Simulation Games in Teaching International Relations: Insights from a Multi-Day, Multi-Stage, Multi-Issue Simulation on Cyprus

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This article reviews experiences from a large-scale student simulation, which concluded the Istanbul Conference on Mediation: Enhancing Peace through Mediation that took place in February 2012. We share insights on two unique aspects of the simulation. First, the paper examines a rare case where the simulation crossed paths with real life: a number of the impersonated officials (and offices) including the president of the General Assembly of the UN, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, and the Director of the Policy and Mediation Division of the UN Department of Political Affairs were in the audience and shared their impressions. Second, the setup of the simulation was more complex than its typical in-class counterparts. Our insights from this multi-day, multi-stage, and multi-issue simulation can inform colleagues who plan to run larger scale simulations. Besides sharing experiences on a number of logistical points, we especially draw attention to the constructive role facilitators can play in augmenting the learning benefits accruing to the students from simulations.

Keywords: simulation, teaching, conflict, Cyprus, dialogue

Active learning has emerged in the recent years as an integral part of teaching international relations. Accordingly, simulations are active learning tools that motivate students to deepen their understanding of the subject material. Teaching diplomacy and bargaining in a real-life setting to students of international relations and conflict studies is a challenge. Simulations replicate the real-world situations in a controlled context by the “instructors” with the ultimate goal of creating a proactive learning environment. This type of learning fosters students’ ability to learn while creating new knowledge instead of the traditional passive forms of learning, whereby the instructor gives a lecture to a group of students. Simulations, of course, rest on the assumption that students adapt to this new learning environment by developing new patterns of analytical thinking. Simulations are student-centered learning tools (Biggs 2003).

In this article, we analyze a simulation exercise conducted in February 2012 with 35 students from different social science backgrounds. Specifically, the exercise was a mediation simulation of the Cyprus conflict. The simulation took place in multiple stages, with the last stage played out in front of an international audience of policymakers. The simulation exercise was aimed partly for the graduate students to grasp the many complexities in a crisis situation and to become more aware of the intricacies of reaching a negotiated settlement in an intransigent conflict such as Cyprus. The main objective, of course, was to integrate theory with practice and enable students to put skills acquired in their
classes to real life. The simulation exercise incorporated in itself the goal of peace education, as foreseen by Hazleton (1984). This, in itself, was a learning objective.

This paper first describes the simulation exercise, which is specifically developed to combine elements of active learning amidst real-life interactions with the main policymakers, that is, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, UN officials, as well as foreign policymakers. The simulation we conducted was unique in its attempt to create an interface between the students and the “real” policymakers. Consequently, the simulation exercise provided a rare mix of simulation with the real world of diplomacy. The students’ ability to mimic real negotiation settings was recognized by the President of the 66th Assembly of the UN (2011), Mr. Nassir Al-Nasser who noted the level of similarity of the final round of the simulation and those he has witnessed at the UN. This, in turn, constituted one of the comparative advantages of our simulation exercise.

Simulations as Tools for Active Learning

Why do simulations at all? After all, students could easily learn about conflicts through case study analysis or mediation theory in traditional classroom settings; ability to put their knowledge and skills to practice in the real world would be tested in their careers once they graduate. Kolb (1984) maintained that learning is an active process, takes place in cycles, and that students need “concrete experience.” This view is similar to Boyer, Trumbore, and Fricke (2006:67), who argue that the main challenge lies in “helping students understand abstract theories and concepts and how they apply to their everyday lives.” Alternatively, a simulation exercise could be used to divorce students’ idealism from the complexities of real-life political conflicts (Youde 2008). More importantly, active learning tools such as simulations help “humanize” the other (Morgan 2003) and enable mutual understanding. Simulations encourage students to think about the conflict at hand from different points of view (Lantis 1998), enabling them to see the situation from the “opponents’” perspectives. Since simulations are structured within a set of ground rules, which set a tone for the quality of interactions among the students and define the parameters of the negotiation process, they enhance the active learning experience. Specifically, they provide the students with a glimpse into the real-life diplomatic games and into the concerns of the parties caught up in that precise conflict situation.

