Crisis of The Three Kingdoms

Study Guide
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Welcome Letters

Crisis Director: Daniel Gindis

I could start this introduction by telling you that Crisis may very well be pinnacle of the Model UN experience, but if you’re reading this guide, you either already know that, or are too far in to back out now 😊. If the latter is the case, you will get to experience the magic of Crisis first hand at LIMUN 2015.

I have chaired many classic Model UN committees at WorldMUN, OxiMUN, RomeMUN and GIMUN, to name a few of the higher level Model UN conferences in the European circuit, but Crisis has always had a special place in my Model UN experience. My first experience as Crisis director, at CUIMUN three years ago, saw my starting to drink coffee because I found myself on my feet, both figuratively and often literally, from before 9:00 in the morning until 5:00 in the evening, participating in what I still consider the most intense Model UN of my life.

I am very excited for the Joint Cabinet Crisis that I and my excellent Deputy Crisis Directors have put together for you (I actually met both of them in Model UN Crisis rooms - Albert was a delegate of mine in 2012, and Aaron was a delegate chair at CUIMUN 2014). Together, we have decided to go back to Imperial China, where no known European circuit Crisis has gone before, to the best of our knowledge. This LiMUN, I hope that your imaginations go wild, and we take what was history in an already crazy time period and make the Romance of the Three Kingdoms seem like the Amish phone book in comparison.

Deputy Crisis Director: Aaron McPherson

I’m Aaron and I am one of your deputy directors for the LiMUN crisis. Regardless of what the director tells you, I am not going to wear a kilt over the course of the weekend, despite the fact that I was raised and go to university in Scotland. I study economics at the University of Edinburgh, but I am not sure how helpful this will be given that economics is in a somewhat rudimentary form in the 3rd century... Some of you might remember me from LiMUN or OxiMUN or CuiMUN or ScotMUN or... like Daniel I do a lot of MUN so I hope that you guys aren’t too disappointed to see me here again. I am incredibly pumped to be a part of the crisis staff for LiMUN in what I think is going to be one of the most interesting and different crises the UK has seen in the past two years and I can’t wait to read what I hope are creative directives.
Deputy Crisis Director: Albert Faber

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 16th session of London International Model United Nations 2015, and particularly to the Historical Crisis committee featuring the topic of ‘The Three Kingdoms’. My name is Albert Faber and I will be one of two deputy crisis directors that will be coordinating the chaos you will be causing during the conference. I am currently in the last year of my BA programme, reading history at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands, which also happens to be my country of origin. In addition to that degree I have pursued a number of extra curricular activities of which MUN is by far the most significant guilty pleasure. Over the years I have competed in a large number of international conferences such as those at Cambridge and Harvard. In 2013 I switched over to chairing and I have been doing that ever since. I am looking forward to this year’s crisis in particular because the topic of discussion has, to my knowledge, never been done in the European circuit. That makes this year’s crisis committee both very challenging and offers many opportunities for you to showcase your abilities. I am therefore excited to get started and wish all of you the best of luck!
General Historical Background

Rise of the Han Dynasty

After the betrayal of Xiang Yu by Liu Bang, the Qin dynasty fell to allow the creation of a dynasty which would last over 400 years: the Han dynasty. When the Han dynasty came to power, China was a territory of fissured states with a combination of war lords and self proclaimed kings ruling semi autonomous regions. Coming to a head in 154 BC in the Rebellion of the Seven States, the Han dynasty was forced to initiate a series of reforms in order to consolidate its power throughout the regions that would preserve power and secure a steady line of succession, subsequently uniting China in a way that had not been achieved previously. When the Han came into power they had to deal with the insurrection, which was both the result of the Qin failure to rectify it and the result of the change in power. One of the first and most considerable was the challenge made by the chieftain Modu Chanyu who controlled Mongolia, Manchuria and the Tarim Basin. The comprehensive nature of this challenge to power meant that subservience could not be forced even through a process of assassinations, bribes and trade embargos; it wasn’t until a series of military invasions in 51 BC that the Chanyu would yield to the Han dynasty and become a vassal. Territorial disputes were characteristic of early kingdoms and the resolution of these conflicts were essential in the consolidation of power for dynasties. In order to ensure stability and remove the threat of internal strife the Han kingdom imposed a system of civil bureaucracy in order to ensure that the descendants of Han would not be challenged for supremacy.

