Lessons from Simulations of Regional Crises

For the Study of Fanaticism and Peace

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Abstract

This study presents lessons from feedback surveys for designing simulations and highlighting the role of fanaticism in world politics. It focuses on nine face-to-face and online simulations of regional crises as an innovative tool to study fanaticism. During interactive exercises, participants confronted fanaticism in historical or current events, mostly on Middle-Eastern topics. Feedback questions guided students to revisit their learning experience covering: (1) Simulation and participant attributes. (2) Cognitive, affective, and behavioral gains in a gradual learning cycle, from preparation, via interactions to feedback. (3) Fanaticism in real and simulated environments. Results indicate that participants identify with their role and team, enjoy and learn but show limited awareness to fanaticism and its challenges. Students see the situation in less extreme terms than it is, regard themselves as moderates and label rivals as extremists. Yet, they view behaviors as a response to extremism, creating a dangerous escalation spiral. Fanaticism is associated with learning but not with accommodation. The way negotiations end appeared unrelated to research variables, with the exception of enjoyment and empathy. The implication for instructors is to employ fanaticism carefully to activate team behavior and advance learning but to remember the limits of control over how rivals conclude simulations.

Introduction

Lessons from feedback surveys on simulations of regional crises provide insights on how to design simulations and make participants more aware of fanaticism and its deadly consequences in world politics. This analysis involves nine simulations conducted from 2014 to 2016, mainly on the contemporary Middle East and the Arab-Israel conflict. It uses survey data from 196 undergraduate and graduate students and some faculty members to explore three topics: (1) Attributes of the simulation and its participants. (2) Cognitive, affective and behavioral gains from preparation, via the simulation experience to feedback and debriefing, as a gradual learning cycle. (3) Fanaticism in real and simulated environments. The research regards fanaticism as an important element in world politics, shaping its interactions and affecting its outcomes. Although sometimes overlooked in international relations literature, fanaticism often
becomes a major obstacle for compromise, accommodation, and peace between individuals, states and non-state actors. Increased awareness to fanaticism and its implications may promote the understating of conflict dynamics, escalation to violence and the quest for peace in simulated and real worlds.

**Fanaticism: Real, Virtual and Simulated**

The brutal acts committed during the civil wars in Iraq and Syria, especially by fighters of the Islamic State (ISIS),\(^1\) have helped raise public and practitioners’ attention to fanaticism and its implications as major obstacles to peace. Nevertheless, quietly surprisingly, acknowledgement of the issue’s importance did not penetrate the heart of international relations debate and scholarly research. The discipline deals with attributes of fanaticism and possible motives such as ideology and religion to explain the phenomenon and its impact, but systematic cross unit investigation over regions and time is still limited. Empirical inquiries mostly include case studies such as Nazi Germany, Stalin’s USSR, today’s Iran, and various terror organizations with little regard for constructing a general theory of political fanaticism.\(^2\) As the study of fanaticism is still in its infancy, there is even little agreement about how to define the concept and its true meaning. For the purpose of this study, fanaticism and its synonyms of extremism and radicalism mean encouraging, condoning, justifying or supporting the commission of violent acts inside a state or in interactions between actors in world politics, to achieve political, ideological, religious, social or economic goals that challenge the existing status quo.\(^3\) Some of the difficulties in exploring fanaticism stem from the collision between the basic assumptions of realism and liberalism, the leading paradigms in international relations, and the existence of abnormal actors in world politics. Fanatic actors disregard power limitations and sometimes act against their own interests, thereby challenging the realist assumptions that states behave according to
their material self-interest and power. Neorealism, emphasizing the anarchic structure of the international system, claims that all states act more or less the same, according to the simple rule of self-help, disabling meaningful deviation from this principle. Similarly, when fanatic regimes are involved, cooperation through international organizations, central to liberal thought, leads to consequences that negate peaceful conflict resolution anticipated by this paradigm. The inability to examine fanaticism within the leading paradigms leaves the issue on the periphery of international relations scholarly research and makes it hard to conduct comparative mainstream studies on fanaticism.⁴

By the use of simulations as part of active learning, this study hopes to increase awareness to fanaticism, advance its study and encourage further investigations on the subject. Along with extremism among individuals, collective minorities, states and non-state actors, much radicalization takes place nowadays on virtual platforms, especially on social networks. These environments offer users quick access to radical contents and allow them to express themselves rather freely, with minimal legal barriers and few moral inhibitions.⁵ Escalation of fanaticism on social network environments often spillovers to activities in the real world, triggering terror and violence. Recognizing the powerful role of social networks in contemporary lives, we choose to utilize Facebook, a familiar and popular network, as a tool to confront fanaticism by creating academically controlled environments where students become aware of extremism and cope with its dangerous consequences. We use Facebook groups as the main platform for simulation interactions within and between teams, over time.⁶ Facebook also supplements face-to-face engagements, to enhance policy formation in advance of inter-team negotiations and to discuss outcomes after the simulation ends.⁷ Feedback
from such exercises serves as an authentic input to advance our goal of increasing
awareness to fanaticism for educational purposes.

**Simulations for the Study of Fanaticism**

Ranging from simple role-playing to complex simulations, experimental reproductions
of reality have a long-standing teaching tradition in political science and international
relations. Their extensive use led to vast scholarship on the subject, including hundreds
of articles and books. One of the central themes that appears in these publications is
the many advantages simulations have over or alongside traditional learning as they
enable students to apply theories and concepts in concrete situations, explore world
politics complexities, and understand that not all situations have an analytical solution.
Such experimental learning simply makes the study more tangible and therefore
narciss the gap between theory and reality. Simulations offer an innovative and rich
experience that is hard to achieve by standard lectures and textbooks. Gradual
exposure to information during a learning cycle, from preparation and simulation
interactions to feedback and debriefing, helps expand traditional learning gains beyond
cognitive knowledge accumulation to affective and behavioral aspects. Ben-Yehuda,
Levin-Banchik, and Naveh (2015, Ch. 7) make a distinction between individual
feedback and interactive debriefing. The first is a student assignment in response to an
instructor’s questions, usually submitted in writing after the simulation ends while the
second is an exchange between students and instructors, usually in class, to gain insights
from the simulation experience. Simulations also provide tailored situations to practice
teamwork, leadership, creativity, identification, empathy, persistence, decision-
making, critical thinking and logical reasoning. They offer opportunities to confront
a variety of cultural, ethical and religious dilemmas. As the closest methodological
tool to a laboratory in the social sciences, simulations combine study, training and
research. They enhance the study of various topics such as paradigms, decision-making, negotiations, strategy, or fanaticism along with actual training. Simulations exercises in controlled environments, set ahead of time or observed after they end, create a wealth of materials and data for research.

