Simulations in Politics: a guide to best practice

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Contents

Section   **Page**

This guide is intended to provide a brief 'how-to' for using simulations. It is aimed at those who have never encountered the approach, as well as helping those with more experience to consider how to optimise and expand their practice. While it is written with examples from Politics, the pedagogy is applicable across a wide range of disciplines.

The structure of the guide is as follows:

1. Definitions: what is a simulation?
2. When can simulations be used?
3. Core design principles.
4. Dimensions to consider when using simulations.
5. Common problems.
6. An indicative bibliography for further reading.

Appendices are also included with examples of different types of simulation, together with ideas for variations, as well as a sample feedback for structuring feedback.

1. What is a simulation?

A frequent concern about a simulation is to define what it is. Is it the same as a game or a role play? Is it problem- or enquiry-based learning? Does it imply something particular?

In simple terms, a simulation is *a recreation of a real-world situation, designed to explore key elements of that situation*. It is a simplification and essentialisation of some object or process that allows participants to experience that object or process.

However, beyond that broad definition, simulations are what you make of them. As this guide intends to demonstrate, simulations can cover a vast range of activities, from the simple and brief, to the deeply involved and extended.

Games tend to fall at the simpler end of the spectrum – e.g. in creating very stylised environments – but also shade into the related worlds of video-gaming and serious games. Role plays are effectively coterminous with simulations, albeit with the emphasis more explicitly on the adoption of a particular role or person. 'Simulation' is used in this guide to cover all of these. While simulations do share many common features with problem- and enquiry-based learning, the latter do not have the same basic conceit of recreating real-world situations.

What ties together all of these pedagogical approaches is the notion that the world can be brought into the classroom in a way that allows participants to actively engage with – and immerse themselves in – the material. In short, they offer an excellent way for students to build knowledge and skills in a learning environment that they control. For the educator, it opens up new spaces for interaction and moves the focus on to student-led learning. This has been most simply captured by the proverb quoted in Hertel and Millis (2002, p. ix): "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

Before moving on to consider when simulations might best be used, it is helpful to set out some terms that will be used throughout the rest of the guide. A **game designer** is the person who sets up the simulation's objectives and rules. The **game leader** is the person on the ground for the actual running of the simulation (the **gameplay**): this is often the same person as the game designer. The gameplay might also be observed by **assessors**, who play a purely passive role. We refer to **participants** here as students simply because that is the primary audience.

2. When can you use simulations?

Simulations are not a universal pedagogy and in some situations are unlikely to offer suitable learning opportunities. With this in mind, it is possible to identify three main benefits of using simulations, which in turn suggest where they might be used.

2.1 The benefits of using simulations

Firstly, simulations offer a different way of integrating substantive knowledge about a subject. By taking on roles and requiring active engagement with the constraints within which actors in the simulation have to operate, students can develop a much finer appreciation of situations than it might be possible to communicate through more conventional approaches.

Secondly, students can generalise from the specific instance of the simulation and go on to develop a range of technical, interpersonal and social skills. This can cover research, presentation, public speaking, negotiation, report writing, management of data and teamwork, depending upon what the simulation covers. While usually incidental to the simulation per se, such skills are of clear value in post-education environments.

Finally, simulations can be a good way to break the ice for groups and subsequently to build group identities. This is very rarely the explicit or primary purpose of a simulation, but the shared experience is considerable and can have lasting impacts on student engagement.

2.2 When to use simulations

With these three purposes in mind, several options offer them as potential sites for simulations.

Most clearly, simulations are very good for exploring relatively complex topics, with many dimensions and factors. This might involve understanding of negotiations and group debates, recreating historic and contemporary events or possible future actions.

In situations where the main focus is the development of skills (most obviously in the practice of negotiation), simulations can be very helpful, although it's wise to ensure that while space is given to skills, the simulation still works on its own terms.

Simulations can also be used to convey much simpler concepts (e.g. the state of nature and two-level games are captured in two of the simulations in Appendix 1). However, the relatively low density of this pedagogy means that it tends to be a relatively slow (if ultimately more memorable) learning experience, as compared to more conventional teaching.

In summary, simulations can potentially play wherever there is scope to stimulate student learning in an environment with emergent properties (i.e. one where ideas and concepts logically develop from underlying rules).

3. Core design principles

Some caution has to be exercised in setting out the following model: the sheer variety possible within 'simulations' (see next section) means that a one-size-fits-all approach is potentially counterproductive. However, it is still possible to identify three core requirements than any simulation needs to satisfy in order have a possibility of a successful outcome.

