



Gaming Peace and Stabilization Operations

Rex Brynen
McGill University

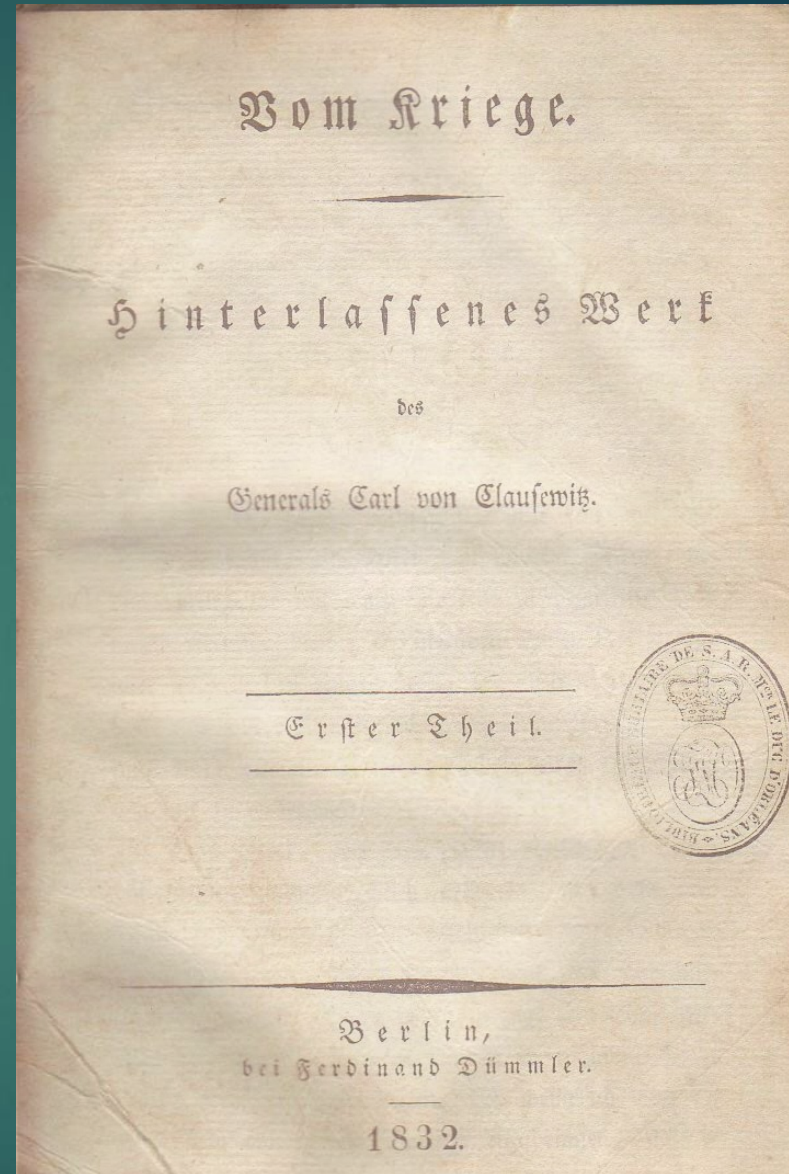




...in the whole range of human activities, war most closely resembles a game of cards.

Carl von Clausewitz

- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.

