

**PEDAGOGY IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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**Using Role-Play Scenarios in the IR Classroom: An Examination of Exercises on Peacekeeping Operations and Foreign Policy Decision Making**

CAROLYN M. SHAW  
*Wichita State University*

Use of role-play scenarios in the classroom is just one of a number of active learning techniques that are being used more and more frequently to convey the more abstract concepts of international relations (IR) to students in a meaningful way. This paper examines the value of two specific role-play exercises used in an introduction to international relations course on the topics of peacekeeping and foreign policy decision making. The value of such interactive exercises is laid out in a section examining what learning objectives can be achieved by using role-play scenarios. These include promoting student interaction and input, and promoting student curiosity and creativity. The preparations necessary for conducting such an exercise are laid out, followed by a description of the exercises as they were conducted in the classroom. Finally, an assessment of the exercises provides useful feedback on the degree to which specific learning objectives were achieved, and how such exercises can be modified to be even more effective.

**Keywords:** role playing, foreign policy, active learning

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**Introduction**

Instructors in university classrooms today face a challenging teaching environment as they work to impart an understanding of the international system and its many complex issues to students. In many instances, an introductory college course in international relations (IR) may be the students' first exposure to international politics, not having had the opportunity to cover the topic in high school. The challenge of conveying abstract theoretical IR concepts is great when the students may not even have basic geographical knowledge, let alone more substantive knowledge of relations between states. In such a setting, it is critical to be able to actively engage the students and provide hands-on activities to make some of the abstract concepts come to life. A variety of active learning techniques have been introduced in college classrooms in recent years in an effort to convey these concepts effectively in an alternative fashion to the traditional lecture format. These alternative methods include collaborative learning, case teaching, simulations and other "student-centered" approaches (Boyer et al., 2000:4). Although studies

increasingly indicate the effectiveness of these techniques for the retention of materials (Stice, 1987; Hertel and Millis, 2002:4–9), it is important to carefully consider the design and implementation of such active learning exercises and to continue to assess their effectiveness in the classroom.

This paper discusses the potential benefits to using role-play scenarios in the classroom, the steps taken to design two different exercises, and an assessment of these exercises used in an introduction to international relations course. The first exercise is on the complexities of “peacekeeping” operations,<sup>1</sup> focusing on the interactions between the diplomats, the military peacekeepers, and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The context is a three-way civil war set in the fictional, developing country of Zodora. The second exercise examines the challenges of foreign policy decision making in a crisis. The context is a fabricated escalation of the situation in Colombia with the government requesting greater American aid to defeat the increasingly threatening Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebel forces. Students represent a variety of decision makers, including the U.S. President, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Secretary of Commerce, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Senate leaders. Through discussion of my own experiences in planning and using role play exercises in the classroom, I hope to provide useful information to others as to what has worked well and what has not, and to reaffirm the value of these exercises as effective teaching techniques. I hope that others might find the exercises that I have developed useful in their classrooms as well.

### **Learning Objectives**

The incorporation of active learning exercises into the international relations classroom allows instructors to achieve several different educational objectives that are beneficial to the students. Although different instructors will have different goals for including role-play scenarios in their courses, some common goals often include providing an alternative presentation of course materials, promoting student interaction and input, promoting student curiosity and interest, and simply having fun. Before creating and incorporating a role-play scenario in class, it is important for instructors to identify what specific objectives they want to achieve by using the exercise (Kille, 2002). General objectives are discussed in this section, and the specific learning objectives for my two scenarios are discussed in the exercise design section that follows.

#### *Alternative Presentation of Course Materials*

The use of role-playing in the classroom provides an alternative method for presenting course materials in contrast to lecturing. Although some materials can be conveyed well through an oral presentation, many concepts in international relations only become less abstract when the student can apply them directly or experience them personally (Preston, 2000). “To the extent that [students] engage in constructing new knowledge or reconstructing given information, rather than simply memorizing it, they gain a deeper understanding” (King, 1994:16). Merryfield and Remy (1995:8) similarly note that “students master content not only by being exposed to information through readings and lectures...but also by engaging in a reflective process in which they make the information their own by evaluating and using it.” Since class trips abroad are beyond the scope of most courses, simulations can be used to place students in a unique international context or position which they would otherwise be unable to experience, and give them the

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<sup>1</sup>The term “peacekeeping” in this exercise is a general one that encompasses a broad range of activities including peace enforcement and peace making.

opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the material. One challenge that instructors face is the trade-off in terms of coverage of material and the time it takes to conduct an active learning exercise. Such exercises usually take more time than covering the same materials in lecture format (Boyer et al., 2000:4). The key to using role-playing effectively without sacrificing too much content is to plan the exercise carefully to provide interactive examples of the course materials. Frequently this can be done in coordination with a preparatory lecture. The concepts can be introduced prior to the exercise, and then participation in the exercise provides the students with concrete examples of more abstract theories and ideas presented in the lecture. For example, when learning about the bureaucratic politics model of foreign policy decision making, students are often frustrated that the government actors involved cannot simply “reach a consensual agreement and do what’s best for our country.” By actually taking on the roles of the different agencies involved in foreign policy making, students begin to understand the underlying conflicts between these actors and the challenge of clearly defining what is in our “national interest.”

The alternative presentation of material also allows the instructor to accommodate different cognitive styles (Merryfield and Remy, 1995:9; Upcraft, 1996:32–33; Seidner, 1978:20–21). Interactive exercises are particularly helpful to kinetic learners, but are also suited to aural learners. Providing background-briefing handouts (discussed below) can be very helpful to visual learners to prepare them for the upcoming exercise. These exercises are well suited for students who are nonlinear thinkers and allow them to incorporate lecture and assigned reading materials in a more meaningful way that can be recalled and applied in the future.

#### *Promote Student Interaction and Input*

Encouraging students to interact with each other in the classroom provides several benefits to the students. Interactive exercises using small groups give students a chance to voice their own ideas without as much pressure as speaking in front of the whole class. It also gives students a chance to bounce ideas off each other that they might be too embarrassed to share directly with the instructor. This dynamic can be particularly useful on campuses where the student body consists of many commuters who have few opportunities to interact outside of class. In addition, interactive exercises allow for peer learning to take place. Often students can provide real-life examples, or put certain ideas in a context that their peers can understand when instructors may be challenged to do so.

Greater student participation and interaction also provide opportunities to build student confidence. The exercises challenge students to step out of the role of passive absorber of knowledge and work together to solve problems. By reaching solutions on their own, they gain more self-assurance in their own abilities (McKeachie, 1994:163; Preston, 2000:112).

