

Activities

Activity 3

Short Research Project: What is “Occupation”? A Comparative Analysis

Preparation:

Estimated Time: 2 class periods • **Materials:** *Israel 101*, reference materials, including the Internet

Background: One of the most important consequences of the 1967 War was Israel’s military administration of the West Bank and Gaza. In current debates about the conflict, the term “occupation” is used regularly, and there are multiple occupations around the world today which get almost no media attention and consequently make Israel seem like a singular case. The purpose of this activity is to broaden students’ perspectives, and have them put the question of occupation in a larger context.

Activity:

1. Explain to students the background described above.
2. Divide students into pairs, and have them briefly research other “occupations.” They can search on their own for different cases (by visiting www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/disputes.htm and www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/index.html) or research one of the following:
 - The U.S. occupation of Japan after World War II. (The U.S. still has troops in Japan.)
 - The U.S. occupation of Germany after World War II. (The U.S. still has troops in Germany.)
 - Jordan’s occupation of the West Bank and Egypt’s occupation of Gaza (1949-1967).
 - Iraq’s and Turkey’s occupation of Kurdish peoples and territory.
 - Britain and the Falkland Islands.
 - Morocco’s occupation of the Western Sahara (which Algeria claims).
 - Spain’s cities of Ceuta and Melilla located in Morocco.
 - China and Tibet.
 - Competing claims over Kashmir.
3. As they research these other territorial and nationalist conflicts, they should keep in mind the following questions:
 - When and why did the occupation begin?
 - What claims does the occupying power have?
 - How much land is involved?
 - What security issues are involved?
 - How has the occupying power treated the population?
 - How much world attention has been focused on this conflict?
 - How much violence has been associated with this conflict?
 - What other nations are involved, supporting one or the other side?
 - What solutions have been suggested?
 - What is the likelihood that the conflict will be resolved?
 - How does this situation compare to Israel’s situation with the territories?

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4. Discussion. Have the student pairs report on their findings, and then raise the following questions:

- Was the “occupation” good or bad? How do you decide? (For example, the U.S. occupation of Japan and Germany and Britain’s occupation/claims to the Falkland Islands were constructive.)
- Are these conflicts with competing national movements or are they sovereign nations fighting over who gets control of a disputed territory and its people, or both?
- Why don’t these territorial disputes get more attention in the media? Why does the Palestinian-Israeli dispute get so much more attention? (Perhaps because of the violence or because of the nations that support the Palestinians?)
- How was or is Israel’s military administration of the territories different from these other cases?

Wrap-up: Israel is not alone in the world in having a territorial dispute. But unlike many of these other conflicts, Israel has tried to resolve the conflict through territorial compromise.