Back to the Future: 
studying and learning BFP via historical modelling and simulation — 
remarks and contributions from a League of Nations simulation 

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Abstract

The paper provides a reassessment of the relevance of historical modelling and simulation (‘modsim’) to active learning in international studies, considering some remarks from (and on) an audacious 1926 League of Nations simulation held in 2007. Such simulation — held within the activities of a major high school-level Model UN — proposed novelties and advances aiming at qualitative improvements of students’ simulated experiences as members of a diplomatic national delegation, taking into special account features such as modelling framework, rules of procedure/’engagement’, kind of participation, preparation (pre-simulation study guide and research material), goals during the simulation process, meta-simulation goals, simulation typology, etc. The reassessment provided is then directed towards the contributions of the aforementioned simulation (its research and experience) to understand the performance, claims and aspirations of Brazilian foreign policy (BFP) in terms of its international peace and security role before the major intergovernmental organisations of the 20th century (League of Nations and the United Nations).

Keywords

active learning, modelling, simulation; Brazilian Foreign Policy; diplomacy, international negotiation; League of Nations; world politics

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-- Draft Version: July 2014 --

Comments welcomed!

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* This paper is inspired by an academic project of mine, on modelling and simulation related to the League of Nations, which encompassed about 5 years of organisation, research, study, writing, etc. I thank Bernardo Silva Martins Ribeiro, who accepted my invitation back in 2007 to make the project happen, as well as Carolina França Netto Chiodi, Leticia Britto dos Santos, Nathalia Dayrell Andrade and Raquel de Bessa Gontijo de Oliveira, who assisted Bernardo and I on the preparation and simulation of the project during the 8th MINI-ONU (2007). I also thank João Augusto Costa Vargas, a great supporter of the project, and Guilherme Stolle Paixão e Casarões, my main partner on participations, researches and writings related to active learning in international studies.

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Prologue

The clash between theory and practice — in an attempt to dissociate one from each other — in International Relations (I.R.) constitutes an obstacle to the improvement and deepness of international relations studies. Stefano Guzzini (2001) stresses that the argument pro-abandonment of a theoretical emphasis in favour of the emphasis on applied studies “is based on an erroneous understanding of the relationship between theory and practice, and of the specific roles theory can play in the education of practitioners [...] [f]or it conflates the theory/practice distinction with the academia/politics distinction”.¹

In that sense, Guzzini intends to highlight the “significance and roles of theory in teaching IR and researching international relations”,² emphasising the binary character of the theoretical knowledge as both explanatory and constitutive — theory is considered the condition for (the possibility of) knowledge, as well as a precondition for empirical analysis (there is no analysis without theoretical assumptions).³

By that, I intend to call attention that this paper is, by no means whatsoever, an academic enterprise pro-use of the active learning toolkit in disregard to (meta-)theoretical significance and roles in I.R. education. On the contrary, my interest and commitment to active learning, modelling and simulation in international studies come pari passu with my interest and commitment to (meta-) theoretical and philosophical-inspired attitudes in I.R. scholarship. Practice and theory in tandem, within academia. Here is where I stand from.

¹ GUZZINI, 2011: 98.
² GUZZINI, 2011: 112.
Modelling and simulation as international studies pedagogical feature

Considering my experience in modelling & simulation (ModSim), as well as the main audience of this paper presentation — strictly, scholars interested in international negotiation (the theme of the panel); broadly, international studies scholars interested in active learning) —, the academic relevance of active learning, modelling and simulation as pedagogical features for fostering and deepening some international studies is here somewhat taken for granted. Thus, what is mainly at issue is about ModSim analytical features and a preliminary assessment of the effects that a MUN organised and held by the United Nations itself can have on the general scenario of UN simulations regarding teaching, learning and youth entrepreneurship/leadership purposes.

So as to better assess the role of modelling and simulation as relevant pedagogical tools to international studies, it is useful to briefly present the constructivist pedagogical approach as well as the so-called problem-based learning. Scott Brown and Frederick King (2000) gives a broad definition of 'constructivism' as a “meaning making [...], rooted in the context of the situation [...], whereby individuals construct their knowledge of, and give meaning to, the external world [...] as a product ‘shaped by traditions and by a culture's toolkit of ways of thought’”.

In this approach, a rich reflective learning environment and context, in which the constitution of meanings comes from the student and its interaction with the world, is appropriate for such constructive learning process to occur. Thus, learning would require ‘learning environments’ that go beyond the symbolic and social boundaries of school or training classrooms and that can be considered collaborative ones (that foster collaboration and interaction within a ‘community of learners’).

