Gaming Foreign Policy

Serious Games in Support of Analysis and Training

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about me

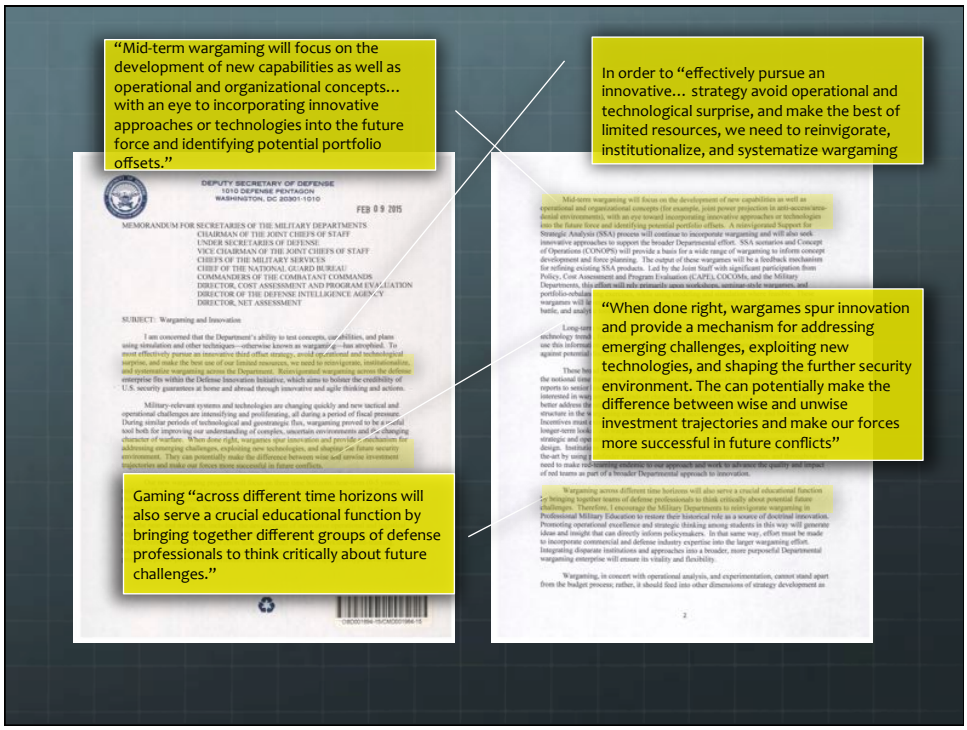
- Professor, Department of Political Science, McGill University
  - Middle East politics and security
  - humanitarian, peace, and stabilization operations
  - intelligence analysis
  - serious (political-military) gaming
- Policy Staff, Department of Foreign Affairs; Intelligence Assessment Secretariat, Privy Council Office; Senior Nonresident Fellow, Atlantic Council; consultant to World Bank, UN agencies, others
- Senior editor, PAXsims (http://www.paxsims.org)

