

GECMUN 8

Background Guide

Historical Crisis Committee

Addressing the 2007 South Korean Hostage Crisis in
Afghanistan

SDG: 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

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Committee Introduction

In the real world, situations emerge that cannot be dealt with in the calm, systematic setting of a regular MUN committee. International crises can erupt at any time, and they must be dealt with promptly to avoid disastrous consequences. To manage such crises, the highest levels of government convene at emergency sessions, where situations are often unexpected and unpredictable, forcing representatives to think quickly and decisively. A crisis committee aims to simulate such conditions.

The crisis committee veers away from the standard procedure seen in General Assembly style sessions, requiring delegates to constantly adapt with fast-paced discussions. In a sense, it allows delegates to immerse themselves in history as it unfolds.

Crisis committees often deal with pressing issues such as wars, revolutions, disaster control, or economic collapse. The rapid updates result in special procedures for the committee. For one, there are no typical draft resolutions in a crisis room. Rather, delegates focus on two primary types of documents. The first of which are directives, most similar to the General Assembly resolution as they both describe a solution to the issue. Then, unique to crisis committees are crisis notes, which drive the flow of the committee. Also, it is uncommon that delegates represent a country, assuming the role of a character, such as an ambassador or particular political figure, instead. Ultimately, it is important for delegates to keep in mind that their goal is to advance the story, to change the world to fit their agenda, and to have fun along the way.

Agenda Introduction

This Crisis Committee is based on the 2007 South Korean hostage crisis in Afghanistan. On the day of July 19th, 2007, a group of South Korean Missionaries entered Afghanistan illegally even after the Afghan government. The local Islamic organization, the Taliban, held the missionaries hostage as they were travelling through the Ganzi Province.

The significance of this issue is that it is a matter of religion. The boundaries between the two religions: Islam and Christianity is extremely important. The missionaries went to Afghanistan to spread Christianity but ignored the presence of the local religious groups. This action alone could be costly as it might ruin the relationship between Taliban (who hold lots of power in Afghanistan) and South Korea.

This hostage crisis is an example of religious groups clashing. This is also the test of whether politicians are willing to step back from their stances and actually solve this religious crisis. If both sides want to push the responsibility to each other, then it would lead up to conflict between the Taliban and South Korea, which would be the worst situation. Keep in mind that the best solution is always ones that would minimize the casualties while establishing terms that either benefit both sides or punish the wrong. However, the latter can not be done without answering one question: is it the South Korean missionaries' fault, or should the Taliban take responsibility for their violent response?

Letter from the Chairs

Dear honorable delegates,

Welcome to the Crisis 4 Committee of GECMUN 8!

I am Audrey Hsieh, and I will be serving as your head chair for Crisis Committee II. I am currently a junior at Taipei American School, where I began my MUN journey in 7th grade and have gained a lot from the experience and the MUN community as a whole since. I believe that MUN can not only help to grow us personally with our communication, diplomacy, and leadership skills, but also allow us to develop a unique perspective on the world, so I hope that through the GECMUN 8 conference, all of us are able to challenge and develop ourselves as individuals, build our MUN community further, and beyond anything, have a memorable experience.

My name is Sophie Lee, and I will be serving as the deputy chair for Crisis Committee II. I am a sophomore at Taipei American School, and I have been participating in MUN since 7th grade as a delegate. This is my fifth crisis conference, so if you have any questions regarding the procedure, you are welcome to email me.

I am Ian Hsu, and I will be serving as the associate chair for Crisis Committee II. I am currently a sophomore at Taipei American school. I participated in MUN as a press team in sixth grade. After that, I continued to be in the MUN community, participating as delegate and chair. This conference would be my third time chairing, so please let me know if there are things that I need to improve on. Besides that, I hope GECMUN 8 will be a memorable experience for all of you.

As this committee will be focusing on a hostage crisis, it will require in-depth research that may at times be difficult. However, the goal of a hostage crisis is to encourage everyone to be creative and think in a different perspective. If this incident were to happen again, how would you make it better? In a crisis committee, teamwork and collaboration are key, so we encourage you to embrace this unique opportunity and bring forward innovative solutions. We are looking forward to seeing all of your ideas!