Peacebuilding is a complex and multi-faceted process. Effective strategies must be proactive (Doyle and Sambanis 2006), context-specific (Tschigri 2011), and span all sectors of society (Barnett, Kim, O’Donnell, and Sitea 2007). In such a context, peacebuilding constitutes a very suitable topic for simulation exercises. Cyprus, a divided island since 1974 where the United Nations has engaged in various rounds of mediation (Müttüller-Bac 1999), has proven to be one of the most complex conflicts in international mediation. Our specific focus on the Cyprus problem builds on the observation that securing public support is increasingly becoming essential to building and sustaining peace. While displaying a great deal of diplomatic craftsmanship, the Annan Plan for Cyprus failed in 2004 partly because it could not secure popular support among Greek Cypriots (Varnava and Faustman 2011). High-level interactions have produced little tangible outputs since the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974. The halting of talks between the two island leaders, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the UN, in February 2012, has been the most recent failure. These failures toward the unification of Cyprus may warrant a shift of focus in peacebuilding from a macro to a micro level.
One of the main purposes in our simulation was for students to experience the real-life challenges embedded within diplomacy. This is a particularly important goal as most of the teaching for the students takes the form of classroom lectures. We chose the participants in this particular simulation exercise from different graduate and undergraduate programs. These programs were Master’s programs in Conflict Resolution and Analysis, European Studies, and Political Science, as well as the PhD program in Political Science. In addition, a few select students from the undergraduate Social and Political Studies program were among the participants. The group was highly diverse in terms of its disciplinary expertise and level of academic training. While the selection of students from various programs could have posited administrative and relational challenges (especially since the simulation was not originally designed under a single course), it actually enriched the simulation as it provided multiple views the group could then draw upon, bringing a value added to the exercise.

Simulations are seldom used as teaching tools for graduate students; yet, our simulation team was mostly comprised of graduate students. These graduate students were exposed to different perspectives of assessing a conflict, and they operated within a multi-disciplinary approach. In this respect, the simulation exercise enabled the students to see how advanced theories of mediation and international relations apply to real-life experiences, and constituted an interface between theory with practice in conflict resolution, mediation, and crisis management. This is another unique value added for our simulation exercise.

The multi-party, multi-issue design, where discussions were simulated at various levels of interaction, from citizen to citizen to head of state to head of state and which continued over a couple of weeks, constituted another distinguishing aspect of our simulation. The structure of the simulation was designed in a manner of duplicating international negotiation processes as much as possible. Some of these traits included preparation of the parties at the domestic level, community leaders being continuously subject to the input of domestic players as well as interested third-party countries, isolation from the outside world at certain stages, and time pressure to reach a decision. The multi-level aspect of our simulation in terms of domestic, national, and international actors all interacting with one another constituted a final added value. The simulation aimed to capture how multiple players at different levels would perceive issues and how interactions between these players would enable breakthroughs, if any. Equally importantly, parties also had the chance to experience cross-level interactions. These cross-level interactions, such as that of between a Greek Cypriot teacher and Turkey’s ambassador to the UN, required students to frame problems and positions from different perspectives, often forcing the students to transcend beyond conventional bullet-points in their conversations.

The Setup

The simulation exercise we conducted was a unique experiment as it consisted of multiple stages where students actively engaged in role playing, and the final stage of the simulation exercise took place within the auspices of the Istanbul Conference on Mediation held in Istanbul on February 24–25, 2012. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded the conference with our

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1The Istanbul Conference on Mediation was organized by Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see http://www.mfa.gov.tr/istanbul-conference-on-mediation.en.mfa for more information about the conference). An important theme of the conference focused on the roles “unconventional” players have in mediation processes. Thus, a number of panels discussed the roles actors beyond traditional diplomacy circles, such as NGOs and academicians, could play in international mediation.
simulation. As a result, the simulation was prepared as a one-time event, rather than as an integral part of a course.