Many strategy or action games build on radical historical topics like the Crusades, the battles of the Second World War, and guerilla combat in Vietnam. Nevertheless, very few simulations deal with radical issues, especially when compared to the variety of other topics like humanitarian interventions, economic cooperation, sustainability issues of environment conservation, climate, and resources or alliance management and negotiations to resolve conflict. The rare exceptions that integrate fanaticism into academic simulations illustrate its importance and potential teaching value. Asal, Fahrenkopf, and Sin (2014) describe an exercise in which students return in time to December 1941 when Nazi Germany is at the height of its power and controls most of continental Europe. They face a dilemma of whether to accept a peace proposal from Hitler’s representatives. If they do, they win or retain their independence, but have to give up their left-handed team members, participants with glasses or others with beards, all branded as undesirables by the Germans. In most simulations, except for the UK, countries gave up their undesirables and concluded peace agreements under the appeasement terms, caving in to fanaticism, in line with the findings we highlight regarding the tendency to underestimate and downplay fanaticism. The same trend appears in the computer simulation called COUNTRY X on the issues of mass atrocities and genocide in African regional conflicts (Harding and Whitlock, 2013). Not even one game of 17 simulations had an outcome of mass killing. Other simulations confront students with acts of terrorism such as hostage taking and suicide bombing to highlight and discuss modes of decision-making, negotiation styles, counterterrorism measures and
possible implications for military strategy or domestic and foreign policy.\textsuperscript{15} These exercises show how simulations on radical topics can be an effective teaching tool, to add drama, trigger emotions, touch upon ethical dilemmas, practice compromise and bring affective elements to light, altogether contributing to a strong and long lasting learning experience. Despite these contributions and growing interest in fanaticism, scholars still have to integrate extremism further into the simulation world.

**Simulation Surveys**

Surveys appear frequently in simulation literature.\textsuperscript{16} Their use covers a wide range of topics like (1) Knowledge gains compared in pre-post quizzes. (2) Assignments for individual/teams. (3) Tasks for skill development and feedback about skill attainment. (4) The impact of knowledge on simulation interactions. (5) Practice of skills and improved understanding of complex topics and abstract theories. (6) The affective outcomes of familiarity with empirical cases and theoretical matters, that is, the development of identity, empathy, enjoyment, or frustration. (7) Ways to improve simulations. While many studies employ surveys, most research regards them in technical terms, setting aside core differences in type of surveys. Some of them include pop quizzes, papers and exams that objectively test knowledge accumulation. Others contain subjective feedback, opinions, attitudes and evaluations on cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of one’s simulation experience. The latter type is very different from most traditional assignments designed to measure cognitive knowledge based on preset grading rubrics. The murky grouping of surveys with little attention to the nature of data they contain weakens their important role in planning and adapting simulations to create a better learning environment. This study seeks to highlight a specific type of feedback survey and use it to map participants’ approach to fanaticism in simulated crises. Surveys, used herein, include subjective views, examinations, or descriptions of
‘someone’ or ‘something’ related to the simulation experience, provided by an individual participant. Survey answers from a single simulation contain individual assessments from all its participants. Over time and multiple simulations, cumulative data illuminates collective trends representing a **cognitive mapping** of the ways students see, feel, practice, understand and learn in simulations. This study uses survey data to produce an initial cognitive mapping of fanaticism in simulations of regional crises. It elevates surveys from a simple technique to a major source particularly fitting to demarcate regularities and obtain individual and collective insights from active learning experiences.

**Model, Variables and Method**

This analysis consists of feedback from 196 participants who took part in nine simulations of regional crises as detailed in Table 1. The empirical and theoretical topics in all of them had to do with fanaticism and contained extreme and moderate actors, state and non-state ones, with undergraduate, graduate and scholars as participants that negotiated in scenario settings of historical and contemporary cases. Table 2 outlines the variables included in the feedback survey and analyzed below. It consists of four sets of questions: (1) **Simulation attributes** focus on type of platform for the exercise, face-to-face in class, on Facebook as a cyber platform or hybrid combining at least one of each. **Fit with reality** measures the gap between the real world and that of the simulation. It distinguishes between scenarios regarded by participants as a close replica of a real event and others that players view as far from it, either as fictional analogies or as imaginary cases. (2) **Participants attributes** address **study level**, of undergraduate and graduate players, willingness to **play again** in future simulations, **teams** they represent and the **role** and **importance of non-state actors** to illuminate the difference between their activities and those of states. (3) **Learning**
captures cognitive, affective and behavioral gains along specific indicators like understanding rivals, identifying with them, showing empathy or reaching a compromise. (4) Extremism characterizes the real and simulated environments based on empirical and theoretical topics, dramatic scenarios, attributes and behaviors of teams and rivals and the link between studying extremism and understanding it.

