STRATEGIC MONOGRAPH SERIES

FROST AND FIRE: INTELLIGENCE AT THE CROSSROADS OF GLOBAL POWER WARGAME

DR. SHAY HERSHKOVITZ, DR. SHADI ABOUZEID,
DR. FREDERIC LEMIEUX



VOLUME 01/2025
RELEASE: JANUARY 2025

STRATEGY INTERNATIONAL

Frost and Fire: Intelligence at the Crossroads of Global Power Wargame

Dr. Shay Hershkovitz, Georgetown University

Dr. Shadi Abouzeid, Georgetown University

Dr. Frederic Lemieux, Georgetown University

All content included in this publication is the property of

Strategy International (SI) Ltd.

Protected from the copyright laws of the Republic of Cyprus and international copyright laws.



Strategy International (SI) Ltd, Copyright ©2022-2027

Strategy International (SI) Ltd is a registered company HE423632 In the Republic of Cyprus

The logo of Strategy International is a registered trademark in the Republic of Cyprus. The trademark and works of strategy international (SI) Ltd and its logo are applied for class 31&45, in the Republic of Cyprus and EU IPO office.

Cyprus copyrights are governed by the Copyright Section of the Department of the Registrar of Companies and Official Receiver.

The governing laws are: N.63/77, N.18(I)/93, N.54(I)/99, N.12 (I)/2001, N.128 (I)/2002, N.128 (i) 2004 and N.123 (I) 2006.

Copyright protection vests automatically in the Republic of Cyprus.

First Published July 2022

Address: 24 Strovolos Str. 2042 Nicosia Cyprus

This publication is the exclusive property, including copyrights, of the author and Strategy International (SI) Ltd.

This publication in its complete form, or any parts of it, may not be reproduced, duplicated, copied, sold, resold, visited, or otherwise exploited for any commercial purpose. For all purposes, there is a need for a first written consent of the author and the legal representative of Strategy International (SI) Ltd.

SI trademark(s) may not be used in connection with any product or service and publication that has not been given any prior written consent first.

The written publication and opinions are considered of scientific and professional value and as such a result of the ongoing work of the author.

Any official statement made or position through all publications, interviews and related communication does not necessarily reflect the mission, objective and works and official opinions of Strategy International (SI) Ltd.

The document produced is endorsed, is its scientific value, and credits are provided to the author.

The editorial Team of

Strategy International (SI) Ltd.

Marios P. Efthymiopoulos (PhD) (CEO)

Josef Demergis (PhD) (Director of Research & Analysis)

Marketing Team: Rebel Online

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context: The Frost and Fire: Geopolitical Landscape Post-U.S. Elections 2025 Wargame was conducted at Georgetown University as part of the Master of Professional Studies in Applied Intelligence program. This exercise examined the potential evolution of the U.S. intelligence landscape under two contrasting geopolitical scenarios stemming from the 2024 presidential election.

Objective: With the U.S. presidential election looming, the starkly different stances of the two main candidates on global issues and the U.S. role in international affairs presented an opportunity to examine the potential impact of each administration's approach over their term.

Methodology: To assess the implications of the two contrasting U.S. foreign policy approaches, a structured, multi-phase wargame was chosen. This format allowed for a rigorous, rules-based simulation that leverages the skills students in the MPS in Applied Intelligence program have developed in open-source intelligence analysis.

Wargame: The wargame centers on hypothetical events unfolding in February 2027, two years after the new U.S. administration has taken office. The theater is set in the Arctic and Baltic regions, where Russia is escalating its threat posture. To structure the wargame, four U.S. intelligence agencies, two alliances, one allied nation, and Russia were selected as teams to respond to these emerging threats, as outlined in the table. Each team received a general scenario, supplemented by a tailored, agency-specific scenario that aligned with their unique responsibilities. Over two phases, teams were tasked with answering eight questions on provided templates to guide their strategic responses.

Key Findings:

Key Insights	Alliance-Based	Isolationist
Intelligence Coordination	Heightened intelligence coordination is critical, with NATO and allies countering Russian influence through real-time data sharing and predictive analytics.	NATO cohesion is weakened, with Poland and Baltic states adopting independent defensive strategies due to lack of U.S. leadership. Allies face increased reliance on self-coordination and individual resilience.
Hybrid Warfare & Cyber Threats	Proactive countermeasures and flexible covert operations strengthen alliance adaptability. AI-driven analysis and fusion centers enable timely threat detection, countering disinformation and cyber risks.	Russian hybrid tactics exploit NATO divisions, reducing proactive defense. Cyber threats and disinformation demand coordinated efforts, with Poland taking a proactive stance to reinforce regional stability through independent countermeasures.

Arctic Security	Russian and Chinese militarization in the Arctic necessitates joint efforts between NATO and allies, enhancing security for critical maritime routes.	Increased Russian and Chinese activity raises security concerns; allies are pressured to address emerging Arctic threats independently, with collaboration required for resource monitoring and navigation security without direct U.S. support.
Energy Security & Diplomacy	Countering Russian energy dominance and supporting European energy transitions requires diplomatic cohesion, maintaining stability amid shifting energy dependencies.	Europe's reliance on Russian energy risks NATO's unity as economic pressures mount. Diversified energy strategies are essential, with diplomatic support needed for sustainable energy solutions to mitigate Russian geopolitical influence.
Alliance Cohesion & Adaptability	Continuous support for Ukraine, joint surveillance, and enhanced intelligence-sharing bolster NATO readiness but stretch resources, requiring adaptable protocols for alliance resilience.	Rising populism and Russian influence in Europe threaten NATO unity, necessitating strategic intelligence to manage alliance shifts without escalating militarily. Poland and Baltic states take defensive measures independently to counter Russian influence and safeguard their borders.
Diplomatic & Strategic Influence	Collaborative intelligence and diplomatic efforts maintain NATO's resilience, allowing flexible, proactive responses to hybrid threats across Europe and the Arctic.	Reduced U.S. presence requires diplomatic intelligence to balance disengagement with selective support, sustaining influence through regional resilience-building and strategic countermeasures against hybrid threats in Europe and the Arctic.