One of the major methods used in order to secure the succession of imperial families was the involvement of court eunuchs within the governments of the Han dynasty, a continuation of policies which the Qin dynasty had used. The theory for this was that the inability of a eunuch to continue their family line would remove any incentive for betrayal within the court as any power they were able to acquire would not be inherited by anyone. Moreover, eunuchs were generally recruited from the lowest classes of society with the idea that these servants were not restrained
by external loyalties. The removal of this benefit, in theory, diminished the possibility for eunuchs to act in anyone’s interest but that of the kingdom as the risk of death for treason would not be worth it. This theory did repeatedly fall short over the course of the Han dynasty as the involvement of court eunuchs in high ranking political decisions did not always work solely in the interest of the kingdom. A considerable early example of this was that under the influence of the eunuch Zheng Zhong, the empress dowager was put under house arrest and her clan was stripped of all of its power, done because of Zhong’s hatred which did ultimately lead to the creation of an unstable and disloyal clan. A plethora of similar examples reverberated through the 400 years of the Han Dynasty with a late great example coming with one of the last emperors: emperor Ling - Ling entrusted his two leading court eunuchs with the affairs of state, causing him to gain the reputation of being weak and incompetent, occupying the majority of his time with his concubines. This led to the mismanagement and abuse of military affairs entrusted to eunuchs by the emperor in 189 AD. The actions of these same eunuchs also included the renewal of the partisan prohibitions which would lead to a great uprising within the Han territory - The Yellow Turban Rebellion and the foundation of The Way of the Five Pecks of Rice.

**Uprisings and the Further Han Decline**

The Yellow Turban rebellion (184-205): the growing influence and power of the eunuchs in the Han court allowed for the enrichment of this group and the creation of The Ten Attendants. This coincided with the ongoing issue of the power and influence of landowners over their peasantry, where the loyalty to them was greater than their loyalty to the emperor. When these landowners had the notion that the emperor was taking the bulk of his advice from the eunuchs and neglecting the importance of the landowners there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction amongst the peasantry. When the extension of the partisan prohibitions further inhibited the involvement of merchants along the Silk Road, the kingdom experienced a famine. The rebellion was led by Zhang Jue and his two brothers and was focussed in three areas: the You province, Julu province and in the commanderies of Yingchuan, Nanyang and Runan. By the end of 184, the commanderies of Yinchuan, Nanyang and Runan had fallen to the rebels as the emperor underestimated the size of the force and the commitment to the cause they fought for. In response the emperor released large
portions of his armies with full military armaments and training in order to attack the rebels, these were immediately successful and the rebels were scattered by 185. The emperor did little to rectify the causes of the rebellion and as a result there was the outbreak of consequent revolts until 192 when Cao Cao forced the rebel army into submission. The Way of the Five Pecks of Rice was a Taoist movement which was a cause of civil unrest among the gentry of the Han dynasty which would continue into the three kingdom period. The failure of the emperor to rectify this spiritual divide meant that what started as a religious movement mobilized into a territorially supported group in the north and the ideologically united one in the south.

Enter the Three Kingdoms

Fall of the Han Dynasty and rise of the Cao Wei

The failure of the dynasty to eradicate the yellow turbans completely meant that the Chinese political leaders grew increasingly uneasy with the system and lead a revolt against the Ten Attendants. General He Jin and Yuan Shao led an army to the outskirts of the capital with the implication of sieging in order to intimidate the emperor into conforming to their demands. These were made clear in the petition which they presented to emperor He that called for the removal of the Ten Attendants and for their execution. Once He was convinced the eunuchs responded with the assassination of He Jin, to which Yuan Shao and his brother Yuan Shu sieged the two palaces and slaughtered the eunuchs inside of them. They did not capture the leader of the eunuchs, Zhang Rang, as he fled with the emperor and his younger brother Liu Xie. Out of fear Zhang Rang drowned himself in the yellow river. The emperor and his brother were then found by Dong Zhou, who took them back to the capital, ousting the Yuan forces. Zhou demoted and poisoned the emperor to promote his brother, only to be ousted by a returning Yuan force that razed the capital to the ground.