**Table 1: Simulations of Regional Crises**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simulation Code</th>
<th>Empirical Topic</th>
<th>Theoretical Topic</th>
<th>Teams</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate IR</td>
<td>1947 Palestine Partition</td>
<td>Fanaticism</td>
<td>UK, core Arab states, Palestinian Arabs &amp; Zionist battling for independence</td>
<td>Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic ISA</td>
<td>1938 Munich</td>
<td>Fanaticism</td>
<td>Great powers &amp; Czechoslovakia confronting German demands for the Sudetenland</td>
<td>Historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate IR</td>
<td>2014-15 Internal Strife in Yemen</td>
<td>Paradigms &amp; fanaticism</td>
<td>Israel, core Arab states &amp; superpowers confronting Houthi insurgency</td>
<td>Contemporary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate IR</td>
<td>2014-15 Civil War in Ukraine</td>
<td>Paradigms &amp; fanaticism</td>
<td>USA, EU, Ukraine &amp; Israel confronting Russian involvement in Ukraine</td>
<td>Contemporary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate IR</td>
<td>2014-15 Iranian Nuclear Quest</td>
<td>Paradigms &amp; fanaticism</td>
<td>Superpowers, EU, core Arab states &amp; Israel tackle non-conventional proliferation in the Gulf</td>
<td>Contemporary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate NSA</td>
<td>2015 Terror in the Middle East</td>
<td>Fanaticism</td>
<td>Superpowers, EU, core Arab states, Iran, Israel &amp; Turkey confronting: ISIS, Syrian insurgences, Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Authority, Palestinian ‘lone wolves’</td>
<td>Contemporary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate IR</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paradigms &amp; fanaticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate IR</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fanaticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate IR</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paradigms &amp; complexity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The feedback survey includes responses, in a written digital format, to multiple choice or open questions, on all variables, some of them requiring informative answers and others requesting assessments, attitudes and opinions. An example of an informative question is ‘what team did you participate in’ while ‘how radical was your team’ illustrates an assessment. Together, feedback questions lead students to engage in a comprehensive overview of the innovative learning process they have experienced, with a critical mindset, in retrospect.
The unit of analysis for feedback questions is an individual participant. The analysis below builds on descriptive statistics of survey responses and qualitative content analysis of written feedback from each student. Our feedback data includes a nearly equal split between undergraduates and graduates as well as some scholars who served as a control group of experienced players that wanted to practice the use of simulations on cyber platforms. Differences in views, opinions and evaluations between the three groups on research variables were insignificant, so we report findings from all participants as one set.
Participants’ life experiences may affect the familiarity, attitudes and learning of insiders to a conflict they role-play, in a different way than outsiders who take part in the simulation. This survey covers mainly Israeli respondents that were insiders taking part in simulations of the Arab-Israel conflict. So findings summarized below and their implications derive mostly from students who live in Israel and have stepped into the shoes of their own leaders or those of their rivals that confront and threaten them in real life. They play scenarios they know about from close encounters as civilians, soldiers or active reservists called to duty on a yearly basis. Issues of identification, empathy and willingness to compromise come mostly from the point of view of insiders that face an overlap between real life experiences and the simulation topic, even and perhaps especially when they play their Arab adversaries. In other simulations of the contemporary civil wars in Ukraine and Yemen or the 1938 Munich crisis, Israelis are outsiders that need to cope with fanaticism in a detached and unfamiliar reality. Besides Israeli students, some participants were from the University of Catania and faculty members from various US universities, all as outsiders to the nine simulation topics summarized in table 1. The distinction between insiders and outsiders adds diversity to participants’ involvement with the simulation topic, designed to show that fanaticism may appear in many disguises. It may characterize insiders rather than outsiders, or both, as a universal trait. For example, we find little difference between insiders and outsiders in assessments of team and rival extremism or in their evaluations of extremism in behaviors. In the future, data and findings from inter-cultural simulations with insiders and outsiders from many countries will help validate the impact of differences between insiders and outsiders on perceptions of fanaticism. So this study of feedback surveys illustrates the direction we believe researchers should pursue to increase simulation effectiveness. Future analysis should involve a large number of
simulations, face-to-face ones and on cyber platforms, with many participants from diverse countries and cultures, addressing like topics. Conceptual mapping, like our pilot one, will include aggregate results on individuals, teams, cultures and countries, all assuring data replication. In face-to-face simulations, we characterize the exercise by observing the interactive process and save our notes for later use. Concluding documents of agreements and disagreements, summarized by teams at the end of the simulation also help. In simulations on cyber platforms, a wealth of information is available, for example, as comments, photos or links posted by each participant on the Facebook wall. For research purposes, one can aggregate these posts, with time tags, for individuals, teams, blocs and the entire process. Data mining driven by theoretical questions or serendipity can investigate many topics in international relations, as they appear in the simulations-lab. More robust testing of the link between fanaticism and negotiation outcomes or other issues will benefit from the use of a semiautomatic computerized system for events data analysis of interactions, currently under construction, to generate a simulation process database that will supplement the feedback one used herein. This analysis of fanaticism first addresses each of the research variables separately, looking at aggregate frequencies and qualitative feedback comments. Then, the analysis shifts to the links between research variables and to the conceptual mapping of fanaticism in regional crises.

I. Findings on Research Variables

Aggregate results of frequency distributions on research variables appear in figures 1-3. Figure 1 presents results on the attributes of the simulations and their participants, figure 2 focuses mainly on the learning process and figure 3 accounts for fanaticism in these exercises. As seen in figure 1A, the simulations conducted for the purpose of this study included all three types: face-to-face (F2F), simulations on cyber platforms and
hybrid ones consisting of at least one cyber round and one face-to-face. Although we regularly use cyber tools and social networks, this use does not necessarily come at the expanse of traditional face-to-face simulations. However, while face-to-face engagements are still very popular and widespread, we gradually employ hybrid learning, combining the advantages of both face-to-face and cyber interactions. The use of cyber simulations alone takes place when students from distant countries interact in the same simulation, like the 1947 Palestine partition simulation included in this analysis. Such inter-cultural events epitomize the benefits of social networks as a free and friendly platform that can easily incorporate Skype sessions with proxy face-to-face interactions to conclude negotiations and finalize agreements.

By running several simulations on similar topics in undergraduate and graduate courses, it is possible to compare learning efficiency. Findings in Figure 1B show a near equal split between undergraduates and graduates in this feedback survey. Study level may have an impact on the simulation results, as participants acquire theoretical and empirical knowledge. However, crosstab examination of research variables revealed insignificant differences between these groups. Few participants were scholars who as our colleagues practiced the use of simulations on cyber platforms. Their feedback helped us design better simulations and advance the spread of inter-cultural simulations. Learning involves cognitive knowledge accumulation and skill development so we integrated both matters into the feedback questions. In order to capture the different areas of learning, we gave students a detailed list of theoretical and empirical topics to choose from on areas of knowledge they had gained. Each student could choose any number of topics. Seven of them plainly said, “I did not learn anything”, which we translated to possibly mean frustration, detachment or resentment, given the rather comprehensive list of options.
Figure 1: Simulations and Participants

A. Three simulation types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simulation Type</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Study level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholar</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Familiarity with simulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familiarity Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Change of political attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Play again in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. Team Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Type</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IG0</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. NBA importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H. NBA role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbing</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the topics other students chose, 24% involved complexities of domestic and foreign affairs, international relations, decision-making and team management. Some 25% of the topics selected had to do with paradigms and theories of great power involvement, international relations and political science. Another 15% concerned empirical topics like contemporary crises and conflicts, Arab-Israel and inter-Arab conflicts, the road to World War II in Europe and the relevance of historical background and patterns of behavior to current events. Closely the same, 13%, related to psychological aspects like the role of diplomats, leadership and its effects, individual personalities in the course of negotiations and empathy for others. Almost 10% marked simulation as a learning tool, a figure understandably high for a single topic, but reflecting the exposure to a new tool of innovative learning. Less common were communications and media (4%), fanaticism and appeasement (3%), and the role of non-state actors (3%). These results show the broad spectrum of simulation contributions to learning. At the very low percentages of 2-3% each, limited learning about fanaticism and empathy accord with findings we discuss below on a common trend to belittle fanaticism in the scenario, as a trait of one’s actor and its behavior as well as the difficulty to reach empathy.

Along with cognitive learning, simulations also provide students with an opportunity to practice and develop skills. Like with topics of cognitive knowledge, students could mark as many skills as they felt they advanced during the simulation. Listed from the most common to the least, findings show decision-making (20%), negotiations (18%), leadership, (14%), teamwork, (12%), creativity and rhetoric skills, (9% each), critical thinking (8%), persistence, (5%), coping with uncertainty, (3%) and empathy with rivals (2%). This ranking highlights the role of simulations in advancing skills for functioning individually and in a collective, but also the limits of showing empathy, consistent with other topics addressed below.
Figure 1C presents answers regarding the question: how compatible the simulation was with real world events. Most participants (76%) felt that the simulations were rather compatible with the real world. However, very reasonably, only a handful of participants (7%) felt that simulations mirror world politics events. So no matter what, and how successful, enjoyable or educating the simulation is, it remains an exercise, or at best a lab trial and has limitations in fully reflecting reality. This finding also suggests that instructors should not try to portray reality with full accuracy but rather to use it as an approximation of a situation students have learnt in class. This way, some latitude remains for critique, creativity and diplomatic initiatives that do not imitate reality with a perfect fit.

