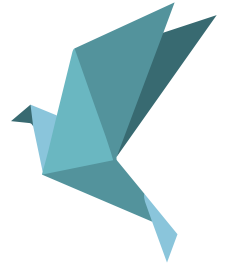


Advancing Dialogue and Building Common Ground:

Peace Games as a Strategic Tool
for Sustaining Peace



American
Friends
Service
Committee



Cooperative Simulations as a Way to Guide Strategic Planning and Advocacy Engagement

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01.

Executive

Summary

Cooperative simulations, including peacegaming, are designed as strategic approaches to sustaining peace and resilience, advance dialogue, and build common ground. By adapting elements of traditional war gaming and focusing on collaboration rather than confrontation, such simulations provide a structured, experiential platform for testing diplomatic strategies, developing new tactics for conflict prevention and resolution, and fostering consensus-based policymaking. Through realistic scenarios and role-based exercises, participants are challenged to navigate complex political and social dynamics, explore alternatives to escalation, and design actionable solutions grounded in cooperation and mutual understanding.

Since 2023, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), in collaboration with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), has piloted over 35 cooperative simulations across six regions, engaging more than 700 participants from government, academia, and civil society.

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and civil society. These simulations have evolved from a regional dialogue tool on the Korean Peninsula into a broader methodology for capacity-building, strategic planning, and policy engagement.

Cooperative simulations can be applied across **three main pathways**: 1) as a **capacity-building tool** for young professionals and policymakers to improve negotiations and coalition-building; 2) as a **strategic and tactical tool** for testing responses to peace and security challenges and risks; and 3) as a **consensus-building and strategic advocacy mechanism** for civil society, including networks and coalitions, preparing joint advocacy positions and advocacy engagement strategies. Across all three pathways, the approach emphasizes empathy, systems thinking, and cooperation as essential to sustaining peace and resilience.

The experience of implementing Peace Games demonstrates that simulations not only expand understanding of conflict dynamics but also cultivate empathy, improve communication, and empower participants to translate lessons from the exercise into real-world policy processes. As this methodology continues to evolve, it represents a scalable and adaptable framework for transforming how practitioners, institutions, and communities approach the complex task of sustaining peace.

This white paper offers policymakers and practitioners in peace and security a tested, adaptable methodology to operationalize cooperation and positive peace in complex policy environments. It is a resource for policymakers, peacebuilders, and civil society actors, articulating cooperative simulations' contribution to capacity-building, strategic planning, and consensus-based advocacy in support of sustaining peace and resilience.

02.

Objectives

and Methodology



Cooperative simulations, also known as peacegaming, are an effective methodology for advancing dialogue and building common ground. It has the potential to advance practice in peaceful resolution of disputes, encouraging participants to develop and test peace-oriented approaches to conflict prevention and resolution.

There are different ways of interpreting this methodology. Just like war games, they can vary in length, scope, and complexity. The methodology used for this paper has been developed by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), with partners from the Northeast Asia network of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC NEA) and Quaker UN Office (QUNO).

Many actors who apply cooperative simulations as a tool for addressing peace and security issues and training experts in peace and security do not present their methodologies. This paper will provide an overview of how cooperative simulations can be done and what they can accomplish in different iterations. With this, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) aims to ensure that policy and academic practitioners can adapt this methodology in their work in peace and security.

The findings of the paper are based on the pilot phase that included over 30 simulations held both virtually and in-person for more than 600 people between December 2023 and September 2025, including educational institutions, policy spaces, and local community consultations. Throughout this time, this methodology has been piloted in Central Asia, Northeast Asia, North America, Southeast Asia, Eastern and Central Africa, and West Africa, as well as at the global level.

During the pilot phase, the organisers established various iterations of cooperative simulations that can serve different audiences and respective goals, contributing effective tools for conflict prevention and resolution. We predict that the use of such cooperative simulations could further evolve as their application continues. The application of such methodology to various spaces within the peace and security field is encouraged, and their consistent evaluation is a must.

03.

Background:

A Peace-Focused

Approach to Sustaining

Peace and Resilience

Cooperative simulations, also known as peacegaming, were initially developed to provide peace-focused ways of engaging in peace and security. This is an approach built on cooperation, mutual trust, and the pursuit of “positive peace¹,” understood not merely as the absence of violence but as the presence of inclusive, just, and sustainable social relations. Cooperative simulations were designed as an alternative to war games, which are widely practiced to model military conflicts and crisis situations to analyze decision-making, strategy, and outcomes (See Table 1).