Two aspects set this exercise apart from similar simulations. First, the setup of the simulation was more complex than its typical in-class counterparts where all stages were structured as facilitated dialogues with student-facilitators assigned to each group meeting. Second, the students conducted the final stage of their simulation in front of an audience of Foreign Ministers, the President of United Nations General Assembly, diplomats and academicians. What was highly interesting for both the students and the audience in this final stage was that when the students were role-playing the UN officials, the Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, and the Turkish delegation to the UN, the real-life actors were observing themselves impersonated on stage.

The simulation exercise comprised of three sets of meetings over a period of 10 days culminating in a full-day (eight-hour, multi-stage) simulation. The simulation exercise began with a general meeting in which the three authors of this paper framed and explained the simulation. This framing included three 15-minute mini-lectures by the instructors: a primer on the history of the Cyprus conflict, a discussion of the prevalent theoretical approaches in domestic politics and international negotiations with a specific focus on how political leaders try to maximize their chances of staying in power during such negotiations, and a brief survey of psycho-social approaches in ethnic reconciliation.2 In the last mini-lecture on psycho-social approaches in ethnic reconciliation, we also distinguished between a confidence-building approach to mediation versus the often-used power-based approach, and encouraged students to consider how the “character” of negotiations affects the outcome. Following these mini-lectures, the students were told that they would work in three separate teams, and two facilitators were assigned to each team.3 Appendix 1 presents the primer we handed out to the students before the mini-lectures.

Three groups were formed after the initial meeting: The Turkish Cypriot (TC) group, the Greek Cypriot (GC) group, and the International Delegation. The students chose which group to join, and the preferences were more or less evenly distributed. For the two Cypriot groups, each student represented a different domestic faction or political party of their respective community. The International Delegation table included the Secretary General of the UN, his special advisor, and the representatives of interested third parties such as the United States and the European Union. Table 1 gives a detailed list of the specific roles the students played during the simulation. A brief meet-up among the groups concluded the first meeting.

During the course of the next few days, the three groups met, on their own, for a second time to (i) decide on the specific roles the individual group members would play, (ii) discuss the group’s initial strategy, and (iii) share the background work they did on Cyprus. These meetings lasted about 3–4 hours for each group. Students suggested new/different roles to be added to the teams, such as trade union representatives and the Russian Delegation to the UN.

The third meeting, in which the entire group got together, took place four days prior to the simulation. The meeting’s main agenda was to identify critical issues of the Cyprus conflict from multiple perspectives. In this session, facilitated by a graduate student, a number of issues emerged as key to a possible solution to the Cyprus conflict. During the meeting, issues pertaining to settlers

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2 Besides the mini-lecture on the history of the Cyprus conflict, we also assigned readings to the students since their level of knowledge on the topic varied considerably, and we also observed that they went beyond the assignments and conducted research on their own on the topic.

3 The facilitators were graduate students from the Conflict Resolution and Analysis program who received professional training in facilitation techniques.
from mainland Turkey—missing people from the 1974 conflict, property exchange, and adjudication—stood out as the critical concerns. An additional aim in this meeting was more specifically to communicate the role of the facilitators during the final simulation. It was made clear to the students that facilitators were neutral on the topics, and their main role was to clarify, summarize, and if necessary, encourage parties to address points of conflict as well as concession. The students were also told that the facilitators had the authority to channel the talks, interject, and suggest alternative, possibly more accommodative ways of expressing dissent if necessary.

**The Simulation Day**

The final leg of the simulation took place on February 25, 2012. This whole-day exercise was conducted in four stages. Three floors of Sabanci University’s Minerva-Han Building, a 20-minutes walking distance to the venue of the Istanbul Conference on Mediation, was reserved for the first three stages of the simulation. The simulation officially opened with a 10-minute briefing to all the participants. This briefing covered the day’s program and the logistics of Minerva-Han. It was also intended to assist students to get in character. Following the briefing, the groups settled into the conference rooms of their designated floors.
During the first stage, *intra-group* discussions took place. Each Cypriot group—Turkish and Greek—discussed various positions for the previously determined issues toward the unification of the island. In this stage, the parties identified the main issues that might impede consensus and the leaders of both communities (that is, the incumbent party representatives) noted the positions of various groups in their respective society. Red lines of different groups were delineated, coalitions among different domestic groups were made, and occasionally these coalitions broke off when seemingly better options surfaced at the table. We also observed that both the incumbent and opposition politicians found the opportunity to mobilize certain groups—either toward more reconciliatory or more hardliners positions during this stage. Meanwhile, the international delegation discussed third-party countries’ current positions on the issue, as well as ways to facilitate dialogue between the two communities on the island.

