WHAT IS PLAYABILITY?

THE ZEN of GAME DESIGN

WHAT-IF
COLLI HAD RUSHED HIS ARMY TOWARD MONTENOTTE?

OPERATIONAL STUDIES GROUP

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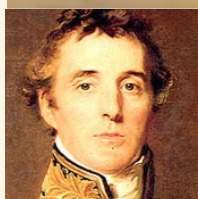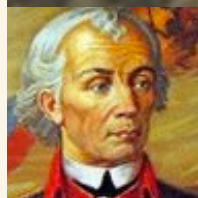
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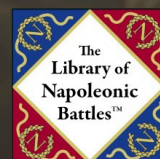
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OPERATIONAL STUDIES GROUP

EDITORIAL
Kevin Zucker

The Voyage of History

The world which we perceive is a tiny fraction of the world... We operate on a very narrow slice based on cultural conventions. So the important thing, if synergizing progress is the notion to be maximized, is to try and locate the blind spot in the culture—the place where the culture isn't looking, because it dare not— because if it were to look there, its previous values would dissolve, you see.

—Terrence McKenna

AN OCEAN LINER SAILS UP THE ALASKA COAST. EVERYONE ON BOARD HAS GATHERED IN AN EXCITED HUSH TO SEE THE whales. Except for me. I am at the stern, watching seagulls in the wake.

I am interested in understanding the voyage of history, not only where we are and where we are headed, but, how we got here and where we have come from. The great passenger ship called Earth Civilization was launched 5,000 years ago in the fertile crescent, and only the forces of geography can make it change its course. During some seasons the sea is raging, at others it is calm and still. One must either sink or swim; drift or row. You can build dykes, and try to channel history, but fighting against its essential nature takes great effort, like moving water uphill.

The ocean of history surges every 19-or-so years, following the cycle of eclipses. https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/history/americas-economic-history/the-19-year-cycle/

We have just completed a cycle that began in 2001, and are now passing through the interregnum between two historical eras. I call the era just ended "The Age of Denial." The next age is being born now. Lots of unrest, with opportunities for dragging hidden excesses into the light; uncovering things that have been hidden in plain sight for long. All the Elephants in the room will be dancing in one big conga line.

> Carl Jung said that the greatest danger that Humanity faces is Mass Psychosis. Thought frozen in stasis. "All one's neighbours are in the grip of some uncontrolled and uncontrollable fear..."

My father, an Air Force Captain, gave me an Air Force booklet of political indoctrination, very simple minded. To me, an 11-year-old, it was pathetically transparent. Dad hated Dr. Suess for being a commie. We were not allowed Dr. Suess in the house. I became a Goldwater supporter in '64. But further attempts at indoctrination failed. In High school I came out against the Vietnam war, when the word "peace" was tantamount to treason in my house. So I was the commie in my family. I joined the Moratorium of Oct-Nov 1969.

Carl Jung said that the greatest danger that Humanity faces is Mass Psychosis. Thought frozen in stasis. "All one's neighbours are in the grip of

some uncontrolled and uncontrollable fear… In lunatic asylums it is a well-known fact that patients are far more dangerous when suffering from fear than when moved by rage or hatred." At age five I was already asking questions my Sunday school teachers couldn't answer, and it became obvious that "believers," are not "questioners." That is the fundamental divide. I want flexible brains. So you have to thaw them. Not with arguments; music, art, poetry, nature, social interaction, creativity that is neither work nor on a technology platform, but something for which our bodies were engineered. Dancing, yoga, joyous exertion, parties. How did we get here? For four decades our system has promoted the accumulation of obscene amounts of wealth in a few hands. That didn't happen by accident. Just EIGHT men own as much as half the planet, 3.6 *billion* people. That is a tidal wave of wealth that could make Midas blush.

This concentration of wealth has completely distorted our political world, turning it into a farce. American Democracy is a Punch and Judy show in a shoe box. Gregory Bateson said that any species that finally succeeds in dominating its environment dooms itself. Unless a different philosophy also comes onto the world stage now.

Kevin Zucker

The Saros or Metonic Cycle of Eclipses

After 18 years, 11 days and 8 hours, the same eclipses return to the same latitude as before. The Chaldeans knew this cycle as a period when lunar eclipses seemed to repeat themselves, but the cycle is applicable to solar eclipses as well.

1789 – French Revolution
1807 – War in East Prussia
1825 – Decembrist Revolt
1843 – Albanian Revolt
1861 – American Civil War
1879 – Zulu War
1897 – Greco-Turkish War
1915 – World War I
1933 – Hitler
1951 – Korean Conflict
1969 – Vietnam War
1987 – Iran-Iraq War
2005 – Iraq
2023 – Ukraine
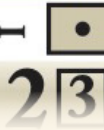
Wargame DESIGN

In this Issue

Beaulieu	Sebottendorf	Argenteau	Colli	Wetzel ❶	Nicoletti	Rosselmini	
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Bonaparte overruns Piedmont

WHAT-IF
COLLI HAD RUSHED HIS ARMY TOWARD MONTENOTTE?

Kevin Zucker

Feldmarschal-Leutnant
Michelangelo Alessandro
Colli-Marchi

In the campaign game, we have placed no limits on the movements of the Piedmontese Army. The Army commander, Michelangelo Alessandro Colli-Marchi, was not aware of Bonaparte's moves until the afternoon of 12 April. So it would be reasonable for players who want a more historical campaign to place a restriction on the movement of the Piedmontese Army until late on the 12th. However, there was no excuse for this lapse in intelligence, even though Voltri and Montenotte were within the territory of Genoa.

AT THE OUTSET OF THE CAMPAIGN, THE PIEDMONTESE ARMY WAS ON A DEfensive footing, as their positions on 11 and 12 April show. The natural inclination of troops in such a position is to maintain the line, as they had been doing in the mountain passes successfully for years.

The Piedmontese army was not of the character of the French. Its initiative—a necessary ingredient of victory—was low. Training in brigade level maneuvers (I surmise) was nil. They used Frederick's drill-book and had a Prussian drill master. This method still places reliance on the firing line as opposed to a free maneuver of regiments. It's really the broadside effect of massed muskets they are looking for, and not maneuver on the battlefield—the old dialectic of maneuver versus firepower. This campaign would shatter the Frederickian system.

News of the French offensive reached the Piedmontese during the afternoon (12 April), but Colli was remarkably untroubled by it. He issued an order to the combined grenadier battalion under Colonel del Carretto, ... to advance to Cosseria and occupy the heights there at daybreak, and instructed them to defend to the last extremity. However, he also wrote to Provera in the evening saying, 'I do not think the enemy will advance very far along the Bormidas.' Nevertheless, he
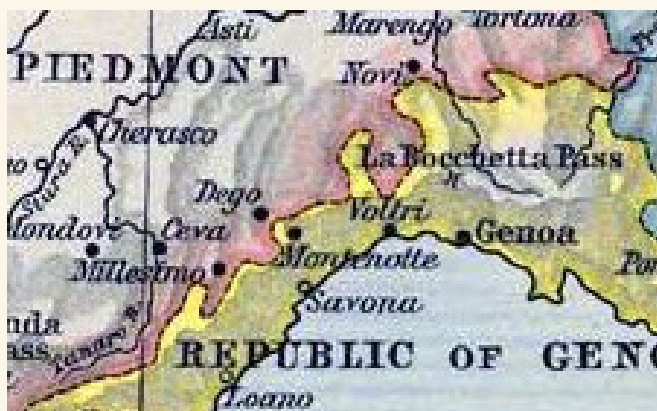
promised him more reinforcements if necessary and said that he would try to turn the enemy's attention to the south. Late on the 12th he left for Montezemolo himself with four battalions of grenadiers to await the next French move.[1]

In the game there are no limits on the Piedmontese, and nothing keeping them in their positions, where they remained historically. Colli did take a small force toward Montezemolo, but for whatever reason he didn't put his entire force into action. It was probably a combination of:

1. Lack of clarity about the intentions of Bonaparte
2. His troops were not ready to march[2]
3. French troops of General Sérurier were threatening Ceva.

While the Austrian Commander Beaulieu was focused on defending Genoa and Voltri, General Provera, the commander of the Austrian auxiliary corps, was to establish an outpost line between Colli and Beaulieu.

Provera had arrived in the Bormida valley on 6 April with four battalions and two companies (2,000 men) of his Auxiliary Corps. With these meagre resources he had proceeded to form an (outpost line) that stretched from the Austrian army on his left and ran through Dego, Santa Giulia, Monesiglio and Mombarcaro down to Ceva, where he linked with the Piedmontese on his right. It was about 22 miles of hills, valleys, woods, rivers and snow-covered mountains.[3]

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1   Boycott-Brown, p. 233

2   "They were kept in a state of semi-readiness in case the enemy made any unusual moves." B-B p. 139.

3   Boycott-Brown, p. 186

This line was too far west to provide any advance warning. Part of the problem was in the lack of staff cooperation over plans of campaign. Colli did present a plan for an offensive in a meeting with Beaulieu on 6 April.

It suggested a vigorous thrust to the sea towards Savona and Finale to cut off part of the French army and defeat it in detail. Its preparation involved attracting the attention of the French towards Genoa. For the main movement it stated, "At least 16,000 men of Colli's Army and an equal number of Beaulieu's must be employed in this expedition. The former will concentrate before Ceva and the others around Cairo." On the day of the attack, feints were to be made on the heights of Voltri and Ormea, while the best troops

would take Montenotte and Monte Negino. On the right, Settepani would be attacked, and the troops would then descend to the sea. Another force would similarly advance from the area of Garessio towards Loano.[4]

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4   Boycott-Brown, pp. 148-49.

This indicates that each army was believed to have the capacity to move at least 16,000 men in an offensive. However, neither the offensive nor a proposed defensive plan was adopted.

Beaulieu rejected both of the Piedmontese plans, and it was no doubt fortunate for Bonaparte that he did, because the adoption of either of them would have made the French task much more difficult.[5]

The Piedmontese Army, for its part, remained on the defensive as ordered. Colli would probably have been reluctant to move much in any

case, as he had become worried by French activity to the south of Ceva, which seemed to him to presage as attack on his positions. He informed Beaulieu of this, but of course the latter had already made up his own mind that Genoa was the goal of French ambitions.[6]

Sérurier's men had also been involved in some minor actions with the Piedmontese, and must have looked to Colli suspiciously like a preparation to outflank Ceva and try to cut his line of retreat to Mondovi. *This almost certainly helped to discourage the Piedmontese from moving forward* into a position where they would be better placed to support the Austrians.

But an even greater incentive to stay where they were was provided by Beaulieu himself, who ... assigned Colli a largely defensive role, only asking him to 'watch the two valleys of the Bormida and Tanaro, and make demonstrations against the enemy by ably advancing his outposts.' Given that Bonaparte was hoping to separate the armies of his two enemies so that he could fight each of them in turn, he could hardly have asked for more.[7]

This decision automatically ensured that Bonaparte would succeed, but in the game other outcomes should be possible.

