

STATECRAFT INTERNATIONAL SECURITY 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 security 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?”).

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?

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?