Feedback and Lessons Learned:

Despite the overall positive feedback received, as shown in the below table there were a number of lessons learned. Namely duration, the complexity of the scenarios, and the number of questions teams had to go through.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the Frost and Fire wargame. This initiative required collaboration, expertise, and a shared commitment to exploring complex geopolitical scenarios. The wargame would not have been possible without the dedication and insights of our participants, whose engagement brought depth and rigor to the simulation.

We extend our sincere thanks to the extended team who supported and enriched this endeavor, including Dr. Barry Zulauf, Jake DePiero, and Jaclyn Langenburg. Their contributions, whether in providing critical analysis, logistical support, or guidance throughout the process, were invaluable to the wargame's execution and its outcomes.

We would also like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Strategy International (SI) Ltd and its leadership team CEO Dr. Marios P. Efthymiopoulos and Dr Josef Demergis, whose efforts ensured that the Frost and Fire wargame was not only well-executed but also published for future reference.

To all who played a role in bringing Frost and Fire to life, we extend our deepest appreciation. Together, we have demonstrated the power of collaborative thinking in tackling some of the most critical issues of our time.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 6

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE EDITORS 8

INTRODUCTION..... 9

SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS 12

STRATEGIC INSIGHTS AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS 16

LESSONS LEARNED FOR WARGAME METHODOLOGY 19

CONCLUSION 22

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE EDITORS

In an era marked by rapid geopolitical shifts, escalating resource competition, and unparalleled technological advancements, tools that bridge the gap between abstract theories and actionable insights are not merely desirable, they are essential. The Frost and Fire wargame emerges as a transformative platform designed to achieve precisely this. By blending the rigor of intelligence methodologies with the dynamic complexity of real-world challenges, this wargame redefines how we approach decision-making in volatile global environments.

Wargaming, at its core, provides a unique opportunity to simulate multifaceted geopolitical crises, offering participants a chance to move beyond theoretical frameworks and engage directly with practical scenarios. Frost and Fire underscores the necessity of proactive, adaptive strategies, enabling participants to grapple with pressing issues such as hybrid warfare, the race for Arctic dominance, and the persistent destabilizing efforts of adversarial states. This exercise not only fosters critical thinking but also enhances collaborative problem-solving, skills that are crucial for the intelligence professionals of tomorrow.

What sets Frost and Fire apart is its innovative design, which integrates intelligence, diplomacy, and strategy into a cohesive learning experience. By placing participants in high-stakes roles and challenging them to navigate uncertainties, the wargame bridges academic principles with the real-world demands of global power dynamics. Its application is particularly significant in today's climate, where the interplay of cyber threats, disinformation campaigns, and fragile alliances continually reshapes the international order.

As editors, we take pride in presenting this report, which highlights the wargame's pivotal role in fostering strategic acumen, enhancing intelligence methodologies, and preparing participants to tackle the challenges of an ever-evolving geopolitical landscape. We believe that Frost and Fire is not just a learning tool but a critical instrument for shaping the strategic thinkers and decision-makers who will navigate tomorrow's global crises.

Josef Demergis & Marios Efthymiopoulos

INTRODUCTION

The Frost and Fire: Geopolitical Landscape Post-U.S. Elections 2025 Wargame was conducted as part of Georgetown University's Master of Professional Studies in Applied Intelligence program. The program aims to provide students with a solid grounding in fundamental intelligence concepts, strategies, and tactics from a global perspective, preparing them to be effective leaders and decision-makers in areas such as law enforcement, homeland security, and competitive business intelligence. This wargame served not only as a learning experience but also as an opportunity for students to experiment with different intelligence methodologies and engage with real-world challenges that align with their professional roles.

Context and Objectives

The wargame was structured to explore how the U.S. intelligence landscape could evolve under two distinct geopolitical futures following the 2024 U.S. elections. It aimed to simulate how two contrasting U.S. foreign policy approaches - an Alliance-Based Administration versus an Isolationist Administration - could shape the strategic role of intelligence by February 2027. Participants analyzed how these differing U.S. strategies might influence intelligence operations, alliance dynamics, and adversarial tactics in key regions like Eastern Europe and the Arctic. The exercise sought to assess how shifts in U.S. policy could impact intelligence effectiveness, international stability, allied cooperation, and adversarial maneuvers, all while emphasizing the evolving role of the U.S. Intelligence Community in these scenarios.

The wargame had several core objectives:

1. **Analyze the Impact of U.S. Presidential Elections on Geopolitics and Intelligence:** The exercise aimed to assess how shifts in U.S. leadership and foreign policy could reshape global power dynamics, alliance management, and adversarial behavior. This analysis emphasized the evolving roles of the U.S. Intelligence Community, NATO, and adversarial intelligence agencies, such as Russia's GRU and SVR, within both policy scenarios. The focus was to understand how different intelligence strategies would be employed to adapt to new geopolitical realities in either an Alliance-Based or Isolationist Administration.
2. **Develop Strategic Recommendations for Intelligence Operations:** Participants were tasked with generating actionable insights and strategic recommendations informed by the simulated outcomes. These recommendations focused on enhancing U.S. intelligence strategies, emphasizing flexible, multi-dimensional approaches that are responsive to complex global challenges. Participants considered how intelligence collection, analysis, and sharing could be optimized under the constraints or opportunities presented by each U.S. policy approach.
3. **Facilitate Interactive Learning in Intelligence Methodologies:** The wargame was designed to enhance participants' analytical skills by simulating a realistic geopolitical environment that required applying intelligence methodologies. Participants were encouraged to collaborate, think critically, and engage in

strategic decision-making to address the challenges posed in each scenario. The exercise aimed to provide a practical, immersive experience that aligned with real-world intelligence operations and strategic analysis.

The wargame's design was rooted in the program's mission to expose students to practical intelligence challenges, foster engagement with global strategic issues, and simulate professional intelligence roles. By addressing both analytical and operational aspects of intelligence work, the exercise provided a comprehensive learning experience aligned with the program's goals.

