Simulating Peace Negotiations: A Case Study of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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Abstract

Background. This article reflects on the use of a simulation of peace talks between Israeli and Palestinians in an upper-level undergraduate course at a liberal arts university in the United States. The university was commissioned to test an externally developed proposal and implementation plan for peace negotiations between Israeli and Palestinians (the "IMPLEMENTATION PLAN").

Aim. (1) To contribute to student's academic learning and understanding of the conflict; (2) to find strengths and weaknesses of the model.

Method. Analysis of data collected using a convergent parallel mixed method approach involving surveys, exit interviews, and guided reflection papers.

Results.

Student Learning Outcomes. The data supports a deeper understanding of the nature of the conflict as well as the complexity of peace negotiations. Students reported a higher level of engagement with the subject matter as a result of the simulation. The model encouraged innovative thinking and new solutions, which might be of interest in real life application. Challenges to student learning were mainly related to (1) student identification with their roles and (2) a need to compromise and finding quick answers.

Model. The simulation demonstrated the strengths of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, namely to the focused, structured negotiation process with narrowly

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defined "tracks." Challenges include the structure of the simulation, the question of applicability of the model to a real life situation, as well as the long-term implementation strategy of negotiation outcomes.

Conclusion. The simulation of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN greatly benefited student learning and led to thought-provoking outcomes concerning negotiations. However, the findings suggest the need for flexibility and modification of the model.

Keywords

academic learning, active learning, Arab-Israeli Conflict, bargaining, conflict, debriefing, design, emotions, innovation in pedagogy, intergroup relations, mixed methods, negotiations, peace, peace and conflict exercises, role specification, scenario, simulation, violence

Introduction

In the context of teaching political science, simulations are processes designed to represent political systems in which participants take on the role of political actors that interact with one another to create fictitious or non-fictitious political situations. They involve at least two participants (individuals or teams) that represent states, non-state actors, international organizations, or other related actors (e.g., the media) who replicate a given political scenario within a predetermined timeframe and according to specific rules (Ben-Yehuda, Levin-Banchik, & Naveh, 2015; Boyer, 2011; Brecher & Ben-Yehuda, 1985). Simulations serve as a way to generate creative approaches to political problems and are commonly seen as an effective teaching tool to better engage and educate undergraduate students, both as participants and designers (Asal, 2005; Druckman & Ebner, 2007). They can make complex theories clearer to the students by encouraging them to experiment with theory, thereby making that theory more real to them and abstract concepts more concrete (Boyer, 2011; Bredemeier, 1978; Corbeil & Laveault, 2011; Kanner, 2007). Simulations help students to gain more factual information about a subject (Goldhamer & Speier, 1959), to develop a more complex view of world politics (Asal, 2005), and to improve critical and analytical thinking skills (McMahon & Miller, 2013; Shellman & Turan, 2006). Simulations benefit student motivation (Switky & Aviles, 2007; Weir & Baranowski, 2011) and are more effective than lectures, discussions, and papers in generating "a self-sustaining reaction that develops its own momentum and course independent of the limits or boundaries with which the analyst starts out" (Asal, 2005; Bloomfield & Padelford, 1959, p. 1115; Taylor, 2013; Weir & Baranowski, 2011). With regards to simulating peace negotiations, scholars generally agree on the usefulness of simulations to illustrate the complexities and challenges of peace talks (Bartels, McCown, & Wilkie, 2013; Bloomfield & Padelford, 1959; Brynen & Milante, 2013; Crookall, 2013; Dougherty, 2003; Ebner & Efron, 2005; Kanner, 2007; Lantis, Kuzma, & Boehrer,

2000; McMahon & Miller, 2013; Powers & Kirkpatrick, 2013; Williams & Williams, 2007; Yilmaz, Ören, & Ghasem-Aghaee, 2006).

