

Wargaming and the Just War

Georgetown University Wargaming Society
19 Aug 25

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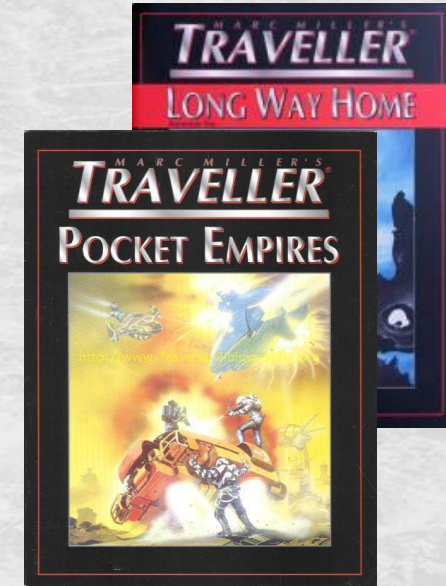
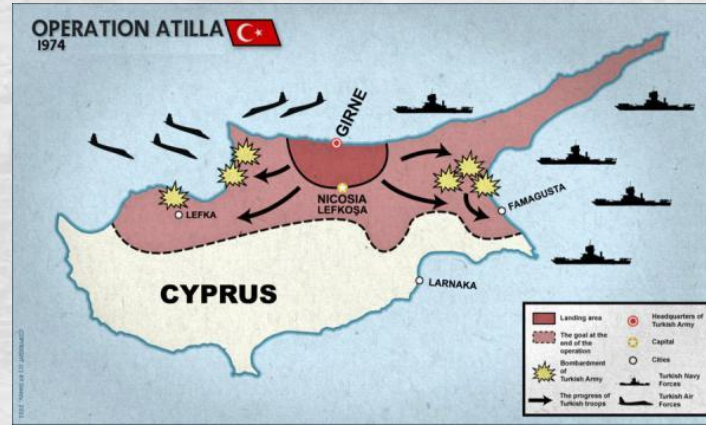
WARGAME
RULES



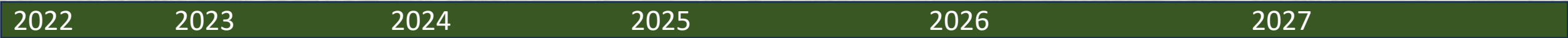
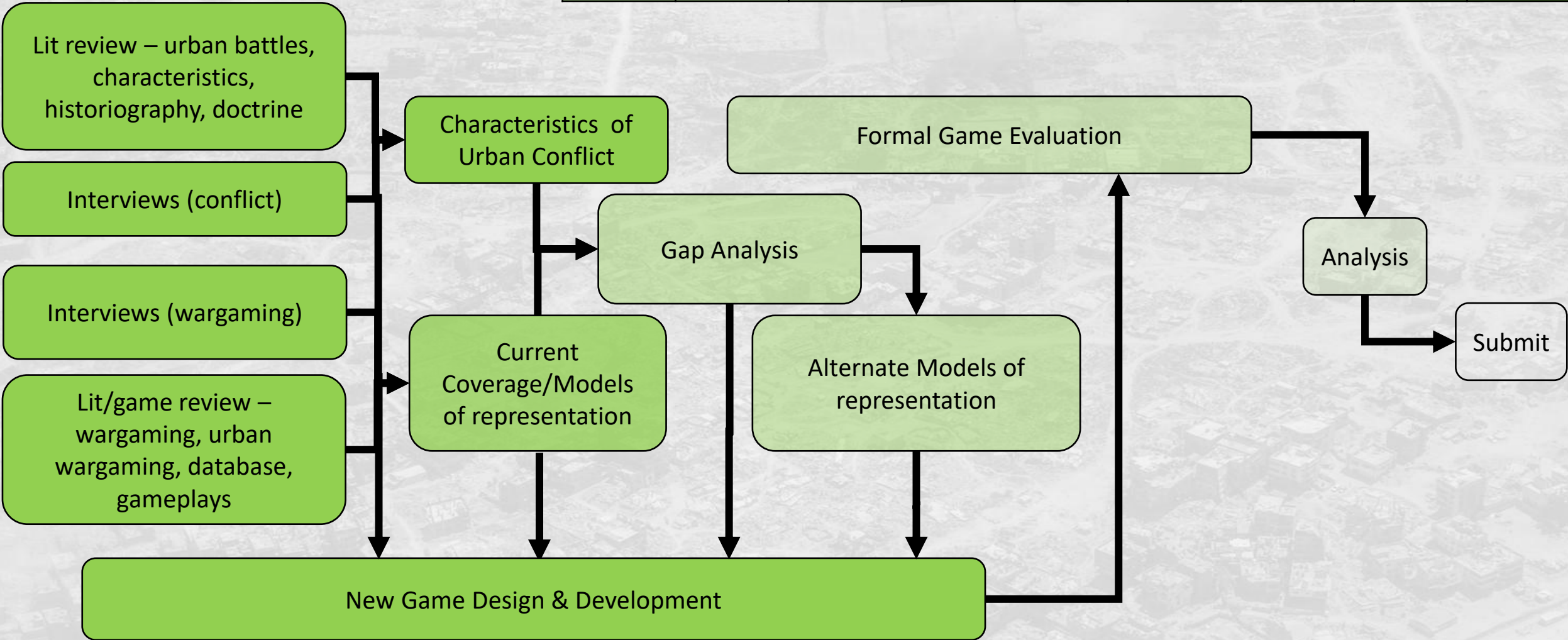
Wargaming and The Just War