Methodology Overview

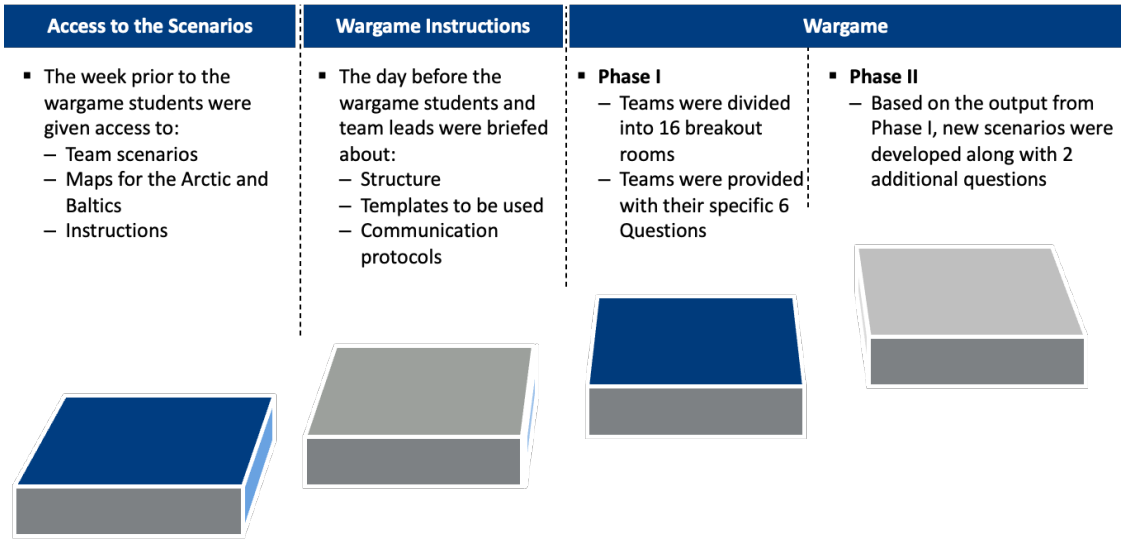
The wargame was structured as a comprehensive, multi-phase event that spanned preparatory activities, an intensive simulation session, and a detailed post-game analysis phase. It incorporated two distinct scenarios, each representing one of the U.S. policy approaches being tested: an Alliance-Based Administration, which prioritized global collaboration and multilateral engagement, and an Isolationist Administration, which focused on national interests and limited foreign involvement.

The event followed three main phases:

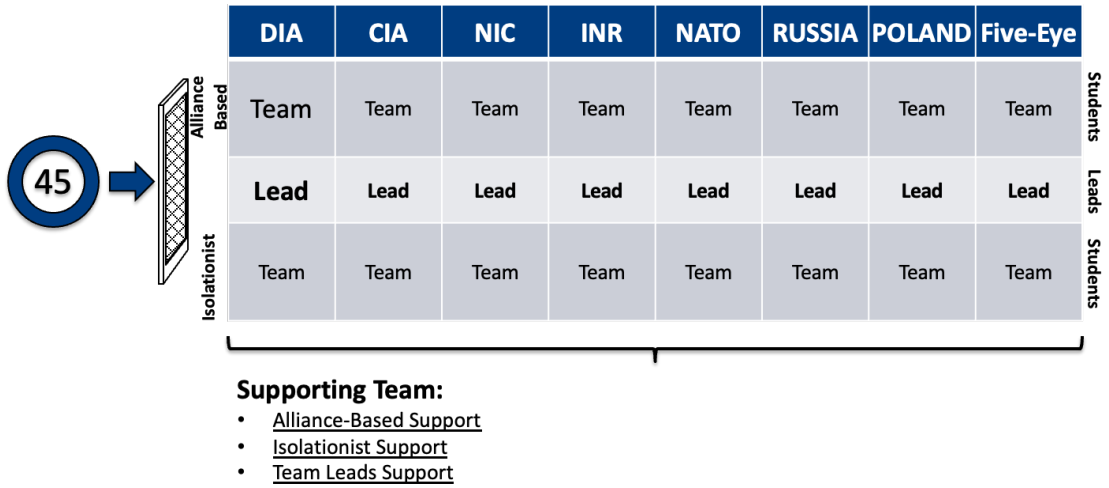
1. **Preparatory Phase (Day 0):** Participants began with an online webinar on October 21, which provided an overview of the wargame's structure, outlined the opening scenario, and detailed logistics for the upcoming simulation. One week prior to the event, participants received both the general and team-specific scenarios, giving them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the strategic context and their roles. This preparatory session ensured that participants were familiar with their roles and responsibilities, as well as the specific context of each scenario. Participants were also briefed on using analytical templates, which structured their assessments throughout the exercise.
2. **Simulation Phase (Day 1):** On October 22, participants engaged in a five-hour online simulation, divided into two distinct phases:
    - **Phase 1: Initial Scenario Engagement:** In the first two-hour session, participants were organized into teams representing major intelligence agencies and alliances, including the DIA, CIA, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), National Intelligence Council (NIC), Russian intelligence (GRU & SVR), NATO intelligence, Polish Intelligence, and the Five Eyes alliance. Each team was given a scenario that was tailored to their organization's mission, focusing on events leading up to February 2027. Participants were tasked with developing strategic responses, assessing evolving geopolitical dynamics, and producing structured deliverables based on six key questions in their templates.
    - **Recess and Scenario Adjustment:** Following Phase 1, there was a 30-minute recess during which the managerial team reviewed the outputs, feedback, and strategic directions from the initial phase. Based on this review, a new scenario was generated to reflect the evolving geopolitical landscape shaped by the decisions made during Phase 1.

- **Phase 2: Follow-Up Scenario:** In this phase, participants were presented with an updated scenario that built upon the developments from Phase 1. This required teams to modify their strategies to address emerging challenges and shifting geopolitical realities. Teams needed to respond to new intelligence inputs, adapt to changes, and refine their strategic objectives accordingly. The simulation concluded with a summary session that synthesized the key findings and set the stage for the final debrief event.

3. **Debrief and Analysis Phase (Day 2):** Scheduled for the week of October 28, this phase will involve a 90-minute online session to present the wargame's findings, discuss strategic insights, and evaluate the effectiveness of intelligence methodologies employed by participants. This debrief will serve as an opportunity for participants to reflect on the outcomes, assess the strengths and weaknesses of their strategies, and generate recommendations for U.S. policy and intelligence work.