#### *Promote Student Curiosity and Creativity*

By designing the exercises in a way that provides essential, but not complete information about a topic, the instructor can encourage further inquiry. After providing background information to the students before the exercise, the instructor can make herself available to answer specific questions throughout the exercise. Students are not usually content with the brief background given and frequently seek greater information because it makes a difference to them in how they decide to play out their roles. This curiosity is much less likely to be in evidence during a standard lecture period even when the material presented is controversial or provocative. The context of the exercise promotes greater inquiry (McKeachie, 1994:163).

In addition to promoting further inquiries by the students, the exercise can also provide an opportunity for creative thinking by not offering immediate solutions to the problems presented, and by leaving the interaction relatively unstructured. This allows students to come up with their own solutions and interactive dynamics. For example, in the foreign policy role-play exercise, no direct instructions were given as to *how* the individuals in each group should contribute to the decision-making process. Each group, however, quickly established its own rules for discussion and voting on the policies to be recommended. Active learning exercises structured in this way can promote the development of skills such as critical, analytical thinking as well as “social and diplomatic” skills that might not be developed in a lecture setting (Seidner, 1978; Smith and Boyer, 1996). As King (1994:15) and others (Lowman, 1996; McKeachie, 1994) point out, teaching students to think critically should be a fundamental function of our educational system. Teachers should emphasize the process of thinking itself because much of the content we impart in the form of rote knowledge will quickly become outdated (Halpern, 1994:2).

#### *Have Fun*

A final objective that may sometimes be overlooked is the simple goal of having fun. People tend to remember positive experiences and students tend to retain the lessons they have learned through interactive exercises because of their enjoyment of them. These exercises help capture students’ attention and are entertaining in addition to being educational. A friend recently shared an undergraduate experience that strongly impacted her over ten years ago. She had participated in a role-play exercise on organizational decision making in the international context, and she still remembered the research she had done on the topic in preparation and the outcomes of the exercise.

#### **Preparation and Design of the Exercises**

To reap the maximum benefits from the exercises and achieve the objectives noted above, it is important to do some clear planning and preparation (Jones, 1995:Ch. 5). The first step is to establish specific learning objectives for each exercise to ensure that the course material is clearly presented in the role-play scenarios (Kille, 2002). Some of my objectives simply involved identification of terms or conditions, and others sought a deeper understanding of a dynamic process through class interactions. The objectives in the peacekeeping exercise were for the students to: (1) identify the different actors involved in peacekeeping and their different interests; (2) identify potential conflicting goals and interactions between the actors; (3) identify the heavy resource demands necessary for successful peacekeeping operations; (4) creatively consider what strategies or tactics would achieve specific goals for peacekeeping actors; and (5) recognize the complex coordination issues necessary for successful peacekeeping operations. The objectives in the foreign policy decision-making exercise were for the students to: (1) recognize and understand the different models of foreign policy decision making as presented in lecture and the text; (2) recognize the time constraints and challenges decision makers face; and (3) think analytically and creatively about the policy options available to decision makers in a crisis situation.

The second preparatory step is to design the exercise so that there is both intragroup discussion as well as intergroup discussion on the topic. Such an exercise can teach students about cooperation and collaboration (Merryfield and Remy, 1995:26). My groups were designed to be either interdependent on each other’s actions, or to have shared decision-making authority and influence so that once decisions were made within the groups, they would have to work with other

groups to produce effective outcomes. For example, in the peacekeeping exercise, the diplomats and military leaders recognized that neither could effectively bring about a lasting peace without the help of the other. In the foreign policy decision-making exercise, the president received advice from both a congressional committee and from his cabinet members prior to making his policy decisions. In addition to designing the interdependence of the groups, it is important to consider the size of the class and the number of groups needed to cover different points of view adequately. My exercises were carried out in a class of twenty students with five groups in the peacekeeping exercise and three groups in the foreign policy decision-making exercise, thus putting approximately four to seven students in each group. These small groups were ideal for allowing each student a chance to speak up within their groups, as well as to participate in discussions between groups later in the exercises. In larger classes, the instructor could duplicate each group to accommodate a greater number of students. The duplication would keep the groups small so that all students could actively participate within their groups, but could present a challenge later in the exercise when the groups interact with each other. The groups could take turns presenting their policy responses, but not all groups would be able to give their input in a large class. In this situation, a written debriefing assignment (discussed below) would provide the students an opportunity to describe their experience even if they did not have the chance to fully articulate their policy decisions in class.

In order to facilitate good group discussions, it is important to consider the placement of students into their groups before the exercise. I deliberately place a "leader" (a student who has been outspoken in the class) in each group so that there is at least one student willing to speak up and get the ball rolling within in each group. By placing the outspoken students in separate groups, it also prevents them from conflicting too greatly with each other within their groups, or from two of them together completely dominating group discussion to the exclusion of others. Some consideration is given to the personal interests of the students. One student with a strong military history background was placed in the military group. Sometimes I deliberately place students who like a challenge out of their comfort zone to try to make them "wear different shoes." Merryfield and Remy (1995:22) note that this helps students examine and better understand perspectives that differ from their own. It is often the best-prepared students that are given the most challenging roles. (In the case of the peacekeeping exercise, the challenge role is that of the diplomats.) An additional factor to consider when assigning students to different groups is placing students with contrary personalities in separate roles. Occasionally students will display some antipathy toward each other during class discussions. Placing these students in a single group where they are expected to cooperate can be destructive to the exercise. For example, in the foreign policymaking exercise, the role of president is supposed to resemble a single decision maker, so it is important to pair students for that role who share similar views. Potential absences must also be taken into consideration. I try to spread those students with poor attendance records among the groups evenly so that no group is left shorthanded.

Once the different groups have been established, the next step is to prepare some background information for the exercise. Instructors often make the mistake of assuming that the students have more information than they actually do, thus making informed participation by the students difficult. It is important for the students to have the information available to them prior to, or at the beginning of the exercise so that they may fully understand the different viewpoints they are expected to represent (Merryfield and Remy, 1995:25). If the instructor interrupts the exercise to clarify a point, then the group dynamics may be thrown off (Jones, 1995:Ch. 4). These exercises were used in an introductory-level class that needed this information to facilitate their role-playing. In the peacekeeping exercise the

background material consisted of a summary of an imaginary civil war resembling a combination of several African conflicts. One group in the conflict had secessionist goals in mind and controlled many of the natural resources in the country. Another group dominated the military and political system and was reluctant to share power with the third group that was demanding greater participation and more equal treatment. The peacekeepers were faced with addressing issues of human rights violations, refugees, provision of humanitarian assistance, and seeking a long-term solution to the conflict. In the foreign policy exercise, the students were provided with a summary of a crisis situation in Colombia (very similar to the reality) with some information about each of the different actors engaged in the long-running conflict. Different bits of information were designed to be of interest to different actors within the cabinet. The negative impact of the conflict on the Colombian economy and regional trade situation was noted. The potential for negotiation and ambivalent demands of the rebels were also included. These background briefings were designed to be one full page (or less) and were given to the class in advance.