Figure 1D contains participants’ feedback to the question of changing their political assessment of the conflict they played after the simulation. Not surprisingly, the figure shows that many participants (42%) did not change their evaluation of the conflict at all. As one student stated, “My personal politics or assessments have not changed after having played the game because my actor’s assessment was similar to my assessment”. Another wrote, “I’ve thought and I think now that the only solution to the Arab-Israeli problem is compromise from both sides”. A third revealed, “We had to learn how to make compromises with four teams in order to achieve our team goals”, and the fourth explained, “Preparing for the simulation, as well as taking active part in it, made me read and learn more about the conflict. Being more informed, I started viewing the conflict slightly different from before”. Since simulations are planned for fun and learning, it is not surprising to find little attitude change. Practice may still have some impact on perceptions, identification, empathy and even attitude change. Indeed, findings show that roughly a half of all participants changed their minds to some extent about the conflict. This indicates that simulations may trigger critical thinking, second
thoughts about prejudices, and perhaps even a practical potential to reduce hostility and promote peace. A student admitted, “I learned that the pursuit of justice is not always the right way, you should also use common sense and sometimes be willing to compromise for a better future”. However, another student declared, “because I was born and raised in Israel, my identification may make it difficult to change my positions”. One explained, “I understand the players in the conflict better now and why they do what they do regarding the conflict”, while a different student claimed, “I’m not a terrorist, and I don’t think that this is the right way to achieve my goals”. An answer summarizing the common approach to attitude change was, “During the simulation and the project that preceded it I came to recognize the goals and values of the Islamic republic of Iran. While I hardly agree with most of their goals, getting to know them did change my perception a bit over what is really going on in the diplomatic arena of the Middle East, and what states are the real powerhouses in the region”.

The fact that attitudes may be re-examined are especially important in light of the complexities and negative heuristics held by rival parties during protracted and intractable and conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Kelman (2010:374-75) described a method of interactive problem solving, quite similar to simulations, in which Palestinians and Israelis participated together in guided workshops at Harvard. The workshops were an opportunity for participants to get to know one another, and translate their personal experiences, from one-time events or continuous meetings over the years, to produce attitude change. The idea was that personal changes the workshop triggered would eventually lead to a political debate, and decision-making processes in respective societies, to unlock deep-rooted cycles of hatred and mistrust. Our goals are more modest, academic rather than political, and yet we hope that as knowledge of the
‘other’ spreads, a more objective view of complex situations may emerge and creative use of non-violent crisis management may gain popularity.

**Figure 1E** deals with participants’ willingness to take part in future simulations. It shows that about two-thirds (66%) of the respondents were very enthusiastic and most of them (83%) wanted to play again in later games. Even though simulations are more time consuming than traditional modes of study and require more intensive individual efforts than standard lectures, they provide a different and unique learning experience that most participants want to repeat. This result relates to the multifaceted learning process simulations offer, illustrated in figure 2, and discussed below. **Figure 1F** presents the types of actors we include in our simulations. Findings are consistent with the realist paradigm’s assumption regarding the centrality of states in world politics, as 78% of participants played in teams representing state actors. Nevertheless, as evident in **figure 1G**, more than half of the participants think that non-state actors (NSAs) have an important role in world politics, contrary to the realist assumption. What exactly is their role? According to **figure 1H**, 47% believe that NSAs have a disturbing impact on world politics. The results in figure 1G and 1H fit the Middle Eastern topics we play in our simulations, and the Middle Eastern reality in which many powerful NSAs exist, control large territories, and often employ terror and other violent acts as their choice of policy. A change in simulation topics may offer cues as to whether or not there is a relationship between events and paradigm choice for behavior or perhaps the choice has to do with culture, personal experiences, value preferences or ideologies. Sometimes we request students to play according to a given paradigm, to try out the specifics of a theory studied earlier in class. Often, however, the narrative of the scenario and the reality behind it, in the participants’ perceptions, leave little leeway for flexibility.
**Figure 2** focuses on the feedback results regarding the cognitive, affective and behavioral learning processes. **Figure 2A** introduces findings regarding learning in general. It shows that most respondents (66%) believe that the simulation was a meaningful learning experience. Only 10% say they did not learn anything, or close to that, from the simulation. These results are consistent with recent studies, asserting that simulations encourage an attentive and active learning process, which over time may increase students’ performance as well.\(^{20}\)

**Figure 2B** deals with another aspect of the learning process: enjoyment. As instructors in academe, we often forget that learning is not about knowledge accumulation alone. As a complex process, it involves affective and behavioral aspects alongside the traditional cognitive ones. Simulations can encourage creativity and improvisation, incite, frustrate, clarify and change emotions, all together making the engagement intensive and enjoyable.\(^{21}\) Therefore, it is not surprising that 78% thought the simulations were an especially enjoyable experience. Comparing figure 2A with 2B revels that fun and learning go hand in hand. Most participants who report that a simulation is an enjoyable event also assert that they had an above average learning experience. **Vice versa**, students who do not really try to step into the shoes of leaders and engage in the intensive event, stay detached and unfortunately learn less than others. The implication of these results is that enjoyment and affective learning increase overall perceptions of learning gain.

**Figure 2C** moves on to behavioral learning and presents feedback results regarding outcomes. Two interesting observations comes to mind by looking at this figure: first, most respondents (67%) believe that the simulation did not end by compromise.
Figure 2: Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Learning

A. Learn

B. Enjoy

C. Outcomes

D. Accommodation

E. Preparations

F. Understanding

G. Identify with team

H. Empathy
This finding shows that many participants gained a valuable experience and perhaps an understanding of the complexities and difficulties involved in negotiations and decision-making, and the need for give-and-take, to solve hard issues at stake among rivals, especially during protracted conflicts. Second, only 3% thought that the simulation ended in a defeat for their side. This means that humans rarely, if ever, will admit severe setbacks, regardless of the actual outcome. These findings can have important implications for students and practitioners alike. Even if one side of the conflict faces defeat, continued struggle might be a choice, rather than admit defeat. This observation, like others mentioned before, is even more relevant to protracted conflicts, sometimes regarded as zero-sum situations in which defeat also means physical annihilation. With such results, instructors should keep in mind that too much frustration may impinge on the feelings of a successful simulation event. That in turn will lower the learning products of the simulation. Some intervention may help, during the interaction process to prevent complete deadlock, or all out compliance early on.