The second stage simulated the interstate bargaining process. This setting resembled a United Nations Security Council Meeting with the addition of leaders from the two parts of the island as well as the Greek and Turkish representatives. During this stage, the interests of the third parties (such as those of Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom) were also communicated. At the end of this process, six specific issues regarding the unification process were identified, namely military and human security, power sharing, legislative structure, land reform, and displaced persons. The parties recessed over lunch for an hour. The International Delegation and the facilitators continued working over lunch.

The third stage focused on the six issues that were previously identified as critical points in the peace process. The talks at this stage lasted about 90 minutes. During this stage, Greek and Turkish Cypriots formed three working groups that focused on one set of the issues. Realizing that most mediation attempts have tried to connect groups at the same level (that is, state to state, president to president, academician to academician), this stage instead aimed at simulating a setting where groups at different levels with different roles interacted. In peacebuilding terms, we tried to lay a foundation upon which the two societies could *cross-stitch* trust and begin to develop a cooperative framework. For instance, a Turkish Cypriot political party leader interacted with a Greek Cypriot media figure, discussing how to frame a story regarding a village that would inevitably stay on one part of the island—if a border is drawn within a federated state. Similarly, a Greek Cypriot businessperson interacted with a hawkeyish Turkish Cypriot civil society leader—and they discussed the pros and cons of adopting an ethnic tone in mobilizing their respective societies. Meanwhile, the international delegation observed this process and revised their proposal framework accordingly.

Although the students were reluctant at the beginning of the third stage, the dialogue became more impassioned toward the end. This was the first time individual characters (in role) were able to engage each other without the lens of political rhetoric or media bias. From a psychological point of view, this time was spent establishing “trust” among individuals with the hope that a mutual understanding at multiple layers of society would *cross-stitch* any solution that might be reached at the bargaining table. A strictly enforced time limit further increased the pressure on the parties. Student feedback after the simulation indeed suggested that the enforcement of the time limit pressured students to agree upon certain principles, although with varying levels of success. This feedback is also in line with the manifested experiences of practitioners (Stuhlmacher, Gillespie, and Champagne 1998).

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4 One such coalition was formed in the Greek Cypriot table among the opposition leader, the businessperson, and the history teacher; the promise of adherence to a single Cypriot identity won the teacher’s support on a relatively milder stance on settler issues.
The formal end of the third stage did not stop the students from continuing their deliberations. A motivation to tie up the loose ends created an interesting scene: several scattered groups of students strolling up the İstiklal Avenue—a major promenade in Istanbul—toward Hotel Marmara, where the final stage of the simulation would take place. These scattered groups hotly debated unresolved issues from the earlier three stages, and the friendly atmosphere of the promenade enabled the emergence of previously unthought-of trade-offs. This rather unplanned transition of venues added to the learning experience of the students, as they experienced how behind-the-doors and multi-track diplomacy can lead to unexpected breakthroughs, or further frustrations. The students easily remained in character, and political bickering and exchange of notes continued until the protocol officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the representatives to take their seats in the final “round table.”

