



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

## Center for Middle Eastern Studies

### Assignment Description (For Teachers)

**Title:** Postwar Reconstruction: What Happens *After* the Conflict Ends?

**Author:** Lisa Adeli, University of Arizona Center for Middle Eastern Studies, PhD in History.

**Purpose/Connection to the Curriculum:** Since World War II but especially in the post-Cold War era, the U.S. has become involved in rebuilding/reorganizing a country after a conflict ends. Thus, it is imperative that U.S. students – and all U.S. citizens – understand issues of postwar reconstruction and peacebuilding.

This lesson is designed for College Social Studies classes: World History, Government, Geography, or Current Issues. It meets numerous Social Studies standards with its focus on U.S. foreign policy, the development of international governmental and non-governmental organizations, human geography, and post-war efforts following World War I, World War II, and modern conflicts. The lesson also helps student improve their research and writing skills as well as their facility in problem solving and critical thinking.

**Overview:** This lesson begins by working with the students to define and discuss the six elements of postwar reconstruction outlined by the U.S. Institute of Peace. Next, the instructor introduces examples of postwar reconstruction and guides students in brainstorming the types of agencies and interventions involved. Students are then put into small groups of 2-3 people and are assigned a short, internet-based research project on a particular aspect of contemporary U.S./international efforts in post-war Afghanistan. Following the research, students will hold a summit to develop a reconstruction plan and then will share their findings with the other group of students in the class.

**Objectives:** Students are expected to: think critically about issues faced by countries after a conflict, conduct research and share their findings, write effectively, develop a greater understanding of the problems/needs of a crisis area in the Middle East, and evaluate and make policy recommendations for U.S. involvement in the region.

## Suggested Procedures

- Day 1:

**Required: Copies of handout on the six elements of postwar reconstruction** (document #2).

1. Open by asking students to think of some **natural** disasters that have occurred recently. Have them brainstorm a list of what issues the population faces afterwards. (While their first impulse will be to discuss damage to buildings and injuries/deaths of people, encourage them to think also of other consequences, such as disruption in education, looting, health issues caused by contaminated water, refugees/internally displaced people, economic issues caused by destruction of work sites or population movements, etc.)

2. What *additional* problems are there if the cause of the destruction is a war or civil conflict rather than a natural disaster? (Issues of the form or leaders of government, security, reconciling competing groups, etc.)

3. Point out:

- A. Recovery takes many years, even decades – although our news stops reporting after a few days or weeks
- B. The U.S. has become increasingly involved in post war reconstruction after World War II and, even more frequently, after the end of the Cold War. Why?
- C. The international community gets involved both through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – such as Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, The Red Cross/Red Crescent, and many others – and governmental entities – such as the U.S. military, NATO, the United Nations, etc.

4. Hand out the copies on the six elements of postwar reconstruction, and go over them with the students. Be sure to define unfamiliar vocabulary and have them discuss the concepts. Give historical examples – and have them give examples – from any conflict or disaster that they know about. Which NGOs or government entities might be involved? Where does the money come from?

5. Mention that the U.S. has been and is now involved in postwar reconstruction in MANY countries. Why is rebuilding Afghanistan, for example, considered important to our own security. (Consider the 9/11 attacks launched out of Afghanistan, supported by the Taliban.)

- Day 2 (or Days 2 and 3):

**Preparation before class: Make copies of guide sheets in document file 3. Each student will get one. Before class starts, divide the students into 6 groups, each of which will work with one element of postwar reconstruction. (If the groups are too large and unwieldy, you can have 12 groups – 2 on each topic - allowing for overlapping of ideas.) Each student should receive a copy of the worksheet/research guide for that group.**

1. Give each student his or her worksheet/research guide. Explain that they will assume the role of U.S. government experts holding a summit on post-war reconstruction in Afghanistan. Of course, that's a big topic, which is why different groups are assigned to research and report on different elements of post-war reconstruction in that country.

2. Have each group research their area and **WRITE DOWN** their responses.

3. If not assigning it as homework, collect their work at the end of class so that it will not be misplaced or forgotten during the next day's activity.

- Day 3 or 4 (summit conference):

1. Have the students sit with their group. (If two groups are working on the same issue, have both groups sit together).

2. Have each group share their findings with the rest of the class.

3. Have them come up with a combined list of some of the changes that need to be made and the order of priority.

### **Extending the Lesson:**

Give the students a specified amount of money (say \$5 billion – or something not easily divisible by 6) and have them decide how much to spend on which projects. (They would have to prioritize needs and figure out how to combine them to make them most cost effective.)

### **Assessing Student Learning**

- Students should be evaluated on their class participation and their group's written response to the research questions.

- Students should also be expected to reflect in writing on what they have learned: either as a stand-alone assignment or as part of a larger test.

- For an extended assignment, students could be asked to summarize their group's findings and reflect on their role in the summit conference.

- For general evaluation, students could be asked to list and define two elements of postwar reconstruction and to give an example of an important issue from each element in the postwar rebuilding of Afghanistan.