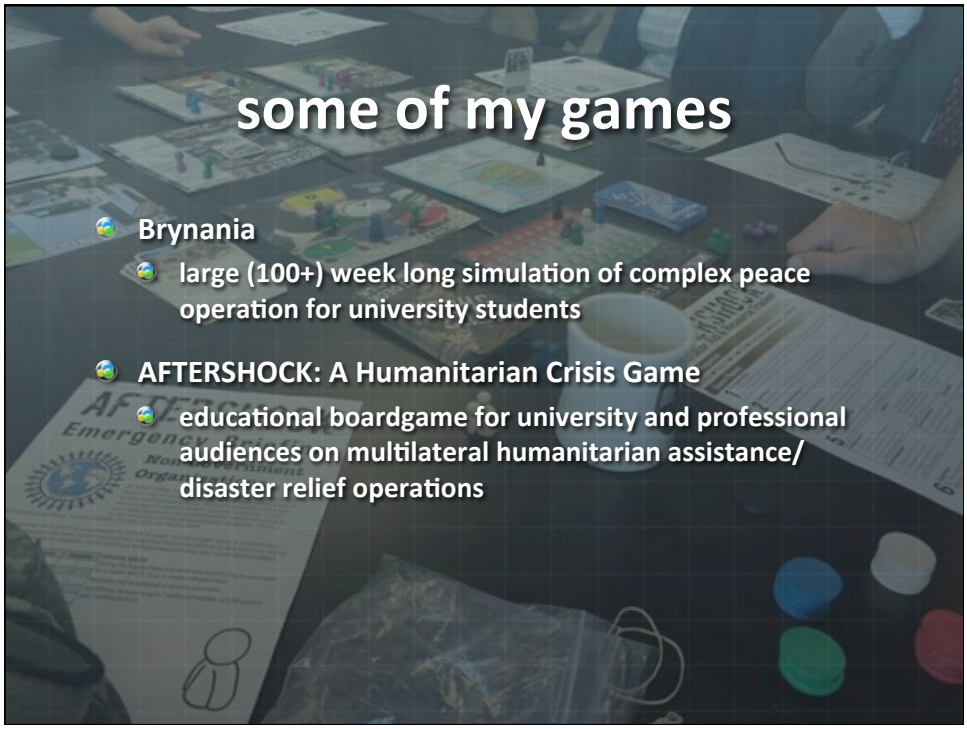
McGill

PAXsims

why game?

- Games can be effective educational and training tools.
  - Engagement and learning
  - Help bridge theory and practice
- Games can offer analytical insight.
  - Empathy/alternative views.
  - Crowdsourcing (generating collective insight).
  - Adversary responses.
  - Second and third order effects.
  - Explore alternatives.
  - Adjunct to other methods.
- Networking and team-building.




some of my games
Brynania
large (100+) week long simulation of complex peace operation for university students
AFTERSHOCK: A Humanitarian Crisis Game
educational boardgame for university and professional audiences on multilateral humanitarian assistance/ disaster relief operations

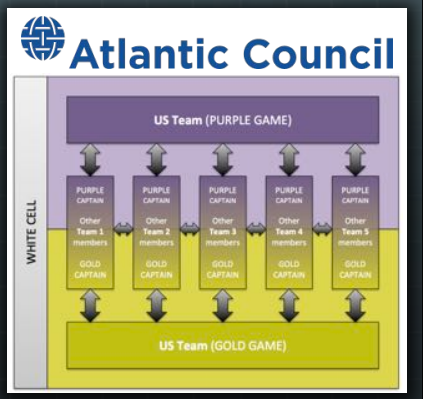
some of my games
Fall of Tripoli
scenario-based examination of post-Qaddafi governance challenges prepared for Libyan NTC (Benghazi, July 2011)

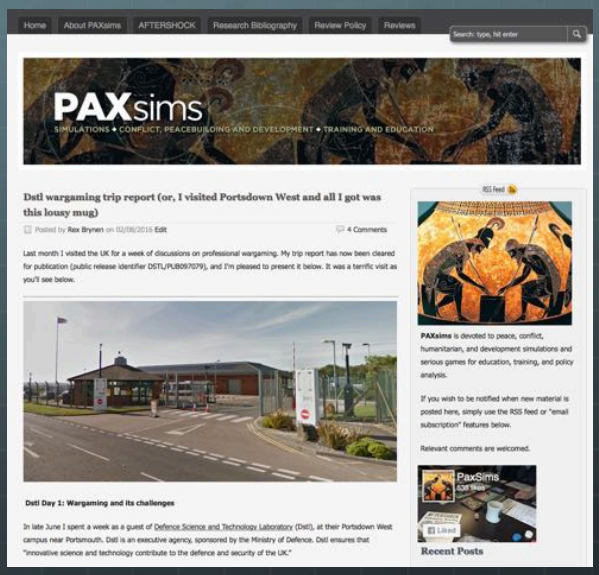
some of my games

- Palestinian refugee negotiation simulation (2009)
  - FCO-supported Chatham House project
- UNRWA policy simulation (2013)
  - policy recommendation for UNRWA CG
- Palestinian refugee workshops (2014)
  - US DoS/FCO-supported Chatham House project in support of Kerry negotiations
- Syrian Refugees in Lebanon simulation (2014-15)
  - educational simulation for Exeter University, McGill University

some of my games

- US Engagement in the Middle East (2016)
  - asked by Atlantic Council Middle East to develop game exploring the impact of greater US engagement/disengagement on Middle East
  - focus on crisis stability: can US effectively deter challengers, support (and restrain) allies, build coalitions, mediate and resolve disputes?
  - two simultaneous, semi-linked games