During the final stage, the groups reconvened at the “International Delegation Headquarters.” Due to time constraints, the discussion was limited to only three of the salient issues, namely demilitarization, settlements, and building a common Cypriot identity. The mediation table was comprised of the international delegation as well as two representatives from each community. Exchange of notes among parties was permitted. One facilitator, “under the auspices of the UN Secretary General,” directed the talks. After a brief discussion of how the insights from the previous stages of the simulation can inform/bring alternative perspectives to the resolution of these issues, the teams started to discuss their policy positions. The benefit of holding previous stages as well as employing facilitators was immediately observed; the teams rarely resorted to finger-pointing and past-blaming rhetoric that is often observed between Greek and Turkish Cypriots at virtually all levels of debate. Interaction from former stages as well as the facilitator’s attempts kept the students on track; in other words, the exchanges among students did not stray from seeking solutions to finger-pointing. This focus on seeking solutions eventually resulted in issue-linkages. Interestingly, the main objections/impediments toward a solution in Cyprus came from the international delegation, especially from the Turkish and the EU representatives—as some of the possible solutions potentially hampered the interests of these parties. The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoğlu remarked that the process reflected real-life situations to a great detail, both the breakthroughs and the failures. Davutoğlu, then, concluded the event on a high note as he asked his aides of possible leakages from the Ministry’s Cyprus division since the position adopted by the Turkish delegation closely resembled Turkey’s new Cyprus strategy!

**Reflections/Lessons**

The two unique aspects of our simulation, that is, its complex setup and presentation to a “real” diplomatic audience, rendered interesting insights for those who plan to do similar exercises. Most importantly, we were able to draw a number of lessons regarding how such an elaborate setup affected students’ learning experience. In this respect, the lessons derived from employing facilitators merit special mention. We also observed that student interaction with real-life actors exceptionally enhanced their active learning.

Student learning was assessed by two means. First, we asked each student to write a one-page response essay about the simulation exercise. Then, we followed up on some of these responses with one-to-one interviews. Time limit prevented us to employ further assessment tools. It is without doubt that the use of such

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5 The authors have observed a number of instances where last-minute agreements were put off the agenda by the political leaders, due to their own political calculations, to the frustration of the constructive parties.
tools (for example, surveys, repeated collection of essay responses at various stages of the exercise) would allow a more systematic and thorough assessment of learning outcomes in future simulations.

**The Individual as the Key**

Repeated interactions between parties over a relatively long time period allowed certain ideas in students’ heads to mature while in character. One of the most recurring feedbacks from students related to the development of a deeper understanding of how challenging it might be to produce confidence-building measures. At the individual level of policymaking, the students saw how bullying, manipulating, and exerting pressure affects actors and why these forms of strategies often fail to generate a long-term peace solution. In doing so, many also noted that they developed a better understanding of how and why national or collective interests clash, and why sticking points emerge in such interactions. It was surprising to note, at the beginning of the exercise, how “the obvious” was lost on the individuals who have neighbored the conflict throughout their lives. As a student noted, until the simulation, Cyprus was simply a “tourist destination” for her, but then realized: “real people who have lived through generations of violence call it home.” Once this reality set in, she argued, her position as a hawkish Turkish Cypriot politician became more accommodative—both toward her dovish Turkish and her Cypriot counterparts. As another student concluded:

> During the simulation, I was amazed by how everyone became their role; the emotions were completely real. We all internalized this experience and I think that’s why we learned so much.

**Using Dialogue and Facilitation**

We used a dialogue format (versus that of debate) to allow any intellectual, ideological, or values-based tensions to be reframed and transmuted into the learning process. Students were working collaboratively together even before the onset of the simulation. To further promote the spirit of dialogue, we designed a special stage, dubbed as the cross-stitching stage. Stage Three was specifically designed to take away formal dominant power and equalize power relations among all the roles in a way that the politicians would not be as free to manipulate outcomes for their own professional gain. As it turned, this stage played a critical role in making students keenly aware of the prevalent and common concern over threats to human security/survival, individually, communally, ethnically, and nationally. Equally importantly, many students recognized tacit impediments toward reconciliation exist, often hidden behind the tumultuous nature of politics. As one student put it:

> I also learned how often the past is referenced, and how memory, injury, and a sense of injustice can become sticking points. People want their stories to be recognized—and as you know, there is a very serious problem of recognition in this on-going conflict.

