



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

Simulation on The Case of “Palmyra”

This simulation focuses on a conflict in the territory of “Palmyra” in the fictional country of Siwa. The aim of the simulation is to demonstrate for the participants some of the challenges facing peacemakers in their efforts to resolve violent international conflicts.

The ultimate challenge of the simulation and the goals of the participants are to have the parties to a violent international conflict, with the assistance of outside mediators, address the issues that divide them and that have led to violence.



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Introduction

This simulation focuses on a conflict in the territory of Palmyra in the fictional country of Siwa. Its purpose is to highlight for participants some of the challenges facing peacemakers and those who hope to resolve violent international conflicts.

The simulation is designed as well to provide the participants with insights into some of the skills and approaches that can lead to successful negotiation and mediation. These include: accurately analyzing parties' positions and interests; communication of different views to others; eliciting new ideas and differentiating between positions and interests; promoting areas of common agreement; adjusting positions without sacrificing one's interests; and helping make an agreement that will last and can be implemented by all sides.

Given the many issues likely to emerge during the mediation meeting, participants should be given ample time to read and discuss their roles before beginning the general meeting. It may even be useful to hold a few sub-group meetings at which three or four participants could meet and brainstorm the types of issues likely to arise at the general meeting.

Participant Tasks

Participants' first task is to read the background documents and their role guides, and begin to understand the position and views of the role each will play. Throughout the simulation, each participant should:

- Try to understand the underlying reasons for the conflict
- Listen to the needs and interests of the parties on either side of the divide
- Think about recommendations for the future course of the peace process

The simulation promises to be an enriching and rewarding experience. The importance of being prepared cannot be stressed enough. Participants should read all of the enclosed documents and take time to analyze the situation. It is important that participants remember which issues must be addressed, on which points flexibility is possible, and which issues are vital to a particular role's interests. With sufficient preparation, this simulation will provide participants with a firsthand experience of the challenges confronting those who tackle the issue of peacebuilding among the various stakeholders in a conflict situation.



Materials

Each participant should receive the following materials:

- The Introduction, Scenario and Background documents (pages 1 - 7)
- A role guide

Teachers may wish to make available as well the following items for this simulation:

- A classroom or conference room and sufficient breakout rooms or additional space for any needed sub-group meetings or other teamwork exercises
- An overhead projector or multimedia data projector and an overhead screen.
- Flip charts and flip chart paper (or white boards) and markers
- 1 pad and pen per student