The fourth step to take in preparing for the exercise is to write up specific instructions for each group or each actor within a group to let them know more about the role that they are taking on. These instructions should also include some specific questions or directions about what they are expected to accomplish within their group, or as an individual actor. In the peacekeeping exercise, for example, each group was given a specific set of "mission mandates" with several questions regarding *how* they would attempt to achieve their mandates. The NGO providing humanitarian assistance was given the mandate to: (1) provide food for civilians faced with insufficient supplies and (2) provide medical supplies for civilians injured in the fighting. In the foreign policy exercise, within the bureaucratic decision-making group, each member was assigned a different cabinet position with various contradictory interests in addressing the conflict. The State Department members were instructed to strongly pursue negotiations between the two sides in hopes of achieving a diplomatic solution. The DEA, on the other hand, was directed to have no trust or respect for the FARC and strongly doubted that anything could be worked out diplomatically. Other departments were particularly concerned with some of the consequences of the conflict including refugee flows, human rights violations, and economic instability. The students were instructed not to share their specific role information with others in the group. Once they began to play their role, their positions and preferences became clear to the others in the group.

A final step is to determine the timeframe for the exercise. Both of my exercises were designed to be carried out in a single class period, but the 50-minute class period proved to be quite a challenge. An hour-and-fifteen-minute class period, or two 50-minute periods, worked better. The exercises are roughly divided into three parts: intragroup discussion, intergroup discussion, and debriefing. In the first part the students work within their groups to determine what strategies they want to adopt or recommend to deal with the given crisis. In the second part, the class comes together as a whole to discuss each group's ideas and solutions and to see how the groups affect each other. For example, one question that each group considered in the peacekeeping exercise was what requests they might make of the other groups to help them carry out their mandates more effectively. One request made by the NGO dealing with refugees was that the military help them disarm any refugees coming into the camps. Finally, the exercise ends with a debriefing period. The debriefing is a key component to the exercise, allowing the students to learn what was happening in the other groups, to debate the positions of different groups, and to link the exercise to reality and to various theoretical concepts (Jones, 1995:Ch. 5; Merryfield and Remy, 1995:25). The debriefing allows the instructor to reiterate key points in the process and to point out the similarities between the exercise and the actual experiences of international actors.

If an instructor has the time, the exercises could be designed to take a week, which would allow more time for the debriefing. In order to justify taking more than a single class period, research and writing components can be added to the in-class exercise itself. These preparations could be graded assignments and would help to ensure that students take the exercise seriously. They would also serve to enrich the writing component of the course. The research assignment would provide the students with greater background knowledge prior to the exercise. For example, for the foreign policy exercise, students might be assigned an essay on the FARC, on the policy position of the current administration toward Colombia, or on the different members who sit on the National Security Council that advises the president. If an instructor wanted to shape the course around the central themes brought out in a role-play exercise, the in-class scenario could be the concluding component of a full semester's research project. Rather than providing students with brief summaries of the conflict situation, students could research the background of the conflict (for example, Colombia), or the actors involved in a specific peacekeeping operation. The knowledge gained through their own research would allow them to play their assigned roles very realistically and would give them greater insights into the wide range of policy options available to decision makers in conflict and crisis situations. Having a graded research component (whether brief, or more in depth) can also avoid a "free-rider problem," although my experience has been that valuable peer learning occurs within the groups whether students have prepared in advance or not. Even those who do not contribute a lot to the discussions learn from their classmates.

An essay might also be assigned following the exercise to incorporate the debriefing component. This can help instructors limit the class time devoted to the exercise while still including the debriefing. An essay can also be used in large classes where not all students will have the opportunity to give their personal feedback and discuss their group experience during the debriefing session. Students could be asked to write about what they learned from the exercise, what worked and what did not, and to discuss what additional actions they might have taken in their role had they had more time to consider the circumstances. In addition to helping students to reflect on what they have learned from the exercise, such essays can also provide the instructor with good feedback for modifying the exercises in the future.

### **Role-Play in Action**

Once the advance preparations have been made, the exercise can be used in the classroom. In the class period before the day of the exercise, background information is provided to the students to be read before the next class. Most students do take a few minutes to read these briefings before the exercise and are prepared when class starts. In addition, these two exercises were paired with introductory lecture material over peacekeeping and recent civil wars, and different models of foreign policy decision making. This information was presented the day before the exercises to give students a solid introduction to the material. The exercises then provide a realistic context in which to apply this new knowledge and observe the dynamics that have been described in lecture. The students are divided into their groups and the exercise gets under way.

#### *Peacekeeping*

In the peacekeeping exercise, there were five different groups: military peacekeepers, international diplomats, a human rights NGO, a refugee relief NGO, and a humanitarian assistance NGO. These groups were operating in the context of a fictional, three-sided African civil war. The conflict briefing described the three

different combatant groups and their interests. (One wanted to secede with many of the prime natural resources in the country, one wanted more equal political power sharing, and one wanted to hold on to its political dominance). The specific role-play assignments gave additional information about the situation and problems on the ground, and asked several questions about how the group was going to address these problems. For example, the human rights NGO was given details about reported abuses by two of the three sides and asked what tasks their team would engage in, in order to carry out their mandate to monitor, record, report, and publicize these abuses. Each of the groups was asked to consider what resources they would need to best carry out their mandates, and what they might ask for from the other actors involved to help them in fulfilling their mission (see Appendix).

The five groups were given about 20 minutes to discuss their group's response to the situation. I was available to answer any additional questions they had about the conflict situation, or about what restrictions they faced in the role they were playing. For example, the NGO providing services to refugees wanted to know if there were refugees from all three sides coming to their camps and what they were supposed to do about that. I briefly answered "yes," and turned the problem back over to them to address. This questioning by the groups also provides the instructor the opportunity to give them greater background into what has been done in real operations in the past and point out some of the pros and cons of different actions they might choose to take. For example, the NGO providing humanitarian relief (food and medical supplies) was informed that some regions of the country were more secure than others. They wanted to know if they had to travel to the less secure regions or not. I presented them with the dilemma that they might be perceived as not being impartial in the conflict if they supplied one region with relief but not another, also that they had strong moral incentives to provide for those in greatest need (which were those that were in the insecure regions). The group had to weigh the consequences and decide what actions it wanted to take.