The dialogue format, in turn, necessitated the use of facilitators. Our exercise demonstrated the value of skilled facilitators in helping create common ground, generating a sense of cooperation, maintaining focus on the future, and moving through impasse. Facilitators augmented the learning benefits for all involved,

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6Note that Stage Three was the first “formal” opportunity during the simulation for different actors of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, barring political leaders, to interact with each other.
especially as simulations become more complex. Students were acculturated into the simulation climate more easily through facilitation. Facilitators kept the dialogue on track and continuously re-framed the exchange between the parties in a constructive spirit while keeping the focus on subjects of interest. Moreover, the facilitators showed considerable effort to prevent most of the interpersonal clashes between students (especially in a subject that carries significant emotional baggage for many) that could have impeded their learning process. Besides their contribution to the learning outcomes, facilitation also reduced the logistical workload of such a large simulation. Their leadership significantly reduced the email traffic relating to everyday management issues for the instructors; communication was more effective and efficient as they served as contact points for the groups.

Getting Feedback from Real-Life Actors

Exposing these talks (at least the final stage) to real-life actors enhanced the learning process on a number of dimensions. Turkish foreign minister (Ahmet Davutoglu), President of the 66th session of UN General Assembly (Nassir Al-Nasser), and director of UN Political Affairs Department’s Policy and Mediation division (Levent Bilman), among others comprised one of the most unconventional groups from which students could receive feedback after such an exercise. During this briefing, Nasser pointed out how closely the simulation reflected real-life events. Davutoglu added that the contingency plans of the parties, especially the Greek Cypriots, were quite well prepared. Bilman added that his division’s efforts often resulted in a similar dynamic between the conflicting parties—small, continuous steps toward a solution with apparently insurmountable challenges along the way. Such feedback allowed students to assess what parts of their strategy was perceived as most effective by real-life practitioners. The “carrot” of presenting their work in front of such an audience was another source of motivation for students; we observed that the prospect of obtaining feedback from policymakers spurred the students to do extra research on their own. Furthermore, we also could see that many students started “owning” the issues, increasingly so as they became more acquainted with the subtleties of the issues in which they were interested. As a result, many of the students claimed that the successful execution of the simulation was a self-confidence booster for them.

Lessons: Preparation and Delegation

We believe three key reasons were instrumental toward this multi-issue, multi-stage simulation’s success. First, our advanced preparation was critical. Before the initial meeting, we prepared a packet of materials, identified credible Web sites, and sent the information out to the students electronically. The students came intellectually prepared to the very first meeting. Second, we delegated leadership to a cadre of graduate students who were trained facilitators. However, we remained in an advisory or coaching role throughout the entire pre-simulation and simulation experience in case the students needed assistance. Finally, we intentionally selected a high caliber of students, those who had previously demonstrated initiative and responsibility. These students had the capacity to think independently, and they remained proactive throughout the entire process.

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7We were able to conclude that the students did extra research on their own through two main observations. First, during these 10 days, many of the students contacted us for more papers and data on the subjects of interest to them. Second, students often utilized data (for example, demographic or economic) and archival knowledge in their discussions, which went far beyond the resources we circulated at the beginning of the exercise.
Applicability of Our Simulation in Different Classroom Settings

Our simulation advanced the pedagogy of active learning with its key original features that enhanced the learning benefits to the students. These could be summarized under three main elements, (i) its multi-day, multi-stage, multi-issue nature; (ii) the immediate feedback from real-life actors; and (iii) the use of dialogue as the main form of interchange between students through facilitation. Admittedly, the incorporation of these elements required committing a high level of physical and human resources, extending well beyond the classroom setting. While our simulation was not originally designed for a classroom setting, we believe that its main features can be accommodated in classrooms while retaining major learning benefits for the students. This section will discuss how these features can be kept in classroom settings without committing such a high level of resources.

Running a multi-day, multi-stage, multi-issue simulation is the most readily applicable feature across different classroom settings (see Table 2). Instructors can easily incorporate multiple meetings in their course syllabi perhaps finalized by a day-long meeting during the weekend. Likewise, instructors can simulate physical distance between conflicting parties and the (equivalent of) international delegation by reserving different classrooms during the group meetings. Finally, depending on the size and the composition of the classroom, the instructor can choose the conflict subject carefully. The subject should include sufficient number of salient issues to accommodate all students in the class in various roles, and allow for issue-linkage dynamics to take place.

