

AVATAR



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Welcome from the Dais

Dear Delegates,

I am pleased to welcome you to SSICSIM 2014. My name is Derick Johnson and I am a third year with a double major in International Relations and Anthropology. I have been doing MUN since I was in the 8th grade and I have been doing crisis committees since coming to the University of Toronto, which is why I took to doing SSICSIM this year. I hope to give the best crisis session within this committee, the Avatar: The Last Airbender committee.

Since this is a fictional committee we have more liberty in terms of what we can do with our universe as we do not have to adhere to the general politics, or physics, of the real world. There are also elements that are useable that wouldn't ordinarily be available to a committee that is grounded in reality. That being said, there still is an adherence to the reality of the Avatar world in some form or another so we cannot be too overboard with our simulation.

My hope it that both crisis committees are run with the utmost smoothness and care and can teach a thing or two about politics debate and conflict resolution as well as having fun with the topics as this is a fun TV show. I want to try to adhere to that as much as possible. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to email me at derick.johnson@mail.utoronto.ca

Eagerly awaiting your arrival at SSICSIM,

Derick Johnson
Committee Director
Avatar: The Last Airbender

The Four Nations of Avatar: The Last Airbender

The world of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* consists of four nations, one for each classical element. These four are: the Fire Nation, the Earth Kingdom, the Water Tribes (one tribe lives at each pole), and the extinct Air Nomads. Certain people in each society have the ability to manipulate their respective element; this ability is called *bending* and those who can bend are called *benders*. Bending is one of the major drivers of combat and technology between the four nations. Each bending art is based on a real world martial art and therefore each nation has their own style, which has also permeated into their respective cultures.



Air Nomads

Air Nomads is a collective term for a nation of people who practice the discipline of airbending. One of the four major nations, the Air Nomads were wanderers by definition but had four air temples, one at each corner of the globe, hidden away atop mountain ranges in the northern Earth Kingdom and on three remote islands. The theocratic Air Nomads were home to a monastic order of men and women who practiced airbending.

Unlike the other nations, the Air Nomads were all benders due to the high level of spirituality of their people. They lived in large temples and traveled the world on flying bison. They were the most spiritual of all the cultures and lived in harmony with nature. They also were fun-loving and had a strong sense of humor.



Air Nomads before the genocide

The Air Nomads made up the smallest of the four nations in the world. They had a small economy, based entirely on limited agriculture. The population of the Air Nomads was small compared to even the next-smallest Water Tribe, and was far smaller than either of the world's two major powers, the Fire Nation and the Earth Kingdom. However, almost all the Air Nomads were killed by the Fire Nation during the Hundred Years War, and their culture is considered to be mostly—if not totally—eradicated.

Water Tribe

The Water Tribe is a collective term for the two tribes of people who practice the art of waterbending. These two tribes are one of the four nations and their citizens primarily inhabit both the polar regions of the Northern and Southern hemispheres. There is also a small community of waterbenders that populate the Foggy Swamp in the Earth Kingdom, although they were isolated from their sister tribes for generations and others were largely unaware of their existence until they were stumbled upon by the main characters, Avatar Aang, Katara, and Sokka.



Northern Water Tribe. The Southern Tribe is similar, differentiated mostly by the colors of their clothes, The North wears darker blues and the south wears lighter blues and purples.

The people of the Water Tribe are generally peaceful. They strive to live in harmony with nature and the other nations of the world. There are two primary divisions of the Water Tribe, the Northern Tribe and the Southern Tribe. Although in the past there was significant exchange between the North and South, contact between the tribes came to an end during the chaos of the Hundred Year War.

The Water Tribe is less powerful than both the Earth Kingdom and the Fire Nation, due to its population size, geographic location, and economy. Its economy is very small and their food supply is dependent on ocean resources, which largely explains the relatively small population of the Water Tribe.

Earth Kingdom

The Earth Kingdom has the largest territory of the world's four nations. Spanning an entire continent as well as several subsidiary islands, it encompasses much of the eastern hemisphere and is also the most populated sovereignty in the world of Avatar. The kingdom is ruled by a federal constitutional monarchy which operates under the rule of a king or queen.