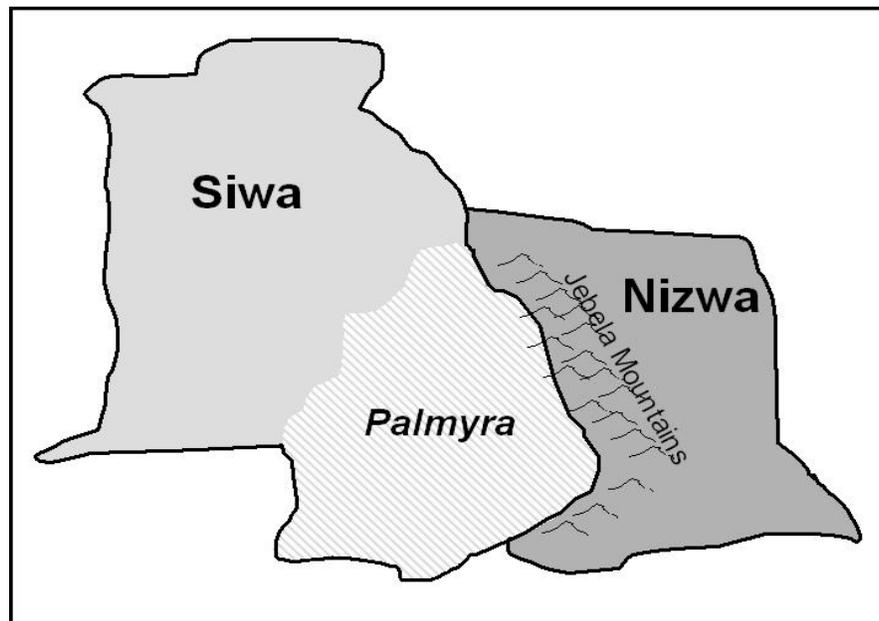


Scenario

Violence is escalating once again the country of Siwa, a poor country torn by a decade-long rebellion. International humanitarian assistance groups are urging the United Nations to explore ways to halt the conflict and establish security in the region. These organizations are calling on the UN to provide peacekeeping forces to increase security and to provide assistance to the large numbers of refugees through the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In addition, the regional organization, NESO (North East States Organization), composed of all states in the region, is exerting political and economic pressure on the parties to stop the fighting and discuss peace.

To explore options for bringing an end to the violence and establish security in the region, a group of outside organizations has convened a meeting with all parties affected by the conflict to begin a process that will lead to peace.





Background

For ten years, Siwa, a relatively poor country with a mixed population of majority Siwans and minority Nizwans, has confronted rebellion.

In the territory of Palmyra, a province that borders the country of Nizwa and where ethnic Nizwans are the majority, the violence has been extreme. Initially, the rebellion began as a political movement for greater autonomy for the Nizwan minority in Siwa. There were demands for greater freedom of religion (Siwans are animist, Nizwans Buddhist) as well as the use of the Nizwan language in schools and the conduct of official business in the province of Palmyra. Siwans who live in Palmyra strongly opposed greater Nizwan autonomy. When the government attempted to clamp down on groups rallying for autonomy, considerable violence broke out. The government charged that the violence was instigated by Nizwans. The Nizwans claim that the government purposely initiated the violence to have an excuse to use force to halt the autonomy movement. Groups of armed men began to challenge the government forces and widespread violence erupted into armed rebellion in Palmyra.

In the years of fighting since, there have been charges of atrocities on both sides. In addition, thousands have been made homeless, and there is a considerable refugee population along the border in neighboring Nizwa. Most of the soldiers in the rebel movement are based in the Jebela Mountains inside Nizwa along the border. They often cross over into Siwa on raids and then escape back into the mountains. In order to continue financing their rebellion and secure armaments, the rebels have taken to illegal mining of the gems in the Jebela region, as well as plundering border areas of Siwa.

For many years the Nizwa government ignored the growing numbers of rebels inside its borders. It had provided some support for the initial political movement, but as opposition to Siwan authority became increasingly violent, the Nizwa regime has disavowed any support for the rebels. Nizwa is also concerned that the Siwa government may attack Nizwa under the pretext of pursuing the rebels. Nizwa has many fewer men and women under arms than Siwa and does not want to provoke the Siwans unnecessarily. On the other hand, many Nizwans are sympathetic to the rebels so the government provides rhetorical support if not actual financial and military support. However, the Nizwa government does support the rebel contention that Palmyra has historically been settled by Nizwans and strongly opposes any effort by Siwans to push out the Nizwans and re-settle the area with Siwans.

Siwa, on the other hand, believes that the violence is nothing but an unlawful campaign of terror and rebellion against a legitimate regime and law-abiding citizens. The Siwan Government notes that the territory in question has been sovereign Siwa territory for centuries and has insisted that the international community should not try to interfere with Siwa's domestic matters as Siwa tries to defend itself from attack from inside and outside its borders.

With the growing violence and the large numbers of refugees, many international humanitarian assistance groups have urged the United Nations to provide peacekeeping forces to help provide security in the border area as well as provide assistance to the civilians through the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In addition, the regional organization, NESO (North East States Organization), made up of all states in the region is putting political and economic pressure on the parties to stop the fighting and discuss peace.



Roles

The simulation is planned for a minimum of between [XXX] and [YYY] participants; the number of participants for each role is indicated in parentheses after each role heading.

