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DELHI POLICY GROUP

Program on Developing Durable Peace Processes & Partners

Simulation III

Simulation Exercise

The Role of the International Community in Conflict Management/Resolution

(This simulation is based on an abstract scenario)

Summary

A longstanding conflict between ethnic/religious communities in a geo-strategically important country has begun to spiral into outright war. Thousands have died and tens of thousands of people have fled. Humanitarian agencies warn of an impending catastrophe in which millions might become refugees. The international media is baying for international intervention to prevent the catastrophe, and public pressure is building in influential countries for the governments to act.

The U.S. administration has called an emergency meeting in Washington to discuss whether and in which way the international community should react. The countries that have been invited are (apart from the U.S.): the UK, Canada, Japan, China, Russia, France, regional powers' representatives and Norway. India is present as an observer. The international institutions that are invited are the UN, EU, World Bank, IMF, UNHCR and a number of other humanitarian and donor agencies.

You have two days to decide your course of action. The questions before you are:

- *Can this conflict be solved or minimized through diplomacy, and which countries and/or institutions should take the lead? Will neighboring countries be helpful or are they part of the problem?*
- *Can the humanitarian catastrophe be prevented by speedy deployment of international aid and protection? What are the chances of the local/national government agreeing to this?*
- *What are the risks of the conflict spreading across the region, unless there is concerted international action?*
- *If military intervention is required, who will provide the troops? Will a sufficient number of countries support military intervention so that it has international backing?*
- *What are the risks of military intervention backfiring, with repercussions across the region? Is there an exit strategy?*



Brief Description of the Conflict

Physical: This is a middle-size country, landlocked, with densely populated urban areas interspersed by very thinly populated rural ones; rich in oil/mineral resources, with mountains on its northern border and desert in its southeast (see map attached).



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Demographic: The country has a population of around 20 million, comprising two large ethnic/religious groups (A: Muslim, and B: Christian, see map attached), one slightly larger than the other (40:30), and four minority groups (10:8:7:5). Though the ethnic groups are dispersed, each can form a province-wise majority to create separate statelets. Additionally, both of the large ethnic groups have contiguous Diasporas in neighboring countries.

Administrative: There is a weak central government, and the provinces are thinly administered. The police and military forces are feared rather than respected; and the politicians are corrupt, communal and nepotistic.

The conflict began ten years ago, following the death of the country's president, a dictator who had ruled the country for 25 years. Since then there has been a struggle for power between the country's two major political parties, one backed by Ethnic Group A (Muslim), the other by Ethnic Group B (Christian). Minority Groups C (syncretic) and E (sect) support Group A, and Groups D (sect) and F (nomadic) support Group B. Neighboring countries have used their Diasporas to interfere in the conflict; they have also from time to time tried to seize control of the country's oil/mineral resources (see map 2).

The **U.S. and European Union** countries brokered a weak power-sharing agreement between the two major political parties about five years ago, but the coalition government did not last long, and the parties' armed militias violated the truce. Armed militias multiplied in the years to follow, with the minority groups also acquiring their own militias, but the conflict was basically of low intensity, with selective assassination and inter-militia killings.

New Crisis

About six months ago the militias of Group A, and their allies in C and E, suddenly targeted villages allied to Group B, who retaliated swiftly by targeting Group A, C and E villages. Conflict rapidly spread to the towns, and the country's capital is currently in the control of five separate militias, who have plundered and vandalized government buildings, including the armory, and shops, murdered men who refused to work for them, and raped women.

There was a large exodus of panicked townspeople and villagers to the neighboring countries, all of which now shelter refugees but keep them in dire conditions. Meantime the conflict has brought all government services to a halt, trade and public distribution systems have stopped, and a drought has brought most of the population close to starvation.

Humanitarian agencies, NGOs and the media are convinced that hundreds of thousands will die – perhaps as many as 2 million – if the international community does not intervene rapidly. Though some of the neighboring countries have allowed selected humanitarian agencies (such as the UNHCR) to work with refugees, other neighbors are stonewalling, especially countries with Diasporas that are directly involved in the conflict. The country's government has absolutely refused to allow any humanitarian agencies to enter, though the numbers of internally displaced are rapidly rising (see map 3).

The U.S. and European countries have been trying to use diplomatic pressure on both the country's government, and regional powers, to begin negotiations with warring parties to end the conflict, but the results thus far have been patchy. Neighbor A is willing to push for negotiations and put the issue on the agenda of the regional organization which the country is a member of, but the country's government has frantically lobbied against such a move, with the support of neighbors B, C, D, E and F, all of which are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. The two regional powers, which border neighbors D and E, have also tried to put





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pressure on them to cut their ties to the warring parties, but are reluctant to use too much pressure for fear of pushing D and E over the edge into outright conflict.