Dstl trip report:
https://paxsims.wordpress.com/2016/08/02/dstl-wargaming-trip-report-or-i-visited-portsdown-west-and-all-i-got-was-this-lousy-mug/

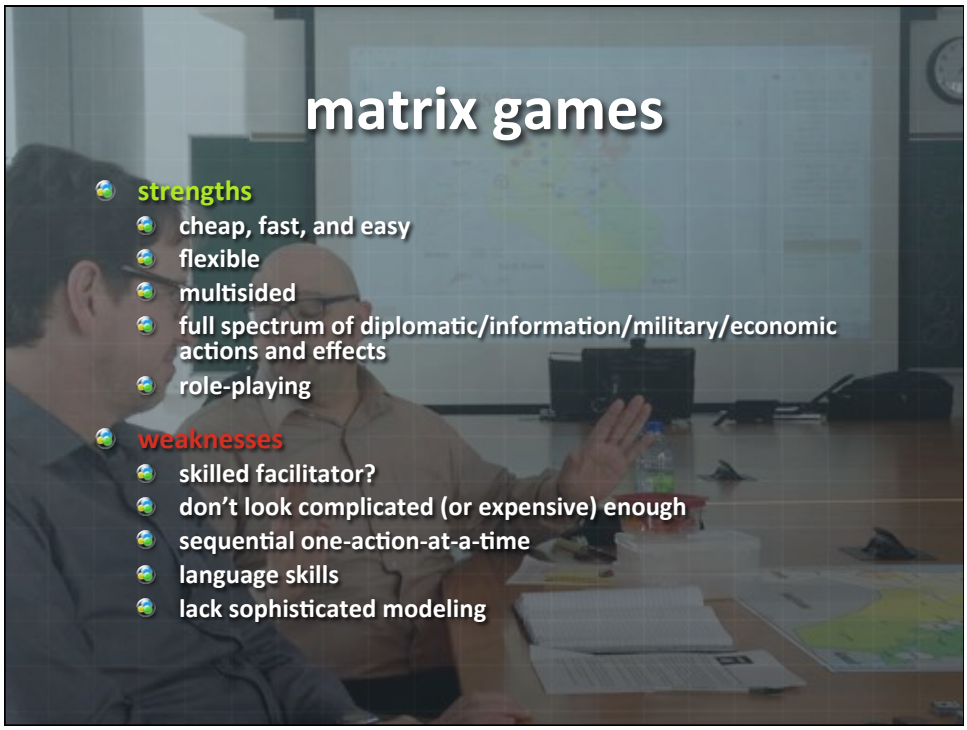
some of my games

- **ISIS Crisis**
  - **multi-sided pol-mil matrix game**
  - **examines counter-ISIS challenges, with emphasis on Iraq**
  - **developed with Major Tom Mouat (Defence Academy of the UK), based on matrix game approach first developed by Chris Engle**

matrix games

- matrix games* are narrative-based game with no rigid rules
- in turn, each player declares:
  1. an action
  2. the outcome/effect of that action (if successful)
  3. reasons why they will be successful
- other players (+SME) identify other arguments for/against success
- outcome is then determined
  - umpire adjudication
  - balance of arguments
  - adjusted stochastic determination (dice + modifiers)
- game is adjusted, and next player takes turn

