

Executive Branch Simulation Guide

I. Background and Introduction

You and your group are the inner circle of advisors to the 46th President of the United States of America. After a controversial four-year term, President Donald Trump was defeated by a unity ticket – a Democratic President and a Republican Vice President. Congress, however, is divided, with the Democrats controlling the House of Representatives and the Republicans controlling the Senate, both by small majorities. You have joined the President's Administration because of your faith in the President as a person and your belief that a unity Administration can heal the partisan divide within the country. You strongly believe that the President has the good of the country as their first priority. That's why you took a job at the White House.

II. The President and Your Administration

For the purposes of this simulation, you can imagine the President to be any Democrat, real or imaginary. Did the United States elect the first woman to office? Was it a Midwesterner, Southerner, or someone from the coasts? Was it a well-known politician, or a brand-new candidate? Similarly, you can imagine the Vice President to be any Republican, real or imaginary, who is committed to the cause of unity. What's important for the scenarios that follow are not the details about the unity Administration, but the idea behind it: healing the partisan division and putting the country on a better path. The President is someone you respect, even if you don't share all of their values.

When the simulation begins, you will learn specific facts about the current state of the country as well as the overall health of the Administration: is it in a **STRONG** position, a **MODERATE** position, or a **WEAK** position? These scores will help fill in some details about where things currently stand. Is the U.S. in an economic downturn? How is it doing in terms of national security? Do tensions remain with Russia, China, Iran, and even some European allies? Does the President enjoy the full support of their political party, or do they already have critics? Similarly, is Congress willing to work with this Administration, or are roadblocks already emerging?

III. Preparing for the Simulation

Before you take part in the simulation with your group, read this simulation guide all the way through. Then you must individually complete four pre-simulation assignments: 1) think about your core personal values, and how they inform your decision-making; 2) choose a Scribe; 3) work out with your group which role(s) each of you will take in the simulation (see below), and 4) fill out the Administration Priorities section of the Personal Standing Table (see the end of this guide). If possible, it is recommended that you print this guide (or have it open alongside the simulation). You will need to refer to it during the simulation.

1. **Your Core Personal Values** should inform your decisions during the simulation when you are confronted with a number of morally challenging scenarios. Exactly how your personal values inform your decisions is up to you. It is also entirely up to you whether it is a big concern of yours, a little concern, or no concern at all whether your personal values conform to those the administration ends up pursuing with its policies.

2. **The Scribe** is the individual in your group who will actually run the simulation and share their screen with you all via Zoom. See the Executive Branch Simulation SCRIBE Guide for more details.

3. **Advisor Roles** are listed and described in the next section of the Guide.

4. **Fill out the Administration Priorities** on page 7 of this Guide.

Advisor Roles

There are six advisor roles in this simulation:

Party Influence	You are a master party operative. You have a long-standing and influential role within the Democratic party. You work closely with party leaders and help to ensure clear communication between them and the President. You are also the President's eyes and ears within the party.
Cyber Security	You are an expert in cyber security. Your role is to help the President and the unity Administration coordinate across government agencies and the public and private sectors to ensure the security of the nation's computers and networks.
Bureaucracy	You are an expert in civil service operations. You have a long history working inside various parts of the government and you are an experienced public sector manager. You also have a deep understanding of the public policy implementation process and how policies can affect government operation.
Legal Affairs	You are an expert in U.S. legal code. You have a background in Constitutional law and worked in the Department of Justice for many years. Your particular area of expertise is in labor law and the President relies on you to help formulate and implement sound policies affecting the entire federal workforce.

National Security	You are an expert in foreign and domestic security. You have worked for many years with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security, overseeing the safety and security of U.S. citizens both at home and abroad.
Defense & Intelligence	You are an expert in covert military operations. You were an officer in the U.S. Navy Seals for decades and are now the leading source of information in the President on all matters related to military intelligence.