The wargame featured 16 teams across both scenarios, representing eight organizations: DIA, CIA, INR, NIC, NATO Intelligence, Polish Intelligence, Russian Intelligence (GRU & SVR), and the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance. Each team had a designated lead responsible for guiding strategic responses and ensuring alignment with the broader U.S. policy approach in the respective scenario.



The simulation was guided by structured analytical templates that required participants to address six critical questions related to their organization's mission and the scenario context. These templates facilitated systematic analysis, ensuring that all aspects of intelligence collection, analysis, and decision-making were covered.

Overall, the wargame offered a realistic platform to examine how differing U.S. foreign policy strategies might impact global security dynamics. It also provided participants with an opportunity to apply intelligence skills in a dynamic, high-stakes environment, reinforcing the core competencies of Georgetown University's Master of Professional Studies in Applied Intelligence program.

SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

This chapter analyzes the two distinct scenarios from the exercise: the Isolationist Scenario and the Alliance-Engaged Scenario. By examining how intelligence operations influenced policy responses, this analysis provides insights into intelligence collection, adaptability, sharing, policy alignment, counterintelligence, alliance management, crisis response, and long-term strategic outcomes.

Insights from the Alliance-Based Scenario

The Alliance-Based scenario provides a detailed exploration of intelligence's evolving role within modern conflicts, focusing on U.S.-aligned teams such as the U.S. Intelligence Community, NATO, Poland, and the Five Eyes Alliance, as they engage Russian intelligence agencies for strategic advantage. Set against a backdrop of heightened tensions in Eastern Europe and the Arctic, this scenario highlights how intelligence shapes responses, supports alliance cohesion, and counters hybrid threats. This analysis assesses U.S. intelligence strategies' effectiveness, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement in intelligence collection, analysis, and sharing to adapt to these strategic demands.

Enhancing Strategic Intelligence Collection

The scenario underscores the importance of timely, integrated, and multi-domain intelligence collection. U.S.-aligned teams relied heavily on robust Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C5ISR) capabilities to monitor critical areas like the Suwalki Gap, Kaliningrad, and

Arctic naval routes. However, the need for more advanced surveillance tools, such as high-resolution satellites, unmanned aerial systems, and enhanced electronic intelligence (ELINT), became evident. Integrating these assets within NATO's intelligence framework could facilitate broader surveillance coverage, ensuring that intelligence remains actionable.

Cyber intelligence also emerged as a critical factor, given Russia's cyberattacks on NATO's infrastructure and public confidence. The scenario highlighted the need for a more aggressive cyber intelligence architecture, emphasizing the detection and disruption of adversarial operations. Increased collaboration between U.S. agencies like the NSA, FBI, and DHS is crucial to enhance preemptive capabilities against Russian cyber incursions. Furthermore, expanding Human Intelligence (HUMINT) networks across Eastern Europe and the Arctic was identified as a priority. Cooperation with regional allies, such as Poland and the Baltic states, is essential to anticipate Russian tactics and strengthen strategic foresight.

The Arctic was identified as a significant intelligence priority due to Russia's growing military presence and its alignment with China for resource control. Enhanced Arctic surveillance - using specialized SIGINT, maritime reconnaissance, and environmental sensors - could improve intelligence outcomes. Collaboration with Arctic Council members, particularly Canada, would ensure comprehensive intelligence coverage, supporting strategic decisions across U.S.-aligned teams.

Advancing Intelligence Analysis for Strategic Foresight

The scenario underscored the need for rapid, predictive, and multi-domain intelligence analysis to maintain situational awareness and enable proactive strategies. AI-driven predictive analytics emerged as a vital tool, enabling early warnings and strategic foresight. Integrating AI models across intelligence streams - military, cyber, diplomatic, and economic - could help identify patterns and predict escalations before they materialize.

Deeper integration of intelligence analysis with strategic communications was necessary to counter Russian disinformation campaigns that targeted NATO cohesion and European elections. Establishing dedicated units to map disinformation narratives and sources could enhance intelligence-driven public diplomacy. Real-time analysis would allow for swift deployment of counter-narratives, protecting alliance credibility.

Developing cross-domain analytical fusion centers could offer a holistic view of interconnected threats, supporting U.S.-aligned teams' coordinated responses. These centers could integrate data from cyber, military, economic, and diplomatic domains, providing a more comprehensive assessment of adversarial strategies.

Improving Intelligence Sharing for Strategic Cohesion

The scenario exposed both the strengths and limitations of existing intelligence-sharing mechanisms within alliances like NATO and the Five Eyes. While there were successes in maintaining cohesion, the need for more adaptable sharing protocols was evident. Implementing flexible, multi-tiered sharing protocols could ensure that diverse needs are met while maintaining operational security and rapid dissemination. This approach

would help prevent intelligence bottlenecks and enhance real-time situational awareness.

Real-time intelligence collaboration platforms were also identified as essential, given the fast-paced nature of modern conflicts. Such platforms should feature encrypted communication and AI-driven data integration to enable seamless information flows. Establishing trust-building initiatives, like joint intelligence exercises and transparent declassified reports, could foster deeper collaboration among allies and address concerns about sharing sensitive intelligence.

Strategic Implications for U.S. Intelligence Strategy

The Alliance-Based scenario provides valuable lessons for adapting U.S. intelligence strategy in multi-domain conflicts, emphasizing the centrality of intelligence as a strategic foundation. Intelligence must be integrated across military, cyber, economic, and diplomatic domains, ensuring flexibility and adaptability to rapidly shifting geopolitical conditions.

Balancing offensive and defensive intelligence measures is critical; while preemptive cyber strikes and counter-disinformation campaigns were effective in disrupting Russian strategies, they also carried risks of escalation. A balanced approach is needed to ensure that intelligence actions align with broader U.S. strategic objectives.

Maintaining alliance cohesion was both a challenge and a strength in this scenario. Transparent intelligence-sharing, tailored assessments, and trust-building measures can reinforce unity, enabling a coordinated response to adversarial tactics.