3.1 Clear learning objectives

The game designer needs to know why they are using a simulation. Without this, there is a strong danger of creating little more than a diversion or amusement for students. Clear learning objectives allow the designer to create an appropriate gameplay, as well as an understanding of how students might understand what the simulation is for.

These learning objectives typically relate back to the range of purposes mentioned above of: substantive knowledge acquisition; skills development; and group socialisation. Since these overlap, clarity of purpose becomes all the more important. This is most notable in larger simulations, where students might be involved in creating their own rules and procedures or where outputs are openly defined.

For someone coming to simulations for the first time, the usual rule is to set out with modest goals. The scope of simulations to be subsequently modified and enlarged means that it is possible to work out from a central idea in stages. A certain degree of creativity is also helpful: a brainstorming session with colleagues to think of the most radical way to access that central idea is often a very good start.

For students, there is a certain ambiguity in this. Clear objectives help to guide them through what is often a new experience, by guiding them on the degree and nature of support and preparation, as well as any assessment. However, in some cases, the ultimate objective might be concealed from students, to allow them to 'discover' it: the first game in Appendix 1 is a case in point. Nonetheless, even in these situations, the putative objective should still be set out for students.

3.2 Alignment of learning objectives, gameplay and assessment

The second key requirement flows logically from the first, namely that the learning objectives need to shape the gameplay and any assessment in such a way as to allow those objectives to be achieved. Equally clearly, knowing what your objectives are will also make this process much easier and will facilitate a review of whether they are being met *a priori* by the simulation as a whole.

Moreover, for students, proper alignment reduces the potential dislocation that simulations can offer, allowing them to immerse more fully into their simulated environment and ultimately to gain more from the experience.

Thus simulations need to create environments within which students can do what the game designer wants them to do in order to achieve the objectives. Similarly, whether assessment focuses on processes, outcomes/outputs or on subsequent reflection will depend on what the game designer wishes to valorise. As noted in the next section, misalignment is easy to do, especially as complexity increases and actions are less prescribed.

3.3 Provide feedback

Without feedback, simulations lose the vast majority of their pedagogic value. Unfortunately, this is one of the most overlooked aspects of simulations (see Newmann and Twigg (2000) for a rare exception), while simultaneously being relatively easy to remedy.

In substantive terms, feedback can focus on three main areas: processes, actors and outputs (see Appendix 2 for a general observation/feedback form). The particular focus will be informed by the learning objectives, although the interrelation of the three makes it advisable to look at all three together, since they are present in any simulated environment.

Feedback can take place at a number of time points. Most obviously, it can come immediately after the gameplay, when students can recall their actions and thoughts, connect it to their wider learning, as well as 'exiting' from the simulation. However, feedback can also be offered where there is substantial preparatory work (e.g. a negotiation brief) prior to gameplay, to allow for a more rounded participation. Interim feedback can take place in longer exercises (especially those stretching over more than one session), although some care is needed not to become sucked into the simulation itself.

The form of feedback can be very varied. Game leaders or assessors can produce video, blogs and reports, in addition to student-generated materials (e.g. outputs, negotiation notes, reflective pieces written *ex post*). Again, it makes sense to start with a more basic system, to which additional streams of information can be added in later iterations.

However, a key part of any feedback is the need for it to be student-led. The simulation itself is given meaning by the students and their actions, so any feedback needs to work out from their own understanding and appreciation of that scenario. Moreover, students will often notice aspects that game leaders and assessors have not, and recognition of the value of their observations can give students increased confidence in their skills of self-evaluation and self-criticism.

4. Dimensions to consider

As this guide has repeatedly noted, simulations are very adaptable. Therefore, it is helpful to try to list some of the key variables that might be considered when designing a simulation: it is not exhaustive, but it will help with most decision points.

4.1 What do you want students to get from it?

This is the central question that has to be addressed and relates directly back to the need for clear learning objectives discussed above. Whether looking at process or output (or both), the gameplay needs to allow students to have the possibility of achieving those aims.

To illustrate this, we might look at the third simulation in Appendix 1, modelling a comprehensive set of negotiations in the Middle East. The game designer's objectives were multiple: to allow students to understand the positions of different regional actors; to appreciate the interlinked nature of security, economic, environmental and social issues in the region; to develop experience of a negotiation with scope for package deals and scope for non-compliance; as well as to recognise the problems of the status of different actors. The gameplay reflects this in the range of topics that are covered, the broad structure of the negotiating model and the ability of actors to set out their own rules of procedure. As the variations note, there is the possibility to use this model in several other ways that permit exploration of other aspects.

