

FLASHPOINT SYRIA^{*}

Simulation Overview

FlashPoint is a simulation game constructed as a teaching tool for the topics of conflict analysis and resolution, collaboration, negotiation, mediation, and public international law. It is set in a scenario that is primarily fictitious – but still blends in and incorporates real events, history, and detail, forming a ‘pseudo-reality’: a situation familiar enough to spark interest, motivation, and identification, yet controlled and delineated to allow for maximum learning and skill-building.¹ Set, as it is, in a scenario right out of today’s headlines, it offers students the sense of applying their analysis and skills to real-world problems.

At its core, the simulation’s framework is familiar: two disputing parties and a neutral third-party intervener, all possessing both shared and private information. Parties must choose whether to fall into familiar patterns of competition and coercion or endeavor to construct a collaborative process and achieve cooperative outcomes with their perceived adversaries.

Certain elements in the simulation’s setup dictate that careful attention be paid to the early stages of the simulation’s initiation (e.g., role-division and participant preparation). The introduction of trainer-initiated changes and interventions in the scenario necessitates special attention to the simulation’s management. To this end, detailed simulation setup and management instructions have been provided. Additionally, the Teachers’ Manual in Part 2 of this book provides an extensive Debriefing Guide, to address the wide variety of training-goals this simulation can achieve.

Designed for dedicated and committed participants, FlashPoint engrosses participants in the simulated environment for a long period of time, ranging from one to three days, or from about six to sixteen hours. These can be conducted in a continuous, intensive manner or in multiple sessions over several lessons. This investment engenders two major learning outcomes:

- In-depth understanding of the complexities of managing international conflict
- Advanced skill-building in conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation skills

^{*}Noam Ebner, Yael Efron & Nellie Munin, *Flashpoint: Syria, 2014—An International Conflict Management Simulation* (2014). Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2476968>.

This role-play was developed originally by Munin and Efron, and after further adaptation by Ebner the role-play was submitted to the 2014 E-Parcc Competition for Collaborative Governance at Syracuse University, where it was awarded first prize.

¹ For more on this method, see Noam Ebner & Yael Efron, *Using Tomorrow’s Headlines for Today’s Training: Creating Pseudo-Reality in Conflict Resolution Simulation-Games*, 21(3) NEGOTIATION JOURNAL 377 (2005). Available at: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1292594>

While it can be employed with participants at an introductory level, the simulation is particularly suited for participants with some background in conflict resolution, international relations, or public international law. It can incorporate students from more than one course (i.e., law students negotiating and mediation students serving as mediators). It has been used successfully with participants at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, as well as with groups whose participants hail from very diverse backgrounds.

The background scenario depicts a fictional dispute between Turkey and Syria, over a developing humanitarian crisis occurring in a piece of land claimed by both countries. Underlying this presenting issue is a broad range of international, national, and local interests, which must be resolved for a peaceful solution to be reached. However, power imbalances, as well as time pressure, present major obstacles to resolution. A team of UN mediators convenes negotiating teams from each country in an attempt to reach a negotiated settlement.

The simulation is designed for maximum versatility. The storyline can be updated easily and regularly to allow for any changes in regional or global political reality. ‘Hot’ issues – such as escalation in different areas in the Middle East or in the real-world internal politics of Turkey or Syria – can be spotlighted in order to allow the reality of the relations between the two countries, and the sentiments of their populations, to permeate the simulation. The roles of the UN mediators can be stressed in mediation skill-building training or dropped altogether in order to allow participants to flex their unassisted negotiation skills. New roles can easily be developed (or the provided roles adapted) to allow for participants’ real-life preferences and experiences.

Logistics, Setup and Game Management Instructions

Number of Roles: 8-20 (up to 8 Turkish roles, 8 Syrian roles, and 4 UN mediator roles)

Optimal group size is 8-9 participants, with 3 players each on the Turkish and Syrian teams and 2-3 UN mediators. This allows for maximum individual participation and group management. However, suggestions are provided for incorporating up to 20 players in the simulation (see Game Variations). In still larger groups, several simulation groups can work concurrently, with the trainer either rotating between them or employing training assistants.

Setup and Preparation Time: 1-2 hours (see section on Game Variations).

Running Time: 6-16 hours (see section on Game Variations).

Level: Intermediate to advanced.

Debriefing Time

At least one hour of debrief is recommended for every four hours of simulation running time. In addition to a post-game debriefing session, trainers might choose to conduct impromptu or pre-planned debriefing sessions during the game’s running time (see further instructions below and in the Teacher’s Manual (Part 2 of this book).

Background Preparation

When this simulation is used with groups with little knowledge of Syrian-Turkish relations, conflict in the Middle East, or international law, trainers might choose to assign reading material before handing

out the simulation information packs, or to provide participants with time to conduct independent background research in the library or on the Internet. However, the simulation can be conducted on the basis of the material provided alone.

Role Assignment

a) Divide participants into three teams: Turkey, Syria, and the UN.

b) Hand out the following material:

To each member of the Turkish team:

Public Information

Private Information for the Representatives of the Turkish Government

A copy of the map (optional).

To each member of the UN team:

Public Information

Private Instructions for the UN Team

A copy of the map (optional).