- Me and My PhD
- The Just War model
- Wargaming and the Just War
- The Just Wargame
- Implications for Wargamers

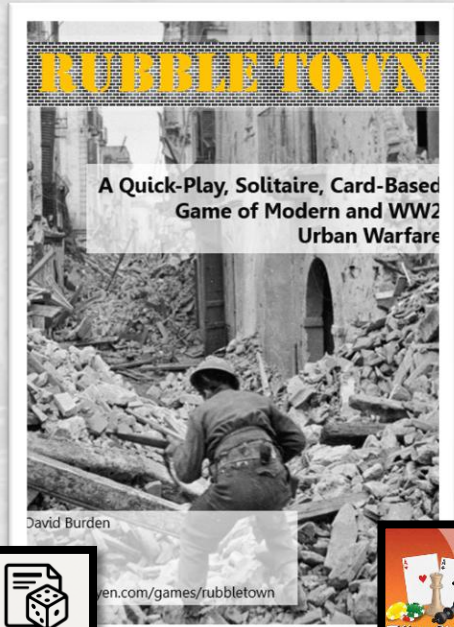
A Bit About Me



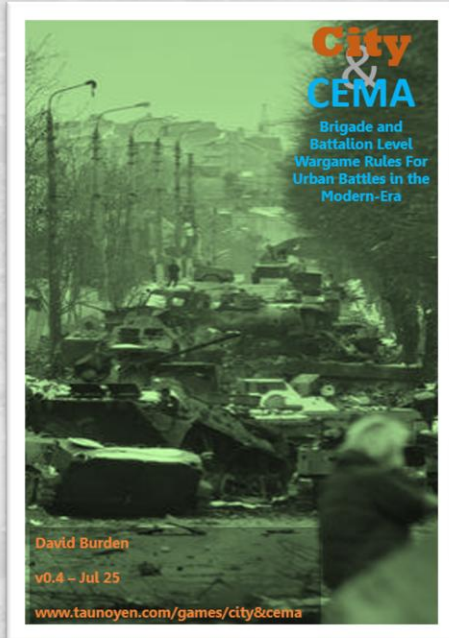
PhD Overview



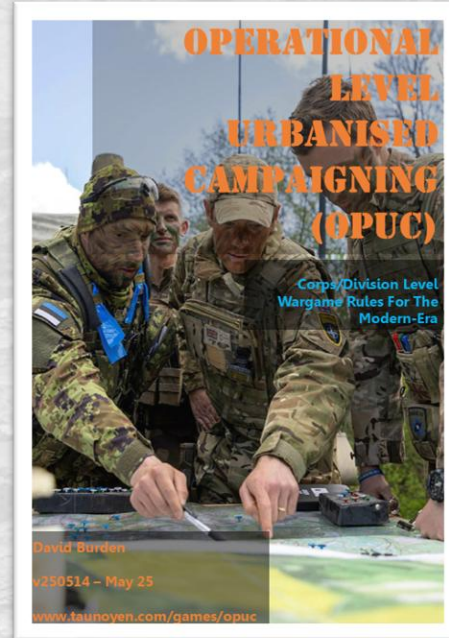
My Games



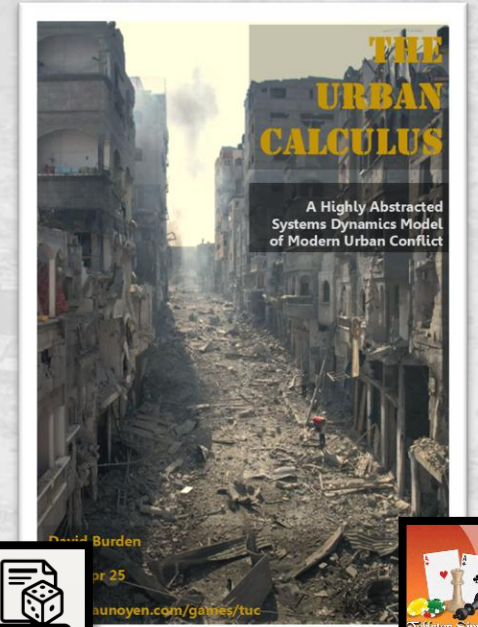
Solitaire card game,
Platoon level



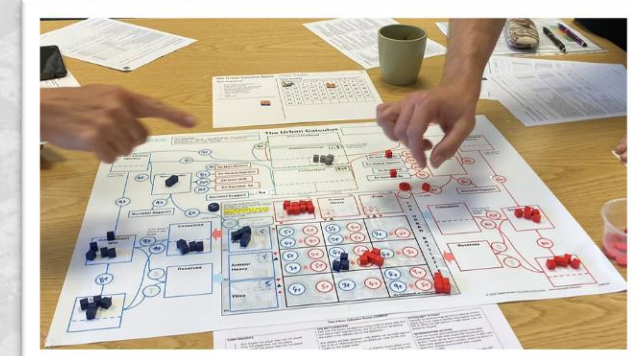
Areas & Blocks + Cards,
~ Bn/Bde level



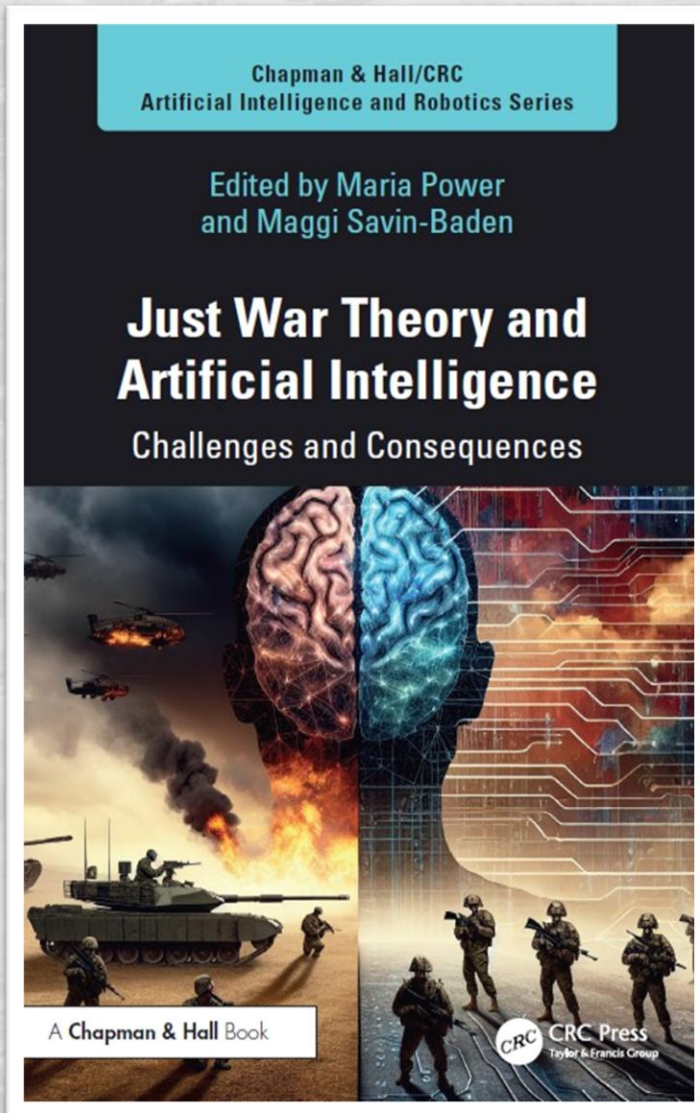
Hex & Blocks + Menu,
~ Div/Corps level



Highly abstract,
dynamic systems model,
Pol-Mil level



Wargaming and The Just War



9 Wargaming and the Just War

David J. H. Burden

'Wargames save lives' declared leading US professional wargame designer Matt Caffrey (Caffrey, 2018). This chapter examines the potential truth of that statement within the context of Just War Theory, and particularly with regards to the increasing impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the battlefield and in wargaming itself. The chapter argues that wargaming can make a significant contribution to the examination of just war considerations, both within the professional military community and beyond. The chapter begins by describing