In all of this, there is a tension between being prescriptive and being flexible. Tightly written gameplay will move students more quickly towards the intended objective, but with the potential downside of limiting their agency and their feeling of immersion: if only one outcome is possible, then what is the point of the exercise? Conversely, an open structure allows much more scope for students to develop creative approaches and outcomes, albeit not necessarily those originally intended. As this author often notes to his students: "I'm disappointed that you didn't do what I thought you would, but I'm also happy, because you did something I hadn't thought of at all." In defining learning objectives, it is possible to set some parameters to this, as the game designer feels most appropriate.

4.2 How much time do you have?

Simulations are highly variable in length and can be run in time slots from a few minutes up to as long as is needed for the learning In practice, five main lengths of simulation take place:

- very short simulations (under 30 minutes). These are illustrative simulations (e.g. the first simulation in Appendix 1), where either no preparation is required or all relevant information is provided (i.e. a closed simulation);
- seminar-length simulations (one to two hours). Very common, since they fit easily within usual teaching arrangements. These allow sufficient space to get into some substantive discussions, although if this is a priority then some student preparation is very helpful;
- day-long simulations (six to eight hours). This length permits extended discussion, even with larger groups, as well as scope for parallel sessions and/or sub-groups. Preparatory work becomes essential for any simulation at this length or longer;
- multi-day simulations. Sometimes it is possible to join together several shorter sessions (cf. the third simulation in Appendix 1) to allow for informal interactions between sessions and for the progressive development of positions and outputs;
- asynchronous simulations. Purely online simulations (e.g. between students in different physical locations) can be run over an extended time period, with more or less flexibility on when interactions have to take place.

Increased length allows for more open and realistic scenarios and positions to be developed, but with an obvious cost of increased organisation and co-ordination costs. The practicality of shorter simulations has to be set against a necessary limit on what can be gained from the experience.

4.3 How many students do you have?

Again, this can be any figure from one upwards. Online computing gaming can be created for individuals to play, but in an HE context it is more usual to have a group that requires simultaneous provision.

One key concern is again the purpose of the exercise. In the second simulation in Appendix 1, a key part of the interaction is the difficulty of reaching group decisions, which necessarily requires a group: typically, the upper limit for a single group to have a discussion is about 20.

Above this figure, then there is value in thinking about creating parallel or sub-sessions (e.g. working groups) or multi-stage discussions. The latter might comprise different students at different points (see the final simulation in Appendix 1 for an example of this).

In an HE context, there might not be full control by the game leader over student numbers, so any simulation needs to be able to cope with the numbers that do come, having scope to drop or add elements as necessary. If this creates fundamental issues, then these should be discussed in advance with the relevant colleagues, rather than trying to work things out on the hoof. In practice, extended simulations tend to develop a good reputation with students over time, so the issues are more usually ones of over rather than under-recruitment.

4.4 What space do you have?

If there is limited control over student numbers in HE, then there is even less over suitable rooms. As much as is possible, the game designer and game leader need to communicate their requirements to those in charge of rooming. The relevant issues are four-fold:

- number of students. This has been covered above, but there is the additional aspect that the students will need enough space for any movement or activity required by the simulation;
- length of simulation. Again already discussed, but anything that requires rooming beyond what is normally timetabled (i.e. beyond about two hours) will need a space that can be secured. This might mean finding spaces not normally made available for teaching;
- number of rooms. If parallel sessions or sub-groups are envisaged, then there needs to be space for them. In most cases, this means more than one room, especially if there is an intention to explore co-ordination issues;
- style of room. Plenary debates can be accommodated by lecture theatres while small group discussions cannot. In the majority of simulations, students will need to be able to move furniture around in a flexible way, so this should be considered when rooming.

In all cases, clarity on the purpose and gameplay of the simulation should help to inform the necessary discussions.

4.5 How many times will you use this simulation?

Game designers tend (rightly) to be proud of their simulations, so it is a good idea to think about how all that hard work and effort can be reused and developed.

This can be thought about in a broader sense of pedagogic development. It might be that an extended simulation is run on a first iteration in a relatively basic form, to which additional elements and aspects can be added over subsequent runs. Indeed, given that it is usually only once the simulation happens that one is able to see how things work, it can make sense to start from a more modest beginning.

Likewise, it is possible to think about relating a series of individual simulations to each other. This might be simply a matter of using the same scenario and/or roles, or more ambitiously a series of linked simulations, where the outcome of one directly feeds into the next.

Finally, one might think about whether other game leaders might want to use the simulation. The main consequence of this is to document more fully what the simulation entails, much as in the manner used in Appendix 1.

