Conclusion

The Die Is Cast

How does one become a wargamer whether as a player, sponsor, analyst, or designer?

This volume strives to shift the discourse in wargaming away from perpetual questions about the utility and nature of wargames to new examinations of the professionalization and evolution of wargaming as a field. Each of the authors approaches this question from a unique perspective, whether as a researcher, military officer, analyst, or educator.

In chapter 1, Wojtowicz explored the core competencies and professionalization of the wargaming field, while highlighting the systemic gaps in the wargaming talent pipeline. This chapter is unique in seeking to codify the necessary skills and aptitudes for wargamers from novice to expert, and the various roles involved in the wargaming process. This bold approach to quantify the wargamer into its atomic components is the reason it opens this edited volume. However, this chapter will undoubtedly inspire intense debate amid the wargaming community, ranging from disagreements about the specified roles and associated competencies to a general aversion to standardization in a field that historically viewed itself as an art. Nevertheless, if we are to forge better wargamers, we must strive to answer the elusive question: What makes a good wargamer?

In chapter 2, Hunter argues wargaming in precommissioning education can lay the groundwork for “intellectual overmatch” by developing mental agility and interdisciplinary thinking early in an officer’s career. Fundamentally, the argu-
ment is persuasive as wargames, and games more broadly, have consistently demonstrated their educational value in both PME and civilian education. This is reflected in the growing use of wargames at other precommissioning institutions such as NROTC and other Service academies. For instance, in 2020, the U.S. Naval Academy established its own Naval History Wargaming Lab and student-run wargaming club, called the Combat Action Lab. Likewise, the U.S. Military Academy also boasts a wargaming club. Nevertheless, a stark difference exists between demonstrating the value of wargaming and systemically institutionalizing its use. Like all educational wargaming, the overarching challenges of sustained funding, faculty buy-in, resident wargaming expertise, and the ever-present constraint of resistant curricula will be consistent and considerable barriers.

In chapter 3, Smith outlines the pedagogical approach of the Office of Naval Intelligence’s (ONI) SimBAT program, where junior analysts leverage wargames to explore a variety of military issues. The SimBAT program strives to provide professional development to intelligence analysts through the social and experiential model of learning offered in wargames. Similarly, in “Wargaming: A Tool for Naval Intelligence Analysis,” Sundstrom, another analyst at ONI, argues intelligence analysts should embrace wargaming as a critical tool. Yet, as mentioned above with precommissioning programs, educational wargames consistently face several challenges in implementation and continuation, as reflected with the discontinuation of SimBAT in 2011 and its truncated form in 2014. Moreover, like tactical units, the intelligence community suffers from the tyranny of the now, with professional development often sacrificed in the dizzying

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1 “USNA Museum, History Department Establish Naval History Wargaming Laboratory,” USNA News Center, 5 August 2020.
jumps from crisis to crisis. Although not insurmountable, wargaming for professional development will have to offer a more persuasive argument for continued existence and growth.\(^5\)

In chapter 4, Kearney outlines best practices for developing on-the-job training for aspiring wargame designers, such as using commercial wargames and using professional wargaming organizations. This builds on the longstanding master-apprentice structure of teaching wargame design within the field.\(^6\) Although expedient in forging designers, the master-apprentice structure is limited in its volume and inherently possesses an outsized risk in passing on biases in one’s learning, stemming either from the master or the institution. Furthermore, on-the-job training for designers presumes an aspiring designer can qualify for said position in the first place. This may be the case for uniformed servicemembers who can fill such wargaming billets (often at the capricious whims of the Service), but this is not true for their civilian counterparts. Thus, this begs the question: How does one get experience to get a wargaming job where you can learn how to be a wargamer? This vexing conundrum faces most aspiring wargamers who did not serve in uniform, which may contribute to the severe lack of diversity in the field.\(^7\)

In chapter 5, Jenkinson and Brick outline their experiences when instituting wargaming for PME at the Australian Defence College, including specific obstacles and lessons learned. The authors highlight the importance of concurrent and overlapping lines of effort to push their wargaming initiative forward. Additionally, echoing Hunter, Brown, and Herbold, they emphasize the importance of faculty support and the various constraints of time and effort required. These are hard-won les-

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\(^7\) Caitlyn Leong, “How to Raise a Wargamer,” *PAXsims*, 21 May 2020; and “No Playing Around When It Comes to Wargaming,” *IDA Insights*, March 2022, 2–5.
sons repeated by other institutions, such as the Marine Corps University and Georgetown University. Although this chapter provides one of the two non-American perspectives on educational wargaming in this volume, it is important to highlight the largely Anglo-American perspective in this volume. The absence of other regional perspectives on educational wargaming is a critical shortcoming. It is our collective hope that our counterparts in Asia, South America, and elsewhere will add their voices to this growing literature with their own experiences and perspectives. As wargamers, we are keenly aware of the importance of context.

