The Idiot’s Guide to Being A Controller

First of all, CONGRATULATIONS on being chosen to be a controller in the IR simulation. You have just been chosen to do the very difficult job of looking over the simulation. Looking past the arrogant thought of being able to boss around your classmates for two weeks, this guide will hopefully ensure that you do not embarrassingly break down and cry in front of the class (for a second time in Politics class) because the simulation is not going the way you had hoped/planned and Mr. Melnyk is still giving you the “I don’t know” shrug.

Have no fear. This guide is here to (hopefully) stop your tears.

The IR Simulation
Knowing what the IR simulation is all about is an important first step. Your classmates will be given a country to portray and introduced to the simulation. In their role as the leaders of a specific country, they will be asked to react accordingly through negotiations towards the scenario that has been chosen for your class’s simulation. This simulation is necessary to show the effectiveness (or perhaps, the ineffectiveness) of the diplomacy that occurs in the real world.

The aim is to keep the simulation realistic. They must represent their country’s interests, whether political, economics or social, as best as they can. You, as the controller, must make sure that they are in role. If they are not, let them know. For example, if a classmate is very passionate about a topic as an individual, but the country that they are representing does not have a major role in reality, you must remind them that they must stay in role and represent their country, not their personal opinions.

Countries can communicate through verbal means or through the blog to simulate private discussions and diplomacy, conferences and meetings, press releases.

Goal
Why are you and your classmates doing this? To make a peace plan for the scenario that Mr. Melnyk has given you. As a controller, you must make sure that your classmates stay on task. The final peace plan is a major aspect of your mark for the simulation and therefore, it is crucial that you create one that is realistic and can be used in the real world. HOWEVER, it is not acceptable for everyone to magically get along, cooperate with each other and accept each other’s proposals without any disagreements as this is not what happens in the world (or else we wouldn’t be doing this simulation).

Diplomacy/ Conferences
When the countries are engaged in negotiations, it is time for you to take out your notepad and write down what is going on around in the world of diplomacy. You may be able to draw some hard-hitting questions for your classmates for the press conference, especially if the media is able to capture some of these moments. Arguments are natural, but make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.

The Blog
*Set rules for the blog. Your classmates must be made aware of the seriousness of the blog. You can refer to the rules of previous moderators as exemplars.
You must check up with the blog and the email (that you can set up to allow countries to contact you privately) constantly. You must monitor all communications to prevent wrong-doings, resolve disputes and assess the performances. If anyone wants to undertake violent actions against other people, they must first submit their plans to you. You determine whether the action is justified and is within the realms of reality and either allow or disallow it.

Mandatory Posts
You will be asked to make three mandatory posts. These will be marked by you. Make sure that the posts relate to both the simulation and reality. You want to set rules for these mandatory posts such as length, deadlines, MSN language, etc. It might be useful to ask Mr. Melnyk to set up a separate page for mandatory posts as some of them can get lengthy and you don’t want to confuse mandatory posts from other posts made by countries regarding the simulation. Again, looking at some previous mandatory posts by past controllers may be helpful. Be creative with the questions. The questions should be able to test how well your peers can play the role of their countries and their knowledge of current events.

Press Conference
This is the time to show off your knowledge. Be sure to work with the media to come up with questions that will be able to test the knowledge of the countries. Mix the questions up. Study what has been happening on the blog and come up with some questions regarding actions of countries. However, keep the simulation realistic by looking up some recent events that has occurred surrounding your situation and question the countries about their actions in real life. Make sure that every country is involved. Some countries may be harder than others, but it is good to prepare at least one or two questions for each of the countries to avoid any awkward silences.
This is NOT the time for a cross debate between the countries. If a debate begins, let your classmates know that they can bring it up on the debate day.

Position Paper
Everyone will be asked to do a position paper at the end of the simulation. As a controller, your position will be difference from everyone else’s. In your paper, you should reflect on the simulation, make recommendations (ie. look at the final peace plan) and apply it to your life. Make suggestions for future simulations and future controllers. Evaluate the simulation. Do you think it was successful? What did you learn? Your position paper will be more objective than your classmates as you have been looking in “from the outside”.

Role of a Controller
The responsibilities of the controllers included being objective, acquiring knowledge of international events and leading the simulation. You overlook the entire simulation, which involves attempting to solve the conflict decided for the simulation.

What You Can Do
1) Before the simulation starts as well as throughout the simulation, TALK TO THE PREVIOUS CONTROLLER. This is very important. They will be able to tell you about
successes and failures of the past simulation. With this knowledge, you will be able to improve your simulation and to make sure that mistakes are not repeated.

2) DO NOT limit your role as controller to just inside the confines of Room 231 or 234. It is important to talk to different representatives during the simulation, but also approach individuals outside the classroom to address certain situations or problems. For example, when someone stepped out of their role because they were so passionate about a topic that may not directly relate to their country, let them know that or else everyone would have been throwing in their own personal opinion at inappropriate times. You do not want to jeopardize the authenticity of the simulation.

3) KNOWLEDGE IS KEY in this simulation. Just like your classmates, the more you know, the better off you are in the simulation. Research on every country participating in the simulation. Know the historical background, the economy, the political structure, the major players and the recent events. This information will become very helpful in the press conference.

A good website that provides a brief historical, political, economics and social background for countries is:
http://www.economist.com/countries/?CFID=8324990&CFTOKEN=d66052aef72f448a-CE202163-B27C-BB00-0129A262E4D5EDA8

4) Keep your classmates on task. The focus of this simulation is to create a realistic peace plan to solve the problematic scenario that was given to you at the beginning of the simulation. If your class wants to create an effective peace plan, there must be some disagreements. You must make sure that you keep every country in role.

5) Even though the IR simulation may seem tough at times, especially at the moderator, this is how you will realize the difficulty of solving just one or two problems in the world. Diplomacy is an important aspect of international relations and unfortunately, as you and your classmates will find out, it is definitely not as simple as many of us think.

WELCOME TO THE IR SIMULATION!