

THE PLAN

A game about negotiation, committees and planning

OUTLINE

The Plan is a game ostensibly about a strategic planning committee in a time of war. The players are the key senior decision makers and planners of Freedonia. In the game they have to communicate, negotiate and problem solve with their fellow committee members to come up with a successful War Plan.



This game is suitable for groups of 4 – 8, the ideal number is 6. If there is a large group then the game can be run in parallel, so long as no group playing is smaller than 4.

The game is designed as lasting no more than a hour.

AIM

The game is a tool for starting conversations about how committee structures work, how participants act in this environment and how information is transmitted within a group when the participants have different hidden objectives.

At the end of the game are some review and reflection questions to be used with the participants, and this encourages them to look at their negotiation styles and how they communicate.

SETUP

The facilitator should have read all the game materials and understand how the information is distributed between them.

The game layout is a table with the players sitting around it.

At the outset try to avoid obvious seating clues like having one chair obviously at the 'head of the table'. All the player start with equal status in the committee.

1. To start the game give the following explanation, or something like it:

“This is an activity about communication.

In it you are the senior staff responsible for the defence of Freedonia.

Each of you will be given information about your role and the situation you are in.

Briefly, as a result of Silvanian aggression over their annexation of the small independent country of Krim, your Government called for the withdrawal of Sylvania troops from Krim with a deadline of midnight last night.

The Silvanians have refused to withdraw, and as a consequence Freedonia and Sylvania are now at war.

Of course, war plans have existed for some time, and this is the first meeting of the War Committee which will review Freedonia's plans and prepare to commence war operations."

2. Hand out the individual briefings as follows:

Every player gets the Background Briefing

Each player in a group gets a specific individual personal briefing for their role. The roles represented will depend on numbers playing as follows:

Role	4 players	5 players	6 players	7 players	8 players
Army	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Navy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Air Force	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Treasury	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Intelligence	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Propaganda	-	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Warfare	-	-	-	Yes	Yes
Naval Transport	-	-	-	-	Yes

At the same time give each player a role badge (a sticky label will do) or a nameplate to put in front of them.

3. Settle the players round the table and given them 5 minutes or so to read their game materials and briefing the give them the **'Letter from The President'** announcing the assassination of Marshal Van Rental.

Observe and note for later discussion how they approach this – some players may be quicker at reading and absorbing the information than others, and might use this to their advantage.

4. If they do not self-start with the first item on the agenda – the appointment of a Chair – then prompt them. They **must** do this before moving on to the planning phase. This selection phase is a chance to observe discussion styles and the dynamic of the group as they discuss things. Allow no more than 10 minutes for this stage.

5. Allow the game play to flow as they arrive at a plan for the war. Observe and note down key interactions and player communication styles.

Watch out for:

- a. Overstatement of capabilities
- b. Holding back information for a negotiation advantage
- c. Holding back information because they haven't read the briefing
- d. Obstructive tactics
- e. Mediation – those who find win-win positions
- f. Not holding back on information – ready sharing.
- g. The interpersonal dynamics – who dominates – who might feel 'shut down'

6. Give the players warning of the game deadline at the 10 minutes and 5 minutes to go points. The final stage is their presentation of the plan to the Cabinet which should take around 5 minutes.

7. Debriefing. Using some of the suggested discussion questions below players are encouraged to discuss how they interacted and reflect on their communication and negotiation styles. This can be prompted by some open observations by the facilitator. The debriefing is an important section of the game because it is where the players get to use their experience in the game constructively.

REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Allow around 30 minutes for the debriefing discussion and reflection.

There is no "right answer" to this strategic planning problem, one plan is as good as any other - and each plan is likely to have overlooked or glossed over some problem or other – often at the expense of another faction in the committee. The game is not about arriving at a solution as such but a vehicle for looking at interpersonal behaviours.

It is interesting to see this in action.

Here are just some suggested discussion questions that might allow the players to reflect on the process they have just been through. More may very well occur to you based on your observations of the interactions during gameplay.:

- **Consensus – did you find it hard?** – and if so think about why this was so difficult. What were the blockages to achieving a consensus?
- What do you feel was your **key action** in the game – if any?
- What did you feel were the main **blockages and barriers** to achieving your game objectives?
- When others disagreed with you, **how did you feel** and what were your strategies for managing that?
- Who in the group would you say had the most 'dominant' position, and reflect on **why that might be?**
- If you were to play the game again tomorrow, how might you **approach the negotiations differently?**

GENERAL NOTES

Virtually all the information players need is in the briefings.

Most of the questions that come from players are questions that can be answered by other players.

As facilitator, you should therefore redirect questioning where possible.

Key points

- Decisions must be by consensus. There is no provision for voting in the Strategic Planning committee – everyone must agree / acquiesce. Some groups find this a challenge.
- No additional information about enemy dispositions is available at present. All the information they have is embedded in the player briefings.
- This is the first day of the war, and no military action has yet been taken by either side.

Issuing Military Orders

The players may wish to issue immediate operational military orders in the light of information that comes up in committee, or discussion. They can only issue orders of a

defensive nature – get the players to write these down and give them to you – they are useful in the debriefing stage.

Offensive military action (including bombing) must be agreed by the Cabinet - who will agree to nothing in isolation or without an overall plan.

There is no obstacle to issuing orders - but note that they also only have an hour to come up with a plan, and any orders will not have been put into effect in that time - so they get no feedback on operational military orders in the context of the exercise.

Choosing a Chair

In monitoring the meeting, note the time available, and if necessary remind the players of their deadline. The initial discussion of who should be chair must not be allowed to last more than 10-15 minutes - and pressure can be brought to bear in the form of demands from the Cabinet for a nomination.