Once the groups had worked out their own responses to the conflict, the class came back together as a whole to hear the reports of each group. At this point, each group got to hear the others' answer to the question about what would be requested from other groups to help them in fulfilling their mission. The interdependence of the different groups became quite apparent in this discussion, as well as the divergent interests and hesitance of the groups to carry out the tasks requested of them by the others. For example, the humanitarian NGO chose to resolve its dilemma about operating in an insecure area by requesting a military escort from the peacekeepers, who subsequently refused to provide such a service.

The final portion of the exercise was a debriefing in which I pointed out how the fictional exercise closely mirrored the real challenges faced by all the actors in conflict situations. I noted some of the further limitations and dilemmas faced by these actors in real life that I did not impose on the classroom groups. These limitations include limited funding and personnel as well as limited political support from the international community, and ultimately, the need for the combatants themselves to be willing to end the fighting since peace enforcement is rarely, if ever, successful in the long run.

#### *Foreign Policy Decision Making*

In the foreign policy decision-making exercise, the students were divided into three different groups representing the three decision-making models in the text: Bureaucratic Model, Rational Model, and History-Making Individuals Model (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2001). The situation they were given to handle was an escalation of the current conflict in Colombia. The first briefing they were given described a situation in which violence had increased, as had reported human

rights abuses and refugee flows, the economy was in serious decline, and the president of Colombia had requested greater U.S. assistance (see Appendix).

The group modeling rational choice decision making was given the role of the "Senate Latin American Committee" and assigned the task of analyzing the situation and giving its expert advice to the U.S. president as he formulated a U.S. response to the crisis. The committee was given specific decision-making guidelines that included: (1) problem recognition and definition (2) goal selection and prioritization, and (3) identification of alternatives and cost-benefit analysis. Based on these guidelines, this group had many additional questions for the "Latin American expert" (myself) testifying before the committee. The committee members wanted to know a lot more about the details of the conflict and what had already been done in the past. Their questions gave them greater insights into the nature of the long-lasting conflict, the FARC, and the multiple challenges facing the Colombian government.

The group modeling the bureaucratic model of decision making was divided into five different cabinet positions: State Department, Defense Department, Commerce Department, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Two students were paired up for each department. The group as a whole was told that they were an advisory group of top officials that the president had put together in order to get policy recommendations on the Colombian situation. They were also instructed that the president wanted a single consensual recommendation from the group. The particular challenge the group faced was that each department was given a separate set of guidelines specifying what their departmental interests were and suggesting that they needed to "persuade the other members of the group to see reason and adopt your position." As in real life, these positions were often contradictory. For example, the State Department guidelines suggested that they believed a peaceful negotiated settlement was possible without U.S. military action, whereas the DEA guidelines presented the FARC as narco-trafficking thugs that could not be reasoned with and therefore the DEA requested a significant increase in military hardware to defeat these groups. In addition, the CIA was given top-secret information it was not allowed to share with the group until the information became public knowledge. (They feared compromising their agents who had obtained the information). (The students representing the CIA found this restriction on sharing this top-secret information very difficult.)

The third group, representing the president of the United States, modeled the history-making individual model of decision-making. This group was smaller (three students), and was given a separate briefing with more personal background information about the president. The president was portrayed as a skilled diplomat, having resolved the conflict in the Middle East with the signing of the "Berlin Accords." He was averse to committing U.S. troops abroad and risking American lives if it could be avoided. However, he was also opposed to communist insurgents, having strong backing from Cuban Americans in Florida. His strongest interest in Latin America had been trade-related, not security issues. This group was instructed to consider what policy options the president of the United States might adopt, and to consider the recommendations of his advisory groups as well.

The exercise began with each group meeting separately to consider the situation for about 15 minutes. Just as they were beginning to put together some recommendations, I altered the situation by providing them with an unexpected "Crisis Update-Day 2" briefing. This briefing notified the groups that the cities of Medellin and Cartagena had fallen to the FARC and were calling for the resignation of the Colombian president. This new information was provided to simulate a more crisis-like atmosphere in which time becomes critical to decision making and affects the entire process.

After 10 more minutes of discussion, taking into consideration the updated information, each group was asked to report their recommendations to the U.S.

president. The president was then given a few brief moments to consider this input and to make a “public announcement” as to what action the United States would be taking. The exercise then continued with a Day 3 update and a Day 4 update, final recommendations to the president, and a final U.S. policy pronouncement by the president.

The debriefing after the exercise was focused on the decision-making processes that occurred within each group. As a whole, the class talked about what dynamics they observed within their groups and the various challenges and frustrations they faced in trying to respond to the crisis situation, new information, and uncooperative colleagues. In the relative calm of the debriefing, students were able to consider additional policy options and to discuss more fully the pros and cons of certain options. In assessing the quality of advice given to the president, the students had mixed views about whether they had made good recommendations or could have done better given different circumstances.

### **Evaluation of the Exercises<sup>2</sup>**

Following the debriefing in each exercise, students were given a brief assessment survey to determine to what degree the learning objectives noted above were achieved (see Appendix). Several of the questions specifically focused on the “factual” lessons learned, while others were more open-ended to assess the degree of critical thinking and dynamic interactions that occurred. In assessing the effectiveness of these two exercises, both of them were successful at meeting the general objectives noted in the learning objectives section above. The nature of the role-playing itself provided for an alternative presentation of course materials, with both exercises complementing outside readings and lecture materials. The exercises promoted student interaction with significant discussion among students within their smaller groups, and also with the entire class during the debriefing session. After a brief initial hush, the students were engaged in group discussion throughout the duration of the exercise. Both exercises also promoted student curiosity and creativity. Students had many questions about the context of the crisis or conflict and the different options that might be available to them. They took what information was provided, and then built on that information to design their own creative solutions to the problems presented to them. The final course evaluations indicated that the students enjoyed and remembered the exercise even at the end of the semester. A number of comments indicated that this was their favorite part of the course. Student remarks included: “I enjoyed working in a group to understand the theories more” and “the exercise was very interactive which helps me to gain a better grasp of these concepts.” In addition to achieving these general objectives through role-playing, the exercises were also effective in achieving the specific learning objectives laid out for each lesson.

#### *Peacekeeping*

The learning objectives for this exercise were twofold, with one aspect focused on identification of actors, conflicting interests, and challenging conditions, and the other aspect geared toward creative thinking and problem-solving. With regard to the first aspect, the exercise was quite effective in helping students identify the different actors and their interests. All except two students were able to list all five groups and the different types of activities each of these actors were carrying out in the conflict zone. The debriefing and discussion with the entire class at the end helped the students understand the interests of the other groups. A number of

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<sup>2</sup>Special thanks to the students in my introduction to international relations course for their enthusiastic participation in the exercises and their thoughtful responses to my assessment questions.

students remarked that the military and diplomats seemed to make difficult demands on each other but that they were ultimately interdependent. It was also noted that the issue of neutrality played out differently among the groups, with some attempting neutrality (the diplomats), and others taking clear positions against those combatants who were violating human rights norms (the human rights NGO).

