



Unethical Wargaming

Connections UK 2024

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Why care about unethical wargaming?

- Unique WG features also come with risks
- Definition of unethical wargaming:
When an actor, with a personal agenda that differs from the wargame's purpose, attempts to manipulate the wargame to affect the output.
- So what? Improve WG and decision-making

Today's objectives and agenda

Objectives:

- Describe unethical wargaming
- Identify problems
- Explore solutions

Agenda:

- Intro presentation
- Workshop
 - Problems of unethical WG
 - Solutions to those problems
- Concluding presentation

Source of inspiration

An Unethical Wargaming Taxonomy for Practitioners and Observers

Robert Seater & Joel Kurucar

Unethical Professional Wargaming
“make your wargame say what you want it to say”

Connections US 2021 Wargaming Conference

US Command and General Staff College (CGSC)
and
The CGSC Foundation

Final Report 13th September 2021

Contributors

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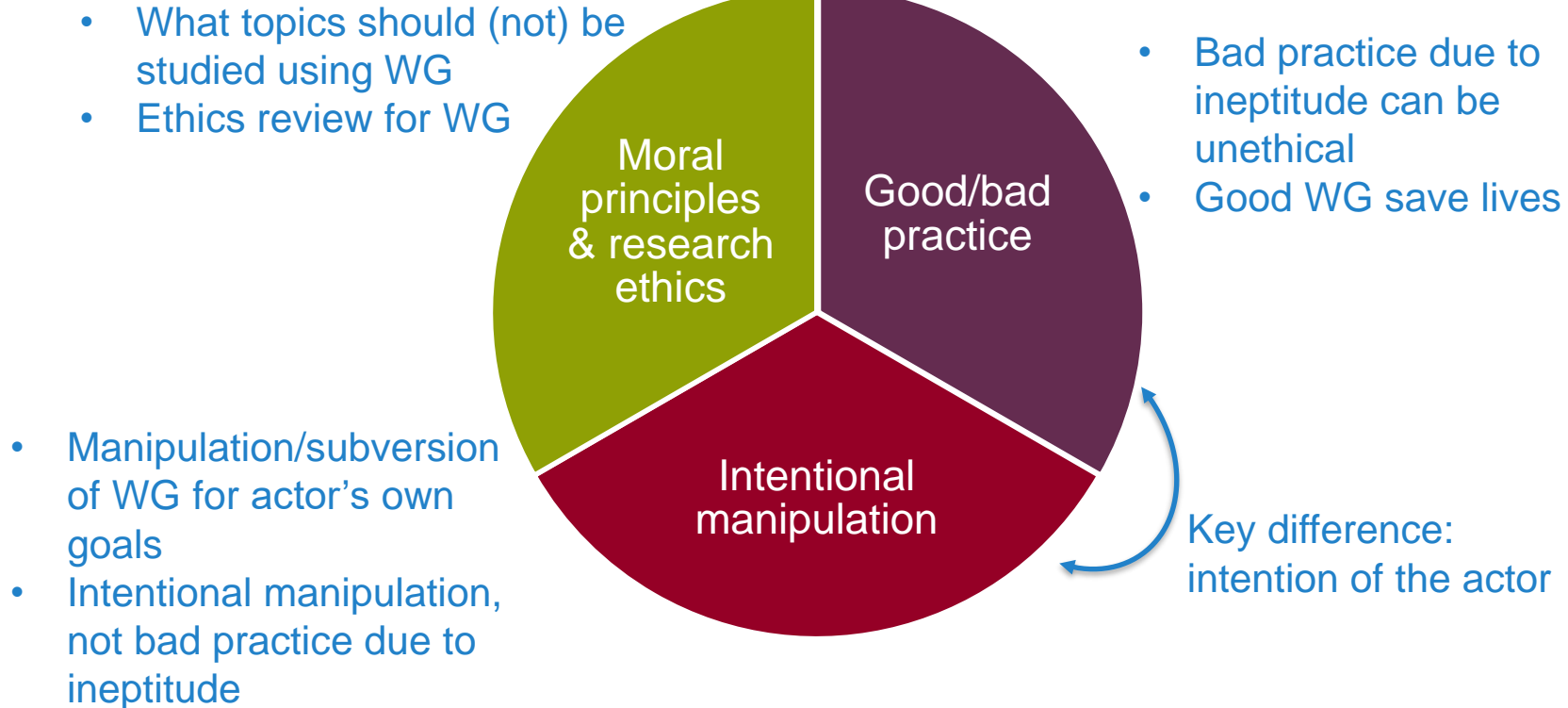
Stephen Downes-Martin