what constitutes wargaming and how it is used by the military and others. The chapter then examines how AI could be used in wargaming, and how urban warfare, and by extension urban wargaming, provide the *in extremis* case for studying just war and wargaming. The main body of the chapter then examines the role of wargaming, and AI in support of war and wargaming, in each of three elements of a just war analysis – *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello* and *jus post bellum*. The chapter concludes by arguing the case for a broader use both of wargaming in considering just war issues, and in including just war issues within wargames, and by highlighting the need for just wargames to support just wars.

WARGAMING

There are many definitions of wargaming, but for the purposes of this chapter the definition in the U.S. Department of Defence (DoD) *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Planning* will serve:

Wargames are representations of conflict or competition in a synthetic environment, in which people make decisions and respond to the consequences of those decisions.
(US Department of Defense, 2020)

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF WARGAMING

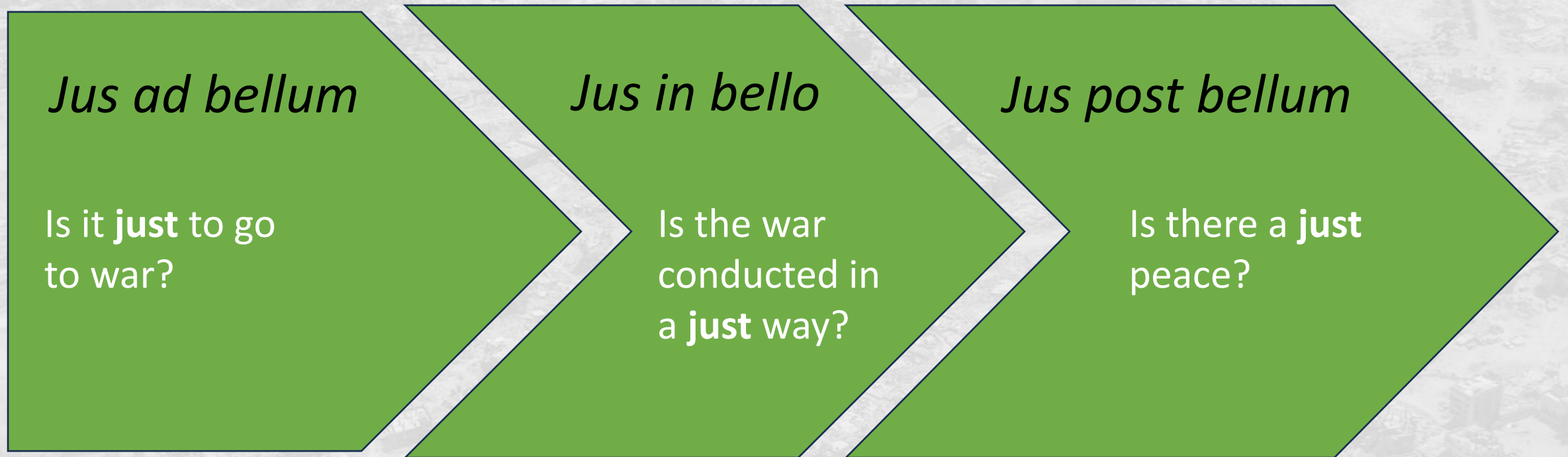
In its current form, wargaming developed under the Prussian military in the nineteenth century (Caffrey, 2019), and was used extensively by the US Navy between the wars (Appleget et al., 2020), and by all sides during World War 2 (Perla, 2011). Although manual wargaming continued after World War 2 it was for several decades eclipsed by computer-based wargames (Perla, 2011), and today both manual and computer forms of wargaming are in regular use (Mouat, 2022).

Burden, D. (2025). Wargaming and the Just War. In M. Power & M. Savin-Baden (Eds.), *Just War Theory and Artificial Intelligence* (pp. 105–121). Taylor & Francis.

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.1201/9781003440253/war-theory-artificial-intelligence-maria-power-maggi-savin-baden>



Just War Theory



Jus Ad Bellum



Jus Ad Bellum – the key questions

- Is the threat too little to justify war?
- Is the primary purpose to halt or avert the threat?
- Are there options other than going to war?
 - Are grey-zone actions available?
- Are the planned means (duration, impact etc) proportional and minimal?
- What are the chances of success?
- Might the war generate disproportionate consequences?