During the ensuing carnage, Cao Cao saw his opportunity to seize power. His adopted son killed Dong and the emperor was convinced by Cao Cao to move the capital to Xuchang. The main challenge to Cao Cao was then from the Yuans; Yuan Shao was beaten by the forces of Cao Cao in
the battle of Guandu in 200, with Shao dying and his son being killed by Cao Cao. Shao’s two other sons were then killed by the forces of Cao Cao and their heads sent to his encampment. At this point Cao Cao was the commander of the North and had the emperor captive, but after his defeat at the red cliff in 208 he was not able to conquer China, but it was instead divided into the Northern region of Cao Cao, the Western region of Liu Bei and the Western region of Sun Quan. When Cao Cao died in 220, he was succeeded by his son Cao Pi who shortly thereafter forced the emperor to abdicate and subsequently proclaimed himself to be emperor. This is considered to be the spark which began the period of the war of the three kingdoms between the Cao Wei, Shu Han and Wu as each of the other leaders named themselves emperor in response.

The largest issue which prevailed in the Cao Wei kingdom was the instability of the Western territory; the territory of Chang’an was not under the subservience of Cao Cao when he separated the territory or under Cao Pi when he proclaimed himself emperor. Resistance came in three tiers, the first was in the Xianbei who were a clan of nomadic Mongols, who though they lacked formal training and organisation were fearsome soldiers who knew their territory very well and rallied behind their leader Kebineng, who is believed to be the driving force behind their resistance. The Xianbei are raiding the territories outside of Chang’an and are moving east in their attempts to destabilise the regime of the Cao Wei. The second tier of resistance came from the Qiang people who were opposed to the leadership of the Cao Wei, though they did not pose a considerable military opposition they were culturally divided from the Cao Wei and are likely to cause a large amount of issues should the Cao Wei be successful in capturing the territory. The final tier was the Shu Han, who though they did not have consolidated power in the region, are believed to have a large base of the support coming from the people. Sima Yi and Cao Zhen have been assigned to rectify these issues for the Cao Wei kingdom but the relationship between these two imply that they will be more likely to be fighting for supremacy over each other rather than for peace.

**The Rise of the Shu Han**

The Shu Han kingdom was led by Liu Bei, a former war lord and senior member of the court of the Han dynasty. Liu Bei established himself as a formidable general during the Yellow Turban
Rebellion in which he used a volunteer army in order to win major victories against the Taoist rebels in the West, achieving a more comprehensive elimination than in the North. He was then assigned his first legitimate title as the prefect of Anxi but demonstrating his moral integrity he relinquished this rather than kneeling to a corrupt inspector. When Dong Zhou took the capital from the Yuan and there was the consequent civil war, Liu Bei established what would be a long rivalry with Cao Cao, immediately joining the forces of Tao Qian against those of Liu Bei. Though Cao Cao was initially successful it was the rise of Lu Bu within his own kingdom which allowed Liu Bei to raise a force in resistance to the Cao movement, he did this domestically through gaining the support of the two most powerful clans in the area: the chen and the Mi. This support proved crucial with the death of Tan Qian, when the Mi clan insisted that Liu Bei be named the emperor of the territory over Qian’s sons, which Bei reluctantly accepted.