To each member of the Syrian team:

Public Information

Private Information for the Representatives of the Syrian Government

A copy of the map (optional).

c) Assign each team member on the Turkish and Syrian teams a specific title, indicating their area of responsibility. To clarify: Each member of the team gets the same information. However, each is designated an undersecretary/assistant minister representing a particular department/ministry, which leads participants to prepare themselves, individually, to represent the interests pertinent to their office. This leads to better preparation and sets the stage for interesting intra-team dynamics, as team members see themselves as representing or safeguarding particular interests.

On the Turkish side, designate participants as assistant ministers of Health, Defense, and Justice. On the Syrian side, designate participants as assistant ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Defense. Have them note their title at the top of their private team instructions.

Participant Instructions

Instruct participants to read their information carefully, and to try and flesh out their instructions with their own knowledge, emotions, and experience. Explain that by “owning” the role in this manner, the simulation will not only become more lifelike but will also enable them to understand what parties to conflict truly experience, resulting insights will, therefore, be highly transferable to real-life situations.

Role Preparation

Once roles have been assigned, allow students at least one hour for reading and individual preparation. You might even consider giving the material out the evening before the simulation begins.

If students prepare their roles immediately before gametime, ask all members of each team to stay in the same room during the individual preparation period. This will avoid participants getting 'lost' during this extended period and will also encourage a natural transition to the group discussion period. If you have given the material out earlier, you might consider suggesting they add some individual research to flesh out their assigned role.

According to the scenario information, participants meet with their own team before meeting the other. Announce that once the individual preparation period is up, each team will meet as a group for 45 minutes or an hour before meeting the other group. This time is to be used for the team to get to know each other 'in-role,' discuss issues, interests, and priorities, divide labor, etc. The UN team will use this time to discuss their intervention strategy, to decide on their opening welcome to the parties, and to arrange the meeting room. This time will serve as a transition period during which participants will try on and try out their new roles and get used to addressing each other in-role as colleagues. If the simulation is being conducted in the framework of a study program involving negotiation and/or mediation, this might be a good opportunity to prime participants to keep the models learned in class in mind as they prepare for the upcoming process.

Room Setup

Assign the task of setting up the room and organizing seating arrangements to the UN team. Preferably, the room should have a whiteboard and/or a flipchart and comfortable seating (remember the duration of the simulation!).

The group may periodically opt to break out of the meeting for consultations. Try to have a couple of rooms available adjacent to the primary meeting room for this purpose.

3rd Party Intervention

You might choose to give the UN team particular instructions on how they should act, process-wise. You might ask them to be relatively passive observers at the beginning, taking a more active role when this is requested by the parties or dictated by circumstances. Alternatively, you might instruct them to conduct a controlled, semi-formal process – depending on your class framework and training goals. The participants in the UN roles might be a bit uncertain regarding their authority and timing at first (although your initial guidance should help them with this). This is part of the process: they are expected to identify situations and process-points suitable for their intervention and earn the parties' trust and acceptance through their words and behavior, rather than these being dictated by instructions. You might choose to stress this to them during the team preparation time. Of course, the UN role can be written to be more intervening or directive (in order to make the 3rd party role clearer), can be written out altogether (in order to stress unassisted negotiation skills in a two-party process), or can be limited to providing good offices. In general, the degree to which you choose to prime the UN team should depend on their experience and skill level in third-party intervention.

Gametime

Once the time for team preparation is up, the simulation opens with a joint session. If one party takes more time to discuss things among its members, they need to be aware that the other party is already waiting for them in the meeting room, and that there will be a 'process-price' to pay. Parties arrive

and are seated, and spend some time on formalities (introductions etc.), although some groups might quickly jump to conflict on procedural issues (e.g., ‘How come they have one representative more than we do?’ or ‘Are these talks going to be confidential?’) or make early demands (e.g., ‘If Syria does not immediately welcome our inspectors, we will not sit at the same table with their team!’). After some time has passed, parties will usually (but not always) reach a point where they intuitively try and set a general agenda for the talks, or perhaps even plunge into an in-depth negotiation on one of the issues.

FlashPoint is designed to be conducted entirely by participants, requiring no trainer intervention. This frees teachers up to take notes and prepare for debrief. Teachers wishing to consider a more active role in affecting the ebb and flow of the game can see suggestions for doing so in the Game Variations section, below. However, even teachers choosing to stay on the sidelines, for the most part, would do well to consider intervening at the following two points, to make sure that primary learning objectives are achieved:

One hour before the end of the first half of the time allocated for the simulation, if parties have not yet set an agenda for the substantive discussions (e.g., they have been bogged down for an hour over the question of who should speak first, suffered a walkout by one party, etc.) the trainer should announce that the Syrian and the Turkish Ministers of Foreign Affairs, who are following the talks closely, have requested that by ‘halftime’ the parties will have reached an agreed-upon agenda for the remainder of the negotiations. This will focus participants on what they came here to do, nudging them gently (albeit a bit artificially) away from the play-acting the first few game hours allow for and encouraging them towards applying of conflict resolution skills in what may have become a decidedly non-conducive atmosphere. You might even set a time by which they must submit a written agenda.