Renewed Diplomatic Effort

The effort now is to get the international community to adopt a coordinated response to the conflict. This too is not easy—**France** has been the former colonial power in the country with ties to Ethnic Group B; the **UK** has been a colonial power in neighboring countries C and E with ties to Ethnic Group A. Both have considerable trading interests in the region, and France has military ties to the country while the UK has military ties to neighboring countries. **Russia** has also been an imperial power in the region, through the Warsaw Pact countries as well as during the Cold War arms race.

The UK and France are each anxious to help end the conflict—the British army, in particular, envisages taking a major peacekeeping role in the post-conflict phase—but are not convinced that they can work together, especially as France is suspicious of the UK's close ties to the U.S., and fears that the UK and U.S. will join hands to push France out of the region in order to establish predominance in exploiting the region's rich natural and strategic assets. Politicians of Ethnic Groups A and B are playing up these fears in the hope of getting British/French backing, respectively, for their control over the country. Russia has not decided its position regarding the conflict—both major Ethnic Groups, A and B, have had ties to Russia, and Russia has energy interests in the country—but has stated it will be part of any and all international consultations.

The **European Union** has been sluggish in its response, partly due to the rivalry between Britain and France in the region. Other European countries with a colonial past, such as Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands, also have ties in the region, including with some of the minorities in the country, and fear for their safety. Another question of concern is how the European Union's response will affect ties with Russia, which have frayed over the past year. The question of how the European Union should respond is, therefore, being hotly debated at various levels, in the cabinet and secretariat, in the Council of Ministers, and in the European Parliament.

The **UN** has largely been a bystander in these regional and global rivalries, though the Secretary-General has repeatedly called for concerted humanitarian action, and has offered his good offices in mediating negotiations. He has now offered to appoint a Special Envoy to the country, and has provided a choice of 5 of his most seasoned negotiators, an Indian, an Arab, an Irishman, an African and an Englishman. The Norwegians have also offered a facilitator, who has worked with some of the Diaspora armed militias in the past – for example, to get them to underwrite the weak power-sharing agreement of five years ago. And the **U.S.** is considering sending one of its own envoys, who had negotiated in Africa, West Asia and the Balkans, to set up negotiations.

The **Japanese** government is keen to play an active role in both the humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, largely to strengthen their international role and secure a seat in the UN Security Council. **China**, eyeing the region's natural assets for its own needs, has for the first time stated its desire to be part of the international consultations, with the promise of playing a role in the post-conflict recovery phase. **India** is still straddling the fence – the Indian government's preferred option would be to have an Indian as the UN envoy, and to offer peacekeeping troops if an agreement is reached, but not play an active role in consultations or negotiations.





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The regional powers would like some “Third World” or “Non-Aligned” involvement because they fear that the U.S. and the Europeans will undermine their roles as regional powers. They

are, at the same time, working hard on their American and European connections to ensure this does not happen. While they are beginning to concede, reluctantly, that peacekeeping troops might be required, they are undecided on whether these should be regional or international peacekeepers. If the latter, they are unanimous in asking for a UN rather than U.S. led force.

Negotiations vs. Force

By and large all countries agree that the best way forward would be if negotiations could bring about a settlement between the different groups and parties. But the humanitarian crisis is escalating rapidly, and there are as yet no indications that the country’s government would agree to allow peacekeeping troops into its territory to protect, feed and shelter the internally displaced. Nor is there any indication that the warring parties will agree to a truce and allow peacekeeping troops to police the country until negotiations yield a settlement.

Diplomats from the U.S., UK, France, Norway, the UN and EU have all engaged in shuttle diplomacy over the past week, to see whether the country’s government, and the warring parties, might agree to either option:

1. Allow peacekeepers in to protect refugees and the internally displaced;
2. Agree a ceasefire and allow peacekeepers in to restore order and demilitarize the country.

In return, the country’s government and warring parties have been offered aid during negotiations and for post-conflict reconstruction; fully representative negotiations in which all parties’ views and needs will be considered; and future security through a range of possible institutions, from rebuilding their army to regional security forums, and even perhaps a new NATO partnership for peace type program.

These diplomats will present their findings at the simulation, reporting on the conversations they had with government representatives and militia leaders, offering their interpretations of the conversations, and indicating areas in which some progress could be made. They will also opine on whether an agreement can be reached in time to prevent the humanitarian crisis from becoming a catastrophe, or whether military force will be required to end the crisis; which would then be followed by peace negotiations.

The U.S., UK and some of the smaller European countries are willing to consider using force if diplomacy fails. France, Russia, China and the regional powers are opposed; most others are undecided.