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4 Revised and adapted from: CASARÕES & GAMA (2005a; 2005b); P.S. GAMA (2008); P.S. Gama (2009).

5 For several discussions on this matter of relevance, the paper’s Reading & Research References present a quite comprehensive list of interesting texts, in both English and Portuguese languages.

Jonassen, Davidson, Collins, Campbell, and Haag (1995) held that these learning communities focused on four principles: context, construction, collaboration, and conversation. As they stated, “Constructivist environments engage learners in knowledge construction through collaborative activities that embed learning in meaningful context and through reflection on what has been learned through conversation with other learners”. Synthesizing the attributes discussed above, Wilson (1996) would define a constructivist learning environment as “a place where learners may work together and support each other as they use a variety of tools and information resources in their guided pursuit of learning goals and problem-solving activities”.

The authors highlight the consideration of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method of instruction and of problem-solving skills as fundamentals to succeed in current modern society. They also mention J.C. Dunlap and R.S. Grabinger’s (1996) statement that “learning to think critically and to analyze and synthesize information in order to solve technical, social, economic, political, and scientific problems are crucial for successful and fulfilling participation in a modern, competitive society”, thus concluding that problem-based learning and problem-solving skills are very good ways to prepare students for such participation in the modern life. In sum, problem-based learning method and problem-solving skills are considered important tools for the development of a kind of contemporary relevant human capital, providing individuals with knowledge, thinking and analysis-based perspicacity/sagacity.

In that sense, modelling, simulation and gaming were long used as tools in pedagogical and professional practices (of learning and instruction), be that in military (war games), business (management games), policy (decision-making/taking models) or diplomacy (simulation of international organisations’ meetings/sessions), for example.

Most professions have used simulations for a variety of reasons, but until recently, few had used simulation as a teaching tool (Smith and Boyer, 1996). In the field of political science, simulation exercises, used as teaching tools, are conducted on a regular basis. Smith and Boyer (1996) contend, “Simulations have the power to recreate complex, dynamic political processes in the classroom, allowing students to examine the motivations, behavior constraints, resources and interactions among institutional actors”.

For Brigid A. Starkey and Elizabeth L. Blake (2001), I.R. simulations have a common feature of making an effort to “recreate important aspects of the international system—from the tools and levers available to state and nonstate actors in the system—to the many connections between issues of concern in the international arena”. 

\[7\] BROWN & KING, 2000: 265
\[8\] Dunlap & Grabinger \textit{apud} BROWN & KING, 2000: 246.
\[10\] STARKEY & BLAKE, 2001: 539.
Simulation in International Relations (for instance) has its origins, basically, in war games; the military use of simulation aimed “to train officers in battlefield decision making and tactics and to test strategies and develop battle plans”. This is interesting because, not coincidentally, the history of I.R. simulation leads back to the use of simulation in war preparation and training, and ‘war’ is a traditional object of study of International Relations — especially that “traditional I.R.” that is (semantically and somewhat anachronistically) term-exchangeable with “international politics”.

Also worth of notice is the fact that the most common simulation in I.R., that of international (intergovernmental) organisations, has its advent in tandem with the traditionally-considered advent of International Relations as a distinct (sub)field or discipline itself — notably by the creation of the so-called ‘first academic course/program concerned with the world outside’ (Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth, Wales, 1919) as well as the ‘first known International Relations department’ (at London School of Economics-LSE, London, 1924).

By that date, simulations of the respective main international organisation (the League of Nations) emerged in the awakening of the 1920's, and curiously such enterprises were mostly taken into effect in non-League member countries (notably the U.S. and Germany). Later on, after another warring period (1939-1945), Models League of Nations (MLNs) went out — as well as the international organisation itself — and Models United Nations (MUNs) took its place and were further developed during the Cold War and post-Cold War periods.

Simulation in International Law (for another instance) dates back from (at least) the 1950's, as the world's largest and most important international law moot court competition is now (2011) at its 52nd edition. The most usual of I.L. simulations, notably Moot Court Competitions (MCCs), range from broader international courts (e.g. International Court of Justice) to regional ones (e.g. Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Ad Hoc Arbitration Court of Mercosur).