Table 1: Differences between Peace Games and War Games:

Peace Games	War Games
No violent incidents are catalysts for the scenario.	Violent incidents are a catalyst for the scenario.
The only way to “win” is through cooperation and working together.	Simulations are focused on unilateral action oriented toward one side taking a “win”.
Simulations are focused on developing pathways for de-escalation and compromise.	Simulations are focused on developing strategies for advantage and decisive victory.
Peace is a baseline.	Conflict is a baseline.
Simulations build capacity for diplomatic action.	Simulations build capacity for military action.

1. “Positive Peace” is a concept invented by Johan Galtung, a Norwegian sociologist, in his 1969 work “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” where he distinguished positive peace (the presence of social justice, equity, and harmonious relationships) from negative peace (the mere absence of direct violence).

Cooperative simulations are a peacebuilding tool because the role play encourages the change of behavior towards cooperation and consensus-building, and requires collective leadership rather than individual dominance. It can be used to simulate both pre- and post-conflict contexts, providing an avenue to determine viable alternatives in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and resilience building.

These simulations involve active role-playing and encourage deep involvement through a “learning by doing” approach. They create an engaging, well-structured, and immersive environment where participants can grapple with complex issues, practice negotiation and coalition-building, and experience how perceptions and dynamics evolve in real-world diplomacy, as well as brainstorm solutions to the main challenges in peace and security. Time constraints are a deliberate feature of the simulation; it encourages participants to focus on finding an agreement, articulate arguments quickly, and reach a compromise.

There are at least three pathways to use cooperative simulations, drawing on AFSC’s long-standing practice and accumulated expertise in their design. Each serves a particular audience and works to advance specific objectives. The selection of a pathway suitable to a specific peace and security context depends on clearly-stated goals, intended outcomes, and potential benefits to all participants (See Annex 1).

First, cooperative simulations can be used for capacity-building. In 1978, educator John Hunter created the “World Peace Game” at Richmond Community High School to teach students about global issues and conflict resolution. In 1992, Eric Dawson at Harvard University founded the Peace Games program to teach young people about cooperation, respect for differences, and personal responsibility to create safe schools and communities. Similarly, GPPAC Network in Northeast Asia, the American Friends Service Committee, and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) transformed Peace Games into a simulated UN negotiation on thematic issues (e.g., sustainable energy transition). This pathway helps participants build practical skills for engaging with peace and security risks and policy dynamics. From this perspective, cooperative simulations serve as an educational tool for young professionals and newly onboarding experts.

Second, cooperative simulations can be used the development and testing of tactics and strategies in conflict prevention and resolution. This methodology presents a particular context and helps understand differing points of view, consider new alliances, reveal possible contingency plans, and assess risks and consequences in responding to major conflicts and risks to peace and security. In this, it helps to move away from crisis simulation and put “peace” at the heart of negotiations. Simulation of the negotiations for a regional action plan on Women, Peace and Security in the Korean Peninsula was first piloted by AFSC and partners in Seoul as part of the Ulaanbaatar Process. This encouraged involved parties to think about building peace, instead of preparing for conflict. It helped the participants identify and act on opportunities that allow warring parties to come together and build consensus, even when the conflicts are entrenched and difficult.

Third, cooperative simulations can be used for consensus-building and planning for strategic advocacy engagement. This pathway helps prepare for major political opportunities in policy influencing, such as the development of new global and regional policies. It helps collect information, identify the key stakeholders, and create space for consensus-building. This format of cooperative simulations was adapted by QUNO and GPPAC to [support regional peacebuilding networks](#) in preparation for the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (2025 PBAR) and resulted in a set of concrete and targeted recommendations that informed the process.

Each pathway in cooperative simulation requires the facilitators to consider three different aspects:



1) scenario (depending on learning goals),



2) roles (depending on the stakeholders relevant for each peace and security issue), and



3) negotiation format (usually oriented at developing a joint action plan).

04.

