

Dr. Chad Raymond
POL 240 Comparative Politics

Gerkhania Presentations

You have been hired by the government of Gerkhania to provide advice on a new constitution that will be put before the citizens of the country for popular ratification. Your consulting duties include identifying how other societies have solved or not solved the same kinds of problems that Gerkhania now faces. Government officials have hired you to help them understand how cultural and political differences in Gerkhania might lead to the following:

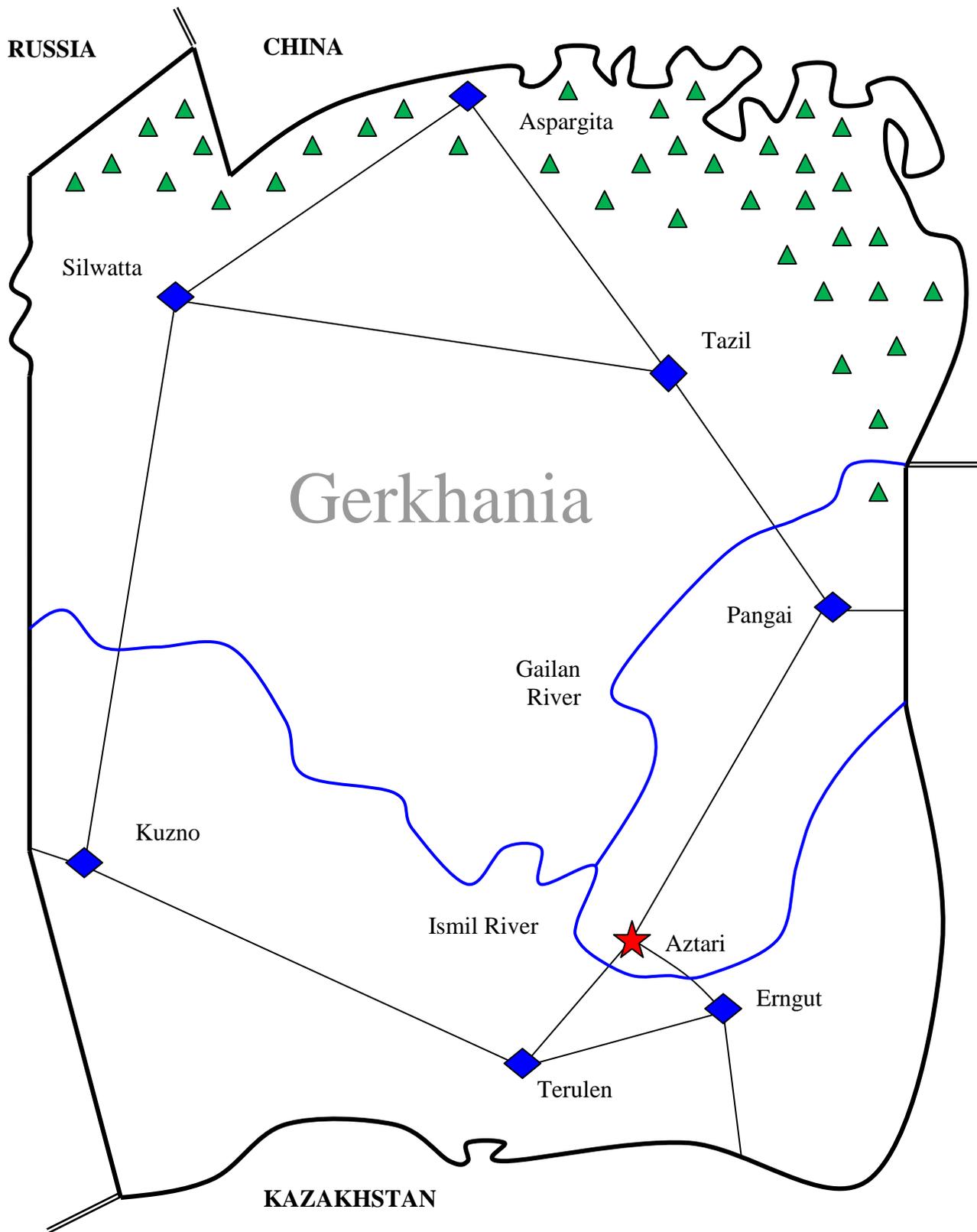
- Conflict between individuals who have constructed distinct political identities
- Revolution
- Democratization
- Genocide

You and your team have the responsibility of examining this question in different regional geographic contexts and presenting your findings to members of the Gerkhanian government.

Each presentation needs to include:

1. A recommended solution to the problem in Gerkhania—a solution that incorporates or in some way takes into account the perspectives of people who have different values, based on what has happened elsewhere in the world. In other words, this is where the “comparative” of comparative politics comes in.
2. An argument on why the solution applies to both the historical case from another part of the world and to Gerkhania, why it will work, and why it hasn’t been tried before (or if it was tried, why it failed, and why it will work this time).
3. A definition of success and a method of measuring it.

Analyses and recommendations should be as specific as possible. For example, your team might be presenting on why one nation-state in Latin America was able to democratize and but another was not. The recommendation that “there should be elections” is too general to be useful to the Gerkhanian government, given the multicultural nature of Gerkhanian society, the varied political interests of its citizens, and the fact that many nation-states that hold elections have not democratized.



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.

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.

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.

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.