Humanitarian Response

Most of the major humanitarian agencies agree that immediate international humanitarian aid is required to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe, but are divided on whether force should be used, if necessary, to achieve this goal. Many of the big humanitarian groups believe that recommendations on use of force are outside their mandate and rightly so; though each has staff that believes the mandate should change so that force can be recommended when necessary. Many of the smaller humanitarian groups, especially the NGOs, believe that force





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should be recommended when necessary, and that this conflict is rapidly becoming such a case.

Irrespective of this debate, all humanitarian agencies are gearing up to provide aid, medical, food and shelter, when it becomes possible to do so. Thus far, most countries have been sluggish in their donations and/or pledges; so humanitarian groups have come to the Washington meeting to campaign for larger pledges of aid and a timetable for when donations will actually be paid.

The UNHCR is the only humanitarian agency to be allowed to set up offices in the region, but not in the country; UNHCR offices are close to refugee camps across the country's borders, and at a considerable distance from the country's border, as well as the zones of conflict. Nevertheless the UNHCR also fears that the conflict zones will soon widen to include the refugee camps, in which case their offices could become warring party targets. The UNHCR, therefore, also wants the neighboring countries to allow peacekeepers in to shelter the refugee camps as well as UNHCR offices and staff.

Military Response

The majority of peacekeeping countries and institutions are opposed to the use of force, with the exception of the U.S., whose Defense Department and Pentagon heads say they will consider the use of force if vital U.S. interests in the region are threatened (the U.S. has an airbase in neighbor A, and oil interests in neighbors E and F, see map3). The British army chiefs say publicly that they are willing to support whichever course of action their government decides, including under a U.S. led command; but privately they counsel the government against a decision that might land their troops in an Iraq-type situation.

Thus far none of the countries of the region have threatened U.S. interests, but the conflict country's warring parties have talked to their respective Diasporas about targeting U.S. installations if the U.S. takes sides against them. The country's government has flirted with radical Islamic armed groups, who have acquired a small presence in the conflict, adding further to international fears that force might be required.

NATO has said they will not participate in military action unless one of their member-states is attacked, but will contribute towards a peacekeeping operation if the country's government agrees. The UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) has warned that it is not in a position to provide peacekeepers unless member-states step up troops' contributions. The regional security organization has not engaged in regional peacekeeping and has no military wing.

The concern for the military group is: even if military force is desirable, from where will the troops come? Conversely, if a peacekeeping agreement can be secured, who will provide the peacekeeping troops? What will be the logistics required and how would the neighboring countries behave – will they be helpful to peacekeeping troops or not? Should a trial peacekeeping mission be tried first – for example, to protect refugees in a neighboring country?





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Simulation Structure

Day One: 9.30 – 11 am: Opening session of all participants together, chaired by the U.S. representative, who describes the problem, the reasons for the meeting, and the possible courses of action that the international community can take.

11.15 – 11.30 am: Tea/Coffee. Opportunity for side meetings, lobbying

11.15 am – 1.00 pm: Participants will break into 4 working groups – humanitarian; military, peacekeeping and security; diplomacy; and donor agencies. Each group will prepare a “roadmap” for international action to deal with the conflict and/or its impact, taking into account local conditions within the conflict area; own resources; logistical issues; possible threats and risks. Thus, for example, the **humanitarian working group** will assess the nature and potential extent of the humanitarian crisis, in terms of food, sanitation, medical, shelter and protection requirements; how these could be fulfilled and what resources it would take; what kinds of logistical arrangements would be necessary and through which entry points; what kinds of agreements would be required and who would have to make them; and what kinds of guarantees would need to be given.

1.00 – 2.00 pm: Lunch. Opportunity for side meetings, lobbying

2.00 – 3.30 pm: Working groups continued

3.30 – 3.45 pm: Tea/Coffee. Opportunity for side meetings, lobbying

3.45 – 5.30 pm: Participants come together to present their roadmaps and discuss whether a course of action can be charted.

Day Two: Morning session – 4 working groups refine their proposals according to previous day’s discussion of their roadmaps.

Afternoon session – participants decide together whether and in which ways they will react to crisis.

Side meetings and lobbying continue in tea breaks and lunch.

**Note for teachers. Round table and working group sessions should be chaired by international and national experts so as to ensure best results. This would mean assigning roles to the experts as well.*

Roles

You are a member of the “international community”, comprising the following members:

Humanitarian: UNHCR, UNOCHA, ICRC, WFP, WHO, MSF, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International.





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You have come to the meeting with a double agenda:

- (a) To push for international humanitarian aid, preferably through agreement with the country's government. You are divided over whether to ask for force to deliver aid if the government refuses;
- (b) To push donor countries and institutions to make larger pledges of aid.

Additionally, you have been asked to substantiate your case by presenting concrete plans for how humanitarian aid can be delivered to the affected people. You need to formulate these plans with reference to the attached maps, especially map 3, which shows refugees and displaced people.

