



# Classroom Simulation of War-to-Peace Transitions

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# The Course

- POLI 450/650: a 13 week undergraduate/graduate course on peacebuilding
  - conflict analysis and prevention
  - insurgency and COIN
  - peace and stabilization operations
  - negotiation and mediation
  - coordination
  - humanitarian relief, refugees
  - DDR, CIVPOL and SSR
  - ERW (mines, UXO)
  - power-sharing, transitional elections
  - human rights, war crime prosecutions, amnesties
  - development and reconstruction
  - gender

# The Challenge

- textbooks, readings, “best practices” don’t adequately explain many of the practical challenges of peace and stabilization operations:
  - the intense politicization of... everything
  - the “fog of peacebuilding”
  - signal/noise analytical challenges
  - difficulties of coordination
  - stove-piping, bureaucratic and institutional politics
  - complex trade-offs and ethical dilemmas
  - second- and third-order effects
  - the impact of leadership



# The Simulation

- late March (week 11 of 13 week course)
- 100 students + 25 in secondary roles
- 7 days, 8-12 hours a day
  - 1 day = 1 month, 1 hour = 1 day
  - combines aspects of turn-based and real-time simulation
- *free kriegsspiel*
  - political/military players given briefings, resources, free to order any realistic actions
  - aid actors more constrained by budgets
  - algorithm used to determine humanitarian conditions
- interaction mechanisms left open to students
  - face-to-face, email, phone, VoIP/webcam/IM, video, podcasts
  - listserv news service, GNN, daily “New York Times”



# The Setting



# The Setting

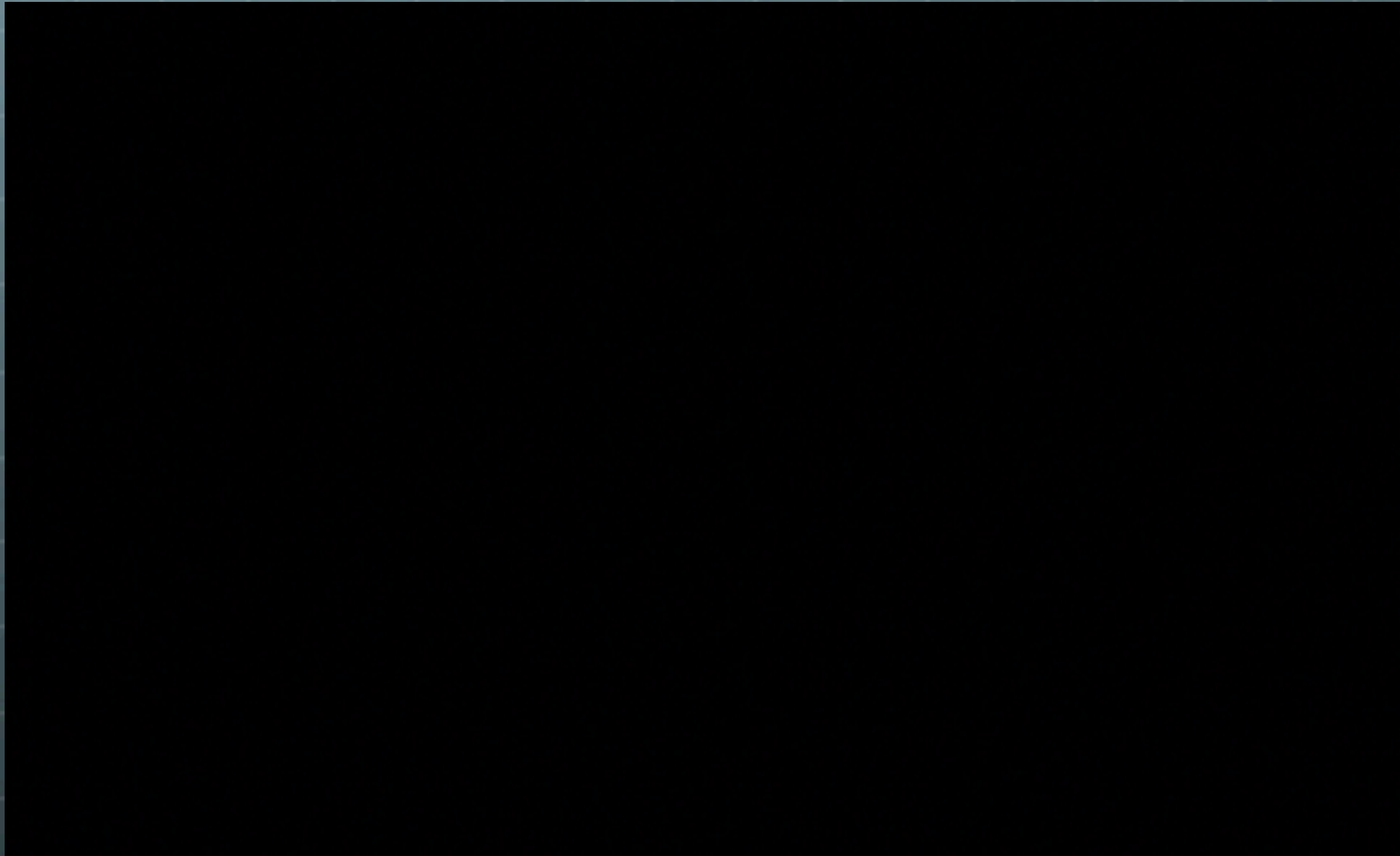
- ethnic tensions, conflict resources
- humanitarian crisis
- human rights issues, peace vs justice dilemmas
- refugees (and militarized refugees)
- constitutional negotiations
- corruption
- meddling regional neighbours
- shaky ceasefire in place—can the international community turn it into a lasting peace agreement?