Entry and Supply Hexes
Napoleon Overruns Piedmont

15 (16:00) = date (time) of reinforcement
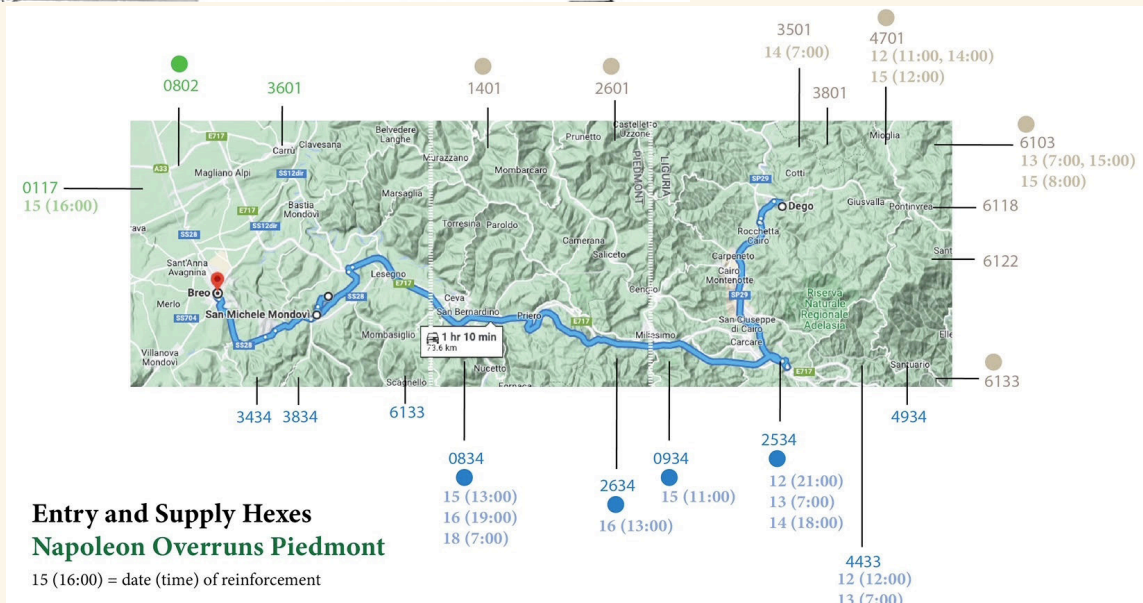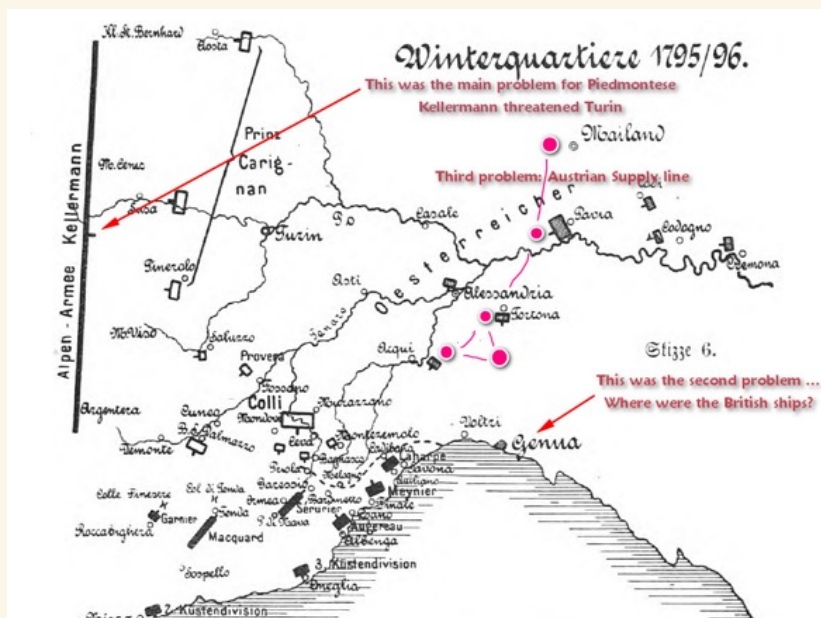
Entry and Supply Hexes graphic © Christopher Moeller

5   Boycott-Brown, p. 150

6   Boycott-Brown, p. 186. The troops of Sérurier's French division arrived south of Ceva on the 16th

7   Boycott-Brown, p. 177.

TLNB MAP DESIGN

To design a TLNB game map, you need to study the location at the operational and the strategic levels, to see how the game fits with other battles and campaigns.

Kevin Zucker

CLARITY AND PERIOD FEEL

A BOOK SUBTITLED "THE COCKPIT OF EUROPE,"[1] NOTED THAT CENTRAL BELGIUM had been the focus of many campaigns throughout history. If Hitler's Ardennes Offensive had succeeded, the panzers would have had to go through Waterloo on their way to Antwerp. Even in 1814 there was a separate campaign around Antwerp between General Maison and Bernadotte.

One major benefit of publishing in one box several battles from the same campaign, besides the savings on counters, is understanding the influence on the overall outcome of each battle, and then trying to weigh that in terms of VPs. We usually take the historical outcome of the four battles as the baseline result, and then allow you to see how an additional force or a free-setup (via the AtB), or an augmented or depleted force because of losses in prior battles, could have changed the outcome.

Folks probably think this geography is just in the cloud waiting to be downloaded intact. Actually it is hand-made, each hex is crafted. Charlie does the first pass, 95%. I go through with the history books in hand and add the remaining 5%—the mills, chateaux, hilltops and the other trappings of the time. Our source maps for *Napoleon's End* were drawn by hand in 1835, and sometimes we have to erase certain features to get back to 1814 conditions (RR and later roads).

One important objective of the graphic designer is to reduce the amount of fiddling with counters. To increase clarity, at the outset of the TLNB series, we deliberately minimized the number of terrain types. The colors of earth, blue and green are what you see. The different types are easily distinguishable—the similarity of crests and slopes was deliberate—just like they might be on the ground. Red, slightly muted, is reserved for the chateaux.

The antique feel of the maps was influenced by our military history sources. You can tell a complex story with a few colors. With each color requiring a separate plate on the printing press, simplicity was the rule. The period feel is also in the details, including the names of locations that don't have any effect on play; more than mere "decoration," they help tell the story.

DESIGN DECISIONS

Each full-size game map is 10 x 15.36 miles. But within those bounds the designer has a number of decisions to make.
1. Will the map be full or half-size?
2. Will the map stand alone or will it adjoin another map?
3. To include the important roads and rivers, what will be the compass orientation?
4. Will it have long or short hexgrain?

Where the Battlefield(s) are

We try to keep the actual battlefield toward the center so that players cannot use the map edge to anchor their lines. This gets complicated if there was more than one combat on the map.

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1 A.R. Hope Moncrieff, *Belgium Past and Present: The Cockpit of Europe* (1920)

Aligning the Main Highways

Many considerations go into the judicious placement of the map edge. The main roads are the most important in this regard, and if possible the map is oriented with the main highway down the middle, other roads leading diagonally toward the corners. We have to consider the location of the supply sources and the roads used to enter and exit. It is better if the player doesn't spend a long time marching reinforcements across the map to come up against the enemy. (For more on this topic *see Wargame Design* Vol. III, Nr. 1.)

Once the map's scope is determined, we need to clip a section of the source map that fits those boundaries. Superimposing the source map under a hexgrid, we can see how the mapedge interrupts roads and rivers. Ideally, the mapedge should be parallel to some large natural obstacle, such as a mountain or river. The final positioning of the mapedge will often be shifted at this stage.

In the next stage, for each hex Charlie will

TLNB TERRAIN TYPES
HEX · Chateau · Marsh · Town · Woods · Orchard, added later.
HEXSIDE · Bridge · Crest · Ford
· River · Slope · Stream · Trestle

make a choice of one of the above hex and hexside types. The more effectively this is done, the more historically the game will play. Charlie can begin to trace out the rivers (the most abstract), then the roads, trails, and towns. The other features are arranged around the water courses.

There are over 2,000 hexes on a full-size map and every one is hand-placed. Chuck gets to use his experience as a Civil War reinactor, where you learn first-hand about line of sight in all different types of terrain.

In many cases we can retrofit details from maps drawn during the actual year, using specialized maps of the fortresses and cities.

Over the long process of playtesting many changes emerge, such as exit and entry arrows, VP hexes, and terrain tweaks.

Redmond Simonsen laid out several principles for map development.

REDMOND ON MAPS

1. Can the basic **set-up** be printed on the map using unit-pictures or codes?
2. Can the victory conditions be expressed on the map by coding the cities or sites that may be the **objectives**?
3. Would it be useful to code **entry and exit hexes** or reinforcement sites?
4. Are there any seasonal/weather changes that can be displayed on the map without interfering with the basic terrain?
5. Are there any rules, other than victory conditions, that make some terrain feature or site important enough to warrant a **graphic emphasis**?
6. If the game involves the production of units, are there any values or devices that can be built into the map to aid the player?
7. If the sketch map indicates more than one terrain feature in a hex, which takes **precedence** (and can the map be rationalized so that there is only **one feature per hex**)?
8. Are there any superfluous terrain features on the map or are there any redundant features that can be eliminated to clarify the actual, operative terrain analysis?
9. What are the effects of the various features? Is there a **natural hierarchy** that can be expressed graphically?
10. Are there any games in print which use a similar or identical terrain system? How well does that prior system serve the present need?

Our maps achieve some of these criteria (above): Victory hexes, Entry and Exits, Graphic Emphasis (e.g., fortified town walls). Our maps fail Redmond on the set up locations, and superfluous features. The period flavor is enhanced by the inclusion of buildings that have no effect on play. Redmond was a gamer first and not a historian.

REDMOND ON MAP SYMBOLOGY

The graphic designer must make the proper choice of colors and symbology to create a map which will have high utility for the player and yet be pleasing to the eye.

The graphic designer has available to him a range of choices as to how to convey a given type

of terrain or map element. These divide into categories which I'll now list in order of their recognition value (i.e., the ease with which the average person senses the presence and meaning of the graphic element).

1. **Color and tone**
2. **Shape and pattern**
3. **Symbol**
4. **Typography and outline**
5. **Position**

What this means is that those elements most essential to the interpretation of the map should be represented by change of field color— since humans with normal eyesight most easily recognize differences in color.

the patchwork quilt of a multi-colored map can be confusing to the eye and tiresome to look at for long periods of time."

The eye evolved to see the colors of nature, greens and blues, tan, dark brown, black shadows and gray. Since we use these colors for our maps, the eye feels comfortable looking at them for long periods without fatigue. As a bonus, the coloration also keys the terrain type so you don't really need a printed terrain key.

LA FERE-CHAMPENOIS

La Fère Champenois is a battle featured in our next game, *Napoleon's End*. The game map is co-extensive with the battle map (below).[2] Because there were two simultaneous battles, it

La Bataille de Fère-Champenoise
22 mars 1814
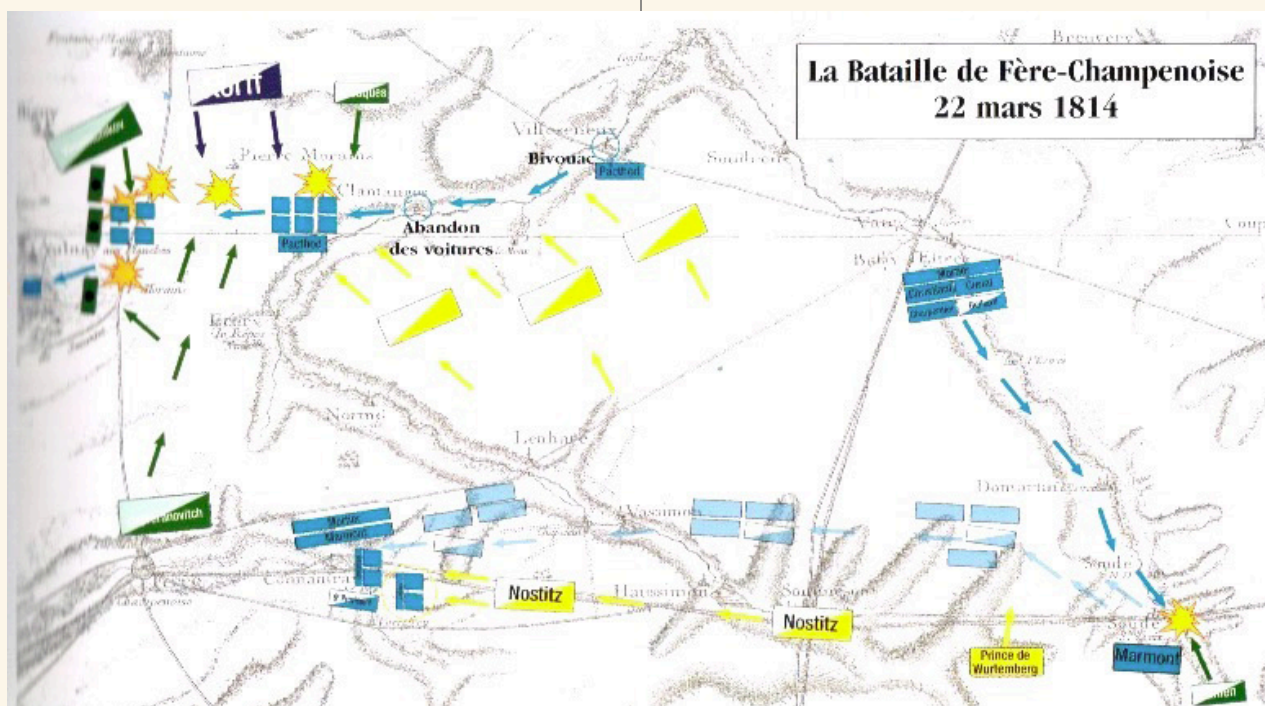
"Precedence" (No. 7 above) is a complicated issue. We often allow the woods to conceal any slopes and crests lying beneath them since the woods effect takes precedence.