**Figure 2D** presents participants’ feedback on what they consider as the outcome of the simulation in terms of accommodation between the warring parties. Results show that the answers divide almost equally between accommodative and non-accommodative ending, 54% and 46% respectively. These results, similar to the ones shown in figure 2C, point to the hardships participants confront during negotiations and the difficulties in giving up some core values in order to promote others and reach compromise.

**Figure 2E** concludes the results regarding the weight of preliminary preparation before the simulation. Preparations relate to cognitive learning and include various assignments, for instance reading about the topic, actors, and decision-makers, and handing in written assignments such as actor portfolio and character biography, filling short questionnaires and so on. The figure illustrates that most participants (67%)
regarded pre-simulation preparations as a crucial step for the success of the simulation as a whole. This teaches us that simulations are not ‘just for fun’ and most of them involve some cognitive learning activities and chores as well. Learning about the topic, actors and decision-makers also relates to the question in figure 1C on how well the simulation reflects reality. The implication here is that if instructors want students to play ‘for real’, the simulation process should integrate some preliminary tasks in preparation for the interactive activities designed to replicate a real world event. Enhanced individual study by participants and in class lectures also means that students have initial knowledge to understand the situation they will step into, thereby enabling them some extent of identification with their role, team and rivals, as displayed in Figure 2F. This figure shows that 72% of the participants understand their rivals better after the simulation ends than they did before. Yet, just a few participants (9%) believe they reached a very high level of understanding, indicating that the use of simulation does not create ‘magic’ results and should be part of a comprehensive learning cycle, with traditional study methods. In order to reach a holistic understanding of a rival, one must know more than just facts and be able to identify and show empathy towards rival as displayed in figure 2G and figure 2H respectively. Studies often assume that simulations are a vital tool for teaching world politics and conflict in particular, as they enable identification, facilitate the emergence of some empathy and may ultimately result in attitude modifications. While the question of attitude change, dealt above, reasonably points to rather confined changes, this study confirms a gradual process of affective transformation, even if incomplete. Close to 80% of them said they identify with the team they played during the simulation. What makes this claim even more powerful is the fact that most participants, in this survey, were Israelis that played Arab actors that are still bitter enemies of Israel in day-to-day reality. We plan to test the
question of affective processes further by comparing surveys from other simulations that involve students who are insiders to the conflict they play along with many outsiders in inter-cultural simulations between campuses from afar. It may be reasonable to expect that participants from afar that learn about a conflict but do not confront it daily, may find it much easier to feel positive emotions to rivals that do not threaten them in real situations. It was not surprising that an Israeli wrote, “I think that Putin is not flexible and thinks only of his benefit, and I’m not that kind of person, but I didn't let my personality effect my performance” or “I played the role of President Erdogan. I did my best to look out for Turkey’s interests and basic beliefs. Some might say I did a good job and they enjoyed my role…Nevertheless, I could not relate to him or change my opinion of Turkey in our current reality”. Outsiders, that take part in a regional conflict can benefit from the inter-cultural engagements, as a student put it “To put in practice what you have just read in books means to acquire a new and better knowledge of the issue. I enriched my political background by hearing all these different voices from different countries and from the country of the conflict itself”.

This survey shows that while identification was relatively high, empathy was quite lower. Half of the participants report that they show no or little empathy towards their rivals, although many of them actually stepped into the shoes of an ‘other’. Only 18% have reached a high level of empathy. These findings illuminate the fact that simulations may be an effective tool to practice negotiations and conflict management but they do not provide instant identification or the achievement of full empathy. We suggest sharing this finding with students after the simulation, as a core debriefing insight, discussing the fears and moral inhibitions many participants might have regarding complete identification with rivals, especially when students live in a conflict region and face its realities in person.
Figure 3 focuses on fanaticism as our theoretical case study, to use Gerring’s (2004: 342) conceptualization, on the meaning of a case study, not confined to empirical events. This type of case study focuses on a theoretical subset that one probes in order to generalize about a larger population in mind. The study of fanaticism and extremist behaviors in the simulations serves a dual purpose. First, it illustrates how to use simulations to teach theoretical topics with implications for improving simulations. Second, findings from this study of extremism are an initial pilot for more advanced research on the topic, based on more participants, by comparison of insiders and outsiders to a conflict in inter-cultural simulations and contrasted with events data analysis of simulation proceedings.

Together simulations data and feedback surveys are useful to test the question of fanaticism from a comprehensive point of view by looking at relationships between radical escalations, simulation outcomes and perceptions reported in feedback regarding awareness of radicalism and its impact. The main point that appears in most findings below is that participants tend to deny fanaticism, primarily about their own characterization and about situations as a whole, that is, extremism in the simulation scenario. The value-laden meanings of extremism are easily used, however, to characterize rivals and their behavior and to the action-reaction radicalization in behaviors between foes in conflict. Some of the results on fanaticism also serve as useful guidelines for improving the effectiveness of simulations as a method of teaching as detailed below. Figure 3A deals with whether fanaticism in the simulations reflected reality. In general, findings are quite similar to the ones presented in figure 1C regarding the question of how compatible the simulation is with real world events. It shows that most participants (71%) felt that fanaticism in the simulations replicated reality to some extent.
Figure 3: Fanaticism in Simulations

A. Extremism in reality

B. Extremism: scenario

C. Team extremism

D. Rival extremism

E. Extremism in team behavior

F. Extremism in rival behavior

G. Study of extremism

H. Understand extremism
Although it may seem trivial, we find this result astonishing, giving the fact that as simulation administrators we purposely embedded very radical acts in the scenario in order to increase fanaticism levels and test participants’ responses. We believe that many students chose to disregard accounts of fanaticism and ignore fanatic ad-hoc events we added during the interaction process. In doing so, they followed many historical events in which decision-makers preferred to disregard radicalism and overlook its dangers, most notably the 1938 Munich crisis and the policy of appeasement. This pattern of sidestepping fanaticism was especially striking given the scenarios we use.

Figure 4 illustrates a typical scenario of ours. It opened the Ukrainian civil war simulation with a bloody massacre at the Russian town of Rostov-on-Don. The brutal acts conducted by nationalists from the Ukrainian militia Azov Battalion enhanced the narrative dramatically. A headline “This is only the beginning!” and a dead man’s photo with ‘rivers of blood’ flowing in the streets, completed the vivid demonstration of an acute situation. This opening confronted all teams with acts of fanaticism as inputs for policymaking. In a similar manner, the 1938 Munich scenario included Nazi slogans “Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer”, that is, one people, one realm, one leader, adjoined with reports on aggression and ethnic cleansing in Sudeten border towns taken over by SS troops. In the Yemeni internal strife simulation, photos of mutilated bodies accompanied the text and in the simulations on terror in the Middle East, provocative announcements from an ISIS spokesperson: “The White House will turn black with our fire, Allah willing” and “the US, France, and other allies are all slaves and dogs”.