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(United Nations, 2004)

Wargaming Jus Ad Bellum

- Exploring options
- Generating evidence-base for decisions
- Stress-testing and providing insight (proper purpose)
- Matrix and Confrontation Analysis (Howard, 1999) games to explore pol-mil and grey-zone options, and unintended consequences
- Rigid games to explore proportionality and chances of success

“There was no mathematical formula to decide if a plan was acceptable”
– Jake Sullivan, US National Security Advisor on Rafah (Wintour, 2024)

Jus In Bello



Jus In Bello

- Discrimination and Distinction
 - Between combatants and non-combatants, and incl. “collateral damage” (Bica, 1998)
- Proportionality (Van Steenberghe, 2012)
- No *mala in se* (evil weapons) (Dige, 2017)
- Military necessity (Patterson & LiVecche, 2023)

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Wargaming Jus In Bello

- Where most wargames start (and end)!
- More use of the USECT model
- **Must** have a civilian population in order to see discrimination and distinction and civil/reverberating effects

Understand

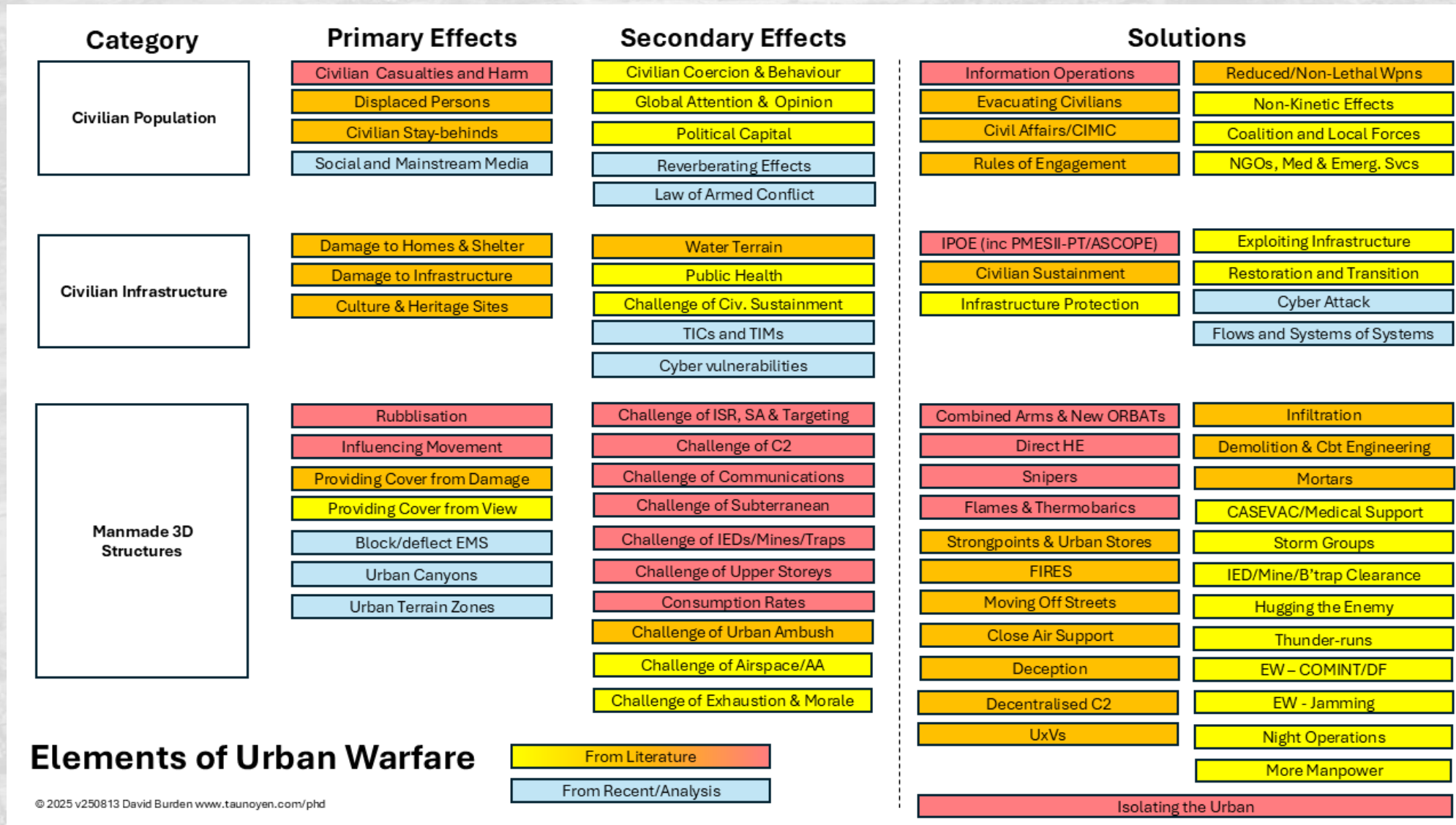
Shape

Engage

Stabilise

Transition

Importance of Civilians in Urban Warfare



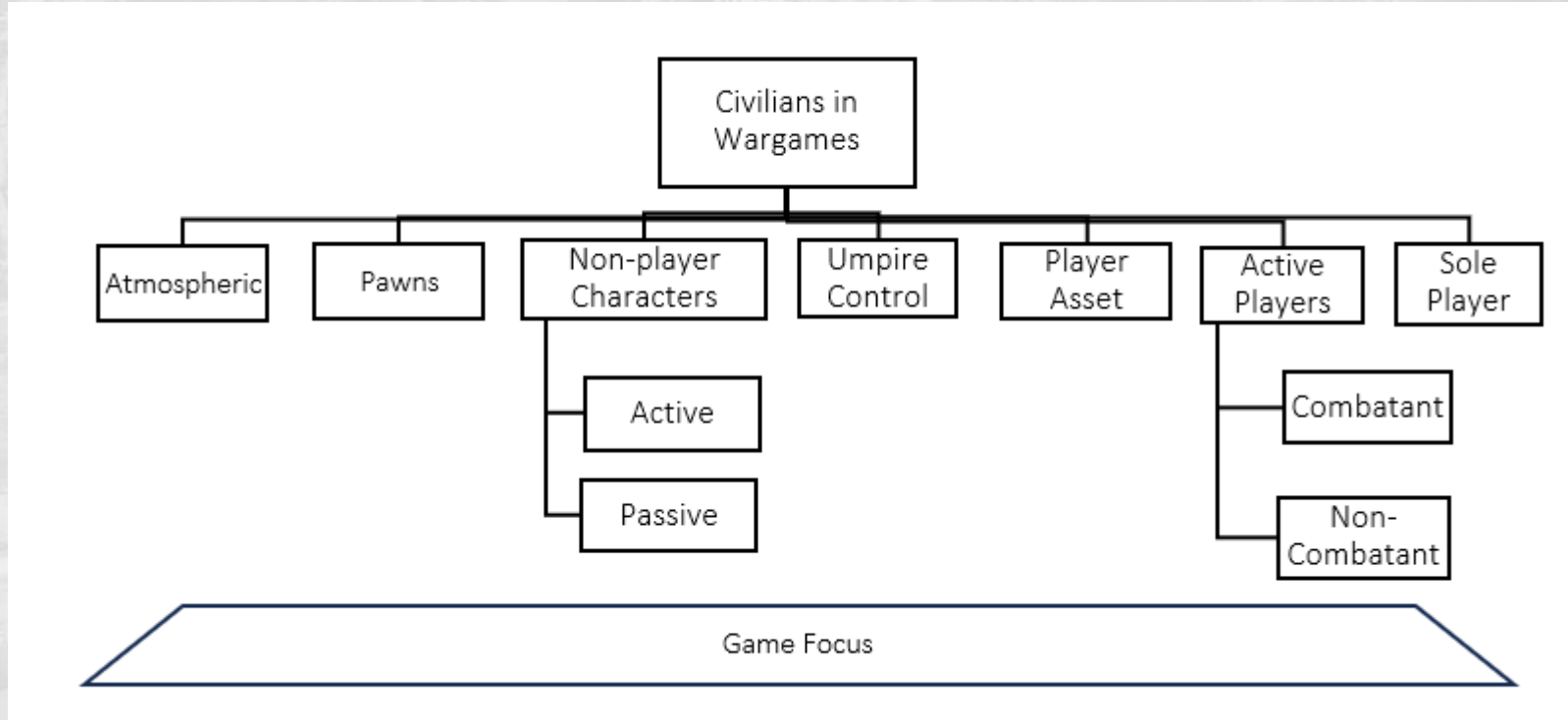
Elements of Urban Warfare

From Literature

From Recent/Analysis

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Representation of Civilians in Wargames