One hour before the end of the time allocated for the simulation, the trainer might announce that the coordinators for all parties have requested that the participants write up any agreements they have reached. Participants might ignore this at first, especially if no or little agreement has been achieved. The trainer should repeat this instruction 15 minutes later, stressing that ‘agreements’ can relate not only to sealed issues but also to an agreed-upon agenda for future talks, a joint declaration, or any other joint statements or agreed principles, including procedural agreements regarding these or future negotiations. The purpose of this intervention is to try to allow for students to have some sense of achievement, albeit minor, when the simulation is brought to a close. This has a positive effect on debrief, encouraging participants to engage without losing the valuable effect of the in-process frustration of slow or no progress. If any significant agreements have been reached (even if only a partial agreement) highlight this milestone by conducting a brief signing ceremony.

When the allotted time is up, help parties break out of character, take a deep breath, and move on to debrief (See further instructions below and the Teacher’s Manual (Part 2 of this book). Beyond debrief sessions, consider using forms for participant self-reflection (before, during, and after the simulation) as well as for receiving participant feedback on the simulation or the workshop. Sample forms for these purposes are provided in the Teacher’s Manual (Part 2).

Use of Props

Imaginative trainers will find many ways to develop and employ props during this simulation. Here are a few possibilities:

Provide nametags for participants, each with a Syrian, Turkish, or UN flag on it.

Provide place cards for each participant (these can also be in the national colors). Players will often color or decorate them, or perhaps create a game name for themselves suitable to their personal role.

Consider providing a transparency of the map included in the scenario for participants to project on a whiteboard and draw on.

Consider providing, pictures, relevant clippings from current newspapers, etc.

General Information

February, 2014.

With the entire world focusing on the internal conflict in Syria, a much larger conflagration is currently building up between Syria and its neighbor to the north – Turkey.

For the past three years, Syria has been engulfed in internal strife. Fierce battles have been fought all across the country between forces loyal to the Syrian government and various opposition groups. The struggle has taken a heavy toll in human life. According to the UN, over 100,000 people have been killed in Syria thus far – half of them estimated to be civilians caught in the shifting lines of fire.

The international community has expressed its dissatisfaction with the situation in Syria, focusing particularly on censuring the government's acts. The United Nations condemned the Syrian government's acts in using force against opposition protestors in the initial stages of the conflict, but as armed conflict broke out, Security Council resolutions calling for sanctions against Syria were vetoed by China and Russia. The UN and other international bodies have called for a ceasefire and for democratic elections to be held, but the Syrian government has ignored these calls. The government has repeatedly stated its position that the international community had no right to meddle in Syria's internal affairs and has protested the West's undermining of its legitimacy and infringement on Syria's sovereignty.

In 2013, tension between Syria and the international community peaked as fears that the Syrian government was using chemical weapons rose. The United States called off an offensive against the Syrian government at the very last minute when Syria declared it would turn its stockpile of chemical weapons over to international observers for extrication from the country and neutralizing. This disarmament has been successfully completed; the UN has announced that, to the best of its knowledge, there are no more chemical weapons in Syria, and the team of chemical disarmament experts has finished its work and departed the country. With the chemical weapons issue out of the way, the international community has focused less on intervening in the day-to-day fighting, focusing its efforts instead on bringing the parties together for peace talks.

Since the beginning of the conflict, Syria has closed its borders completely. However, opposition forces have taken over several border crossings, allowing weapons to funnel in – and refugees, fleeing the combat zones, to funnel out. Most of these refugees found their way to camps in Turkey. Turkey has given refuge to hundreds of thousands of Syrian citizens and has expressed its dissatisfaction with the Syrian government. The Syrian government, on the other hand, has accused Turkey of supplying weapons to opposition forces, and of repeated violation of Syrian airspace. There have been numerous clashes between Turkish and Syrian airplanes on the border between the two countries. Artillery fire from Syria has often impacted on Turkish soil, although whether fired by government or opposition forces and whether these were intentionally aimed or stray rounds is constantly a matter of mutual accusation. Tensions between Turkey and Syria are currently very high.

A month ago, an artillery round (reported in the news to have been fired by opposition forces) hit a Syrian fertilizer manufacturing plant near the Syrian-Turkish border. Given the fighting in the region, the plant had not been active for nearly two years. However, its storage areas remained full of fertilizer and other materials, and the explosion caused the entire factory to be engulfed in flames. The noxious smoke caused by highly flammable fertilizer materials has spread a dense cloud on both sides of the border. Given the fighting going on in the area, Syrian firefighters have been unable to fully extinguish

the blaze, and a cloud of fumes continues to spread from the factory. The fumes on the Turkish side of the border have now spread to engulf the Turkish border town of Akcakale. This town had often been hit by artillery fire coming from the Syrian side of the border, but the damage now caused is at an unprecedented scale. Dozens of people are dying daily from reactions to the smoke, with hundreds more being hospitalized. Amongst the casualties are many Syrian refugees living in a temporary camp just outside the town. The Turkish government has proclaimed a national emergency in the area, and teams of medical and other experts and emergency forces are converging on Akcakale.

Turkey has demanded to send its own experts into the factory and its surroundings to control the blaze and determine the type of fumes being released. This is the only way, it says, to decide on proper treatment for the Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees who have been injured, as well as on the proper preventative measures needed to protect the inhabitants of the region.

Syria has refused Turkey's demand, stating unequivocally that nobody would be allowed to cross into Syria. It has flown fighter sorties over the border crossing and threatened to attack anyone who set foot on Syrian soil.