The following parties have been invited to meet in the border town of Smyrna and take part in the meeting to discuss avenues to peace:

Parties to the Conflict:

- Representatives of the Government of Siwa
- Representatives of the Government of Nizwa
- Representatives of the Palmyra Liberation Movement (PLM)
- Representatives of refugee camps
- Representatives of the internally displaced in Siwa
- Representatives of the internally displaced in Nizwa
- Representatives of Palmyran Legal Assistance Association
- Representative of Nizwan Farmers' Cooperative Affected by War
- Representative of Association of Siwan Citizens in Palmyra (ASCP)

Mediators:

- United Nations Mediators
- Representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
- Representatives of the North East States Organization (NESO)
- Representatives of Humanitarian Assistance NGO
- Representatives of Human Rights NGO



Representative of Government of Siwa

You represent the government of Siwa. Your country has been immersed in a civil war for the past 10 years. The most rebellious area is the territory of Palmyra. Many of the rebels have bases across the border in Nizwa, especially in the mountains around the town of Jebela. You want the rebels to be forced out of the Jebela region so they can no longer finance their revolt. You want peacekeeping forces deployed immediately to create a barrier between the rebels and Siwa. In addition, peacekeeping forces will allow you to consolidate control over Palmyra by keeping the rebels at bay. Ultimately, you want the rebel leadership handed over to your government in order to be charged with treason and murder. Finally, you are adamantly opposed to Palmyra's independence since it is internationally recognized as part of the sovereign territory of Siwa.

You appeal to the international community with the argument that the independence of Palmyra violates the sanctity of inviolable borders and domestic control over internal affairs as recognized in the United Nations charter. You also emphasize that this would create a precedent that would inspire any small group intent on breaking up a sovereign state. Finally, you are concerned that the return of all refugees to Palmyra would be impossible because many homes were destroyed and many are now occupied by Siwans. You are vocal in your opposition to opening the border between Siwa and Nizwa. This would, you claim allow the rebels and other undesirables to flood into Palmyra and overwhelm the Siwan population there.



Representative of Government of Nizwa

Although you initially supported Palmyra's autonomy movement, the war has had devastating consequences. You have refused to recognize the rebel force as a legitimate opposition but the continuing war has put a strain on your resources and caused unrest along the border because of refugees. Crime has increased, agricultural land has been destroyed, and many Nizwa citizens have been killed in the border area. Rebels are strip mining and harvesting timber, actions that are destroying or eroding arable land and polluting rivers. The economic consequences have been dire.

Your military forces are so weak that you have lost control over the Jebela region. You want the problem between the province of Palmyra and Siwa settled and strongly support a solution that would allow the refugees to return to Palmyra and the border made secure. You support intervention by UNHCR and UN peacekeepers in the region so that the burden of providing for refugees and of security falls on them, not on your government.



Representative of Palmyra Liberation Movement (PLM)

You have no wish to halt the fighting unless the status quo is changed. There can be no peacekeeping forces unless there is agreement to discuss independence for Palmyra. You have little incentive to make peace without independence because you and many of your colleagues are making considerable money for the liberation movement as well as for yourselves through your control of the gems in Jebela. Refugee camps have been prime areas for recruitment into the liberation movement so you want continued access. In addition, if you are to lay down your arms you want to ensure that the people of Palmyra (including refugees) have the opportunity to vote on a referendum for independence. You also want to ensure that the PLM is allowed to become a legitimate political party in Siwa prior to the referendum.



Representative of Palmyran Refugees (Nizwan Descent)

You are a Palmyran of Nizwan descent. Siwan soldiers accused you of supporting the rebels and forced you and your family out of your home. You fled across the border to escape the fighting and find shelter. You live in a refugee camp on the outskirts in Nizwa. You want to return to your home as do most of your neighbors from Palmyra.



Representative of Internally Displaced in Siwa

You are a Siwan who lived along the border in Palmyra. Your house was destroyed by rebels during a cross-border raid. You now live in a house abandoned by Nizwans who fled across the border to escape the fighting. You have no other house to move to, so desperately want to keep this one. There are many displaced Siwans like you.



Representative of Internally Displaced in Nizwa

You are a Nizwan who lives in a refugee camp because rebels forced many of you and your neighbors out of Jebela. Your sons were marched off to the gem mines and forced to work for the rebels. You are displaced in your own country. Your only goal is to return to your land and your home and have your sons liberated from the mines.



