Simulations and hybrid learning vary greatly. Some of them involve face-to-face interactions with no resort to web platforms or digital resources while others are cyber ones that are run on advanced web platforms. Figure 1.1 illustrates the area of overlap between hybrid learning and simulations.

Not all simulations are part of hybrid learning as some of them only involve short ad-hoc role-play exercises in class with no resort to online features. Similarly, not all hybrid learning practices integrate simulations, so many fully distance-learning classes use web platforms for remote access with no integration of simulations in their curriculum.

This book is about the intersection zone. It is designed to show that the application of simulations in hybrid learning can encompass a wide variety of choices, with a different emphasis on traditional and virtual elements in teaching and in simulation modes, detailed in the second part of the book on implementation. It is the joint impact of simulations integrated in a hybrid learning cycle that produces the gains we highlight in the third part of the book on analysis and in the fourth part of the book on the projections for the use of simulations in the coming years.

The variants at the intersecting zone of simulations and hybrid learning are many, open to modification and adjustment. At one end of the spectrum you may choose to run a traditional face-to-face simulation, but integrate some hybrid learning tools into lectures and online student assignments to enrich and liven up the process. At the other end, alongside on-campus classes or distance learning, you may run several cyber simulation rounds and conclude them with an international conference that brings together participants from afar. Regardless of your particular choice, the overlap of simulations and hybrid learning means that simulations become an integral part of a comprehensive learning cycle described below.

We regard simulations as an effective way to teach world politics. The idea of extending the learning process to virtual environments captures the main thrust of the book. Social networks and other free Web 2.0 platforms, with Facebook in particular, are our starting point for describing how to run simulations. Google+, WhatsApp, or Edmodo, as an educational forum, various e-mail services, and designated websites are also useful for the same purpose. But ample room should be left for the incorporation of an infinite range of innovations that are likely to take place in the future. Whenever we refer to cyber simulations on Facebook, we actually mean any social network or suitable alternative platform that is available and popular. With the appearance of new digital tools and resources you can easily add them to the modular structure of this manuscript, to fit your learning environment.

Many simulations build on a real or fictional crisis scenarios within an ongoing conflict. The crisis embodies dramatic and rapidly unfolding events that are related to a much broader conflict reality. This type of scenario makes it easy for the students to assimilate in time and space to a particular well-defined role and to learn what they are about to play. Indeed, most of our examples relate to conflict situations in the Middle East and more specifically to the Arab-Israel conflict. But simulation scenarios can be applied to other geographic regions and acute phases in nonconflict situations. They may include negotiations among states and nonstate actors on integration processes, the formation of an alliance or its policies, and a decision-making process with choices that touch upon culture, values, and moral dilemmas related to human rights, welfare, the environment, or the creation of new international regimes. Simulations can focus on current or past cases, by reliance on historical documents supplemented by fictional material created for the purpose of the simulation. Scenarios can also build on science fiction narratives, like George Orwell’s 1984, The Lord of the Rings, The Matrix, or Star Wars.

Some international crises evolve without violence, while others escalate to war. While war simulations are common in military training, the primary focus of this book is on simulations of diplomacy and media. At the core of the exercise is a policy formation process and its implementation in world politics, in a peaceful or conflict setting. Diplomacy may be triggered by a war scare, acts of violence, civil war, terror, or even full-scale war.