Insights from the Isolationist Scenario

The Isolationist Scenario provides a comprehensive analysis of intelligence's evolving role under a U.S. administration characterized by reduced global engagement. It focuses on the strategic behavior of key actors, including the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC), NATO (with a specific emphasis on Poland), and Russian intelligence agencies, as they compete for strategic advantage in Eastern Europe and the Arctic. Set against a backdrop of diminished U.S. military support, this scenario illustrates how intelligence drives strategic responses, adapts to alliance challenges, and counters hybrid threats. This analysis evaluates the effectiveness of U.S. intelligence strategies, highlighting both strengths and limitations in intelligence collection, analysis, and sharing to meet emerging geopolitical demands.

U.S. Intelligence Community's (IC) Role and Limitations

Under the constraints of an isolationist administration, the U.S. IC operated with a strategy focused on indirect support, intelligence collection, and covert actions rather than direct interventions or overt leadership. This restrained engagement reflected minimal military involvement and limited support to allies, emphasizing intelligence-gathering in Eastern Europe and the Arctic.

However, the reduced access to NATO's intelligence networks and a weakened multilateral information-sharing framework led to slower response times, intelligence gaps, and increased vulnerability to Russian hybrid tactics. The U.S. IC's efforts were

hindered by limited intelligence-sharing mechanisms, impacting both collection and analysis capabilities.

Enhancing Strategic Intelligence Collection

The scenario emphasizes the need for robust intelligence-sharing networks, even amidst reduced U.S. military commitments. To maintain alliance cohesion and readiness, the U.S. IC must sustain resilient information-sharing frameworks that can adapt to political shifts. This includes leveraging regional intelligence cells, bilateral intelligence agreements, and secure digital platforms to facilitate timely intelligence exchanges.

Improved counter-disinformation capabilities and enhanced cyber intelligence emerged as vital components. The U.S. IC must integrate information warfare capabilities into broader foreign policy strategies, promoting a unified transatlantic response to adversarial narratives. This involves joint cyber defense initiatives, real-time intelligence-sharing protocols, and coordinated messaging that reinforces democratic values. Additionally, aggressive counter-disinformation measures should be pursued through collaboration with European media and tech companies to strengthen pro-NATO narratives.

NATO's Strategic Dilemmas and Poland's Assertive Role

NATO’s response to the scenario was marked by a combination of defensive measures and efforts to maintain alliance cohesion despite the diminished U.S. presence. Poland, at NATO’s eastern frontier, adopted a more assertive stance, emphasizing intelligence-sharing with Baltic partners, surveillance, and rapid mobilization of defense forces to secure critical areas like the Suwalki Gap. This proactive role was crucial for NATO’s eastern defense but also exposed internal divisions within the alliance.

Countries like Poland and the Baltic states advocated for stronger military deterrence, while others, such as Germany and Italy, favored diplomatic engagement and risk-averse strategies. The U.S. IC must recognize these diverging approaches and understand their potential to weaken NATO's unity. U.S. policy should aim to bridge the gap between hawkish and cautious NATO members, integrating deterrence with diplomacy to foster compromise and cohesion.

To support Poland’s defense efforts, the U.S. IC should prioritize non-military assistance, such as intelligence and logistics, while encouraging European nations to boost their defense capabilities. Diplomatic efforts must focus on targeted outreach to Poland and the Baltic states, reinforcing collaborative planning and strengthening transatlantic ties without overextending U.S. resources.

Russia's Hybrid Warfare and Strategic Adaptations

Russia’s strategy in the isolationist scenario was to exploit NATO’s perceived vulnerabilities while avoiding direct military confrontation. It employed military posturing, cyberattacks on infrastructure, and disinformation campaigns targeting European elections to weaken NATO’s cohesion. In the Arctic, Russia aimed to consolidate control over resources and strategic shipping routes, often collaborating with China. The use of plausible deniability, including unmarked troops and covert

cyber operations, allowed Russia to make incremental gains without provoking full-scale conflict.

Implications for U.S. Policy: Diplomacy, Alliances, and Adversarial Tactics

The isolationist scenario reveals significant vulnerabilities associated with a reduced U.S. role in global security, particularly regarding alliance management and countering hybrid threats. For U.S. policymakers, the findings emphasize that even an isolationist approach must recognize the strategic importance of transatlantic alliances and the evolving geopolitical landscape in the Arctic.

Adjusting U.S. policy in this context involves deepening diplomatic engagement with NATO and Arctic allies, supporting regional security dialogues, and facilitating intelligence-sharing that does not rely on direct military commitments. U.S. policy should emphasize resilience-building measures among allies, encouraging stronger cyber defenses, counter-disinformation campaigns, and the reinforcement of democratic institutions. Multilateral cyber defense agreements and coordinated media strategies can help mitigate Russia's influence while maintaining alliance cohesion.

Strategic Outlook

The Isolationist Scenario emphasizes the imperative for U.S. foreign policy to compensate for reduced military engagement with enhanced diplomatic efforts, strategic intelligence-sharing, and targeted countermeasures against hybrid threats. The U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) must recalibrate its approach by refining intelligence strategies, optimizing collection methods, and implementing resilient sharing protocols tailored to evolving threats. By advancing intelligence capabilities through integrated predictive analytics and strengthening partnerships with allies, the U.S. IC can effectively sustain U.S. influence and security interests in contested regions like Eastern Europe and the Arctic, despite the constraints of a reduced global presence.

STRATEGIC INSIGHTS AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This section provides a detailed examination of the strategic insights gained from the wargame scenarios, contrasting the two distinct U.S. policy approaches - Alliance-Based and Isolationist - in terms of intelligence operations, alliance management, and geopolitical outcomes. By analyzing participant feedback and scenario outcomes, this comparative analysis sheds light on the unique advantages, challenges, and long-term implications associated with each strategy.