A (meta-)theoretical pause

Deep, careful discussion on modelling-simulation as academic pedagogical feature for international studies, especially considering constructive learning process point-of-view, leads us to consider boundary(ies) — taken/regarded as an interconnected and transversal theme to general international (relations) studies. As already briefly mentioned, symbolic and social boundaries are relevant terms so as to deal with ‘learning environments’ and role-playing scenarios, as well as to deal (in depth) with binaries such as “simulation”/”reality”, “classroom”/”negotiation room”, “roles”/”stakes”, etc.

Michèle Lamont & Virág Molnár (2002) discuss the study of boundaries in Social Sciences, stressing that such are part of the classic conceptual toolkit of social scientists. Affirming the need that social scientists and researched that deal with the concept of boundaries be aware of its use beyond theirs disciplines and specialties (as well as between the social sciences), the authors provide a relevant distinction between symbolic and social boundaries. “Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorise objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality.”12 Social boundaries, instead, are “[…] objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities. They are also revealed in stable behavioral patterns of association, as manifested in connubiality and commensality.”13

Only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important ways. Moreover, only then can they become social boundaries, i.e., translate, for instance, into identifiable patterns of social exclusion or class and racial segregation (e.g., Massey & Denton 1993, Stinchcombe 1995, Logan et al. 1996). But symbolic and social boundaries should be viewed as equally real: The former exist at the intersubjective level whereas the latter manifest themselves as groupings of individuals. At the causal level, symbolic boundaries can be thought of as a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries (Lamont 1992, Ch. 7).14

The importance of the concept of boundaries to social sciences is, in great part, due to its virtue of capturing a fundamental social process, notably that of ‘relationality’.15 The thematic of boundaries is relevant to the studies of several relational processes, for example: social and collective identity; class, ethnic/racial and genre inequality; professions, knowledge and science; communities, national identities and spatial frontiers.16 Yet is important to point out that boundaries are not only conditions for separation, segregation and exclusion, but also for communication, exchange, bridge-building, inclusion and insertion [and, why not, networking], what reminds and resounds the theme of ‘omnivorousness’ found in the literature on some social processes.17

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Simulating the League of Nations (1926)

My academic project of a distinct simulation of the League of Nations, related to the year 1926, had its origins dating back to the year 2002 when I started studies about the League of Nations — especially regarding the 1926 scenario — and decided to simulate related committees. This was still during my high school times. Two years later, in university, I had the opportunity to participate as delegate in an outstanding simulation held at 7th AMUN (Americas Model United Nations), notably the simulation of the Special Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations (March 8th – March 17th, 1926). In 2007, the Secretary-General and the Coordination of the 8th MINI-ONU (Modelo Intercolegial da Organização das Nações Unidas) — the biggest high school-level Model United Nations in Latin America — invited me to submit a committee project. Although my project was originally designed to be hold as an university-level simulation, I took this as a peculiar opportunity to confront some “common-sense” (pre)conceptions regarding challenges, difficulties and limits of simulation in International Relations [I will come back to this soon]. So, I took the dust off my research archives and materials as to accomplish one of my early simulation projects.

The project was very distinctive and unusual, in comparison with the general simulations (MUNs)’ committees I was familiar with or had notice of, either considering the Brazil-based or abroad ones. It was not a project for a committee, but for two committees and three instances of in loco negotiation; thus a dense and multiple simulation, not restricted to a sole committee or a sole instance of negotiation. The participants would not be delegates alike with a horizontal status of political prerogative, and they could communicate with each other (and even with their superiors, e.g. head of state) via confidential written messages; also, some delegations would have one member entitled to take part in negotiations in the two committees. Each committee would deal with an agenda not restricted to one topic/item, and they both had the prerogative to go beyond the established agenda so as to deal with other affairs/issues under the scope of the Organisation or related to world peace and security. The topics would not be necessarily specific or exclusive to each committee, so their discussions and deliberations would relate and interfere in each committee and instance of negotiation. The preparation documents (rules guide, study guide, annexes) would not be separate, but joint, so as delegates could have a broader view of the topics, actors, positions and stakes at play. There would not be a director/chair for each committee, but two directors/chairs responsible for both committees and for the three instances of negotiation. As you can notice, there were many differences from committees regularly simulated in MUNs all over the world.
The main pedagogical purpose of the proposed simulation was to provide a simulation experience that could go beyond the more regular goals of teaching and learning about a topic of international relevance, about an international organisation's structure, rules, members, mandate and functions, about how to represent an actor's position, about how to establish and recognise stakes, goals and possible motivations, about how to speak and write in a diplomatic manner, etc.; in sum, the usual goal-features of a role-playing activity. The mentioned differences of the project were intended to foster some unusual pedagogical goals in international studies' simulations (at least in MUNs), such as to learn and experience a hierarchy within a country's delegation, to experience and deal with the challenge of receiving “inputs” (e.g. orders) from and sending “feedbacks” (e.g. reports) to superiors, to take into account and to participate in a multi-level negotiation with two committees and three instances of in loco negotiation, etc. These were all related to a general purpose of providing delegates with an unique experience of an international negotiation in an international organisation milieu, as well as an in-depth historical simulation. Additionally, it was intended to put to “test” a consideration of the need to do “easier” and the “basics” in what regards short-term intensive simulation activities for pre-university students.

