

STATECRAFT IR SIMULATION

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: The following “debriefing questions” are designed to illuminate, for the entire class, key concepts that may be experienced more directly by some students than others. For example, only a subset of countries likely experienced an autocratic president, an intense security dilemma with a neighbor, an exploitative trading arrangement, or a secret deal with a rising hegemon. Yet all students can gain from this knowledge to maximize the learning impact of the simulation. Therefore, it is recommended that you spend at least 30-60 minutes of class time focusing on debriefing after the simulation has concluded for the semester. There is enough material here to fill multiple class periods if you wish to spend several days really delving into what was learned in the simulation, but the basic debriefing points can be covered in 30-60 minutes. (Note that the first 5 topics are recommended, while the remaining topics are optional). A class-wide discussion that allows everyone to hear from specific players about their experiences is the recommended approach to debriefing. You might consider bringing members of specific countries up to the front of the class as you ask them relevant questions. For example, suppose a coalition of three countries ended up dominating international relations in your Statecraft world. Bringing those three countries’ members to the front while you discuss power transition and hegemony will put the focus on those key players. You are of course not limited to the following questions; you know the unique contours of how things unfolded in your simulation world, and so you are encouraged to ask more specific questions of certain countries and students who had special roles or experiences in your simulation. (For example, “I want to ask the members of Utopia: why did you break that treaty with Mordor? It seemed to be in your best interests, so what was your reasoning?”).

The Ice Mountain Problem and the Global Environment

Questions:

- How long did your world wait to take action on the global flooding, and what were the environmental consequences?
- Why did you wait as long as you did? That is, what were the obstacles to (1) taking the flooding threat seriously and (2) once you were concerned, building the Globe of Frost?
- If your world built the Globe of Frost, how did you divide up the cost across countries? Who took the lead and why? Did you notice free riding or “easy riding”?
- What are the parallels to real-world environmental problems?

International Cooperation, Treaties, International Law, and IGOs

Questions:

- Did countries regularly meet and deal with global problems through the UN or another body (even an informal one)?

- Were IGOs effective in facilitating cooperation (as liberals expect) or were they either ineffective or dominated by the most powerful countries (as realists expect).
- What *global* treaties, if any, did your world try to create? What treaties/agreements did you negotiate between smaller groups of countries?
- Did you devise any way to enforce the treaties that you created? What were the challenges of enforcing these agreements?
- Did anyone violate an agreement in your world? If so, why did that country (or countries) violate this agreement? What were the consequences?
- Do you think international cooperation was easier or harder in your world than in the real world? Why?

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Trade and Economic Interdependence/Dependence

Questions:

- Think about the resources in your world: gold, food, steel, oil, and scientific knowledge. Were all of these resources equally valuable or were some more useful than others? Why were some more or less valuable?
- Every country was rich in some resources and poor in others. What *opportunities* and *constraints* did these resource endowments create for your country? Be specific. What resources and products did you have a comparative advantage in producing?
- What countries did you develop trade relationships with, and why? (i.e., what resources did they have that you needed and vice versa?)
- Did these trade relationships make it easier for you to cooperate and avoid conflict with your trade partners on other issues? (As commercial liberalism would expect). In causal terms, did you trade with certain countries because you were already allies or did you become allies due to your ongoing trade relationship?
- Did you find that certain trade relationships were asymmetric, with one partner needing the other more? Did these situations of dependency (rather than interdependence) create opportunities for coercion and did some countries take advantage of this? (As realists would expect).
- Which countries in your Statecraft world represented the wealthy, developed “core” and which were part of the “periphery”? Describe relations between the core and the periphery: was there an element of exploitation, and how did the exploited actors respond?

Power Transition, System Polarity, and Hegemony

Questions:

- Your world began as multipolar, with each country roughly equal in terms of capabilities and influence. How did the polarity of your world evolve over the

simulation? Did it become bipolar? Unipolar? Which countries became particularly powerful?

- Power is generally defined as influence, not simply in terms of capabilities. Which countries had a lot of influence in your simulation world, and how did they acquire this influence? Can you think of examples of countries exercising “hard power” in your world? What about “soft power”?
- Did you face a situation in which one or more countries were quickly “rising” through economic or military gains? Did this create fear and destabilize the international system? How did you deal with these rising powers? (Did you balance against them or bandwagon with them?)
- With no higher authority above states, the world of Statecraft meets the realists’ definition of anarchy. How did the lack of an enforcer affect countries’ perceptions and interactions in your world? Is it possible to (at least partially) overcome the negative effects of anarchy in Statecraft? If so, how? What are the implications for real world politics?
- If you had a single hegemonic power in your world, how did that country exercise leadership and shape the rules of the international system to their benefit?
- How were the most powerful states in your Statecraft world perceived? (Common answers could include “condescending,” “threatening,” “insensitive to others’ views,” etc.). Was it their capabilities, their actions, or their rhetoric (or some combination of these) that produced these perceptions? Do you find parallels to America’s experience as the world’s dominant power? If you were advising the U.S. President, what advice would you give about the way power should be exercised to minimize resentment or hostility?