The people of the Earth Kingdom are proud and strong and adhere to a philosophy of peaceful coexistence and cooperation with the other nations of the world. It also has a large economy based on agriculture and limited industry, though it is not as economically powerful as the Fire Nation, which benefits from advanced technology.



Earth Kingdom Nobility

The Earth Kingdom is characterized by significant ethnic and cultural diversity, a consequence of the country's vast territorial expanse. As a result, it has high levels of local autonomy and ethnic conflict, both of which have eroded the authority of the central government over the past hundred years especially in the desert regions in the east side of the country. Despite this division, the people's recognition of the Earth Kingdom as a single political entity is largely strengthened through the communal belief in a shared history and identity.

Fire Nation

The Fire Nation is the last and most aggressive of the world's four nations. It is an absolute monarchy led by the Fire Lord. Geographically, the nation is located on the planet's equator in the western hemisphere, and is composed of several islands. Its capital is simply known as the Fire Nation Capital. It is the second-largest nation in terms of population and area, following the Earth Kingdom.

The Fire Nation's economy is the largest and most dynamic in the world; its strong industrial sector and extensive technological developments not only enabled the Fire Nation to create an extremely powerful military, but also sparked the development of worldwide modernization and globalization.



The Fire Nation, with its large military, began an imperialistic century-long war with the other three nations, during which the country committed genocide on the Air Nomads and conquered vast areas of the Earth Kingdom. The ruler directly after the conclusion of the Hundred Year War, Fire Lord Zuko, is using the Fire Nation's resources to help rebuild the world.

The Hundred Years War

All four of these nations lived in peace until the Fire Nation attacked the Air Nomads, wiping them out and taking over the Earth Kingdom. These attacks instigated what is known as the Hundred Years War as well as the century-long disappearance of the Avatar concurrent to the majority of the war.

The Avatar is the only physical being with the ability to learn all four bending disciplines. By holding the Avatar Spirit, the Avatar is the human embodiment of light and peace. It is considered the Avatar's duty to master the four elements and use such power to keep balance among the four nations of the world, as well as between mankind and spirits. When the Avatar dies, he or she is reborn into the following nation, dictated by the cyclic order: fire, air, water, and earth. Mirroring the order in which the first Avatar, Wan, learned the elements, this is also the traditional order in which any one incarnation of the Avatar is to master all four elements, beginning with the element of their birth nation. The reincarnation cycle can only be broken if the Avatar is killed while in the Avatar State.

After the Fire Nation attacked the Air Nomads and began invading the Earth Kingdom, the Water Tribe and the Earth Kingdom reacted in very different ways. The Water Tribe joined the Hundred Year War against the Fire Nation during the life of Avatar Aang. The Southern Tribe was driven to the brink of extinction through a series of devastating raids, and the Northern Tribe proved unable to provide any resources for the War beyond its borders. With the war's conclusion, a reconstruction effort began for the Southern Tribe, consequently restoring regular contact between the two tribes.

The Earth Kingdom long withstood encroachments on their borders in the Fire Nation's century-long imperialist war. Other than the Avatar, the Earth Kingdom was the only real obstacle that hindered the Fire Nation from achieving world domination. Though the Water Tribe aided the Earth Kingdom in the War, the conflict progressed poorly and took a heavy toll on them as the years passed. This continued until the Coup of Ba Sing Se, when Princess Azula of the Fire Nation seized control of the Earth Kingdom capital city, Ba Sing Se. By the following summer, the metropolis was occupied by the Fire Nation military, and although it had previously been asserted that the fall of Ba Sing Se would lead to the disintegration of any remaining Earth Kingdom forces, rebel fighters continued to resist foreign rule. As earthbenders use their abilities for defense and industry, they fiercely defended their cities against Fire Nation attacks during the Hundred Year War.



Avatar Aang using all four elements

The Avatar incarnate during the period of the crisis committee, Aang, is an airbender and the last of his kind; he was able to master all four elements and defeat the Fire Nation and this is where the

committee starts. The Fire Nation has a new leader who is in favor of peace and reforming the nation to begin an era of harmony between the four nations. The committees will have to try to compromise with the Fire Nation, while at the same time hold their ground in creating terms of surrender that are also advantageous for them.