The research subject of the academic project related to the simulation was formulated by taking into account that the League of Nations had been neglected as an important international organisation, due to its failures and the advent of World War II. In terms of modelling and simulation, especially in the Brazilian experience, pre-United Nations international organisations and organs had been rarely explored; additionally, regarding high school-level activities, there were no notices of simulations in such area. Therefore, the project was an attempt to promote further interest and study on the League of Nations and the international scenario of its period of existence.

The general aim of the project was to “[m]ake a more profound analysis regarding the role of the League of Nations and the challenges faced by this very organization regarding peace and security issues during the troubled times of the international relations in the interwar period (1919-1939)”\(^1\). The specific aims were to: analyse the conflictive context of League of Nations' Council reform, analyse the challenges disposed to the international environment after WWII, investigate the corollaries of this matter to the broader scope of international relations of that time; provide delegates with the experience of simulating in historical perspective, specially pre-United Nations times, as to promote a better knowledge of the interwar period — taking into account the outbreaking relevance of 20th century World Wars to History, Politics and I.R. studies.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) P.S. GAMA & RIBEIRO, 2007b: 7.
The committees simulated two League meetings that took place simultaneously in March 1926: a Special Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations (March 8-17, 1926); the Thirty-Ninth Session of the Council of the League of Nations (March 8-18, 1926). Both committees had a common agenda item and a specific agenda item: the common topic was “Germany Accession and League's Council Reform”; the specific topics were “the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference” (Assembly) and “the Mosul Question” (Council). In each committee, Assembly and Council, members were represented by up to two delegates. Countries that were represented in both the Assembly and the Council had a Head of Delegation, a plenipotentiary representative with credentials to participate in both committees. Those special representatives had easier access to the League's Secretariat meeting room, when its use was requested for more restrict, direct and (in)formal negotiations.

Despite Gumbrecht's (1999) opinion that 1926 was not a special year, not a year decisive to humanity, just a year like any other, the choice of that year for the simulation was very purposeful. In terms of history of international relations, of history of international organisations (including the history of a particular one), and of history of Brazilian foreign affairs, 1926 was a relevant year, even a turning-point in some cases.

In that year, it was negotiated and decided the accession of Germany to the League of Nations. The League was an international organisation established in the Treaty of Versailles, the same treaty that divided Europe into content and discontent nations and put the responsibility of the war — and all its losses, damages, casualties — on Germany (mainly) and its allies, the same treaty is mostly considered to have reinforced the status of Germany as defeated in war and taken the country to a disgraceful, deteriorating and humiliating situation — the Treaty is usually taken as one of the main seeds of Germany's position/attitude that led to World War II. The major defeated enemy of the then Great War was getting its place as member — not a “mere” member, but a member with permanent representation in both League's Assembly (constitutional, plenary organ) and Council (executive organ) — of the international organisation that was created as a corollary of the war and the Versailles peace negotiations, with the mandate of promoting peace via collective security, disarmament and pacific resolution of controversies. This is emblematic, symbolically powerful.

The accession of Germany clashed with the aim of some countries — mainly Brazil, China, Spain and Poland — that also had the aim to be a permanent member of the League's Council. In the case of Brazil, because of Germany's accession as a League member with permanent seat in both Assembly and Council, the country withdrew from the League.
This was a very important feature of the research subject, because it provided basis for motivation and justification in three ways: in terms of Brazil's international relations experience, in terms of the League of Nations and of international organisations history, and in terms of international relations in general. The simulation was held in Brazil, designed and organised by Brazilian university students, got the participation of Brazilian high school students... so to deal with a time period and a negotiation situation relevant in terms of Brazil's foreign affairs was a motivating 'teaser point'. Also, there was a 'bonus point' because, not coincidentally, there were resemblances between Brazil's campaign for acceding to a permanent membership in the League of Nations Council and Brazil's campaign for acceding to a permanent status in the United Nations Security Council. In terms of the League's history, this was an important period due to the Council's reform and the accession of the most discontent part of the Treaty of Versailles. In terms of international organisations history, the period was relevant so as to understand how such organisations change (e.g. via adaptation or learning);\(^{20}\) also, the study of the League's Council reform could shed a comparative light on the discussions on the UN Security Council reform. In what regards the history of international relations, 1926 could be a turning-point in the broader process from war to peace negotiations, with the insertion of the great defeated part into the institutional post-war peace and security framework.

