

# Wargaming as a historical research method

Case studies from Brunel's MA  
Intelligence and security studies

Dr Steven Wagner

Senior Lecturer in International  
Security

Brunel University London



# Wargaming at University



MY  
BACKGROUND



MA LEARNING  
OUTCOMES



A RESEARCH  
METHOD  
EMERGES

# Wargaming changed my mind about historical debates

About me

Historical method & counterfactuals

The Palestine 1929 riots



# Palestine 1929

Matrix style. Map and tile.

Colonial Crisis/flash point

Was the Mufti the mastermind? (No)

Could the British have mitigated disaster? Not by much (if at all).

Does intelligence affect the crisis?  
No but it could have led to longer term alternative outcomes.



Seiner Eminenz dem Großmufti  
1943. zur Erinnerung.  
H. Himmler.

# Historical methods

I'm not saying that these counterfactuals represent scientific fact.

Wargaming is a more **rigorous** and more **collaborative** way to engage with counterfactuals.

Better than using intuition, alone.



# What's next?



Able Archer '83 - how close were we to Armageddon?



Double blind - uncertainty



More intelligence-intensive



What happens when our alternative narrative encounters scripted events?



# Thank you

Questions?