"Natural Hierarchy," is probably a strength of the maps, since you can see the main roads and objectives easily. Having a hierarchy of terrain means that the important points shine out, not an overall sameness. The maps are not always good at rendering where the mountain is highest.

Redmond goes on to say, "The more colorful a map is the harder it is to read in an overall sense:

wasn't possible to place either battlefield in the center of the map.

This map refused to sit in a full-size map so we had to add a quarter panel on the right extending the map to 40". French Exit hexes on the left. You will actually be exiting onto the Champaubert map (East map) from La Patrie.

We decided to go with a 40" press sheet (instead of our usual full-size 22" x 34"). That way the approach to battle is whole. How does a lon-

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2   Hourtoulle, E.-G., 1814 La Campagne de France

ROADS AND TRAILS

At this period, a trail could be anything from a wagon route to a farm track. It might be similar to an unpaved "hiking & biking" trail in current use. "Roads" were wider, two-lane trade routes for the shipment of goods with a raised roadbed. Some of these roads dated to the Roman Empire, and many followed the banks of major rivers. In the 1770's a new category of mail routes came about in Europe to fill the demand for reliable and faster mail service. "In a period of 125 years, the French network extended itself to two and a half times its original size, growing from 10,400 km in 1708 to 27,800 km in 1833"[2] (see inset map below). These roads were laid out by engineers along the ridges and are notably straighter. Below are shown the mail routes in use at the time.

2 Nicolas Verdier, Anne Bretagnolle, Expanding the Network of Postal Routes in France, 1708-1833. https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00144669/document

1810

200 km

ger map get folded and still fit in the box?

You can fold the map on the longer side in five parts instead of the usual four, up to 42.5" and the map will be a little bit narrower.

There is only one paper manufacturer that currently has the 40" sheet in stock. We're going to buy the paper this summer to make sure of supply. Another twist: our bindery cannot do the "accordion fold," we have to send it to another bindery with a larger folding machine. Nonetheless, the end cost is lower than doing a make-ready for a separate 8.5" by 22" sheet.

But the road net fits with roads parallel to the map edge and diagonals exiting at the corners. This layout required a 40" sheet. As a bonus, this map will overlap by one hex the East map from

Geo. Nafziger, "The End of Empire"
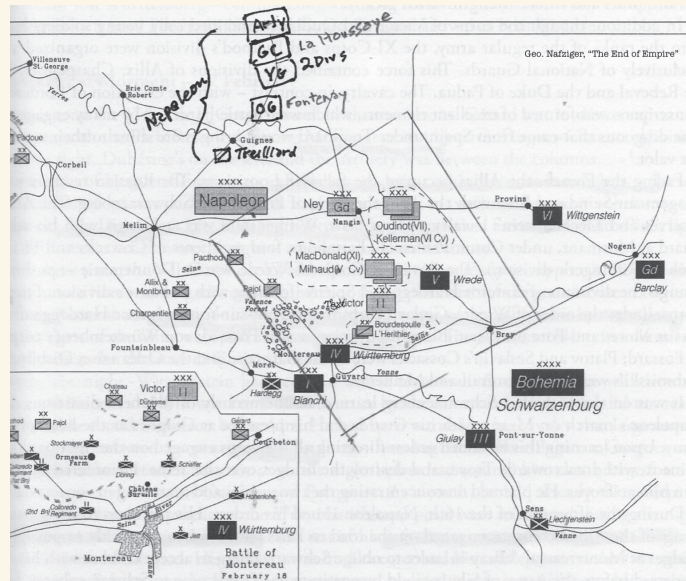
Montereau Battle Layout
Mormant (also Valjouan) 17 Feb., Montereau, 18 Feb

La Patrie en Danger (the Champaubert map).

At bottom is the track of Marmont and Mortier, (lt. blue) repulsed by the Russians and shown withdrawing by stages to the west. At top is Pacthod's division escorting a wagon train (voitures), attacked by Korff and Wassilchikov as they waited for Marmont and Mortier. They will try to exit at Aulnay.

In the Napoleonic era the road net is so optimized that (in settled flat country) the roads either run down the middle of the map or they exit at the corners. (See map above.) Historic roads naturally lay themselves out in straight lines. They do not have to twist and turn to avoid obstacles. Five roads exit directly into the corners while six roads go somewhere toward the middle. Every 45° there is an important road.

Nangis is a hub in the road network. Ney, at Nangis with the Young Guard, has 7 routes to choose from: Provins, to the east, Bray, to the southeast, Montereau to the southwest and Melun to the west. There are three more roads off to the north (possible reinforcement or retreat routes). The possible route missing is a direct road to Fontainebleau, which would have to traverse a large forest (larger than depicted on this sketch.)

Uffindell writes of the unfought battle of Troyes, that had Schwarzenberg accepted battle on the

CAMPAIGN of 1814
Scale. 1:2,000,000
English Miles
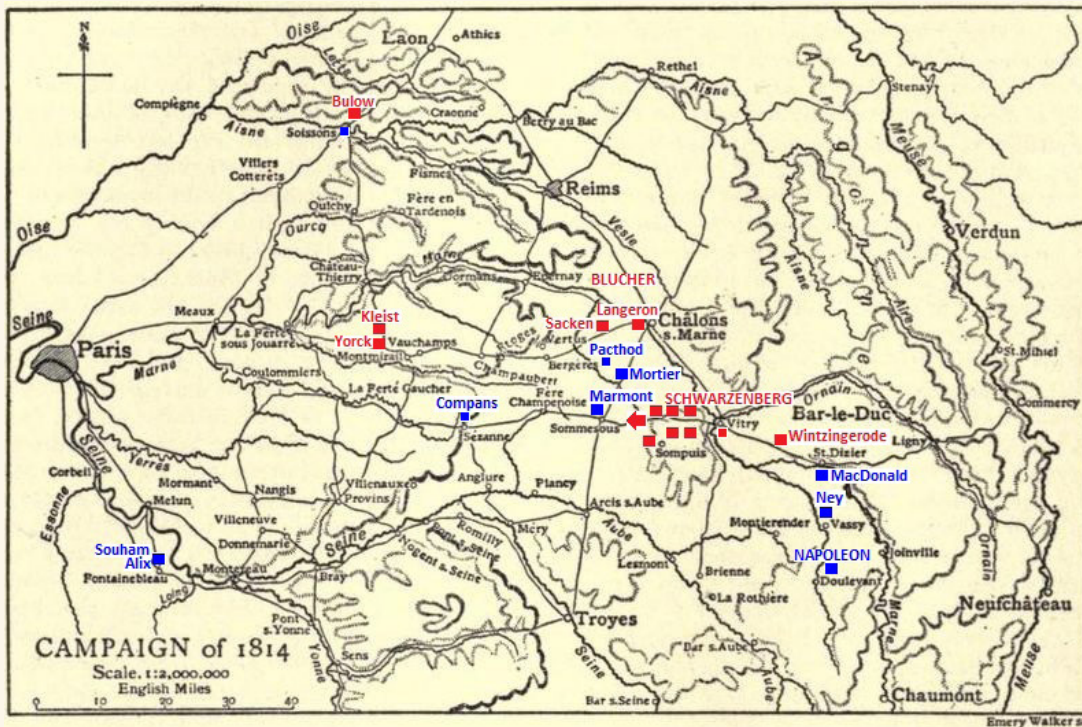
23rd of February, and lost, negotiations would very possibly have ended in a treaty. Unfortunately, the battle wasn't fought and so it is not a part of the baseline. The numbers would have been stacked against Napoleon at 1:2.

Arcis Mystery

During the night of 20-21 March Napoleon has 21-27,000 men, and Schwarzenberg is on his way to 80,000. Why Didn't Napoleon or one of his scouts notice camp fires of a large army? Such light could be seen at these distances. Tens of thousand of Russian troops were arriving. How could alert sentries have missed that?

It can only be because Radetzky, Schwarzenberg's Chief of staff, was careful to place the army behind a line of ridges, from roughly Vaupoisson on the right to Voue on the lower left.

The LOS of a French lookout post on hex 3421 is entirely blocked by the ridge, except for a space around 3831 in the middle. This is what the histories mean by the phrase, "hidden by reverse slopes." They were actually hidden in a gulley between ridges.

If you want to win you have to do due diligence. Napoleon is a pro. Either he sent one of his aides de camp to 3421 or else he was no longer a general.

3811 is 12 hexes from that hilltop. At more than 2,000 yards, troops moving across the plain ap-

pear as a dark shadow trailing dust; beyond 3,000 yards troops become invisible to the naked eye.

However, one could see, and count, their fires out to about 12 hexes (6300 yards). Why did Napoleon walk into a trap? We are told that a staff officer assured him there were only 1,000 Cossacks around, and this fit with his own conception. But it is military standard procedure to place guards and lookouts, "vedettes," toward the known enemy position, especially for the cavalry. In his prime, Napoleon was out in the night counting the fires, at Austerlitz, Jena. It is suggested by Chandler, that the officer's assurance was accepted at face value, and it was only the next day, when Sébastiani crested the ridge, that he saw an entire army lying there unexpectedly. Then and there the Emperor ordered a retreat. Luckily he had finally acquired a captured pontoon bridge. Actually, the moment when the French discover the Coalition army should be the start of the DoB.

There was no rain during the battle. It was mostly cloudy with temps above freezing and muddy (13°C on the 21st). I have not yet found reference to any fog. The horizon, when standing on a level plain, is 10 hexes- the maximum sighting distance of a fire (although the smoke of many fires could be observed beyond that). If you have let's say 60,000 soldiers, that could mean 6,000 fires. It is possible the troops were forbidden to make fires.

JOHN PRADOS

(January 9, 1951 – November 29, 2022)

THE "ARCHIVE RAT" PASSES...

Kevin Zucker

I MET JOHN PRADOS AT SPI 50 YEARS AGO, AS HE SAT WAITING FOR A MEETING WITH RED-mond Simonsen, who had been working on the cover for the "Year of the Rat" issue of *S&T*. This issue featured a Vietnam War game, and an article by the designer who sat waiting. He struck me as calm, detached, an island unto himself. His confidence was about to be tested, with Redmond on the warpath, but John held his own and his article was not edited. (Redmond, the Air Force vet, felt it necessary to publish a disclaimer.) By this time John had experienced running a game company, the short-lived Morningside Game Project, and "Year of the Rat" was his first design published outside of that project.