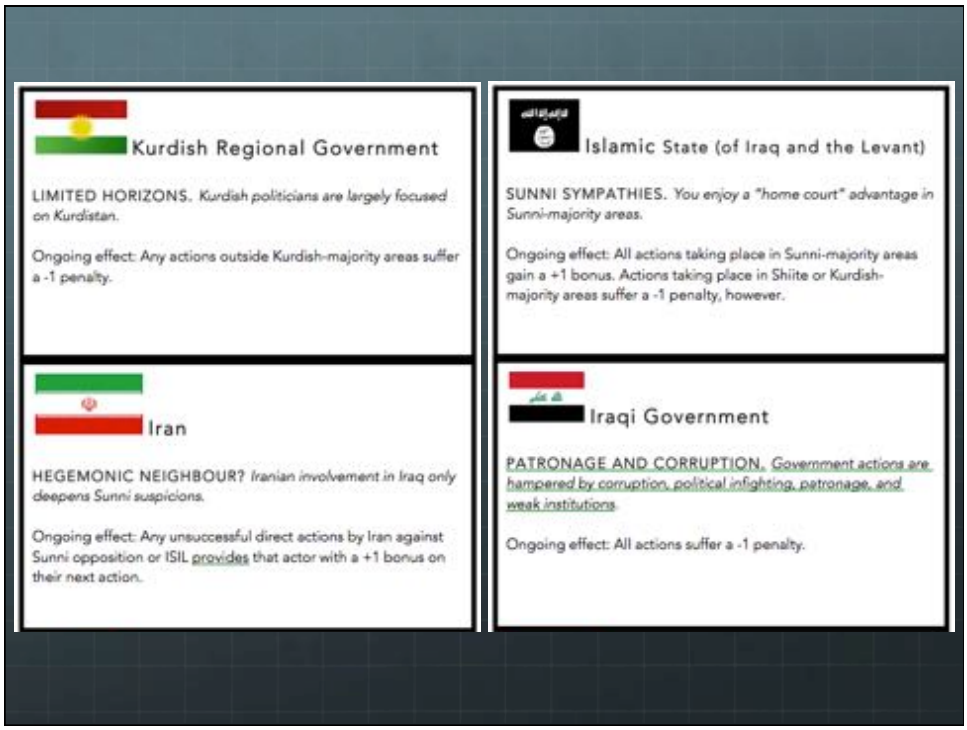
*which involve no actual matrix

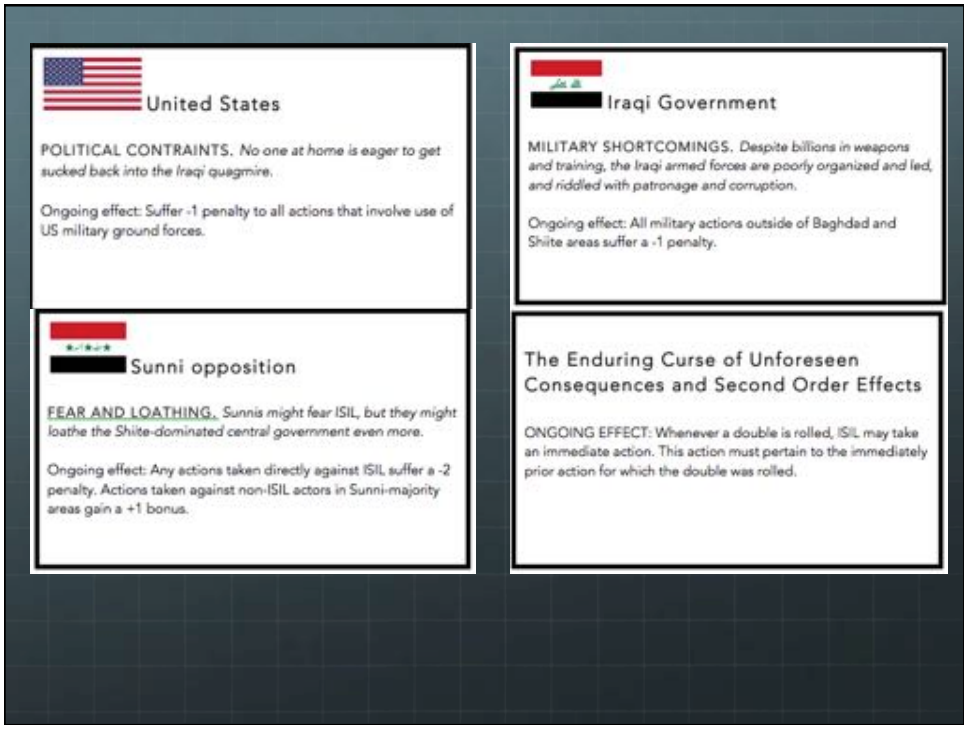


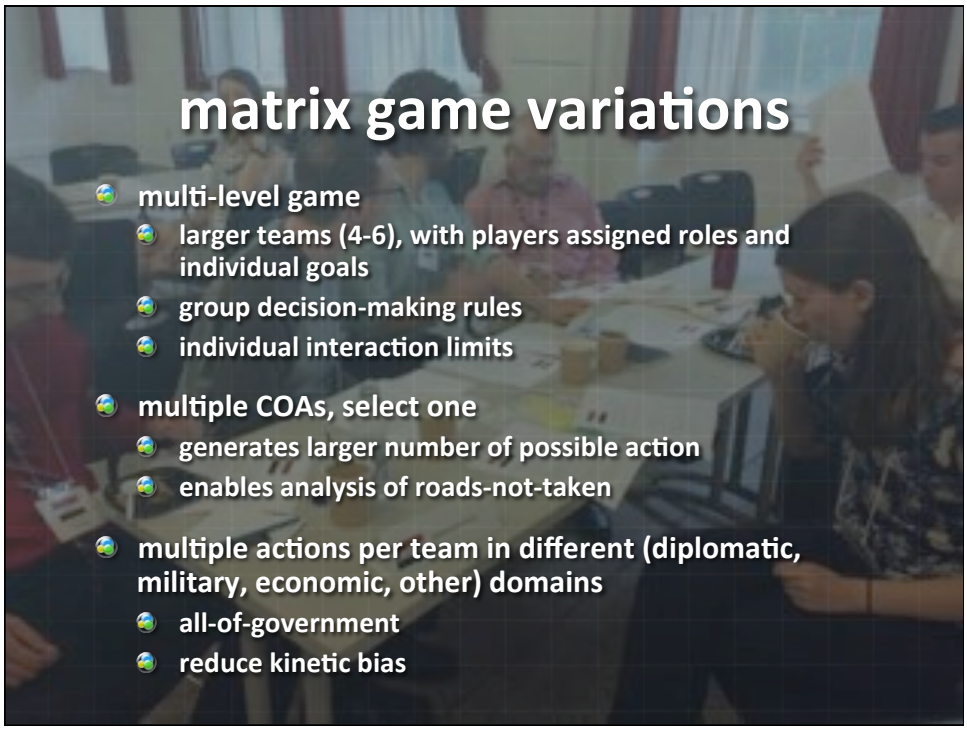
matrix games

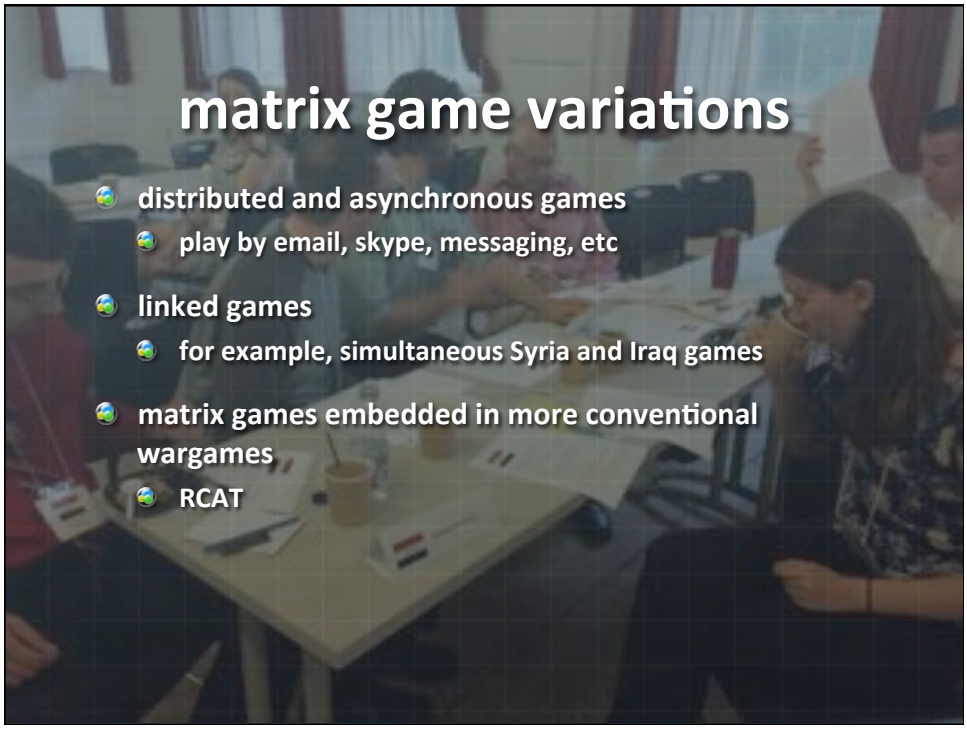
- strengths
  - cheap, fast, and easy
  - flexible
  - multisided
  - full spectrum of diplomatic/information/military/economic actions and effects
  - role-playing
- weaknesses
  - skilled facilitator?
  - don't look complicated (or expensive) enough
  - sequential one-action-at-a-time
  - language skills
  - lack sophisticated modeling

ISIS Crisis (Iraq edition)
Six players/teams + optional SME
1. ISIS
2. Kurds
3. Iraqi government
4. Sunni opposition
5. Iran
6. United States
7. SME (unrepresented players and effects)


Kurdish Regional Government
LIMITED HORIZONS. Kurdish politicians are largely focused on Kurdistan.
Ongoing effect: Any actions outside Kurdish-majority areas suffer a -1 penalty.
Islamic State (of Iraq and the Levant)
SUNNI SYMPATHIES. You enjoy a "home court" advantage in Sunni-majority areas.