This article describes the use of a simulation of peace talks between Israeli and Palestinians in my upper-level undergraduate course entitled *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Workshop* at Christopher Newport University. The university was commissioned to test an externally developed proposal and implementation plan for peace negotiations between Israeli and Palestinians (hereinafter "IMPLEMENTATION PLAN"). Beyond the introduction of the model and its adaptation for the political science classroom, this article examines two main questions. First, what kind of knowledge and skills have student participants developed as a result of the simulation and how has the simulation benefited their academic experience? Second, what kind of novel insights have participants offered regarding the challenges and opportunities of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN in a real life situation? This article uses a convergent parallel mixed method approach involving surveys, in-class discussions, personalized and group reflection papers, and exit interviews to analyze the model and measure the impact of the peace simulation on student learning outcomes. It contributes to the discussion of simulations as learning tools in the political science class room as well as the question of how adaptable simulation outcomes are for real world situations.

The Model for Our Simulation (The IMPLEMENTATION PLAN)

In 2009, Christopher Newport University was approached by a retired businessman who had invested time and money to have experts in international conflict management develop a proposal to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His extensive experience in business mediation led him to believe that these types of strategies could be used in a structured and interactive way to solve political problems. As part of his plan, he asked that Christopher Newport University undergraduate students simulate peace negotiations among the different parties involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to test his proposal. He would then forward the outcomes to his connections in the United States Department of State.

The *An Approach to a Solution - Implementation Plan*, as the businessman's proposal is called, foresees a well-defined, multiparty negotiation process with the end goal of a Palestinian state. The suggested approach follows the interactive conflict resolution theories and problem solving workshop strategies developed by John Burton, Herbert Kelman, Ronald Fisher, and others (Burton, 1969, 1979, 1984, 1987; Fisher, 1989, 1997, 2007; Kelman, 1972, 1979, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2005b). Interactive conflict resolution is a method by which a small number of unofficial representatives of identity groups or states engaged in deep-rooted, violent conflict interact face to face in a closed safe space over a set period of time to (1) promote analysis of the conflict situation and motivations of the parties and (2) find solutions to the conflict. This process is facilitated by an impartial third party with the goal to generate outcomes that are perceived fair, just, and equitable by the conflicting parties. In multiple
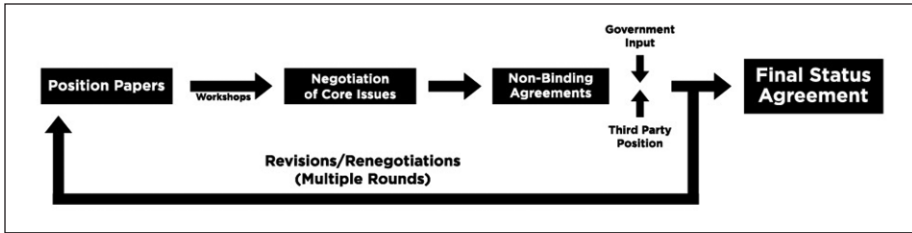
Figure 1. The IMPLEMENTATION PLAN negotiation process.

workshops, the conflict is analyzed and rationalized into tangible causes (e.g., resources, political power struggles) and subjective factors (e.g., psycho-social, identity-based elements). These workshops can be held at all stages of the peace process: in the prenegotiation phase to educate, discuss attitudes, perceptions, and ideas among conflicting parties; in the paranegotiation phase, in which official and unofficial negotiations are held in parallel; and during the peacebuilding phase, in which the workshops serve as "sounding boards" for de-escalation strategies and cooperation (Fisher, 2007). Advocates of interactive conflict resolution argue that this unofficial, informal, safe, and relatively low risk negotiation process will over time lead to innovative outcomes that might guide the official peace process. Participants will change their attitudes towards nonviolent relationships and experience positive motivation for continued peaceful engagement, a more open and accurate dialogue, and a way to diagnose the underlying causes of the conflict (Fisher, 1997; Rouhana, 2000).