Strategic Intelligence Collection and Analytical Adaptability

The isolationist strategy necessitated a redefined approach to intelligence collection, particularly due to limited U.S. engagement in global affairs. Under this scenario, intelligence teams focused on covert methods, such as HUMINT, cyber intelligence, and digital surveillance, to compensate for reduced access to real-time intelligence in areas of strategic interest like Eastern Europe and the Arctic. Participants noted the challenge of maintaining situational awareness with constrained resources and highlighted that the limited intelligence-sharing framework resulted in a more reactive approach. One participant mentioned that "information-sharing became more reactive than proactive," echoing the broader difficulty in sustaining continuous and timely

intelligence exchanges. This reliance on covert and bilateral methods often left allies to fill in their intelligence gaps independently, posing a collective security risk by fragmenting threat assessment efforts.

Conversely, the alliance-based scenario leveraged a sustained U.S. presence, enabling comprehensive intelligence collection through multi-domain operations. Supported by NATO collaboration, intelligence analysts had access to SIGINT, GEOINT, and shared intelligence data, which facilitated more proactive measures, such as tracking Russian naval patrols in the Arctic and monitoring covert troop movements in Belarus. This integrated approach empowered participants to respond more effectively to emerging threats, illustrating how collaborative intelligence networks can enhance real-time situational awareness and rapid crisis management.

Intelligence-Sharing and Coordination

The isolationist scenario underscored the limitations of reduced multilateral intelligence-sharing. Teams relied on bilateral agreements with close partners, such as Poland and the Baltic states, to maintain some flow of information; however, the absence of extensive U.S. presence weakened multilateral coordination, impacting the speed and effectiveness of intelligence responses. Feedback from participants emphasized that limited information-sharing under this framework increased the risk of slower threat detection, delayed decision-making, and gaps in collective situational awareness. This reactive stance often left allies independently managing regional threats, highlighting potential vulnerabilities when multilateral intelligence exchanges are deprioritized.

In contrast, the alliance-based strategy underscored the benefits of established intelligence networks supported by active U.S. involvement within NATO and Five Eyes alliances. Real-time intelligence-sharing allowed participants to engage in joint analysis, streamlining responses to hybrid threats, such as cyberattacks on European infrastructure and Russian disinformation campaigns. Participants recognized that the robust communication channels maintained under this strategy facilitated unified responses to security threats, reinforced mutual trust, and provided a model for enhanced intelligence coordination in high-stakes scenarios.

Policy-Intelligence Alignment

The two strategies presented contrasting impacts on aligning intelligence with policy objectives. Under the isolationist approach, intelligence efforts prioritized diplomatic support, strategic deterrence, and covert influence operations as the primary tools to achieve geopolitical stability without direct involvement. This strategy required intelligence to operate in alignment with a policy stance that prioritized domestic security over global commitments, creating constraints on intelligence actions that might have been more proactive under an alliance-based framework.
In the alliance-engaged scenario, the alignment between intelligence and U.S. policy objectives was more direct and actionable. Intelligence actively informed diplomatic negotiations, supported military strategies, and played a role in reinforcing collective defense initiatives, such as joint exercises in the Suwalki Gap and Arctic surveillance missions. Participants noted how active intelligence engagement enabled more seamless alignment with broader U.S. policy goals, transforming intelligence from a

supportive to a more central function in shaping international policy and defense strategies.

Counterintelligence and Threat Mitigation

Counterintelligence under the isolationist scenario focused heavily on protecting U.S. interests and relied primarily on OSINT and digital monitoring to detect and mitigate disinformation, cyber threats, and covert military actions. Participants noted that counter-disinformation measures were constrained by limited access to external intelligence resources, making the task of monitoring adversarial actions more challenging. This approach required the IC to manage threat mitigation under a resource-constrained environment, relying on independent efforts to counter Russia's and China's influence within strategically important regions.

Conversely, the alliance-based scenario benefited from coordinated counterintelligence efforts between the U.S. IC and NATO cyber defense units. Joint counter-disinformation campaigns, cyber defense exercises, and intelligence-sharing bolstered the collective ability to thwart hybrid threats that targeted both European elections and critical Arctic communications. Participants observed that such coordination enabled timely responses to adversarial actions, enhancing NATO's strategic defenses and facilitating broader protection of allied infrastructure.

Alliance Management and Support

The isolationist scenario illustrated the challenges of alliance management under conditions of limited U.S. involvement. U.S. intelligence had to rely on indirect methods, such as diplomatic backchannels and selective intelligence-sharing agreements, to support NATO members closest to Russia. Despite some success in maintaining a basic level of support, the feedback highlighted concerns from allies regarding U.S. reliability and commitment, particularly during tensions near the Suwalki Gap. This scenario highlighted potential risks in alliance cohesion when U.S. leadership is reduced, revealing an underlying fragility in the collective security framework.

In contrast, the alliance-based strategy demonstrated the positive effects of active U.S. leadership within NATO. Participants noted that joint intelligence efforts, coordinated security measures, and consistent intelligence-sharing reinforced alliance morale, trust, and cohesion. This scenario underscored the U.S. role as essential in rallying NATO member states to take proactive security measures against adversarial actions, demonstrating the impact of active engagement on sustaining alliance solidarity and resilience.

Long-Term Strategic Outcomes

The isolationist approach encouraged the U.S. IC to adopt flexible and adaptable methods for indirect influence, utilizing regional networks, digital surveillance, and covert operations to achieve strategic objectives. While this approach allowed for a degree of influence without direct involvement, participants highlighted the limitations of slower decision-making, fragmented situational awareness, and reduced visibility into adversarial actions as potential trade-offs.
The alliance-engaged strategy reinforced traditional methods of active engagement, alliance leadership, and intelligence collaboration, achieving consistent policy

outcomes such as NATO cohesion and enhanced Arctic security. Participants found that sustained U.S. presence not only strengthened the alliance but also facilitated long-term objectives, like protecting regional stability and securing access to resources. Overall, the comparative analysis of these scenarios reveals valuable insights into the trade-offs between a collaborative and a limited-engagement approach, underscoring the potential for U.S. policy to balance adaptability with strategic influence across various security domains.

LESSONS LEARNED FOR WARGAME METHODOLOGY

The wargame provided participants with a complex, dynamic environment to explore the impact of different U.S. foreign policy strategies following the 2024 presidential election. This chapter evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the wargame, drawing on participant feedback, survey results, and the actual outcomes of the event.