Syria suspects that Turkey is not only using this situation as a pretext to smuggle arms and supplies into Syria for delivery to opposition forces, but also that Turkey is seizing an opportune moment of Syrian weakness to introduce Turkish forces into the area surrounding the factory in order to lay claim to it. The factory, and about eight square miles of its surroundings, had originally been Turkish territory, which had been wrested away from a much-weakened Turkish Republic by the French Mandate which ruled the Syria region in the early 1920s, right after the First World War. There is now a small Syrian village in the area, Tell Abiad, populated by a few dozen Syrian families – some of them farmers and others employed in the fertilizer factory. Syria has often made it clear that this is Syrian territory, while Turkey has claimed that the territory (which they call Lower Akcakale) is Turkish. Turkey has recently re-raised this claim to support its demand to enter the area.

The Syrian government has offered to work cooperatively with Turkey in the sense of updating Turkey on the firefighting and fumes-control efforts, as well as providing data from tests conducted to identify the composition and concentration of the fumes. In addition, Syria has promised that if the fumes continue to pose harm to Turkish civilians, Syria will be willing to assist in humanitarian efforts on the Turkish side of the border, providing medical assistance and other supplies to injured or displaced Turkish civilians.

Turkey has claimed that by its behavior, Syria is in breach of the United Nations Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which makes it forbidden “[t]o develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons.” Turkey claims that the treaty also governs factories producing large quantities of chemical products – seemingly for civilian use, but with potential use for chemical warfare. Turkey has also stated that it will see protracted Syrian refusal to allow Turkish experts into the site an act of chemical warfare on Turkey.

Several Syrian civilians – some living in the affected area in Syria, others residing in the Akcakale refugee camp in Turkey – have filed claims against both countries in the European Court of Human Rights owing to their failure to protect the right to life. They claim that this is both countries' duty, under the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has assigned a team from the UN's Mediation Unit to convene a meeting between representatives of Turkey and the Syrian government in Lucerne, Switzerland. In his message to both parties, he stated: "The purpose of this meeting is, at the least, to reach agreement regarding the humanitarian crisis currently developing in the Akcakale region. However, if either party would raise additional issues for bilateral discussion, the UN team is at your disposal for assistance."

Private Information for the Representatives of the Turkish Government

You are official representatives of the Turkish government; each of you is an assistant minister in each of your respective offices: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Justice. The Turkish Prime Minister agreed to send such a high-level team to Lucerne because he knows how crucial this meeting is to Turkey's national interests.

The first priority, of course, is to protect Turkish lives. Syria must allow you to enter the Lower Akcakale territory, extinguish the blaze if it cannot do so itself, and figure out how to stop the fumes from spreading and killing yet more Turkish people.

Another reason to prioritize this is that as the fumes have spread, the stream of refugees from Syria to Turkey has greatly increased. Even though the fumes also threaten the Turkish area, the refugees' reason that they will at least receive better treatment from Turkish and international medical teams in Turkey than they would in Syria. Turkey's ability to provide for the hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees already in Turkey has stretched the country's capacity to its limits; a continued flow of refugees could overwhelm it – endangering lives, the Turkish economy, and Turkey's reputation in the international community. In addition, Turkey cannot rule out the possibility that at least some of the 'refugees' may be undercover Syrian intelligence agents.

Turkish intelligence suspects that the source of the fumes is not really fertilizer and associated chemicals lying dormant in an inactive manufacturing plant. The plant was, they believe, a military installation for the stockpiling, and perhaps the manufacturing, of chemical weapons. There is no way to prove this without access to the factory surroundings. However, the nature of the injuries suffered by people in Akcakale is not of the type usually associated with fertilizer-related fumes. Turkish intelligence has not ruled out the possibility that the fire and fumes were caused intentionally by Syria to camouflage a deliberate attack on Turkey, which would tie up Turkish attention and forces and limit Turkish ability to supply the Syrian opposition forces.

Turkey's long-term interests include restoring its national honor by regaining and reclaiming the Lower Akcakale region. Advancing the international border into Syria, even by four or five miles, would also greatly lessen the chance of stray artillery and gunfire causing casualties in Akcakale and other Turkish villages in the region.

Turkish intelligence has covertly laid hand on some very valuable information. About five years ago, a survey conducted secretly by the Syrian government showed that the region, although relatively small, was likely to be rich in natural gas reserves. Unable to develop the gas field due to its financial situation, and later due to the state of internal conflict, Syria has kept the information in reserve for a more opportune time. Turkey's developing economy is a huge consumer of energy and has been moving towards natural gas. Currently, Turkey is dependent on Russia for gas and is considering a large-scale treaty with Israel to supply Turkey with gas from Israel's recent offshore discoveries in the Mediterranean. Having access to a local supply would allow Turkey to consider disengaging from both those partnerships and gaining, in the process, much more political freedom to maneuver in its quest to become a regional power. This freedom would be particularly welcome given that so many other countries competing for clout in the region are still struggling to recover from the upheavals caused by the Arab Spring that started in 2010. This quest for regional influence also dictates that Turkey must refuse any offers to resolve issues between it and Syria by more active UN intervention – that would be a clear sign of weak-

ness. Participating in UN-sponsored dialogue initiatives, however, is not only a wise diplomatic move, but also necessary in terms of Turkey's bid for EU membership, recently renewed. Turkey must protect its image as a peace-loving country and a good partner. It also must gain recognition as a protector of human rights – and, therefore, it is of great importance that Syria pressure its citizens to withdraw their petitions to the European Court of Human Rights.