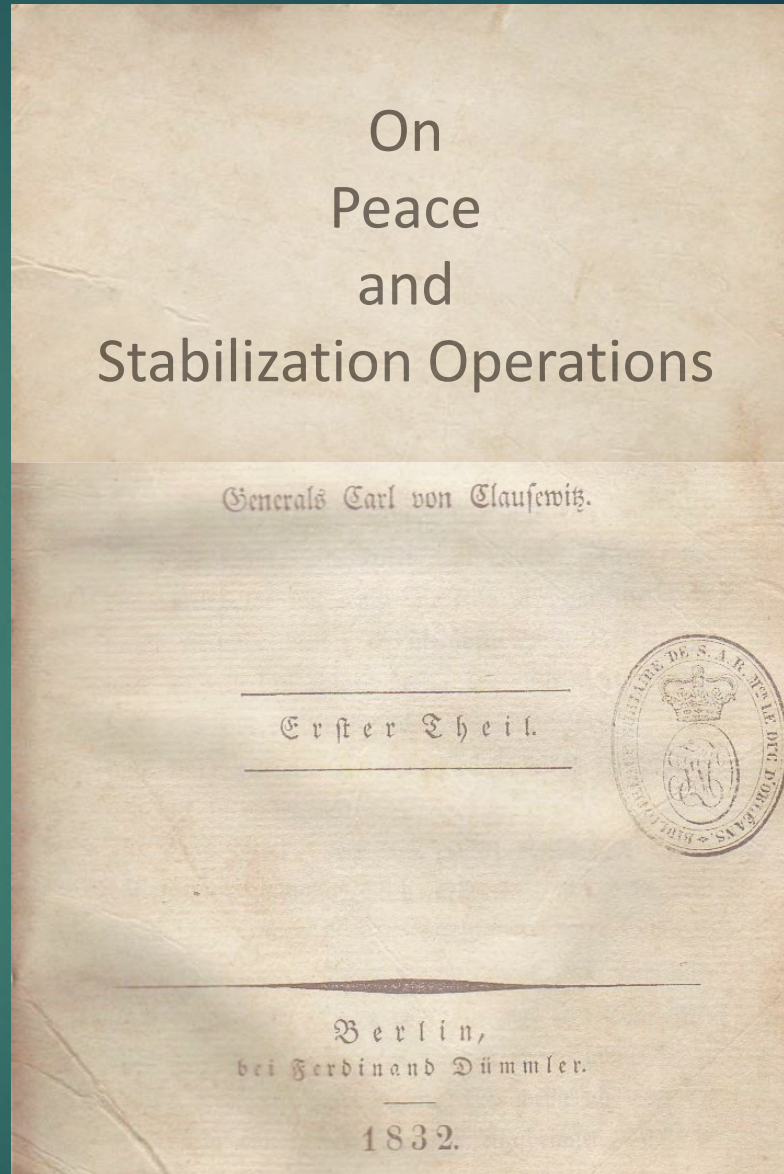




...in the whole range of human activities, ~~war~~ **peace operations** most closely resemble a game of cards.

Carl von Clausewitz

- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.





