

# Unethical Wargaming Matrix

During the interactive session “Unethical wargaming” at Connections UK 2024, group work was conducted to explore problems and solutions related to unethical wargaming (UWG).

UWG is defined as when an actor, with a personal agenda that differs from the wargame’s purpose, attempts to manipulate the wargame to affect the output.

Below is a compilation of all the problems and related solutions (in bullet points) identified by the groups, as they were written.

The problems may reflect incidents that the participants have experienced, or they may be invented for the sake of exploring potential future problems.

Phase: Actor:	Preparation	Execution	Post-game
Designer/ Developer	<p>Problem 1. Game/rule set had a flaw that could be exploited by players once discovered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run playtests with people outside game design</li> <li>Show game dynamics</li> <li>Red-team the game itself</li> <li>Continue personnel development</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Road to war not credible (manipulation of starting conditions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assumptions exposed, reviewed, and reported</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3. Avoiding bias at the design level (creating a problem and design that tends to lead to desired solution)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cite sources</li> <li>Ensure that the designer is not invested</li> <li>Diverse design team</li> <li>Not reveal the intent (if possible) of the wargame, only the resources/modelling required</li> </ul> <p>Problem 4. Setting up the scenario to achieve a certain outcome/situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foot notes on progress/hacked audit trail</li> <li>Multiple person design team to remove single agenda</li> </ul> <p>Problem 5. Overstating wargame capability/utility or not stating assumptions/omissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mislead sponsor to retrain contract</li> <li>Closer technical partnerships</li> <li>Accreditation of wargame developers?</li> </ul> <p>Problem 6. Presupposed knowledge or limited understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red-team (including subject matter expert advice)</li> <li>QA design process</li> <li>QA designer knowledge (selection) – not the right designer</li> </ul> <p>Problem 7. Designer bakes in some manipulation – to get a preconceived outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review/approval process in place</li> </ul> <p>Problem 8. Creating an objective to prove a point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating understanding of objectives between sponsor and designer at the beginning</li> </ul> <p>Problem 9. Ego/vanity prevents the designer from accepting feedback</p> <p>Problem 10. Only doing confirmatory research e.g. backs up their world view in the game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need constant touch points with political consultants – military</li> <li>Game developers can’t just be left to design + implement these games with no consultation</li> <li>Cross government + engagement in war game design</li> </ul>	<p>Problem 1. Deliberately putting non-experts in the cell</p>	<p>Problem 1. “The players played it wrong!” – following proper use of the game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red-teaming ahead of the game</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Manipulate results to try to please the sponsor or cover up poor game design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress-testing of results, hot wash of all opinions</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3. Intentionally misstating findings to underline the importance of the game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better oversight of the analytical process</li> </ul>