Finally, you know that while your Prime Minister is committed to seeing the Syrian President ultimately ousted from office, that might take some time. Meanwhile, the absence of low-level coordination with Syria – on issues of security, refugees, environment, and more is costing Turkey heavily. There are two issues on which you would like the Syrians to cooperate. The first is that drug smugglers are using the same routes into Turkey from Syria, and the flow of drugs into Turkey has tripled over the past year. The second would involve Syria stepping up to take some responsibility for the refugees currently being supported and cared for by Turkey. Even with the rift between your countries and the current developing crisis, some pragmatic discussion might enable cooperation on those issues.

Private Information for the Representatives of the Syrian Government

You are official representatives of the Syrian government; each of you is an assistant minister in each of your respective offices: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Justice. The Syrian President has agreed to send such a high-level team to Lucerne, because he knows how crucial this meeting is to Syria's national interests.

Syria's immediate interest is to prevent foreign personnel, forces, or experts from entering into the region, which would threaten to completely topple the last vestiges of government-controlled stability in the region. Unstable regions are easy pickings for "opposition" – really, *rebel* – forces. In particular, Turkish personnel, even disguised as chemical or medical experts, are sure to be used in some manner to support the rebels with aid or arms. Finally, allowing a foreign power to take care of this situation would be a huge admission of weakness – and an image of weakness is the last thing the Syrian government can allow itself at this point in its struggle against the rebel forces.

Indeed, the Syrian administration is much more concerned about the situation vis-à-vis the rebels than it is with any danger or damage caused by the fumes spreading from the burning factory. Those are local issues; the threat posed by the rebels attempting to overrun the country is of far greater importance.

The truth of the matter is that foreign intervention in the factory would probably uncover the truth: the factory was indeed used for manufacturing and stockpiling chemical weapons. While Syria cooperated with the international team dismantling its chemical warfare program, it concealed the existence of three stockpiles – and this factory is one of them. The administration's intention was to maintain the weapons as a last-ditch resort against foreign enemies or the rebels. If the stockpile's existence is verified, Syria would certainly face international sanctions and perhaps military action; you yourself could wind up in front of a war tribunal.

Syria has no doubts about Turkish intentions to create facts on the ground enabling it to rekindle the dispute over the area surrounding the factory – Syrian territory! The Turkish government can orate all it wants about "national honor" being restored; you know that this is really about weakening Syria. Unless Turkey's intelligence forces are better than usually suspected, Turkey likely is not aware that Syria has secretly conducted surveys showing large reserves of natural gas in the area. If Turkey's intelligence forces discovered this, you certainly refuse to be plundered in this manner! You know that once the rebellion is quashed in Syria, you will need all your resources to restore the country to what it once was.

Syria is suspicious not only of the Turkish claim to the territory, but of other foreign intervention in the area as well. You know that once international forces enter a region they can remain there endlessly, and on their heels come a wave of multinational development contractors looking for fat reconstruction contracts. They would certainly be attracted to developing the gas fields; there is more than one way to plunder Syria's treasures! You've seen this happen in Iraq; you won't allow it to happen to your country.

Syrian-Turkish relations have been good over the past ten years – until the Turkish Prime Minister abruptly betrayed the Syrian President and began to openly support the rebels trying to oust him from politics. Your President has a long memory, and this may be payback time. Turkey is currently engaged in its bid for EU membership, and its actions in this conflict are sure to be closely monitored. You might have the opportunity to embarrass Turkey in terms of its handling of human rights situations, or of its unwillingness to participate in peaceful settlement of disputes. A weakened Turkey, at this moment, is good for Syria.

On the other hand, engaging in diplomacy – any diplomacy – on the international level provides the government with some much-needed legitimacy in this arena. Therefore, cooperating with Turkey on some issues might be in Syria's interest. As one example of this, perhaps you can use this as an opportunity to start winning back the hearts and minds of your country's people. These talks might offer an opportunity for Syria to cooperate with Turkey by becoming involved in caring for its refugees across the border in Turkey. Using this as a highly publicized (yet limited) demonstration of care for its citizens might score the government some points.

Private Information for the Representatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

The UN Mediation Unit has been assigned the mission of facilitating talks between the governments of Syria and Turkey. A new team set up for rapid deployment into real-time conflict areas and for dealing with immediate crises, you and all its other members have earned your spot in the unit through years of playing third-party roles in other parts of the world - working on endless rounds of talks on the Cyprus issue and addressing the Israel/Palestine conflict. As Turkish-Syrian bilateral relations have always been smooth, however, there is no one in the unit with specific experience pertaining to the situation. The internal Syrian conflict has held everybody's focus for so long that your team hadn't even noticed this new situation escalating until you were tapped for the job! Still, you are confident that you can help the parties work out their issues with your conflict resolution toolbox and all the patience in the world.

Well-versed on the internal Syrian conflict, it didn't take long to bring you up to speed on recent developments on the Turkish-Syrian border. In addition to the general information readily available in the public media (see the General Information sheet), your director has provided you with the following guidance regarding the UN's position and how it can help.

The Secretary-General is concerned about three issues:

First, that this issue might undermine the UN's efforts to address the much bigger problem of the civil war raging inside Syria by convening the Syrian government and the opposition leaders.