Based on these theories and approaches, the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN proposal foresees the creation of concurrent, separate workshops in which unofficial representatives of the Israeli and Palestinian factions, e.g., low-level politicians, economists, sociologists, religious scholars, and civil society leaders, discuss the core issues of the conflict with the goal to negotiate a two-state solution. These core issues were identified as:

- Palestinian statehood and governance;
- borders between Israel and a future Palestinian State;
- the right of refugees of the 1947/48 Arab-Israeli conflict to return to their roots;
- questions of legality and permanence of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories;
- political control over Jerusalem;
- access to and allocation of water;
- shared infrastructure;
- separate and combined economic policies; and
- the question of security for both parties.

The negotiation process is illustrated in Figure 1. The program begins with each side presenting position papers on each of the core issues. Over the course of about two weeks (or any other, relatively short, mutually agreed timeframe), the workshop

participants negotiate positions, concessions, and plans based on their initial approaches and directions given by their respective governments with the goal of producing non-binding agreements. At the end of the workshop period, parties return to their respective governments and political leaders to discuss outcomes of past discussions and to get directives for the next cycle of negotiation. In the meantime, impartial mediators, led by the USA, use the time between each workshop cycle to synthesize a third position combining the approaches presented by the conflicting parties. The parties can choose to use the third party position as a basis for discussion upon their return. After multiple rounds of negotiations and consultations, the program eventually concludes with a codified body of work setting a precedent and standard for implementation of a negotiated peace plan. This Final Status Agreement has to be ratified by the constituents of both sides to ensure widespread support for the agreement.

Adaptations for the Political Science Classroom

The simulation of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN took place in an upper-level undergraduate class called *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Workshop*. Students for this class were selected on the basis of a rigorous application process involving a statement of interest and an evaluation of their academic record. In the three semesters the class was taught (fall 2009, fall 2010, and spring 2012), each course had 15 participants. All students were full-time undergraduates enrolled at Christopher Newport University, 68% of which were Political Science majors. Other majors included History, Anthropology, Sociology, and English. 38% of students were male, 62 % female, which represents the male/female ratio at the university. The course focused entirely on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, involving extensive readings, lectures by myself as well as other experts on the subject, in-depth discussions of the conflict, examination of the identity, motives, and strategies of the conflicting parties, as well as research assignments focusing on one aspect of the core issues discussed above. In 2012, the course involved a ten-day study trip to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

To adapt the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN for simulation in the political science classroom, the model had to be changed and simplified. These adaptations are illustrated in Table 1.

Throughout the semester, students were coached on their position (Who do they represent? What would the political leaders they represent like to achieve?) and negotiation strategy (How would a moderate handle negotiations? What kind of approaches can a mediator take in negotiations?). Within each position group and the third party, one student focused specifically on one core issue, thereby becoming an expert on this particular subject.

The main part of the simulation took place off campus for three main reasons. First, the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN foresees that negotiation cycles be held in a closed off, safe location. We were able to use the businessman's estate for this purpose. Second and related, it seemed important to get the students out of their regular environment (friends, schedule, homework) to be able to fully concentrate on the negotiations. For the same reason, students had to turn in their phones at the beginning of the

Table 1. Adaptations of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN for the Political Science Classroom.

Roles/Topics/Location	Adaptations
Representation of actors	Five position groups • Palestinian moderates (loosely following Fatah) • Palestinian hardliners (loosely following Hamas) • Israeli moderates (loosely following the Labor and Kadima parties) • Israeli hardliners (loosely following the Likud party) • Impartial third party
Negotiation topics	Three core issues discussed • borders • security • Israeli settlements
Location	Separate location, off campus

day and were only allowed to use them during breaks and at the end of the day. Students were permitted to use laptops for note taking and for researching topics relating to the negotiations. Third, many of these types of negotiations do in fact take place in a closed, protected environment, such as Camp David, which made the simulation closer to reality as if we had staged it on campus.

To account for the limited timeframe, the negotiation plan was adapted as shown in Table 2.