The committee will be a peace conference between all Four Nations trying to sort out the path towards peace for years to come. All though there maybe disagreements that may be very severe it is imperative that for the sake of the world a lasting peace is achieved.

Topic 1: The Fate of the Fire Nation Colonies

Long ago the four nations lived in harmony but everything changed when the Fire Nation attacked. Although things did change after the Fire Nation attacked, it is up to the victorious nations and the Avatar to decide how the Fire Nation should be punished for their crimes of starting a war and how their colonies should be split up. After the war between the Fire Nation and the Earth Kingdom ended there was a large movement by the Earth King, Kuei, to try to re-establish the Earth Kingdom colonies that the Fire nation had conquered 125 years previously.

Since there are very few earthbenders in the colonies already, the Fire Nation claims that they belong to it. Fire Lord Zuko is adamant that the colonies stay in the hands of the Fire Nation since they are the most superior nation in terms of military. This has led to many clashes in the aftermath of the war.

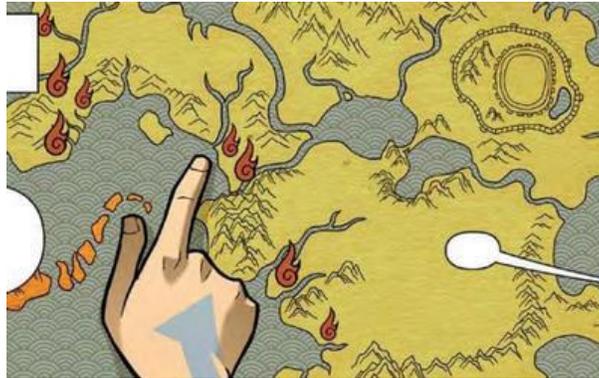


Fire Lord Sozla

About 35 years before the Hundred Years War, Fire Lord Sozin decided to expand the Fire Nation into the Earth Kingdom. Although it was an issue between the Earth and Fire Nations, it never was really solved by either of them. When the previous Avatar, Roku, died the Fire Nation ramped up their assault on the Earth Kingdom, conquering areas in the east of the country over a period of a hundred years. The ongoing invasion of the Earth Kingdom led to back and forth fighting, with the Fire Nation pushing back the Earth Kingdom's forces until they hit the capital of the Earth Kingdom. The Fire Nation's army laid siege to the capital for six hundred days; this siege happened six years before the events of Avatar Aang and the end of the war.

As the war was coming to an end there was much wonder as to where the older Fire Nation colonies' loyalties lay because of the cultural melting pot that has been established between the leftover Earth and Fire colonists. The most well-known of these is the colony of Yu Dao, which is not only had claimed by the Earth Kingdom and Fire Nation but also has a burgeoning movement calling for self-determination. This led to the very turbulent change in leadership and relocation of many people, mainly Fire Nation nationals back to uncontested Fire Nation lands.

Yu Dao was and still is an important place for both the Earth and Fire Nations; not only is it the Fire Nation's oldest colony but it also is home to vast mineral resources. The Fire Nation had built up the city and the surrounding area over the past hundred years and it was their initiative that had extracted the resources. The immigrants from the Fire Nation as well as the local earth bending population created a successful society that combined elements from both countries and both cultures have been thoroughly engrained with each other.



A Map of the Fire Nation Colonies

This has also led it to become one of the wealthiest cities in the region, making it a coveted prize by both the Fire Lord and the Earth King. Unlike most of the newer colonies there is a distinct feel between Yu Dao both culturally and politically. The People of Yu Dao and the older colonies feel either apathetic to which side rules them or are in favor of forming their own country, with the vast majority pulling for the latter solution. This is highly reminiscent of the decolonization movements of the end of World War II.