Lu Bu was then defeated by the forces of Cao Cao and forced to seek amnesty with Liu Bei. This alliance was short lived, however, and by 196, Liu Bei surrendered to the forces of Lu Bu during a war of attrition in Donghai. Bu trusted the new loyalty of Bei, therefore stopping the Yuan from destroying them. However, when Bu attacked Cao Cao, Bei fled to meet Cao Cao who then resupplied his army and helped him bolster his forces. This series of defections continued until 201 when in the battle of Guandu Cao Cao defeated Yuan Shao, forcing Liu Bei to seek refuge with the accommodating Liu Biao. Liu Biao feared the strength of Liu Bei and thus, until his death in 208, did nothing to stop the growing influence of Cao Cao. When Liu Biao died and his son surrendered to Cao Cao, Liu Bei fled with 100,000 supporters only to be hunted down by Cao’s cavalry causing them to fled south with a force of less than 100 men.

Facilitated and led by Bei’s envoy Zhuge Liang, the Bei forces joined with the Sun Quan in order to meet the Cao forces in the battle of the Red Cliff. Despite the fact that their forces were \( \frac{\pi}{5} \) of the size of the Cao, their knowledge of the territory and superiority in naval warfare allowed them victory. The territory of the Yi Province was then in the sight of Liu Bei following his victory and the governor Liu Zhang received Liu Bei and helped him secure his army in the territory. Bei’s military advisor Pang Tong advised Bei that the best method to take the Yi Province was to take control of Zhang’s northern armies, which he succeeded in doing despite Zhang changing generals to avoid surrender. When Pan Tang died in battle, Liu Bei sieged Lou for lack of better ideas which led to a drawn out and costly siege. When the city finally fell, Bei married Zhang’s sister to
consolidate his power. Liu Bei only had Hanzhong left to represent himself as a major power which he accomplished in 219, declaring himself first king and then emperor in 221.

The alliance of the Shu Han with the Sun Quan was severed when the Quan forces executed Guan Yu and Bei prepped for war. This meant that Meng Da defected to the Cao Wei, which jeopardised the territory of Fangling and Shangyong - who are loyal to Da and though they don’t have a considerable army have the defences of the territory and knowledge of the region which would allow continued guerilla warfare. The other considerable threat is that Meng Da is convincing high ranking officials on the periphery of the Shu territory to defect as they fear the new emperors brutality. With the forces rallying to his side, Meng Da is beginning to look like a warlord.

**The Rise of the Sun Wu**

When the Han dynasty was falling into the hands of Cao Cao, Sun Ce gained influence and military power through the war lord Yuan Shu, once he gained territories in Wu and in Jiangdong, Ce severed ties with Yuan Shu. Sun Ce crowned himself emperor of his territory and Cao Cao convinced emperor Xian to grant him the title of Marquis of Wu. When Sun Ce was assassinated in 200 during a hunt, he left his power and territories to Sun Quan as his own son was too young. Sun Quan’s first major act as emperor of Wu was to align himself with Liu Bei’s forces in the battle of the red cliff in 208. When Sun Quan and Liu Bei then severed their ties over the execution of Guan Yu, Sun Quan was able to expand the Wu territory in the Jing province. When Liu Bei called himself emperor, Sun Quan sided with the Cao Wei, for which the Cao Wei court recognised Sun Quan as the king of Wu.

In 220, however, Liu Bei led a military campaign against the Wu both in revenge for the execution of Guan Yu and to retake the Jing province which they took. When the Bei forces suffered a crushing defeat to the Wu commander Lu Xun in Baidicheng, the Wu believed that their territory was secure, but the entire Jing province is still riddled with war lords who oppose the rule of Wu. The same territory also serves to weaken the peace between the Cao Wei and the Wu as both claim the territory and the local warlords and clans haven’t yet picked a side between these two emperors.
The Future

While each kingdom is getting settled and looking to consolidate power, the legacy of Qin Shi Huang still lives in their minds. A unified China as a global military and economic powerhouse can be within the grasp of any kingdom if only they can overcome their rivals. With different strengths and weaknesses the battle for territory, legitimacy and complete victory is about to begin. With nothing decided and everything open for the taking each kingdom must solidify its rule, both internally and with its problematic satellite states. If they succeed without splintering or being overrun they can turn their eyes on their neighbors and maybe, with luck, skill and strategy history may be rewritten in the battle for the mandate of heaven.