

No Man's Land

The AI Singularity and the Future of American National Security

Story

Wracked by economic malaise and global insecurity, American voters in a near future are increasingly embittered and long for an escape. Sensing an opportunity for a stunt, a jovial long-time television comedian named Chuck Branner decides to run for president, promising to fire all government employees and replace them with artificial intelligence. The tagline for his "Singularity Pledge": "The last job in government will be the president — and I will fire myself!"

Buoyed by voter excitement about the potential for AI and their deep trepidation of his opponents, Branner takes an early lead in the polls — one that is downplayed by journalists and political analysts. In a political earthquake, he emerges victorious through a plurality of voters in enough states to secure him the Electoral College. The one-time jokester now has a very serious task: executing his pledge to fire all federal workers within four years while breathing life back into the United States's anemic economy and strengthening its national security in a rapidly changing world order.

Branner ran individually, without a party infrastructure. He has no allies in the U.S. Congress, which remains vociferously opposed to cutbacks to federal employment during a time of economic recession.

There is one area of economic optimism though: the AI innovation ecosystem. While founders have launched hundreds of startups to seize on recent technological breakthroughs, five companies have started to gain attention as critical players across the commercial and defense sectors.

Meanwhile, serious security concerns lurk all around the world, both from emerging groups as well as long-time, great-power competitors. New technologies and new ideologies are burbling and fusing, threatening the long-term strength of the United States and its allies. Even as the government attempts to shed its human workforce, the president must try to protect the country — or reap the disappointment of voters. Will Branner be the last man standing? Or will voters fire him before he can fire himself?

Scenario Goal

With the rise of an assertive China in the Pacific, a revanchist Russia in the Atlantic and an AI revolution in Cyberspace, America's future security and economic prosperity is at greater risk than at any time since the fall of the Soviet Union. Exacerbating the uncertainty is a persistent divide between Silicon Valley's leading technologists and Washington's military and policy leaders. The two coasts profoundly diverge on language, mission, culture and dreams. America's technology is world leading, as is its defense. Yet far too often, the two prove subtractive — rather than multiplicative — of each other's strengths.

Riskgaming bridges that divide by helping each player understand the motivations, incentives and challenges facing very different professionals as they all seek the same broad goal. It breaks down the cultural silos that separate technology progress from policy, while directly confronting the tradeoffs inherent in the key decisions surrounding the world's most pressing challenges. A chaotic and uncertain world deserves nuanced and realistic decision-making — skills that every one of our game hones.

Riskgaming's *No Man's Land* places eight players into leadership roles at American AI companies, politics, and the defense sector. It simulates how exponential improvement in AI will radically change the ways in which America procures the key national security capabilities required by warfighters. In the process, it forces all players to balance challenging tradeoffs, including:

- Research safety versus technology capability improvement
- Emerging threats versus great power competition
- Open source versus proprietary technologies
- Security versus economic growth
- Competition versus cooperation
- Productivity versus employment
- Long-term investment versus short-term business goals

Within a compact timeframe, all players will develop an intellectual framework of the tradeoffs required around AI as America seeks to secure its military and economic dominance in the twenty-first century.

No Man's Land models the AI technology economy and its opportunities for growth in the commercial and public sectors. The AI companies compete to build proprietary technology in different AI capabilities, or alternatively, fund open-source libraries that undermine the value of their competitors' technologies. These different AI capabilities offer different values to the commercial and defense sectors. For the commercial sector, the value is described by the **Gardener Research** card, which lists the projected total revenue for each AI capability by year.

For the defense sector, the value of contracts is determined within the gameplay by the Congressional Liaison, the Budget Director and the Defense Official. Over the course of each scene, the three negotiate the annual National Defense Authorization Act, setting the government's budget, and thus, its procurement priorities. They can assign their target budgets for each AI capability, and the minimum between the trio will be passed into law and become available as contracts to the AI companies. The ideal outcome is for all three to come to a consensus and choose identical numbers, maximizing Budget Utilization.

At the end of each scene, **commercial contracts will be apportioned to the AI companies based on their relative AI capabilities**, while **government contracts will be offered to the two best companies per AI capability** — the top company will receive 2/3 of the government contract and

the second-place company will receive 1/3 of the government contract. This models the government's desire to diversify its procurement and avoid sole-source suppliers.

The quality of the AI capabilities purchased by the government directly affects the size of the government's workforce as well as the nation's security from emerging threats and pacing competitors.

