

Victory Points in Arcis-sur-Aube

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A small French force of 7,500 men crossed the Aube, intending to interfere with the rapid withdrawal of the Army of Bohemia. This was intended to be another swift kick in the pants to the Allied rearguard. To everyone's surprise, Schwarzenberg turned about and began concentrating his army while Wrede's Bavarians engaged at Arcis.

In the Library of Napoleonic Battles series, Victory Points are available in eight different categories.¹ One critical category is the VPs assigned per controlled hex. As a designer, one has to be careful with the assignment of VPs so that it isn't completely arbitrary. The total number available on the map has to be kept to a minimum in order to balance with the seven other categories.

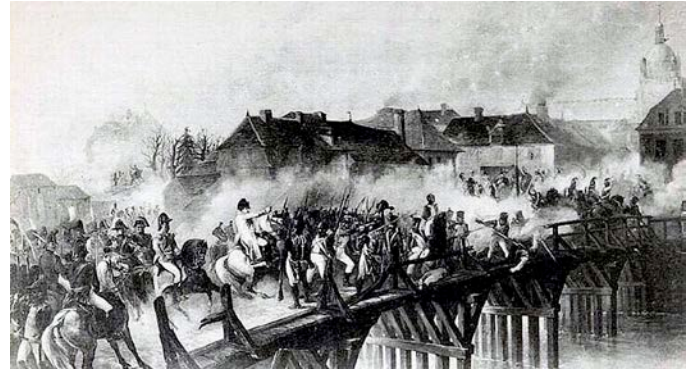
VPs should reflect the strategic importance of key locations, something that impacts on the wider war, beyond the mapedge and the game's TRC.

Right now in the development process for *Napoleon's End*, we are considering the VPs to be assigned to the town of Arcis. Originally tested at 15, this amount would dominate in victory calculations. 15 VPs might as well be 100. Ownership of that one hex at the end of the game would probably tip the scales, unless there were other points of similar importance.

The main N-S highway from Troyes (pop. 20,000) to Chalons-sur-Marne (11,000) goes through Arcis. The town itself (buildings, supplies) is of lesser importance than the bridge. This bridge is of great strategic importance to both sides.

Strategic View of Arcis

How important is Arcis in the entire scope of the war? How important to Napoleon? to



Schwarzenberg? Arcis is a key communications link between Schwarzenberg's Army of Bohemia and Blücher's Army of Silesia. Control of this route gives the Coalition an overall strategic advantage, allowing either army to lend support to the other.

Arcis-sur-Aube is not as important as Montereau, for example, which stands at the influx of the Yonne with the Seine and is the last point where the Seine is still a barrier.

How important is it?

Strategically, Arcis dominates the entire game map. For his next operation, Napoleon wants to run his LOC along the right bank of the Aube, from Plancy to Ramerupt. He cannot have the Coalition in Arcis; he must deny it to them.

He needs to control the bridge and crossings farther upriver, if he wants to move east. If Wrede's Bavarians should remain in possession of Arcis, his LOC would be compromised and he would be forced to commit all his forces to control the riverbank.

Napoleon wants a clean sweep, so he has to take Arcis. This symbolizes French control of the course of left bank of the Aube depicted on the game map, and symbolizes interruption of communications between the two Coalition armies.

It is likely that Wrede would have fallen back voluntarily if the Emperor reached Brienne, if not before. Then again, the chances were that Schwarzenberg would pull back his entire 80,000-man army, but for

¹ 26.11

once he took the offensive against Napoleon in person.

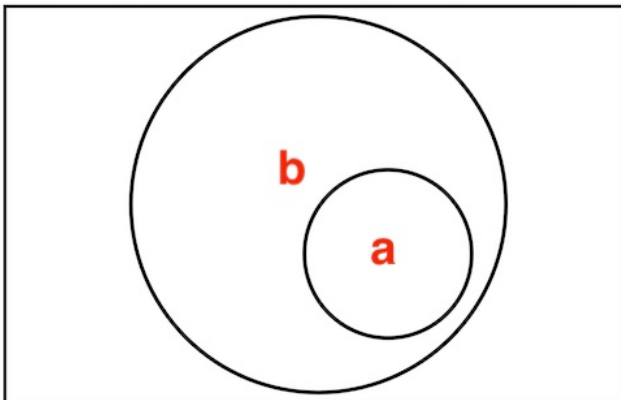
The Strategic Chessboard

Each town can be evaluated in 5 areas:

- Number of road connections
(by this measure Troyes is #1).
- Number of river crossings
- Proximity to Paris
- On direct route to Paris
- Facilities for movement of supplies

If a designer wishes, he can construct a "clockwork," forcing player decisions. Making Arcis worth 15 VPs would force both players to focus on that one hex. For me, and I hope the majority of gamers, this clockworks approach to design is not satisfying. In this case, we tried rating the town of Arcis at 5 VP and found that the French Player in the AtB may choose to ignore Arcis entirely and fight further west. That is a valid option that should be available to the French player. The Battle of Arcis was not a good idea for Napoleon.

