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Session Overview

Hedgemony is a tailorable multi-sided board game designed to help defense practitioners consider the impact of strategic-level choices and priorities on force development, posture, capability, capacity, force management.

• Game Features
  – Card-driven
  – Live and/or scripted Red
  – Asymmetrical victory conditions
  – Tailorable
  – Free play or scripted
  – Global or regional
  – Quick and transparent adjudication
  – Can be played in less than a day

• Intended Audience
  – Defense-related professionals and students

• Session Objectives
  – Learn about the game, how we designed it and the decisions we made along the way through interactive live play and discussion
  – Provide feedback and lessons learned to the design team
  – Help us improve the game for its intended audience

Session Classification: SECRET
Session Agenda & Introductions

- Oct 17 PM
  - 1300-1400: Hedegemony game objectives, design process and design decisions
  - 1400-1500: Rules overview
  - 1500-1700: Game walk-through / training for attendees

- Oct 18 AM: Live play + discussion
  - 0800-1100: Game session (with up to 30 min rules review for new attendees)
  - 1100-1200: Hot-wash discussion

- Oct 18 PM: Live play + discussion
  - 1300-1500: Game session (with up to 30 min rules review for new attendees)
  - 1500-1600: Hot wash discussion

- Oct 19 AM: Live play + discussion
  - 0800-1100: Game session (with up to 30 min rules review for new attendees)
  - 1100-1200: Hot-wash discussion and wrap-up
Game Origins

• Original Tasking/Guidance From the Client
  – Build a game to educate defense strategists about the implications of their strategies/policies on the forces that must execute them
  – Must be global in scope
  – Must provide for multiple live red teams
  – Must be able to play a worthwhile number of turns in four hours
  – Have a working prototype ready for live client demo in three weeks

• The Project Team and Available Resources
  – No formal game design experience in the team, but ...
  – Included life-long gamers (all had some wargame experience)
  – Had significant operational, strategy and force-development experience, including numerous Pentagon tours in similar positions to the target audience
  – Could leverage significant “area expertise” from RAND researchers
Game Design & Implementation

- Game Design & Refinement Process
  - Researched and discussed contemporary and historical game systems
  - Brainstormed game ideas
  - Tasked each time member with developing a strawman game design
  - Discussed and selected best-of-breed ideas for the prototype
  - Iterative prototyping and player training with client participation
  - Continuous refinement based on in-game and post-session feedback

- Design-Implementation Timeline
  - From tasking to client demo: 3 weeks
  - Practice sessions, training and refinement: 7 weeks
  - Production game sessions: 3 multi-session game series over 5 weeks
Key Game Design Decisions & Trade-offs

The game is “unbalanced” by design
- Tailored specifically to Blue learning objectives
- Red players are “training aids”, and play both Red and Blue roles during a turn
- Red play is simplified and depends on player expertise

Time is highly abstracted
- A turn is “roughly a year”

Resources are highly abstracted and asymmetrical
- Blue and Red resource “budgets” have different amounts and purposes

Force development cycles are highly abstracted
- The life-cycle “sequence” is preserved, but the duration is shortened

Deployment and maneuver are highly abstracted
- Game only differentiates between “in AOR” and “between AOR” deployment/Maneuver

Game scenario and adjudication are embodied “in the cards”
- The game system is just a framework
- The card decks, define the scenario, define the range of possible player actions and events, and
- Adjudication steps for each action/event are specified on the card

No explicit differentiation between types of forces
- There are “force factors” denoting the size of forces
- There are abstract “asymmetrical” capabilities to account for specific side-specific capabilities (e.g., C4ISR, long-range fires, missile defense, SOF, etc.)

Force interactions and adjudication are highly abstracted
- Combat is not explicitly represented
- Players must “build a story” behind interactions between forces
Game Features

• Card-driven – the scenario, player incentives, options, constraints and risks are represented in card decks that shape game play and determine adjudication.

• Live and/or scripted Red players whose primary purpose is to advance Blue’s learning objectives for the given scenario.

• Asymmetrical victory conditions – players have different incentives and constraints, and more than one player can win.