\(^{20}\) Cf. HAAS, 1990.
Remarks on Brazilian foreign policy: lessons from (simulating) history

The provided reassessment can now be directed towards the contributions of the aforementioned simulation (its research and experience) to understand the performance, claims and aspirations of Brazilian foreign policy (BFP) in terms of its international peace and security role before the major intergovernmental organisations of the 20th century (League of Nations and the United Nations).

The following thematic discussions will turn attention to this topic of concern, so as to sketch the potential (and effective) contributions that a historical simulation may bring to understanding and reassessing the BFP and its assumptive key aspects, considering inclusively a pre-United Nations context.

On BFP and the ‘continuity thesis’

The major trend of the Brazilian Foreign Policy (PEB - Política Externa Brasileira) historiography and analysis, present in great part of the Brazil's academic (and political) literature on the country's role and features regarding foreign affairs and international relations, is one based on a thesis — contemporarily turned into some sort of assumption — of continuity. For such interpretation, the country's foreign policy is characterised as a continuum, a coherent historical movement without significant ruptures or twists within more than a century (e.g. since the end of the 19th Century).

Also, Brazil's foreign policy and international relations are commonly considered, by home practitioners and scholars, as practical and theoretical means towards better understanding and fulfilment of the national objectives/goals and of a certain Brazilian “manifest fate” — taking into account the country's “privileges” and “special character”, e.g. grandiosity (“giant by nature”, according to the National Anthem), embedded leadership, a nation fond of peace and both nationally and territorially satisfied, etc. — in regional and international spheres. In this sense, Brazilian Foreign Policy and I.R. in Brazil, even from the 1970s on, concentrated a considerable part of its efforts to such themes and challenges, notably to the agenda of ‘international insertion’, ‘development’ and ‘regional leadership’ — and, later, on multilateralism and universalism. In a certain way, diplomacy, foreign policy and international relations are supplementary (or united) efforts on ideas and practices related to the Brazilian international role and performance.
Researching (and simulating) the League of Nations in 1926, the negotiations for its Council expansion, and Brazil's position and participation, bring the opportunity for questioning aspects related to this narrative of coherence and continuity. The fact that the country took part in the League of Nations as a founding member and later withdrawn from the Organisation due to (among other factors) the unsuccessful campaign for a permanent Council seat is quite an overturn in contrast with the country's future participation in the United Nations and the renewed dismissal of Brazil's project towards being granted a permanent status in the new organisation's Security Council — this Brazilian foreign policy goal is still pending nowadays. This appears incoherent with the country's comprises and efforts (e.g. establishing a permanent mission) to the former international organisation. [these subjects will be also discussed in the following subject items]

Brazil's international role: a (deserved) place in the sun?

One curious feature of Brazil's international “best practices” is about the (intended monumental) efforts towards enhancing the country's participation in international institutions. This relates to a Brazilian proclaimed self-image as a nation fond of peace, security and multilateralism, a friendly country that respects international law and the international system — as well as an innate regional leader.

In recent or contemporary times, we may remind of some sounding efforts: i) Brazil's leadership of military forces in MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti), commitment that was backed by a discourse of concern for peace and social justice directed to the assistance to “the world's first black republic”; ii) Brazil's access as a creditor country in IMF; iii) the successful campaign that resulted in the election of a (then) member of Brazil's representation to WTO as the Organisation's Director-General; iv) Brazil as a third-party mediator for international nuclear negotiations with Iran; etc.