Ongoing effect: All actions taking place in Sunni-majority areas gain a +1 bonus. Actions taking place in Shiite or Kurdish-majority areas suffer a -1 penalty, however.
Iran
HEGEMONIC NEIGHBOUR? Iranian involvement in Iraq only deepens Sunni suspicions.
Ongoing effect: Any unsuccessful direct actions by Iran against Sunni opposition or ISIL provides that actor with a +1 bonus on their next action.
Iraqi Government
PATRONAGE AND CORRUPTION. Government actions are hampered by corruption, political infighting, patronage, and weak institutions.
Ongoing effect: All actions suffer a -1 penalty.


United States
POLITICAL CONTRAINTS. No one at home is eager to get sucked back into the Iraqi quagmire.
Ongoing effect: Suffer -1 penalty to all actions that involve use of US military ground forces.
Iraqi Government
MILITARY SHORTCOMINGS. Despite billions in weapons and training, the Iraqi armed forces are poorly organized and led, and riddled with patronage and corruption.
Ongoing effect: All military actions outside of Baghdad and Shiite areas suffer a -1 penalty.
Sunni opposition
FEAR AND LOATHING. Sunnis might fear ISIL, but they might loathe the Shiite-dominated central government even more.
Ongoing effect: Any actions taken directly against ISIL suffer a -2 penalty. Actions taken against non-ISIL actors in Sunni-majority areas gain a +1 bonus.
The Enduring Curse of Unforeseen Consequences and Second Order Effects
ONGOING EFFECT: Whenever a double is rolled, ISIL may take an immediate action. This action must pertain to the immediately prior action for which the double was rolled.


matrix game variations
multi-level game
larger teams (4-6), with players assigned roles and individual goals
group decision-making rules
individual interaction limits
multiple COAs, select one
generates larger number of possible action
enables analysis of roads-not-taken
multiple actions per team in different (diplomatic, military, economic, other) domains
all-of-government
reduce kinetic bias


matrix game variations
distributed and asynchronous games
play by email, skype, messaging, etc
linked games
for example, simultaneous Syria and Iraq games
matrix games embedded in more conventional wargames
RCAT