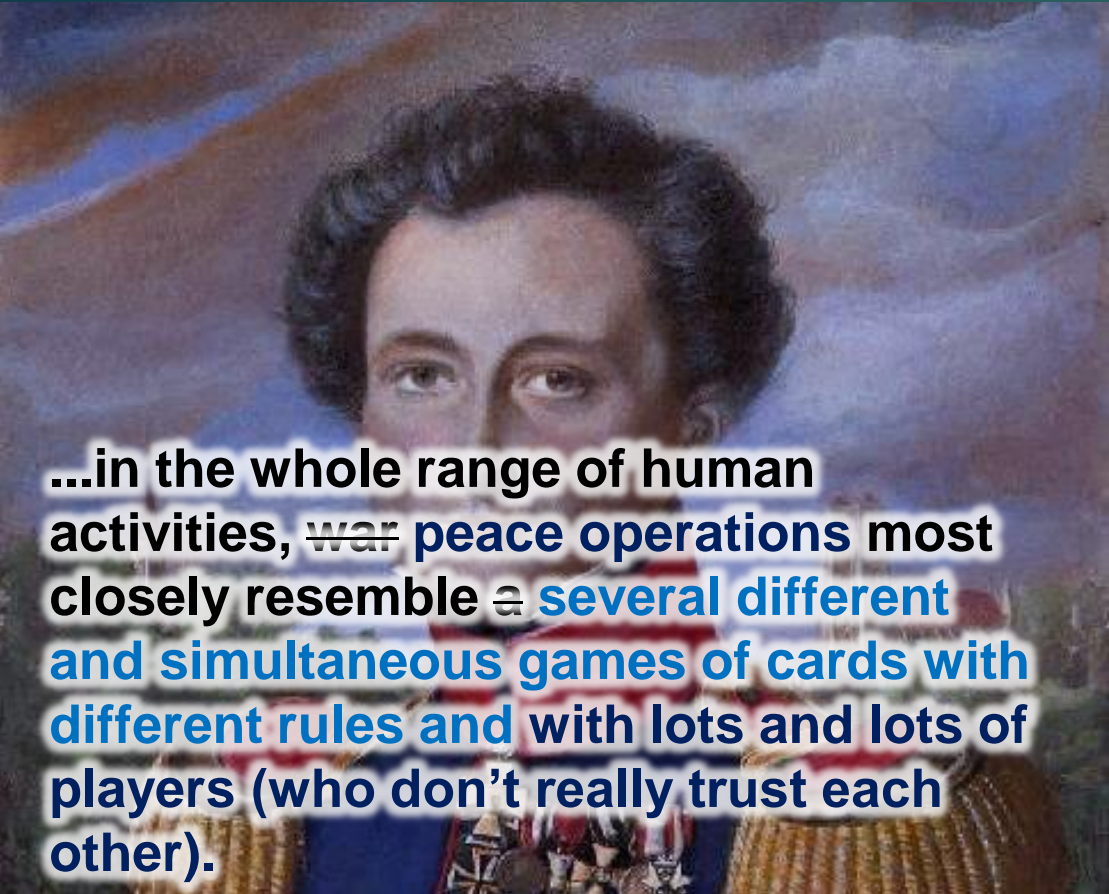
Carl von Clausewitz

- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.



Carl von Clausewitz

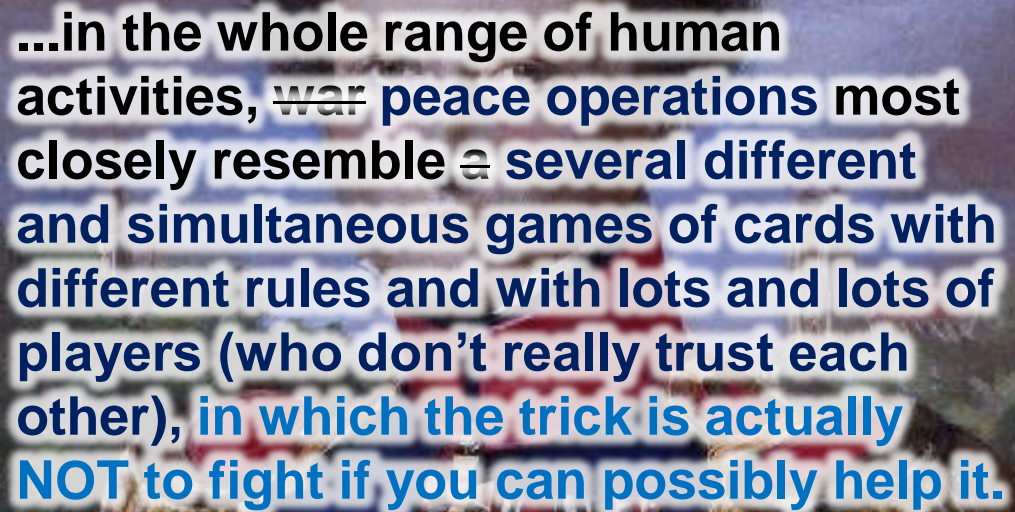
- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.

A portrait of Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian military theorist. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark coat with a red sash and several medals on his left breast. He has dark, curly hair and is looking slightly to the right. The background is a soft, cloudy sky.

...in the whole range of human activities, ~~war~~ peace operations most closely resemble a **several different and simultaneous games of cards with different rules and with lots and lots of players (who don't really trust each other).**

Carl von Clausewitz

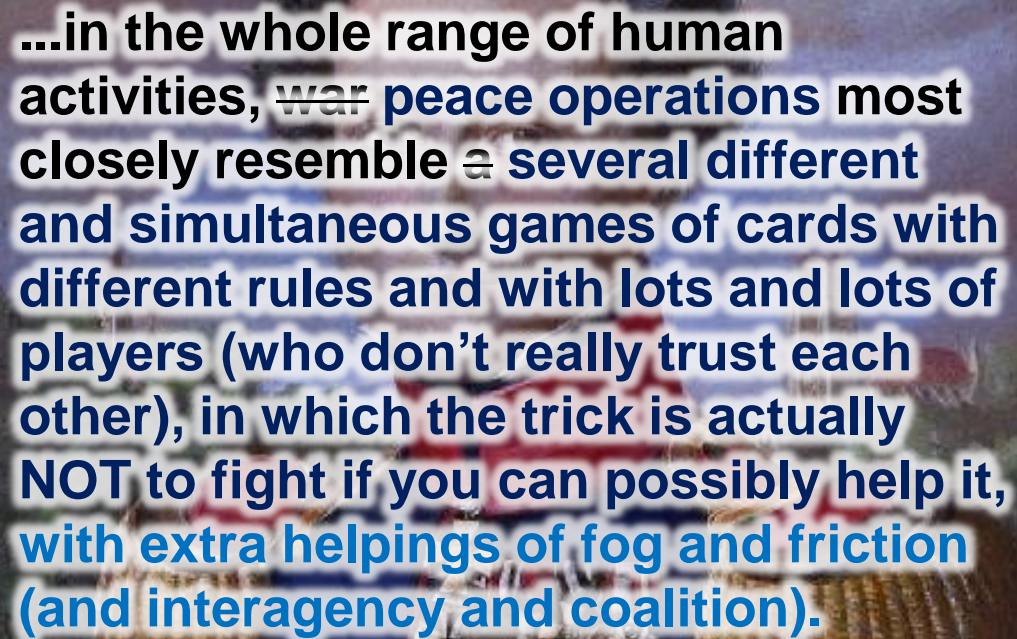
- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.