Historical Decolonization

In Asia especially, where the Japanese expelled many colonial powers and conquered their former colonies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many nations felt that after the defeat of the Japanese in World War Two, their former European colonizers did not deserve to reclaim their colonial possessions and as such fought to establish their own nation-states. With invested interest from other nations, such as the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, these nations, with some exceptions, achieved their goal of independence. One of the more interesting examples of bitter fighting to achieve independence post-World War II would be Indochina, now separated into Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

France had ruled Indochina since the late nineteenth century. The French had a very notable influence within the culture of the region, such as the conversion of many people to Catholicism and the changing of the official Vietnamese script from Chinese-based characters to the Roman letter-based spellings that are used now. There is a distinct flavor of French culture and architecture mixed with traditional Southeast Asian society in this area. After the French got ousted from Indochina in the early parts of World War II, the Japanese occupied the region until the end of the war, which made relations difficult when the French wanted to claim it back in 1945. The majority of the Indochinese citizens wanted to be free of their colonizers, which was the reason for clashes between the forces of the Viet Minh, the major fighter of independence for the region, and French forces. These clashes lasted for a decade and ultimately led to the creation of four states: North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in 1954. Although they had no direct involvement, the US and USSR both played important roles in the way the independence movements played out.

Since both global superpowers (The US and the USSR) had money after the Second World War they were able to vie for dominance within the region and ultimately create their own particular governments that would be favorable to them. This is why two Vietnams were created: one communist and one capitalist.

Historically, decolonization is rarely a smooth process. It is instead typically a violent affair with many nations involved in the process, each with their own interests and philosophies. In the world of Avatar, politics like this still happen. There are many different paths that the Fire Nation colonies could follow or be pushed upon. It is an important decision that affects all four nations deeply, and could determine whether the colonies end up in violence or are ceded to one nation or the other, both of which have repercussions that will last for many years to come.

Questions to Consider

Avatar Coalition

1. Is the world ready for a fifth nation that has no elemental affiliation, being instead a melting pot of two different cultures?
2. What will happen to all the Fire Nation citizens in the colonies if the Earth Kingdom takes over?

Fire Nation

1. How can you find a way to protect your people against the Earth Kingdom without plunging the world back into war?
2. Is it the best solution to grant the colonies independence, or to compromise with the Earth Kingdom?

Topic Two: The Rights of Non-Benders and the Equalist Movement

In the world of Avatar, there are people that can manipulate the four elements telekinetically by virtue of martial arts called bending. Each nation has its own element and style and can only bend that one element. For example, the Fire Nation can manipulate fire while the Water Tribes can manipulate water. The Avatar has the ability to learn to bend all four elements, as he is the bridge between the mortal and spirit worlds. Though the nations are associated with a specific bending art, not all citizens in a given nation can manipulate an element. The only exception to this rule was the Air Nomads, who all possessed the capacity to bend air, but who were almost entirely wiped out by the Fire Nation.

During the Hundred Years War, many people were hurt and killed by the firebenders in their quest to take over the world. There was also much destruction that had occurred due to the elements being used for war. The devastation left many non-benders angry at both the firebenders and at bending in general. In the Fire Nation and, to a lesser extent, the Earth Kingdom, there is a distinct divide in treatment of the benders and non-benders, with most benders being able to coerce non benders to do their bidding because they are naturally more powerful. In the Water Tribes, there is less of a divide, largely because in the south the Fire Nation captured or killed almost all of the benders there; therefore, there is no major conflict to be had between benders and non-benders. In the northern tribe, benders and non-benders are treated relatively equally with men using their abilities for war and women for healing; benders have managed to coexist peacefully with non-benders and are an integral part of their society.

Although there have always been tensions between the benders and non-benders, the problem was exacerbated by the firebenders subjugating the non-benders in the Earth Kingdom to poor treatment; this treatment led them to rebel with help from select earthbenders who rallied and led the charge against the Fire Nation. Although the Avatar did finally defeat Fire Lord Ozai, the rebellions also proved successful, taking major cities including Omashu as well as significant territories in the western part of the country. Naturally, this empowered the members of the non-bending class and they began to fight to be treated equally within their respective societies. Although this push for equal rights is non-violent thus far, many citizens are becoming disillusioned and restless with the lack of progress and seem to be quite close to ramping up their protests. While the protests have been peaceful thus far, they could possibly erupt into violence.