Debriefing of the Simulation

Debriefing students and assessment of learning achievements is a crucial part of the simulation (Brynen & Milante, 2013; Crookall, 2013; Raymond & Usherwood, 2013; Shellman & Turan, 2006). The debriefing in this case happened in two phases. In phase one (right after the simulation weekend), multiple class periods were dedicated to the discussion of conflict outcomes and suggested peace solutions as well as the emotional and personal perceptions of the simulation. In phase two (at the end of the semester), students were asked to reflect on the simulation with some emotional distance and to put the topics discussed into a broader context. The first phase was conducted mostly verbally and allowed students to comment on the political implications of suggested solutions, discuss progress made, and deal with immediate frustrations. It also served as way to focus on "teachable moments" (Newman & Twigg, 2000, p. 841) that highlight theoretical challenges and concepts discussed earlier in class. During the second phase, students had to hand in a last group position paper responding to the text of the agreement, the negotiation outcomes, and the leadership of the third party. The assignment also included an individual portion, namely the completion of a survey, a guided personalized reflection paper of the simulation, and their assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

Table 2. Negotiation Timeframe.

Phase	Time frame	Tasks/Process
Phase 1: Prenegotiation (in class)	Week before the negotiation	Position groups: • Position paper on each of the three core issues (shared with class) • Negotiation strategy (shared with the professor only) Third party: • Rules for negotiation, (e.g., room setup, speaking time, breaks, secret negotiations with the third party) (shared with class) • Third party position on each of the three core issues (shared with the professor only)
Phase 2: Negotiation (off campus, weekend)	Day 1 (negotiation cycle 1)	Morning: Three simultaneous workshops on the core issues (each position group sends one member of the group; the workshops are presided by a member of the third party) workshops start with a (short) presentation of each position and the suggestions made by the third party timeframe: 2-3 hours Afternoon: Position groups meet and prepare changed position papers (rebuttals; reflecting on the discussions in the workshops); third party prepares a synthesized report of the workshop discussions Position groups and third party can meet with each other to discuss their positions (secret negotiations) Position papers and reports (summary of negotiations) are distributed to all participants timeframe: about 3 hours
	Day 2 (negotiation cycle 2)	Morning: Discussion of rebuttals and third party reports in workshop groups timeframe: 2 hours Late: morning Third party synthesizes morning session and creates draft resolution on the basis of the workshop discussions Position groups: final secret negotiations timeframe: 1 hour Afternoon: Plenary session: discussion of first draft of peace resolution (led by the third party) timeframe: 2 hours Third party adapts resolution based on plenary discussion
Phase 3: Post-negotiation (in class)	Week(s) after the negotiation	Position groups decide to agree or disagree and prepare a justification of their position; third party will come up with a voting procedure Reading of position statements Final discussion of the potential adaptations of the peace agreement text Final vote on the text

The discussion below is based on the analysis of the data collected using a convergent parallel mixed method approach involving surveys, group papers, personalized papers, exit interviews, and notes of in-class discussions of the 45 students who participated in the class over the three semesters it was offered. The response rate was 100% as the completion of these assignments was part of the overall class grade.

Discussion of Student Learning Outcomes

Because educational benefits of simulations and the level of course content retention is often overestimated by students in unguided self-assessments (Raymond & Usherwood, 2013; Shellman & Turan, 2006), it was important to design questions to specifically address learning objectives. The three learning objectives for the simulation were:

1. enhanced conceptual understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace negotiations;
2. high level of student engagement in the simulation; and
3. high level of innovation and critical thinking with regards to proposed solutions and processes.

These learning objectives were developed in response to the university's assessment goals as well as the businessman's commission of testing the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

Conceptual understanding. With regards to conceptual understanding of the conflict and the peace process, the goal was to gain a more nuanced perception of the situation, the motivations of the parties to the conflict, and the basics of peace negotiation and conflict resolution. Parts of the survey (two questions) and of the personalized paper (one question) were specifically designed to ask students (1) whether the simulation had changed their opinion of the conflict, its causes, and the incentives of conflicting parties; and (2) if they perceived they developed a deeper understanding of the complexities and many facets of the conflict. 91% of respondents mentioned that the simulation permitted them to look deeper into the roots of the conflict, better understand the viewpoints and motivations of different actors in the conflict, and learn about the way in which peace negotiations are conducted. As one student wrote, "[m]ost importantly, the simulation gave us a greater awareness of how individuals on each side would act during the negotiation process and the extreme difficulties of mediating between the two" (class of 2009). Another student wrote: "Before the simulation, I thought this conflict was just about land, which is something that can easily be divided. Now I know that this is not true – the conflict is about so much more" (class of 2009). A member of the third party reflected: "By participating in the simulation, I learned how integral proper communication is in the peace process, how emotions factor into negotiating, and how to set up and run negotiations" (class of 2010).