A portrait of Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian military theorist, wearing a military uniform with medals. The text is overlaid on the image.

...in the whole range of human activities, ~~war~~ peace operations most closely resemble a several different and simultaneous games of cards with different rules and with lots and lots of players (who don't really trust each other), in which the trick is actually NOT to fight if you can possibly help it.

Carl von Clausewitz

- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.

A portrait of Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian military theorist, is shown in the background. The text is overlaid on the image, with some words in blue and some in white. The text reads: "...in the whole range of human activities, ~~war~~ peace operations most closely resemble a several different and simultaneous games of cards with different rules and with lots and lots of players (who don't really trust each other), in which the trick is actually NOT to fight if you can possibly help it, with extra helpings of fog and friction (and interagency and coalition)."

...in the whole range of human activities, ~~war~~ peace operations most closely resemble a several different and simultaneous games of cards with different rules and with lots and lots of players (who don't really trust each other), in which the trick is actually NOT to fight if you can possibly help it, with extra helpings of fog and friction (and interagency and coalition).

Carl von Clausewitz

- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.

...in the whole range of human activities, ~~war~~ peace operations most closely resemble a several different and simultaneous games of cards with different rules and with lots and lots of players (who don't really trust each other), in which the trick is actually NOT to fight if you can possibly help it, with extra helpings of fog and friction (and interagency and coalition).



also, “war is the continuation of policy by other means”

Carl von Clausewitz

- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.

...in the whole range of human activities, ~~war~~ peace operations most closely resemble a several different and simultaneous games of cards with different rules and with lots and lots of players (who don't really trust each other), in which the trick is actually NOT to fight if you can possibly help it, with extra helpings of fog and friction (and interagency and coalition).



Carl von Clausewitz

- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.

“~~seriously, war~~ peace operations ~~is~~ are so intensely political that every little thing—like the shape of the damned meeting table or the name of a city on a map or who your mother was suddenly becomes a potential political crisis”

...and don't even get
me started on
"strategic corporals"

...in the whole range of human activities, ~~war~~ peace operations most closely resemble \approx several different and simultaneous games of cards with different rules and with lots and lots of players (who don't really trust each other), in which the trick is actually NOT to fight if you can possibly help it, with extra helpings of fog and friction (and interagency and coalition).



Carl von Clausewitz

- Prussian military theorist.
- Author of *On War*.

"seriously, ~~war~~ peace operations ~~is~~ are so intensely political that every little thing—like the shape of the damned meeting table or the name of a city on a map or who your mother was suddenly becomes a potential political crisis"

Top 7 things to remember when gaming peace and stabilization operations

1. **It depends on what you are trying to do.**
2. Everything is political.
3. ~~Strategic~~ operational corporals.
4. Balancing culture and common sense.
5. Break the “law of the instrument.”
6. Hubris management.
7. Remember the Kobayashi Maru.

1. It depends on what you are trying to do.

As with all serious game design, **start with the objectives not with the game. What exactly are you trying to do** (and is a game the best way of doing that)?

- ▶ Are you trying to **teach about peace operations**?
 - ▶ If so, what to whom and why?
- ▶ Are you using games analytically, to **develop general approaches or specific policies**?
- ▶ Be realistic about resources, participants, and value-added.



GCAM2.0 Comprehensive Approach
(Anja van der Hulst/TNO)