Strengths of the Wargame

Realism and Relevance

The wargame's scenarios were well-aligned with current geopolitical realities, making the simulation highly relevant for participants, particularly those from intelligence-related fields. Set in 2027, the simulation presented two divergent U.S. foreign policy paths: an Alliance-Based Administration emphasizing multilateral cooperation, and an Isolationist Administration focusing on national interests and reduced international engagement. This dual scenario structure provided a realistic examination of potential geopolitical trajectories, reflecting actual debates in U.S. foreign policy.

Participants confirmed this strength, rating the relevance of the scenarios at an average of 4.6 out of 5. As one participant put it, "The scenario itself was eye-opening, and the questions opened up geopolitical concerns that weren't at the forefront of my mind." This feedback underscores the simulation's effectiveness in prompting participants to consider broader geopolitical dynamics and emerging challenges, a core objective of wargaming as a learning tool.

Immersive Learning Experience

The immersive nature of the wargame was one of its most significant strengths, offering participants a hands-on approach to strategic intelligence analysis and decision-making. Participants noted the value of working within structured scenarios that required them to simulate real-world responses under time constraints. Survey responses highlighted the effectiveness of this approach, with one participant noting, "Learning how complex decision-making takes place within a small amount of time with very limited information" was among the most valuable aspects. This feedback indicates that the wargame not only conveyed theoretical knowledge but also allowed participants to apply that knowledge in a high-pressure, realistic setting.

Adaptation to Strategic Complexity and Ambiguity

The wargame was successful in simulating the complexity and ambiguity of modern geopolitical conflicts, particularly those involving hybrid warfare, strategic intelligence collection, and multilateral diplomacy. Participants were required to adapt to evolving scenarios, respond to ambiguous threats, and make decisions based on incomplete

information - elements that mirror the real-world challenges faced by intelligence agencies.

Participants highlighted the value of engaging with complex scenarios that demanded rapid adaptation and strategic flexibility. One respondent commented, “Answering the questions gave me a better insight into future threats and a possible future.”

Effective Use of Team Dynamics

The structure of the wargame, which included small teams representing different intelligence organizations (e.g., DIA, CIA, NATO), enabled participants to explore the dynamics of interagency cooperation. Teams were required to coordinate internally and sometimes interact with other teams, simulating real-world intelligence collaboration and joint decision-making processes. Participants generally found this aspect effective, with many noting the diversity of perspectives as a valuable feature.

Strategic Focus on Intelligence Objectives

The wargame maintained a clear focus on strategic intelligence objectives throughout both scenarios. Participants were asked to address issues such as intelligence collection, analysis, and information sharing, all within the context of broader U.S. strategic goals. This helped reinforce the link between intelligence operations and policy decisions, reflecting the wargame’s broader objective of integrating intelligence work into foreign policy considerations. As one participant noted, “The game allowed us to think critically about real-world intelligence challenges and how they relate to broader geopolitical outcomes.”

Areas for Improvements

Despite its strengths, the wargame also faced several challenges that limited its effectiveness. These weaknesses provide important lessons for refining future iterations of the simulation.

Time Constraints and Depth of Analysis

One of the most commonly cited weaknesses was the time limitation, particularly during the two-hour phases of the wargame. Many participants felt that the compressed timeframe limited the depth of analysis and hindered their ability to fully explore the complexity of the scenarios. As one participant observed, “Participants were essentially expected to run through all steps in the intelligence cycle in two hours,” which often resulted in underdeveloped responses.

Clarity of Instructions and Phase Transition

Participants reported some confusion regarding the instructions, particularly when transitioning from Phase 1 to Phase 2. While the initial phase was generally clear, the shift in format and objectives in Phase 2 led to uncertainty among participants about what was expected.

Technical Challenges and Communication Tools

While the overall organization of the wargame was highly rated, participants did encounter technical issues with communication tools like Canvas and Zoom. Some participants experienced difficulty accessing templates or sharing screens, which affected collaboration and the pace of analysis.

Specific Outcomes of the Wargame

The outcomes of the wargame reflect both the strengths and weaknesses of its design. In the Alliance-Based Scenario, participants were able to establish a more collaborative and multilateral strategy, successfully engaging NATO partners and implementing joint intelligence efforts. This outcome aligns with the wargame's objective of exploring effective alliance management and highlights the strategic benefits of maintaining U.S. leadership in global coalitions.

In contrast, the Isolationist Scenario revealed the challenges of limited U.S. engagement, particularly in intelligence-sharing and alliance cohesion. Participants struggled with maintaining situational awareness and encountered more severe intelligence gaps, reflecting the potential consequences of an isolationist U.S. foreign policy. This divergence in outcomes underscores the importance of the wargame's dual-scenario structure, which provided a clear comparative analysis of U.S. strategic options.

Key Lessons Learned

The wargame yielded several critical lessons that can inform the development of future intelligence simulations. The following themes emerged from the survey responses, reflecting both positive feedback and areas for improvement:

Relevance and Real-World Engagement - Participants overwhelmingly found the wargame to be relevant to current geopolitical challenges, particularly the post-2024 U.S. election landscape. The scenarios allowed participants to explore the implications of different U.S. foreign policy approaches, providing a realistic and immersive experience.

Importance of Clear Instructions and Phase Transition - While the initial phase of the wargame was well-received in terms of clarity, the transition to Phase 2 was less seamless. Participants reported confusion about the objectives and structure of Phase 2, impacting the depth and quality of their analysis. To address this, future wargames should ensure greater continuity in instructions across phases, with clear guidelines on the expected outputs and analysis format.

Adaptation to Time Constraints - The compressed timeframe of the wargame was both a challenge and a learning opportunity. Participants noted the pressure to deliver quick analyses under time constraints, which mirrored real-world intelligence demands but also limited deeper exploration of complex issues. One participant commented, "Learning how complex decision-making takes place within a small amount of time with very limited information" was one of the most valuable aspects of the wargame. However, several participants recommended extending the wargame to allow for more thorough analysis, suggesting a multi-day event as a potential solution.

