

1. Asymmetric Warfare



In an asymmetric conflict, the state has the preponderance of power, but very little information; the insurgents have lots of information but very little power. Whoever reverses this dynamic first is likely to win. The state must gain information; the insurgent must grow and become more powerful. This concept, originally articulated by Gordon McCormick, forms the basis of the game, *Asymmetric Warfare*.

The state begins with five all-powerful pieces in the center. The insurgent starts with five pieces, placing them in the outside ring. The insurgent sees everything, but the state cannot see the insurgent pieces (information asymmetry). The state pieces, however, will always win in combat (power asymmetry). The insurgent wins if it surrounds the capital with enough forces. The state wins if it kills enough of the insurgent pieces. For the insurgent to grow it must combine two existing pieces onto the same position, which allows it to produce a new unit. However, this act of growing will temporarily reveal these pieces to the state player. The insurgent must weigh the tradeoff between growing in size versus maintaining its invisibility. The state player, whenever it lands on an insurgent piece, will have to decide whether to kill the piece and remove it from the board, or to interrogate the piece to learn if any neighboring spaces contain insurgent pieces. The state must weigh the tradeoff between gaining information versus shrinking the power of the insurgent.

