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Successful Playtesting: MOD Playtesting Procedures

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Why Playtest?

Playtesting is '*critical to deliver all wargames successfully*', the desired outcome of which '*should be that the sponsor, game director and all members of the wargame team are confident that the wargame can be set up, executed with a full player contingent, deliver the required outputs and meet the overall aim*'. - MOD Wargaming Handbook

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-wargaming-handbook>

- **Training People**

Training the facilitators, adjudicators and data capture and analysis teams in their roles and responsibilities

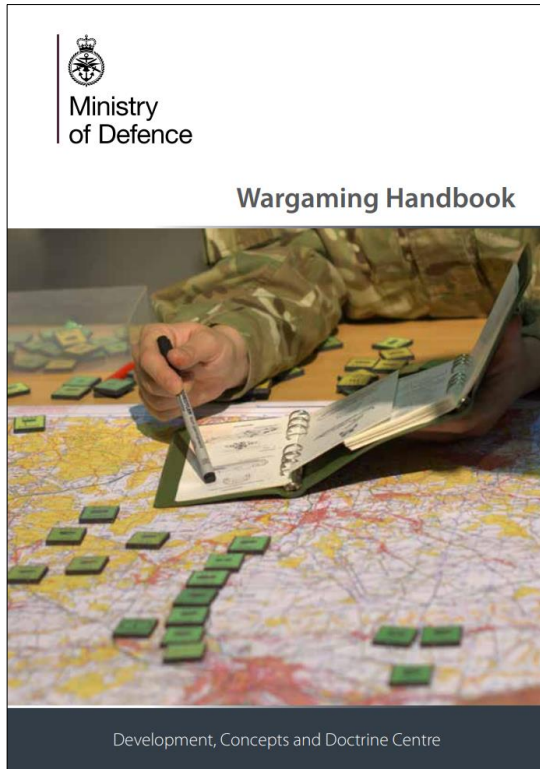
- **Testing Supporting Systems/Enablers**