4.6 Are you assessing the simulation?

This is as much a quality assurance issue as it is a pedagogic one. The first issue is whether one assesses at all. On the one hand, assessment can bring more student engagement and strengthen reflective practice. On the other, it creates a series of requirements on documentation and evaluation that might detract from the simulation itself.

If assessment is taking place, then it must be decided what is being assessed. If direct participation is being assessed, then that requires some form of recording or documentation (for second and external examiners), as well as possibly assessors on the spot: as a rough estimate, one assessor cannot only follow about five individuals for any length of time. If assessment is based on outputs, there are equity issues if some students 'win' and others 'lose', especially if they have structurally unequal roles. *Ex post* reflective essays can sidestep many of these issues – by assessing the students' ability to reflect – but this can be at the cost of directly assessing student performance in the simulation itself.

In any case where assessment is taking place, there needs to be sufficient documentation to allow second and external examiners to form their own judgements, going beyond what is necessarily an evaluation process that can be very subjective: just as students can become caught up in simulations, so too can game leaders and assessors!

5. Common problems (and how to avoid them)

As well identifying good practice in the design of simulations, it is also helpful to reflect on what can go wrong with this pedagogical approach, especially given the wide range of options that present themselves. What follows is a list of the most common issues and how they can be addressed. While this list might appear daunting, it should be remembered that it is very unusual for any one of them to prove fatal to the success of a particular simulation, not least because simulations typically serve multiple purposes. Moreover, the game designer should recognise the intrinsic contingency of the approach: much of what happens is outside anyone's control.

5.1 Lack of clear purpose

Looking back at the introductory comments on definitions, it might seem odd to note simulations without a clear purpose or focus, since simulations are about simplifying the real world and drawing out key elements. However, it is easy to fall into this trap, especially in a simulation of any complexity.

Consider a situation where you want to run a simulation about the Cabinet. Is focus on the internal operation of the Cabinet, with its committees? Or on the relationship between ministries, ministers and Cabinet? Or on the relationship between Cabinet and Prime Minister and party? Or on building package deals across issues and over time? All of these are possibilities and equally valid, depending on the learning objectives, but each require different simulation design and gameplay, from a very stylised and abstract model to one grounded in the fine detail of the real-world practice.

The solution to this is to set out very clearly to yourself what it is that you expect students to gain from the simulation.

5.2 Under and oversimplification

Undersimplification typically arises in situations where not enough consideration has gone into what the purpose of the simulation should be, leading to the inclusion of an excessive number of factors, which in turn makes the scenario so complex as to be effectively unplayable: a good marker of this is when students spend more time learning the rules of the simulation than playing it!

By contrast, oversimplification occurs when there is so much focus on a single dimension of the real-world object that insufficient attention is paid to other important and relevant factors. Thus a simulation of a parliament that focuses solely on party voting without scope for substantive amendment of a legislative text would risk the students not appreciating concepts such as nested games or textual ambiguity.

In both cases, clear identification of learning outcomes is essential in allowing you to make a meaningful judgement on the inclusion or exclusion of particular aspects.

5.3 Design driven by room or timetabling constraints

In many institutions there is substantial pressure on rooms, in relation to size, style and times of availability. Obviously, a simulation that requires group debate cannot sensibly be run in a raked lecture theatre, while a negotiation that uses online resources will need to have some form of Wi-Fi connectivity. *In extremis*, this means that the starting point becomes about 'what simulation can I do in this room within this time period?'

This matters because a key concept in simulations is the notion of immersion, of creating an environment within which a student can have enough time and space to get into their role and its relationship to others. Without that space, the benefits of using simulations become much harder to realise.

With this in mind, the initial question has to remain 'what do I want the simulation to achieve?', to then be followed up by 'can I achieve that within the constraints I have?' If not, then either the constraints or the utility of the simulation needs to be challenged.

5.4 Inappropriate levels of conflict within the simulation

In any interaction between students there needs to be an appropriate level of conflict. This can be illustrated by two examples from the author's experience where too much and too little conflict created problems.

In one run of the third game in Appendix 1 (on a Middle East peace process), students represented different states. After an extended series of negotiations, over several days, some students started to over-identify with their roles and took overly personal positions, which started to compromise real-world relationships. By contrast, in a game where students were representing different agencies of the US Government, the impression was that they (the agencies) all agreed on everything, leading them to not challenge each other's positions, in turn reducing the need to defend their own position and so appreciate the logic behind it.

In both cases there is an aspect of individual personalities, and the simulation leader needs to be ready to step in to moderate. However, reflection prior to gameplay by the designer (perhaps in discussion with someone else) usually highlights where such problems might occur, allowing for adaptations in gameplay.