Setup

Each player will be **assigned one of the eight available roles** for the duration of the game. The game will proceed over **four scenes**, each of which represents one year of President Chuck Branner's first term. At the start of each scene, the Game Leader will deliver a story update and hand out the most up-to-date Capabilities Chart. **Players will have about 15 minutes to debate their decisions** with each other.

At the end of each scene, all players will *privately* fill out their decision sheets and hand them to the Game Leader. **All decisions — both public and private — are made simultaneously.** Once the decisions are tabulated, the Game Leader will present players with updated **Key Metrics**. Key Metrics will change as players make decisions, and they will fully determine the outcome of the game. In addition, the Game Leader will announce the outcome of the scene's three Emerging Threat Attacks, which depends on the government's access to AI capabilities.

At the end of the game, each player will be **scored out of 10 points** based on their success in reaching their character's personal objectives. The player with the most points wins, and in the event of a tie, the victory is shared.

Public Key Metrics

Each player has one public Key Metric in the game that will be regularly updated by the Game Leader at the close of every scene (the exception is the Defense Official, who has two Key Metrics). The metrics are:

- **Awesome.Ai Revenues (Company A CEO):** The revenue of Awesome.Ai.
- **BoldPrecision Revenues (Company B CEO):** The revenue of BoldPrecision.
- **Caliber Revenues (Company C CEO):** The revenue of Caliber.
- **DarkLark Revenues (Company D CEO):** The revenue of DarkLark.
- **EagerSource Revenues (Company E CEO):** The revenue of EagerSource.
- **Congressional Poll (Congressional Liaison):** The Congress's general support among the electorate. Can be between 0 and 100%. Higher with *more* Government Employees, better Emerging Threat and Pacing Competitor Security, and higher Budget Utilization.
- **Presidential Poll (Budget Director):** The President's general support among the electorate. Can be between 0 and 100%. Higher with *less* Government Employees as well as better Emerging Threat and Pacing Competitor Security.

- **Emerging Threat Security (Defense Official):** An aggregation of AI defenses toward a range of emerging threats. Represents the probability of an emerging threat being successfully defended. Can be between 0 and 100.
- **Pacing Competitor Security (Defense Official):** An aggregation of AI and legacy defenses toward great power threats. As a relative score, it can be between -100 (extremely weak against other great powers) and +100 (extremely strong against other great powers).

In addition to character-specific Key Metrics, the Game Leader will also provide updated scores for additional metrics at the end of every scene. These are:

- **Successful Emerging Attacks:** Three emerging attacks will take place in each scene. Based on the current technological and defense capabilities of the government, the Game Leader will announce how many of the three attacks were successful.
- **Government Employees:** The government's workforce starts at 1,000,000 and changes based on the federal procurement of different AI technologies.
- **Budget Utilization:** This is the percentage of the government's available budget that is allocated to AI contracts by the consensus of the Congressional Liaison, Budget Director and Defense Official. Anything less than 100% is considered lost to waste.

Character Objectives and End-Game Scoring

AI Company CEOs

For the five AI Company CEOs, their goals are identical: they want to increase their revenues as much as possible while limiting the amount of venture capital they fundraise. There are two components to end-game scoring:

1. Companies will be ranked at the end of the game based on **highest revenue**. The company with the highest revenue will receive 5 points counting down to the last-place finisher, which will receive 1 point.
2. Companies will then be ranked on **capital efficiency**, which is the total revenue gained during the game divided by the total amount of money the company raised from their term sheets. Once again, companies will be ranked, with the most capital efficient company offered 5 points counting on down to the last-place company, which will receive 1 point.

Congressional Liaison

The Congressional Liaison wants to maximize the Congressional Poll. At the end of the game, they receive 0 points if the poll is 50% or less. Above 50%, they receive 1 point for every 5%. Thus, 55% is 1 point, 60% is 2 points, and onwards. The number of points rounds to the nearest value.

Budget Director

Parallel to the Congressional Liaison, the Budget Director wants to maximize the Presidential Poll. At the end of the game, they receive 0 points if the poll is 50% or less. Above 50%, they receive 1 point for every 5%, rounding to the closest threshold. Thus, 53% is 1 point, 62% is 2 points, and onwards.

Defense Official

The Defense Official's primary objective is the safety of the American homeland. They are rated based on the strength of the country toward both Emerging Threat and Pacing Competitor Security. At the end of the game, they receive 1 point (up to 5) for every 20 Emerging Threat Security and 1 point (up to 5) for every +20 Pacing Competitor Security. A negative Pacing Competitor Security will be considered 0 points. Similar to the Budget Director, the number of points awarded will round to the nearest threshold.