Stress testing the game's systems – data transfer, IT, and the facility/venue

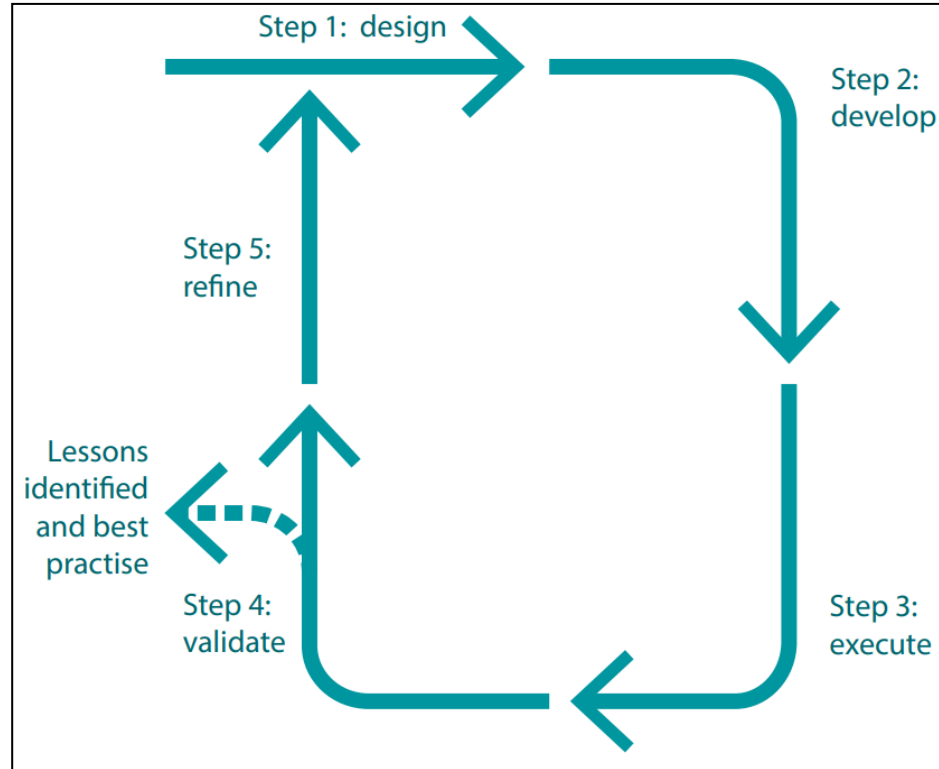
- **Testing Game Mechanics/Balance**

The Wargaming Process

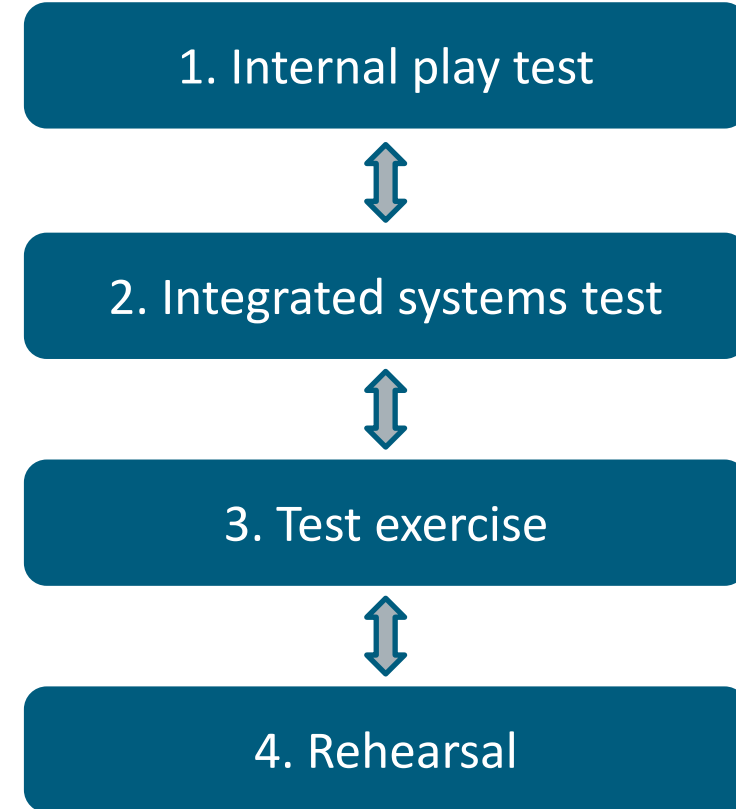
The MOD Wargaming Handbook



The Wargaming Process



The Playtest Cycle



The Playtest Cycle

*1. **Internal play test.** The internal play test is usually limited to the wargame team. The purpose is to test the progress of key development items such as adjudication methods, processes, the scenario, data capture and analysis plans.*

*2. **Integrated systems test.** The purpose of the integrated systems test is to assess whether the wargame systems integrate to the required degree of rapidity and simplicity. It is a good opportunity to involve the sponsor and game director to confirm that the wargame is on target to achieve the objectives.*

MOD Wargaming Handbook, p.56-57, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-wargaming-handbook>

