

# CAPITULATE! WARGAME REPORT

No. Participants: 8, No. Observers: 10

## Game Format & Overview

1. Members of the wargaming network participated in the wargame 'Capitulate!', which was developed for the network by UK Fight Club.
2. Capitulate! is an abstract simulation of state-on-state asymmetrical warfare, featuring fictional countries and following the basic mechanics of the boardgame 'Battleships'. Each team has an abstract city map with their civilian & military infrastructure placed strategically on grid squares (chosen before the start of the game). Like 'Battleships', the teams' maps are hidden from the opponent. When the game commences, the teams take turns to call out grid squares on their opponent's map, resulting in them either hitting or missing key infrastructure.
3. The two countries involved were Freedonia (a Western liberal democracy with a wealth of advanced military technology) and Authoritania (a dictatorship with radical expansionist tendencies, a high tolerance for extended conflicts, but with limited military capability). Each country team comprised of four people who embodied one of the following roles: the political leader, military general, media officer or intelligence director.
4. The aim of the game is to either 1) Destroy the totality of the adversary's military infrastructure, or 2) Inflict so much damage to their wider infrastructure and civilian population that they willingly give in to defeat... hence the name, Capitulate!

## Narrative of the game

5. Freedonia began with an intelligence led strategy, utilising their advanced intelligence capabilities (in the form of Human and Imagery Intelligence gained from drone surveillance). They acted on their intelligence with precision strikes, which had significant success and avoided disproportionately violent actions.
6. Authoritania meanwhile struggled to identify Freedonia's key infrastructure with their limited open source intelligence and even though their missiles resulted in significant Freedonian civilian casualties, they failed to fully destroy any key military infrastructure. They also deployed chemical weapons in the early rounds, which demonstrated their limited concern for causing civilian casualties and increased pre-existing tensions with Freedonia.
7. At what seemed to be a pivotal point in the game, Freedonia took out Authoritania's Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) system. The missile silo closely followed, but not before Authoritania used the last of its stock to take out a hospital in Freedonia's capital.
8. Press-rounds took place every 10<sup>th</sup> turn, with the aim of swaying international opinion. Both sides took a reactionary stance to events that had transpired. Freedonia's messaging focused on patriotism and critiqued Authoritarian's apparent lack of concern for civilian deaths. Authoritania continued to broadcast propaganda and critique Freedonia's actions in the hope of diminishing Freedonia's claim to being the defender of freedom and democracy. The international audience remained largely un-affected by either campaign, with opinion swaying slightly in favour of Freedonia at the mid-point of the conflict.
9. After taking out the missile silo, the more peaceful doves in Freedonia became outweighed by the hawks and the government launched a risky bombardment campaign. The result was mass Authoritarian civilian casualties and not a single piece of military or civilian infrastructure was fully destroyed.

10. Authoritania used these actions to its advantage, recruiting multiple new members to its direct-action cells. Freedonia committed to its bombing campaign but to no avail- the remaining aspect of Authoritania's civilian architecture (the grand palace) remained hidden and intact.

11. Authoritania then unleashed a series of direct action cells attacks in Freedonia's capital, taking out all but one of Freedonia's civilian and military architecture and causing their civilian death toll to increase even further. As a result, Freedonia was forced to announce capitulation and sent a plea to the international community to continue the battle against Authoritania. Unfortunately, this call remained unanswered and Authoritania emerged from the conflict victorious.

### **Reflections on the game**

12. **The Result.** During the post-game analysis, the consensus was that most people had expected Freedonia to be victorious, due to its more advanced weapons and intelligence gathering functions (Freedonia's weapons were renewable, whereas Authoritania's were a finite resource). There was agreement that Freedonia's main mistake had been its bombing campaign, though it was undecided whether it launched it too early or too late.

13. **Authoritarian Tactics.** The political leader for Authoritania highlighted that their use of WMDs and violence against the Freedonian population placed pressure on Freedonia to respond robustly and may have compelled them to use increasingly violent means of attack. Freedonia's bombing campaign in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the game is evidence of their increased willingness to use riskier, violent means to achieve their military goals.

14. **Media Campaigns.** It was also interesting to reflect on the use of the media campaigns and how these shaped the teams' actions. For example, Freedonia was reluctant to take any inflammatory actions, such as bombing campaigns, the move before a media round, in the fear that this may be used as propaganda against them.

15. **Logistics.** The logistics of coordinating with team members, whilst keeping up with other team's moves and the main group conversation proved quite difficult in a virtual environment (lots of muting and un-muting!). It might be good to explore the use of team break-out rooms or even running the game in-person to see if this speeds up the game play.

**16. Overall, it was a very interesting and entertaining event to participate in and certainly made attendees consider the features of asymmetrical warfare and how this might impact military strategy. We look forward to working with UK Fight Club in the future and hopefully taking part in more of their wargames!**

Feedback from Freedonian political leader:

"It was a great experience being the Political Leader, albeit a stressful one - predominantly from trying to handle being in two simultaneous conversations to declare and respond to actions while also getting advice from your team. I am sure in person this would be less burdensome but I think there could definitely be interesting dynamics to be had from a game structure where individual roles have different elements of information. Broadly play felt well-paced (with some actions naturally taking longer than others). One thing that would help future first-time players is an example of play in each of the team's Powerpoints to demonstrate how skills such as open-source intelligence and aerial bombing need to be declared and function without ambiguity. Overall, it was very enjoyable and has got me thinking about wargames, both in design and potential application, a whole lot more."