

Simulation

Overview:

Students are representatives of assigned groups at a constitutional convention in the wake of a peaceful social revolution to oust the previous authoritarian regime. Major western powers have a vested interest in establishing a stable regime because the territory of Gerkhania has been claimed by both Russia and China. Russia and China are interested in creating privileged positions of relationship for trade and access to natural gas. Neither Russia nor China is unwilling to intervene militarily to protect their interests and co-ethnics. The UN and many of citizens of Gerkhanian state want to see a more democratic regime than any regime in recent memory. Further complicating this tenuous situation is the relationship and varying economic positions of the major ethnic groups within the state.

Major considerations of the convention: designing a lasting political system, making decisions about industrial development to grow economy, and deciding on the type and extent of redistribution. Individuals within the convention are expected by their regions and ethnic groups to represent their interests and get a favorable outcome.

Practical considerations:

Seats at the negotiating table will be based on proportional representation. The Ger will have five votes, the Khan will have four, the Yari will have two, the Chinese will have two, and the Izba will have one. Only those who have a seat at the table will be allowed to speak. However, each group will have three support staff who can monitor the 'newswire', gather information and statistics, and provide any other necessary support. The support staff should also be monitoring the D2L chat as this may provide further information. The representative can change from session to session, but only those representing their group at the table will be permitted to speak.

Groups are free to work and strategize with other groups (up to and including drafting proposals). Proposal consideration will follow a simplified version of parliamentary procedure.

Structure:

Class sections will generally proceed according to the following format: review of concepts (3-5 minutes), brief group strategy session (5 minutes), proposals (5-7 minutes), consideration of amendments (10 minutes), and debate and vote(s) (15 minutes).

Proposals will be drafted by the chair and may be presented by representatives. During strategy times, groups may wish to see what other groups are considering in an effort to work together to pass proposals. Proposal presentations will be made by delegates and followed by a brief period of question and answer. Once all proposals have been introduced, there will be a period of debate and voting. Once a proposal is passed by the convention, the group will work to create a finalized version of the outcome. For more information, see the procedure handout.

Assessment:

Students will be evaluated on how well they upheld the interests of the groups they represent. At the end of the simulation, groups should identify the costs of this new arrangement for their ethnic group; any compromises made and the rationale; and any disproportionate benefits for their group.

Description of Gerkhania

Population: 10 million people.

Geography: High mountains covered by dense forests are located in the country's extreme north, rolling hills stretch southward from the mountains to the northern bank of the Ismil River. Flat grasslands exist from the Ismil River southward into Kazakhstan. The Gailan River flows into the Ismil River near Pangai, the capital of Gerkhania. The country's other cities are Aspargita, Silwatta, Tazil, Pangai, Kuzno, Erngut, and Terulen.

Resources: The country's most valuable resource is natural gas. Large natural gas reserves have been located around the city of Kuzno, but exports are limited due to outdated production methods and the lack of a pipeline between the gas fields and export markets abroad. The northern forests contain timber and gold deposits. Construction of a hydroelectric dam along the Gailan River near Pangai has been proposed by international aid agencies. Such a dam could supply most of the country's electricity needs, but would result in displacement of some residents.

History: Gerkhania was an independent state prior to World War I but was incorporated into the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution. The territory of Gerkhania was claimed by all three of its neighbors (Russia, China, and Kazakhstan) after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but a United Nations-sponsored plebiscite established Gerkhania's independence as a sovereign state. Gerkhania has suffered decades of authoritarian dictatorships alternating with periods of political instability, a lack of economic growth, and ethnic conflict. Furthermore, the women of Gerkhania have been traditionally disadvantaged by low levels of education, barriers to political participation, and limited policy representation.

Main ethnic groups and proportion of total population:

Ger: 40 percent. The Gers are nomadic pastoralists related to the Kazakhs who graze herds of horses, goats, and sheep on the country's southern grasslands. Most Ger are Sunni Muslims. Many of the Gers live in relative poverty, particularly in the wake of the political instability of recent years.

Khan: 30 percent. The Khans migrated to the area from Russia in the 17th century A.D.; most Khans live in the central area of Gerkhania west of the Gailan River and are employed in agriculture. Approximately two-thirds of the Khans practice Eastern Orthodox Christianity; the remaining Khan are Sunni Muslims.

Yari: 15 percent. The Yari are the descendants of Persian invaders who conquered the region in the 13th and 14th century A.D. The Yari have traditionally formed a tightly-knit administrative

and military class that has controlled politics in Gerkhania for generations. Most Yari inhabit the Pangai-Aztari corridor between the Gailan and Ismil Rivers. The Yari are Shi'a Muslims.