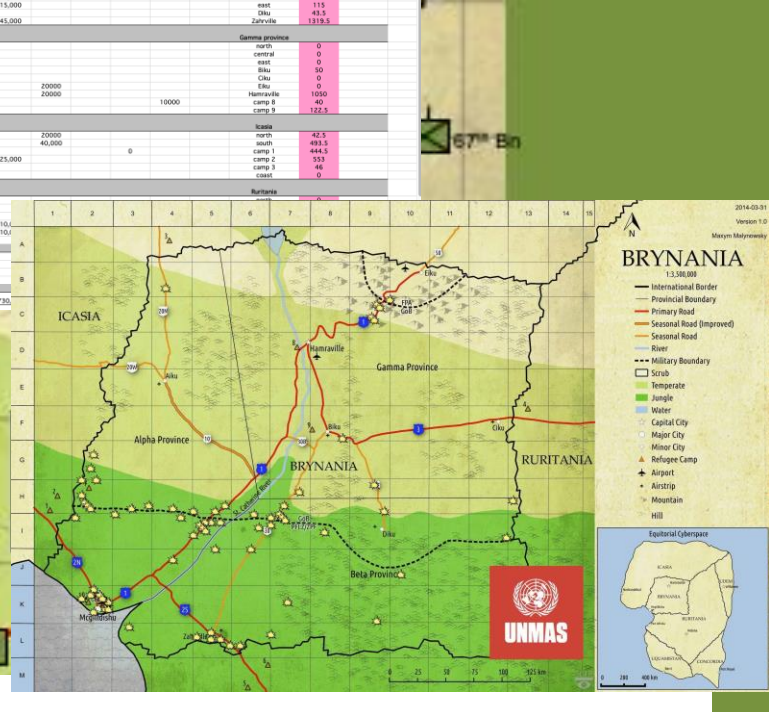
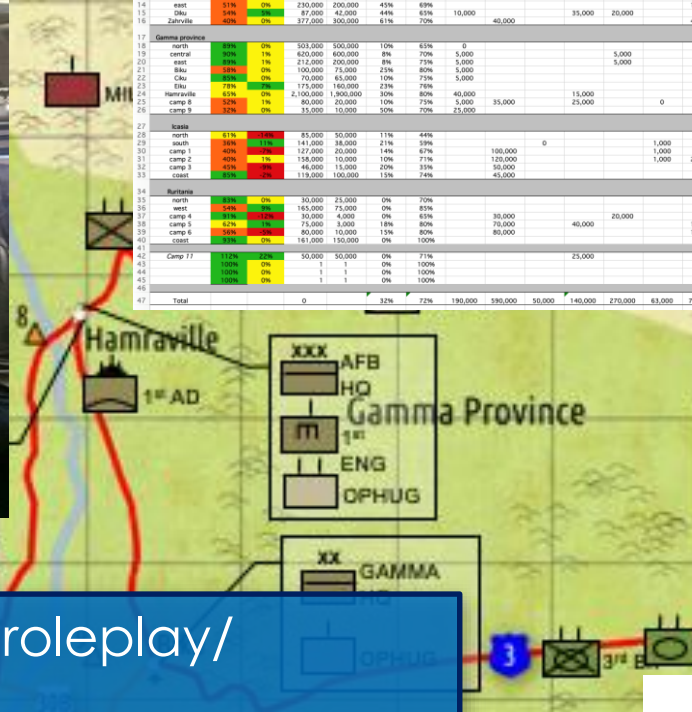


Afghan Provincial Reconstruction
(Roger Mason, Joe Miranda/ LECMgt)



AFTERSHOCK
(RB/PAXsims)

- Rigid play (board, card games)
- Short duration (few hours)
- Small groups



- Free kreigspiel (roleplay/ negotiation)
- Long duration (week)
- Larger groups (c100)

Teaching students the fog and friction of complex peace operations in Brynania.

Welcome to Cyberspace,
A guide to Equatorial Cyberspace.
4,294,639 articles in English

Brynania

Map of Equatorial Cyberspace

Area
293,456 km²

Population
11,500,000

Capital City
Hamraville (formerly Grenoble)

Major Cities
Hamraville
McGillidishu
Zahrville

Languages
Brn, French widely spoken

Flag of Brynania



Brynania is a country of 293,456 square km, located in Equatorial Cyberspace. The country is located in the north of the St. Erine River, which flows from Lake Icasia on its northern border into the Gulf of Cyberia in the north. The valley and the plain of the river constitute the most fertile lands of the country. The rugged, hilly terrain immediately to the west of Hamraville, in the area around Eiku, and the southeast of the country.

The tropical vegetation in those areas of the country south of Eiku. The remainder of the country is semi-tropical, with more arid areas found in the northern plains and the mountainous regions near Eiku.

Demography

The total population of Brynania was estimated by the UN at 11.5 million in 2015. According to the most recent census in 1965, approximately 61% are ethnic Brn,



- Large-scale staff exercise.
- Hundreds, days/weeks.
- Emphasis on procedures.