Putting in historical context the Brazilian efforts of amplifying and strengthening the country's presence, role and influence in international institutions, we will find that this remits to pre-UN times. A classical episode which is taken as both a source and an evidence of Brazil's eminent activity in the international arena regards the participation in the second Hague Peace Conference, especially through the iconic role of the Brazilian head delegate/chief of delegation — Rui Barbosa, then nicknamed as “Águia de Haia” (Hague's Eagle) — as a leading voice in defense of the principle of equality of nation-states, as a memory of times when the world “bowed” before Brazil's virtuosity.
In the League of Nations period, Brazil also took very seriously the need to take an active role and exert influence within international multilateral institutions. In March 1924, Brazil was the very first country to establish a Permanent Delegation to the League, granting it ‘embassy status’, which represented a meaningful step that signalled an especial commitment regarding the conduction of international negotiations in Geneva. Together with Brazil's vehement participation in the main activities — Council, Assembly, commissions, technical organs — of the League, this was intended to emphasise and corroborate the country's legitimacy on claiming a permanent seat in the Executive body of the Organisation. Thus, the presence of Brazil in the Council of the League would be due to a background of multilateral “good services”.

Brazil's international aspiration of a greater role and influence in international affairs via the acquirement of a privileged status in multilateral forums and decision-making “club organs” (Councils), something linked with the BFP traditional narrative on the country's qualifications as a (almost natural) regional and international leader, was not successful. Such national pride-driven and public opinion-supported claim, whose denial could change the way the Brazilian government saw its relations with the Organisation — as sir James Eric Drummond, then Secretary-General of the League of Nations, was once reminded of by one Brazilian delegate —, was not received by other countries as Brazil would expect.

Brazilian institutional efforts/practices within major multilateral international organisations, as well as the related campaigns for a Council's permanent seat, have to bear in mind a historical obstacle (from a considerable part of fellow member states) to Brazil's presumption of leadership.

Brazil's (pretentious) regional leadership role

Alongside the argument that Brazil deserved a permanent seat in the League of Nations' Council as a reward for “good services” and “best practices”, a considerable part of the Brazilian candidature discourse regarded the claim for both regional and continental representativeness.

Here is how the story goes: i) America, a continent eager for world peace, was much underrepresented — taking economic, demographic, political and moral criteria into account, and also considering the loyalty of the countries (summing around 90 million people) to the League —

22 “[...] the permanent representation of eighteen American nations that, in economic terms, were not in a much inferior position compared to the European continent, could not be excluded” (GARCIA, 2000b: 63). Original: “[...] não se poderia excluir a representação permanente de dezoito nações americanas que, do ponto de vista econômico, não estavam em posição muito inferior à do continente europeu”.
in the League's Council, and Brazil could fill such gap;²³ ii) in subcontinental terms, Latin America should also have a well-earned permanent representative in the Council, “due to its populational and territorial dimensions, the volume of financial contribution to the League (7th in importance), and its politics of affiliation to the organisation's ideals”;²⁴ and Brazil would be the most qualified candidate;²⁵ iii) in face of great powers' opposition, a third solution came up, claiming that the two Ibero-American ethnic groups be represented in the Council, with Spain — representing (in the name of its former colonies) the Hispanic America — and Brazil — the one and only nation of Portuguese race and language in the continent — occupying those seats.²⁶

Those alternatives, which were negotiation attempts of realising Brazil's self-image as innate/embedded regional leadership, did not resonate in the “community” of South American or even the broader group of Latin American countries. The position of other South American countries by the time of the issue of Germany's accession to the League is enough to show the lack of support for such leadership claim: although not contrary to the Brazilian candidature, Uruguay (also a non-permanent member of the Council in 1926) did not expressed any firm position on the matter, mostly concerned with renovating the country's temporary mandate; although having proposed the creation of two Council seats (one for Brazil) in 1921, Chile was interested in arranging a permanent status of its own and already stated in 1923 that it would be keen to replace Brazil as the temporary regional representative; basically, the other Latin American countries (including Venezuela and Dominican Republic) wanted Brazil to reconsider its position, as they were in favour of applying the ‘principle of roulement’ to the Council's temporary seats.²⁷

Brazilian claims for a “natural” regional leadership, due to the country's dimensions and qualifications, were (and still are) not echoed by fellow regional countries. Thus, Brazil's self-image as the best-qualified “voice of Latin America” is considerably silenced by the lack of legitimacy.

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²³ Later on, Brazil adapted such argument by accepting to provisionally fill the permanent seat that would be dedicated to the representation of the American continent and that was reserved to the United States.

²⁴ GARCIA, 2000b: 78.

Original: “[...] dadas as dimensões de sua população e de seu território, o volume de sua contribuição financeira à Liga (a 7ª em importância), e sua política de filiação aos ideais da organização”.