5.5 Misalignment of gameplay and incentives

Because of the centrality of students in this pedagogy, simulations have to align their various elements. This is especially the case where there is formal assessment: if that assessment is to be based on an external evaluation of participants' gameplay, then there need to be enough assessors present to observe properly that gameplay. As noted above, one assessor cannot follow many more than five individuals for any length of time. Likewise, simulations focused on the production of a substantive output (e.g. a legislative text) often fail to provide enough time for prior preparation.

You need to ask whether you can achieve what you intend within the constraints that you have. In addition, you need to recall the alignment issue outlined in the 'Core design principles' section.

5.6 Lack of connection to other learning and teaching elements

The final problem is perhaps the one most often encountered (and was a key stimulus to producing this guide): simulations too often suffer from being nothing than an add-on to bigger teaching modules – a 'bit of fun', within significant explicit or implicit connection to the rest of that module. Even with bigger simulations, the very fact of their own constellation of activity can often lead to a lack of connection to other modules in a programme.

If simulations are to allow students to operationalise existing skills and knowledge and give them new skills and knowledge, then that connection needs to be made explicit before, during and after the simulation. The two central aspects of making this connection are, on the one hand, curriculum design of modules and programmes and, on the other, meaningful feedback on the simulation.

In practice this means programme directors and learning and teaching teams working to make connections across modules, both into and out of any simulations, covering both substantive knowledge and student skills development. Furthermore, the game designer and game leader need to have an understanding of how the simulation connects to the rest of their students' experiences and understanding, making explicit the linkages and building in appropriate scope within the simulation to let students make such connections themselves.

6. Further reading and resources

There are a small number of books that directly relate to using simulations in HE, as well as assorted articles in journals:

Chin, J., Dukes, R. and Gamson, W. (2009) Assessment in simulation and gaming: A review of the last 40 years. Simulation & Gaming. 40 (4), 553-568.

Gee, J. (2007) What video gamers have to teach us about learning and literacy. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Gredler, M. (1992) Designing and evaluating games and simulations: A process approach. London: Kogan Page.

Hertel, J. and Millis, B. (2002) Using simulations to promote learning in higher education. Sterling: Stylus.

Laver, M. (1979) Playing politics. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Newmann, W. and Twigg, J. (2000) Active engagement of the intro IR student: A simulation approach. PS: Political Science and Politics. 33 (4), 835-842.

Raymond, C. and Usherwood, S. (2013) Assessment in Simulations. Journal of Political Science Education. 9 (2), 157-167.

Sabin, P. (2012) Simulating War: Studying conflict through simulation games. London: Continuum.

Whitton, N. and Moseley, A. (eds.) (2012) Using games to enhance learning and leaching, Abingdon: Routledge.

For a definitive bibliography of literature on political science writing on simulation is available via the excellent IPED resource (http://bit.ly/SimIPED)

In addition, various online resources are also available:

- https://activelearningps.wordpress.com/ – a blog with many relevant examples;
- https://sites.google.com/site/howtodosimulationgames/ – a site run by the author, including the text of this guide and playable versions of the simulations in Appendix 1;
- http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Portal:Simulation_and_Gaming_Archive – HEA-funded resource with several games;
- http://www.seriousgamesinstitute.co.uk/ – Coventry University's Serious Games Institute, which organises events and research.

Appendix 1: Four simulations to get you started

One of the consequences of the huge variety of simulations is that it is often hard to know what to do in any specific instance. The simulations below are designed to highlight that variety and to stimulate your own ideas; in each case there are some suggestions for varying the activity.

Simulation 1: The state of nature

This is a simple game to illustrate a theoretical concept. Thanks to Victor Asal (Rockefeller College, University at Albany).

Objective
This demonstrates the concept of a state of nature, humanity's humans' tendency towards competitive behaviour and the value of co-operative action. However, given the nature of the exercise, do not reveal the objective until after you have played it.

How to play
The game can be played with any number of students.

Each student is given a playing card and told to stand up. They should be able to move around.

Students are given the following instructions verbatim:

> *The aim of this game is to survive. Now you are going to play rock-paper-scissors* [explain rules if necessary]: *the winner gets all the loser's cards, the loser sits down and cannot play any more: a draw must be replayed. You do not have to challenge someone to play rock-paper-scissors, but you must accept a challenge to play.*

Students then play. You should wait until a stable outcome is reached, before feeding back.

Feedback points
Typically, most students will play rock-paper-scissors, despite the objective being to survive. The key question here is why anyone would play at all. Asking students for feedback on why opens up space for a discussion on human nature and competition. If you are lucky enough to have some students who don't play, then ask them to explain why.