Second, that there is a very real danger that one side or the other would act unilaterally, and the current issue would trigger a full war between Turkey and Syria. Turkey's recent suggestion that Syria's intransigence was tantamount to waging chemical warfare against Turkey might be laying the foundation for justifying an upcoming Turkish invasion.

Third, the crisis is currently local. However, if the winds shifted and carried the fumes to neighboring countries such as Iran or Israel, there is no telling what will follow, and the stability of the entire region will be at risk.

In addition to these, the UN has the following interests:

- 1) Modeling a successful dialog process, to encourage the Syrian government to engage in dialog with the opposition with which it is currently at war. At the very least, you need to avoid a mediation fiasco which Syria can later point to as a reason for turning down future UN-backed initiatives focusing on the internal conflict. The UN has been ineffective and gridlocked so far regarding the internal Syrian conflict – you must avoid making that worse!
- 2) As it is now, the reason for gridlock in the UN is the Chinese and Russian vetoes cast on any resolution leveling sanctions against the Syrian government. You know that one reason for these vetoes lies in these countries' hopes to be awarded large contracts in reconstructing Syria once the government quashes the opposition. In particular, one area both these countries are casting their eyes towards is the very zone in which the current disaster is unfolding – both countries think there are oil or gas reserves in the area.
- 3) You have no definitive information – but you know that there is a chance that this is no innocent fertilizer factory. As the UN was responsible for carrying out the program for destroying all of Syria's chemical weapons, finding out that the Syrian government had withheld stockpiles of

weapons would be valuable information. It would also be *embarrassing* information, given that the UN has already declared that all chemical stockpiles had been dismantled and that its teams had dispersed. One way or another, this is certainly information the Secretary General would want to know should the opportunity to find out present itself.

- 4) This problem is snowballing: From an internal conflict to a potential conflict between states; from an environmental problem to a health nightmare and a refugee crisis. The sooner all this can be neutralized, the better. Time is not on your side.

You know that even though the countries' governments have accepted the Secretary-General's invitation to these talks, neither government will be particularly inclined towards further UN intervention. Therefore, while you can offer them some practical aid or incentives, it is more a question of whether they want to deal with each other than whether they want to deal with the UN.

Here are some resources the UN could provide, should parties be interested:

- The UN can provide on-the-ground monitoring for the implementation of any agreement reached. Given the volatile state of the region, this would require a peacekeeping force of several thousand troops ensure any monitoring personnel are adequately protected.
- The UN can provide up to \$10,000,000 for humanitarian aid in Akcakale and the nearby refugee camps.
- The UN can provide experts on firefighting as well as medical personnel. It can also provide experts on working with refugees.

This doesn't seem to be a case where you can just throw money or resources at the issue and expect it to resolve itself. However, it never hurts to come to the table with something in your pocket. In the end, though, you know that getting anywhere at all with this conflict depends on your ability to encourage parties to cooperate with you and with each other.

Use your preparation time to work out your game plan - you will soon be meeting with the delegations.

Game Variations

FlashPoint can be tailored by teachers to achieve teaching goals optimally across a wide spectrum of programs of study and educational settings. This section includes guidance for four categories of variations:

- Role additions, variations, and expansions.
- Active game management.
- Simulation updating and contextualizing.
- Public international law-focused version.

Role variations

Changes can be made to the role structure of the game, to accommodate teaching goals, by incorporating more players in the game or adjusting participants' level of identification with the characters they are playing.

Incorporating more players in the game:

The game's basic structure accommodates 8 players: 3 members on each delegation, and 2 UN mediators. This number can be expanded to allow more players to participate in the same game, to allow for a shared learning experience. With large groups, though, breaking the group down into several separate simulations is recommended. Here are some ways to add players to a group, in an order recommended to have the best impact on the simulation's conduct:

Add another Assistant Minister to each group. These might be chosen according to current issues in Syrian/Turkish relations at the time of play. If nothing seems particularly suitable, add on roles of the Syrian Assistant Minister of Justice and the Turkish Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs

Add an additional mediator (or two) to the UN team.

Assign each team another member – a legal counsel or a negotiation consultant. They might take a seat at the table or take a back-seat role – participants can work this issue out for themselves.

Add a local role to each team (e.g., the Turkish Mayor of Akcakale) as an observer or full team member.

Assign each team member an aide – a legal counsel or negotiation consultant. These should be back-seat roles.

In addition to adding roles, you might consider adding slight twists in the plot or in negotiator information to shift dynamics. For example, hand a note containing secret personal information to one or more individual members of negotiation teams regarding commercial/financial interests they have in the region, or personal political ambition that somehow affects to the story.

Adjusting Participants' Degree of Role Identification:

You might consider creating more in-depth briefings, handed out as personal information, for each individual player in the game. These might include professional, contextual information (e.g., providing the Turkish Assistant Minister of Defense with information regarding specific concerns or threats) or personal information (e.g., providing the Syrian Assistant Minister of Defense with personal ambitions to form close ties with the Turkish government or to portray himself as a reasonable statesman whom the international community might look to as a responsible alternative in the event the current Syrian government collapses).

If students have been given their roles ahead of the game (such as the night before game time), you might ask them to write themselves a brief personal “bio” for the character they are about to play (up-bringing, education, experience, etc.).

Active Game Management

As noted, *FlashPoint* is designed to carry its own weight, process-wise. Participants with reasonable degrees of motivation will engage in the process for hours, making their own decisions on procedure, joint and separate meetings, in-role breaks, etc. Therefore, teachers can take on the role of observers, focusing on collecting issues to stress during debrief.