A note on Advisor roles: The role of an advisor is powerful and non-political. Advisors serve at the direct request of the President and are the President’s primary source of expertise and guidance on issues that fall within their area. Unlike members of the Cabinet, advisors are not politically appointed, meaning they do not need to be confirmed by the Senate. They report directly to the President.

To decide the distribution of advisor roles within your group, you need to ensure that each person has at least one role. Each will be an area of specialization within the Administration. Roles do not directly correspond to official positions – for example, the Advisor on National Security in this simulation does not represent the actual U.S. Director of the NSA (National Security Agency). Rather, each person’s role(s) simply add detail to their position within the Administration and to give members of your group a sense of what expertise exists within the Administration and who owns it.

IMPORTANT: *You should take your role seriously, but don’t try to take on the personality or ideas of someone other than yourself. Do not try to imitate someone specific or imagine what “these kinds of people” do in these situations in the real world. Instead, try to imagine yourself, with your own ideas, values, and beliefs, in this advisor role and in the scenarios that you will confront in this simulation.*

Types of Scenarios

As a group, you will encounter two types of scenarios in this simulation: *advising* and *complying*. For your own personal reference, you may want to write down a quick description of each of the four scenarios, along with the decision your group ultimately comes to, and, in just a few words, your feelings about that decision. Because there are no right or wrong “answers” to each scenario, only decisions and trade-offs that your group must make, don’t worry about whether the group’s decision is the “right answer”. Instead, think of it in terms of the practice of moral leadership.

Advising Scenarios

In an advising scenario, you will be asked to deliberate with the other advisors in your Administration to recommend an action for the President to take on a specific issue, question, or problem. There will be one or two advisors whose expertise is particularly relevant to each scenario, but every member of the Administration will contribute to the discussion and deliberation.

The President will adopt the group's final recommendation as soon as it has been submitted. Your group's recommendation will lead to either a success or failure for the president and your unity Administration in the eyes of the public and other U.S. politicians. Success or failure will depend on two things:

1. The strength of the group's recommendation (was the recommendation made *unanimously*, or by *majority*?) and
2. The strength of your Administration in the policy area related to the recommendation (does it, for instance, have a MODERATE score in an area involving national security?).

The more successes your Administration has, the easier it will be to implement new recommendations and the easier it will be for the President to win reelection. The more failures you have, the harder it will be.

A note on public and political reactions: For the purposes of this simulation, public and political reactions to a recommended course of action will be determined by a computer-based model that is designed to simulate the role of *uncertainty* in real-world situations of leadership and decision-making: in the real world, even the best decisions have uncertain outcomes. Within this model, the chances of success in each *advising* decision are as follows:

Strength of Recommendation	Administration Score in Policy Area (see below for details)	Likelihood of Success (as measured by public & political reactions)
Unanimous	Very strong	6-in-6 chance of succeeding
	Strong	5-in-6 chance of succeeding
	Moderate	4-in-6 chance of succeeding
	Weak	3-in-6 chance of succeeding
	Very weak	2-in-6 chance of succeeding
Majority	Very strong	5-in-6 chance of succeeding

	Strong	4-in-6 chance of succeeding
	Moderate	3-in-6 chance of succeeding
	Weak	2-in-6 chance of succeeding
	Very weak	1-in-6 chance of succeeding

Comply Scenarios

In a comply scenario, the President is not seeking your recommendation. Rather, the President has already decided on a course of action, and is asking you and the other members of the Administration to comply with it. You are free to decide for yourself – independent of the other members of your group – whether to comply with the President’s request. However, once again, the strength of your group’s *overall* compliance will directly impact your Administration’s success:

1. If **everyone** in your group complies with the President’s request, the President will be pleased and will automatically rate the Administration’s action as a success.
2. If **no one** in your group complies, the President will be displeased and will automatically rate the Administration’s action as a failure.
3. If **some** members of your group comply, then *chance* will determine whether the President views the Administration’s action as a success or a failure.

Once again, the successes and failures are important to both you and your Administration because more successes will make it easier for you to pursue your agenda and to win reelection, while more failures will make it more difficult.