Redmond always argued strongly for his beliefs, but not *too* disparagingly, and he respected a sparring partner who stood his ground. Prados was one such, very good at marshalling an argument. So, even though Redmond probably suspected that Prados had strong left-leaning tendencies, he never called him a "comsymp" (for communist sympathizer, an epithet he reserved for those who he didn't bother debating). Their fateful meeting regarding Prados's article on "Year of the Rat" actually started a period of collaboration that led to the publication of the game "Spies." There is a story about Redmond urging Prados to find and develop new fields for exploration and discovery. The result was one of John's Power Politics designs, where the wargame aspect takes a back seat. Here is how John tells it.

John really thought deeply about the player experience, and he came up with the term "player overhead" to describe the effort it took the player to execute a given task.

Spies: The Games of Espionage in Europe, 1933-1939.

Redmond Simonsen of SPI asked me to do this game. He had tired of "vanilla" combat games and wanted something different. Looking at the innovations of weapons, communications technology and so forth that proved crucial in World War II, the idea of a competition for "secrets" suggested itself right away. Secrets were distributed on the board, which represented cities in Europe where one might reasonably expect to uncover them, connected by means of a route-path network. Players moved agents to capture secrets and police forces to defend them. A set of "tiles" replicated events, influenced "capture" and could disrupt the opponent's play. Spies was actually designed using cards. Simonsen, pleading high production cost, made the decision to go with tiles rather than cards. While others have laid claim to the innovation of the card-driven game, there is a fair argument to be made that Spies was the forerunner, per- haps even the first card-driven design. Some of these principles were used again in Cold War. When TSR Hobbies took over SPI, Spies was among the games they were most interested in. (Game Designers Guild **Select Award Winner.)**

John really thought deeply about the player experience, and he came up with the term "player overhead" to describe the effort it took the player to execute a given task. If the player is referencing three or four different rules and several

different charts just to perform one action, that is high overhead. What Prados and I and many others were doing in the 1970's was foundational work, creating basic terms and processes, groundwork for the future of the game. Since that time, progress in wargame design is incremental and laborious, because the basic elements are already there and they work. They are hard to avoid.

John re-designed one of his Morningside de-

> *John had a big imagination. He could track and describe the movements of hundreds of ships and aircraft, filter thousands of pages of documents and radio logs to build a compelling narrative.*

signs for OSG: *Panzerkrieg*, in 1978 (originally *von Manstein's Battles*).

I got many good ideas from hanging out with John. It was his suggestion that I start Napoleonic Tours in 1990. The hobby was in the doldrums, but this was a way to stir things up. John never got to go on those treks. He was always busy with the National Security Archives, writing articles, designing, and teaching classes in International Relations at NYU.

John's designs were well-researched and extensively-playtested. He was careful in organizing the sequence of play and liked to include "reaction phases" for armored reserves. He designed all kinds of wargames, from the Warsaw Uprising to the reduction of Berlin.

As author, John specialized in books on the CIA, the Cold War, Vietnam and the Pacific War. I created the sketch maps for many of his books. Prados was on a first-name basis with the archivists at the Presidential Libraries (Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, etc.).... To write one 500 page book Prados assembled at least 10,000 pages of documents, all printed on paper stacked around the office.

The last time I saw John we remembered the "Castle World" his girls had out on the back porch on Spruce, a place where creativity ruled. All three of them played the game and let their imaginations run wild, like a role-playing world the girls got to construct. Both of John's kids have gone on to explore imaginative careers.

John had a big imagination. He could track and describe the movements of hundreds of ships and aircraft, filter thousands of pages of documents and radio logs to build a compelling narrative ("Combined Fleet Decoded"). When it comes to firing the imagination of the player, his games are among the best. The main reason people play wargames is that palace of the imagination.

The enemy artillery seems to have found the range. "Strike the Tents."

John Prados, author

I have read about half of the 18 books listed. My favorite is "Islands of Destiny," (which I read twice) that covers the Solomons campaign in WWII. Reading Prados convinced me that the Japanese had a fatal disadvantage, that could never be overcome, because they weren't aware of it. Their codes had been broken and all their plans and fleet movements were known in advance. In "Combined Fleet Decoded," Prados writes that Rear Admiral Hasegawa Kiichi came as close as anyone to realizing that the IJN's communications had been compromised, but he was killed in action on 29 March 1944, before he could make the case to his superiors. It was too late anyhow.

The Zen of Game Design

Kevin Zucker

FROM OCTOBER OF 1972 I WORKED AT SPI AS A GAME DEVELOPER. I BURNED OUT IN short order. In the following summer I came back for another stint on 23rd Street, lasting through January 1977, at first working the front desk, and ultimately as Managing Editor.

The design staff were all crazy in their own unique way. The halls resounded with song: John Young singing "Springtime for Hitler," Berg singing the Gilbert & Sullivan patter of "The Modern Major General," Redmond singing tin-pan alley songs with his own made-up verses, like, "I want a girl just like the girl who told me to fuck off!" Or Redmond doing his impression of LBJ, intoning in a Texas twang: "My fellow Rhomboidians, I come to you with a heavy hoart."

Between the bunch of them, they had assembled a regular production line. As you might imagine, that production schedule was a lot of hard work, but it could also be fun. Not all the games were great, but the sheer volume of games produced was remarkable. The wargame hobby went from one new game a year in the 1960's to one or two new games a month.

The most prolific designer then or now was Jim Dunnigan. He seemed able to design games in his sleep. For him it was like rolling off a log. Unfortunately, he never shared his secrets. I think he was afraid some youngster would come along and knock him off his pedestal. He'd say, "I have to run as fast as I can to stay ahead of the pack." When I first came to work at SPI, I had a habit of inviting Jim to dinner once a week. We went to the "Steak 'n Brew" on 23rd Street. I plied him with ideas, but I never really learned anything about game design from him.

I did learn that he probably didn't deserve all the credit for every game that had him listed as designer. His idea of a "design" was more of a Zen Koan. For example, I was assigned to "develop" the game *Foxbat & Phantom*. Jim asked me to show up

New York in the '70's was in the middle of an alarming slump in the tax base, with no trash collection and teachers on strike.

in his office to get the design, which consisted of a single 3x5 card with notes scrawled on both sides.

Jim was a character. He had an elaborate network of yellow plastic tubes criss-crossing the walls of his office, with several gerbils scampering through them while you tried to concentrate on what he was saying. But if you complained, he'd just say, "I don't give a rat's ass!" Jim thought everything in the world could be reduced to numbers; hence his reliance on the magazine's "Feedback" system to tell him whether a proposed title would sell. He apparently reduced the employees to numbers as well. He informed me that in his estimation I was a "4-4"—an average infantry unit, not a panzer.

I walked out of that office and stared at that index card. I figured the only thing to do was to steal the design from the other tactical aerial combat game, called Flying Circus. The only problem was, that game covered WWI, when the top speed of an aircraft was around 140 mph. However, by scaling-up the game proportionally, it gave me a basis to work with.

That was the last game I developed for SPI. When I began working as Managing Editor, I started replacing Dunnigan's name with the real designer.

The problem was, SPI never made money. True to form, Dunnigan had a system for determining his costs per project. The staff were given time cards to fill out at the end of each week, and this information was duly punched and fed into the IBM-360 computer that took up a whole room on 23rd Street. There was one category called "Blue Sky," which meant you weren't working on a particular project but were just looking at the clouds or charging your batteries. I would typically list Blue Sky as my main project with around 40% of my total hours ... until they explained that I couldn't do that anymore, and I had to make up something to put down instead. The problem with the system was

the wholesale discount — the company lost $1 on each game sold to distribution. So no matter how "successful" SPI became, they couldn't make that up in volume! But this fact was hidden in *the total costs per game*, that lumped wholesale in with the lucrative direct-mail business.

In my position as Managing Editor, my direct supervisor was the Art Director, Redmond Simonsen. He was a great boss, had confidence in me, and insulated me from the interference of the CEO. Where Simonsen was polite and considerate, Dunnigan was brash and abrasive. His energy preceded him into any room, and my reaction to him was visceral. Even without seeing him, I could feel my ears go back against my head, like an angry cat!

Redmond always looked spiffy in his pegged slacks and Beatle Boots with perhaps a turtleneck sweater. He was an amateur photographer and philosopher, interested in the whole world of ideas, and loved spending an evening convincing you of his unique viewpoint. Dunnigan dressed in the same threadbare sports jacket, olive drab pants and sockless penny-loafers every day. SPI was his only hobby, and his world was limited to the Chelsea neighborhood between 23rd Street and his apartment on West 19th Street.

It was Redmond who rescued me from the front desk, by bringing me a manuscript for a Russian front game that was a total mess. While answering the phones and accepting deliveries I made an outline and reorganized the rules, and so I was moved into the Art Department, Redmond's bailiwick. But as time went on I felt that I was spending too much time in the trenches, working during deadline quite often until 9 at night. I wanted to see over the battlefield, and participate in strategic decisions. However, my demand for a promotion was refused.

When I quit the second time I signed with an agent in the publishing field, the one-man Smith Agency. The most memorable interview that came out of that was for the job of Managing Editor at *Penthouse* Magazine. I put on a suit and reported to their offices at 909 Third Avenue. As you can imagine, there were gorgeous dames all around the office, lolling on the desks. I had a look at the mechanicals for their current issue in production. It was a fat magazine, with well over 100 pages, and the stack of mechanicals was thick as a brick. In those days, each page was laid-out by hand on illustration board, using hot wax to adhere the type galleys, and rules were drawn with mechanical pens. One of the editors explained to me that the offices of *Playboy* magazine were in the building next door, and there was an open rivalry between the two organizations that would erupt in Friday night fistfights at the bar downstairs. Despite the lucrative salary they offered I didn't take the job. I thought it over though.

Instead I started Operational Studies Group.

I heard that SPI was planning to move from 23rd Street around the corner to Park Avenue South, and I knew from my experience that a move of offices could be disastrous to a publication like that. If you have moved recently, just imagine moving 25 or 30 people! Things get lost, office procedures get disrupted. I thought of OSG as a life raft for my designer friends who might soon be out of a job. It didn't turn out that way, however, and SPI held on longer than anticipated. By then I had gotten sick with Epstein-Barr Virus (the "Yuppie Disease") and I had to take the least demanding job I could land, which turned out to be in Baltimore. Frank Davis preceded me there, and advised that he hadn't produced one game in a year.

New York in the '70's was in the middle of an alarming slump in the tax base, with no trash collection and teachers on strike. However, it also provided the perfect ground for the nascent SPI. Coming or going to the company's first office, a basement in the east village, you needed to carry $20 in case you were mugged. But the snowball fights outside the office were also legendary, in the summer replaced by squirt guns. There was a tradition of the whole crew heading to Chinatown for dinner, that hadn't quite died out by the time I arrived in '72. For a few years, it was the kind of kameraderie that could spring from a common obsession with a phenomenon as strange as wargaming...

Some background to BONAPARTE *in the* QUADRILATERAL

Since 1992 I have made several tours of the battlefields around Mantova and I was lucky on those trips to make many friends who live in the area and know the countryside intimately.
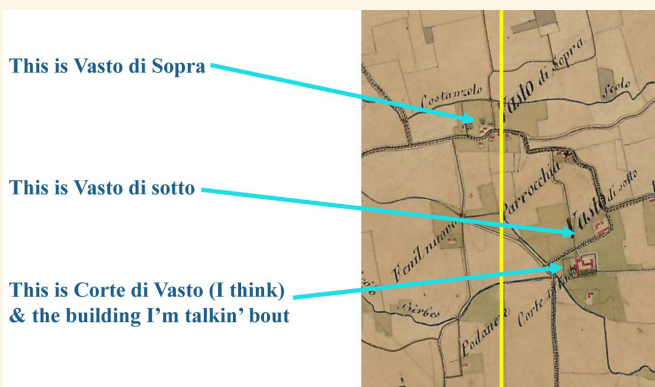
Kevin Zucker

SOME OF THESE FRIENDS ARE ENRICO ACERBI, ALESANDRO MASSIGNANI, RICcardo Rinaldi, Paolo Scannapieco, and Nicola Contardi. They all live in the general area of the campaign of 1796 and contributed details to the five maps in Quad.