Cooperative Simulations

as a Capacity-Building

Tool in Peace

and Security

for young professionals and onboarding policy experts²:

Suggested audience:	Young professionals and onboarding policy experts
Suggested Length:	Max. 3-4 hours
Suggested Number of Participants:	12-35 participants
Suggested Format:	Closed doors or a public forum
Anticipated Outcomes:	practice, acquire, learn

2. The value of negotiation and consensus-building skills is relevant for diplomacy, law, business, and careers in international relations.

The audience for this pathway includes students, onboarding policy experts and those policy experts switching their portfolios to a new thematic policy issue.

Learning Objectives of Cooperative Simulations as a Capacity-Building Pathway:



Scenario

Strengthen negotiation, listening, and collaboration skills

Develop individual creative strategies for engaging in negotiations

Build confidence in negotiations, communication and advocacy

Deepen understanding of geographical and thematic issues and application of policies and agreements in real life

Understand how different experiences shape negotiations

Learn to compromise by balancing individual and collective needs

Understand the role and value of alliances, international organisations, civil society, the private sector, and other actors in international relations

Understand the role of trust-building as a foundational mechanism for successful agreements

Distinguish between personal values and state positions, highlighting the complexity of representing national interests

This simulation helps participants build practical negotiation skills and enhance their understanding of complex thematic issues that shape peace and security policy debates.

For example, *one existing scenario is focused on Sustainable Energy Transition*. The sustainable energy transition is a peace and security risk because an agreement on this issue could reduce resource-based conflicts, mitigate climate-related risks, enhance energy independence, and promote inclusive development that strengthens resilience.

Thematic topics are the best for simulation-oriented capacity-building because they can involve fictitious countries and regions, making it easier to focus on the problem, rather than on the political underpinnings surrounding this matter. Fictitious roles create a safe environment and circumvent national sensitivities, while still bringing to life abstract but relevant strategic, operational, and tactical problems. These simulations help young professionals and onboarding policy experts to understand the complexities of negotiations and identify centers of diverse power. Rather than relying on fictitious scenarios, simulations can be structured around countries from a different region than that of the participants. Doing so preserves realism while reducing sensitivity and supports participants in drawing parallels between abstract thematic issues and challenges in their own contexts.

Simulations need to be focused on a limited number of issues that the simulation is trying to resolve. For example, for sustainable energy transition, AFSC selected financing, militarization, inclusion, and socio-economic impacts of fossil fuels. Otherwise, simulations will take a long time and not allow participants to attempt to reach an agreement, limiting the dynamics of the process. For this reason, the scenarios need to be developed by an expert group with a strong understanding of the problem.



Some catalyst introduced during the negotiations is required to add complexity to the negotiations. For example, “breaking news” can be introduced at different times during the simulation to allow some participants to strengthen their arguments and change the direction of negotiations. For example, a catalyst could be a protest in every country demanding that governments reach an agreement or the publication of a new study that confirms that fossil fuels have the potential to significantly affect biodiversity. These are best introduced closer to the end of the process. Such a set-up allows for real experience with divergent interests and countries changing their positions at the last moment.



Roles

The participants can be assigned roles of Member States, civil society, indigenous groups, and the private sector, among others, relevant to a specific peace and security problem. The dynamics in the simulations by design evolve around Member States, as is often the case in real-life negotiations. However, introducing other roles can help the participants better understand diverse roles in negotiations.

Each actor in the negotiations is represented by a small group of 2-5 people. The bigger composition of small groups creates a risk of having some participants feeling excluded or not adequately engaged in the negotiations. It may affect the experiences of everyone in the group and affect the dynamic.

Each group receives a role sheet that describes the problem from the perspective of each actor and what each actor in the negotiation can and cannot agree on. This enables participants to quickly understand what their position is for the negotiation.

Table 2: An example of a role sheet:

In Support of:
1. Agreements on sharing renewable energy technologies and expertise among countries and establishment of regional research and development centers for an inclusive and fair transition
2. Funding for capacity-building for local communities to develop energy cooperatives and small businesses to phase out fossil fuels
3. Debt relief and financial aid to restore damaged ecosystems, mitigate the economic impact of climate change and develop renewable energy infrastructure as part of a phase-out plan
4. Disclosure and reduction of fossil fuel use by the military with the goal of establishing regional security frameworks that free up resources for renewable energy and economic development
Resistant to:
1. Any action plan that does not include joint efforts to clean up polluted areas and address socio-economic impacts of historical military activities
2. Large-scale international or regional investments in renewable energy infrastructure without clear benefit to local economy
3. Policies strictly regulating gender equity in renewable energy projects and workforce or decision-making processes
4. Making decisions about energy-related projects without consultation with Indigenous groups in an inclusive and fair transition

Regardless of the prescribed roles, individual characteristics of the participants will always shape the way negotiations proceed. Just like in diplomatic spaces, people inevitably act through the prism of their own characters, and it is an important learning from the exercise.