These findings are consistent with the research on simulations in general, and on simulations of peace negotiations in particular, as reviewed in the introduction. The principal advantage of simulations is that they give students "first-hand insights into the complexities and nuances of international politics" (Dougherty, 2003, p. 240). They afford students the opportunity to recreate real world situations and let them experience "the multiple and often countervailing interests, pressures, and constraints which international actors find themselves subject to everyday" (Dougherty, 2003, p. 240). Experiencing events by reproducing them allows students to gain a new perspective on peace negotiations, which then spurs a better understanding of the material and aids in long-term retention (Dougherty, 2003). A majority of students specifically mentioned how these "first-hand insights" changed their perspective of a conflict from a rationally solvable issue to one connected with non-negotiable emotion, pressures, and limitations to compromise.

Student engagement. The second objective was the promotion of student engagement in the simulation. Three questions in the survey and exit interview specifically addressed this issue by asking participants to determine their emotional investment and the level of identification with the roles they were given and the dynamics of relationships and interactions within the classroom. Participants reported generally high levels of emotional investment and identification with their roles (62% "highest" and "high") and thought they were generally well prepared for the simulation in terms of role adoption (60% "highest" and "high" overall, with increasing numbers through the years (role adoption 2009: 50%, 2010: 59%, 2012: 71%)). At the same time, they also commented on how difficult it was to maintain their roles and not to compromise for the sake of agreement. As one student observed: "I'm not used to holding onto past grievances and refusing to recognize the wants and needs of another" (class of 2010). Students discussed how the simulation was unlike most other group assignments they experience in college, which are usually geared towards finding a common solution. In our simulation, the goal was to stay true to character, not to reach an agreement, which was met with frustration. Another student wrote: "I was frustrated that the goal did not seem to be to reach some agreement, but for the students to understand that these negotiations mainly end in disagreement" (class of 2010). A third participant said: "I thoroughly enjoyed the simulation, even though I was amongst those who were quite frustrated during the process and remained so after our accord failed in the end" (class of 2012). There was a general consensus among participating students that some people lost sight of the role they were supposed to be playing for the sake of coming to an agreement (classes of 2009, 2010, 2012).

Challenges related to role identification and deviation from assigned character in search of alternative goals are not unique to the simulation of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, but have been described in other studies as well (Chasek, 2005; Crossley-Frolick, 2010; Ebner & Efron, 2005; Simpson & Kaussler, 2009; Young, 2006). The success of simulations often rests on the ability of students to play their role consistently and on the instructor to effectively facilitate the process. Simulations that are not carefully designed, prepared, and implemented dampen enthusiasm and negatively

affect learning outcomes of other students in the class (Galatas, 2006). The instructor and third party decision making process is particularly important in ensuring the effectiveness of the simulation and in keeping students focused on the educational goals (Vincent & Shepherd, 1998).

Similar issues were observed in interactive conflict resolution and problem solving workshops described in part I of this article. Fisher (1989, 1997) and Kelman (1979) both emphasize the roles of the third party facilitator in the negotiation process. While problem solving workshops are not simulations *per se*, the negotiation environment is artificial as it represents an unofficial, informal, and closed space within which participants can address and discuss issues in an open forum without the risk of political consequences. Scholars have pointed out the importance of briefing and reminding participants on their roles and checking in with participants to ensure that they are staying true to reality and acknowledge the constraints of the situation (Fisher, 1989; Kelman, 2005a).