Research questions

- What challenges, related to unethical wargaming, occur in the Swedish operations analysis (OA)* context?
- What solutions can be used to manage those challenges?

**OA = FOI analysts deployed to Swedish Armed Forces*

Ethics in wargaming literature



How did we study this?

Risk Assessment Table for Goal Distortion

	pre-creation	design	pre-briefing	execution	hotwash	analysis	repetition
sponsor	low risk	unlikely	unlikely	unlikely	unlikely	unlikely	low risk
designer / developer	unlikely	high risk	unlikely	unlikely	unlikely	unlikely	low risk
moderator / adjudicator / white cell		unlikely	low risk	unlikely	low risk		
red / blue participant			unlikely	unlikely	unlikely		
gray / pink participant			unlikely	unlikely	unlikely		
prior participant	unlikely	unlikely			unlikely		unlikely
analyst			unlikely	unlikely	unlikely	low risk	unlikely
content consumer					unlikely	unlikely	unlikely
observer			unlikely	unlikely	unlikely		unlikely

Figure 5: Role-phase pairings that are estimated to pose the greatest risks of unethical dynamics due to *Goal Distortion*. *Goal Distortion* is when someone intentionally misinterprets the stated goal of the wargame, pushing the game in a direction other than what was intended and stated.

Seater & Kurucar, 2021. "An Unethical Wargaming Taxonomy for Practitioners and Observers."

How did we study this?

Unethical Wargaming Matrix

	Preparation	Execution	Post-game
Operations analyst (OA)			
Sponsor			
Sponsor representative			
Players			

Method: survey + workshop

Workshop instructions

1. Divide into groups, each group has their own UWG matrix.
2. Discuss incidents of unethical wargaming* you have experienced, and/or think of potential problems. Write them down in the actor-phase cells in the UWG matrix.
3. Discuss potential solutions to these problems. Write them down in the actor-phase cells in the UWG matrix.
4. Representatives from groups share 1 incident/problem, and 2-3 solutions to that problem with the room.
5. Hand in matrices, which will be compiled into one output from this session and posted on conference website.

**When an actor, with a personal agenda that differs from the wargame's purpose, attempts to manipulate the wargame to affect the output.*

