

UK Connections 2014
Wargames 101

OPENING 
GAMBIT
A One Brain Cell Wargame of WW1
DESIGN OUTLINE

Game objective: To test and simulate issues of command and decision-making. The game should be adversarial and open ended, not following scripted play or fixed (or limited) outcomes. This is to ensure full range of decision making options

Subject area: First World War.

Number of participants: Unknown but likely to be between 10 and 60.

Maximum playing time: 40 minutes

Game environment: Stepped lecture theatre with very limited table space.

Game Timetable is therefore:

- 20 minutes explanation of the game
- 40 minutes game play (3-4 game turns)
- 30 minutes debrief, evaluation and analysis

Total 90 Minutes

Design issues and options

Game structure.

As the environment is largely strategic operational, decision making is around high level strategic direction, policy and resource allocation and unit manoeuvre, with an emphasis on the former.

Time

The 40 minute playing time dictates that each turn should take no longer than 10 minutes – for both player interaction and Control updates. This way at least 3 decision iterations will be achieved.

Environment and Team

The environment can be used to advantage by physically replicating a hierarchy within a

command structure over several tiers of seats. Players would be grouped into teams of at 2 or 3 – so that the intra-team discussion is more fruitful and to allow for better inter-team communication (One team player can be communicating while others are planning, for example).

Another feature of the environment is that game materials for each team must fit on the available space on a small desk.

The availability of a large display screen at the front – visible to all lends itself to using that as the main map representation for the game – the moves and positions being updated on a computer and displayed. This also allows all action to be simultaneous, speeding up the process.

The speed of play and the need for active decisions points toward simultaneous play as distinct from turn by turn, where players are waiting around for the enemy's action before being able to make their next action. Simultaneous action also allows for more pressure on decision making.

Debrief and Evaluation

As the game is intended to examine issues of command and decision-making, the debrief would be structured to examine soft issues as distinct from purely military activity or things like who 'won' the game.

Evaluation questions will include things like:

- a. What would you say was your most significant decision in the game?
- b. Consider how you arrived at this decision
 - what factors did you weigh up?
 - What assumptions do you think you made?
 - Did you seriously consider any alternatives?
 - Did the outcome of the decision surprise you, or challenge any precursor assumptions you might have had?
- c. How did the other teams on your side communicate with you?
Were there ...
 - Gaps in the information you received?
 - Ambiguous or unclear communications?
 - Communication friction unrelated to the game scenario?
- d. How would you say you communicated with other teams?
Did you ...
 - Deliberately withhold information for game advantage at any point?
 - Scale your communications to reflect your perceived game relationship with the other team (i.e. tell superiors what you think they want to hear)?

Written responses are then combined with a verbal debrief to draw out these issues further. The debrief will not be an AAR except where the game anecdote directly relates to command decisions or communications.

The game is disinterested in "who won?" on the map.

Note on game sizing

Teams	10 player game	30 player game	60 player game
French High Command	1	2	4
French Right Wing Armies	1	2	3
1 st Army	-	1	2
2 nd Army	-	1	2
3 rd Army	-	1	2
French Left Wing Armies	1	2	3
4 th Army	-	1	2
5 th Army	-	1	2
British Expeditionary Force	1	2	3
Belgian Army	1	2	3
German High Command	2	2	4
German Right Wing Armies	1	2	3
1 st Army	-	1	3
2 nd Army	-	1	3
3 rd Army	-	1	3
German Centre Armies	1	2	3
4 th Army	-	1	3
5 th Army	-	1	3
German Left Wing Armies	1	2	3
6 th Army	-	1	3
7 th Army	-	1	3

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Game Rules and Mechanisms

1. Layout

Game Control are at the front of the theatre and receive orders in the form of flash cards put up in front of the player team's seating.

The lower level players are the ones issuing orders to armies.

Wing and High commands communicate either by notes or by conversations over the back of the seating.

2. Orders

Instructions to the game in the form of orders and intentions are handled by flash cards.

As this is as much about resources as it is about unit manoeuvre the flash cards will contain simple information:

Flash Card 1: Movement.

Players write with big pen the name of their next objective. If there is a choice of route then they can write that too.

Flash Card 2: Commitment.

How hard they are going to fight if they encounter an enemy unit.

This will be on a 1 – 4 scale.

High commitment causes high casualties on both sides but also higher chance of success.

It also uses up resources faster.

Use one RESOURCE POINT per commitment level.

Flash Card 3: Combat Strength

The number of Corps they plan to employ in the action.

We can get them to record their corps status.

A corps is either 'Fresh' or 'Worn'.

There is no sub-manoevre of Corps – they are a record-keeping artefact.

Fresh Corps are much more effective than worn ones.

Flash Card 4: Special Effort Cards ('JOKERS')

Each side gets a limited number of 'special effort' or 'joker' cards allocated to high command – high command chooses who to pass them down to.

These cards extend the capability of an army allowing it to move faster or fight harder.

3. Unit Movement

The map is a point to point movement system with high granularity.
Each node is clearly labelled.

Normal Movement speeds are:

Dotted Route – 1 node per turn

Other routes – 2 nodes per turn

All movement halts at a Fortress or when the move would place you on an occupied node. This causes a battle.

4. Resources.

High command has a starting supply of Resource Points and a trickle of new resources as the game progresses.

Each army has Resource Point counters handed down by high command (see orbats)

It can choose how much to put into an action, and resource consumption is directly proportional to the level of commitment.

Each turn, control goes round the teams and takes away resource counters as necessary.

The allocation of these are the key decisions.

It takes:

One Resource Point per level of commitment in attack

One Resource Point to move an army.

Armies do not have to use their Resource Points each turn, they can stockpile them.