However, teachers may prefer to intervene in the process to achieve specific training goals. Common examples are interventions aimed at helping students stay on track with a particular process model or to demonstrate use of a particular technique. Beyond these contextual preferences, the desire for active game management, from the trainer’s point of view, is often a balance between the amount of time available and the parties’ progress. On the one hand, one wants to avoid an artificial rush to settlement (e.g., ‘let’s hurry up and reach agreement on everything before lunch so we can have the day free’). On the other, a trainer might want to avoid a situation in which parties approach the final deadline without any headway at all; while this might indeed go a long way towards introducing participants to the reality of protracted peace talks, it might also result in disheartened and demotivated participants. In that sense, it is often helpful for a trainer to be able to fine-tune the game’s progress, pace-wise, allowing for optimal use of the time allotted for the simulation. It is important for teachers to keep in mind that while they would do well to “trust the process” provided by the game’s structure and not come pre-equipped with a plan for dozens of interventions, interrupting the simulation’s flow – they can, and should, consider interventions, breaks, in-process check-ins, or mini-debriefs as suitable to the context, the framework the simulation is conducted in, the students’ learning habits, etc.

One common simulation management method is to incorporate teacher interventions, providing short breaks in the game routine. These could be in-role interventions (such as the teacher joining the UN team and serving as a mediator for a few minutes) or mini-breaks in which the teacher breaks the players out of their role for a short discussion, exercise, or debrief (note that the personal reflection sheets provided at the end of this book allow for such a mid-game self-debrief exercise).

Other interventions allow the trainer to change the game’s dynamics and pace, by means of two different types of real-time game adjustments: *Incentives* and *Setbacks*. *Incentives* are occurrences or elements that offer positive opportunities or support for reaching agreement or for improving relations. *Setbacks* are occurrences that threaten to deteriorate progress already made or threaten the chances of reaching agreement. *Incentives* and *Setbacks* are meant to affect the dynamics at the table injecting a shot of optimism or pessimism, trust or distrust, acceleration or deceleration.

Trainers can decide on the best way to introduce *Incentives* or *Setbacks* into the room. They can make an announcement in the room, describing what took place as if they were making a radio broadcast; they might pass a note to the mediators describing the occurrence and charging them with introducing it into the room as they see fit; they might call for a break, saying each of the teams has received messages from home and handing them written information or instructions.

Here are some *Incentives* and *Setbacks* that work well in *FlashPoint*:

Incentives:

The UN has publicly announced its willingness to deploy troops as observers or peacekeepers in the implementation stage of any agreement between Syria and Turkey. If agreed to by both parties, these UN troops will also partake in protecting refugees and conducting anti-drug operations, as the UN recognizes these issues have a destabilizing effect in the region.

British Petroleum has announced its interest in drilling for gas in the Akcakale region, and is willing to add a reconstruction, rehabilitation, and development component to the project by employing refugees to build roads and facilities in the area. It would fund the building of pipelines to Turkey and other countries in the region. Of course, BP has cautioned, this project could be carried out only if the region was peaceful and environmentally safe.

Setbacks

A mortar shell has landed in a downtown market in Akcakale, killing 13 townspeople and 3 Syrian refugees. The shell was fired from somewhere in the region of the burning factory, probably using the smoke from the blaze as cover. In a press release from Ankara, the Turkish government has accused Syrian government troops of firing the shell. Syrian officials blame the Syrian opposition for the attack.

The President of Iran has invited the Syrian President to Tehran for discussions focusing on what he calls Turkey's ongoing aggression in the region. Iran has already backed Syria heavily in its internal conflict, and Turkey knows that Iran is looking for any excuse to become more involved in its internal affairs and to form a strong bloc limiting Turkey's regional aspirations.

It should be stressed that trainers need not use all of the *Incentives and Setbacks* listed— or any of them. Trainers can pick and choose, judging which might be best utilized to fine-tune the game dynamic in any desired direction. Trainers can improvise their own interruptions, whether on the spot or based on recent (or predicted) events in the news.

Simulation adaptation, contextualizing and updating

Many aspects of the *FlashPoint* scenario are left a bit ambiguous on purpose to allow the teacher a high degree of latitude to tailor the simulation to any particular course. Far from tampering with the simulation's basic structure, such adaptation is welcome and will likely to improve students' learning experience.

The same principle relates to the question of assigning students reading material. The simulation, as written, can be assigned as-is, with no further reading or preparation required on the students' part. However, that is not to say that reading external material interferes with the simulation in any way; on the contrary, teachers can choose any background material they consider beneficial to students in their field and assign it (e.g., relevant international treaties, general literature on conflict management, or specific reports on the disputed region). Similarly, they can assign students to conduct their own research, pointing them at particular topics or resources.

The use of maps and other visual materials is a helpful way to adapt the simulation to a particular type of use. While one teacher might want to use this to emphasize broad regional trends and circumstances, another might prefer to keep the focus as local as possible, and perhaps zoom in even further to allow students to deal with the nitty-gritty details of sketching out real-world treaties. Google Maps (www.google.com/maps) is one example of a useful tool which allows teachers to create maps showing

different areas in different scales. To give students a sense of scale, teachers might create maps comparing the size of the region they choose to a region with which students are familiar, to give students a sense of proportion (for example, a map of Turkey and Syria overlying a map of the southern U.S., to demonstrate that, combined, they are roughly the size of Texas can be seen at <http://mapfrappe.com/outlines?show=18423>). Helpful sites for this purpose are <http://overlapmaps.com/> and <http://mapfrappe.com/outlines>.