²⁵ This ‘best candidate’ argument was secretly expressed by the Brazilian representative to the 4th League Assembly, via a confidential communication to the British, French and Swedish representatives, in Sep. 20, 1923.

²⁶ This proposal was linked to the suggestion “[...] that Brazil and Spain would be in fact provisionally occupying the two seats respectively reserved to the United States and to Germany” (GARCIA, 2000b: 78).

Original: “[...] de que o Brasil e a Espanha ficassem na verdade ocupando provisoriamente os dois lugares reservados respectivamente aos Estados Unidos e à Alemanha”.

²⁷ Argentina closed its mission in Geneva in 1920, after the League rejected (on Nov. 17th) the country's proposal to extinguish the distinction between permanent and temporary members (all Council members should be elected in the same way) and after the first commission approved the Balfour report, which recommended to postpone decisions on amendments to the League's Covenant. (GARCIA, 2000b: 59-60)
Conclusions

1926, when the admission of Germany to the League of Nations (with a permanent seat in its Executive Council) was defined, also marks the Brazilian notification regarding the withdrawal from the Organisation, which would entry into force two years later. Such decision can be considered a diverging point for the country's international participation, one made even more evident if we take a brief comparison with Brazil's position in the future United Nations.

A founding member of the League of Nations, following the country's presence in the Versailles Peace Conference (1919), Brazil saw in the Organisation an opportunity for fostering its international role and influence. Due to the U.S. Senate refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, Brazil originally acceded to the League as the only Council member from the American continent, and then aspired to maintain its status as the “spokescountry” of the region's ideals of peace and law — as a temporary member (whenever the only option available), and later as a permanent member (as soon as possible). When Germany, a defeated party of the 1919 Peace Treaty, was being accepted to the League (with the promise of automatic accession as a permanent Council member), Brazil considered that the universal ideal of the League got overthrown, that the primacy of international law and equality of nation-states was neglected in favour of the realm of great powers' politics, that the Organisation was getting subordinated by a regional group of countries.

The curious part is that many aspects of this narrative were (more or less) “replicated” in the United Nations era: i) Brazil is also a founding member of the Organisation; ii) Brazil is again a relevant candidate for a Council permanent seat; iii) the Council division between permanent and non-permanent seats is again disadvantageous to Latin America (but now the U.S. is present); iv) the Council, its composition and its structure of great powers' politics is again subordinated to a small group of countries, without concern with regional representativeness in the permanent seats.

But, different from the previous experience, in that occasion Brazil expressed its intention of becoming a permanent member of the (Security) Council since the very beginning. In diplomats' memoirs and books related to the UN “behind the scenes”, it can be read the story about Brazil negotiating its Council member status. Bearing in mind the 1926 “trauma”, when another refusal of the country's permanent seat candidature was answered with a ‘that's enough!’ message, Brazil demanded a permanent seat from the beginning and negotiated this as far as it could, but the request was “initially” refused with a promise to be considered and made effective in the near future.28

28 As a “compensation” for such delay, it is told, Brazil had been given the right to be the opening speaker in the annual UN General Assembly (privilege maintained until today).
Since then, the only significant reform of the Security Council (UNSC) occurred in 1965 (expansion of members from 11 to 15 seats), which added four non-permanent members and thus did not embrace Brazil's claim for permanent status.

In that sense, the Brazilian decision in 1926 cannot be taken into account only in terms of getting or not a permanent seat at the Council, because this narrow vision would imply a presumed same decision towards the UN. The analysis of the decision needs historical context, so as to be attentive to the fact that Brazil's government was intending to augment relations with the U.S. (and to deviate from European matters) and that probably the “German issue” in 1926 served as a catalyst or just anticipated a withdrawal decision that would be inevitable in the future — from that year on, several other countries gave notice of withdrawal from the League of Nations (Spain 1926, Japan 1933, Germany 1933, Paraguay 1935, Guatemala 1936, Nicaragua 1936, Honduras 1936, Salvador 1937, Italy 1937, Chile 1938, Venezuela 1938).

Also, it puts under historical perspective analyses over the UN Reform (especially its Council) and the still ongoing Brazilian candidature to a permanent seat in such major international security organ, one objective deemed as fundamental for Brazil to take a more prominent role in the international system through its most universal-intended multilateral international organisation.
Remarks on historical modelling and simulation

Here I present some remarks on historical modelling and simulation. The following comments take a philosophy-inspired character, but such thoughts and considerations are related to — in the sense of taking into regard or also taking relevance in tandem with — experiences in historical modelling and simulation.

