Created by Yoav Duman

The Next Move

60–75 minutes / Asynchronous assignment



Send Vela’s inspection order, then rewind the first and last meetings to see tit-for-tat at work. Compare two agreements, test a tariff fine, and apply your reasoning to a historical treaty.

Learning goals

- Compare a country’s two payoffs with its rival’s choice held fixed.
- Explain why the timing of a breach changes the payoff from tit-for-tat.
- Distinguish verification and repeated dealings from concerns about a rival’s relative gains.
- Use a penalty and a treaty provision to explain how a rule can change incentives.
- Distinguish a Prisoner’s Dilemma from a coordination problem.

Assign and pace

The game includes payoff grids and treaty excerpts. No advance reading or game theory is required.

Inspection meetings · 17–21 min

Read one payoff grid, play the rounds, then replay the first and last breach.

Drafts and theories · 15–18 min

Compare the two offers using the same inspection rules. Record both decisions before writing the synthesis.

Tariff fine · 10–13 min

Predict the result of each fine and read the new best replies. Use the forecast as a discussion starter.

Treaty, rescue radio, and export · 18–23 min

Choose one treaty. Finish the radio check and verify the complete report.

Set up Canvas

Choose For Class at the start. Enter your name and, if you wish, your class or section. Finish the responses and checks to open your report. Choose Download Class PDF in your finished report. If needed, use Print or save as PDF. Open the PDF to check your name and responses, then upload it to Canvas.

To pause or change devices, open Save & resume and download a JSON backup. Use the same activity and mode to restore it.

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Read the class report

Read the five required explanations and the five completed checks. The fine prediction is a forecast. Use the report's replay and draft choices to check students' reasoning.

What to look for

One round and four rounds

Against an open site, hiding pays 5 versus 3. Against a hidden site, hiding pays 1 versus 0. With Orin copying Vela's previous move after opening, all-open yields 12/12, first-round hiding yields 11/11, and last-round hiding yields 14/9.

Two drafts, two theoretical concerns

The inspection system stays fixed. Vela gains 3 in either draft, and Orin gains 3 in A or 6 in B. Verification helps with uncertainty about compliance. Relative gains matter when a rival can turn its extra gains into leverage.

A small fine and a larger one

With a 1-point fine, breaching against a compliant partner still yields 4 compared with 3. With a 3-point fine it yields 2 compared with 3. Compare the replies to a breach as well. Mutual breach can remain stable.

Treaty and radio

Ask for one specific treaty provision and a separate source of evidence about implementation. In the radio case, a best reply depends on the other boat's channel. Read the reasoning beside the keyed checks.

Suggested rubric · 10 points

One meeting · 2 points

Give both payoff comparisons with the rival's move held fixed.

Repeated meetings · 2 points

Use the replay totals to explain why Orin can respond to an early breach.

Drafts and IR theory · 2 points

Tie verification and relative gains to the actual drafts and choices.

Tariff fine · 1 point

Show why a 3-point fine changes the reply to compliance.

Treaty · 2 points

Identify a rule and a record that could test the student's claim about its effects.

Rescue radio · 1 point

Explain why matching the other radio can be a best reply on either channel.

Award full credit when the response meets the stated criteria, partial credit for incomplete reasoning, and zero for a missing or unsupported answer.

The Next Move

Debrief and extend

- What would change if neither side knew which meeting was the last?
- What evidence would make the extra gains in Draft B seem dangerous to Vela?
- How might the tariff result change if collecting a fine took another government’s approval?

A follow-up activity

Have students redraw the last meeting when both sides expect another negotiation. Ask which new incentives they can defend and how the replay might change.

Scope of the case

Vela, Orin, and the payoffs are fictional. Orin follows a known rule for four rounds. A treaty text establishes legal obligations and gives students a starting point for investigating compliance.

Sources for instructors

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

Read the treaty provisions on elimination and inspection.

Montreal Protocol, Article 4

Read the trade controls with non-parties in the UNEP Ozone Secretariat text.

Activity and downloads

Activity, student guide, and teaching pack on yoavduman.com

Activity, student guide, and teaching pack on Trouble in Common

For Fun allows you to explore with an optional name. The class report is available through For Class. To change modes, save a backup of any work you want to keep and start a new run.