We understand that a crisis committee may be new to some of you and that we may continue to face unexpected changes in this unpredictable world that we are currently in, so please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions as we are always here to help. Good luck in your preparations. We are beyond excited for this opportunity and are truly looking forward to getting to meet and work with all of you soon!

Best Regards,

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Key Terms

Hostage

A person who is captured or held in order to force another individual, party, or organization, to comply with certain terms and demands. The term typically applies to an individual who is held as security until a certain agreement is carried out. A hostage crisis in an emergent situation where someone or some organization is holding another person or group hostage.

Insurgent

A person that engages in armed resistance to a government and/or its enforcement of the laws. These people are often referred to as rebels who rise in defiance against higher authorities. An insurgent can also be one who acts contrary to the methods or policies of their own party.

Missionary

A person sent on a mission, especially a member of a religious group sent to promote their faith or perform ministries of service. These services may include promoting social equity, providing and advancing health care, and furthering education and economic development. Missionary work often entails living abroad to work with the less fortunate, participating in infrastructure projects and sharing the Gospel.

“War on Terror”

A term used to describe the ongoing multifaceted counterterrorism campaign sparked by the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The now global campaign, initially launched by the United States, has had immense impacts on diplomatic relations worldwide and continues to have lasting consequences on international law, security, and governance.

Neocolonialism

The practice in which great powers use economics, globalization, cultural imperialism, and conditional aid as a means to indirectly maintain or extend its influence over other nations, areas, or people, often forming relationships of dependence, subservience, and/or financial obligation toward the neocolonialist nation. Neocolonialism has its roots in the early 20th century as decolonization began to occur, though differing from prior colonial methods of direct militaristic control or indirect political control.

Zaytun Division

A Republic of Korea army, formed upon request of the United States government, stressing the peace-keeping role of troops and also aiding in other reconstruction related tasks. The division was dispatched in addition to the 600 military medics and engineers that had already been serving in the Middle Eastern region. The Zaytun Division also represented South Korea's contribution to the Iraq War and its cooperation with the United States of America.

Presbyterianism

A denomination, or branch of the Christian Church, that is a part of the Reformed tradition within Protestantism, with its practices and beliefs tracing back to origins in

Scotland. The Presbyterian denomination was first taken to North America, primarily by Scottish immigrants, and later spread across the globe, with roughly 75 million Presbyterians in the world now.

Evangelism

An important part of the Christian faith that is the act of preaching the gospel in order to further spread the teachings of the Church; the spreading of the Christian gospel through public preaching or individual demonstrations of faith. Though interpreted differently across the Christian religion, evangelists are often in leadership positions, preaching to large congregations or serving administrative roles.

Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)

The second largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations, comprised of fifty-seven nations spread over four continents, which aims to safeguard and protect Muslim interests worldwide in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world. The Organization of the Islamic Conference played an important role in furthering talks between the parties of the Afghanistan Hostage Crisis of 2007.

Historical Background

On July 19th, 2007, 23 Korean missionaries of the Saemmul Presbyterian Church traveled to Afghanistan. The missionaries were traveling from Kabul to Kandahar on a bus. The driver of the bus allowed two local men aboard, who started shooting to stop the bus, and the group of missionaries were captured by the Taliban. The Korean government did not recommend traveling to Afghanistan especially when it was at war; however, the missionaries still did.

The history of the Taliban is important for this crisis. The Taliban's formation leads back to the 1980s. Afghanistan was under Soviet occupation from 1979 to 1989, and when the Soviets left in 1989, the country was in chaos. Leaders from different groups tried to seize power, leading to a civil war in 1992. Civilians wanted stability and law, and in 1994, the Taliban started getting public attention. The Taliban took over Kabul, the capital, by September 1996. Most of the members in the Taliban got the influence of conservative religious schools, which affects their goal of what they want to do as the "government" of Afghanistan. When the Taliban seized the capital, they started imposing Islamic law of their own interpretation and defined Afghanistan as an Islamic emirate.

South Korea and Afghanistan had maintained an amicable relationship from the past. Even though they themselves did not have much direct contact with each other, Korea has actively perpetuated friendliness to Afghanistan through supporting the United States when they aided Afghanistan. In 2001, South Korean medics and engineers helped Afghanistan in the past by cooperating with the United States coalition in Afghanistan. However, the coalition itself was made to attack the Taliban which ruled most of Afghanistan since 1996. The United States went through the 911 attack in 2001 and have shown strong hostility since then. Even though the Taliban is not the official government of Afghanistan, it is important to recognize that the Taliban have authority in most parts of the country.