Rebel Inc
Ndemic Creations (£1.99)

Chatham House 'The Regional Dimension of the Palestinian Refugee Issue'

Simulation Exercise Report

23-25 June 2008

Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to government or to any political body. It does not hold opinions or express views. The views expressed in this text are the responsibility of the author(s)/speaker(s). This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the event.

This report summarizes a simulation exercise held at Eynsham Hall in Oxfordshire in June 2008. The workshop was organised as part of the Chatham House project 'The Regional Dimension of the Palestinian Refugee Issue'. The meeting was held under the Chatham House Rules and the views expressed are those of the participants. At best, this report serves as an *aide memoire* to those who took part, and looks to provide a general summary of discussions for those who did not.



UNRWA simulation
(PRRN/Exeter University)

- Contingency planning, stress-testing, idea generation.
- Dozens, days.
- Designed to affect policy process.

Minster Lovell Process (PRRN/Chatham House)



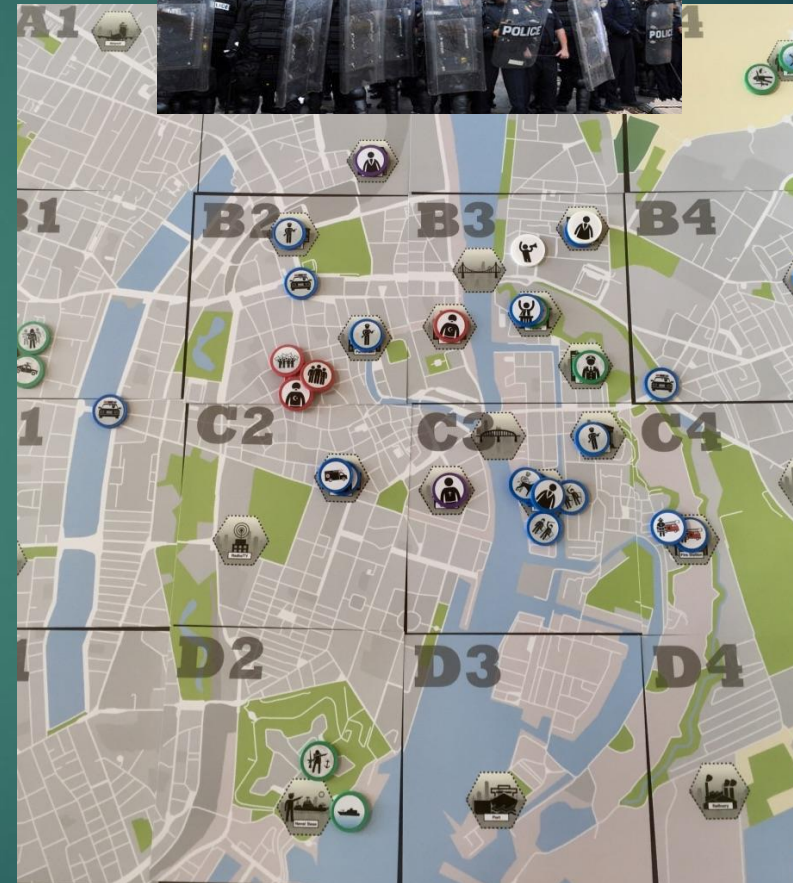
Libya TNC scenario exercise
(RB)

2. Everything is political.

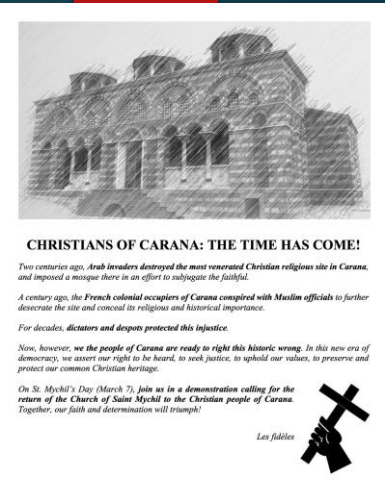
Politics is the central feature, not a bug, of peace and stabilization operations.



- ▶ Games should have a political logic that goes beyond imposed “objectives.”
- ▶ Ideally, players should understand and internalize the perspectives of the actors they represent (player selection, briefing documents, game system, chrome/fluff).



Crisis in Galasi
(RB and Mick Dumper)



3. Operational corporals.

Small things can create big problems

- ▶ Games usually fix upon a “level of analysis” to prevent players from micro-managing or playing in “god mode”
- ▶ However, there may be value in “zooming” operational games down to the tactical level to highlight the political and ethical challenges involved.