# Actors

- government (various portfolios, pro-government militia, pro-government radio station)
- rebels (resource warlords, ethnic rebels, spoilers)
- local civil society (trade union, local human rights group, independent radio station)
- regional states
- international community (MFA, MoD, aid)
- United Nations (SRSG, DPKO, DPA, OCHA, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, OHCHR), World Bank
- international NGOs (HRW, MSF, Oxfam, ICG)
- international press (journalism class at Concordia University)
- private donors (POLI 227)



# Actors



# Background Materials

- “CIA World Factbook” entries
- media articles
- blogs
- videos
- music
- other materials (much of it student-generated)
- role briefings
- *oral tradition?*

Brynanianet

http://brynanianet.mcgill.ca/

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Simulation Rules



**Brynanianet**  
Peacebuilding Simulation

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<Information Centre>

**CIA World Factbook** (2011 edition)

Equatorial Cyberspace (*regional overview*)

- Organization of Cyberian Nations (Charter)
- Cyberian Currencies
- Flags of Cyberia

**Brynanianet**

- Map of Brynanianet (relief) (1:4M)
- Map of Brynanianet (rebel areas) (1:4M)
- Map of Brynanianet (administrative) (1:4M)

**Concordia**

- Icasia
- Ruritania
- Udem
- Uqamistan

**Government (and Insurgent) Websites**

- Constitution of Brynanianet (.doc)
- Eastern Icasian Freedom Movement (EIFM): video communique #1
- Eastern Icasian Freedom Movement (EIFM): video communique #2
- Ruritania
- Popular Front for the Liberation of Zaharia (PFLZ)—historic site
- Popular Front for the Liberation of Zaharia (PFLZ)—updated site
- Zaharian People's Front (ZPF)

**International Organizations**

- OCHA: Brynanianet Humanitarian Situation (February 2011)
- UNDP: Human Development Report (2009)
- UN DPA: Tips for Writing UN Resolutions (PDF file)
- UN DPA: Sample Template for UN Peacekeeping Resolution (.doc file)

**Non-Governmental Organizations**

- Oxfam
- Human Rights Watch
- Public and International Law Policy Group: Peace Agreement Drafter's Handbook (actual website)
- International Federation for Electoral Systems (actual website)

**Business Sectors**

- DiaCo

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**Media**

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<Media Section>

**Current News**

**Global News Network**

- All the latest news, sports, and weather from across Cyberia, and around the world...