Current State of Affairs

On July 19, 2007, 23 South Korean volunteer aid workers sent as missionaries from the Seoul Saemmul Church were kidnapped as they traveled on a bus from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, to Kandahar, a former Taliban stronghold. The group still remains as captives held hostage. The South Korean government has taken immediate action in trying to find a safe and proper solution to secure the release of the hostages. President Roh Moo-hyun has sent out special envoy Baek Jong Chun to directly aid in negotiation processes alongside the Afghan government. Nonetheless, the hostage crisis has had an impact on Korean citizens, with the media being heavily influential in publicizing the situation.

Negotiations have been far from simple. Pressure continues to build and intensify on all sides as all governments involved seek to find the most effective solution. The South Korean government has expressed that it wishes to adhere to international law to the best of their ability, though placing the safety and release of the captives as their highest priority. The Afghan government has expressed conflicting ideas: wishing for the safety of all hostages but noting the risks of negotiating with the Taliban. Afghanistan officials have conveyed that they are upset by the kidnapping's violation of traditional Afghan values. The United States of America, also actively involved in reaching an agreement with the Taliban, has stood firm in its policy against negotiating with people they regard as terrorists, refusing any direct talks with the Taliban. This has created obstacles for the South Korean government as they continue to make decisions in ongoing talks, though the utmost goal is for the release of all hostages safely and peacefully.

The Taliban has raised demands for a prisoner swap, submitting a list of names to the Afghan and South Korean government. However, believing that their conditions have not been met and that the South Korean have not been conducting their talks in good faith, two male hostages have unfortunately been killed, and the Taliban threatens to take more lives if the South Korean government does not begin to comply. The Taliban has also sought an end in the cooperation between the Afghan and South Korean governments, hoping instead for direct negotiations to take place. Regardless, talks continue to progress as officials hold hope that a resolution to the issue will be reached soon.

Stances of Parties

Amin Farhang

Serving as the Afghan commerce minister, Farhang criticizes the deal with the Taliban. He believes that the South Korean and Afghan governments are being pressured under conditions which will only exacerbate the current situation in Afghanistan, expressing fear that the “decision could become a precedent” that would promote the perpetuation of the Taliban’s behavior, which is unlikely to stop until they have fully attained their aims.

Angela Merkel

The German government is in negotiations under similar circumstances with Rudolf Blechschmidt, a German engineer held hostage under the Taliban along with other Afghans, who were all seized on July 18, a day before the capturing of the 23 South Korean hostages. The kidnappings have been believed to be a strategy to illustrate the Afghan government’s inability to properly protect its people and to pressure foreign governments that are aiding Afghanistan with a military presence. However, though the German hostage has asked for his release to be secured, the German government is not prepared to exchange its soldiers for the release of any hostages.

Baek Jong Chun

As South Korean President Roh’s special envoy, Baek Jong Chun has been sent on behalf of the government to Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, to work alongside the Afghan government towards freeing the 22 surviving aid workers who have been held hostage. Speaking as the chief secretary for security and foreign policy, Baek states that “the organization responsible for the abduction will be held accountable”, and it seems that further talks have discussed the withdrawal of South Korean forces in Afghanistan.

Ban Ki-moon

Ban Ki-moon served as the foreign minister of South Korea from 2004 to 2006, and has occupied the position of the eighth Secretary General of the United Nations since January of 2007. Ban has been actively involved to help obtain the captives’ release. In journalist conversations, there have also been urgent pleas from the hostages themselves to General Secretary Ban Ki Moon for help, hoping that his position in the UN can further push for their release.

George W. Bush

The Bush administration has taken a large and vital part in the negotiation processes in Afghanistan. A delegation of South Korean lawmakers have also made a trip to the United States to hope for their further support in ongoing talks. It is believed by many South Koreans that the United States can be a big help in securing the release of the hostages, with their part also being a big test to the alliance between the U.S and South Korea. So far, the U.S has expressed adamant opposition to conceding to the Taliban’s demands, but talks are still in progress.