Intelligence, Secrets, and Lies

- What secrets can you now reveal about your country’s plans or things that happened behind the scenes?
- What was the most effective way of gathering information in your simulation? Did you use the spy missions? What about exchanging ambassadors? Did you learn information just by overhearing others’ conversations or glancing at computer or phone screens that were carelessly left visible?
- Were there rumors that you assumed were true and turned out to be false? What did these rumors say? Did you intentionally spread false information to other countries, and why?

ADDITIONAL TOPICS (OPTIONAL FOR DEBRIEFING)

Norms, Identities, and Constructivism

Questions:

- What international norms have developed in your Statecraft world? Through what process did they develop? Why these expectations and not others?
- Have countries felt constrained by these norms or have there been violations? If you have observed violations, what do these events suggest about the conditions that favor norm violation?
- Compare the norms of your Statecraft world with international norms in the real world. How are they different (or similar), and what accounts for these differences or similarities?
- What *identity or identities* did your country have? (for example, hegemonic power, military giant, rogue state, peacebuilder, neutral state, isolationist, environmental steward, etc.). Was this determined by your own group's perceptions/actions or by the way you were treated by others? Did some countries get forced into a certain role, such as "rogue state," by the way other countries treated them?

Foreign Policy

Questions:

- Did members of your country with different responsibilities (such as Secretary of Defense, Domestic Affairs Advisor, etc.) have different priorities and concerns during the simulation? How did this lead to clashes or bargaining among different officials within your government? (These are examples of bureaucratic politics).
- Describe a crisis situation that your country faced in Statecraft (it must meet all three conditions of a crisis: high threat, short decision time, and surprise). How was your decision-making process different (if at all) in this situation as opposed to non-crisis situations? Would this "crisis-induced process" be likely to produce better or worse decisions than the normal process?
- To what degree did your Statecraft country exhibit symptoms of groupthink (overestimation of group power/morality, incomplete survey of information/options/risks, and pressures toward uniformity)? Give details. Did this lead to a bad outcome, as frequently occurs with groupthink? If you experienced groupthink, why did your decision-making group fall victim to groupthink? Could you have avoided it?
- Did your country's Chief Decision-Maker pursue a more democratic or participatory decision-making process or was he/she more autocratic? Give examples. How did this affect the quality of decision-making in your group? Did the leader's style depend on the issue at stake?
- Mirror-imaging has been cited as an important cause of intelligence failure, and it is common in Statecraft. Describe a case in which you or other members of your country engaged in mirror imaging during the simulation and wrongly assumed that others shared your values, perceptions, or calculations. What were the consequences? How might you have avoided mirror imaging, and what are the implications for real world decision-makers?

Ethics

Questions:

- Choose an example of a war that either (a) occurred in your Statecraft world or (b) was seriously contemplated by your country or others. Evaluate this actual or potential war in terms of the following principles of Just War Theory: just cause, right intention, last resort, legitimate authority, reasonable chance of success, proportionality, and discrimination. On which criteria does the war “pass the test,” and where does it fall short? Overall, would you say this was a just war or not?
- Is Statecraft “just a game” in which anything goes, or should students adhere to some basic ethical practices such as honesty and not harming others since their classmates’ grades may be affected by what happens in the simulation? Justify your position. What examples from your simulation qualified as ethical or unethical behavior, in your view?

Nuclear Weapons

Questions:

- (**NOTE: Only use this question if one or more countries have developed nuclear weapons in the Statecraft world). How has the presence of nuclear weapons affected countries’ calculations and behavior in the world of Statecraft? Be specific. How have you sought to protect your country from nuclear annihilation? Does the presence of nuclear weapons make the world of Statecraft more stable or less stable? Do nuclear weapons have this same effect in the real world?
- (**NOTE: Only use this question after the OLF has made its nuclear threats, as revealed in a news message on Turn 6). At the start of Turn 6, General Drax claimed to have a nuclear weapon and threatened to use it if Orion was not freed. Do you think the OLF would actually use it? Why or why not (think about their goals). Is there any way to deter terrorist organizations that have no territory to hold under threat? What other options are open to countries targeted by such groups?