Negotiations

Every small group is focused on negotiations of a joint action plan. Each small group receives a role in which they are encouraged to find a common ground based on individual priorities. An action plan is a structured framework through which multiple actors within a region collaboratively identify shared priorities, align on common objectives, and coordinate actions to address cross-border or regional challenges.

Table 3: How to conduct a simulation for capacity-building? Step-by-Step Guide:

Introduction	The facilitators introduce the scenario, explain the roles and the process, and clarify the expected outcomes.																
Team building	Participants go over the scenario in their assigned groups and develop a common position. Each group needs to clearly identify what they can bargain and what are the red lines in the negotiations.																
Introductory statements	Each small group presents its common position. When each group is speaking, the other groups are expected to track their statement.																
Bilateral negotiations	Each group participates in three rounds of bilateral negotiations, where representatives of non-state actors can only observe.																
Internal strategizing	Each small group can revise their strategies for engagement based on introductory statements and learning from bilateral negotiations.																
Special interest briefings	Non-state actors provide the briefings on their specific positions, with representatives of countries listening to the statements and asking questions. This is the most persuasive space for non-state actors to persuade governments to consider their positions.																
Multilateral negotiations	Each small group can engage with anyone they want and small groups can split. This stage is suitable for breaking news as a catalyst for negotiations to introduce a major change that can impact the outcome of negotiations.																
Second round of internal negotiations	State actors identify one proposal per group that they want to make for the outcome document of the simulation. Each group will need to consider everything they have learned from other small groups, decide the formulation of their proposal, and predict what could be offered by others. Non-state actors could debrief and identify the strategies for moving forward.																
Introduction of proposals for the final agreement	State actors make proposals:																
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Implementation Action Plan</th> <th>Approved?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Action A</td> <td>All countries in the region must take ethical responsibility in their approach to restore the ecosystem and move forward to sustainable energy transition by 2030.</td> <td>YES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Action B</td> <td>Each country will be responsible for their own illegal actions. We strongly encourage the consideration of climate change matters that promote environmental sustainability in the region.</td> <td>YES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Action C</td> <td>We would like our support for all nations to preserve the nature together and to shift to renewable energy for the healthier earth and healthier climate.</td> <td>YES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Action D</td> <td>We propose all countries to end military activities and share renewable energy and technology expertise.</td> <td>Veto - Ambitious, CLEAR</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Implementation Action Plan		Approved?	Action A	All countries in the region must take ethical responsibility in their approach to restore the ecosystem and move forward to sustainable energy transition by 2030.	YES	Action B	Each country will be responsible for their own illegal actions. We strongly encourage the consideration of climate change matters that promote environmental sustainability in the region.	YES	Action C	We would like our support for all nations to preserve the nature together and to shift to renewable energy for the healthier earth and healthier climate.	YES	Action D	We propose all countries to end military activities and share renewable energy and technology expertise.	Veto - Ambitious, CLEAR
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Second round of internal briefings	State actors decide their voting preferences.
Voting	State actors vote and each government having only one veto.
Second round of multilateral negotiations	State actors can resolve the issues that arose during the voting. All groups can freely engage with each other to persuade each other towards or against finding an agreement on specific issues or the document itself.
Second round of voting	State actors can amend the language of a proposal towards the agreement.
Debrief	<p>Participants jointly reflect on the exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened during the simulation? What did you observe about your role? • What insights did you gain about multiparty negotiation and decision-making processes? • What insights did you gain about the topic of the simulation?

05.

Cooperative Simulations as a Tactics and Strategy Development Tool in Peace and Security

for peace and security experts³

Suggested audience:	Peace and security experts
Suggested Length:	3-4 hours
Suggested Number of Participants:	12-35 participants
Suggested Format:	Closed doors
Anticipated Outcomes:	test, anticipate

3. The audience for this pathway includes peace and security experts within governments, international and regional organisations and civil society.