These struggles are not unique to the world of Avatar. Many multinational nations have had similar issues with civil rights and the inequitable treatment of different classes of people. The long and sometimes violent movement towards equal rights is a story that has examples in every nation. An example of this is the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in the United States. 10

Historical Civil Rights Movements

There are parallels that can be drawn between the non-benders fighting for equal treatment and the civil rights movements that have happened in the United States as minorities fought for equality. Most of the minorities were not a part of the economic affluence that happened during post-World War II America. African Americans in particular were still under the laws of segregation and many were earning significantly less than white people, with over half the population living in poverty. Although many had been fighting for equal rights for years previously, World War II really pushed African Americans to fight for their rights since they had served in the military during the war and were, for the most part, working in cohesive partnerships with white people during that time.

Thus when the war ended, the returning veterans and civil rights groups began to fight for equality at home as well.

A major starting point to bringing about the end of segregation and discrimination was getting the judicial system to order the desegregation of schools, as the legislators refused to alter the laws. Desegregation would affect not only African Americans but also, in the South Western States, Latinos and other immigrants who were considered to be lesser citizens. In California, the case of Mendez v. Westminster of 1946 brought about the desegregation of Orange County, which in time brought about the desegregation of the entire state in the same year. The biggest court case regarding desegregation was Brown v. the Board of Education, a case that was fought began in Kansas but was decided by the Supreme Court of the United States; the result was an order that black and white students be educated in the same school. This led to massive resistance against the verdict in the American South, ending with many schools in that area to close and violence against African Americans students trying to attend school. Ultimately, only about 2% of schools were integrated by the end of the 1950s.

By the 1960s, many minorities had taken to the streets and had begun marches, protests, and sit-ins of prohibited areas and waited to be arrested. While this did lead to desegregation of interstate buses, it also caused a large backlash. The anti-civil rights sentiment, particularly in the American South, was large and catastrophic, with police dogs set on protesters, bombings from white supremacy groups, as well as the use of water cannons on peaceful protesters and bystanders.

Despite the many achievements in civil rights and the eventual legal integration of minorities in 1964, there was still legal oppression of African Americans and other minorities in the United States throughout the 1960s. There was an intense sense of cultural achievement in minority groups, and a growing acknowledgement that these deserved to be celebrated alongside dominant culture. Though there were peaceful protests and marches throughout the decade, violent radicals began to sprout up and show their power by force. The Black Panther Party and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were more violent in their approaches toward bringing about equality. Although there were many the achievements born from the struggles of African Americans and other minorities, there is still an ongoing struggle to create a truly equal society. The most visible struggle today is the gay rights movement, although institutional racism persists in many nations.

There are many parallels from the story of the civil rights activists to the story of the non-benders and it can go in many directions depending on how the committee decides to handle the issue.

Questions to Consider

Avatar Coalition

1. How do we distribute resources for the equality of non-benders?
2. What is the best course of action to minimize violence within the respective nations between benders and non-benders?

Fire Nation

1. Is it good to have a nation of people who are all benders?
2. Should the non-benders be given special treatment because they are different?

Topic Three: Refugees of the War

Since the Fire Nation started the war, there have been many refugees fleeing the carnage that the Fire Nation has left in its wake. From both the Earth Kingdom and Water Tribes, many have fled their homes in search of refuge. In the Earth Kingdom, many leave to go to the Capital, Ba Sing Se. However, there are some that cannot afford the long journey to the capital or cannot pay the fee to take the ferry across and instead have decided to live in the abandoned Air temples, much to the displeasure of Avatar Aang, the last airbender, as the refugees are changing the land in order for people to live there. Although Avatar Aang had not taken any action against the refugees, he was still not pleased that they were there. Now that the war is over, these refugees are slowly trying to return to their former places of residence, especially those staying at the Air temples.

This is proving to be very difficult as the Fire Nation army was thorough in their destruction of villages and towns. Therefore, the people of the Earth Kingdom have very few places to go. With the many disputes between the Earth and Fire Nations about the Fire Nation colonies, there is very little chance that the former inhabitants of the towns are going to be able to return to their destroyed villages anytime soon.