<p><b>Facilitator</b></p>	<p>Problem 1. Players act/respond to the game due to loopholes (also applies to execution-facilitator cell)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize/pre-empt areas of exploitation</li> <li>Personnel development so can control/withstand challenges to game play</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Not reading the rules or understanding fully</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training games/sessions</li> <li>Game control function/ensure quality of facilitation</li> <li>Careful selection of facilitators</li> <li>Analysts report on unethical facilitation</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3: Steer the players</p>	<p>Problem 1. Favoring red/blue within a wargame</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitator below a game control function</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. 'Cherry-picking' data to record (also applies to execution-analyst cell)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-approved data collection plan</li> <li>Multiple data capturers</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3. Directing game time/focus to 'preferred' areas/serials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training</li> <li>Give them a stake in research question</li> </ul> <p>Problem 4. Shut people down (if they differ), prefer others (if they agree)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness training (preempt bias)</li> <li>Feedback sessions so players can raise concern (also applies to post-game-facilitator cell)</li> <li>2nd facilitator (to challenge 1st)</li> </ul> <p>Problem 5. Sleight of hand/adjudication in favor of one group or another</p> <p>Problem 6. Imposing personal biases on the game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scribe in adjudication cell to record decision-making</li> </ul> <p>Problem 7. Putting their finger on the outcome of the game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training and oversight</li> </ul> <p>Problem 8. Steer the players/leading questions</p> <p>Problem 9. Mega games e.g. prior relationships when playing – selectively calling on known people – allows undue influence</p>	<p>Problem 1. Steering would influence the results of the game</p>
<p><b>Analyst</b></p>	<p>Problem 1. Bias criteria to be collected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OA doesn't choose criteria</li> <li>QA chosen criteria by others (SME)</li> <li>Red-team among main team (e.g. OA, sponsor, facilitator)</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Fudges numbers/data or other background information to cover up poor research or lack of evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review or approval process in place</li> </ul>	<p>Problem 1. Deliberate falsification of notes</p> <p>Problem 2. Lack of data capture – poor preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple scribes</li> <li>Collect player notes (with caveats)</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3. Only collecting data to satisfy an inappropriate post-game objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have robust data collection plan that is agreed in advance with the sponsor</li> </ul>	<p>Problem 1. Results from game based on players acting on recognized loopholes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight this in findings and how this has influenced results/analysis</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Manipulation of data and data presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple reviews and seek multiple perspectives on what the data is showing</li> <li>Publication of data for peer-review</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3. Insights not supported by evidence or not reporting on insights that disagree with sponsor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer review</li> </ul> <p>Problem 4. No weighting or rank/experience behind insights (anonymized/democratic decisions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer review</li> <li>Pick experienced player/player choice</li> </ul> <p>Problem 5. Avoid conscious bias/telling lies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage open forum post-wargame open discussion prevents 'writing your own history', if conflict different version can be recorded</li> <li>Using multiple analysts looking at same data independently</li> <li>Using analysts who have no investment in the outcome</li> </ul> <p>Problem 6. Ignoring some data from the game to gain a certain outcome in the analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transparency of data collection</li> <li>Adhering to the pre-arranged data collection plan</li> <li>Bias in weighting of the report/unconscious interpretation</li> </ul> <p>Problem 7. Deliberate misinterpretation based on service/regiment/domain prejudice ("he's just an artillery major")</p> <p>Problem 8. Post-hoc embellishment of findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-registration</li> <li>Faster production of reports</li> <li>Peer/external review</li> </ul> <p>Problem 9. Biased selection of evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have more than one OA (scribe)</li> <li>Sign-off of capture by senior</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publishing data (wider scrutiny) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ External if not classified</li> <li>○ Internal if classified</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strong leadership/mentoring</li> </ul> <p>Problem 10. Manipulate results to cover up poor note-taking/data collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review/stress-testing of output</li> </ul>
Sponsor	<p>Problem 1. (Contractor) Deliberately misleading game players as to what the real problem or purpose of the game is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with sponsor</li> <li>• Submit to ethical review (objective/impartial)</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Demands specific results from a wargame rather than using it as an exploratory tool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear on objectives, create contract with sponsor signature, open ‘3 witches paper’ in NWC review</li> <li>• Scrutiny – Analysts can escalate concerns of scientific validity. Legal routes exist within the UK.</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3. Having the development/project be contingent on the game being skewed towards a desired outcome</p> <p>Problem 4. Only selects like-minded players (groupthink)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure designer has a vote (decisions)</li> <li>• Remind players of rules (integrity)</li> <li>• Remind everyone of integrity</li> <li>• Training in order to reduce bias before player selection</li> </ul> <p>Problem 5. Commissioning a game to serve preexisting agenda + making that clear to designer/facilitator/analyst</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F/w or contract to protect designer independence</li> </ul> <p>Problem 6. Setting the research question itself – could produce a Q &amp; A designed outcome</p> <p>Problem 7. In strategic game e.g. specific focus/limited focus. Not looking at economics.</p> <p>Problem 8. Manipulating the outcomes/pre-designed outcomes</p>	<p>Problem 1. Sponsor interjecting to influence the game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the sponsor out of the room/game play entirely</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Senior sponsor pressure facilitators to remove a move to impact outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid sponsor/player combos</li> <li>• Pre-game ensure the sponsor/player is fully aware they may not impact adjudication</li> <li>• Facilitator to use instance or branch point so as to ‘avoid’ de-railment</li> <li>• Question: Should this issue be documented?</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3. Showing up can dramatically impact behavior of high-ranking – could direct players in artificial directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No uniforms</li> <li>• Make sure you’ve got buy-in on a neutral approach to the game – rank doesn’t determine boundaries of behavior</li> </ul> <p>Problem 4. “We’re all here to prove X” – designed outcome/preprogrammed – proving what you want</p>	<p>Problem 1. Decision to overinflate or not release findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor isn’t release authority</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Knowing desired outcome in advance and interpreting evidence/outcomes in that light</p> <p>Problem 3. Misstating the game’s findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust, evidence-based reports</li> <li>• Culture that allows challenge</li> </ul> <p>Problem 4. ‘Hotwash’ – speaking first to manipulate the narrative/analysis – declare the result first – to lobby agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design a situation where the sponsor does not speak first e.g. set speaking order – need to be careful with how you limit the sponsor’s speaking role</li> <li>• Separate the delivery of the game from the execution of the game – take some control from the sponsors</li> </ul>
Players	<p>Problem 1. Player “hacking” the game system to ensure a favorable outcome during the execution phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced/appropriate security measures to prevent security breaches</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Decision/pressure on players by senior sponsors (also applies to execution-players cell)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor, be aware it’s happening</li> <li>• Assume it will happen</li> <li>• Be mindful in the final report/analysis</li> <li>• Decision justification</li> </ul> <p>Problem 3. Hiding intentions + experience to manipulate play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vetting/pre-approval of attendees</li> </ul> <p>Problem 4. Collusion before the game between players, especially on opposite sides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operations security</li> </ul> <p>Problem 5. Lack of preparation that can lead to stymied results, lacks context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure players have enough time + keep info digestable, brief</li> <li>• Start with a bit of a check on understanding</li> <li>• Pre-event communications from senior stakeholder about importance</li> </ul> <p>Problem 6. Player selection – not choosing experts to play the game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency across the players so each role is carried out correctly</li> <li>• Context of play/player role if also important</li> </ul>	<p>Problem 1. Players discover loophole in game play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an embedded player who maintains objective and upholds game</li> <li>• Change moderator/players dynamics once realized</li> </ul> <p>Problem 2. Dice manipulation</p> <p>Problem 3. Players neglect game rules to win or achieve some goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly tell the players about the risk of getting into Gamer Mode</li> </ul> <p>Problem 4. Willful wasting of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit use within rules</li> <li>• State aim “in order to…” (justify)</li> <li>• Adjudicator veto</li> </ul> <p>Problem 5. Gaming the game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe mechanics from players</li> <li>• Recruit the right players</li> </ul> <p>Problem 6. Not understanding the rules or the role of the game</p> <p>Problem 7. Organization issues e.g. wanting to be represented rather than sending experts to play the game</p> <p>Problem 8. Cheating</p>	<p>Problem 1. Players not waiting for post-game report, assume findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast report production</li> <li>• Better debriefs</li> </ul>