A note on chance in comply scenarios: For the purposes of this simulation, the President’s reaction to a “some members comply” situation will be determined by a computer-based model designed to simulate the role of *uncertainty* in public policy leadership and decision-making. Within this model, the *chance of success is 1-in-2*.

Administration Scores

Before your group begins working through the scenarios in the simulation, you will receive a series of scores. These scores represent your unity Administration’s strength (or weakness) in five key areas: national defense, national economy, the President’s relationship with their party, the Administration’s

capacity for policy implementation, and the national popularity of the Administration. Throughout the simulation, your group's scores will go up or down depending on the decisions you make while advising or complying.

When the simulation begins, your group will receive scores between 2 and 4 in each of the key areas mentioned above. During the simulation, your scores can increase to a score of "5 or more" and they can decrease to "1 or less". These scores translate to your Administration's strength or weakness in a given area as follows:

1 or less	Very weak
2	Weak
3	Moderate
4	Strong
5 or more	Very strong

As noted earlier in this guide, the stronger your Administration's scores, the better your chance of success.

Personal Standing

In each scenario of this simulation, you will make difficult decisions. One input to this process is your Personal Values Inventory. Are you making justifiable moral trade-offs in order to make recommendations to the President? Or are you betraying your core values for a short-term "win"?

You can also consider your Personal Standing when making decisions. Standing is all about how much the President relies on you. If you comply with the President's requests, and if you recommend decisions that turn out well for the President, your standing will go up - the President likes you and feels they can trust you. If you refuse to comply with the President's requests, or recommend decisions that turn out badly for the President, your standing will go down - the President does not trust you.

How much weight you put on the importance of your standing in the Administration is entirely up to you. **If improving your standing conflicts with maintaining your core personal values, you will need to evaluate whether a moral trade-off is justified or not.**

You will fill out the "Scenario Tracking" section of the Personal Standing Table below as you move through the simulation. The Personal Standing table tracks how you appear to the President: if you recommend successful decisions and reject unsuccessful ones, your standing goes up. if you reject successful recommendations, or recommend unsuccessful ones, your standing goes down.

When it comes to compliance, it's pretty black or white: if you comply with the President, your standing goes up, and if you don't, your standing goes down. The only question the President asks is: are you loyal?

After a decision is made and the result is revealed, please fill in the "Scenario Tracking" section of the chart on the next page to keep track of your standing.

Personal Standing Table

Administration Priorities. List three priorities that <i>you personally</i> would like to see the Administration adopt; e.g., promoting LGBTQ rights, government transparency, etc. Fill this out before the simulation begins.			
1. 2. 3.			
Scenario Tracking. Use this table to track your personal standing in the Administration. • If you are part of a majority or a unanimous recommendation and it is a success, give yourself a check mark (✓). • If you are part of a majority or a unanimous recommendation and it is a failure, give yourself an X. • If you are in a minority position (you took a stand against a majority decision) and the recommendation is a success, give yourself an X. • If you are in a minority position and the recommendation is a failure, give yourself a ✓. • If you complied, give yourself a check. If you didn't, give yourself an X.			
Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Success or Failure?	Success or Failure?	Success or Failure?	Success or Failure?
<i>Check One</i>	<i>Check One</i>	<i>Check One</i>	<i>Check One</i>

At the end of the simulation, if you have more ✓ marks than Xs, your personal standing will be high. The President listens to you, and that means they will enact one of the priorities you identified. If you have more Xs than ✓s at the end of the simulation, or if you have an equal amount of each, you will not be able to get the Administration to adopt your priority. Standing can also represent how likely it is you will keep your job. If you have good standing, all's well. But if not? Perhaps the President will be showing you the exit in the near future.

IV. Ready, Set... Go!

That's a lot to take in! It's probably best to re-read this Simulation Guide. After that, get ready, and get excited, to participate in this simulation, where you'll have to tackle some very real, and very thorny, issues. Good luck!