**BBC News**

- Brynanianet Approaches Ceasefire Agreement (16 March 2006)
- Zaharian Refugees View Peace Deal (16 March 2007) (.wmv file)

**CNN Interactive**

- Special Report: The Crisis in Brynanianet (5 February 2011)

**New York Times**

- 1 April 2011
- 1 May 2011
- 1 June 2011
- 1 July 2011
- 1 August 2011
- 1 September 2010
- 1 October 2011

**The Independent**

**Radio Unity**

**Radio Democracy**

**Archived News Stories**

**The Economist**

- What a tangled web we weave *Economist Staff*, (December 2002)
- Beefing up the Competition: Brynanianet's Farming Potential *Economist Staff*, (April 2000)
- Seeds of Destruction - *Michael Boag* (2 March 2001)

**New York Times: reports, opeds and letters**

**Op-Ed (December 2002)**

**Radio Democracy - Brynanianet's Last Free Voice**

- Equatorial Cafe: "The Displaced People of Brynanianet" (9 March 2003)
- Peace Today Youth Campaign: "Radio Play" (14 July 2004)

**Radio Unity - The Voice of the GoB**

- Special Report: "Bm Refugees: Without Homes, but not Without Hopes" (10 March 2003)
- Video Report: "The Day They Failed to Kill the Voice of Freedom" (16 May 2006)

**The Wall Street Journal**

- Cyberian Edition - Archives - "Ruritania: Is DXEneroia a Magic Word?" (11 February 1995)



# The New York Times

1 May 2011

Cyberian Edition



Above: FPA, GoB soldiers exchange handshakes

## Shuffling the Deck

Agreements with Rebel Groups Could Transform Brynania

Hamrville (Reuters) 1 May 2011. With remarkable political energy, the Brynanian government of Majd Al Khalidi seems to be on the verge of not one but two momentous political agreements.

The first, more highly publicized of these is a possible temporary ceasefire agreement with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Zahara, which would see the establishment of a UN-facilitated demilitarized zone around Megildishu and the opening of both the port and rebel-controlled areas to humanitarian relief supplies. Such a step would be a bitter pill for many Zaharian guerillas, who have fought hard to capture the city for years. However, widespread famine in Zaharian regions is thought to have made them desperate for aid. The UN Security Council met throughout late April in an effort to craft a resolution that would authorize the deployment of unarmed observers to monitor the deal. In the meantime, France unilaterally deployed a frigate and a supply ship to enforce humanitarian access, apparently angering the Zaharians who saw it as a threatening and partisan move.

Yet for all the attention in New York to a temporary GoB-PFLZ deal, the real story may be in the north of the country where government and FPA negotiators seem close to agreement on an agreement that would see the northern warlords rejoin the government. If such reports are true, this could dramatically strengthen the position of the Al Khalidi government, politically, militarily and financially.

## Zahra al-Zahra Under House Arrest

Hamrville (AFP) 1 May 2011. Famed Brynanian poet and human rights activist Zahra al-Zahra, who undertook a "hunger strike for peace" from her cell in Hamrville Central Prison last month, has been released from hospital and placed under house arrest in an isolated and well-guarded location in the capital.

While al-Zahra was not permitted to speak to reporters (or anyone else), she was able to smuggle out a message to her supporters, telling them "The donkeys of the north bray for glitter, the children of the Simsim die like litter.. with dark design, the spider waits.. and the zebras echo their whispers of glacial sadness."



Above: Zahra al-Zahra under house arrest

## Inside Today's New York Times:

- Ruritania's new get-tough refugee policy.
- Crime sky-rockets as Icasian economy continues to spiral downwards.
- Concordia in defense negotiations with US and UK.
- GNN-Radio Unity feud gets nasty

# The New York Times

1 October 2011

Cyberian Edition



Above: UNOB forces on patrol outside Megildishu

## Headed to Where?

UN Scrambles to Save Peace Deal in Brynania

Hamrville (AFP) 1 October 2011. It was indeed a remarkable sight last month: President Majd al-Khalidi and Zaharian nationalist leader Maryanne Mutch together signing a peace deal to end decades of ethnic strife in Brynania. The agreement represented an expanded and more detailed version of an earlier deal that had fallen through in August, with additional provisions regarding demilitarization, revenue sharing, and the timetable for implementation. Additional UNOB forces arrived in Megildishu, preparing to assist in implementation.

While there seemed to be widespread acceptance among Zaharians for the regional autonomy provisions of the peace agreement, its failure to address the issue of Zaharian prisoners held in Brynanian detention camps #7 and #9 soon emerged as a lightning rod for rejectionists. While the fiery Zaharian People's Front condemning the PFLZ for failing to protect Zaharian rights, student protesters in Zahrville occupied that city's Liberation Square demanding a prisoner release.