We started with our main source, the Second Military Survey of the Habsburg Empire (1818-1829, sample below) but many details had to be changed to give us the exact situation of the area in 1796. It was here that my Italian friends supplied the knowledge that it would be difficult to replace by years of research. They have already spent many years on that project, and have built up a wealth of knowledge. Contardi knows the Lodi battlefield like the back of his hand. Rinaldi similarly knows the countryside around Mantova, his home. Acerbi has published 28 volumes on the subject. Scannapieco was the one who did the online research for map sources and provided the source map for Kibler to work from.

As you may imagine this process took many months, from June 8th, 2021, when the first template map was put together until December 21, when the 16th proof of the Mantova map (see sample) was ready. (The Castiglione map went through 26 proofs in the same time period.) We included not just the terrain, the woods and hills, but even the important buildings that receive mention in the histories, so that you can be sure of finding almost any detail mentioned on one of the maps. This makes the game a valuable tool for study, as well as allowing the games to play out more historically. Clear and accurate maps are a necessity for any campaign study.

Three scenarios use more than one map. One that is intriguing is the Caldiero Mini-campaign, which uses the Arcole and Rivoli maps. This allows the other arm of the Austrian pincer to intervene at Arcole. Davidovich has 18,000 men on the Rivoli map, being held off by a smaller force under Joubert (Atlas map No. 21). This covers a week of fighting and Lull days.

The Lonato Mini-Campaign uses the Castiglione map alone, and starts two days before Castiglione. This again allows for both arms of the Austrian pincer to meet at Castiglione.

Finally, the Campaign Game uses all four "quadrilateral" maps, and allows for off-map movement between maps not directly connected. (Lodi is not part of the Grand Campaign.)

The problem with the Arcole one-map simula-

This is Vasto di Sopra

This is Vasto di sotto

This is Corte di Vasto (I think) & the building I'm talkin' bout
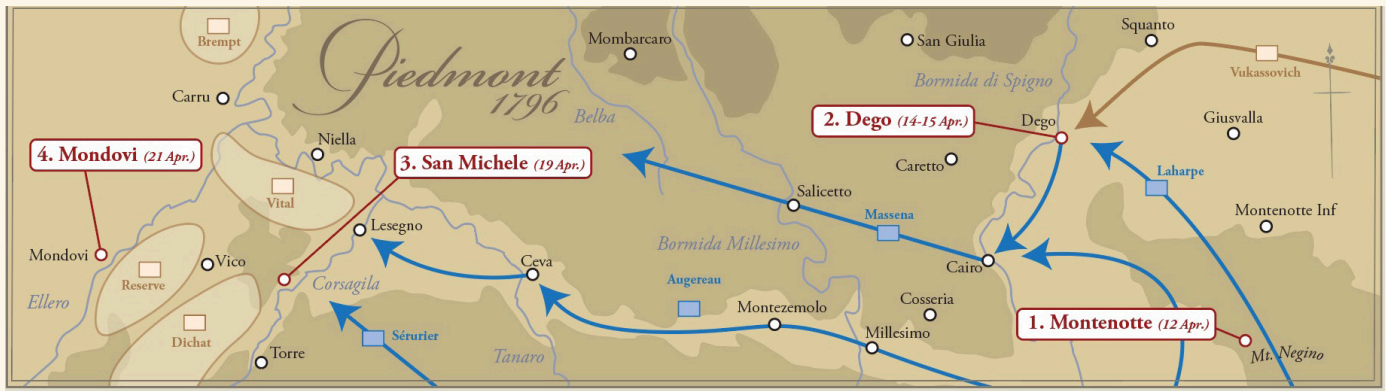
A good map reveals events in one glance.

tion. If you focus just on the battle, many of the moves make no sense. Alvinczy was endeavoring to coordinate this offensive with Davidovich.

He was just about to cross the Adige, behind Bonaparte, but he withdrew toward his Supplies when Bony crossed first. It can happen otherwise in the mini-campaign.

The Austrian pontoon trains seem to have been very heavy to move in the mud.

In 1796, the Austrians had pontoon trains with all their offensives, but they were slowed by mud. It took days for the Austrians to get their pontoons in place if the river banks were muddy. They were constantly looking for less-swampy locations. They lost most of these pontoons, if not all, by the end of January 1797.

The Causeway Bridge in
BONAPARTE *in the*
QUADRILATERAL

Andrew Hobley published an AAR on OSG's new Lodi battle game. Below is the section of his review where he talks about attacking the Causeway.

A Hobley's AAR on OSG's Lodi battle game on Boardgamegeek

I HAD STRUGGLED A BIT WITH MY UNDER-STANDING OF THE SPECIAL RULE IN THE scenario booklet, Rule 25.79 "Units must be in Road March to enter the Causeway hex. They may leave Road March in the hex and end their move there." How can the French attack the causeway? Working it through step by step, and assuming the choice of words in each rules section is deliberate, Kevin has confirmed this is what happens.

The rules on Combat say nothing about having to 'enter' an enemy hex to attack it. You just have to be in a ZOC. So the French can move into the Town hex (1416) with normal movement. They stop in the enemy ZOC from the causeway. In the combat phase they must fight the Austrian artillery. Let us assume they get a DR or similar. The Austrians vacate the causeway. The French can now Advance after Combat under rule 12.4.

The Advance rules do not use the word 'enter' – they use 'advance'. So the French do NOT have to be in Road March to advance after combat and occupy the causeway hex. And they do not have to be in Road March to attack out of the causeway hex. But once the French have captured the chateau and move off the bridge any reinforcements crossing the causeway must enter in Road March. And this means while on the causeway (going back to 7.53) the French cannot be reinforced – they will need a leader in the attacking stack so they can advance all undemoralised infantry in the stack if successful (12.4B).

I asked Hobbes if he allowed stacks to move across the bridge. I think there is nothing to prevent this.

A Hobley comments:

Do the scenario rules require a clarification? It may not hurt—a lot depends on how the reader's brain works—and what assumptions they bring. I have learnt—partly from Mr. Zucker's explanations of the rules—you sometimes have to work through step by step, leaving your suppositions behind. And then it all makes sense. But a clarification may prevent some unnecessary rule questions.

My reading is the rules say nothing about stacks NOT advancing across a causeway as part of Advance After Combat. But units cannot be stacked and move across a Causeway in the Movement Phase as they have to be in Road March and cannot stack in Road March. (Units NOT in Road March can move over a regular Bridge or Trestle in a stack, as nothing says they cannot.)

And did he use 12.33 Retreats Across Bridges?

If I didn't use 12.33 I should have. After all a Causeway in my mind is a sub-category of Bridge.

Attachments:
https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0443/6423/4910/files/BitQ_Update_6.2.22_K.pdf?v=1654255746

https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0443/6423/4910/files/Quad_SetUp_v2.27_K.pdf?v=1654259040

People ask different questions for different reasons. Like me, they want the history lesson. They want to play the game, or they just want to dissect the corpse of the game and show their cleverness.

GAME QUESTIONS
ARE ALWAYS WITH US

GAME QUESTIONS TAKE MANY FORMS. ASIDE FROM FINDING OUT THE ANswer, each writer sometimes has his own hidden agenda. For example, when I was in High School, 15 years old, I wrote a letter to the Avalon Hill Co., pointing out the total inaccuracy of the Volksgrenadier regiments in "Battle of the Bulge." (I had seen the real orbat.) Tom Shaw wrote back, dispatching my complaint with, "the pot calling the kettle black." He must have thought, "Who does this little twerp think he is?"

At SPI, where I worked in my twenties, the game question letters were 3 pages long and effusive. We made it a point to answer them all. This drudgery was passed along usually to the newbie, but at one point Frank Davis got fed up with the chaotic and inconsistent answers being given out, and set up several 3-ring notebooks: one for issue games, one for the quads, and one for the stand-alone titles. The answers were printed in MOVES. Frank would clip these articles and file them under the appropriate game title in the binders, so you could see if a similar question had already been asked. Frank, probably alone, had the tidiness of mind to get that all organized.

On the other hand, now and again a gamer will point out some obscurity and act like he doesn't understand, in order to make us look dumb too. It's like trophy hunting.

At OSG we have a similar system, overseen by Dick Vohlers. Dick makes regular sweeps of game questions and does the updates, making sure they are posted on Napoleongames.com

Unfortunately—with the exception of misprints and the like—the same question doesn't often reappear. People ask different questions for different reasons. Like me, they want the history lesson. They want to play the game, or they just want to dissect the corpse of the game and show their cleverness.

This constituency spends time on a fishing expedition, looking for flaws in the rules. I don't know why it is always the rules in particular, but trying to understand things with only language and no imagination must be frustrating, especially when there is a language barrier.

Question:

OK, have to ask, how does one get on the 7,8 line on the bombardment table. I don't see the rule or chart to get a +1 or +2. I've looked and am missing it on Combat modifiers…help.

OSG provides, as it ought to, the service of answering questions—as long as people are really trying to play the game. I am happy and thrilled to do so, because the play is OSG's goal #1. Everyone who actually plays will have questions, because we all have different minds. These gamers will have our support. That is understood.

On the other hand, now and again a gamer will point out some obscurity and act like he doesn't understand, in order to make us look dumb too. It's like trophy hunting.

Recently it was asked how the TLNB rules provide for Commander Movement during the night. Thank goodness Vince was there to suavely handle it. I flipped through the rules and didn't find much (more on that below). Tens of thousands of games have been played with these same command rules and no one has had a problem with commanders moving at night.

5.21 says "Commanders have … a Movement Allowance of 10." It *doesn't* say, "except at night." In the absence of any qualifying information, one has to conclude that Commanders have 10 MPs to expend on every turn.

Still, what are we to do, players? This should be a priori knowledge. If you have read one book on Napoleon you would know that he moved around at night when necessary. In addition there is this rule:

26.17 Leader in a town throughout the Night: Each player receives 1/2 VP for every friendly Leader who remains in a town from 6PM to next 6AM inclusive.

A player should be able to trust his own judgement and draw the obvious conclusions. If you want to slow down the pace of night movement for leaders, great!

There must be something in the stars, however, because on the same date I received the following two questions. Both refer to our second edition *Four Lost Battles.*

Dick Vohlers writes:

Regarding the Bombardment Table modifiers, at the first two pages of the four-pager or at the blue card. Both have the Combat Tables on one side and the (exquisitely-named)

Vohlers page on the other. Both of those pages show positive modifiers for Enfilade Fire, use of the Grand Battery card, and use of the Point Blank Fire card.

Question:

The Weather Effects Table for MUD says:
MP Costs= -1; x2 Train/Art
What's the meaning of -1?

Kevin Zucker writes:

It costs an additional MP per hex Gamer replies: I excluded that because of 25.72, last dot: "The max MP Cost increase from all effects is x2". Are you saying 25.72 is wrong?

Nicola Contardi writes:

It is also my experience: someone is asking for something which only requires one step of induction from the rules as written. This may be caused because they have a different basic rule in mind, or, worst case, they have an intent against the game, the designer, the company or what else. The second case should be disregarded in my opinion.

The first case is different, good faith is implied. Maybe a note at the head of any rulebook should specify what is obvious, that rules should be implemented as written and with good sense, giving some example... is this too much? :-)

Eugene Rodek writes:

A lot has changed in the 60 years since this hobby developed. It used to be, one had to write to get an answer to a rules question, as simple as those early games were. Today there is the internet and therefore more easy to access designers and game companies with questions. So, personally, while I may hit a rule that is unclear in my mind, I am more inclined to play by my interpretation rather than bug the maker of the game. Others may feel differently.

We long time gamers also grew with the games as they developed. What seems clear to us may not be so clear to someone delving into a new series or game. And therefore, because of ease of access, ask more questions.