This simulation was written at a particular point in time – early-to-mid -2014. As time goes by, facts on the ground might change; political realities and even territorial boundaries may change. There are two ways to approach this. One way is to leave the simulation as it is, and to ask students to play it out according to the material and not according to current historical fact. A second is to update the simulation, tweaking facts in the information here and there to align it with contemporary events; telling students that this is what you’ve done will allow them to overcome any gaps you may have missed or dealt with too generally. Keeping an eye on, or conducting a search through general news sites (such as www.cnn.com or www.bbc.co.uk) should provide the necessary material; teachers can also check out local news sites such as www.hurrietdailynews.com.³

One way to address the issues of adaptation, contextualizing and updating is to create a team of students charged with design issues. Teachers can assign this group to review the simulation before it is given out to the other students, and to make changes, create supplementary material, choose reading material, develop maps, etc. This group may also be tasked with creating in-simulation interruptions, interventions, incentives and setbacks (see “Active Game Management” above) either before the simulation begins or as it goes along. Students in the designer role will benefit from a unique experience and their learning experience will not be less than that of students in the role-play; they will certainly serve as a valuable resource to the class in the debrief session following the simulation.⁴

International Law

In this section, we show one interesting purpose for which *FlashPoint* can be used, and we also demonstrate how teachers might contextualize the simulation to teach a particular topic. *FlashPoint* can be used to demonstrate the relationship between international negotiation process and public international law, showing how each takes place in the shadow of the other. This variation works successfully in educational settings focused on international law or on international relations with an international law element included.

FlashPoint raises core international law issues including signing, upholding, and construction of treaties; the use of force, self-defense, or chemical weapons; cross-border natural resource management, cross-border environmental issues, territorial sovereignty, borders, human rights issues, and many others. As a result, international law will always find its way, to one extent or another, onto the negotiation table. The General Information includes links to two international conventions, to ensure this. Teachers

³ For more on the benefits and challenges of using ongoing, real-life situations as the backdrop to simulations, and on ways of maximizing learning and student comfort, see Noam Ebner & Yael Efron, *Using Tomorrow’s Headlines for Today’s Training: Creating PseudoReality in Conflict Resolution Simulation-Games*, 21(3) HARV. NEGOT. J. 377 (2005).

⁴ For discussion of such a designer role and its benefits, see Daniel Druckman & Noam Ebner, *Onstage, or behind the scenes? Relative learning benefits of simulation role-play and design*, 39(4) SIMULATION & GAMING 465 (2008).

wishing to stress the interplay between law and negotiation might add further material (real or fictitious). Beyond that, they might adjust the structure of the parties and the game to allow the legal aspects to be given more attention, by addressing directly, or orienting students towards, for example, the 4th Geneva Convention (1949), the Hague Conventions (1899, 1907), the Charter of the United Nations (1945), the agreements concluded between the EU and Turkey regarding the latter's EU candidacy, the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the EU Convention of Fundamental Rights (EUCFR) or the European Charter on Human Rights (ECHR).

One way to do this, already mentioned above, is to add a role of legal counsel onto each team. This role could be given to participants with a particularly strong background in international law. When possible, participants tapped for this role might receive the role information a week or more ahead of time, allowing them to research the legal aspects and implications.

An even stronger spotlight can be cast on the interplay of law and negotiation can be done by holding separate sessions in which each of these is highlighted. Here is one way to do this:

Hand out the role material a week or more before game time. Assign one to three students on either side as their delegation's legal counsel/team. Task them with treating the role information they have received as a legal case *précis*, and to prepare for a hearing of the case before an international court, which will take place before the negotiation sessions. You might play the role of the arbitrator/neutral/judge in the hearing or assign a participant to this role. Depending on learning goals, the hearing can be conducted briefly and informally, or as a full-blown mock court session, similar to a Jessup competition round, complete with written and oral pleadings and rebuttal. At the end of the hearing, announce that now that the case has been heard, the court/neutral recommends that parties take the UN up on its offer to provide mediation services.

The next session (which might follow immediately afterwards or begin the next day) is dedicated to the mediation process, which will continue until parties reach agreement or impasse, or until the activity's time runs out. In these sessions, the negotiation is to be conducted by the participants assigned the negotiator roles. However, it is interesting to note whether they allow their legal team to sit at the table, lead the way or participate in other ways. As the negotiations commence, note for later discussion how the legal mindset and frames affect the parties' negotiating behavior and the nature of the conversation. Also, note efforts made by the mediators or the negotiators to slip loose of the legal framing, and their success or failure. Other issues of interest may be the relationships between principles and counsel, counsel as agreement facilitator/inhibitor, the way parties relate to and use their BATNA⁵ (success in court, as it has been framed by their legal counsel) and the type of language used in the negotiation.

⁵ The best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) is a course of action a party will take if talks fail and no agreement can be reached during negotiations. ROGER FISHER & WILLIAM URY, *GETTING TO YES: NEGOTIATING AGREEMENT WITHOUT GIVING IN* (2011).