Learning Objectives of Cooperative Simulations as Tactics & Strategy Development Pathway⁴:

Test innovative solutions and tactics for conflict prevention and resolution

Refine preventive measures, identify leverage points for de-escalation, and strengthen ability to anticipate and respond to complex crises

Develop empathy with different perspectives and reflect on bias, as well as understand humanity on all sides

Understand regional and historical complexities that shape negotiations

Understand possible outcomes of different actors, including civil society, in negotiations

Understand the role and value of alliances and collaboration

Understand defensive mindset, insecurities, and logic behind policies like nuclear weapons

Realize the importance of distinguishing between stated positions and underlying needs, and of asking “why” to uncover true interests



Scenario

These cooperative simulations bring people together to jointly test innovative solutions and tactics for addressing real-life peace and security risks in a specific context. For example, *an existing scenario on Women, Peace and Security in Northeast Asia* provides an avenue to see discussions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as a means to bring all partners operating in the region together. This simulation helps better understand regional realities and diverse views, while still showing the potential for reaching an agreement. It reveals potential consequences, trade-offs, and opportunities for collaboration that might not emerge in traditional policy discussions.

Expertise in the key of contemporary crises and context dynamics is critical to build a real-world inspired situation. The Northeast Asia WPS scenario, for example, introduces historic injustices that prevent countries from collaboration, encouraging participants to find solutions, including the impacts of the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. This allows for building and testing realistic and innovative solutions.

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The context should be limited to a small number of issues for discussion to allow meaningful interaction within the game’s timeframe. Otherwise, simulations will take a long time and not allow participants to attempt to reach an agreement, limiting the dynamics of the process. In the Northeast Asia WPS scenario, the simulation explores possibilities of regular dialogues between women in South and North Korea, and justice mechanisms for crimes committed during the Japanese colonial period. The scenarios as such need to be developed by experts in the topic, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

4. This pathway incorporates some learning objectives of the Capacity-Building Pathway, if applied to the audience of onboarding policy experts.



The simulation should introduce a catalytic event during the simulation that pushes participants to think creatively. In the Northeast Asia WPS scenario, the simulation covers, for example, gunfire exchange between a Japanese fishing boat and a North Korean coast guard and elections of a progressive government in South Korea looking to build ties with the DPRK. Catalytic events can set the stage for urgent decision-making to compel players to engage in dialogue and problem-solving, as well as allowing for real experience with divergent interests and countries changing their positions at the last moment. Such events also help the participants test different tactics as conditions evolve. Each phase can reveal new information or challenges, encouraging adaptability and reflection.



Roles

The participants can be assigned roles of different actors that represent the spectrum of relevant parties in a particular context. Each role should have defined interests, constraints, and hidden agendas that generate tension and negotiation opportunities. The dynamics in the simulations normally evolve around Member States, as is often the case in negotiations. In the Northeast Asia WPS scenario, the simulation introduces the DPRK, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, and the United States. However, introducing other roles into the negotiations can help the participants better understand different roles and opportunities brought by other actors. In the Northeast Asia WPS scenario, the simulation introduces one civil society organisation. However, this set-up could be expanded.

The audience for this simulation is generally people with some knowledge of the topic at hand. This allows participants to use the depth of their expertise to build and test realistic and innovative solutions. However, participants are encouraged to take different roles from what they fulfill in real life to ensure that their experiences can be challenged by new assignments.

This simulation is best played in a closed - non-public - forum. Participants may be worried about political sensitivities associated with fulfilling the goals of specific actors in a particular context. The public nature of the forum also limits the creativity of the exercise.

Each actor in the negotiations is represented by a small group of 2-5 people⁵. The role sheets help participants “get into character,” making the simulation immersive and realistic. It describes the context from the perspective of a particular actor, and the points that this actor supports and the points that this actor opposes. This enables participants to quickly understand what their position is for the negotiation.



Negotiations

Everyone is focused on the negotiations of a joint action plan.

Each small group receives a role in which they are encouraged to find a common ground based on individual priorities. An action plan is a structured framework through which multiple actors within a region collaboratively identify shared priorities, align on common objectives, and coordinate actions to address cross-border or regional challenges. However, to be properly tactical, the scenario requires strategic planning for the implementation of an action plan, which has not currently been piloted.