- 58% of hobby urban wargames have no civilian representation (64% of those which could be expected to)
- 38% - 57% of professional urban wargames had civilian representation
- “Passive” representation was most common (64%)
- Only 7% had civilians as sole player, and 7% as game focus
- See ConnectionsOz 2024 - <http://www.kriegspiel.com.au/connections/2024/videos/06%20burden.mp4>

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Wargaming Jus In Bello

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- More use of USECT model
- **Must** have a civilian population in order to see discrimination and distinction and collateral/reverberating effects
- Tracking of goals vs impact to assess proportionality
- Provide the options of *mala in se* if in the side’s arsenal
- Need to allow players to take unnecessary actions (and track/feedback)



Jus Post Bellum

Jus Post Bellum

- What obligations are there to restore sovereignty, governance and community in the vanquished country?
- What rights (and obligations) does the belligerent have against a defeated government (genocidal/dictatorial)?
- What obligations do victors have to restore the economy, and to demand repatriations?
- How are innocents safeguarded (children, mines, chemicals)?
- Is the environment respected and restored?
- What measures are taken for justice and reconciliation?
- How are warriors transitioned?

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Wargaming Jus Post Bellum

- Is *post bellum* even considered (USECT again)?
- On-going “grey-zone” operations
- Link to humanitarian games?
- Matrix-style games
 - Roles and role-playing
 - Exploitation of the peace
- Should be gamed *before* the war!

The Just Wargame

- The indecency of recency (Train, 2016)
 - “Recent conflicts are not only an appropriate topic for games, but perhaps the most appropriate” (Train & Ruhnke, 2016)
 - “Games can’t be too soon they can only be too late ... that’s the moment that saves live” (Werhle, 2024)
- Professional games need to be commissioned, played and acted on in an ethical manner (and any impact on players understood) (Hirst, 2022)
- Witches (Downes-Martin, 2014) and pathologies (Weuve et al., 2004)
- “80% of analytical wargames skipped ethics reviews” (Barzashka, 2023)
- Significant concerns around explainability and bias – multiplied by computer and AI use (Barzashka, 2023)
- If wargames are effective at influencing decision-making then that influence needs to be on a sound, and just, footing
- A just wargame is needed to support a just war

Implications for Wargamers/Designers/Sponsors

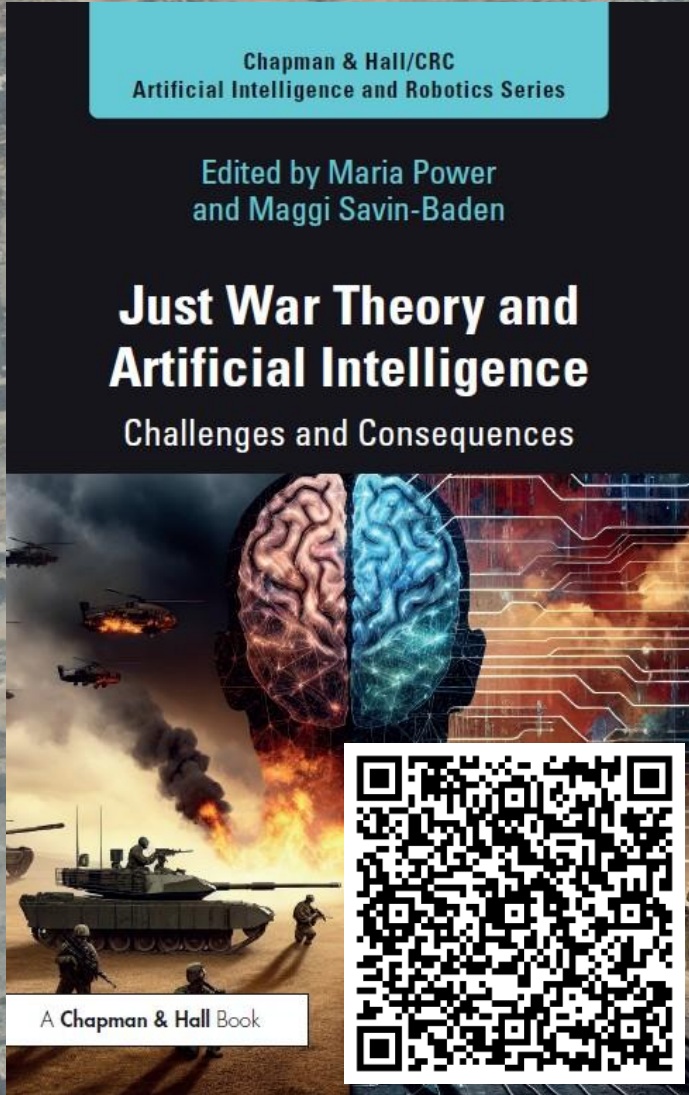
- Ensure Just War considerations are built into every professional wargame (unless you want an Unjust war of course...)
 - Cover the whole of the USECT model – Understand – Shape – Engage – Consolidate – Transition
 - Ensure that civilians and civil effects (and loss of livelihood) are represented in an appropriate way
 - Enable people to make “mistakes” and do unnecessary things
 - Ensure “success” is measured against Just War metrics
- Wargame *post bellum* before you start the real war
- Use free/non-rigid games to explore “soft” issues and unintended consequences
- And to explore the peace....
- Use rigid games to explore proportionality, necessity and chances of success
- Ensure that your wargames are just!