Figure 3B shows that even though most of our scenarios, formatted as newspaper’s front page, deliberately included extremely brutal acts, inciting headlines and vulgar photos, only 20% thought that fanaticism levels displayed in the scenarios were high,
while more than a third (37%) even claimed that they had no or very little fanaticism. Together figures 3A and 3B demonstrate how individuals repress unacceptable or potentially harmful behavior as a defense mechanism in order to preserve stability in their perceptions of reality, and regard what they come to see selectively, as normalcy. These perceptions of reality also relate to images of one’s ‘self’ and ‘the other’, displayed in figure 3C and figure 3D respectively. While participants viewed their own actor as less fanatic than it really was, they often exaggerated rival attributes, leading to a noticeable gap, repeated from one simulation experience to another irrespective of the political attributes of the team in reality. Accordingly, students playing Iran will regard their team as moderate and view the US and Israel as extremists and vice versa. Figure 3C, indicates that most participants characterized their team as not fanatic at all (37%) or slightly fanatic (29%), while only a handful (15%) claimed their team is highly fanatic. In contrast, figure 3D that deals with participants’ main rival displays a mirror image of these self-perceptions. Few (15%) characterized their rival as not fanatic at all, while more than a third (37%) claimed that this actor is highly fanatic. Such images of the ‘other’ are evident throughout history, as great nations and civilizations usually labeled outsiders as savages or barbarians. This classification has also taken a modern form of fanaticism, as superpowers brand their adversaries as ‘pariah’, ‘rogue’, or ‘crazy’, usually without delineating objective criteria to distinguish between ‘deviant’ and ‘normal’ ones. The more different attributes of the ‘other’ are in terms of culture, religion or regime the easier it becomes to label it as a fanatic. This process and its dangerous implications highlight the importance of running inter-cultural simulations that bring together students from distant countries and different cultures.
Massacre at Rostov
400 men, women and children were beheaded at Rostov last night with blood covering the streets.

Andriy Biletsky, Azov commander threatens
More to come unless Russia evacuates Eastern Ukraine immediately

This is only the beginning!

President Poroshenko Blames Russian Propaganda
* Ukraine denies involvement in Rostov events.
* Says photos are fabricated.
* Calls for EU inspectors to enter the city immediately.
* PM Yatsenyuk called Obama and requested immediate guaranties for Ukrainian sovereignty.

PUTIN: Death to the Traitors!
Ultimatum expires May 19, 2 PM
1. Comply or the troops will invade.
2. Hand in Azov battalion leaders and fighters.
3. Stop all Israeli and US weapon shipments to Ukrainian militias.
4. Mediate the transfer of Eastern Ukraine to Russia or face discontinuation of gas supplies.

Israel trains Neo-Nazis?
Undisclosed sources: IDF experts were seen at an urban combat training site near Mariupol where Azov battalion fighters operate.

Pro-Russians Fighters Yes to Russia!
We will confront Biletsky and liberate Novorussia and wipeout all Azov battalion Strongholds.

All graphics retrieved from Wikimedia Commons and are labeled as copyright free
When participants switch sides, each playing the team of the other, like American students playing Israelis and students from Israel representing the US, the spotlight shines on hidden prejudices, misconceptions, biases and the specter of false attributions, not merely as a theoretical topic but by interactive practice. **Figure 3E** and **figure 3F** strengthen these findings, as they display accounts regarding extremist behavior in the simulations. Mirror images also appear regarding behaviors, 67% of participants saw their own team’s behavior as not fanatic or only slightly so, while only 44% of them regarded their rival’s behavior at parallel levels. Only 13% regarded their behavior as highly fanatic, this number more than doubled to 29% regarding the rival’s most extreme behavior. The findings from the last four figures on self and rival attributes and behavior highlight the role of misperceptions and mirror images in world politics and the importance of awareness to baseless branding of rivals as a starting point for compromise and peace. **Figure 3G** and **figure 3H** support our previous findings regarding fanaticism as an overlooked element. These figures examine the results of learning and increased awareness to fanaticism on individual behavior during the simulation and after it ends. It is reasonable to expect that learning about fanaticism will increase awareness to the phenomenon and its deadly implications in world politics, and consequently reduce radicalism in the game itself. Nevertheless, 55% of participants felt that learning about fanaticism did not change their behavior during simulation interactions. In a similar manner, one might expect that participants will understand fanaticism better after taking part in simulations on extreme topics and involving radical actors and events. Yet, only a third (34%) of the participants claim that they gained a high or very high understanding of fanaticism and its role in world politics. Findings from these last two figures help illuminate the fact that fanaticism
remains a hard to grasp phenomenon, one which many prefer to suppress, even if they are fully aware of its existence and harmful consequences.

II. Findings on Links between Research Variables

The relationships between the variables described in table 3 illuminate the impact of fanaticism on the learning process by use of simulations. The idea of teaching with simulations depends on the links between variables, shaping the conceptual map of fanaticism and learning in simulations of regional crises, summarized in figure 5. Such experiences foresee a learning cycle in which paradigms have an impact in making a choice between core values, confronting moral tradeoffs and finding ways to apply abstract theories to reach compromise and forward one’s goals. The findings we address refer to correlations that are statistically significant at $p=0.05$ or $p=0.01$. The conceptual mapping of fanaticism contains four groups of variables: (1) enjoyment and learning, (2) identification and empathy, (3) extremism, (4) the way simulations end in terms of negotiated outcomes and accommodation. This map shows that enjoyment and fanaticism affect learning with moderate and weak ties respectively. Empathy and enjoyment affect compromise outcomes and accommodation with weak ties. Identification with roles affect identification with teams with strong ties. Extremism in reality affects learning and other variables of radicalism, mostly with weak ties but with a moderate one to scenario extremism. Extremism in scenario affects identification and other variables of radicalism with weak ties. Team extremism affects behavior and learning with strong and weak ties respectively. In all, the map reveals mostly weak ties along with a few moderate and strong ones. Due to the many elements that affect one another, it is reasonable that individual links are weak. Future research will employ regression analysis to verify the role of fanaticism from objective events data of simulation interactions and views of extremism as reported in feedback.
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** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
Beyond offering ways to run better simulations, this study also highlights specific insights from simulation feedback on fanaticism and problems that result from the ways people think about the subject, confront it and adapt to fanatic ‘others’.

As far as *learning* is concerned, identification with role and team are enhancers of learning via enjoyment. Fun is not merely a gimmick but a useful element to embed cognitive learning. In a one-sentence summary of the simulation most students simply say, “It was both fun and productive”. They characterize simulations as a “great and joyful studying tool”, mention that “I had a lot of fun; it was a great way to demonstrate international relations and make theories come to life”, or even point to “an exciting dip in the icy water of international diplomacy”. In short: “enthusiastic, interesting and a good learning method” or “One of the best experiences I had in International Relations”.