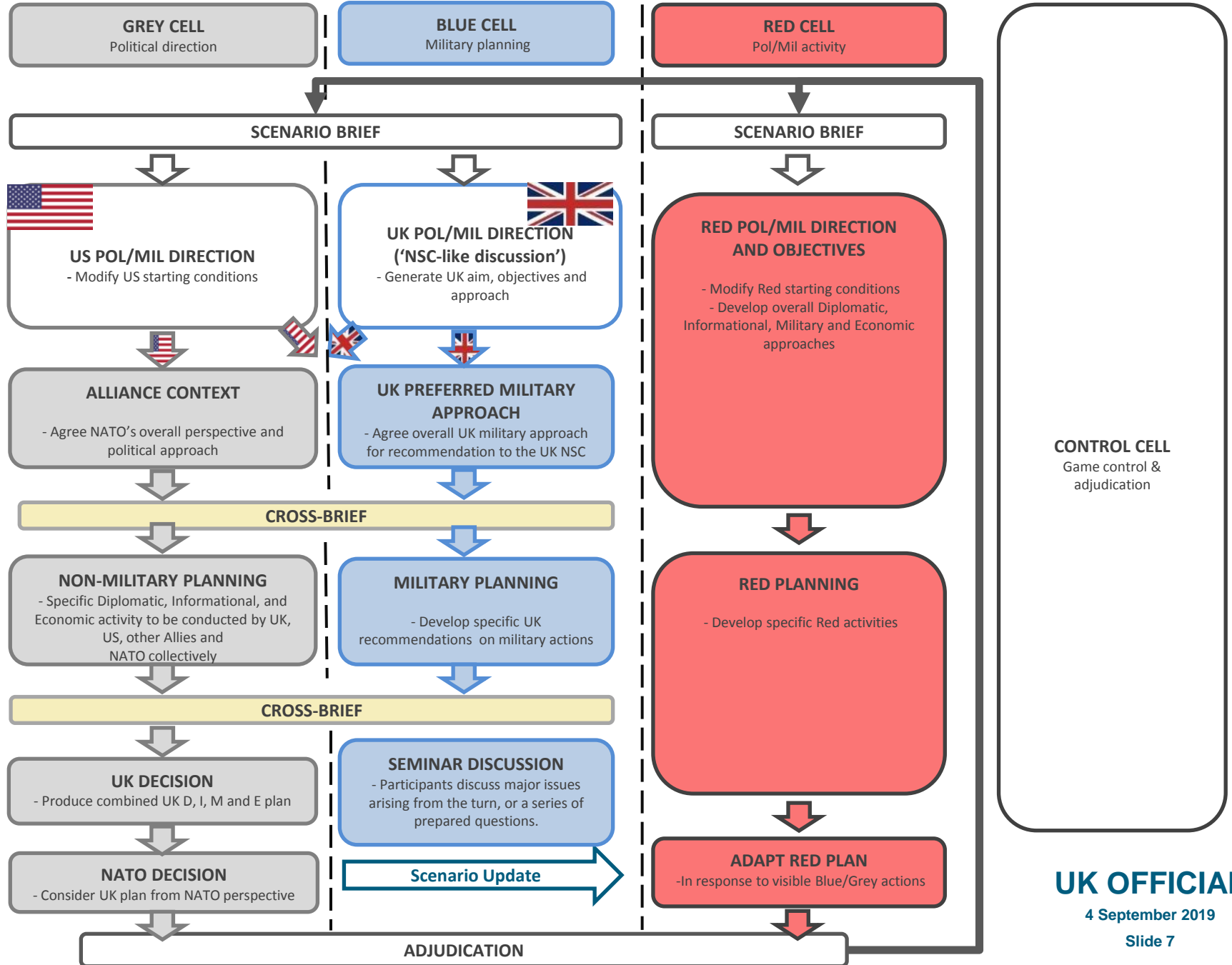
The Playtest Cycle

3. Test exercise. *The purpose of the test exercise (TESTEX) is to robustly test all aspects of the wargame to ensure they are fit for purpose. While all wargame elements (including briefings, technology and processes) should be evaluated, the TESTEX should not be mistaken for a rehearsal. A representative of the sponsor and the game director should be present.*

4. Rehearsal. *Differentiated from the TESTEX, a rehearsal is required just before the actual wargame, with sufficient supporting staff and player representatives. No new issues should arise; the rehearsal is primarily to confirm that the technology and processes supporting the wargame will work.*

MOD Wargaming Handbook, p.56-57, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-wargaming-handbook>

The VCDS Wargame Series



Playtesting Problems, Pitfalls and Mitigations

Problem 1 – Lack of Senior Availability

Mitigations

- Early involvement of people who can accurately represent the players
- Two senior events
- Using retired seniors

Playtesting Problems, Pitfalls and Mitigations

Problem 2 – Selecting a Facilitator and Facilitating Senior Audiences

Mitigations

- Pre-briefing a player to be a chairperson and work with the facilitator
- Using retired seniors

Playtesting Problems, Pitfalls and Mitigations

Problem 3 – Lack of Access to Facilities during Playtesting

Mitigations

- Recce
- Use similar location
- Rehearsal of Concept (RoC) Drill
- Run at your own facility

Concluding Remarks

- The Playtest Cycle
 - Explained in detail
- Playtesting Problems, Pitfalls and Mitigations
 - Lessons learnt from playtesting wargames with senior audiences
- Further Discussions
 - Other lessons

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