

Contribution ID: 1778 Contribution code: WE03

Type: Roundtable

Games, Seriously? The proliferation and possibilities of wargames and simulations in International Relations

Wednesday 3 June 2026 13:15 (1h 30m)

Until the early 2010s, International Relations' (IR) engagement with games was limited a few historical case studies, occasional classroom roleplay, and some student experience enhancement. Focused on the serious business of statecraft and war, games and play were assumed by the field's mainstream to be steadfastly outside IR's remit. With the turn to the study of popular culture as an important site of global politics over the past fifteen years, however, an important literature on the politics and possibilities of videogames played for entertainment has developed. Moreover, as the use of games across business, health, education, government, and defence has expanded apace more recently the field has become interested in so-called serious gaming. The serious applications of games now range from recruiting and training military personnel and first responders, to experimentation with conflict scenarios and disaster relief, to forecasting consumer and voter behaviour, and much more besides. At the present time, scholars in IR are scrambling to keep pace with these developments, and are seeking to establish the requisite sub-fields and methods necessary to effectively study and utilise serious games of various kinds. This roundtable brings together leading scholars of serious games to evaluate the state of the field, showcase the important work done to date, and scope possibilities for future research.

Track Classification: Security Policy and Practice