4. Culture and common sense.

Games designs should accurately represent local cultural practices and perspectives without cultural stereotyping or “othering.”

- ▶ Highlight **social and political diversity** within broader cultural settings.
- ▶ Among the cultures to be understood are **professional subcultures**: military, UN, NGO, etc.
- ▶ Be aware that actors will **instrumentalize culture**.
- ▶ **Common sense and empathy** are as important as “cultural knowledge.”



5. Break the “law of the instrument.”

Organizations tend to see priorities and solutions through the lens of their own specializations (“if all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail”)

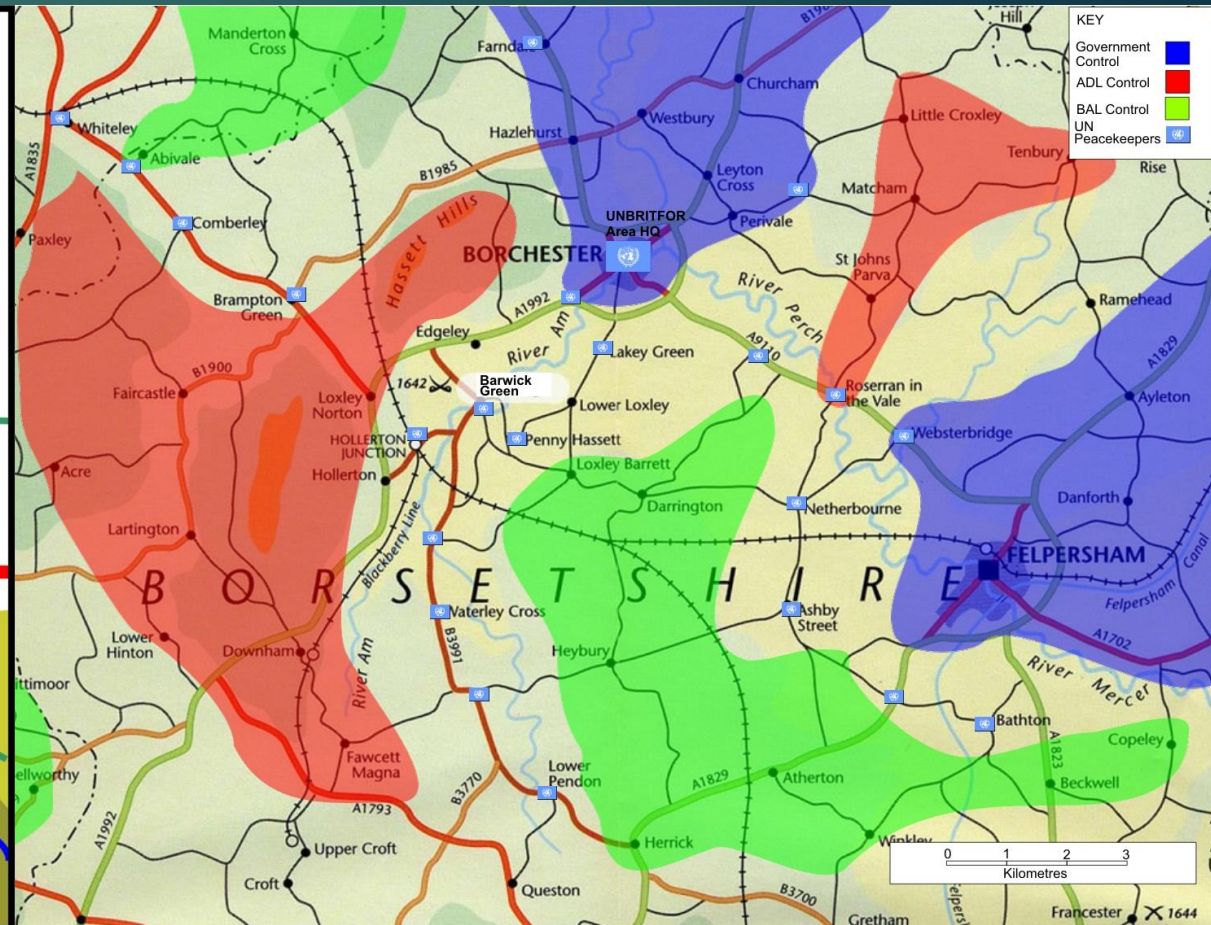
- ▶ Create scenarios and game dynamics that force participants to:
 - ▶ confront these assumptions;
 - ▶ encourage innovative and synergistic solutions;
 - ▶ rely on others.