Students were also able to clearly identify a variety of challenges that actual peacekeepers face in their operations. They noted the problem of implementation: “identifying goals is pretty easy, but figuring out how to achieve them is more difficult.” They recognized that reality is far more complicated than the exercise; coordination and cooperation between groups is a significant hurdle to overcome. The need for financial and logistical resources, as well as the life-threatening environment and the challenge of time constraints were also identified as significant problems faced by peacekeepers. Additional comments by the students about what they learned from the exercise included: the challenge of dealing with multiple actors in the conflict (especially for the diplomats), developing long-term goals that are beneficial to all parties, the *process* that groups go through to achieve their goals and mandates, the length of the process, the need for a clear mandate, and the importance of the military for a variety of tasks (protecting NGOs, establishing safe havens, and so on). Overall, students found the exercise very helpful to them for understanding the dynamics of peacekeeping and the variety of actors involved, with five students rating it a 5 (on a five-point scale), nine students rating it a 4, and two ranking it as a 3, with none giving it a 2 or 1.

The exercise was also successful in stimulating the creativity of the students. Each group came up with some good strategies for achieving their specified mandates given the limitations and challenging conditions that they faced. For example, the NGO charged with providing refugee relief determined that it would be important to separate the different factions and make sure they were disarmed when they arrived in the refugee camps. In addition, they thought it would be a good idea to provide some education to the children because they would not be attending schools otherwise. Perhaps, they argued, the children would have a better chance for a more stable future if they were literate.

#### *Foreign Policy Decision Making*

Two of the three specific learning objectives for this exercise were achieved based on the students’ responses to the assessment at the end of the scenario. Students clearly recognized the time constraints and challenges decision makers face. Their responses to the question concerning the impact of a crisis on foreign policy decision making indicated that they felt considerable pressure to act quickly. It was difficult to make well-considered decisions which resulted in “satisficing” rather than “fully rational” behavior, and they noted that the government may be driven to act because of public pressure. In addition, students believed that the challenges they faced in the exercise closely mirrored the challenges of real policymakers. They remarked that everyone had different interests which made compromise difficult, that everyone had different information that was needed to make informed decisions, that original goals tended to get lost in the process, and that the policymakers faced very tough decisions in considering risking U.S. lives and gaining international support for the actions to be taken.

Students were also engaged analytically and creatively in determining their policy options as decision makers in a crisis situation. Some struggled to take on the roles they were given, while others did not find this aspect of the exercise problematic. Those who stepped into their roles without difficulty noted that it was easy because they did not have to formulate or defend their own personal recommendations. They liked to voice their position in the group and listen to the

positions of others. Those students who had more difficulty taking on a different identity felt constrained by their lack of knowledge of the issue, and their weak position within the group (specifically those representing the Commerce Department when discussing military options). Some of the lessons that they claimed to have learned from the simulation included: how difficult and complex policy-making is, how important information is to making good decisions, how difficult it is to achieve consensus, how much advice the president gets, and how difficult it is to “think outside the box.”

The one lesson that did not come across clearly was the presentation of different models of decision making. Students were able to accurately identify the model their group was operating under, but only two students accurately identified the models the other groups were using. Seven were able to name one of the other groups, but ten did not identify either of the other groups correctly. This is most likely due to an oversight in the introduction and debriefing by the instructor. It was not explicitly mentioned which group was operating under which model (the instructor assumed this would be obvious based on the text readings, but clearly not everyone had done their readings in advance). This problem should be easily corrected in the future by clearly identifying the model that each group is operating by prior to and after the exercise itself. Despite this set back, a number of students presented good arguments in discussing which model they thought best represented the actual foreign policymaking process. The majority argued that the bureaucratic politics model most accurately described the process because of the “pluralistic nature” of our society and government. It allows a variety of views to be presented to find the best solution. The minority who supported the rational-actor model made a similar argument, noting the importance of discussing all options as being the most logical process.

One additional problem that was noted was that the Senate committee attempting to operate by rational-choice guidelines did not even come close to actually doing so. Part of this was due to the severe time constraints imposed by the crisis situation, in essence replicating a more bounded rationality model. Part of the problem, however, was also due to the committee being too large (ten students). An option to correct this problem in the future could be to make the rational actor group smaller by creating a Senate *and* a House committee. Less time would be taken up with five instead of ten students trying to give their input on each policy option presented and weighing the costs of benefits of each proposal. Even though the rational choice group did not function as smoothly as anticipated, the students still found the exercise quite helpful for understanding the dynamics of foreign policy decision making, with eight students rating the exercise a 5, eight students rating it a 4, three giving it a 3, and none giving it a 2 or 1 (on a five-point scale).

### **Conclusions**

As IR instructors face the challenge of conveying the events and dynamics of a complex world to their students today, they have a growing array of active-learning techniques to draw upon. The use of role-play scenarios is just one of these techniques that works well to effectively supplement the traditional lecture format. As Hertel and Millis (2002) note, learning happens when students are motivated, when they are actively involved in the process instead of being passive observers. In my peacekeeping and foreign policymaking exercises, the students expressed excitement and enthusiasm about the exercises, as well as demonstrated a clear grasp of the established learning objectives. Being actively involved did make a difference in their learning. These exercises helped the students apply more abstract concepts to real-life situations. Halpern (1994:3) notes what a critical task this is: “We need to prepare students to become global citizens, which requires a curriculum that reflects worldwide contributions to knowledge and that applies

knowledge to worldwide situations.” The use of role-play scenarios in the IR classroom serves as an effective tool to promote student interaction and input, curiosity and creativity, and learning and retention of materials by just having fun.

### **Appendix: Foreign Policy Decision Making**

#### *Crisis Situation: Overview\**

The forty-year civil war in Colombia has become more and more violent in recent weeks, with over 5,000 peasant refugees crossing the borders into neighboring Venezuela and Ecuador. There are regular reports of human rights violations by the Marxist guerilla group (FARC) as well as by paramilitary groups (i.e., anti-guerilla armed civilians) supported by the Colombian government. Both Venezuela and Ecuador have requested financial assistance from the United States and the international community to care for the refugees.

Colombian President Andres Perez has expressed an urgent need for more U.S. material aid, including military helicopters and weapons.

Manuel Rodriguez, the leader of the FARC, has made a variety of inconsistent statements including his desire to overthrow the Colombian government, his aspiration to serve in the government, his wish to include members of FARC in a ruling coalition, and his willingness to negotiate a ceasefire and final settlement with the government.