Representative of Palmyran Legal Assistance Association

You are a lawyer from Palmyra who believes strongly that many of your neighbors were killed by Siwan military forces. You want the perpetrators of war crimes held accountable and have worked to ensure that any efforts at peace include provisions for justice for the victims of war crimes. You want to make sure that the international community does not ignore these crimes in the efforts to end the fighting and make peace.



Representative of Nizwan Farmers' Cooperative Affected by War

You head a cooperative of farmers from Nizwa whose land has been greatly damaged by the war and the run-off from water polluted by the mines in Jebela. You want the rebels ousted from Nizwa and want compensation for your losses.



Representative of Association of Siwan Citizens in Palmyra (ASCP)

You head a citizen's association from Siwa whose members come from the Palmyra region known as ASCP. You fear that any attempt to bring the rebels into the peace process ignores the terror they have waged on the local populace of Palmyra. You argue that Palmyra has been part of Siwa for centuries and that prior to the rebel movement, Siwans and Palmyrans lived very peacefully in the province. The rebels have destroyed that communal relationship. You support limited autonomy in the province but fear that if the Palmyran language and culture is allowed to dominate the province Siwans like you will suffer considerably.



United Nations Mediator

You want to stop the killing and fighting and establish a buffer zone. You want to get the two states to agree to a peacekeeping force that will separate the combatants. Most importantly, you want to disarm the rebels and help them return to civilian life in Palmyra. Ideally, you would like to see those rebels identified as the worst perpetrators of war crimes to be tried and punished; you would not, however, hold up a peace or disengagement agreement for that reason. In addition, to get an agreement for a UN presence it will be necessary to secure the agreement of the Siwan government, some of whom are themselves accused of war crimes.



Representative of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

You want to ensure that refugees are protected and provided for. You also are concerned about the lack of security confronting international workers, and feel it is vital to have UN peacekeeping forces establish a presence on both sides of the border. You also want to ensure that the rebels are kept out of the camps so that they are not recruiting young fighters there. Stopping the killing is your first priority, but you also want to ensure that any agreement does not simply transfer the refugee problem back across the border.



Representative of North East States Organization (NESO)

You are the organization representing the states in this part of the world, including both Nizwa and Siwa. You want to stop the fighting and halt the economic and environmental destruction that is having a ripple effect throughout the region. You want to work for a durable peace but strongly oppose independence for Palmyra because many of the member states have similar situations where minorities have aspirations of independence. If necessary, to move the parties toward a peace agreement, many of your members are willing to exert economic pressure through cutting off trade or economic sanctions, or through the offer of incentives such as increased trade and economic aid and investment.



Representative of Humanitarian Assistance NGO

You work for a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that is interested primarily in humanitarian assistance and bringing relief to the people who have been victims of the war. Your priority is to help find a blueprint for peace that will ensure the right of return by all refugees to their homes. You believe that the best way to strengthen peace efforts is to promote economic development. The rebels have to be deprived of their source of funding not only because it fuels the war but also the mining leads to the abuse of the mineworkers and creates considerable environmental damage.



Representative of Human Rights NGO

You work for a Non-Government Organization (NGO) that is interested primarily in human rights and war crimes. Your staff has interviewed hundreds of refugees who have provided credible evidence of atrocities and war crimes. You want to make this evidence public and feel it is critical that any peace include provisions for war crimes trials. You strongly believe that any agreement without such accountability and justice will only create the conditions for future violence and human rights violations. If rebel forces and Siwa government authorities who are guilty of war crimes are allowed to remain free the people will have no reason to trust any peace agreement that emerges.



Related Web Links

Related Institute Resources

Jeanette Rankin Library: <http://www.usip.org/library/index.html>
Knowledge for Resolving
International Conflicts

Other Web Resources

ReliefWeb: Various documents concerning "Ethnic Conflict" [http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/SR?OpenForm&"ethnic+conflict"&SortOrder=3&MaxResultsNum=50](http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/SR?OpenForm&)

Human Rights Watch:
Commentary and Editorials
on Refugees, Internally
Displaced Persons and Asylum
Seekers http://www.hrw.org/doc/?t=refugees_editorials

INCORE: The Ethnic Conflict
Research Digest <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/ecrd/>