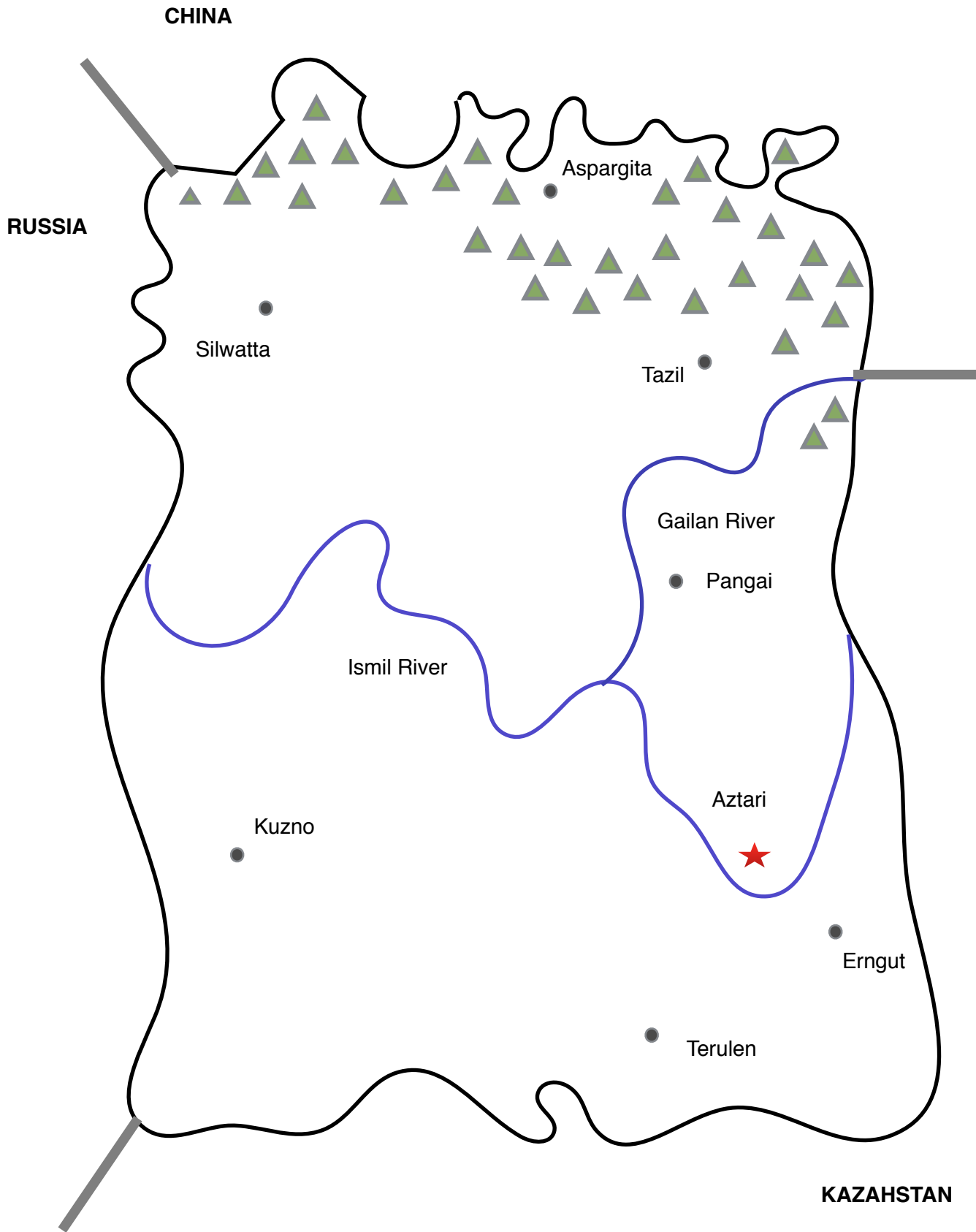
Chinese: 10 percent. Approximately half of Gerkhania's ethnic Chinese are natives who speak both Mandarin and Gerkhanian. The remaining ethnic Chinese are illegal migrants from China. Both groups live in Gerkhania's main cities, where they work as merchants, traders, or moneylenders, or in the northern part of the country, where they engage in (often illegal) gold mining and logging. The ethnic Chinese are interested in amnesty, workers rights, job creation.

Izba: 5 percent. The Izbas are indigenous forest-dwelling inhabitants of the country's northern mountains who practice either animism or Tibetan Buddhism. Few Izbas speak the Gerkhanian language. Izba culture is threatened by gold mining and logging in the Izbas' traditional homeland along the northern border of Gerkhania.

Political Considerations:

- The Yari have ties to the pre-existing infrastructure and authoritarian regimes, including the recently ousted leader and his second in command. The second in command remains incredibly popular and will likely stand for election if so allowed. Much of the military leadership is ethnically Yari and may be willing to fight for their interests if they are too disadvantaged by the new power structure. However, much of the governing experience is held by the Yari.
- The state, in need of resources, is considering external funding offers to develop one of three industries: logging, hydro-electricity, or natural gas extraction. Final development of any industry is dependent on political stability in the state. NGO developers are willing to help develop a single industry so-long as a democratic regime is established, remains stable.
- Developing the natural gas industry would advantage the state greatly in terms of tax revenue, but much of the land and existing industry in that area is owned by Yari resulting from their close ties to government in the past. Developing the natural gas extraction would disadvantage the Ger who use the lands that would need to be developed for their agricultural industry.
- Expanding the logging industry would disadvantage the Izba as their culture and traditional region would be constrained and potentially damaged by developing this region. The logging industry would also disadvantage the ethnic Chinese by undercutting their blackmarket logging industry.
- Developing the hydroelectric dam would displace many citizens, particularly those of Yari decent and the ethnic Chinese living in the city of Pangai. However, this industry would provide immense benefits to the state.

Map of Gerkhania



Cultural Map of Gerkhania