Karl Marx once wrote, inspired by G.W.F. Hegel's observation that all facts and characters of great importance in world history occur twice, that this philosopher forgot to add something to such thought: that it occurs firstly as tragedy, secondly as farce. Also, Marx states that men do their own history, but not according to their will neither under circumstances of their choice, but under contingencies that are imposed to their challenge, contingencies legated and transmitted by the past.

One of the central arguments of the starting chapters of Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is that grand socio-political happenings are results of diverse and dynamic human actions, as none relevant historical occurrence is detached from (previous) history itself and its contingencies. Also, Marx reminds us of the usualness of the (allegorical, discursive, ideational) recurrence to tradition and the spirits of the past as important moments of revolutionary enterprise. To consider this "philosophy of history" from Marx (with a Hegelian spice) can be one of several ways of thinking about and dealing with the challenge of history; more specifically, in our case, dealing with the challenge of '(re)accessing and (re)assessing the past' via a crosscut or transversal historical move. That is, perhaps, the great challenge and impetus of any historical simulation intended to provide a learning experience relevant to international studies. Diving into this reading of a "Marx-add-to-Hegel" consideration of history, in terms of ‘facts and figures’ of relevance, perchance the venture of historical modelling and simulation could be considered a purposely attempt to experience farce so as to grasp (some of) the tragedy. Historical ‘modsim’, as both a process and a pretense accomplishment, may be taken as a dialectic farce-tragedy induced experience. But, differently from history "for real", *historical simulation summons traditions and spirits of a double past*: the past of the present simulated, and the past of the current present in which it is modelled the present of the simulation. Historical simulation thus brings somewhat of hypocrisy to the spotlight. More than in "regular", "basic-to-basic" simulation, much of a reciprocal embeeded dissimulation takes place in historical simulation; to (dis)simulate or not to (dis)simulate, that is the question.
In his work related to the year 1926 (Em 1926),\textsuperscript{29} Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht wants to “speak to the dead”, his will is for a first-hand experience of worlds that existed before our birth. The intention is to present the book as an essay on historical simultaneity, questioning in which extent and at which cost it is possible to make again present, in text, worlds that existed before the author's birth. In other words, somewhat how to bring to life worlds that existed prior to his life. This may take resemblance with the challenges faced by and for historical modelling and simulation: to imaginatively represent [create a model] a world before our existence and make it present again [simulate it, simulate within it].

An outburst of the exclusive binary framework thinking on boundaries; the merge of farce and tragedy; a dialectic historical move, a crosscut, transversal historical move; a present of pasts folding on/in themselves; time-space relativity; play in the margins (of history, of theory/practice)... historical simulation brings these questions to the spotlight.

As Gumbrecht says,\textsuperscript{30} there is no sole dominant way of imagining and representing History...

\textsuperscript{29} GUMBRECHT, 1999: 11-12.
\textsuperscript{30} GUMBRECHT, 1999: 11.
Review of assessments and Final Remarks

This paper is a preliminary attempt on reviewing and reassessing the experience of a simulation that is here taken as distinct and unique, so as to shed light upon possibilities to add depth and quality to simulations done in Models United Nations and upon the relevance of historical modelling and simulation. Although active learning is considered to be quantitatively and qualitatively fostered in terms of longer, continuous and more closely supervised (and tutored) activities and experiences, such as a(n) (under)graduate semester or year-long course on international negotiation applying simulation tools, this should not be taken as an excuse or justification for not doing better in more specific, short-term and intensive simulation activities such as the ones held in MUNs.

In the previous pages, there were provided initial best-attempted remarks that relate international studies, active learning, boundaries and history. From stating a position of taking seriously the interconnectedness of practice and theory, and also providing a brief introduction on modelling and simulation as a pedagogical feature for international studies, while highlighting such discussions with some considerations on the question of boundaries, it was given an (very summarised) overview on the ‘case study’ simulation and then some remarks on historical modelling and simulation were offered, so as to (re)assess its relevance.

As I insist to emphasise, this paper is a stepping-stone. I plan to revise it carefully and also to expand its content, especially regarding more detailed information on the ‘case study’ simulation, so as readers may get a better grasp of how the simulation worked, of its dynamics. Additionally, I intend to improve my comments on the challenges of historical simulation, and maybe try to deal with it in relation with thoughts on history provided by thinkers that wrote during the period of the League of Nations. So, I will get ‘back to the future’ of this work.
Reading & Research References

Books & Book Chapters


Articles


Papers


Other