In chapter 6, Brown and Herbold discuss the ongoing process of institutionalizing educational wargaming in the U.S. Marine Corps through wargames such as Fleet Marine Force: INDOPACOM, TOAW IV, and Command. This chapter marks the latest renaissance in educational wargaming in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps, tracing its origins to the TACWAR family of educational wargames in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, this revitalization of educational wargaming is not limited to the Marine Corps, as reflected by the increased demand for games in the classroom across the Joint enterprise. Whether this trend of

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9 Wojtowicz provides the other non-American perspective in the volume. She teaches at the Hague University of Applied Sciences.
10 Fleet Marine Force: INDOPACOM is the original title for the educational wargame designed by Sebastian J. Bae. However, due to issues with the U.S. Marine Corps trademark office, the title was changed to Littoral Commander: Indo-Pacific for its eventual commercial release by the Dietz Foundation.
educational wargaming will continue or if it will be relegated again to the shadows of analytical wargaming remains to be seen. For now, the demand for educational wargaming continues to rise, but the resources and tools to meet the demand remain elusive.

In chapter 7, Appleget and Burks highlight how to better educate wargame sponsors on the value and limitations of wargames, based on their experiences designing and teaching wargames at NPS. This chapter is a wonderful extension of their recent book, *The Craft of Wargaming*, which provides a clear introduction and guide to the methodology of wargaming.\(^\text{13}\) Unsurprisingly, both their chapter and the book aim to increase wargaming literacy across the DOD and Joint enterprise. Echoing Elizabeth Bartels in her article, “Building a Pipeline of Wargaming: A Two Track Solution,” the authors aim their educational efforts beyond just wargamers and designers, but to the consumers and sponsors of wargames.\(^\text{14}\) Admittedly, much of the wargaming discourse can be insular and self-directed, wargamers speaking to other wargamers. However, this chapter examines the consumer perspective of wargames, building on similar works by Jon Compton, a senior analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.\(^\text{15}\)

In chapter 8, Valeriano and Jensen argue that wargames can serve as powerful research tools for social science by highlighting both recent successful cases of its implementation in academia and its remaining challenges to wide-scale use. As mentioned in the chapter, the authors build on a growing literature of wargaming applications in social science and

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academic research. This includes the pioneering works by Lin-Greenberg, Pauly, and Schneider, exploring the applications of wargaming for international relations research, such as the International Crisis Game. Likewise, Goldblum, Reddie, and Reinhardt utilized SIGNAL, an experimental wargame, to explore nuclear conflict escalation. Barzashka of King’s College London similarly raises questions about wargaming as an academic discipline and the associated obstacles to achieving this vision. This chapter adds to the rapidly expanding literature on the topic, challenging the long-held norms of wargaming as the exclusive domain of the profession of arms and defense policy.

In chapter 9, Taylor argues that educational wargaming can bridge the gap between the DOD and Congress, particularly in the case of nuclear policy. As mentioned in the chapter, in 2020, Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI) argued for greater participation by Congress in DOD wargaming, particularly in relation to the Navy’s Battle Force 2045. Both Taylor and Gallagher argue that wargames can serve as powerful mediums to engender cross-organizational collaboration, understanding, and policy. Fundamentally, this stems from the same value proposition in

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CONCLUSION

terms of Joint or cross-Service wargaming.\textsuperscript{20} However, there are serious concerns about the involvement of Congress in wargames. Chief among them being the powerful temptation to bias the wargame to advance a specific Service or organizational agenda. This pathology of wargaming, where advocacy masquerades as objective wargaming, is especially dangerous when millions, if not billions, of funding may hang in the balance. Furthermore, in a wargaming ecosystem where most of the expertise exists within the DOD enterprise, this model of congressional wargaming risks producing myopic perspectives of policy challenges overly focused on the military dimension of national power.\textsuperscript{21} Nevertheless, this chapter reiterates the challenge to the broader wargaming community—How can Congress be an active participant in the wargaming process or at the very least, be a better consumer of wargames?

In the end, nine chapters comprise this edited volume, each offering their own insights and recommendations for the way forward. Some of the chapters converge in their conclusions, despite markedly different starting points. Meanwhile, other chapters forge their own path into the wargaming literature. Yet, all the authors recognize there is still much to be done in the process of forging a wargaming pipeline, connecting the disparate islands across the wargaming ecosystem. This includes, but is not limited to, producing a wargaming continuum from precommissioning education to PME, crafting a more persuasive argument for resources and time for educational wargaming, and better integrating the design process with the consumers of wargames. As a result, like wargames, this edited volume does not provide unassailable, validated solutions but highlights better questions to improve understanding.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} Mike Gallagher, “Bringing Congress to the (Wargaming) Table for a Bigger and Better Navy,” War on the Rocks, 19 October 2020.

\textsuperscript{21} “Congress Should Be Wargaming (but Not Battle Force 2045),” PAXsims, 21 October 2020; and Rex Brynen, “Gaming for Congress?,” PAXsims, 19 October 2020.

\textsuperscript{22} Peter P. Perla et al., “Rolling the Iron Dice: From Analytical Wargaming to the Cycle of Research,” War on the Rocks, 21 October 2019.
The way forward for the wargaming community is dimly lit and fraught with obstacles, both known and unknown. Nonetheless, we must press forward, armed with better questions and greater understanding, to forge a new generation of wargamers.

As befits wargamers, the die is cast, and now tumbles across the table—but the result is yet to be determined.

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