Variations
- a particularly enjoyable variant is to play once again, after the feedback session. Often someone will still want to play rock-paper-scissors: talk to them about it;
- in the basic game, the playing cards have no function other than to indicate who is still in the game, but their face values could be used to modulate the rock-paper-scissors interaction (e.g. you have to win twice to beat an opponent with a higher face value).

Simulation 2: A small crisis

Objective
This is a closed simulation that allows students to consider some of the issues surrounding international intervention, as well as developing their negotiating skills.

How to play
The game works best for a group of 10-20 students and requires a room where they can all face each other. Gameplay is 30 minutes, plus 15 minutes for feedback.

Each student is given the following text and their time starts immediately:

*You are a member of the Emergency Co-ordination Committee for a large European country. You and your colleagues have been called together to deal with this urgent situation. You must reach a **unanimous** decision from one of the options listed below within 30 minutes. Your Committee chair is absent, so there is no one to lead the meeting, so you have to decide how to organise your discussions. You have only the information given to you below: you cannot get any more information during the period of the discussion.*

Your country has close links with the small West African state of Valla Ullé, a former colonial territory until a short war of independence in the late 1960s. Since then, Valle Ullé has been governed by a civilian government under President Allanga, who has become increasingly corrupt and unpopular within the country and the region. Allanga has recently appeared to be taking an ever less friendly line towards your country, including strengthening economic and political ties with states with which your country has poor relations.

Despite this, Allanga's government has relied for many years on your country's support in training and equipping Valle Ullé's army. The army has been caught up in a long standing low-intensity conflict with a rebel group in the North. This group – the United Volunteer Army of Valle Ullé (UVAVU) – has recently been increasing its activities and is now threatening the key transport hub and regional capital of M'beka.

You have just been informed that UVAVU is about to launch a full-scale assault on M'beka: only your country has this information. The town is home to approximately 20,000 people. M'beka has traditionally been an important balancing point in Valle Ullé, bringing together different ethnic groups: its capture would swing the military and political advantage to UVAVU. This would be especially the case if UVAVU maintained its historic pattern of benign and democratic local rule, which has generated widespread support in the western world. In previous clashes, UVAVU has committed large-scale retaliations against local populations if they have resisted.

There is a small detachment of your country's special forces based in M'beka as part of the training programme. The detachment numbers 20 men, fully equipped, armed and experienced in counter-insurgency techniques: they also have access to a single transport helicopter, which would carry all your men. They are currently training about 500 Valla Ullé Army soldiers, although these are still at only a very basic level of training and have limited weaponry (including some anti-aircraft guns); without your men, they are unlikely to put up much resistance to UVAVU.

Reports suggest that UVAVU has about 300 troops, but also now has access to heavy artillery and air support supplied by Gonjana, a state to the North of Valla Ullé, which your intelligence considers to be UVAVU's key sponsors. However, there has been no direct evidence of this until now. If this equipment (or better still, a Gonjanan) could be captured, then this would strengthen Valla Ullé's recent attempts to secure a UN Security Council resolution imposing economic sanctions against Gonjana, a resolution to which your country has given tacit backing.

Do you:

1. Keep the information secret, evacuate your soldiers, leaving Allanga's troops to protect M'beka?

2. Share the information with Allanga's troops and focus on protecting M'beka from UVAVU attack, with your soldiers playing an active role?
3. Keep the information secret, but keep your troops in M'beka, in the hope of gaining evidence of Gonjana influence?
4. Use the situation as a pretext to switch allegiances to UVAVU and so regain influence in Valla Ullé?
5. Something else?

There is scope to keep students informed about remaining time, although this is not essential. However, when the 30 minutes is finished, then make them stop, regardless of whether they decided or not.

Feedback points
Some aspects to discuss:
6. What obligations and motivations do states have to intervene?
7. What role does the international system have to play?
8. What is a life worth? Compare the value of the lives of 'our' soldiers, UVAVU soldiers, civilians, etc. What determines the difference?
9. Who do you trust and why?
10. What's the balance between rational action and emotional feelings?
11. Do you rush to a decision, just to make a decision?

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- What's the balance between rational action and emotional feelings?
- Do you rush to a decision, just to make a decision?

Variations
- This is an almost endlessly variable game. Times can be lengthened or shortened. The majority required can be lowered, or a requirement to justify a decision introduced. The figures can be varied.
- Indeed the entire scenario can be changed: typically, you would be looking for a situation where there are no unambiguously 'good' options and/or assorted conflicting variables, as well as a logical need for a timely decision.

