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Introduction

Professor John Andreas Olsen

Head of Department for War Studies, Swedish Defence University

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, partners, and friends of wargaming; welcome one and all.

We operate in a security and defence environment characterized by continued uncertainty, instability, and war in Europe. The possibility of an armed attack against Sweden, or against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our NATO allies, cannot be ruled out. These new security and defence policy challenges place increased demands on the capability and resilience of Swedish defence and require sustained readiness and resolve across society as a whole.

Additionally, the technological development is accelerating faster than our organisations and institutions can adapt. The lines between military and civilian, between war and peace, and between national and international security have become increasingly blurred. In such an environment, it is no longer sufficient to rely on static plans, linear analyses, or abstract forecasts.

Hence, we need methods that allow us to think, to test, to fail safely, and importantly to learn before reality forces us to do so, under the most unforgiving conditions. This is where wargaming becomes essential, and this is where the Centre for Wargaming finds its purpose.

Although the Centre for Wargaming is part of the Swedish Defence University, our mission extends far beyond. Our role is to promote the use of wargaming across the defence sector, that is, in education, research, capability development, conceptual innovation and analytical support to political and military decision-makers. Simply put: wargaming should help us make better decisions.

We work both internally in the university's educational programmes and externally with the Armed Forces, government agencies, industry, and research partners. We do so through a combination of theoretical and empirical research, the development of games and gaming concepts, and the practical design and execution of wargaming activities and exercises. Importantly, in war gaming failure is not the opposite of success; it is one of the learning steps that makes success possible.

What matters most, however, is not only what we do, but how we do it. The Centre for Wargaming operates at the intersection of two demanding worlds: the military profession and academic scholarship. Each has its own logic, standards, culture, purpose, and forms of legitimacy. Academic work demands conceptual clarity, rigour in methodology, critical scrutiny, and international relevance. Military professionalism demands applicability, realism, timeliness, and relevance to real tactical, operational and strategic problems. Too often, these two worlds drift apart.

But wargaming here at FHS brings them together: war gaming combines the best of two worlds. This is why we see wargaming as one of the most powerful methods available for research and education: it is a genuine meeting place between scholarly knowledge and the realities of the military profession.

To elaborate: in wargaming, theory meets experience, doctrine meets lateral thinking, analysis meets intuition, plans meet friction, and assumptions meet reality. New perspectives collide, and consequences unfold, in the shape and form of the most beautiful OODA loops.

War gaming is real: academic ideas cannot hide behind elegant models if they do not hold up in play, and professional experience cannot rely only on intuition without reflection and structure. Wargaming demands both intellectual discipline and professional judgement at the same time.

Our Centre aims to function as a national and international hub for knowledge development in wargaming. Our work spans emerging research areas such as artificial intelligence and multi-domain operations, the development of gaming concepts in cooperation with partners, and support to both internal and external research projects. These activities are not peripheral nor marginal. They are central to what it means to be a modern defence university.

The growing importance of wargaming reflects the growing complexity of the challenges we face. As already mentioned, contemporary security problems resist linear thinking. We need to go outside the box of conventional logic. We need to explore critical thinking and chaos theory alike, because we are confronted with simultaneous threats across multiple domains, rapid escalation dynamics, uncertain technological maturity, and adversaries who do not share our rules-based international order.

Wargaming offers something uniquely valuable in this context. It allows us to explore uncertainty, to think through adversarial perspectives, to uncover hidden assumptions, and to examine the second- and third-order effects of decisions before they become irreversible.

Wargames do not provide answers or predictions. Their value lies in improving judgement. In doing so, wargaming can save the lives of civilians and soldiers alike.

This conference is a concrete expression of that ambition. Organised jointly by the Swedish Defence University and the Swedish Defence Research Agency, FOI, it brings together leading experts, game designers, researchers, and users from across the defence sector to share insights into the ongoing development of wargaming, and their applications in total defence.

Just as importantly, this conference provides space to meet colleagues, build networks, and explore future collaboration across institutional and professional boundaries.

Looking ahead, ladies and gentlemen, we operate in an area of rapidly increasing demand. Our ambition is to expand into new research domains, to secure long-term funding, and to establish new partnerships both in and beyond academia.

Our long-term vision is that wargaming becomes a natural and integrated part of both military and civilian education across the defence sector. Not as a niche activity, but as a widely used and respected method. We see the Centre for Wargaming as an essential actor in that development.

In closing, let me emphasise that paradoxically wargaming is not about games. It is about preparation. It is about planning and execution. It is about leadership. It is about taking responsibility. It is about taking both the military profession and academic scholarship seriously in an uncertain and contested future.

Because in today's world, there is no room for complacency, there is no room for incompetence when it can be helped, and there is certainly no room for intellectual laziness.

With these words, I welcome you to the conference and I congratulate you on having the good sense to be in the right place at the right time.

Thank you.