Some groups really struggle with the whole concept of consensus. This is an interesting point to raise in debrief. It is usually worth pressing the players into reaching consensus.

The committee should not be allowed to discuss plans until they have agreed on a chair.

Too Quick Decisions

If the committee come up with a rapid plan that is not thought out or over-simplified – perhaps not taking account of enough factors, then the facilitator should role play the Cabinet Secretary asking questions of areas not well covered or which might need a different emphasis or a re-think.

For example where a plan has a massive seaborne assault, the facilitator might ask (as the Cabinet Secretary) suggest that there are political reasons for an alternative landing site and ask them to look at how the plan might involve landing at a different point. Or ask questions about how they plan to counter the submarine threat.

Feeding Missing Information

Some of the eight player roles have some key information. If not all the roles are played then the facilitator must feed that information into the game.

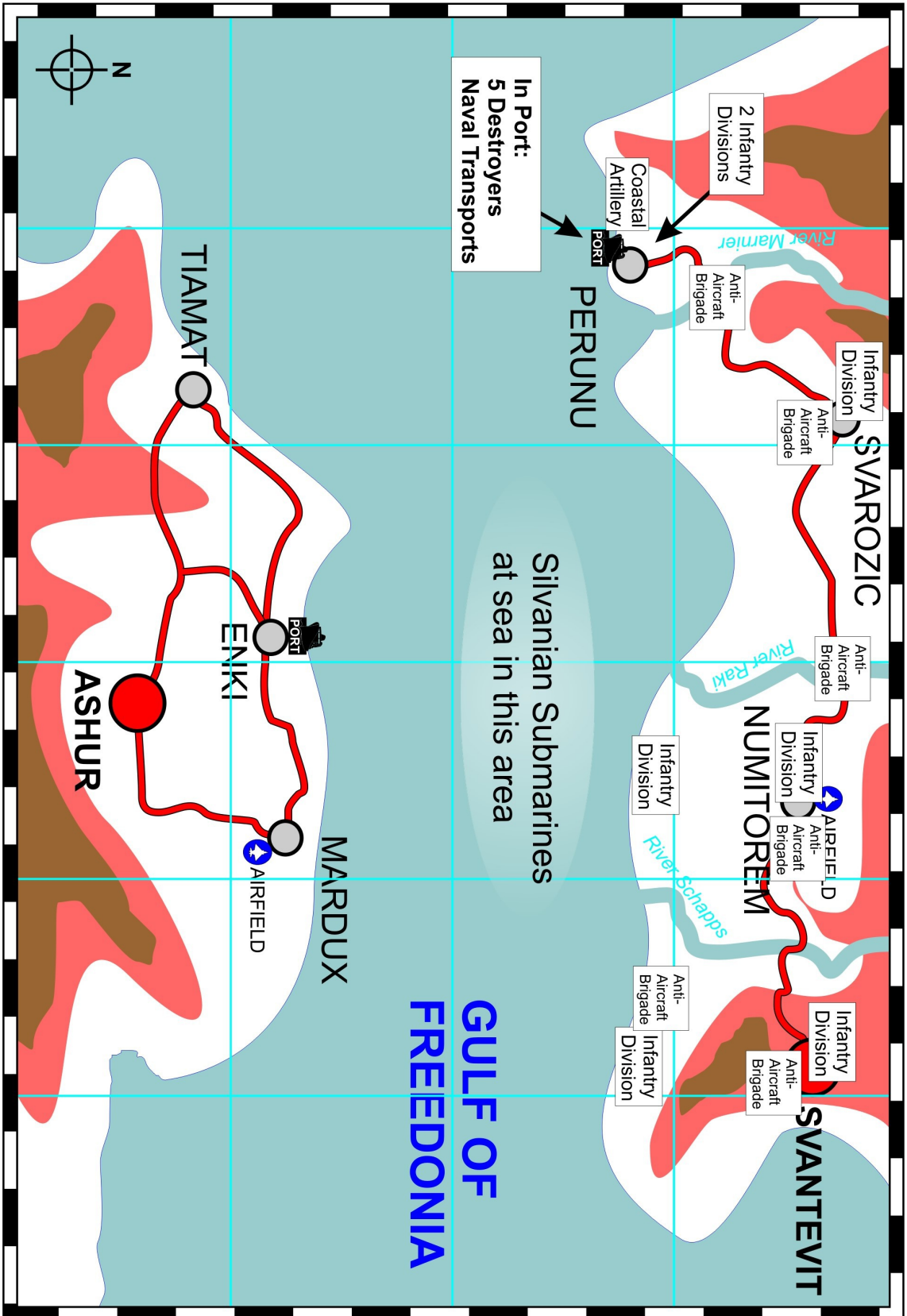
Depending on how the group are interacting you can either wait until they ask for more information or it can be drip-fed every 5 minutes or so – as a 'new report'.

Initial distribution of information:

Role	Intelligence Information
Army	-
Navy	-
Air Force	Location of 3 AA Brigades (Svantevit, Raki Bridge & Perunu), 2 Infantry Divisions (South of Svantevit & Numitorem) and the Silvanian Navy (in port)
Treasury	Enemy levels of War Stocks
Intelligence	Information on the Silvanian War Plans (see briefing)
Propaganda	Location of Destroyers, Likely landing site (South of Svarozic) and 1 AA Brigade (Numitorem)
Economic Warfare	Location of 1 AA brigade (Svarozic) and 1 Infantry Division (Svarozic)
Naval Transport	Location of 1 AA Brigade (south of Svantevit)

FACILITATOR'S MAP

(Do not show to players)



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