5. The bigger composition of groups creates a risk of having some participants feeling excluded or not adequately engaged in the negotiations. It may affect the experiences of everyone in the group and affect the dynamic.

Table 4: How to conduct a simulation for tactic and strategy development? Step-by-Step Guide:

Introduction	Facilitators introduce the scenario, explain the roles and the process, and clarify the expected outcomes.																					
Team building	Participants go over the scenario in small groups and develop a common position. Each group needs to clearly identify what they can bargain and what are the red lines in the negotiations.																					
Introductory statements	Each small group presents its common position to the entire group. When each group is speaking, the other groups are expected to track their statement.																					
Bilateral negotiations	Each small group participates in five rounds of bilateral negotiations.																					
Internal strategizing	Each small group revises their strategies for engagement based on introductory statements and learning from bilateral negotiations.																					
Proposals and voting	Each state actor makes a proposal for an action plan. Each state actor can veto one proposal by another actor. For example:																					
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">NORTHEAST ASIA REGIONAL ACTION PLAN</th> <th>Passed?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Outcome</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Outcome</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Outcome</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Outcome</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Outcome</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Outcome</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	NORTHEAST ASIA REGIONAL ACTION PLAN		Passed?	1. Outcome			2. Outcome			3. Outcome			4. Outcome			5. Outcome			6. Outcome		
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Second round of proposals and voting	State actors refine their proposals and encourage other state actors to lift their vetoes.																					
Internal strategizing	Each small group revises their strategies for engagement based on proposals and voting.																					

Multilateral negotiations	Each small group to engage with anyone they want and small groups can split.
Last round of proposals and voting	State actors refine their proposals and encourage other state actors to lift their vetoes.
Debrief	<p>Participants jointly reflect on the exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened during the simulation? What did you observe about your role? • What insights did you gain about multiparty negotiation and decision-making processes? • What insights did you gain about the topic of the simulation?

06.

Cooperative simulations as a Consensus-Building and Strategic Advocacy Tool in Peace and Security

for policy practitioners and experts, social justice advocates, civil society

Suggested audience:	Civil society, their networks and coalitions
Suggested Length:	2-3 hours
Suggested Number of Participants:	50-60 participants
Suggested Format:	Closed doors
Anticipated Outcomes:	align, prioritize, coordinate

Learning Objectives of Cooperative Simulations as Consensus-Building and Strategic Advocacy Pathway:

Collect information about experiences, priorities and good practices from diverse partners within networks and coalitions
Understand perspectives, biases and interests of partners
Conduct mapping and analysis of the current context
Prepare groups for strategic and coordinated engagement with external stakeholders
Identify risks within areas of mutual interest and points of alignment
Develop strategic recommendations to address the risks and build on good practices
Understand power dynamics and areas of influence
Exchange tactics and analysis



Scenario

This simulation brings people together to prepare a strategy for upcoming policy engagements. Instead of a fictional scenario, the participants focus on a real policy process or political opportunity they are trying to engage in. They also represent themselves and their own perspectives and experiences. The pathway is focused less on inter-group negotiations and, instead, on internal consensus-building. The participants mostly spend time in small groups, developing common positions, enabling the other groups to provide feedback and contribute to their work. For example, *the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review* was the first process that piloted cooperative simulation to support regional and global networks to come together and facilitate joint strategic input into the process of the development of the 2025 UN resolution on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The simulation helps clarify the process and expectations from civil society, as well as propose a framework for strategic, inclusive, and coordinated input, allowing everyone to participate in the process.

The core of negotiations should be focused on a limited number of risks. A typical scenario for this simulation includes the explanation of the context in simple language and the request for the audience to answer two key questions: 1) What are the three main risks? and 2) How each risk needs to be addressed? In policy processes, concrete recommendations are likely an expected outcome. All small groups are only encouraged to identify 3 main risks, forcing them to focus on solutions and recommendations. Otherwise, a large number of risks can limit the dynamics of strategic engagement.



Roles

The participants represent themselves and enter the simulation from their own personal perspectives and experiences. There are no role sheets required for this simulation. The participants do not all have to be from civil society. It can include donors, policymakers, and government representatives as well, if relevant for the objectives of the organisers.

The number of breakout groups can include up to 10 groups, with up to 10 people in each. However, it is important to ensure that a facilitator(s) can keep an eye on all groups to make sure that conversations are focused and inclusive. Each group has to have a dedicated facilitator/note-taker.