Earth Kingdom refugees

The Water Tribe is facing just as difficult a time as the Earth Kingdom. The Southern Water tribe had been decimated due to the Fire Nation raids that had occurred since the war began. The firebenders invading this area would not only destroy the villages that were raided but also kidnap and kill all waterbenders they found. The few people who remain in the Southern Water Tribe villages have tried to move to other places, with most opting to go north to try to live in parts of the southern Earth Kingdom. Although the Northern Water Tribe has had people moving southward to their sister tribe, there are too few people to make up for the large loss in population.

The Fire Nation has not been spared from the problem of refugees. After the Earth Kingdom rebellions near the end of the war, many Fire Nation colonists were expelled from their homes and became refugees as well. The Fire Nation colonists are also the targets of freedom fighters from the Earth Kingdom. These rebels want to drive all influence from the Fire Nation out of the county for good. Another problem is that the vast majority of Fire Nation colonists have had roots in their colonies for many years and do not have the resources and connections in their home nation or the means by which they could return to it. As they cannot return to the Fire Nation, they have decided to fight the rebels; this is creating more violence in the other parts of the Earth Kingdom and Fire Nation.

The firebenders in the homeland are also not very welcoming of the colonists, which is putting strain on all the leaders, who want to see a resolution to end the violence and carnage.

Real World Solutions for Refugees

There have been many ways different nations have dealt with the problem of refugees. One way is to open borders and lift restrictions to let the refugees move and settle freely. Another way is to create refugee camps, which has largely proved to be ineffective.

An example of this second solution is the situation of refugees fleeing the conflict between Israel and Palestine in the Middle East. This conflict has demonstrated one of the most contentious dealings with refugees in modern times, as the creation of Israel during the aftermath of World War II and its repercussions are still being dealt with some 65 years on. The Jewish people, who were the targets of the Nazi genocide had been driven out of their homes in many parts of Europe and had nowhere to go.

No country in Europe would take in the multitudes of refugees due to problems with infrastructure and economic concerns. There was also the movement by a large number of Jewish refugees pushing for the creation of a Jewish nation-state in the Middle East. In the end, the British mandated that an area of Palestine be carved out to create that nation. This, naturally led to many people being upset at the fact that their compatriots were being displaced for others, and it has led to continued instability in the region.

There are around 455,000 Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) living in Lebanon today. Although there are probably many more that are unregistered, this make up a total of 10 percent of the population of the country. Most do not get the same basic human rights as the actual citizens of Lebanon on account of their refugee status, which makes their lives even harder. Until recently, Palestinian refugees were unable to work in as many as 20 professional positions such as engineering. This is because, as refugees, they are not legally part of any state; therefore, they get neither the rights of foreigners nor those of Lebanese citizens. The refugees also face a serious lack of health care and educational facilities. Throughout the 12 refugee camps around Lebanon, there are only 68 schools and 28 primary health care centers. This is a major problem because the UNRWA only can do so much in terms of providing health care as it is very expensive and not subsidized by the state. While the Arab League has put a large amount of energy to help the UN effort to try to protect refugees, they have not really done much to actually come together for the refugees in other countries, focusing mostly on refugees located in the Palestinian territory itself.

Both the UN and The Arab League have tried to get both sides of the Israel-Palestine conflict to come together and talk many times, but this has constantly ended in failure. Instead of working on a peace settlement, both sides are antagonistic with each other and therefore nothing has gotten done. The dealing with refugees is an issue wrought with nuance and complex ideologies that, if poorly executed, could lead to disastrous consequences. This is why both committees should think carefully about how they plan to tackle this issue without causing an international incident. Cooperation is the key to navigating towards peace in a world that still bears the scars of war.

Questions to Consider

Avatar Coalition

1. Should the Fire Nation be made responsible for the rebuilding of the former villages and cities of refugees?
2. Should the Fire Nation colonies be a designated haven for refugees? \

Fire Nation

1. How can the Fire Nation reintegrate their refugees into their society after such a long time abroad?
2. Should the Fire Nation colonies be a designated haven for refugees?

Episode Guide for this Committee

1. The Siege of the North Parts One and Two
2. The Serpent's Pass
3. The Earth King
4. The Crossroads of Destiny
5. The Puppet Master
6. The Avatar and the Firelord
7. The Ember Island Players
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