Hamid Karzai

As the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai has been deeply involved in talks alongside Korean hostage negotiators and local tribe elders to discuss the next steps in

negotiations, stating outright that the Taliban's kidnapping is a "total contempt of [their] Islamic and Afghan values". Karzai has also met with Bush to address questions around the security of the nation, explaining after their summit meeting at Camp David that "the security situation in Afghanistan over the past two years has definitely deteriorated". The hostage crisis has put lots of pressure on Karzai, raising questions around whether he is capable of maintaining and enforcing the rule of law.

International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross has taken on a large role in the care of the hostages. The head of the Red Cross delegation to Afghanistan, Reto Stocker, notes that its team is on standby for the release of the hostage victims. Beyond direct physical care, the Red Cross has also worked to facilitate negotiations that have been taking place in Ghanzi between both parties.

John Negroponte

John Negroponte, the US Deputy Secretary of State has discussed the ongoing hostage crisis with South Korean foreign minister Song Min-soon in a meeting at an Asian security conference in Manila. Negroponte has assured that the possibility of military operations to free the hostages has been ruled out, with both sides wishing to place safety and peace as top priority. Nonetheless, there have been difficulties in dealing with the crisis, as the U.S keeps up its policy in refusing to negotiate with people they label as terrorists.

Kim Man Bok

Kim Man Bok, as South Korea's national spy chief and spy master, has taken on multiple high level secret missions prior to dealing with the Afghanistan hostage crisis, such as arranging a summit meeting between the two Koreas. This time, his mission in Afghanistan also had him take on a large role. As he later described, his work for efficient and effective negotiations required "speedy decision-making channels", calling for him to "personally command the negotiations from the front line".

Korea National Oil Corporation

The Korea National Oil Corporation is South Korea's national oil and gas company. In 2008, the Korea National Oil Corporation (KNOC) reached an agreement with Iraqi Kurdistan in the Middle East for rights to drill and explore in the area. The South Korean government has continued to seek out various business opportunities in the Middle East, especially since the region accounts for nearly 80 percent of the nation's oil needs. Thus, there seems to be significant material interests behind South Korea's presence and support in the region.

Merajuddin Pattan

With the 23 Christian volunteer aid workers having been abducted from their charter bus while passing through the Ghazni Province, Merajuddin Pattan, as the Ghazni Province governor, has been actively involved in negotiations. He also often takes to the press to give any updates on the progress of the talks. Governor Pattan has also raised possible concerns that members of Islamabad's powerful intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), are behind the crisis, causing some tensions in diplomatic relations.

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

Since taking over the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2003, NATO has taken primarily to aiding the Afghan government in developing effective security across the nation. The force expanded further in 2007, becoming increasingly engaged in fighting the growing insurgency and in helping Afghanistan to rebuild following the crisis and economic devastation. NATO, facing the crisis in Afghanistan, has also decided to begin discussion on forming a possible common policy for dealing with hostage situations.

Provincial Reconstruction Team

First established in Afghanistan in early 2002, the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was introduced by the United States government for purposes of supporting reconstruction efforts in unstable states. Although South Korea rarely deployed troops beyond its borders, hopes for strengthened ties with the US led to the deployment of a group of South Korean medics and engineers to join US-led coalitions in Afghanistan, though this mission faced barriers following the 2007 hostage crisis.

Roh Moo-hyun

Nearing the end of his term as the President of the Republic of Korea, Roh Moo-hyun was faced with an unexpected crisis when 23 South Koreans were taken hostage by the Taliban on their mission in Afghanistan. As he faced immense domestic pressure to secure the release of the hostages, President Roh also feared damaging the nation's credibility if negotiating in ways that did not align with the wishes of allies such as the United States. The crisis immediately brought about tremendous upset from the Korean public, which the Roh government tried to quell through deflecting attention by placing blame on the victims themselves, though only stimulating greater resentment. Ultimately, the crisis meant great political challenges for President Roh as he attempted to deal with not only domestic but also global pressures from all sides.

Romano Prodi

The Italian government, at its head Prime Minister Romano Prodi, faced its own hostage crisis in March of 2007 when an Italian journalist was captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan. The government came under international scrutiny over its decision to free five Taliban prisoners in exchange for the release of the Italian hostage. Nonetheless, Prodi and his government stand by their actions, with the Prodi office releasing a statement asserting that their negotiations were "conducted in a correct way", with their priority being "saving human lives".

