

Exam questions Methodology Course (HUMR 5191), Spring 2014

Below please find three ‘situations’. Choose one of them and use it as a departure point for writing a text that contains the following elements:

- 1 Deduce a human rights-relevant research question from the situation described.
- 2 Explain briefly why you believe this research question is plausible and researchable.
- 3 Elaborate a research plan for answering the chosen research question (or exploring the relevant issues).
- 4 Give a sketch of the resulting research in the form of an outline of an essay or thesis, i.e., a text that demonstrates your methodological and editing abilities rather than answering the question as such.

Situation 1

Andinia recently adopted a constitution saying it is a ‘multi-ethnic and multicultural country’. The constitution also declares the country to be sovereign and democratic and moreover the country has ratified all major international human rights conventions, including the relevant regional human rights instruments.

Since the end of a protracted civil war 15 years ago, which although it mostly involved fighting between left-wing and right-wing forces of a middle-income industrialised country, also involved casualties among the country’s indigenous population, and hence political mobilisation of hitherto marginal social groups, successive governments have tried to implement its new multiculturalist aspirations by way of fundamental reforms in its political and legal systems as well as various welfare programmes.

Andinia can be several countries in the Americas. Choose one of them in order to provide the situation with further empirical detail.

Situation 2

Arkadia is divided in two regions, Northern Arkadia and Southern Arkadia. In the last years the country has been going through economic hardships caused by drought and a largely subsistence-based agricultural economy. Its projected economic growth has also been slowed by the fall of the oil price in the international market. These economic hardships have exacerbated the inter-ethnic relationships across the country. The ethnic minority, located in the southern part of the country, where most of its oil reserves are located, has started to

become increasingly vocal about seceding. While initially that movement was largely pacific, in the last years there have been a number of armed clashes between the government forces and militia, supporting the independence movement. Those clashes have resulted in a large number of civilian casualties and material damage. There has also been massive movement of the population from the affected areas within Southern Arkadia, as well as refugee flows to neighbouring countries. Access to this displaced population is difficult because the activity of armed groups makes the areas unsafe for humanitarian workers and agencies. Moreover, a somewhat hostile attitude seems to have developed *vis-a-vis* humanitarian agencies on the part of the Southern Arkadian government.

A referendum on independence was held in Southern Arkadia and the majority of the population voted to secede and form a new State. Under international pressure, the central government (Northern Arkadia) grudgingly agreed to recognise the result of that referendum, although it claimed that it was not genuine. Despite a cease-fire agreement between the countries, border clashes between the armed forces of the two governments as well as armed groups continue with varied frequency. After several calls to the parties involved to stop the fighting, the situation was deemed to amount to a threat to international peace and security and the UN Security Council (UNSC) mandated a peacekeeping force with the duty to ensure peace in the border region between the two countries. In the same resolution, adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the UNSC asked the parties to agree to submit the border delimitation dispute to international arbitration before the Permanent Court of Arbitration. In the aftermath of that UNSC resolution, with the help of international mediators, a peace agreement, including a compromise to submit the border delimitation dispute to arbitration, was signed by the parties.

Situation 3

Antropia is a middle-income country with a culturally diverse population and rather large social and economic disparities between modernised, urban areas and a tradition-bound countryside. Over the last five years, the economy has stagnated and there are signs of political unrest in a country strongly dominated by a strong president and a single party. Recently, the national assembly passed a law outlawing homosexual practices, following several violent episodes and public marches against what various religious groups consider 'ungodly practices'. In a widely disseminated and much debated report, also inside Antropia itself, a world famous, international NGO details a dozen cases of murder and mutilation of homosexuals.

Antropia is formally a parliamentary democracy with a constitution that prohibits all kinds of discrimination and moreover the country has ratified all major international human rights conventions, including the relevant regional human rights instruments.

Antropia can be many countries. Choose one of them in order to provide the situation with further empirical detail.