Another important aspect of our simulation advancing the pedagogy of the discipline was the ability to get immediate feedback from real-life actors. Although foreign ministers, ambassadors, and the president of the UN General Assembly make a unique audience, much of the aforementioned learning benefits can accrue through an audience with a lesser stature. A key input from the audience is the practitioner’s immediate response, highlighting points of convergence and divergence between the simulation and the “real” case. As such, lower level officials, newspaper reporters, or perhaps any individual who has been somehow exposed to the real (or a similar) event could provide this input to a considerable extent. Possibly, these individuals would have less difficulty in allocating time to the exercise. A related upside of having such an audience, then, could be to include such practitioners not only at the final negotiation table, but at various stages of the simulation.

Finally, the use of facilitators was critical to ensure a productive dialogue environment. Facilitators also managed a steady workflow of the tasks leading to and during the simulation. The Conflict Analysis and Resolution program at our university provided a stock of students who had received practical training in facilitation. Instructors who want to employ facilitators in their simulations but do not have access to students with relevant training can consider assigning “leaders” to each group and encourage these leaders to educate themselves as facilitators. Using a dialogue format without facilitators also remains as a possibility. We surmise that such an option would require an elaborate setting of ground rules for discussion by the instructor and an active monitoring of the teams during their dialogues.

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8 Some basic-level sources for facilitation training include the respective guidelines of UN FAO (accessible at http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/AD424E/ad424e02.htm) and The Bonner Network (accessible at https://files.pbworks.com/download/upMJG5cRk3/bonnernetwork/13113666/BonCurFacilitation101.pdf). Also see Pruitt and Thomas (2007) on mediation techniques. Finally, the Web site www.beyondintractability.org provides excellent resources for mediation and facilitation training.
Conclusion

This paper presented a simulation exercise conducted in February 2012 on mediation in one of the most intransigent conflicts in international relations, the Cyprus conflict. The simulation exercise was an active learning process for the students of graduate programs at Sabanci University where they were able to put the skills they have acquired in their lectures into real-life situations. The interdisciplinary character of the students enhanced the learning experience as students from multiple backgrounds, conflict resolution, international studies, European studies, and political science, participated in this exercise. What set

### Table 2. A Road Map for Running a Multi-issue, Multi-Discipline Simulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To familiarize students with multi-party, multi-issue negotiation</td>
<td>dynamics in the international realm</td>
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<tr>
<td>To develop negotiation techniques</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To familiarize students with intra- and intergroup dynamics in</td>
<td>negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To demonstrate the similarity between a simulation and a real-life</td>
<td>negotiation processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(For facilitators) To provide a first-hand experience in facilitation</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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#### Learning outcomes

- At the end of the simulation, the students will be able to
- Utilize individual-, group-, and state-level background information in various negotiations settings
- Optimize a negotiation strategy to reach a viable, equitable, and acceptable solution
- (For facilitators) Be able to facilitate small-scale dialogues in an unbiased manner

#### Simulation outline

**Preliminary meetings**

- Meeting 1: introductory meeting
  - Frame the exercise
  - Render theoretical background
  - Divide the students into groups
  - Explicate the role of facilitators
  - Assign the facilitators to the groups
- Meeting 2: groups meet among themselves
  - Students assign specific roles among themselves
  - Students share background research
- Meeting 3: finalization meeting
  - Identify major issues to be discussed in the simulation
  - Use a facilitator for the identification process
  - Highlight the need to be constructive
  - Cover the logistics of the simulation day

**The simulation day**

- Stage 1: group meetings
  - Groups finalize their positions
  - Groups discuss contingency plans
- Stage 2: groups meet international delegation
  - Assign one (or two) facilitator for the final talk
  - The “third-party” group and the facilitators recess after this meeting
- Stage 3: cross-level negotiations
  - Facilitators emphasize cross-level interactions
  - Third parties shuttle back and forth between both groups
  - (If necessary, artificially) impose time pressure
  - Allow time for informal exchanges
- Stage 4: final-round talks
  - Allow the groups to choose two representatives each (not necessarily the head of states)
  - Assign one (or two) facilitator for this stage
  - Get immediate feedback from “real-life” actors

**Debriefing**
the simulation exercise from other similar simulations was that the final stage of
the simulation was played in front of a real-life diplomatic audience. This, in
turn, enabled a blending of fiction and real life for the students and fostered
their learning experience.