Innovation and critical thinking. The final learning objective was to achieve high levels of innovation and critical thinking in negotiation processes and outcomes. Two questions in the survey and in the personalized paper were designed to address this issue. Students had to critically assess the level of innovation and novelty of solutions proposed during the simulation and discuss specific examples. A majority of students (82%) rated the innovation level "very high" or "high" and commented on how the simulation opened their eyes to inventive solutions, critical thinking, and new approaches in negotiating this conflict. In one case, students developed a very detailed plan on how to find a solution for the security and border issues (class of 2009). The *Olives for Peace* plan detailed a way in which Palestinians would be able to kick-start their economy, thereby reducing unemployment, increasing security, and finding a creative way of approaching the border issue. In another case, students discussed very detailed land swaps to solve questions of how to determine borders and deal with Israeli settlements (class of 2010). While their solutions were not always realistic, these innovations added to the knowledge gained of the conflict and peace process by allowing them to engage with the situation in a manner they would not have been able to in a different setting. As Ben Dak (1972) states, "one of the greatest advantages of simulating the Arab-Israeli relationship is that the rules do not forbid the evolution and realization of roles, resources, interactions, sequence of events, etc., except those that would be impossible in the real situation" (p. 287). Dougherty (2003) agrees with this assessment, stating that simulations allow students to explore politics from a variety of perspectives and enhance their innovation and critical thinking skills.

Facilitator and Researcher Lessons

The analysis of the surveys and personal papers indicate that staying true to character, propagating realistic solutions, and not surrendering to the need to compromise have been the main challenges of the simulation of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN. Learning from experience, I became more hands-on during the simulations and paid

closer attention to where discussions were heading. I also surveyed students during break times to see how they perceived the simulation, the moderation of negotiations, and the topics discussed. This allowed me to catch issues much earlier in the process and bring the simulation back on its course. In addition, I spent more time preparing the members of the third party for their important role during the simulation. We discussed and role-played different negotiation tactics and met more often on a one-on-one basis. I also took students' personalities into account when allocating roles, as an ideal mediator is impartial and objective, adaptable, and a team player (Imperati, 2009). While I let students choose their roles freely in 2009 and 2010, I partially assigned roles in 2012 based on personal opinions, classroom behavior, and students' self-assessment. Additionally, the survey results indicated that role identification was higher in the case of the class that travelled to Israel and the Palestinian territories (class of 2012).

Keeping the simulation as close to reality as possible has amplified some of these main challenges because it added complexity to both the roles and the content of the simulation. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, every factual or historical detail is highly contested, its interpretation reflective of the identity of the conflicting party, and its discussion part of the narrative of the conflict itself. Considering this, it might make sense to not only simplify the situation with regards to parties represented as has been done in the past, but also with regards to the situation on the ground, thereby employing a type of simulation Ebner and Efron (2005) refer to as *pseudo-reality*. Pseudo-reality simulation games focus on "creating a backdrop against which participants engage in negotiation and mediation skill building using real life events and facts—but only so far as these events and facts are helpful to the learning process" (p. 8-9). As a result, students become familiar with the real situation but are not constrained by real events as they actually occurred. The pseudo-reality simulation distances the simulation from the real life situation and thus avoids the problems of participant role relationship inherent in reality based simulations, and ensures that participants will reap the educational benefits of the simulation (Ebner & Efron, 2005). The downside of a pseudo-reality simulation, however, is that the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN – an integral part of what the University was commissioned to do – will become more difficult (see next chapter). Finding a balance between the creation of ideal environment for student learning and honoring our responsibility with regards to the businessman's requirements and expectations will be a key component in the development of future adaptations of our simulation.

Discussion of Challenges and Opportunities of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The second key component of this exercise was to test the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN as an effective model for negotiation of a peace agreement between Israeli and Palestinians. Obviously, because of the adaptations of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN for the classroom, only a limited assessment is possible. The following brief observations are based on my reflections as well as student comments.