Enhancements to Intelligence Templates - The provided templates effectively guided participant analysis, but several respondents felt that they were more tailored for policy assessments rather than intelligence-focused analysis. As one participant mentioned, "The wargame template was structured as if people were completing a strategic policy memo, but facilitators were looking for more of an intelligence assessment." Adjusting

the templates to better reflect intelligence evaluation processes, such as integrating assessments of adversarial intentions or capabilities, could enhance future simulations.

Team Composition and Interaction - The composition of teams and the level of interaction between team members were frequently mentioned in the feedback. While most participants valued the diversity of perspectives within teams, some expressed concerns about the limited size of teams, which constrained collaborative discussions. One participant suggested, "Teams should have been larger to allow for more content and more conversation." Additionally, several respondents recommended pairing less experienced participants with more experienced ones to enhance learning and collaboration.

Use of Communication Tools and Collaboration Platforms - Although the communication tools were generally effective, participants suggested exploring more collaborative platforms, such as Google Meet or enhanced screen-sharing tools, to facilitate better interaction.

Participant Engagement and Learning Outcomes - Despite the logistical challenges, participants appreciated the opportunity to engage with complex scenarios and apply intelligence methodologies in a simulated environment. The wargame was particularly effective in encouraging strategic thinking and facilitating discussions on geopolitical risks and intelligence operations. One participant highlighted that "answering the questions gave me a better insight into future threats and a possible future," reflecting the wargame's success in achieving its learning objectives.

The participant feedback from the wargame demonstrates its effectiveness as a learning tool for exploring intelligence strategies within complex geopolitical scenarios. The wargame was generally well-received, with participants appreciating its relevance, immersive nature, and the opportunity for strategic analysis. Key lessons for future wargames include enhancing clarity in phase transitions, providing more extensive pre-game materials, refining intelligence templates, and improving collaborative tools. By addressing these areas, future iterations of the wargame can offer an even more effective platform for intelligence education, strategic engagement, and real-world application

CONCLUSION

The *Frost and Fire: Intelligence at the Crossroads of Global Power* wargame illuminated distinct operational and strategic insights by comparing Alliance-Based and Isolationist scenarios. Each approach revealed unique strengths, emphasizing the role of intelligence in adapting to U.S. foreign policy priorities in an increasingly complex global landscape.

The Alliance-Based approach underscored the benefits of close collaboration with NATO and other allies, fostering an environment of real-time intelligence sharing, joint operations, and mutual support that bolstered situational awareness and alliance cohesion. This setup allowed for shared intelligence assets, reducing gaps in coverage across NATO's Eastern European and Arctic fronts. In crises, such as Russian cyber

incursions or hybrid warfare, alliance members could coordinate defenses effectively, with intelligence feeding directly into multilateral strategies.

On the other hand, the Isolationist stance presented valuable advantages in terms of operational agility and focused national security. Operating independently, U.S. intelligence agencies enjoyed greater flexibility, avoiding the complexities of coalition consensus and allowing for rapid, covert responses to critical threats. Resource concentration on direct U.S. security objectives, such as counter-disinformation and cyber defenses against Russia and China, enabled more specialized attention to threats facing U.S. infrastructure without the necessity to allocate resources across alliance-wide needs. Additionally, reduced intelligence-sharing minimized the risk of data leaks, preserving operational security and autonomy and allowing the U.S. to bypass internal alliance disagreements over responses to Russian aggression.

While the Alliance-Based approach strengthened NATO unity and enabled comprehensive, multilateral strategies, the Isolationist stance facilitated a cost-effective, agile, and secure intelligence posture. Each scenario revealed trade-offs that shaped U.S. intelligence responses, alliance management, and long-term strategy.

As a methodological tool, the wargame excelled in providing participants with a hands-on learning environment where they could simulate real-world challenges and explore critical decision-making processes. The dual-phase design allowed for phased strategic adaptations, with the first phase exploring initial responses to pre-set scenarios and the second phase introducing new dynamics and challenges based on interim developments. This structure effectively highlighted how intelligence agencies must adapt their strategies as geopolitical conditions evolve.

Feedback underscored the effectiveness of the two-phase structure for generating strategic insights and the high relevance of the scenarios. However, participants suggested improvements such as longer engagement periods to allow for deeper analysis and clearer instructions to bridge phase transitions. Technological adjustments, like more collaborative digital tools, could further enhance interaction and analytical depth. The structured templates provided a solid framework for analysis, although some noted that adjustments toward a more intelligence-specific structure could strengthen alignment with the wargame's context.

Looking forward, conducting wargames more regularly offers valuable opportunities for both learning and real-time strategic insight generation. By integrating wargames more frequently into intelligence and decision-making processes, participants and decision-makers alike could benefit from continuous, actionable insights and enhanced strategic preparedness. As a teaching and training tool, wargames reinforce critical analytical skills, promote adaptive thinking, and simulate real-world intelligence roles, making them highly beneficial for both academic and professional settings.

The integration of advanced artificial intelligence, especially large language models, could transform the future of wargaming. By utilizing AI-driven agents to simulate the actions of hundreds or even thousands of entities, it would be possible to conduct highly complex, role-playing wargames with multiple parallel scenarios, each contributing to a broader strategic narrative. In this advanced model, distinct storylines could unfold

concurrently, some intersecting and others evolving independently, mirroring the nuanced complexity of real-world geopolitics.

AI agents, powered by LLMs, could embody various stakeholders, generating dynamic scenarios based on preset contexts and objectives while continuously analyzing and adapting to wargame outcomes in real-time and post-simulation. This capability would enable a continuous information flow into the wargame, transforming these exercises from static simulations into interactive, adaptive tools that can be integrated seamlessly into live decision-making. Such a system could provide decision-makers with instant, multi-layered strategic perspectives and unprecedented situational awareness.

These advancements in AI-driven wargaming could usher in a new era of intelligence simulation, enabling greater strategic depth, flexibility, and realism, ultimately transforming wargames from periodic exercises into real-time, decision-making tools.



(+357) 96 886 872
info@strategyinternational.org
https://www.strategyinternational.org
24 Minoos Street, Strovolos, 2042 Nicosia, Cyprus

Copyright ©2022-27 Strategy International (SI) Ltd. All Rights Reserved