The "desire" for games to cover more and

more detailed aspects of an event, battle or war, as well as the desire to give people in different parts of the world, a uniformity of play (in part so that they can play across the globe) has created a larger set of rules to help clarify those aspects and in that way add to the "realism" of the game. Just look at the original NLB compared to NLG (or the 1st ed of La Bat compared to the multiverse that exists today).

So, perhaps one way to look at it is not necessarily the fishing, or flawed, or zero thinking capacity POV (though they certainly exist), but a genuine interest in learning these games by people who have not had the depth or breadth of gaming experience that many of us have had.

A somewhat parallel example. I have been in electron microscopy for 40 years. I spend a vast amount of time answering questions about various products we carry. I try to put up as much information about our products on the website including instructions so that a customer can find all they need. And yet, I get constant questions, people asking about some spec that isn't there, or wonder about a line in a use instruction that we have had in place for 30 years. The ease to which users and customer can ask these questions is far more easy than having to find it themselves in a book, or trying it out themselves, etc. But that is part of the nature of being able to reach a greater range of information that we were once able to do.

Kevin Zucker writes:

I guess everyone knows Nicola's company, Europa Simulazioni. It is true that there are those two groups - well-intended, and the opposite - those who are trying to find something "broken" with the rules; but there is a third group…

(3) Those who get a wrong impression about something stuck in their heads. This mistake might not even be the rule they are focused on, but it colors their understanding of the rule and your response. These are the hardest questions to answer, because you don't know how to locate what is really wrong.

(4) Another fairly widespread kind of ques-

tion you get is when the player is in the middle of a game and is twisting the rules into spaghetti in order to obtain the ruling he needs to gain advantage in the ongoing game.

We have an obligation to answer (1) and (3), but with (2) and (4), our answers will not be liked.

I much prefer when the players will "F.I.O." - figure it out.. The ones who have "a genuine interest in learning …" usually come in three varieties:
1. They want the game to be the way they want it to be, and won't accept it when we inform them otherwise.
2. They want to understand the game without playing it. They think that everything about the game should be literally in the rules.
3. They understand the game well and the answers we give are accepted.

When answering questions I of course open the rules and search for the paragraph, read it, and then answer. I think it is fair to require that Joe Gamer respect my time, because for me it really does take focusing on a question for a time before you can make sense of it. Their misconception is built-in to the sentence and hidden in there…

One has to work backward from the question to reveal the misunderstanding that leads to the question. Quite often the questioner does not explore a rule's appearance in the other places it might come up but instead simply goes to the main heading. What works the best is adding up two or more rule sections to come to the correct conclusion.

One then has to disabuse the questioner. That is not a criticism, it's just a fact of life for us!

HOW TO SEARCH TLNB RULES

Search for exact terminology; e.g., "Retreat."
"Retreat" is defined in 12.3. The concept appears in 10.2, 12.51, 13.38-39, 13.5, 14.23, 18.13-16 and 23.15..

The designer is designing a game, not a historical document.

MISCONCEPTIONS OF DESIGN
& WHAT A DESIGNER REALLY DOES

Kevin Zucker

I ENCOUNTER LOTS OF GAMERS IN MY LINE OF WORK, AND YOU WILL FIND ALL TYPES; but they have in common an intelligence and curiosity which is very good. They like to ask challenging questions. They really want to find out the truth, and their bullshit detectors are fine-tuned. They may know a good deal about the history, or at least they have played some games and studied the era.

Sometimes with their chutzpah they skip to the wrong conclusions, especially as to what they imagine wargame design is all about. You can see in the way they formulate their questions that they are trying to get the designer to agree on what *should* be covered in the game, and *how*. They tend too far to the factual side and don't understand the art of abstraction at all.

One of the fun things about TLNB are its many departures from the common Napoleonic bells and whistles. These differences give it its character. For those used to another game, the TLNB rules may trip them up until they finally drop their assumptions. When they write, their questions might not make sense. The design they *want* is their reference point, not the published game. Some players just want lots of special rules for handling one of a kind situations. That satisfies their sense of completeness and accuracy, but at the total loss of playability.

The designer is designing a game, not a historical document. Playability has to be above a certain threshold. The gamer-historian doesn't care about playability. He doesn't understand that we need the competition-gamers as well as uniform buffs, Napoleon fans, even Zucker aficionados. All of those groups are looking for some-thing slightly different, but it is our balanced commitment to all the different groups that makes the TLNB line successful.

> *Adjusting a design based on gamers' feedback is part of the work of the designer. "Feedback" may come in a vast variety of forms, but it is up to us to elicit what is essential and what is not.*

The second worst thing a designer can do is to argue with the player who has a false notion about game design and what a designer does, the "how." But the No. 1 worst thing he can do is to cave and modify his design to meet the demands of the audience. He's got to stick to his guns even though the internet followers don't understand. They are a small cohort. He has to refer to his Design Intent and remember why he began this design in the first place.

I do pay close attention to player feedback, player comments and suggestions, and I implement some of it. However, there have been other times where I regretted making changes. In the 1997 edition of NAB I acceded to gamers demands for too heavy weight on combat. This conflicted with the Design Intent, to have room in a playable game for Command, Attrition, Administration and Combat.

What is PLAYABILITY?

Kevin Zucker

Playability is my top goal; everything else depends on it.

THE TERM "PLAYABILITY" IS GENERALLY USED WITHOUT ELABORATION AS though everyone knows what it means. They know it when they see it! However, a designer needs to know how to "bake in" playability; like a cake recipe. You know whether a cake is delicious or not, but how does someone create a new cake recipe? If it is all trial and error, then there is not much one can do to help.

Playability is my top goal; everything else depends on it. Playability is a multi-faceted topic, comprised of at least seven attributes:

- **Satisfaction:** Is the overall experience satisfying or is it frustrating?
- **Learning:** Is it easy to understand the game?
- **Efficiency:** Does the player have an efficient handle to meet the challenges presented by the game?
- **Motivation:** Is the player able to see and guide his forces along a pathway to victory?
- **Immersion:** Does the player believe in the game world? Is the historical detail convincing?
- **Emotion:** The involuntary impulse, feelings and reactions.
- **Socialization:** The degree that the game promotes social interaction.

These attributes are reflected in play in several ways:

Intrinsic Playability:

Game design implementation. One player wrote about *Terrible Swift Sword*: "I've played this more than any other wargame. I have no idea if it is an accurate simulation, and I don't care! This game is amazing." That is one kind of playability—call it sheer gamery—getting swept up in the play of the game. This is a necessity of a good game. It derives from a compelling sequence of play narrative; and then not mucking it up too much with exceptions and interruptions. (A recent example in TLNB would be the addition of the extra steps for Artillery Reaction Fire and CBF. This new step (2A) is definitely an interruption of the flow of the game, but it is balanced by the potential Arty result, making it well worth the effort.)

Mechanical Playability:

Are the game mechanics player-friendly? John Prados uses the term "Player Overhead" for this aspect of playability—how much effort is required to play the game—or a given mechanic. The effort must be balanced by the player's perceived benefit; is it worth the trouble? Not everyone is interested in special HC charges. The game's components entail an inherent level of friction. Set-ups, too much math and too many die-rolls ("Wristage") can make the game a slog. After the rules are learned, how often do the players have to reference the rule book? Having to rely on memory for modifiers reduces playability. Can

the game be easily played with just the charts and tables? Quick Reference Sheets are the most important tool for improving this aspect of playability. Flow charts and checklists are essential for exceptions to the normal rules.

Interactive Playability:

The player interface depends upon Graphic *Systems*. "Given this large burden on the player, the challenge to the graphic designer is clear: make the information the player uses clear, organized, accessible, and pleasing to look at for long periods of time... The tables and charts should be well-integrated and logically formatted; the terrain symbology should be a development of a consistent approach; the rules should be presented in a systematic, accessible format, etc. ... Wrong design choices can conspire in such a subtle manner that the gamer may not be able to pinpoint *why* the game is troublesome but he'll be aware that something is wrong and is preventing him from getting the most out of the game."[1] Too many small, crowded, hard to read counters in stacks covering terrain or objectives, with information constantly hidden, make it hard to play.

Artistic Playability:

The aesthetics of the graphic art. "Properly used, decoration helps the player to *relate* his activity in the game to the historical activity being simulated. ... Decoration is information—unnecessary information—which if present in overabundance distracts the player from the truly important, game-play information he must have."[2] Artsy fonts, low contrast colors, busy art designed to assist immersion also *reduce* playability.

Personal Playability:

The vision, perceptions, and feelings the game evokes. At the early stages of a design I like to sit in a certain nearby park and admire a row of 12 great Oaks, and try to summon the image of the next game, using the feeling and intuition; con-

templating the overall player experience I want to impart. As you go along, if a given piece of design clutters up that experience, then you either remove that piece or tear it apart and put it back together.

Social Playability:

The intensification of the above when played against an opponent. A long down time (30+ minutes) for the non-moving player is detrimental to a game's enjoyment. The most realistic aspect of the game is the conflict of wills with that opponent sitting across the table from you. At key moments your pulse quickens, you get nervous and make mistakes, and may watch events spiral out of control. That is the historical lesson in a nutshell.

Redmond, as Graphic Systems Designer, seeks to artistically tie-together all the disparate components into a working system. A system is a collection of guiding principles, concepts, rules, and components that interact to function purposefully as a whole.

DISCUSSION

Artistic Playability includes things like the colors chosen, the paper used for maps, and decoration. Colors are used to denote nationality. Colors should harmonize so that units in play present no color clashes.

Why is Russia brown? Kevin has given an answer but it is mysterious. My feeling is it was a throwback to his old SPI days. Something about Redmond's color choices and the limited printing options are in his blood. So when he decided on Russia's colors it just felt right. The Russians in Napoleon at Bay are also brown ...

Color choices are tremendously important to a designer or artist, but people don't get that they are contextual. They think "it's supposed to be green! Why'd you make it brown!?" People who don't work with color may not get it. And yes, people also want to be surprised and delighted. That's our job, even if some folks are bothered that our color choices are "wrong."
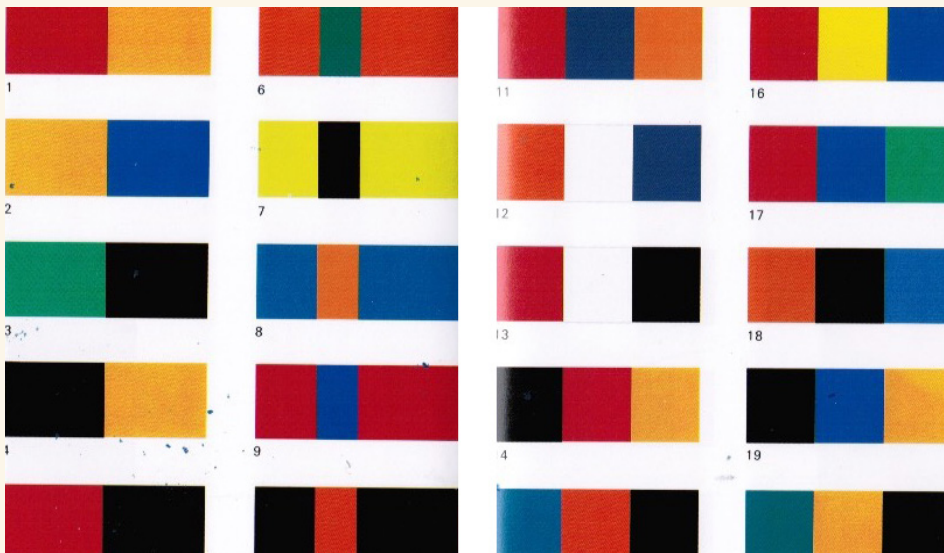
—Christopher Moeller

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1 Redmond Simonsen, in *Wargame Design, Strategy & Tactics Staff Study Nr. 2, pp. 46-47.*