Survey findings point to strong ties between role and team identification. This link suggests that participants feel they have successfully managed to step into the shoes of others, leaving an affective impact, beyond cognitive knowledge acquisition. As in theatre, it is easier to play a dramatic and colorful figure like Adolf Hitler or Muammar Gaddafi then a technocrat or mediocre personality such as Neville Chamberlain. Therefore, we suggest incorporating figures considered as radical leaders in the simulation plan and scenario, for at least some of the teams, to help students identify with the decision-makers they represent. Common statements showing identification appear frequently in feedback. “I really was the Secretary of State of the US!!! Not bad!”, or alternatively, “Before the simulation started I decided my approach would be to be bossy and proactive and I was satisfied that I accomplished what I set out to do”. One student revealed, “I realized that I could make stuff up and as long as I sounded sure of myself no one would stop and challenge me. So I just kept announcing things
and bulldozed everyone along” and another admitted, “I was surprised to see such strong resistance to my fanaticism… As in reality, anti-war climate in the West was a decisive constraint on British, French and American decision-makers”. Another student added a comment on the complex relationship between different ‘lives’ exposed by the simulation experience: “It’s been great fun playing a role from a different life that actually affects my life every day”.

**Figure 5: Conceptual Map**

Participants who identify with their role and team tend to regard their side and its behavior as moderate while they view rivals and their behavior as fanatic. For instance, a player wrote, “They wanted the nuclear bomb. I know.” However, the other explained, “My Iran’s primary goal was financial, but we did think of Shiites worldwide, and the conflict with Sunnites. We weren’t prepared to just ignore that” and “We were very dominant, like it supposed to be in reality”.

Identification, however, appears to be unrelated to empathy. This means that participants’ ability to identify with their team and role, as detailed in figure 2H, does not translate further to feelings regarding rivals. Empathy, even if qualified and partial, does have some effect on compromise outcomes. When instructors add detail and décor
to create atmosphere, they help students identify and encourage expressions of empathy. The use of inter-cultural simulations may help students realize that hidden biases act as powerful barriers between rivals and make it hard to reach accommodation. Even so, control over simulation outcomes remains very limited.

Extremism in reality is a core variable having a moderate link with scenario extremism and weak ties with students’ enjoyment, learning and extremism in the simulation. As one student put it: “Reality is stronger than fiction”. In other words, students who participate in current events simulations of the Middle East and are confronted by ISIS, or others taking part in historical simulations like the 1938 Munich crisis, are likely to regard the situation as extreme and act accordingly. One student wrote “The simulation is like a mirror, it reflects what’s really happens”. Another participant admitted, “I think we were somewhat moderate compared to radical groups in real life”. A third elaborated, “The actors were reflected very realistically during the simulation. The real world is more radical. Terrorist attacks by non-state actors such as ISIS are far more extreme than in the simulation”.

Most simulations we run involve crises with extreme situations. Their scenarios are a useful device to trigger more radical interactions between teams than events in reality are. We use this design deliberately because team and rival attributes have strong ties with their respective behaviors and extreme interactions have an impact on learning. Radicalism sets the simulation in motion, affects learning and advances fanaticism awareness. In feedback comments, students explained: “Frankly, I think Saudi Arabia is right to be suspicious of Iran’s intentions”, “Iran is radical”, “it felt real”. With respect to the civil war in Ukraine one student wrote, “They were ready to kill and keep with the war if Ukraine didn’t grant them independence” and added, “It has been an ongoing fight against my team during last decades”. Pointing to more and less radical actors a
student declared, “They were all playing international relations”, but remarked, “The USA did not want to change the system, as we wanted”. Others presented their moderate stance, “we only wanted to defend our border and solve the refugee problem”. One of them concluded, “I think it was an amazing learning experience that enriched my background! Looking forward the next one”.

Given the ease to represent radical figures and their impact on interactions, participants playing Hitler or Gaddafi are likely to escalate simulation extremism while others in the roles of Barack Obama and his associates are likely to add moderation. A mix of radicals and moderates leaves some chance of compromise and accommodative outcomes, depending on the weight of each side and the narrative played. Incorporating rogue states like North Korea, extreme NSAs such as ISIS or radical media teams like Dabiq, improve students’ learning either directly as they get to know their actor, its goals and politics, or indirectly by negotiating with other teams that challenge them with extreme behaviors. Though participants actually play less extreme roles than the scenario dictates, and usually regard their own team as moderate, even when they represent a radical actor, simulations with extreme scenarios usually escalate, making it more difficult to reach compromises. The implication from these findings is that extreme situations consisting of fanatic leaders and radical teams are useful additions to a simulation plan. In all, the result of an extreme setting is a spiral of fanaticism that tests peaceful crisis management but adds drama and increases knowledge gains.

The intertwined nature of radical aspects that affect one another and other simulation variables means that instructors should avoid an ‘overdose’ of radical inputs that might lead to frustrating deadlocks, the collapse of negotiations, or outbursts of animosity between teams or individual players at the end of the simulation. While deliberate amplification of extremism may be a useful as educational tool, one must remember the
shortcomings of experimental engagements. By integrating cognitive study with practice and emotions, the experience of confronting extremism may touch upon personal values, real life events and political beliefs to trigger unexpected outcomes. Careful coaching and in-depth debriefing after the simulation can help students cope with such results, if they occur. Since reality seems to be more important than the scenario in shaping simulation extremism, instructors can look for historical or current analogies to the narrative they plan and share them with students to help them step successfully into their roles and teams. After the simulation, analogies can also help participants step out of the characters they played, remove their costumes and analyze the interaction process and its implications for academic goal fulfillment.

**Conclusion**

This study presented lessons from feedback surveys for designing simulations and highlighting the role of fanaticism in world politics. It focused on nine face-to-face and online simulations of regional crises as an innovative tool to study fanaticism. During these interactive exercises, participants have confronted fanaticism in historical or current events, mostly on Middle-Eastern topics. Results indicate that participants identify with their role and team, enjoy and learn but show limited awareness to fanaticism and its challenges. Students see the situation in less extreme terms than it is, regard themselves as moderates and label rivals as extremists. Yet, they view behaviors as a response to extremism, creating a dangerous escalation spiral. Fanaticism is associated with learning but not with accommodation. The way negotiations end appeared unrelated to research variables, with the exception of enjoyment and empathy. The analysis of separate variables and the relationships between them leads to some practical implications for planning and running successful simulations. In a capsule, two of them are: (1) Add fun and enjoyment to the exercise, as they are an essential part
of learning and enhance it. (2) Incorporate radical actors, but make sure not to exaggerate, and balance extremism with moderate teams as a challenge for all participants. The integration of fanaticism is one topic among others one can incorporate into simulations. We believe that in the future, with the gradual development of rigorous procedures to run simulations and agreed-upon methods to appraise them, users will come closer to the ideal of having a so called ‘political science lab’. Entry to this lab and its frequent use will provide participants with an enhanced learning environment and effective practice under controlled conditions. Planning, backup and analysis of lab products will offer scholars the option to use critical cases constructed specifically for comparison with real world occurrences, along with a multitude of data to test theories. The combined use of study, practice and research of this sort will hopefully increase awareness to extremism and its consequences and improve the understanding of fanaticism by students, scholars and practitioners.
References


