

## “The Benefits of Extended Simulations in the IR Classroom”

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### Presentation Summary:

Most simulation and role play exercises are issue-specific; they allow students to actively learn about a certain theory, concept or historical event that is relevant to their particular course. For courses that cover a wide range of material, instructors often employ a number of independent simulation exercises at different points in the term. Some of these exercises might address the prisoner’s dilemma, balance of power politics, collective action problems or even the tragedy of the commons. These isolated exercises are each valuable in their own right, but they fail to mimic important aspects of international relations such as the shadow of the future, reputation, issue linkage, rivalry, and nationalism.

With this in mind, I have integrated an extended simulation into my Introduction to International Relations courses. The "International Relations in Action" Simulation consists of 12 complementary and interdependent scenarios that offer not only the traditional benefits associated with individual active learning exercises, but also the lessons that can only be uncovered by offering the students a chance to see the long-term consequences of their policy decisions unfold over an academic term. In general, this format is a better "simulation" of the overlapping issues, multiple actors and repeated interactions that occur in world politics today.

In the simulation itself, students act as influential leaders in the fictional world of *Politica*. Each team of students governs a country with a unique history, geography, and culture. The teams must use strategy and negotiation to succeed— and survive— seeking to achieve specific territorial, security, and economic objectives. In the process, they grapple with a range of complex challenges: energy security, ethnic conflict, humanitarian intervention, environmental disaster, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and more. Students also pursue individual objectives based on the governmental post they hold— and quickly learn that self-interest and national interest are not always compatible. Teams are judged on their effectiveness in meeting stated objectives, but must also relate their practical experience to the academic content of the course. The simulation is published as a textbook and has been used successfully by a number of instructors in a wide range of settings.

### Outline of Presentation Talking Points:

1. Introduction
2. Existing Interactive Exercises in International Relations
  - The Prisoner’s Dilemma
  - The Balance of Power Game
  - Isle of TED
  - Classic Games
    - Risk
    - Diplomacy

### 3. The International Relations in Action Simulation

#### Structure

- The World of Politica
- Scenarios and Country Objectives
- Individual Objectives

#### Simulation Components

- Diplomacy
- Resource Factors = Power
- Trade and IPE
- Conflict

#### Using the Simulation in Class

- Scheduling and Syllabus Issues
- Managing the Simulation (In Class and Online)
- Anecdotal Evidence of Success
- Empirical Evidence of Success

### 4. The Benefits of an Extended Simulation

#### The Shadow of the Future

- Iterated Games
- Audiences
- Example: Building Consensus on Security Council Reform

#### Reputation

- Trust
- Tit-for-Tat
- Example: The Plight of Tundristan

#### Issue Linkage

- Compromise in Different Scenarios
- Example: Foreign Aid and Ethnic Conflict

#### Rivalry

- Behavioral Patterns
- The Construction of the Simulation and Rivalry
- Example: Paxony and Industrael

#### Nationalism

- Group Identity
- Team vs. Individual Objectives
- Long-term Benefits for Course Morale
- Example: Islandia

### 5. Conclusion

*\*Note: These talking points will be put in PowerPoint format for the conference itself.*