The value of the Colombian peso has been steadily dropping for two months and shows little chance of stabilizing. International investors are beginning to withdraw their money from the country.

#### *Day 2: Crisis Situation Update*

The FARC guerrillas have taken the key cities of Medellin and Cartagena. They appear to have some support among the Colombian peasants, but not as much support from urban residents. The FARC has called for the resignation of President Perez, but it is uncertain what its current military objectives are.

Refugees continue to flee the cities for the countryside and for safety across the border. Some have experienced or witnessed atrocities committed by the rebel forces.

Foreign investors are selling off Colombian stocks quickly and taking their capital to safer markets.

#### *Day 4: Crisis Situation Update*

The Colombian military has been able to drive and confine the FARC into several suburbs of Medellin and Cartagena, but the rebels have refused to surrender and continue to demand President Perez's resignation. The counter attack by the Colombian military, however, has led to significant casualties among the army forces. It is apparent that the FARC has been secretly rearming. There are indications that some of their weapons were supplied by groups linked to Al Qaeda.

The Colombian government has announced that it is about to default on its foreign loans and needs U.S. support in the IMF to secure emergency loans. Its current foreign public debt is \$30 billion and it is requesting an additional \$20 billion in emergency funds.

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\*Note that although there are a number of similarities between the Crisis Situation and current Colombian politics, the simulation is fictional and structured to promote greater understanding of foreign policy decision making models.

*Day 6: Crisis Situation Update*

President Perez has been assassinated. The rules of succession are unclear in the Colombian Constitution and no clear leader has emerged from the top leadership yet.

The FARC guerrillas have rallied and marched on the capital city of Bogota. Several top government officials have demanded immediate U.S. military assistance to keep the capital from falling to the rebels. The FARC leader has declared that any military force (Colombian or foreign) that opposes the rebels is an enemy of the people and a legitimate target.

Diplomats in the United Nations and the Organization of American States are meeting to consider resolutions addressing the crisis, and are requesting member states to provide immediate humanitarian assistance as they are able.

**Role:** You are members of the *Senate Latin American Committee*, a subcommittee of the Foreign Relation Committee. It is your job to write and review all Senate legislation on foreign policy issues relating to Latin America. The President also seeks your input and expertise as he formulates U.S. policies toward the region.

Decision-Making Guidelines:

You are motivated to make the best decisions that you can based on as much information as possible. One question that regularly drives your decision making is what impact the issue at hand has on American security. You are not inclined to give priority to issues that have little impact on U.S. security interests. You are very systematic in the way you make policy, taking each of the following steps in turn:

1. Problem Recognition and Definition. You objectively define the characteristics of the problem to be addressed. You gather all the relevant data/information concerning the problem.
2. Goal Selection. You determine specifically what you want to accomplish, and then rank / prioritize all of your goals.
3. Identification of Alternatives. You must identify all policy options and weigh the costs and benefits of each.

Follow these steps above as you consider the problems in Colombia.

Once you have used these decision-making guidelines to consider various policy options, determine your recommendations to the president about what should be done in Colombia.

**Role:** You are a top level official in the *State Department* meeting with other top officials from different departments to advise the president on the situation in Colombia.

Decision-Making Guidelines:

The president has emphasized that he wants a single consensual policy recommendation from the group so that the U.S. can present a united front in the face of this crisis. You must thus work to persuade the members from other departments to see reason and adopt your diplomatic proposals before taking rash military action.

As a professional diplomat, you believe that there is a possibility for a peaceful negotiated settlement to the conflict. You would like the United States to call for UN or OAS action to pressure the parties to adopt a cease-fire. You believe there are a number of common goals that both sides share if they can be forced to sit down at a negotiating table and discuss them instead of shooting at each other and seizing territory.

If the UN is unable to take effective action, you believe there are professional negotiators within the State Department who can bring the parties together and try to work out some kind of power sharing arrangement, or general amnesty.

In addition to your concern about reaching a negotiated settlement, you are also quite concerned that the United States address the refugee problem stemming from the high levels of violence in Colombia. Any policy recommendation should include some provisions to help these poor people.

Discuss the circumstances and policy options with your colleagues and determine what policy recommendation you would make to the president. What options ought to be given top priority?

**Role:** You are a top level official in the *Defense Department*, meeting with other top officials from different departments to advise the president on the situation in Colombia.

Decision-Making Guidelines:

The president has emphasized that he wants a single consensual policy recommendation from the group so that the U.S. can present a united front in the face of this crisis. You must thus work to persuade the members from other departments to see reason and adopt your strategic military proposals in order to protect U.S. military personnel and avoid setting dangerous precedents.

You are in favor of providing additional military hardware to the Colombian government just as the United States has for over a decade. You are reluctant, however, to commit U.S. troops to the counter-insurgency movement. The United States has been involved only in limited counter-narcotics operations in the past because of the extremely volatile political conditions and hazardous terrain in Colombia.

You recall the strong public backlash in 1992 when U.S. marines were killed in Somalia and do not believe there is enough public support for a sustained U.S. intervention in Colombia. You are also aware that many of the high-tech weapons used by U.S. forces are not ideal for the jungle warfare found in Colombia.

Discuss the circumstances and policy options with your colleagues and determine what policy recommendation you would make to the president. What options ought to be given top priority?

**Role:** You are a top level official in the *CIA*, meeting with other top officials from different departments to advise the president on the situation in Colombia.

Decision-Making Guidelines:

The president has emphasized that he wants a single consensual policy recommendation from the group so that the United States can present a united front in the face of this crisis. You must thus work to persuade the members from other departments to see reason and adopt a proposal for immediate action to prevent another attack on the United States.

[TOP SECRET] Due to the sensitive nature of intelligence gathering and the risk to operatives in Colombia, your agency is currently unwilling to reveal that they briefly located Osama Bin Laden in Colombia two weeks ago. The Agency lost track of him suddenly and has been unable to determine his whereabouts since that time.

It is your belief you, the United States, must take an immediate, strong military stance in the country to prevent attacks on the U.S. or greater regional instability in Latin America that threatens U.S. interests. The United States has a great deal at stake in Colombia despite its lack of attention to the conflict in the past.

When your intelligence concerning Al Qaeda becomes public knowledge, you may have an easier time convincing the public and other government agencies that swift, harsh action is necessary.

Discuss the circumstances and policy options with your colleagues and determine what policy recommendation you would make to the president. What options ought to be given top priority?

**Role:** You are a top level official in the *Commerce Department*, meeting with other top officials from different departments to advise the president on the situation in Colombia. You do not usually advise the president on security issues, but since the United States has considerable trade interests in Colombia and the Latin American region, you have been asked to contribute to the discussion.