Civil Effects Checks (OPUC & City and CEMA & ...)

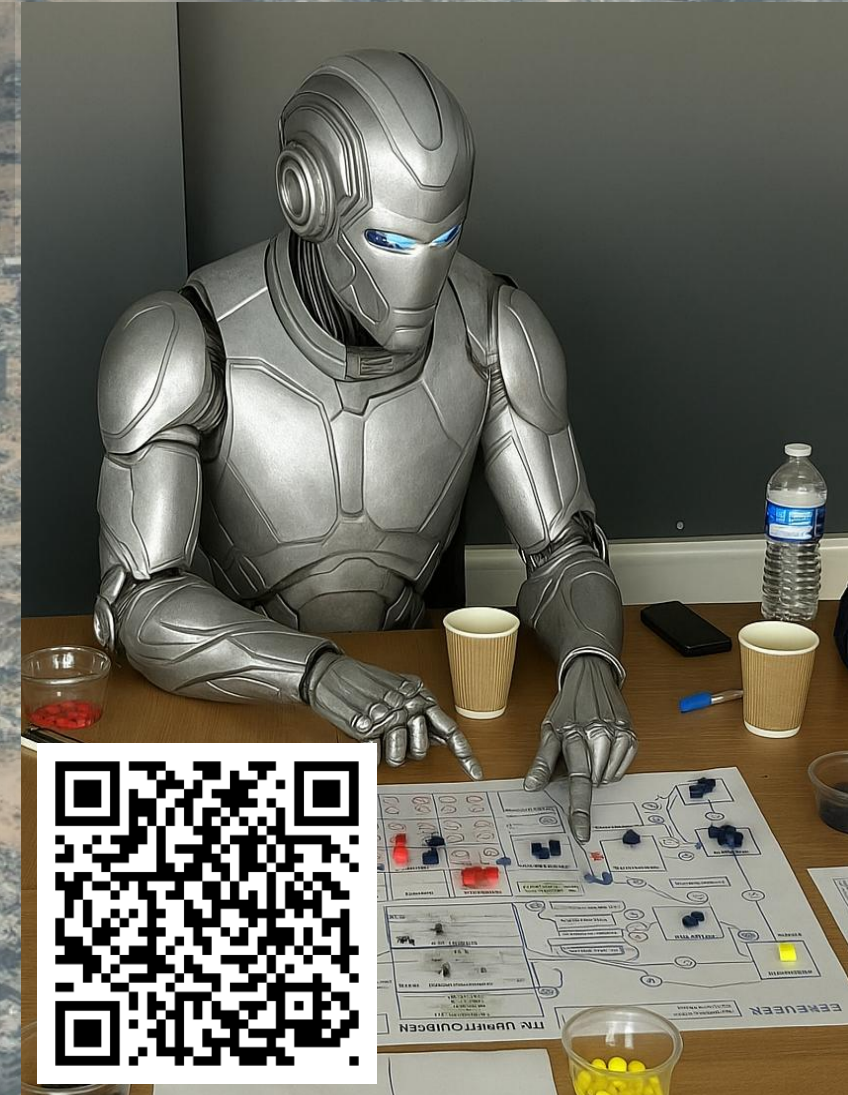
1-	No effect	2	No effect	3	Utility*
4	Rubble in PV1+ (1AO)	5	Rubble in PV2+ (1AO)	6+	DPs (1AO)



Questions



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www.taunoyen.com/phd



<https://taunoyen.com/virtualurbanwargamer.html>