



# Beyond the BOGSAT: Structured Strategic Gaming

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**Games are events in which people make decisions according to a set of rules and face the consequences of their actions**

# What are strategic games?

- Pol-mil crisis games
- Long-term strategy games
- Alliance games
- Non-military games
- Seminar games
- BOGSATs

# Why strategic games?

- Central focus on people and interacting decisions
- Useful for testing strategies in a low-risk environment
- Reduce misperceptions
- Players gravitate to this level because the decisions here often dictate events at operational and tactical levels

# Game design is heavily influenced by its past

- Pol-mil crisis games 1950s RAND
  - Goldhamer and Speier
- MIT 1958
  - Bloomfield and Schelling
  - Endicott and POLEX games
- Cold War division on Joint Staff
- Free-form gaming at RAND

**Games tend to be minimally structured with few formal rules for determining outcomes**

# Seminar games too often result in

1. BOGSATs

*Or*

2. Poor quality games

We can do better....

# BOGSATs

- Players do not make decisions *or* deal with the consequences of their choices
- May report pre-ordained outcome or return to favorite talking points
- Blurs the distinction between games and non-games

# Substandard seminar games

- Team deliberations are unfocused, even with skilled facilitators
- Teams make hasty decisions
- An abundance of semi-relevant reference materials that are often ignored
- Game validity rests on “expert” adjudication, which is often ad hoc and undocumented



# Common failings of seminar games

- Questionable internal validity—heavily dependent on unconstrained player inputs and expert adjudication
- Variable results makes it hard to compare across games
- Too few innovative ideas

# Games can be differentiated by the level of structure and degree of transparency

**Structure**

	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Low</b>		
<b>High</b>		

**Transparency**

# Operational games cover the spectrum

**Structure**

**Transparency**

	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Low</b>	<b>Expert Adjudication</b>	<b>Computer Models</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>Matrix Games</b>	<b>Rflex</b>

# Most strategic games have little structure

		Structure	
		Low	High
Transparency	Low	Seminar Games	
	High	Matrix Games	

# Seminar games lack two key game elements

1. Objectives
2. Scenario
3. Database
4. Models
5. Rules and Procedures
6. Analysis

# Opportunity to develop more structured— but still transparent—strategic games

		Structure	
		Low	High
Transparency	Low	Expert Adjudication	
	High	Matrix Games	Manual Board Games

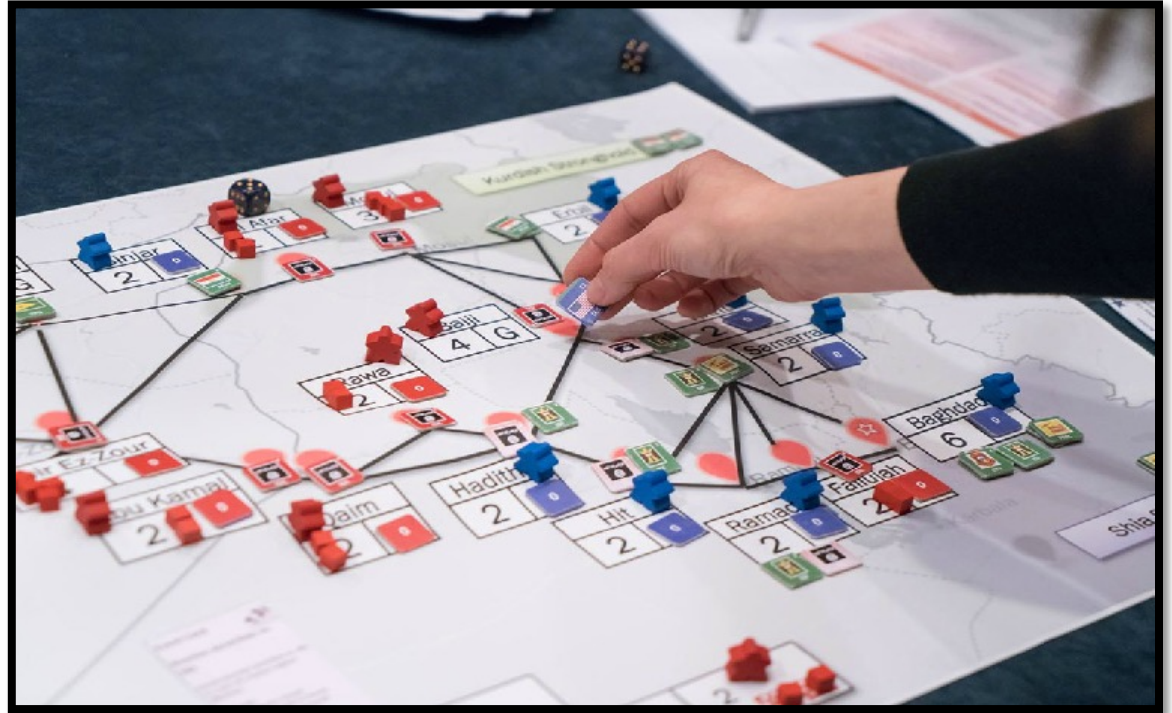
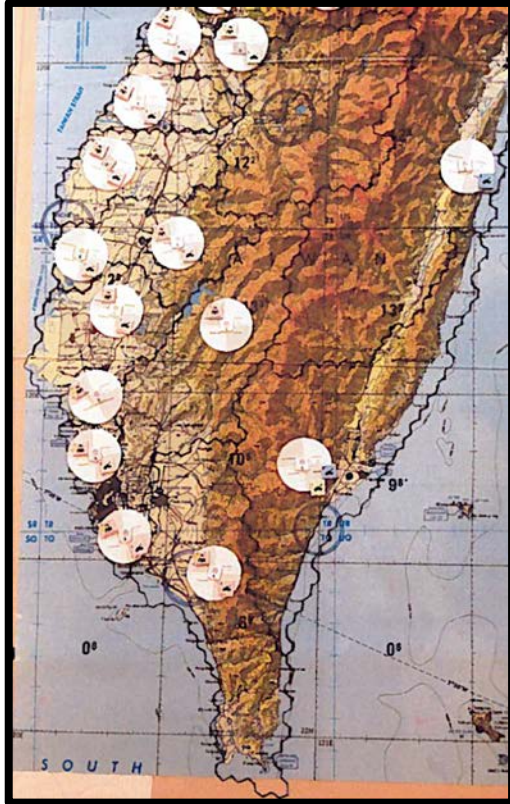
# Manual games offer a way to improve strategic gaming

- When a problem is sufficiently understood
- Board games
- Focus on pol-mil, socio-economic factors



Aftershock at Connections  
2015 Source; paxsims

# Examples of manual strategy games used for analysis





# Downsides of structured games

- Requires extensive research on social, political, and economic phenomena
- More upfront work to build model, design the game, and play test
- Model and rules could be incorrect or incomplete
- Hard to scale
- Some may not take seriously

# Strategic level manual games are underutilized

- Ensures that there is a game
- Helps to scope the game and identify an appropriate objective
- Can be quickly created, are flexible, and easy to revise
- Forces players to deal with key tradeoffs and problem at hand
- Engaging and fun
- Facilitates comparisons across games
- Transparent