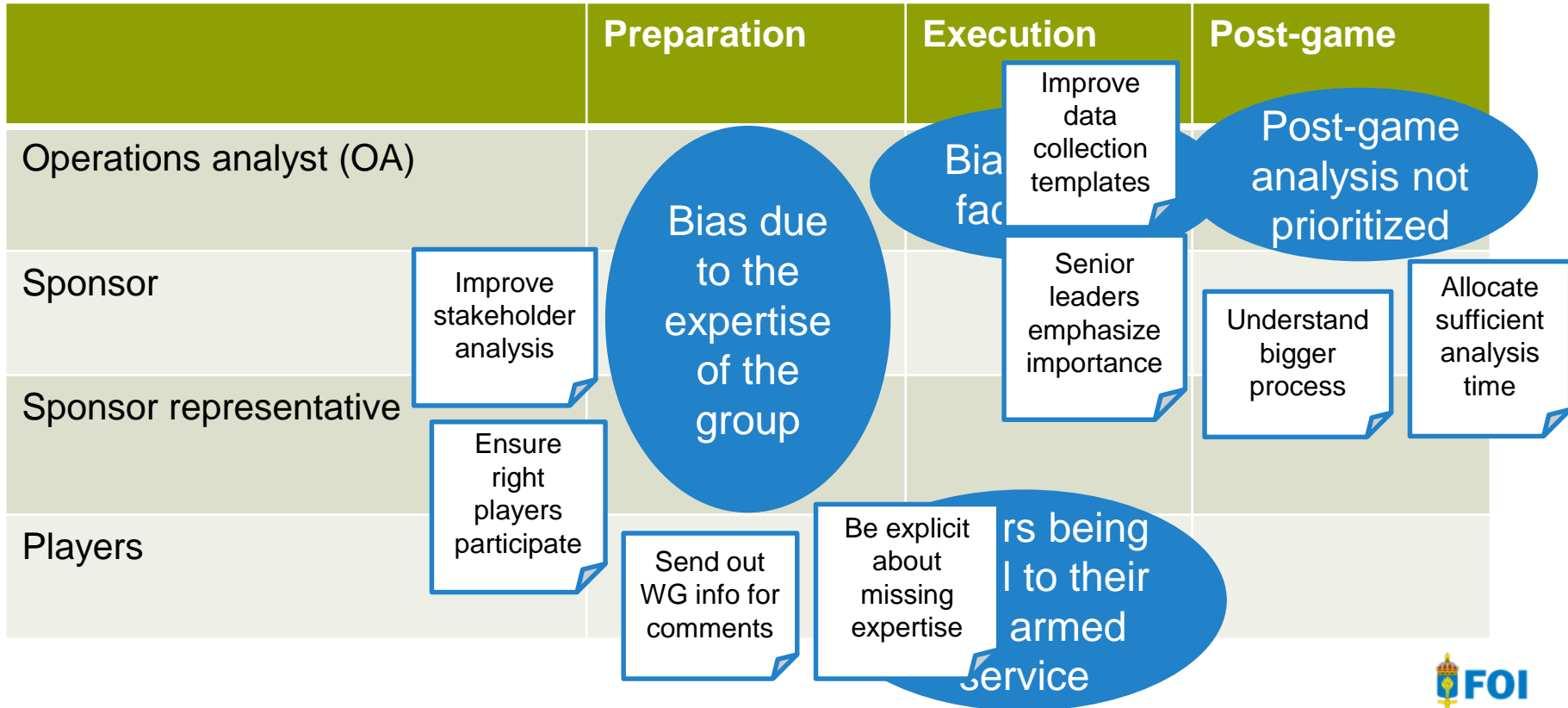
Intentional
manipulation



Preliminary results: problems

	Preparation	Execution	Post-game
Operations analyst (OA)	Bias due to the expertise of the group	Bias due to facilitation	Post-game analysis not prioritized
Sponsor			
Sponsor representative			
Players		Players being partial to their own armed service	

Preliminary results: problems and solutions



Preliminary results: main takeaways

- Unethical wargaming doesn't happen regularly
- Most important problems concerned the wargaming team
- UWG matrix must be adaptable to be useful
- Some solutions create other problems → have an open discussion and consider consequences

Questions?

- Matrices compiled into session output
- FOI publication coming at some point...

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A few suggested readings

Banks, 2024. “The Methodological Machinery of Wargaming: A Path toward Discovering Wargaming’s Epistemological Foundations.” *International Studies Review*, 26(1): 1-25.

Downes-Martin, 2014. “Your Boss, Players, and Sponsor: The Three Witches of War Gaming.” *Naval War College Review*, 67(1): 31-40.

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Pauly, 2018. “Would U.S. Leaders Push the Button? Wargames and the Sources of Nuclear Restraint.” *International Security*, 43(2): 151-192.

Reddie et al., 2018. “Next-Generation Wargames.” *Science*, 362(6421): 1362-1364.

Seater and Kurucar, 2021. “An Unethical Wargaming Taxonomy for Practitioners and Observers.” Unethical Professional Wargaming, Connections US 2021 Wargaming Conference.