Decision-Making Guidelines:

The president has emphasized that he wants a single consensual policy recommendation from the group so that the United States can present a united front in the face of this crisis. You must thus work with the other group members to determine what policy recommendation would best serve U.S. interests.

Your area of expertise is trade and economics. You recognize the dangerous nature of the economic decline in Colombia and the risk it poses to other countries in the region. A regional economic downturn would also strongly affect the U.S. economy. Also, U.S. energy interests are at risk given the oil exports from Ecuador and Venezuela that are shipped to the United States.

You understand that political stability and economic stability are closely linked and would like to provide support for the Colombian government in order to strengthen its economy.

Discuss the circumstances and policy options with your colleagues and determine what policy recommendation you would make to the president. What options ought to be given top priority?

**Role:** You are a top level official in the *DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency)*, meeting with other top officials from different departments to advise the president on the situation in Colombia. You do not usually advise the president on security issues, but since the United States has been involved in counter-narcotics operations in Colombia for some time, your advice has been requested.

Decision-Making Guidelines:

The president has emphasized that he wants a single consensual policy recommendation from the group so that the United States can present a united front in the face of this crisis. You must thus work with the other group members to determine what policy recommendation would best serve U.S. interests.

The DEA has been working closely with the Colombian government for several years and believes its mission to disrupt the drug trade is very important to strengthening the democratic government and stabilizing relations in the region. The DEA has consistently requested more military hardware for the Colombian officials to help them carry out their anti-narcotics operations (recognizing that these are frequently anti-insurgency operations as well). You believe it is important to support the legitimate democratically elected government in Colombia. You consider the FARC to be simply drug running thugs, not worthy of respect or consideration.

Discuss the circumstances and policy options with your colleagues and determine what policy recommendation you would make to the president. What options ought to be given top priority?

**Role:** You are the President of the United States.

Situation:

You are facing a serious crisis in Colombia and are expected to take on a strong leadership role by the U.S. citizens as well as by the international community. You

have asked for policy recommendations from your top level officials in the State Department, Defense Department, Commerce Department, DEA, and the CIA. You are also working closely with congressional leaders in the Senate Latin American Committee. It is up to you to articulate a clear policy after carefully considering the value of the advice given to you by your top officials and Congress, your feelings about the crisis, and the overall situation.

As your officials meet to discuss the crisis, you also work to come up with some viable policy options of your own, taking into account the following factors:

#### Your Personal Background:

You rose to your current position after serving as a representative and a senator from the state of Florida. Many of your strongest supporters have been Cuban-Americans with strong anti-communist/anti-Castro sentiments. You have also succeeded in appealing to a growing number of Latino voters in Texas and California in your bid for reelection next year.

One of your greatest successes in office has been the negotiation and signing of the Berlin Accords, which has brought stability to the Middle East. The world community acknowledges your diplomatic skills and ability to find nonmilitary solutions to long-standing conflicts. You are personally relieved that you did not have to risk the lives of U.S. military personnel by sending them into the Middle East.

Your administration has not paid a great deal of attention to Latin America, focusing instead on routing out terrorist threats in the Middle East and Asia. The strongest connections to the region have been trade-related as the Latin American economies and markets have grown.

Your officials will report to you periodically during the exercise and you must make the final determination of what policy to pursue. Be prepared to outline a clear set of policies toward Colombia, and then to explain WHY you have decided on that particular course of action. In other words, you must “sell it to voters.” (Your reasoning can be based on logic, personal beliefs, etc.)

### **Foreign Policy Decision Making Role-Play Assessment**

Please take some time to answer each of the following questions carefully. I will use these assessments to determine whether this exercise was useful to the class and should be repeated in the future.

1. What decision making model was your group operating by?
2. What other decision making models were the other groups operating by?
3. Briefly describe how your group arrived at the policy recommendations/decisions that it did.
4. What differences did you note in the way each group reached its policy choice?
5. What challenges did your group face as it struggled to determine what U.S. policy should be in this crisis situation? Do you think this resembles some of the challenges that real policy makers face? Why or why not?
6. Do you think a crisis makes any difference in foreign policy decision making? Why or why not?
7. Based on this exercise, which model of decision making do you believe most accurately describes the foreign policy process today? Why?
8. Was it difficult for you to step into and play the role you were given? Why or why not?
9. What did you learn about foreign policy decision making from this simulation?

10. Was this exercise helpful to you for understanding the dynamics of foreign policy decision making and the different models that describe it?

Rank your answer on a scale of 1 to 5:

Not at all helpful	Very helpful
1   2   3   4	5

Additional Comments/Suggestions:

### **Peacekeeping Role Play**

**Background of the Conflict:**

The end of the Cold War removed the stabilizing forces that had been in place in the country of Zodora since its independence in 1960. As the two world superpowers (the United States and the Soviet Union) showed a decreasing interest in the country, the three ethnic groups that make up Zodora's population began to assert their own political agendas concerning the future of the state. The two largest groups, the Achoa and Balboans, are closely related to each other and share many common cultural links. They are divided, however, over the issue of political power. When the imperial colonists left Zodora, they placed the Balboan people in charge. The Balboan people ran the country with the support of the U.S. government because of their strong anticommunist stance. Their strong political position gave them many opportunities to enrich their own ethnic group. The Achoa, although they were the most numerous, had little political representation and were often the victims of government persecution. The third ethnic group, the Kikuyus, have fewer cultural similarities to the Achoa or Balboans and thus do not feel strong ties to either of these groups, nor do they identify themselves as "Zodorans." They live in a resource rich area of the country and have separatist aspirations.

The conflict began when the Kikuyu people decided to assert their autonomy and withhold their resources from the rest of the country in order to enrich their own region. The Balboan-led government sent in military troops to restore the flow of resources to the rest of the country and the Kikuyu resisted. As the conflict escalated, the Achoa people initially chose to support the Balboan government and to provide additional troops and supplies. In exchange for this help, they demanded a greater share of political power in the government. When greater power sharing did not materialize, they turned against the Balboan military forces, sabotaging their efforts against the Kikuyu region.

This three-way civil war led to a complete break down in social services (which had been minimal to begin with), increasing refugee flows, and accusations of war crimes and other human rights violations. The intransigence of the three factions resulted in little motivation for the parties to negotiate or reach any kind of settlement. The international community is growing increasingly alarmed as the violence escalates and has decided to send in a multilateral peacekeeping force to restore some semblance of order and to bring about a settlement. Although NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) are not a specific component of this international force, they also have representatives in Zodora carrying out their own missions.

### **Military Peacekeeping Forces**

Your group is part of the command structure of the military peacekeeping forces entering Zodora. The military component is a UN operation, authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII and is comprised of multinational troops. Your forces are drawn from several Western countries and have considerable resources and armaments at their disposal.

