WARGAMES IN STRATEGIC EDUCATION
TEACHING THUCYDIDES

THE PROBLEMS:
- Limited amount of readings permitted
- Students have no context for understanding
- Great lectures forgotten minutes after presented
- Insufficient student knowledge for any Socratic dialogue

THE BEST WE HOPE FOR:
- Fear-Honor-Interest becomes a mantra
- Avoiding future “Thucydidian traps”
- Don’t go to Syracuse!!!
THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

THE PROBLEMS:
- Limited readings and varying degrees of student knowledge (interest)
- Lifting the discussion to the strategic level – economics, diplomacy, politics
- Limited time to teach a war of such scope
- Socratic dialogues tend to head to student comfort zones

THE BEST WE HOPE FOR:
- Jominian outlook for a Clausewitzian war
- A war of the people and of materiel
- Don’t go to war with one lousy major ironworks in your country
WHY GAMING

- Games are remembered nearly forever
- Used as reinforcement for all other parts of an instructional program
- Experiential Learning --- par excellence
- Every turn creates a new strategic problem to solve ---- and the solution must overcome the best an active/thinking/human opponent will do to thwart you --- This is CRITICAL THINKING – “Strategic Battle Drills”
- An excellent environment to test alternative strategies
- Students think about possible strategic alternatives for days and weeks after the event
INTERLOCKED APPROACH

- AUDIO TAPES
- READINGS
- LECTURE – DISCUSSION (Small Groups)
- STAFF RIDE (When Possible... maybe synthetic for the future)
- WARGAME
LECTURE – DISCUSSION

CIVIL WAR - GMT

PELOPONESIAN WAR - COLUMBIA
ASSIGNED READINGS

ASSIGNED FILM

LECTURE – Geopolitics and Innovation between the Wars – Dr. Murray

LECTURE – Axis Strategic Issues – Dr. Citino

CASABLANCA SIMULATION

LECTURE – Holding the Coalition Together – Dr. Stoler

WARGAME - TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

WW II SYMPOSIUM – Stoler, Citino, Murray, Lacey
STUDENT COMMENTS

• War game and field study were great. Provided a different lens to look at and apply material.

• The economics portion is essential and was educational; gave a much broader understanding of the inter-workings and effects. Using the board game helps to preserve items to memory in an entertaining manner.

• The Civil War battlefields field study was excellent and followed by the Civil War Practical Application game added to the strategic understanding of the Civil War.

• Outstanding classes on CIV War and PELO War. Class trip to the battlefields is a MUST repeat...outstanding for senior officer education and team building.

• The Thucydides game (Polis) was surprisingly effective in helping me retain the information. I have studied Thucydides previously in different settings but I never retained much of the information beyond the Melian dialogue.

• The game ingrained the broader concepts of Thucydides in a way that I do not think I will forget.

• The Thucydides class was the best I’ve ever received.

• PLEASE CONTINUE USING THE SIMULATIONS !!! Not only does that really bring the instruction and readings together but its downright fun too.

• Field study and practical exercises were excellent. Thank you for making the effort to keep things interesting!
OTHER GAMES EMPLOYED

WW I
- July Crisis Practical Exercise – “The armies always march!”
- Paths of Glory Game

WW II
- Casablanca Practical Exercise
- Triumph and Tragedy Game

CURRENT
- Baltic Practical Exercise
- ISIS Practical Exercise
- Mindanao Game

GAMES CUT: Twilight Struggle, Fire in the Lake

VOLUNTARY GAMES: SIMULEX at Fletcher School, Army War College Exercise at CSIS, and le Vol de l’Aigle

DIPLOMACY

“NATIONS HAVE NO FRIENDS, JUST INTERESTS”

A low information environment... where no one trusts anyone else!
MY BIGGEST ERRORS

Did not allot for AAR’s or post-game discussion

On practical exercises I critiqued their solutions --- I should have instead said:

“Tell me how you got to your solutions.”