The division of people into groups can be based on a type of stakeholder or a mixed one. In some contexts, it could be more effective to divide young people or women's groups into separate groups, allowing them to actively participate in the discussion.



Negotiations

The participants are asked to develop a joint set of recommendations for an action plan based on the issue the participants are trying to address. This simulation consists of three parts. The first part is to allow participants to identify three shared risks to peace in the region or globally. Then, based on the number of selected risks, participants are broken into different small groups and assigned one risk to brainstorm recommendations for. Finally, the participants, in a Safari Style, rotate to the stations where the groups have written down their recommendations and propose additional recommendations and amendments to the language already proposed.

Table 5: How to conduct a simulation for Consensus-Building and Strategic Advocacy? Step-by-Step Guide:

<p>Introduction</p>	<p>Facilitators introduce the context, explain the process, and clarify the expected outcomes.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; background-color: #f9f9f9;"> <p>CO-DESIGN OF THE EASTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA INPUT TO THE 2025 PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE REVIEW (2025 PBAR)</p> <p>Why are you here? As a team, you will share your expertise in peacebuilding and sustaining peace to inform the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (2025 PBAR). You will collaborate with your colleagues to identify the most persistent and emerging risks to peace and security in Eastern and Central Africa and explore concrete strategies to address them.</p> <p>What is the 2025 PBAR? It is an intergovernmental global policy process of reviewing the way the international community (i.e., donors and the UN) supports local needs in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.</p> <p>What is peacebuilding and sustaining peace? Sustaining peace is a goal and a process that involves activities aimed at preventing conflict and promoting peace by addressing emerging risks and supporting existing positive contributions to peace.</p> <p>What are examples of risks to peacebuilding and sustaining peace? Risks are highly context-specific and can vary widely across countries and communities. They could include long-standing issues in your community, as well as new emerging issues. These could include, but are not limited to, 1) climate change, 2) terrorism and violent extremism, 3) weak governance, 4) exclusion of minority groups from decision-making, 5) lack of financing for peacebuilding and prevention, 6) lack of behavioral interventions and psychosocial support, and 7) breakdown in social relationships.</p> <p>How could international actors address the risks existing and emerging in your context? International actors can provide various means of support to local communities, including 1) financial support (directly to civil society and/or local governments), 2) technical support (i.e., guidance and toolkits), 3) convening capacity (i.e., bringing diverse stakeholders together), 4) promotion of international standards and responsibilities at the national level (i.e., by engaging with the government on complex issues), 5) provision of protection to community members, and 6) support for the transition of skills to the local actors, among others.</p> </div>								
<p>Team building</p>	<p>Participants identify three main risks relevant to the scenario of the negotiations in small groups.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="434 1756 1485 2033"> <tr> <td data-bbox="434 1756 735 1895">Risks (existing / or emerging)</td> <td data-bbox="735 1756 970 1895"></td> <td data-bbox="970 1756 1235 1895"></td> <td data-bbox="1235 1756 1485 1895"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="434 1895 735 2033">Why is this a risk?</td> <td data-bbox="735 1895 970 2033"></td> <td data-bbox="970 1895 1235 2033"></td> <td data-bbox="1235 1895 1485 2033"></td> </tr> </table>	Risks (existing / or emerging)				Why is this a risk?			
Risks (existing / or emerging)									
Why is this a risk?									

Introductory statements	Each small group presents three risks to the entire group. When each group is speaking, the facilitator will combine a list of risks for strategic engagement. Participants are then assigned to groups based on risks. Small groups will not return together in their previous composition.										
Internal strategizing	<p>Each newly-built small group discusses recommendations for their specific risk.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="432 510 1481 1346"> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 510 970 622">Risks (existing/or emerging?):</td> <td data-bbox="970 510 1481 622"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 622 970 741">Why is this a risk?</td> <td data-bbox="970 622 1481 741"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 741 970 1346" rowspan="5"> How to address the risks? <i>What could the UN do?</i> <i>What could donors do?</i> <i>What could other stakeholders do?</i> </td> <td data-bbox="970 741 1481 860">Action 1:</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="970 860 1481 978">Action 2:</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="970 978 1481 1097">Action 3:</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="970 1097 1481 1216">Action 4:</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="970 1216 1481 1346">Action 5:</td> </tr> </table>	Risks (existing/or emerging?):		Why is this a risk?		How to address the risks? <i>What could the UN do?</i> <i>What could donors do?</i> <i>What could other stakeholders do?</i>	Action 1:	Action 2:	Action 3:	Action 4:	Action 5:
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	Action 2:										
	Action 3:										
	Action 4:										
	Action 5:										
Safari-style Workshop	Each small groups reviews, adds and amends recommendations proposed by other groups.										
Debrief	<p>Participants jointly reflect on the exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened during the simulation? What did you observe about your role? • What insights did you gain about multiparty negotiation and decision-making processes? • What insights did you gain about the topic of the simulation? 										