SCG International Risk

SCG International Risk is a private military contractor and security firm that provides governments and private sectors with security, logistics, and training services. SCG International Risk was able to take a vital part in aiding South Korea in the hostage crisis. Ransom experts from the organization worked to advise South Korean officials in ways to properly manage and resolve the crisis.

Seoul Saemmul Church

On July 19, 23 Seoul Saemmul Church members were captured hostage on their mission in Afghanistan, where they were mainly performing relief work at hospitals and kindergartens. South Korea is the second largest source of Christian missionaries, right behind the United States, with an estimated 17,000 abroad in various cities. Through this crisis, the church has been heavily criticized for putting their government in such a position. They have acknowledged that they “owe a big debt to the country and the South Korean people”, though the group believes that the event has only strengthened their determination to send missionaries overseas.

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

As a large muslim nation and a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Indonesia acted as a representative to ensure smooth talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Upon request of the Taliban that a diplomat from an Islamic state be present to “provide a guarantee” and “secure their international status”, Indonesia was able to support South Korea by sending an observer for the negotiations to proceed.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established in March 2002 with the aim to assist Afghanistan and its people in ‘laying the proper foundations for sustainable peace and development’. Together with the Afghan and Republic of Korea governments, the UNAMA was able to obtain the release of the South Korean hostages, commended by UN secretary general Ban for their achievements.

Waheedullah Mujadeddi

Waheedullah Mujadeddi, head of an Afghan delegation negotiating with the Taliban, has been back and forth in talks with Taliban for the negotiation of the release of the South Korean hostages. Although a final solution still seems unclear, the Afghan government has expressed opposition to a prisoner swap, afraid that it would encourage more kidnappings in the future.

Possible Solutions

As the crisis is ongoing and every action matters, it is important to weigh the efficiency of each solution.

One solution that delegates may consider is not necessarily attacking the Taliban but cooperating with the Afghan government to rescue the missionaries. This is the most effective, efficient, and peaceful solution, but there are some issues regarding this solution that the delegates should brainstorm about. Delegates should consider and understand the relationship between the Afghan government and the Taliban first and foremost. If this solution was enforced and it fails, then a larger international crisis will emerge. Delegates could also get the help from other nations to successfully rescue the missionaries from the Taliban, but should also think about how the government will figure out where the Taliban are at, or when and how exactly this plan will be executed. Delegates should attempt to discuss how they will execute this solution by considering what kind of armed forces are in help for this crisis. It will also be helpful to research rescue plans that have been executed in the past, if any. Delegates will not be required to sort out a highly specific plan, meaning that delegates only need to research to the extent of being capable to explain why their plan should be executed.

Another solution could be attacking the Taliban and bringing back the missionaries to Korea. Of course, violence must be used as a last resort; however, this solution outweighs any solutions on timeframe, meaning that it can happen as soon as participating nations agree. It is important to consider the fact that 23 lives are currently at risk. South Korea could ask for help from other nations such as the United States of America or Germany, but also acknowledge that if big nations like the United States gets involved in a physical war, global war could easily be ignited.

If delegates believe violence is not the way to go, negotiating with the Taliban could be a considered solution. The biggest advantage of this solution is that it does not include physical action between the two nations. Like the Cuban Missile Crisis, negotiating is probably the most ideal solution- if the Taliban and South Korea can negotiate successfully. Delegates should keep in mind that negotiations not only take long, but also will not be as easy as it seems. Delegates should think of ways how the South Korean government will reach the Taliban to negotiate and whether or not they are going to provide the Taliban with everything they require.

Overall, it is important for delegates to consider the relations between the Afghan government and the Taliban and how fast this issue can be resolved. They must also keep in mind that the public will panic more and more over time, possibly causing spillover to other political issues.

Questions to Consider

- What kind of solution is the best fit for the situation at hand?
- What is the priority? Rescuing the hostages, or maintaining a peaceful relationship with Afghanistan and Taliban?
- If you decide to conduct a rescue operation, what is the line between “just” and “violent”? In other words, how would you justify your stance while keeping the damage at minimum?
- If a peaceful solution is preferred, how would you compensate for the illegal entrance? What would be the deal that Taliban seek for? How can you compromise?
- Are you taking side in this religious conflict? Or are you simply seeking for a deal that rescues the hostages?

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