2 Redmond Simonsen, in *Wargame Design, Strategy & Tactics Staff Study Nr. 2, p. 48.*
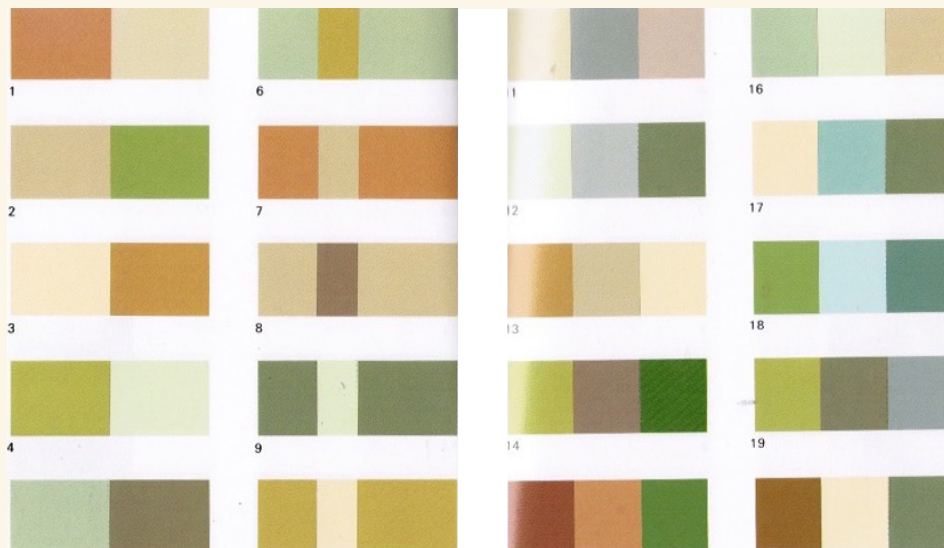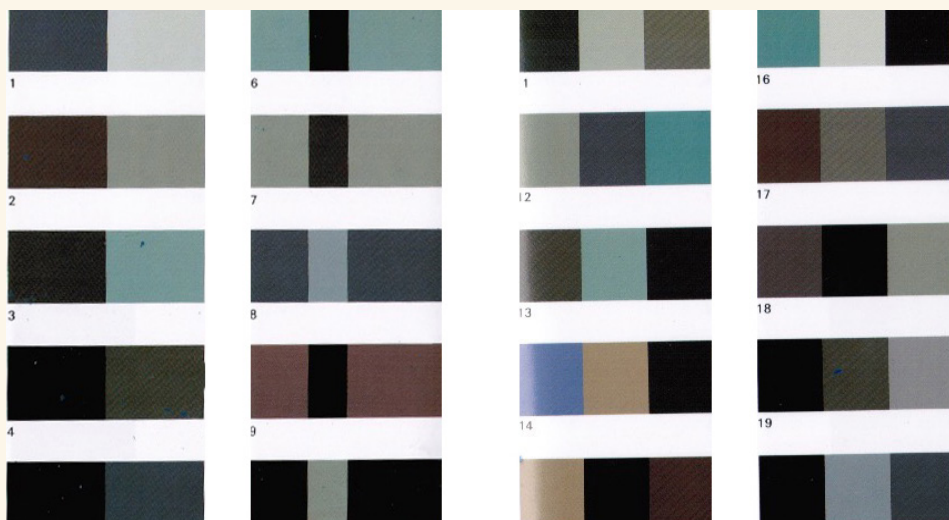
Arcadian Colors

Dynamic Colors

Resolute Colors

I agree that following uniform colors makes a lot of sense, especially for those immersed in uniform lore. However, most gamers aren't; these are just the cognoscenti who are writing these things. They know too much.

For you and I, for artists and graphic designers, there are powerful subconscious associations connected to different colors. One group of colors, called "Arcadian," reproduces the colors of nature. Those are the colors we use on the maps.

Now, we want a contrasting color scheme for the counters. Primary, strong colors are the easiest to pick out on the map. Red always stands out.

Arcadian Colors: Let's say you are about to paint the Borodino battlefield while the battle is going on. What colors of paint did you bring along? Arcadian colors, plus the colors of armies—metal, leather, muddy uniforms, and of course, blood. Wagons were painted green, to hide in woods.

OSG counters use historical associations, such as metal for Prussia. Bismarck's "Blood and Iron," or panzers of WWII, blood and steel are constantly repeated in German history. For the French, a tint of the actual uniform color subliminally brings associations of the sky or sea. The blue we used for the French line is not as dark as the "Dynamic" blue above, but is reserved for the Imperial Guard. The Dutch use the orange above; Brits and Poles are red. Our Markers are yellow, orange red and gray.

It might interest you to know how we determined the counter colors in our Napoleonic Operational Series of games, since it doesn't correspond to the uniforms exactly. The Russians were supposed to be a mud color, the 'average' color of the earth after it has been churned up by an army. The color we chose was a slightly darker cousin to PMS 469 – PMS 4695.

The counters use Dynamic and Resolute Colors—the Polish are the blood. The Saxons are leather. The Rheinbund Germans are from the forest.

Where the troops marched, one would see, from high above, only an amber dust in the summer or thick mud mixed with ice and snow. The men themselves appear as a dark shadow moving across the earth.

Metaphorically, the game is a struggle between the earth and sky. In the *I-Ching*,[3] an army is associated with ground water in the earth. The army arises out of the earth and returns there. During the French occupation of Moscow, a new Russian army virtually rose out of the earth, with 20,000 Cossacks who wreaked such havoc.

Intrinsic Playability:

John Hill calls it "Design for Effect." I would define it as a high level of abstraction that still produces the desired outcome. But one essential ingredient of Playability is the narrative, so you cannot just make it up! It all has to make sense. All the designer can do to achieve Intrinsic Playability is draw a shape around the design, and cut off everything not inside that line.

Mechanical Playability:

This means ease of handling (Heuristics). You don't want to be flipping pages and scanning tables. The Player aids should be like a tryptich, leading the eye to the needed info. OSG's TLNB 4-pager does this. This 4-pager (designed by Brendan Clark) contains most of the info you need to play a turn, along with the Annotated Sequence of Play and the blue Combat Card (with Vohler's Notes to those tables). You can actually play the game with 7 or 8 pages of reference material, plus scenario info. We have provided enough combat tables so that everyone can have one handy. We have standardized the gray card for Turn Record Tracks, and green for weather. French cards are blue and the Coalition vary between tan, ivory, and salmon color. The Reorganization card is always yellow. Weather is on green.

CONCLUSION

If you have fun with the game and don't notice the interface, that is good systems design. If you get lost looking for things among ill-assorted components, that isn't it!

Some mainstream dictionaries do not define 'Playability'; for example, *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. That is surprising, because it is an accepted word; but, perhaps understandable, given the fairly lengthy definition it might require, to define the intrinsic qualities of rendering something complex more accessible and easier to understand. It is an art, not a science.

While "Playability" can be defined in terms of the seven attributes listed above, it cannot be measured. There is no easy recipe to combine those attributes and reflect them into a form of general playability. Good design and development involves the assembling and integration of the game components; which, taken as single pieces, can exhibit some degree of playability, but, as a whole, could fail in working together to produce a really playable game. A game after all is a typical non-linear system (with unpredictable behavior), where a slight change in one component could generate high waves of instability elsewhere. Such factors prevent the designer from foreseeing playability at the beginning of the project or measuring it at the end.

Furthermore, playability often comes at the expense of historicity—the ability of a game to produce plausible outcomes. In theory, a good design is one where these two factors are well balanced and optimized.

With all these limitations, can we still confer Playability a value? It is the Holy Grail for designers and players.
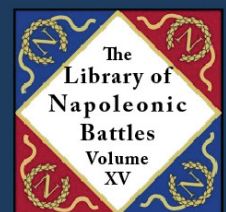
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3 *I-Ching* or Book of Changes, Wilhelm, Ed., Hexagram 7, The Army

La Chute de Napoleon

NAPOLEON'S
End

		BATTLE NAME	Mo	Day	Year	Location	Victor	General	France	General	Coalition	Forces	Type of Battle	Maps	Turns	
		1814: Campaign in France, Part III														
Marmont	77	Mormant	2	17	1814	France	French	Napoleon	19,000	Pahlen	4,300	Russia/Austria	Approach March/Rearguard Action	1	8	Time Runs Out
	78	Montereau	2	18	1814	France	French	Napoleon	30,000	Eugen	15,000	Austria/Württ	Frontal Attack	1	11	
	79	Arcis-sur-Aube	3	21	1814	France	Coalition	Napoleon	30,000	Schwarzenb.	100,000	Austria	Approach March/Counterattack	1	10	
	80	La Fère Champen	3	25	1814	France	Coalition	Marmont	21,000	Eugen	28,000	Württ	Rearguard Action	0.5	7	

With the Coalition armies converging on Paris, Napoleon and his Marshals were unable to stem the flood tide of history. Elba, and the Hundred Days, were to follow.

NAPOLEON'S END

1814: Campaign in France, Part III

Our next game presents four battles on the Seine February-March 1814

Publication Date: February 2024

BATTLES SIMULATED

The first of the four battles occurred on the 17th and 18th of February, the last two in late-March. Mormant took place 3 days after the Battle of Vauchamps, covered in "La Patrie en Danger," and Arcis followed 8 days after Reims, from "Napoleon Retreats." With all three you can contemplate a 12-battle Grand Campaign.

Mormant A Fighting Rear Guard, 17 February 1814

After his victory at Reims, Napoleon moved south to threaten Schwarzenberg. The French army under Napoleon began the counteroffensive with an attack 50 km southeast of Paris against a division of Russian troops under Count Pahlen. Pahlen's outnumbered force was enveloped and nearly destroyed, with one-third of his men escaping. Later in the day, a French column encountered an Austrian-Bavarian rearguard at Valjouan. It was mauled by French infantry and cavalry, before withdrawing behind the Seine.

Montereau The Seine and Yonne Bridges, 17-18 February.

Napoleon approached a corps Austrian and Württemberg troops. The Allied commander ordered a withdrawal, but 17 February saw his rear guards overrun or brushed aside. Ordered to hold Montereau until nightfall on the 18th, the Crown Prince of Württemberg posted a strong force on the north bank of the Seine. All morning the Allies stoutly held off a series of French attacks. However, the lines buckled in the afternoon and the troops ran for the single bridge to their rear. The French cavalry got among the fugitives, capturing the spans over both the Seine and Yonne Rivers and seized Montereau. The Allied force suffered heavy losses and the defeat confirmed Schwarzenberg's decision to continue the retreat to Troyes.

Arcis-sur-Aube Time Runs Out, 20-21 March 1814.

The Austrian Schwarzenberg pulled his army back to Troyes and Arcis-sur-Aube. The French under Napoleon arrived and attacked the town, but the normally cautious Schwarzenberg determined to fight it out rather than retreat. The clashes on the first day were inconclusive and Napoleon mistakenly believed he was following up a retreating enemy. On the second day, the French advanced to high ground and

discovered 74,000 to 100,000 enemies in battle array south of Arcis. Napoleon suddenly realized he was massively outnumbered, and ordered a retreat. By the time the Austrians discovered the retreat, most of the French had already disengaged and the Allied pursuit failed to prevent their safe withdrawal.

La Fère Champenois The Marshals Entrapped, 25 March

After losing the Battle of Arcis-sur-Aube, the Emperor moved east. He hoped to draw the Coalition armies away from Paris by threatening their supply lines, but this ploy failed in its intent. Meanwhile, Marmont and Mortier were marching to join Napoleon, pursued by Field Marshal Blücher's Army of Silesia. As the two marshals moved east north of Arcis-sur-Aube they unexpectedly collided with Schwarzenberg heading west and Blücher moving south. Finally realizing they were marching into a trap, they began withdrawing west. After six hours of orderly retreat, a violent rainstorm made musket fire difficult. The French were steadily driven back and completely routed by aggressive Allied horsemen and gunners, suffering heavy casualties and the loss of most of their artillery. Two divisions of French national Guards under Pacthod, escorting a nearby convoy, were also attacked and wiped out at Bannes. With the corps of Marmont and Mortier collapsing, the Allied capture of Paris was inevitable and the Battle of Paris followed on 30 March.