• Tailorable to a range of scenarios, security environments, resource levels, player combinations, and starting and “victory” conditions.

• Can accommodate/leverage free-play and seminar interactions between players, including use of area/AOR experts.

• Scenario development can be tailored by players before play.

• Can be played at global or regional levels.

• Can be played at multiple classification levels.

• Quick and transparent adjudication allows players to work through a range of challenges and/or apply a range of strategies.

• Can be played in less than a day (some iterations in less than four hours once players are familiar with the rules).
**Game Components**

*Player actions and investments*
- Represented in player Action (Red only) and Investment card decks for each player.

*International and player-domestic events*
- Represented in a single card deck drawn by game facilitators that may apply to one or more players each turn.

*Forces and capabilities*
- Represented by force “counters” (playing pieces) of various modernization levels.

*Critical capabilities*
- Two (Red) or more (Blue) theater/threat-specific capabilities that can provide asymmetric advantages or disadvantages to a player’s forces.

*National Tech levels*
- The level to which a player’s forces and critical capabilities may be modernized, representing the level of each player’s national research, development and industrial capabilities.

*Resources*
- For Blue, a rough analog to the annual defense budget, used to pay for operations, readiness, procurement and modernization.
- For Red, used to pace freedom of action.

*Game map*
- An abstraction of global/regional areas of responsibility (AORs)/interest (AOIs).
- A way to keep track of what and where forces are allocated to game situations.
- Tracks player influence points and progress towards “victory conditions”.

*Player placemats*
- Helps players organize and track their card actions, garrison forces and tech-mod levels.

*Forces & Tracking counters*
- Used to keep track of forces, capabilities, tech, modernization and readiness (Blue) levels, resources and influence points.
How to Play

Setup
• Arrange the player (action, investment and domestic) card decks.
• Arrange the international event card deck (can be presented by a narrator).
• Arrange forces, capabilities, mod levels, tech levels, readiness levels (Blue) and resources according to scenario starting conditions.

Turn Sequence
• Red Signaling and Blue Investments & Actions
• International Events
• Red Investments/Actions and Blue Reactions
• Domestic Events
• Annual Resources
• State of the World Summary

How the Game Ends
• When one or more players meet their victory conditions, when players agree to “reset”, or when “enough” turns have passed.
Game Play Considerations

“Victory conditions” are expressed in terms of “influence” points.
- The objective of each player/team is to favorably change the global influence level of their country relative to other players as specified in the scenario.

Strategic Approaches and Decision-Space:

- **Posture**
  - Pivot vs global presence vs garrison
  - Active vs reactive

- **Resources**
  - Constrained vs increasing vs varying

- **Threats**
  - AOR-specific vs global

- **Opportunities-Risks**
  - Win-win vs hedging vs competition

- **Today vs tomorrow**
  - Prepare-posture for future vs current ops & influence

- **Blue investment trade-space**
  - Force structure
  - Force mod level
  - Critical capability mod levels
  - Operations & readiness
  - Resource variability

- **Red investment trade-space**
  - Force structure
  - Force mod level
  - Critical capability mod levels
Key Game Variables

- Hedegemony’s game system can accommodate a wide range of scenarios and objectives by adjusting “variables” such as:

  - Scenario & starting conditions
    - Player card decks
      - Action (Red only)
      - Investment
      - Domestic events
    - Global event deck
    - Forces and force mod levels and initial force posture
    - Critical capabilities & mod levels
    - Readiness (Blue only)
    - Resources
      - Starting and per-turn

  - Players
    - Number and selection
  - Scripting and constraints
    - Random draws vs stacked decks
    - Number/range of actions
    - Degree of interaction/collusion allowed between players
  - Game length
    - Specific number vs indefinite
  - Victory conditions
In its current form ...

What Hedgemony Is (and is not)

• It is ...
  – A game tailored to the needs of defense strategists (Blue players)
  – An abstraction of representative situations and considerations facing strategists and policy professionals
  – A way for strategists to discuss and learn how fundamental trade-offs and decisions in defense policy can affect the forces that must execute them

• It is not ...
  – An “accurate” representation of specific forces, capabilities, strategies, postures and risks
  – A way to test the viability of any given strategy