1. The model creates a well-structured process with clear direction and achievable sub-goals. It allows participants to negotiate within a distinctly determined framework, both with regards to timeframe and focus, which inspires innovation without the constraints of day-to-day politics. It also encourages participants to get to know each other, thereby establishing personal relationships that could be beneficial for the future. Kelman and others have found similar outcomes with regards to personal interaction in their problem-solving workshops (Chataway, 2002; Kelman, 2008).

2. The division of the negotiations into core issue workshop groups proved to be beneficial overall. The narrow focus of negotiations turned out to be advantageous because it allowed participants to prepare in the best way possible. The workshop model kept negotiations on track, particularly in cases in which the third party was very diligent to ensure discussions to remain centered on the core issue at hand.

3. The downside of separate workshop groups was the difficulty of implementing a cohesive negotiation strategy for each position group. Core issues could rarely be negotiated in isolation. In our simulation, members of delegations contradicted each other with regards to concessions made, and delegations were split among themselves because of the different negotiation outcomes. In one particular case (class of 2010), students representing the Israeli side in the borders workshop negotiated a land swap that involved the dissolution of an Israeli settlement. The students playing Israel in the settlement workshop, however, had insisted that none of the existing settlements would be moved. The resulting impasse put the overall negotiation strategy of the Israeli side in jeopardy. This type of issue could very well present itself in reality as well. The question of Jerusalem, for example, will be very difficult to negotiate without the concurrent discussion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the border and security issues.

4. A related issue presented itself when delegations, particularly those most prone to straying from their roles, made too many concessions without discussing their steps with their fellow Palestinians/Israeli. One delegation specifically stated in their final reflection that "each delegate believed that they had secured an arrangement on their specific issue that represented the interest of all Palestinians. When each issue was presented together, however, we perceived that we had conceded too much to the avaricious desires of the Israelis" (class of 2009). Intra-delegation conflict between hardliners and moderates over negotiation strategy and concessions was a problem in all three simulations. The definition and extent of decision-making powers of delegations and the level and method of involvement by the central government in each step of the negotiation is crucial here. Delegations need some flexibility and on-the-spot decision-making powers to make negotiations worthwhile. At the same time, without careful coordination of the position groups' efforts, delegations will have conflict among themselves and the outcome of the negotiations can be put

in jeopardy. Alternating between core issue-related and integrated discussions (all members of the delegation present) and prioritizing core issues internally ahead of the negotiations might alleviate some of these concerns.

5. The rationale of including Palestinian hardliners in the simulated negotiation process was questioned widely by students across all three iterations of our simulation (55% mentioned this issue in their personalized papers). The inclusion of Hamas in multi-party negotiations at the current stage of the conflict would most likely not only be opposed by the group itself, but also by Israeli and American officials. While the inclusion of Palestinian hardliners in the simulation was certainly beneficial for the students' learning process and the academic examination of multi-party negotiations, it might not be achievable in reality. Because the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN is based on the assumption that only inclusive multi-party negotiations will lead to a solution of the conflict, this is a serious obstacle. One option to overcome this potential impasse is to start negotiating on one mutually agreed upon core issue only, to establish a clear plan for future negotiations, and to discuss some of the more controversial issues at a later time. The downside of this approach is, of course, the fact that this kick-the-can-down-the-road approach has failed in the past, as the Oslo Peace Process clearly illustrates.

6. Students additionally questioned the likelihood of the USA assuming an impartial and neutral role as a mediator, which is a key premise of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN. The special relationship of the USA with Israel has prevented the USA from being an impartial third party in past negotiations (see for example Little, 2008; Migdal, 2014; Reich, 2013) and there are no indications that American strategy towards Israeli and Palestinians will change in the near future. While the USA certainly has to be invested in any kind of peace process in the Middle East, it is questionable if the USA is the ideal selection for a third party as described by the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN. It might be more fruitful to choose a more neutral broker and ask the USA to legitimize and support the peace process from the outside. This strategy has been successful in the past, as the negotiations of the Oslo Accords show.