**Mission Mandate:**

The military forces comprising the peacekeeping operation have been given three broad tasks:

- (a) to maintain an effective cease-fire as soon as the factions have agreed to one
- (b) to keep the warring forces separate
- (c) to protect civilians from war related violence

**Current Situation:**

The Balboan military has superior numbers and armaments, but has not been able to counter the guerrilla tactics of the Kikuyus effectively. The Balboan commanders recognize the considerable losses they have taken, but believe they can still win the battle against the Kikuyu and subdue the Achoa once the struggle for secession is put down. Several recent battles have taken place within villages and towns in the Kikuyu region as the Balboan forces have attempted to flush out the elusive Kikuyu forces.

- I. Consider what problems your force will face in relation to the warring factions, the civilian population, logistics, and the need to protect your own troops. What rules of operation/ rules of engagement would you establish for your troops? What specific tasks would your forces engage in to carry out the mandate?
- II. What resources do you need in order to best carry out your mission?
- III. What would you ask for from the other components (diplomatic and NGOs) to help you in fulfilling your mission?

**Diplomatic Mission**

Your group is composed of members of the diplomatic team attempting to resolve the conflict in Zodora. Your chief negotiator is from a Western country that is viewed as largely neutral to the conflict. The diplomats have the moral backing of the U.S. as well as many other European countries that want to end the violence and establish a stable, democratic government as quickly as possible.

**Mission Mandate:**

The diplomats who make up the peacekeeping operation have been given a series of difficult tasks to accomplish in order to restore order in Zodora:

- (a) negotiate a cease-fire
- (b) negotiate a withdrawal of military forces
- (c) arrange for the provisions of an interim government
- (d) clarify positions of the factions for a more conclusive/long-term settlement

**Current Situation:**

The Balboan military has inflicted considerable damage on the Kikuyu military forces, but the Kikuyu show little willingness to end the conflict. The Kikuyu have adopted guerrilla tactics and have occasionally attacked Balboan villages on the border. There have been reports of atrocities during these attacks. The Achoa are the most weary of the consequences of the civil war, facing shortages of basic supplies and services, but they have little trust for the Balboans since they failed to share political power after agreeing to it early in the conflict.

- I. Consider what problems your team will face in dealing with the warring factions, the civilian populations, and the other peacekeeping components.

What guidelines would you establish in order to carry out your mission? Specifically, what tasks would your team engage in to carry out its mandate?

- II. What resources or conditions do you need in order to best carry out your mission?
- III. What would you ask for from the other components (military forces and NGOs) to help you in fulfilling your mission?

### **NGO Mission: Provision of Aid**

Your group is a member of an NGO. They are in Zodora trying to provide aid to the civilian population throughout the country. Most of your field teams are in the Kikuyu region where the deprivations are the worst.

Mission Mandate:

The members of your team have been given a two main tasks to accomplish to provide relief in Zodora:

- (a) provide food for civilians faced with insufficient supplies
- (b) provide medical supplies for civilians injured by the fighting

Current Situation:

There is active fighting in the border region between Kikuyu guerrilla forces and the Balboan military. There have been reports of atrocities committed by the Kikuyu forces on Balboan civilians. There are also dwindling resources in the Achoa region although the fighting there is minimal. There are a number of other NGOs in the field with mandates similar to your own.

- I. Given the risky environment and the need to protect your own people, what rules of operation would you establish in order to carry out your mission? What tasks would your team engage in to carry out its mandate?
- II. What resources do you need in order to best carry out your mission?
- III. What would you ask for from the other components (diplomatic and military forces) to help you in fulfilling your mission?

### **NGO Mission: Refugee Relief**

Your group is a member of a private NGO. They are in the two countries bordering Zodora trying to protect and provide aid for the refugees being displaced by the war in Zodora. You are also working closely with the UNHCR (UN High Commission for Refugees).

Mission Mandate:

The members of your team have been given a two main tasks to accomplish to provide relief to refugees:

- (a) provide food and shelter for the refugees
- (b) provide a safe haven for those seeking protection from the violence of the war

Current Situation:

There is active fighting in the border region between Kikuyu guerrilla forces and the Balboan military. There have been reports of atrocities committed by the

Kikuyu forces on Balboan civilians. Kikuyu refugees have been leaving the Kikuyu region steadily since the fighting intensified two months ago. They show little desire to return to Zodora in the near future, fearing further violence. There has also been a growing number of Balboan refugees fleeing from guerilla attacks on their villages.

- I. Given the risky environment and the need to protect your own people, what rules of operation would you establish in order to carry out your mission? And what tasks would your team engage in to carry out its mandate?
- II. What resources do you need in order to best carry out your mission?
- III. What would you ask for from the other components (diplomatic and military forces) to help you in fulfilling your mission?

### **NGO Mission: Human Rights Protection**

Your group is a member of a private NGO, Human Rights Watch International. Your organization's founding principle is to protect human rights around the world, especially in conflict zones.

#### Mission Mandate:

The members of your team have been given two main tasks to accomplish in order to protect human rights in the country of Zodora:

- (a) monitor and record human rights abuses as they occur
- (b) report/publicize these abuses in order to improve international awareness of the problems and to put pressure on the guilty parties to stop

#### Current Situation:

There is active fighting in the border region between Kikuyu guerrilla forces and the Balboan military. There have been reports of atrocities committed by the Kikuyu forces on Balboan civilians (kidnappings, chopping off hands or ears to induce fear, burning of houses). Similarly, Kikuyu villagers report that the Balboan military has brutalized their population to force political submission on the region (rape, execution of village leaders). Consequently, there has been a growing number of Balboan and Kikuyu refugees fleeing from the fighting to neighboring countries.

- I. Given the risky environment and the need to protect your own people, what rules of operation would you establish in order to carry out your mission?
- II. And what specific tasks would your team engage in to carry out its mandate?
- III. What resources would you need in order to best carry out your mission?

### **Peacekeeping Role-Play Assessment**

Please take some time to answer each of the following questions carefully. I will use these assessments to determine whether this exercise was useful to the class and should be repeated in the future.

1. List the different actors involved in peacekeeping activities and their specific interests.
2. Describe any conflicting goals these actors have.
3. Did you have trouble translating your mission mandate into specific plans of action to achieve your goals? Do you think real peacekeepers face similar difficulties?
4. What additional challenges do you think peacekeepers face in real conflict situations?
5. How would you characterize the interactions among the different actors involved in peacekeeping?
6. What did you learn about peacekeeping from this exercise?
7. Was this exercise helpful to you for understanding the dynamics of peacekeeping and the variety of actors involved? (1–5)

5 = very helpful, 1 = not helpful at all

Additional comments/suggestions:

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