If you are representing a human rights organization, you are also concerned to ensure that international laws on prisoners and hostages, prevention and punishment of genocide, rape as a war crime, etc., are included in any peace agreement, even if it is a limited agreement.

The questions before you are:

- (a) Can the humanitarian groups present a united front with the military, diplomats and donor agencies?
- (b) Which countries, institutions and agencies are most likely to be amenable to humanitarian concerns – who should you be lobbying in the tea and lunch breaks?
- (c) Can the humanitarian groups form a coordination network for aid and protection activities?

Military, Peacekeeping and Security: NATO chief, U.S. Vice-Chief of Army Staff, Under Secretary-General UNDPKO, chief of EU Rapid Reaction Force, British army general, UNCIVPOL head, Regional Security Organization head.

You have come to this meeting to argue against military intervention; your position is, if there has to be a military intervention then there has also got to be an exit plan for when the military operations will be considered to have ended. You are also, reluctantly, prepared to concede that you will have to provide security for humanitarian aid delivery, and perhaps even protection of refugees; which might be followed by peacekeeping.



Your concern, therefore, is to draw up contingency plans for how many troops will be needed in any of the three eventualities; where they should be stationed, under whose command they will operate – taking into account both logistical requirements such as best and shortest routes for aid, and risks, such as which would be safer or less safe areas of troops deployment – and what kind of mandate they will have.



If you are with the EU Rapid Reaction Force, you will oppose both U.S. and NATO command. If you are with the UNDPKO then you will naturally work only under the UN, and any force you participate in will act according to the UN Charter. If you are UNCIVPOL, your task is post-conflict restoration of rule of law; any divagation into an ongoing conflict situation will require careful consideration.

Additional questions you will ask are:

- (a) Can the regional powers be prepared to take the lead in any peacekeeping operation, under the umbrella of the regional security organization, in the same way as the



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African Union has taken a lead in Sudan? Who would support/oppose such an initiative?

- (b) If not, can other troops' contributing countries be asked to aid a peacekeeping effort?
- (c) Who will support or carry out military intervention if force is required?

Diplomacy: U.S. Undersecretary of State, UK Foreign Secretary, Japan, China, Russia equivalents, UN Department of Political Affairs representative, Norwegian government representative, pro-Western regional powers representatives.

You are the chief actors in this simulation insofar as you do the briefings on the present situation, its crisis and spillover potential, assessment of how far the warring parties are willing to enter and pursue peace negotiations, whether an interim agreement on averting the humanitarian catastrophe can be reached, whether a quick and short military intervention

could aid in delivering a lasting peace, whether any international involvement will result in a quagmire or will it be helpful, whether the conflict can be contained in any way.

If you are U.S. or European, you will be aware of powerful domestic pressure to act, and your concern will be to reduce or divert domestic dismay. You are, therefore, more amenable to the idea of international action of some sort. If you are Russian or Chinese, you are opposed to international action; stridently in the case of Russia, prepared to abstain in the case of China. If you are Japanese you are anxious to offer aid; if you are Norwegian you offer good offices to bring armed militias on board. If you are a regional powers' representative you are divided between pleasing your great power allies and fear of regional reactions.

The questions for you are:

- (a) Can this crisis be resolved by diplomacy, and if so by whom? Will a coordinated diplomatic response help or hinder?
- (b) What are the immediate goals in the short-term? Can they contain the crisis for the middle-term or will a long term solution have to be thought through and worked towards in order to contain the crisis?
- (c) Is it possible to get away with threatening military force – will that bring the parties to the negotiating table?



Donor Agencies: IMF, World Bank, EBRD, EU, ADB, US Aid, Japanese government, DFID (all representatives at the senior staff but not presidential level).

You have been asked to come to this meeting by both the U.S. and allied governments, and by the humanitarian organizations. You know you will be under pressure for donations from both sides, and have already discussed your response to these dual requests with your staff and seniors.

As you see it, your job is to assess the real potential for humanitarian aid delivery or reconstruction programs; the capacity of the aid agencies, governments and institutions present to implement any program of action; what their levels of accountability will be; how





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to bargain for making donations proportionate to the area of operation of each agency and its resources; and how to ensure that your groups/companies of choice get the aid and reconstruction contracts.

The questions for you are:

- (a) What is the level of commitment of the countries, institutions and agencies that will be involved in an international response and what are their relations to the conflict country's government and its neighbors?
- (b) Who will the donations be channeled through, and what will be the accountability procedure at all levels from the ground up/down to the ground?
- (c) How can donor agencies ensure that own-country nationals get the bulk – or at least their fair share – of the aid and reconstruction contracts? Or should donor agencies be more amenable to civil society pressure against this form of “aid nationalism”?

**Note for students: These organizations and countries all have websites that can be easily accessed through a web search. You can, therefore, profile each one, both in preparing your own role, and in preparing your case to convince your opponents.*