Simulation 3: A multi-day negotiation

Objective
In this larger, multi-day exercise, you can see how the increase in time and space allows for a more immersive experience. Students focus here on developing substantive knowledge on the complexities of the Middle East, as well as their negotiating skills.

How to play
This simulation has substantial requirements. Firstly, it requires three students per group (i.e. 45 in total), as well as at least two rooms (one big enough to hold everyone). Secondly, depending on the assessment, it requires not only the game leader, but also some assessors and even someone to be on the spot for technical support. In the form below, this simulation would be roughly equivalent to a 7.5 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credit module on an undergraduate programme: the assessment model provided would match this. An indicative timetable across a semester would be as follows:

Semester week	Contact session (two-hour block, unless indicated)	Assessment
1	Introductory session and group selection	
2	Background lecture and Q&A on Middle East and CSCE model	
3	Preliminary game to set out rules of procedure	
4	Feedback	Essay and brief due
6	Troubleshooting session on briefs	Essay and brief returned
8	Main game (three days, 9-5)	Portfolio diary and discussion due
10	Feedback session	Portfolio covering statement due

The outline instructions to students are as follows:

This is an application of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) model to the Middle East. The CSCE was set up in 1973 and formed the basis for wide-ranging interactions between the two sides of the Cold War. The simulation assumes that the UN has been able to convince the governments of various Middle Eastern states to attend a similar conference, under UN chairmanship.

Students will represent either the UN or a state (Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Turkey). Roles will be allocated during the introductory session and students will have some choice.

Each group will have three members: this corresponds to the three 'baskets' of negotiations that will take place (security; economic-environmental; humanitarian). Students should decide within their group who is responsible for leading on each basket (and hence negotiating with other delegations on it) and who is overall lead negotiator (to deal with general matters).

The UN group will chair all sessions. A rapporteur should be chosen by consensus for each basket and the general text from the country delegations: these rapporteurs will be responsible for writing and editing texts of agreements.

The aim of the exercise is to simulate as closely as possible the real-world positions of each actor. This will be achieved by students preparing an essay on their group, as well as a negotiating brief (both to be returned with feedback before the main session).

Students are then left to organise rules of procedure, timings and structure of discussion in the main sessions.

Typical assessment is broken down as follows:
- Essay (3,000 words: 40% of final grade). This will be an analysis of your actor's real-world position on improving relations between the countries of the Middle East, based on academic and official sources. It should be written from an independent viewpoint. Consider the priorities for co-operation, means for achieving this and barriers to it happening.
- Portfolio (c. 5,000 words in total: 60% of final grade). This is a description and evaluation of your participation in the simulation. It has three elements:
  - negotiating brief: maximum two pages in length with key objectives, red lines, strategy and tactics, as well as key points on other groups' positions;
  - diary: notes of all preparatory activities for main sessions (meetings, research, etc.);
  - discussion: essay-style reflection on your preparation, intra-group dynamics, outcomes of negotiations, process of negotiations and evaluation of other groups. As a reflective piece this requires to engage critically with your work, especially looking at how your practice develops over time. There are no 'correct' answers in much of this, rather it is evidence of self-awareness that will be credited;
  - covering statement: no more than 1,000 words on overall reflections on the simulation, including the final feedback session.

Feedback points
Feedback would focus on the learning objectives, as well as the connection between the academic research for the initial essay and the outcomes of the simulation. In this form, the simulation focuses more on negotiating practice, so this could be bolstered further. The feedback form in Appendix 2 would also be of use.

Variations
This simulation cannot easily be shrunk down, but the main sessions could be split up into two-hour blocks, for ease of timetabling. Likewise, assessment could be refocused more on substantive knowledge aspects, especially if connected to a taught module on the same subject. Changes in the negotiating framework could reduce the number of students required.

The topic itself is incidental: this author has used this framework to run simulations on US foreign policy, a written constitution for the UK and post-Copenhagen climate change negotiations. In short, any subject with multiple parties and no simple solutions lends itself to this approach.

Simulation 4: A two-level game

Objective
This short simulation illustrates how two-level games work, as well as package deals. It is partially modelled on the European Union, so would fit with discussions about intergovernmentalism/supranationalism. It also opens up space for discussion about the priorities of public policy.

How to play
The simulation requires at least 15 students (the market role can accommodate more) and can be run within a two-hour block (including the feedback).

Students are provided with the following information:

The Simon Union (SU) has three member states: Bigistan, Escargot and Communia. The states share a single currency, the Simonito. There is a global economic crisis and states around the world have to tighten their belts: the SU has come under much attention recently, due to its incomplete fiscal integration. In this simulation, the SU has to try to find agreement on how to cut public spending, so as to reassure financial markets and avoid a much worse recession. Students represent either a national role, or that of the markets. The opening target is to reduce SU spending by 10% overall, subject to revision during the negotiations (see below).