- STUDENT COMMENT: “War game was again very good. A few recommendations: 1) either before the game begins or soon after it starts allow the teams 30 minutes to formulate a strategy. How are they going to win the game? and 2) debrief the class after the game. Take about 30 minutes and go over what was a team’s strategy? how did they come up with that strategy? did it work? why or why not? did they adjust their strategy? why?”
WHERE HELP IS NEEDED

COMPLEX GAME MECHANICS
- Pay for video tutorials
- More outside of PME gamers (honorariums)

NEED MORE STRATEGIC LEVEL GAMES – INTEGRATING DIME
- Can be played in a single day (4-6 hours)
- Simple/elegant design filled with complex decisions

NEED GAMES ON THE UNGAMEABLE
- A Clausewitz and/or Jomini game?
- A cascading economic global economic meltdown?

FUNDING!!!!
WHERE I AM GOING

• Continue to refine game selection
• Adapt selected games to enhance focus on strategic aspects
• Build and operational and strategic game repository
• Mega Games (Teach student how to conduct an operational battle)
• Employ fast-playing Matrix Games
• Employ more SMEs during gameplay
• More simultaneous games to reduce team size
• Out of class gaming (Gettysburg Campaign, Diplomacy)
THE NEXT WAR

SELECT STUDENTS WILL SPEND ALL ACADEMIC YEAR

Employing forward looking games to:

- Help analyze “Third Offset” problem sets
- Employ simulations and games centered on potential conflict zones
- Work with outside PME partners
- Make a difference (maybe not developing the next “Plan Orange” but heading in the right direction).

THIS STRIKES ME AS THE CRUCIAL ROLE FOR ANY WAR COLLEGE
MORE STUDENT COMMENTS

• Everything was outstanding, especially with a limited knowledge of WW I. Best war game to date. The July Crisis Application was key to understanding how difficult it would have been to stop or even delay the war. Great learning experience.

• As always, the sims are outstanding. Dr. Lacey hit it out of the park with combining the July Crisis sim and the WWI sim - too bad we cannot sim everything else.

• Practical Application exercise on the July Crisis was excellent and showed the confusion and lack of communication which can lead to war.

• Keep gaming because this is a best way to increase our understanding.

• I love the board games. Puts the theory into practice.

• The July Crisis Practical Application was very beneficial, it gave me a great perspective on how nation-states interact and must focus ultimately on their best interests. The application laid the foundation for a smooth transition to the WWI practical application. Great idea having the game experts on hand to keep us from focusing too much on the rules instead of strategic implications.
Practical application was very beneficial. Showed the difficulties as a joint staff in working through the priorities and strategic outlook to fight 2 fronts during the war. Also painted the picture on how politics can shadow strategic common sense. Keep.

First Class. I have read and spent time learning about this subject for years. I feel like for the first time, I get it. Thank you. Very rich.

I enjoyed the Casablanca Case Study and the back-briefs on the Strategic Plans. Having two History professors in the discussion was very good and emphasized that there can be differing points of view when looking at history.

Honestly -- good series on WWII, w/ outstanding strategic take-aways from the Casablanca Conference. The Casablanca exercise is my favorite of the year so far - I feel that I walked away w/ the best strategic understanding of the war, and decisions at points in the war -- than other conflicts.

Again, everything surrounding the Casablanca exercise was outstanding, with great strategic takeaways.

The Casablanca practical application was the best exercise yet. Beyond the direct benefits associated with the class, convening and leading an OPT or plenary session with joint/interagency/foreign participants is a critical skill for LtCols which we have not had much opportunity to develop or refresh in this course. Phenomenal exercise.

The CASABLANCA planning exercise was excellent and this is exactly what MCWAR needs to do more of. MCWAR needs to recognize that the school that part of developing "critical thinkers, military strategists, joint warfighters, and strategic leaders who are prepared to meet the challenges of a complex and dynamic security environment (MCWAR Mission Statement)" needs to be the development of some LtCol "hard skills" like developing and communicating strategic plans or writing a strategy.

NOTES:
- I have not included most recent critiques... but they are even more over the top then those above (and they “loved” DIPLOMACY)
- Only negative critiques given during the year were on the complexity of the game mechanics.
- Only one person out of 30 said the games were dumb... in a January critique he wrote: “games are not dumb any longer. I am won over. They are a fantastic teaching tool).