6. Hubris management

Peace and stabilization operations are often suffused with a **savior complex**, the idea that outside actors know best.

- ▶ Research on peace operations show that outside actors play an important role, but that local dynamics are equally (or more) important.
- ▶ Too many wargames treat local political dynamics as simply the backdrop. In fact, in many peace and stabilization operations, outside actors are as much “played” as “players.”
- ▶ The lessons of Barwick Green...




Barwick Green
(Jim Wallman)

7. Remember the Kobayashi Maru

All war involves difficult moral challenges, but peace and stabilization operations often involve particularly difficult ones—that don't always have perfect answers.

- ▶ sexual and gender based violence
- ▶ child soldiers
- ▶ warlords and other dubious allies
- ▶ other human rights abuses
- ▶ Camps 7 and 9...

NATIONAL
SA soldiers shocked over killing child soldiers in CAR
Sapa 31 Mar 2013 15:01



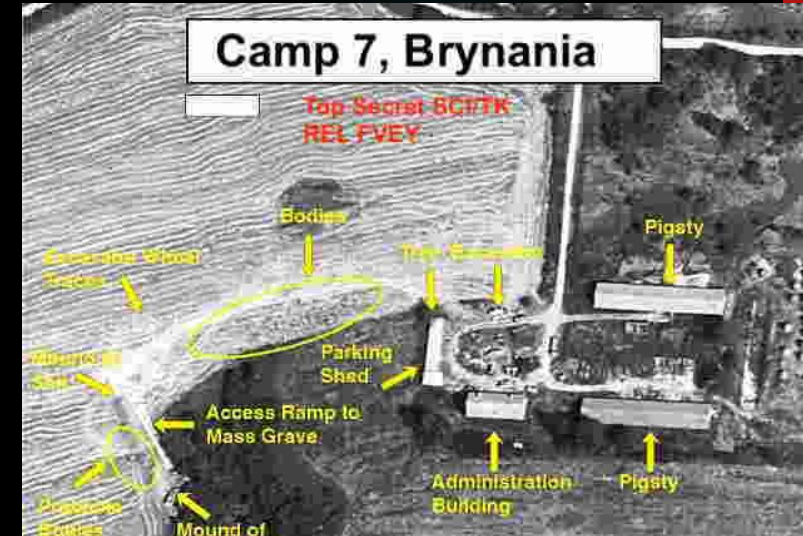
Some of the Central African rebels were "teenagers who should be in school", an SANDF soldier who survived the clash in Bangui, has said. (AFP)

[in LinkedIn](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) 24 [Email](#) [COMMENTS](#)

In what has turned out to be South Africa's heaviest military loss since apartheid, 13 soldiers were killed last weekend in Bangui in clashes with Seleka rebels who toppled president Francois Bozize. Around 200 South African troops fought against about 3 000 rebels during the battle for the Central African capital that lasted several hours.

Some of survivors who have returned home recounted to local newspapers that they only discovered after the battle that they had been fighting against some teenage rebel soldiers.

"It was only after the firing had stopped that we saw we had killed kids. We did not come here for this... to kill kids. It makes you sick. They were crying calling for help... calling for (their) moms," a paratrooper told the *Sunday Times*.



Located 7 km inside Icasia. Poor access on local dirt roads, often washed out in rainy season. Constructed on government land in 1990 to deal with overflow from camp #1. Originally built for up to 10,000 refugees, the current population is estimated at 90,000, of whom approximately one third live in the camp environs. The population has rapidly grown in response to Brynania government "relocation" activities in western Alpha Province. There are widespread reports among refugees of Brynanian atrocities at a Brynanian "relocation" camp located 60 km to the east, across the border. This is impossible to confirm, because camp #7 (like camp #9) is located in a closed military zone. However, UNHCR medical personnel report apparent signs of torture from refugees who claim to have "escaped" camp # 7.

Some final thoughts

- ▶ The value of freer kriegsspiel.
 - ▶ Can still be supported by more deterministic models (PSOM) if these are used correctly.
- ▶ The value of genuine diversity.
- ▶ The value of big green/little blue/ambiguous red.
 - ▶ Play the locals as major actors, and make the adversaries ambiguous.
- ▶ The importance of semi-cooperative game designs.

Connections North will be held at McGill University, Montréal on 15 February 2020.



Registration details will be available at <https://paxsims.wordpress.com/connections-north/>