07.

The impacts of

Cooperative Simulations

on Peace and Security:

Cooperative simulations offer a timely and practical response to the growing complexity, polarization, and rigidity that characterize contemporary peace and security policymaking. By centering cooperation, empathy, and consensus-building, this methodology challenges dominant crisis-driven and adversarial approaches, and instead operationalizes the principles of positive peace through experiential learning and collective problem-solving. Across capacity-building, tactics and strategy development, and consensus-based advocacy pathways, cooperative simulations demonstrate their ability to strengthen skills, test innovative approaches, and align diverse actors around shared priorities. Across all three pathways, such simulations contribute to sustaining peace and resilience by means of the following:

- i. Providing opportunities to be hopeful and forward-looking about peace: By centering cooperation, shared interests, and future-oriented problem-solving, the simulations help participants envision peace not merely as the absence of violence, but as a proactive, achievable process with tangible social, political, and institutional benefits. It also motivates participants to see the possibilities for an agreement, amidst increasingly polarised debate on peace and security.
- ii. Opening broader perspectives on peace and security: Participants gain insight into how diplomatic channels function, how bias and history shape negotiations, and what channels can be used to influence peace and security negotiations.
- iii. Fostering innovative solutions: By encouraging creativity, empathy, and systems thinking, the simulations enable participants to move beyond traditional approaches and generate innovative, cooperation-based solutions that may not emerge in formal policy or negotiation settings.

- iv. Enhancing personal growth and confidence: Through active participation in negotiations, coalition-building, and decision-making processes, participants build confidence in their ability to communicate, listen, and advocate effectively. The simulation also encourages consideration of the full range of diplomatic tools, wants, and concessions.
- v. Developing greater empathy for marginalized and less powerful actors: By assigning roles that reflect asymmetries of power, historical grievances, and limited political leverage, the simulations expose participants to the constraints, vulnerabilities, and strategic calculations faced by marginalized actors. This experiential engagement helps participants distinguish between governments and populations, surface implicit biases, and better appreciate the human and societal impacts of policy decisions.

Annex 1: Guiding questions for the selection of pathways in Cooperative Simulation:

Question:	Options:	Pathway:
What is the primary objective of the simulation?	To build negotiation, communication, and cooperation skills	→ Capacity-Building Pathway
	To test strategies, tactics, or responses to conflict dynamics	→ Tactics & Strategy Development Pathway
	To develop shared priorities or joint recommendations for policy engagement	→ Consensus-Building & Strategic Advocacy Pathway
Who is the primary target audience?	Young professionals, students, onboarding policy experts	→ Capacity-Building Pathway
	Peace and security experts, policymakers, diplomats	→ Tactics & Strategy Development Pathway
	Civil society networks, coalitions, advocates, mixed stakeholder groups	→ Consensus-Building & Strategic Advocacy Pathway
What level of subject-matter expertise do participants have?	Limited or introductory knowledge	→ Capacity-Building Pathway
	Advanced or specialized expertise	→ Tactics & Strategy Development Pathway
	Diverse lived experience and practice-based knowledge	→ Consensus-Building & Strategic Advocacy Pathway
What type of outcome is expected from the simulation?	Skills development, learning outcomes, increased confidence	→ Capacity-Building Pathway
	Identification of risks, leverage points, and alternative strategies	→ Tactics & Strategy Development Pathway
	Joint priorities, recommendations, or advocacy messages	→ Consensus-Building & Strategic Advocacy Pathway

**Advancing
Dialogue and
Building Common
Ground:**

Peace Games as a Strategic Tool
for Sustaining Peace



**American
Friends
Service
Committee**