The UN and much of the international community replied that the deal made it possible to address the prisoner issue, and began steps to repatriate detainees back to Zaharian territory. The matter, however, continued to snowball. A report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted the extent of abuse at the camps. The Brynanian trade unionists launched a series of national demonstrations over the issue. The ZPF raised the stakes further, kidnapping a German official and demanding the freedom of the detainees as a condition for his release. President al-Khalidi announced that his defence minister, General Po Sun, had been arrested for complicity in the detentions. But the wily minister escaped, and promptly began leaking a series of emails that appeared to link the President to a cover-up. Reliable sources report that even before the leaks, the UK and US had already decided to take the issue before the United Nations Security Council later this month.

## Germany Appeals for Release of Aid Official



Berlin (DPA) 1 October 2011. German officials have appealed to Zaharian guerillas to release Karma Vivan, a senior official with the publicly-owned technical cooperation enterprise GIZ.

Vivan was abducted during a meeting with the radical Zaharian People's Front in Zahrville. It has not been explained yet why he was meeting with the ZPF, but friends and colleagues said that it was probably about a pipeline. "Karma loves pipelines," said one former coworker. "He used to decorate his office with little models of them. That's probably what led him to meet with an armed, radical nationalist group deep in guerilla-held territory."

## Inside Today's New York Times:

- ☒ EIFM: In or out of a peace deal?
- ☒ Market analysis: Icasian investments quite a steal!
- ☒ Preparing Simsim for the holidays
- ☒ EU requests new name for EUROBS observer team

# Outcomes

- The simulation has been run (with generally similar starting conditions) since 1998, with a range of outcomes:
  - failed UN mission, ceasefire collapses (1)
  - massive ethnic cleansing provokes “coalition of the willing” R2P mission (1)
  - spill-over effects of conflict tip neighbouring Icasia into state collapse (1)
  - limited or partial negotiations amid uncertain ceasefire (2)
  - EU mediation, successful political negotiations (1)
  - UN PKO, successful constitutional negotiations or transitional elections (3)
  - UN PKO, referendum on Zaharian independence (1)
  - no UN PKO, successful power-sharing negotiations (1)
  - military junta undertakes substantial political reforms, wins elections (1)

# Outcomes

- The simulation has been run (with generally similar starting conditions) since 1998, with a range of outcomes:
  - failed UN mission, ceasefire collapses (Angola 1992)
  - massive human rights abuses provokes “coalition of the willing” R2P mission (Kosovo 1999, Libya 2011)
  - spill-over effects of conflict tip neighbouring Icasia into state collapse (Zaire 1996)
  - limited or partial negotiations amid uncertain ceasefire (Zaire 1996)
  - EU mediation, successful political negotiations (Albania 1997)
  - UN PKO, successful constitutional negotiations or transitional elections (Mozambique 1992-94)
  - UN PKO, referendum on Zaharian independence (Sudan 2011)
  - no UN PKO, successful power-sharing negotiations (Lebanon 1989)
  - military junta undertakes substantial political reforms, wins elections



# Interesting Bits

- semi- realtime dynamic combined elements of both continuous and turn-based simulations
  - time pressures, crisis
  - decision-making delays, distractions
  - coordination issues
  - media coverage
  - immersion
- advantages of a fictional setting in the real world
  - engineered to highlight multiple issues
- advantages and disadvantages of free kriegsspiel
  - demands on simulation controller
  - not all students equally comfortable
  - shift from macro to micro-perspectives

# Interesting Bits

- role of realism
  - playing at starvation, ethnic cleansing, mass killing?
  - student sensitivities?
- student engagement
  - grades?
  - humour?
  - peer pressure?
- the “oral tradition”
  - cheating?
  - immersive effects
- using ringers
  - Icasia, dummy NGO

# Interesting Bits

- interaction and technology
  - student initiative and innovation
- critical importance of post-sim debrief
  - from “the hand of God” to “oops, that was us?”
  - process-tracing (simulated) history
  - breaking out of (and recognizing) the silos
  - baselines comparisons with past sims
  - unpacking simulation process (and artifacts) as subject matter for class discussion



# Interesting Bits

- **assessment of simulation impact**
  - end of term course evaluations (very positive)
  - end of simulation self-evaluations (very positive)
    - both academic and non-academic skills
  - pre/post simulation self-reported assessment of skills (unclear)
  - post-graduation feedback (positive)
    - sampling bias
  - problems of self-reported evaluation
  - problems of experimental design and simulation evaluation

# Questions?