Our own experience in this outside-the-classroom learning tool reinforced our
belief in the value of multiple teaching tools, especially those with the capacity
to motivate students. Thus, teaching diplomacy, international relations, and
mediation to students seems to be greatly enhanced when alternative tools of
teaching are employed. Finally, this simulation exercise also demonstrated that
simulations could improve learning outcomes for graduate students, as it gives
them a chance to apply the advanced theories they study in a simulated environ-
ment. In our simulation exercise, the students were highly motivated partly
because they knew they would be performing the last stage in front of a real dip-
lomatic audience. However, we also noted that stressing the human factor was
an effective motivator by itself.

When we first decided to conduct a simulation exercise of the Cyprus issue,
none of us expected the students to become so engaged in the dynamics of the
conflict or to identify with its main parties so passionately. Thus, we believe that
even if other instructors who might engage in similar simulations would not have
access to a diverse set of students and facilitators, the mere experience of putting
together a simulated mediation enables the students to grasp the complexities of
mediation much better than just reading about it in a passive fashion.

Appendix 1: Primer on Domestic Politics and International Negotiations

The link between domestic politics and international negotiations has always been
an important concern for policymakers in democratic politics. This link has
become increasingly evident in the last 20 years, perhaps with the waning of the
threat of nuclear war. Below is a toolkit relating to domestic politics and foreign
policy that parties might use during the simulation.

Political Survival

Political leaders use foreign policy endeavors to maximize their tenure in office. In
other words, being purely selfish individuals, what they care about most is staying in
power longer. Since most of politics speak to short-term events, often we see leaders
for the small gains, perhaps through rallying the nation around the flag. In the
Cypriot context, therefore, you can expect leaders to sacrifice long-term large gains
for short-term small benefits. Be especially careful in relating issues such as property
exchange, allocation of agricultural land, and continuation of embargoes.

Bargaining Set

A specialized set of political survival approaches relates to the concept of bar-
gaining set. Putnam’s (1988) study on two-level games constitutes one of the
most important theoretical treatments on the link between domestic politics and
foreign policy. Putnam’s study rests on a simple argument: while striking a deal
may be in the best interest of the agent who is conducting the negotiations, he/
she is bounded by the preferences of his/her constituents who can displace the
negotiator from power. The bargaining-set approach again builds on the
assumption that political leaders/negotiators will always try to maximize their
chances of election or reelection. We will also assume that the politicians in the
island behave on this assumption.
Note that, then, if one party can convince the other party about how constrained she is ("I would very much like to agree with you on that point, but my electorate would never ever accept such a proposal") that party can always strike a better deal. Think about its applications real life: I would very much like to pay 200,000 liras for that Ferrari, but my wife would never allow it... but she is OK for 100,000 liras. This may be one of the reasons why sometimes parties “leak” information to the press.

**Diversion**

Foreign policy can also constitute a tool for diversion when things start going bad at home. Research on the United States, for instance, suggests that presidents from the Democratic Party are more likely to initiate militarized conflict when the unemployment is high, and presidents from the Republican Party are more likely to initiate militarized conflict when the inflation is high to divert the public’s attention from unfavorable economic conditions at home. Another famous example of diversion happened in 1982 in the Falklands Islands. Trying to divert attention from dismal economic conditions, the military junta ruling Argentina chose to become involved in a conflict with the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands. This conflict eventually led to the Falklands/Malvinas War. Similarly, the unification talks may serve as diversion opportunities.

Note that the scope of the simulation is constrained on purpose. Time limits do not allow us to address many other critical aspects of what is otherwise a very complex issue with numerous players.

**References**