Beyond Intractability Project at: www.beyondintractability.org/


ICONS project at: www.icons.umd.edu


National Model United Nations (NMUN) at: www.nmun.org


Statecraft Simulations at: http://statecraftsim.com/


Endnotes

1 See Stern and Berger (2015) for details on the brutal acts of ISIS.


3 We build upon and extend the FBI definition available at https://cve.fbi.gov/whatis/. For an analysis and conceptualization of radicalization see: Dalggaard-Nielsen (2010); Goerzig and Al-Hashimi (2015, Ch.3); Hafez and Mullins (2015:960-61); Mandel (2009); Neumann (2013); Sedgwick (2010).

4 For a discussion regarding mainstream international relations theory and the study of rogue or fanatic actors see: Wagner, Werner, and Onderco (2014:1-5).

5 Regarding online radicalization and the usage of virtual platform to transfer radical content see: Berger (2015); Berger and Morgan (2015); Berger and Strathearn (2013); Cole (2012); Klausen et al. (2012); Neumann (2013); Sedgwick (2010).

6 Throughout our simulations, Facebook interactions took place on closed groups as to ensure privacy and security. For the importance of this issue see: Ben-Yehuda, Levin-Banchik, and Naveh (2015:44).

7 On the use of Facebook for running simulations, see: Ben-Yehuda, Levin-Banchik, and Naveh (2015). Other educational applications of Facebook related to simulations are detailed in Darling and Foster (2012), Simpson and Kaussler (2009), and Smolinski and Kesting (2012).

8 Simulations of world politics are processes in which participants representing political or media actors interact with one another according to a fiction or non-fiction story to advance their goals and policies. Simulations are also political systems set up intentionally to replicate specific situations. Ben-Yehuda, Levin-Banchik, and Naveh (2015:3, 13). For some of the leading simulation projects see the following websites and publications: ICONS at www.icons.umd.edu, and Crookall and Wilkenfeld (1985); Starkey and Wilkenfeld (1996). See also Model UN at www.mnum.org, and Crossley-Frolick (2010); Obendorf and Randerson (2012). Other examples include PeaceMaker at www.peacemakergame.com/index.php, and Cuhadar and Kampf (2014); Gonzalez, Saner, and Eisenberg (2013) and Statecraft at http://statecraftsim.com/. For a temporal mapping and the development of simulations throughout the years see: Ben-Yehuda, Levin-Banchik, and Naveh (2015:32-35).

9 For literature reviews on simulations see Boyer (2011); Brynen and Milante (2013); Hudson and Butler (2010); Kee (2011); Kikkawa and Crookall (2011); Mayer (2009); McDermott (2011); Mintz, Yang, and McDermott (2011); Pepinsky (2005); Shubik (2009); Smith (2010); Van Ments (2011); Wilson et al. (2009).

10 For literature on the goals simulations promote, see Ben-Yehuda, Levin-Banchik, and Naveh (2015). For studies beyond the temporal boundaries of their review, see: Asal et al. (2014:357); Asal, Griffith, and Schulzke (2014:488-89); Bridge and Radford (2014:432-34); Elias (2014:412-15); Gill (2015, Ch. 2); Kempston and Thomas (2014:470).


12 For simulations highlighting skill development see: Asal and Blake (2006); Austin, McDowell, and Sacko (2006); Baylouny (2009); Bernstein (2008); Bridge and Radford (2014); Coffey, Miller, and Feuerstein (2011); Crossley-Frolick (2010); Darling and Foster (2012); DiCicco (2014); Elias (2014); Fliter (2009); Gill (2015); Lay and Smarick (2006); Levintova et al. (2011); McMahon and Miller (2012); Rackaway and Goertzen (2008); Rivera and Simons (2008); Schnurr, Santo, and Craig (2013); Shaw (2006); Shellman and Turan (2006); Taylor (2013); Weir and Baranowski (2011).

13 For simulations confronting value-laden issues see: Asal and Schulzke (2012); Baylouny (2009); Brynen (2010); Coffey, Miller, and Feuerstein (2011); Dexter and Guittet (2014); Fowler (2009); Parmentier (2013); Rackaway and Goertzen (2008); Schrier (2015); Weir and Baranowski (2011).

14 On simulations as a lab for training and research see: Asal, Griffith, and Schulzke (2014); Asal and Schulzke (2012); Austin, McDowell, and Sacko (2006); Baylouny (2009); Ben-Yehuda, Naveh, and Levin-Banchik (2013); Boyer et al. (2009); Garrison, Redd, and Carter (2010); Mintz (2004); Mintz, Redd, and Vedlitz (2006); Shaw (2006).

15 Asal and Schulzke (2012); Shellman and Turan (2006); Siegel and Young (2009).

16 Baranowski and Weir (2015) discuss the development of simulations and their utility. They specify different methods used in simulation research and highlight the centrality of surveys.

17 In all nine simulations, some 70% of the participants were insiders and the rest were outsiders.
By allowing a choice of more than one answer on learning topics and skills, the unit of analysis changes from a survey response of an individual student (N=196), used for all research variables, to a choice of a learning topic or a skill, with an overall of 1350 and 804 answers respectively.


Asal (2005); Butcher (2012); Fowler (2009); Gorton and Havercroft (2012); Kelle (2008); Korosteleva (2010); Loggins (2009); Mendeloff and Carolyn Shaw (2009); Obendorf and Randerson (2012); Simpson and Kaussler (2009); Smolinski and Kesting (2012); Taylor (2013); Weir and Baranowski (2011).

Brynen (2010); Crossley-Frolick (2010); Fliter (2009); Jackson (2013); Kelle (2008); Parmentier (2013); Shaw (2004); Weir and Baranowski (2011).

For more details on these and other assignments see: Ben-Yehuda, Levin-Banchik, and Naveh (2015:54-58)

Baylouny (2009); Dexter and Guittet (2014); Rackaway and Goertzen (2008); Sasley (2010); Stover (2005, 2007); Williams and Williams (2011, 2010).

For details on the Munich crisis, its implications and historical evaluation see: Beck (1989); Taylor (1979); Weinberg (1997).

See Bowden (2013, Ch. 4) on this point.

On the branding or labeling problem in this classification see Ben-Yehuda and Zohar (2014:8-9). Elaborations on the pariah/rogue doctrine and crazy state theory are presented by Dror (1971); Harkavy (1981); Henriksen (2001); Hoyt (2000); Klare (1995); Litwak (2000); Malici (2009); Tanter (1999).