Napoleon's End contains:
• **Four 22" x 34" maps**
• **560 die-cut units**
• **15 player aid cards**
• **Two rulebooks**
• **Game Box**

OPERATIONAL STUDIES GROUP

BULLETINS

Nigel Ashcroft

Since the series rules have developed into a detailed robust system now the games are absolutely fantastic. The quality is superb and I just love the maps and the counter art is also excellent. I especially like how the playbook has a good synopsis of the subject matter covered by each game. As my favourite campaigns are the 1805/09 Austrian campaigns and 1813 and 1814, your games are not only great games to play but are very interesting as a tool to appreciate the campaign as I read about it. I am just starting *La Patrie en Danger* as I read George Nafziger's 1814 book.

Keep the excellent games coming as they have given me many hours of pleasure over the years.

QUIZ

Who are the four people sitting around the table, and what is the event?

HINT: His lunches were hasty—less than ten minutes— and even family dinners rarely exceeded twenty minutes.

ANSWER BELOW

OSG's Special Study Nr. 4 mentions a dinner on 27 June 1807 with the two Emperors and the Grand Dukes of Berg and Constantine (the Tsar's brother). The next day the King of Prussia arrived. The King was included at dinner for the first time on 3 July. Napoleon is described as offering a toast to the Queen of Prussia, who was to arrive at Tilsit the next day, July 4.

QUICK TAKE ON QUAD

Guus Ingenluyff

I have been soloing my way through *BitQ* scenarios. It has been good fun and quick with the smallish forces of 10-20 pieces each.

They have a very different feel with the French Army of Italy. Almost all infantry, and with an initiative of 3&4. Unburdened by artillery, the French infantry races around the countryside even in bad weather. The flip side is no soak off bombardments and no combined arms either. Similarly with minimal cavalry there are no charges and some of the cards become unplayable.

The Austrians aren't too shabby roughly the same numbers but with artillery and cavalry. Austrian initiative has a lot of 2&3s vs French 3&4s. Austrian leaders are mostly 3s whereas the French leaders are mostly 4s. The big difference is in the commanders Napoleon's 3 vs Alvinczi's and Wurmser's 1. The Austrians look good on defence but will have a harder time on attack or reacting to maneuvre.

Caldiero had the Austrians entrenched on the ridge. The French bounced off a few times then decided to shield with Augereau while Massena tried to outflank around the south. While that was happening the Austrians rolled their initiative two turns in a row and counter attacked Augereau. Augereau came off worse and the French decided to pull back. A bit risky for if the Austrians had missed their initiative on the subsequent turns they would have been badly exposed.

On to Arcole. The French only gained Arcole across the bridge but not the other two objectives. The next day the Austrians send Provera with most of hist corps to Villanova and Arcole. That made it much harder for the French and they didn't make it.

Castiglione had the Austrians miss most of

their initiative rolls and getting pummeled.

The Lonato mini campaign saw the French reach Castiglione on the first day and the Austrians reach Soferino. Augereau had the MPs to get to Soferino but the Austrians just beat him to it in enough strength to back off and try the next day with Massena and Napoleon on his side. With three days to play the Austrians thought they'd have a good chance of getting 3 or 4 of the reinforcements which would tip the scales. One brigade of Melas' division arrived on day 1. The rest of Melas' division arrived late morning on day two and the lead of Quasdanovich arrived late on day two. The Austrians rolled much of their initiative on day 2. The -9VP for the reinforcements are offset by the 5VP each for Castiglione and Solferino. So one option for the French is to march to Lonato and thrash Quasdanovich. Wurmser will have a hard time chasing as only one of his corps is guaranteed to move each turn. Should Wurmser chase hard he would likely be dispersed and vulnerable on a fourth day.

Lodi, Rivoli and Mantua are to follow.

James Holloway

I'm just checking to see if there is a second edition of "The Coming Storm" or a war-game including Putulsk and Eylau scheduled for the next year. I am asking because I have an opportunity to buy the 2010 edition, but likely won't if you have a new edition or reprinting in the works. Eylau is, honestly, the reason I got into wargaming—first with the Tiller system (WDS) and now with board games. (Also, FWIW, Alex Mikaberidze is planning a volume on Eylau/Friedland from the Russian perspective, probably for publication next year.)

In which regards, thank you for your magnificent games. They are quite obviously the product of love and an obsessive devotion to detail with the highest respect for gamers and history nerds like me (I have five shelves of Napoleonic books).

Dîner de Tilsit entre l'Empereur Napoléon, le Tsar Alexandre Ier de Russie, le roi de Prusse, Frédéric-Guillaume III et le grand Duc de Berg (Murat). (Crédit: @Rue des Archives/Tallandier)

I applaud your efforts and I look forward to playing them all. (I'm on the verge of purchasing Leipzig, 1813 being my favorite Napoleonic year.)

Ed sez:

The armies of 1796 used an intermediate type of organization, based on the Division instead of Corps. The French have a much looser TO&E, with some units often reassigned across divisions, with certain notable exceptions. The 32nd Demi-Brigade remained part of Massena's Division through all the battles. In contrast, the Austrian Army lacks much structural stability. Their Army is constantly disintegrating and then rebuilding from the ground up. You can see the disadvan-tage of this. The Army doesn't "learn," or benefit from experience. The French Army gets better and the Austrian worse, as the months wear on.

You can see all this by studying the Initial Set up Cards. In the early scenarios, the Austrians have lots of 3's and several 4's (initiative). At Arcole, it's 2's and 3's; at Rivoli, Alvinczy's Army has somewhat better material.

TCS REPRINT

This project is not on the schedule, we are exploring the idea. This would not be a straight reprint. First off, the maps would need to be redone with all new artwork, because the original maps do not match all that well with our current style. Then too, at that time we did not have quite the map resources that have become available on the interwebs. We might decide to make use of them. Also, we didn't have detail for things like crests, chateaux, and small farms.

As that game was under development we put out an exhaustive study (*Special Study Series*, *2008*), so that aspect of the project should be fairly clean. But whatever we find that needs improvement, we will do it.

The set ups have to be converted to the new format, as the original set up information was printed in the Study Folder, and not on cards. We will add the composition information per our current style and in doing so, will probably find a few errors.

The *Fog of War* Cards and the new style box already exist.

The new product will then require testing. The charts & tables (especially the artillery rules) have evolved since the original release twelve years ago.

The style of *Player Aid* cards such as TRCs have also evolved so they will be brought up to the current look.

The feasibility study will evaluate all of these questions and determine whether this project will be practically like doing a whole new game or somewhat less than that.

SHOCK COMBAT

Shock Combat is a short, sharp, sudden encounter at close range, as in other game systems, GBACW for example, and in Dean Essig's LoB series. In TLNB *Shock* could be either a bayonet charge or a stand-up firefight. Read the article (from *Wargame Design*)…
https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0443/6423/4910/files/WDM_V4_3.pdf?v=1603723423

Judging from hospital statistics, bayonet wounds were less than 1% of wounds. However, one should not underestimate the effectiveness of the bayonet because of the absence of wounds. Quite the opposite. Since no one usually hung around to meet the attack, a successful bayonet charge might result in very few wounded.

If your bias is Clausewitzian, ("only casualties count") then you conclude that edged weapons didn't win any battles. But there is another side to the story. The "Morale Bias" says, at the critical time and place a bayonet charge could and did win battles. In the game this works by providing a result that would not be available if looking at combat strength alone.

There are generalities of combat throughout history, whether you are talking about Knights at Tannenberg, Napoleonic armies, or 'Knights of the Air' and tank combat. Human beings have similar ways of reacting in combat. Napoleonic French

brigades were quite capable of all around defense, flexible enough to respond to threats from different quarters (III Corps at Eylau). By 1813 all the armies were gaining skill at this, except maybe the British. Wellington's static defense is a red herring for anyone trying to understand the Napoleonic Battlefield. He was successful with a retro-style of warfare.

Starting with Frederick there is a dialectic between mobility and defense, with one mode of warfare gaining the upper hand and then the other. It went from siege warfare to Napoleonic maneuver to trench warfare to Blitzkrieg. Since the time of Marlborough wars had been waged around the control of Fortresses; Napoleon embracing mobility ignored or bypassed fortresses mostly. To maintain his mobility he gave up the siege of Mantova in 1796.

TLNB is not a battalion level game. Battalion level combat is completely misunderstood with many shared misconceptions. The French integrated brigades operated as a unit—not separate battalions. The British army was a throwback, whether because of Wellington's focus or instilled conservatism, probably both. In the official combat record of the III Corps of Davout there is a detailed account of the battle of Serpallen during Eylau in 1807, where there was a sheep enclosure and a small barn. If you read that you will see what I am talking about.

Stacking

Don't think about real estate, think about command. Stacking's not about space, it's about time. The "stack" isn't necessarily residing inside the boundaries of a hexagon (see attached). The location of the unit counter designates the pointy end of the unit, not the whole stack. The units in the stack probably expand beyond the limits of the hex. But the point is, they are within a short distance to be called upon.

My take on the ZOC is the inverse of a "Zone of Control," really. At least the way I use it, Zone of Control is a misnomer. The ZOC, for me, is about defining the flanks of a unit in a hexgrid (see page 80 of the attachment).

Bonaparte Overruns Piedmont

Some high-ranking Austrian officers are brought in to Bonaparte's HQ outside town. Being good Viennese, they ask for some coffee. The French commander immediately sends for some, but when it appears, the Austrian officer remarks on how they only had the spoon of a common soldier, not a silver one. Truly a hardship.

Starting in the 18th century, AUSTRIA expanded into Italy. The DUCHY OF MILAN and MANTUA, and the kingdoms of NAPLES and SARDINIA fell to Austria in 1714. In 1720, Austria acquired the KINGDOM OF SICILY in exchange for Sardinia. Austria lost both Naples and Sicily in 1734, but acquired the DUCHY OF PARMA. During the WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION, Austria fought against the Republic of Genoa and the DUCHY OF MODENA AND REGGIO, and even briefly OCCUPIED GENOA and Modena. However from 1748, the Austrians withdrew from both countries, and also lost Parma. In 1797, in accordance to the TREATY OF CAMPO FORMIO, Austria lost Milan and Mantua to the newly formed CISALPINE REPUBLIC, but gained a portion of the Republic of Venice, which was partitioned between Austria and FRANCE.
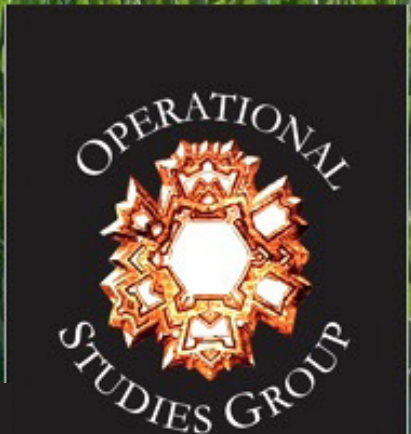
Marco Garrido

This weekend I was finally able to release BOP. I confess to being pleasantly surprised. I played DoB Montenotte and I thought it was brilliant. I was expecting a game with small clashes and little else, but there is a lot here. Continuing Beaulieu's attack on the 10th at Voltri towards Savone is very interesting as it would aggravate the French supply problems and the linking of Le Harpe and Massena towards Montenotte. Playing the campaign can decrease the distances between allies and improve the cooperation between Austrians and Piedmontese, which makes me think that it can become the most interesting operational campaign of the series. Congratulations, it has been a real pleasure! —

Go Back
in
Time