Neither is a historical outcome the goal for Napoleon. We would rather place the player in the boots of his historical counterpart and give him the same forces and options as the generals at the time. These are two different, overlapping goals. If you drew a Venn diagram, one circle, a) "historical patterns of movement" fits entirely inside another circle, b) "full range of possible patterns of movement." We are aiming at b and not a.



In every battle we see several VP Hexes, totaling 25 to 35 VPs per full-size map. These are carefully calibrated during playtesting, the stage we are at with Arcis.

The purpose of VP hexes is to reflect the strategic importance of that bridge or town to the whole course of the campaign. VP amounts can be adjusted until they feel right, as they are highly abstract. Hence there is the danger to avoid setting VPs entirely arbitrarily. I wouldn't want VPs to be the sole factor determining a player's strategy. I'd like him to focus on destruction of the enemy army and then see where his VPs lie.

Napoleon did not want to fight a battle at Arcis. It was a catastrophe, not so much for the 4,200 men (and 3 guns) lost, but, as revealing his weakness. He made a mistake by committing his forces to the wrong side of the Aube, then he had to fight "à l'outrance" to get them out of there in one piece. So if I see French players ignoring Arcis, that might make more sense than forcing the player to repeat Napoleon's error.

Generally I don't put a VP value on a hex that is unlikely or impossible to change hands.

I am still undecided whether to give a split value for Arcis: 5 VP for the French and 10 VP for the Coalition.

That would be closer to the actual value to each side. Napoleon needs the town, but mainly to prevent coalition control. Otherwise, his best strategic move (heading off map to threaten the Bohemian Supply Source to the east) cannot take place. The Tsar was afraid of this maneuver, and actually forced Schwarzenberg to retreat after the battle for fear of it.

We are now testing Arcis with a split value (10/5) and Torcy-le-Grand at 5 VP. At these VP levels, the players will fight for Arcis. Although the French will get less out of it, they have to deny their opponent's 10 VP.

Survey of Series Games VPs

I started out with a survey of 36 game maps from *Nap at Leipzig* through *Nap Invades Spain* (9 volumes). Of all 97 locations:

Two-thirds (67) are 5 VP: such as Fismette and Posoritz;

One quarter (24) are 10 VP, such as Bautzen and Ligny.

Some are per-turn awards, such as Laon and Reims.

Some points are for only one side.

I then extended the survey to 55 maps, to include the remaining 19 maps from *TCS*, *TLS*, *Quad*, *4LB* and *BOP*. Adding the 56 new locations from the remaining 19 maps, yields a total of 153 (not including Expansion maps). Of this total 63% are 5 VPs, while 22% are 10 VPs. The only locations worth 15 VPs are four of the largest towns and cities, like Ratisbon and Bruxelles...

29 5 VP

10 10 VP

3 15 VP Verona, Mantova, Regensburg

14 4(-) VP: Porcile, Villanova, Lodi, Borgo, and Arcole; Hermannsdorf, Schlaupe; Mt. Negino, S. Michele, Montenotte and Deigo. The smaller award is needed because of the

smaller armies. (Pultusk at 20 VP is the sole outlier, and should be reduced to 10.)

A pattern emerges: It's 10's and 5's, in a ratio- 25-10VP — 65-5VP (For every 5–10s there will be 13–5s). The 5:8:13 Fibonacci series is like the Golden Proportion; it appears in nature. A 15 VP hex is basically a city; 10's would be a town like Arcis or larger; any hilltop or bridge can be 5. These patterns were discovered by trial and error. Nobody remarked on it. VPs are taken for granted in the overall scheme of things and it seems to hum along almost as background noise. Arcis started out with 15 VPs. I am happy with 10 VPs for Arcis and 5 for Torcy.

Check out the article "Accuracy is not Enough" on page 28 of Vol V Nr.2, *Wargame Design*

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