7. The IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, despite its name, does not prescribe a way to realize negotiation outcomes. How to transfer negotiation outcomes into actual political change and how to ensure compliance with the Final Status Agreement is not addressed during the negotiation process. While designing an execution strategy was outside the scope of our simulation, students struggled with the lack of clarity on this issue both during the simulation and in their assessments of simulation outcomes. They mentioned that the high level of uncertainty regarding the future and the absence of a clear process of post-agreement implementation made negotiations difficult. Interestingly, the lack of a clearly defined execution strategy for peace agreements is a common reality in peace implementation (Arnault, 2006; Kempin Reuter, 2012; Stedman, 2001; Stedman, Rothchild, & Cousens, 2002). The 2003 Geneva Accord, for example, negotiated for over two years in a manner very similar to the one

described in the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, lacked a clear implementation strategy besides establishing and Implementation and Verification Group that was supposed to oversee the process (Geneva Accord: A model Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, 2003). While the Geneva Accord serves as a forerunner of a potential future agreement, this weakness was cited as one of main points for criticism and as the reason for the Accord's eventual failure (Klein, 2004a, 2004b; Lerner, 2004). In other words, while it might be possible to find agreement on key issues, implementation is not always politically feasible. Conflicting parties, major global and regional powers, and circumstances on the ground might not favor a smooth transition. In fact, secessionist conflicts and territorial disputes with a large number or internally divided warring parties and a high likelihood for spoilers who benefit from the continuance of the conflict tend to be among the most difficult to solve. The absence of international support for the agreement, a lack of state institutions and resources, a high level of militarization, and hostile neighboring states further complicate implementation (Downs & Stedman, 2002; Hampson, 1996; Stedman et al., 2002; Walter, 1997). In the Israeli-Palestinian case, all factors seem to be present, at least on the Palestinian side (the Israeli state institutions and resources are well established). In addition, the literature on problem-solving workshops and interactive conflict resolution has pointed out the difficulties of transferring achieved attitudinal changes and/or proposed solutions to the decision-making bodies of the conflicting parties (Bercovitch, 1992; Fisher, 1997; Rouhana, 2000). Statements issued in such isolated negotiations lose their persuasive power once negotiators return to their constituencies (Chattaway, 2002; Kelman, 1972, 2008; Lewin, 1948). Workshop participants are vulnerable because they can easily suffer the loss of their integrity within their own societies. To convince their constituents, negotiators have to find a way to communicate their message, even if the reaction to it is negative initially (Hoffman, 2011; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Lederach, 1997; Lumsden & Wolfe, 1996; Rouhana, 2000; Nemeth & Chiles, 1988). The IMPLEMENTATION PLAN does not address these issues, which is a real weakness and compromises the political potential the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN could unfold in reality.

Conclusion

The simulation of the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN was an interesting and gratifying experience for all participants and affected parties. The simulation allowed students to develop a deeper understanding of the conflict and peace process and to examine the situation from a variety of perspectives. The structure and design of the simulation encouraged students to rethink their preconceived notions of both the conflict and the motivations of conflicting parties without predetermining the outcome of the simulation. As the assessment of learning outcomes shows, innovation and critical thinking, student engagement with the material and subject matter, as well as academic learning

were positively impacted by the exercise. Additionally, students realized how emotionally charged and invested they could become in the negotiations, allowing them to better understand why the peace process for this conflict is so arduous and riddled with strong rhetoric, emotion, and extreme opposition. Students were able to experience firsthand how challenging and frustrating negotiations can be, especially when the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned.

With regards to the negotiation approach, the findings presented by the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN indicate a realistic and structured model with clearly stated goals, processes, and outcomes. At the same time, the challenges and weaknesses of the model might prevent transfer to real life application. These challenges include the integration of hardliners in multiparty negotiations, the definition, extent, and impact of third party involvement, and most significantly, the transfer of negotiation outcomes into the political realm, especially with regards to the lack of a clearly defined implementation strategy of the Final Status Agreement. Given the extent of these issues, the IMPLEMENTATION PLAN might remain a model for world politics simulations.

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