There are three cycles of state and SU negotiations:
- 15 minutes – state negotiations;
- ten minutes – SU negotiations;
- ten minutes – state negotiations;
- ten minutes – SU negotiations;
- five minutes – state negotiations;
- five minutes – SU negotiations.

National groups will sit separately around the room. In the first two rounds of SU negotiations, only government leaders can participate. In SU negotiations agreement is reached by unanimity. At the end of each SU negotiation, a representation will make a statement on progress: the final round should be accompanied by figures on changes to spending.

Bigistan *(five players: total spending 500 billion Simonitos): the Government can impose its decision on changes in spending on other national actors, unless all those actors can agree a common position. Students represent either the Government, one of the three main ministries, or a super-ministry that deals with all other spending: each student has figures for three policy areas, indicating what preferences they have for change spending (when no value is given, the actor has no strong preference). Students should seek to get as close to their objectives as possible.*

Sector (% of total spending)	Government	Education Ministry	Welfare Ministry	Defence Ministry	Super-Ministry
Welfare (28)	-20%	+5%	-5%	-10%	
Health (18)	0%	-10%	-10%		
Education (13)	-10%			-5%	-5%
Defence (6)		-20%	-15%	+5%	-25%
Research (2)					+20%
Other (33)					

Escargot (five players: total spending 300 billion Simonitos): the Government can impose its decision on changes in spending on other national actors, unless all those actors can agree a common position. Students represent either the Government, one of the three main ministries, or a super-ministry that deals with all other spending: each student has figures for three policy areas, indicating what preferences they have for change spending (when no value is given, the actor has no strong preference). Students should seek to get as close to their objectives as possible.

Sector (% of total spending)	Government	Research Ministry	Welfare Ministry	Defence Ministry	Super-Ministry
Welfare (30)	-10%		-5%	-15%	-5%
Research (17)	-15%	-5%	-15%		
Education (15)	-5%	-5%		-10%	+5%
Defence (8)		-20%	-20%	+5%	
Health (7)					+5%
Other (23)					

Communia (four players: total spending 200 billion Simonitos): all national actors have to agree on spending in any sector, otherwise it remains unchanged. Students represent either the Government, one of the three main ministries, or a super-ministry that deals with all other spending: each student has figures for three policy areas, indicating what preferences they have for change spending (when no value is given, the actor has no strong preference). Students should seek to get as close to their objectives as possible.

Sector (% of total spending)	Government	Welfare Ministry	Defence Ministry	Super-Ministry
Welfare (18)	-10%	+5%	-15%	
Education (15)	-10%			+5%
Defence (12)	-10%	-15%	+5%	
Health (9)			-15%	+5%
Research (8)		-15%		+5%
Other (38)				

Market player (all remaining players) watch the negotiations (unless specifically excluded by other students). At the end of each SU negotiation, the market players decide (by simple majority) whether they have confidence in the negotiations and can vary the target cuts by up to 2% in either direction at a time. Any change in target needs to be accompanied by a justification.

With these instructions, the game leader needs to keep track of time.

Feedback points
Feedback would focus on the objectives. Some questions to consider:
- Whose interests where you pursuing (yours, your state's, the SU's)?
- Did you focus on the numbers or the policies areas themselves?
- How were issues bundled together?
- How were levels of negotiations bundled together: did governments face up or down?
- Who has power?
- Is altruism a better strategy than self-interest in these negotiations?

Variations
This is a scalable simulation, with scope for adding or removing states, policy areas, rounds of negotiation, even adding different actors. Changes in voting requirements or spending figures are also obvious options. *In extremis*, this could form the basis for a much more involved simulation of the Council of the European Union.

Appendix 2: Sample feedback form

To help structure feedback, the grid below is designed to guide reflection from students, assessors and game leaders. In some cases, it might be helpful to circulate this before gameplay, with spaces for students write down responses.

Actors • Who was an active participant? • Who led and organised? • Who had constructive ideas? • Who reviewed and summarised discussion? • Who hid behind other people's obstructions?	**Process** • Did the arrangement of the physical space affect discussion? • How aware were people of the requirements on them? • How was time managed? • How were issues managed? • How was dissent managed? • Was there evidence of groupthink or of peer pressure?
Outcome • Was a decision reached? • On what grounds was the decision reached? • Where the other options fully considered? • Was it the 'right' decision?	**Other** • Did any other factors or aspects strike you as important?

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