5. Units

An army occupies one node on the map. Armies may not split but can leave individual corps as garrisons. Once shed in this way the separated corps may not move.

Armies may not 'stack' – the road/rail infrastructure cannot support them.

6. Fortresses

These count as having one Fresh corps in them at all times (until **reduced**), and this is added to any friendly army in the same node. A fortress is reduced by being attacked and losing.

7. Combat results

All combat converts all the corps involved from Fresh to Worn, except Heavy Fortress Artillery.

An army does not have to use all its corps in a single battle.

Worn corps count half strength

Special cards either improve commitment or add to strength in some way (the effect is written on card)

Count up the relative values in number of corps (as modified above) and take the odds:

Note no die roll

Attacker commitment	Worse than 1 to 2	1 to 2 or better	1 to 1	2 to 1 or more	3 to 1 or more
1	LOSE	LOSE	LOSE	LOSE	WIN
2	LOSE	LOSE	LOSE	WIN	WIN
3	LOSE	LOSE	WIN	WIN	WIN
4	LOSE	LOSE	WIN	WIN	WIN
5*	LOSE	WIN	WIN	WIN	WIN

* Special Cards can allow commitment of 5)

Attacker **WIN** = Defender moves back a node and attacker occupies the node.

Attacker **LOSE** = Attacker does not dislodge the defender.

There are no draws.

CRT Modifiers:

One Column shift in Defender's Favour

Defender's commitment equals or exceeds attacker's commitment

Defending a river line

Defender is in a fortress node

One Column shift in Attacker's Favour

Heavy Siege Artillery used when attacking a fortress node.

8. Special Cards in Play

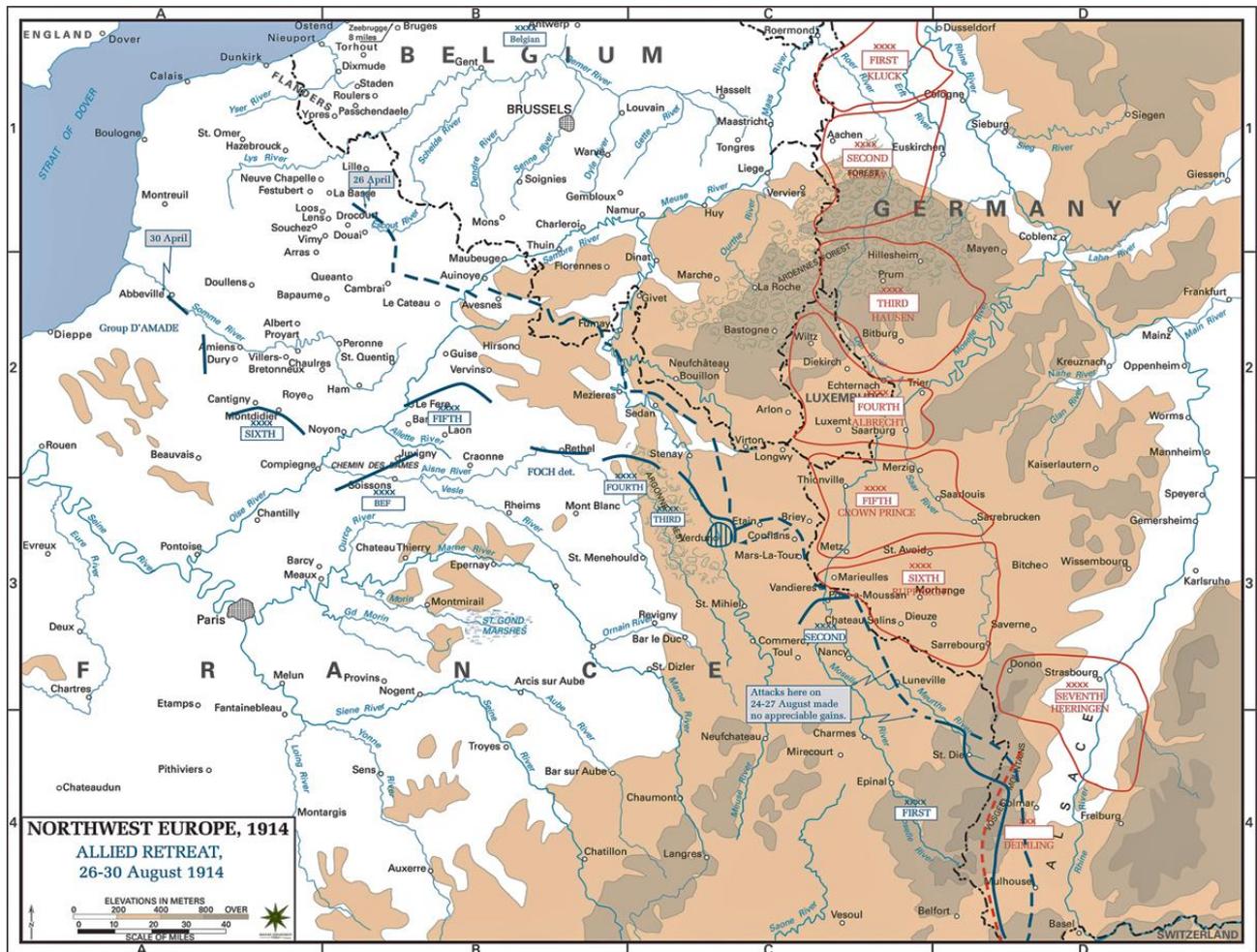
There are 12 Specials per side.

Specials are consumed by being played. Each turn, each side's high High Command is given a Card from the pack. They can be saved until needed.

A Special will be one of the following

Card	Description	Number in play
Organisational Genius	The army's staff work has been exemplary and it can move an extra Node	GERMAN x 4 ALLIES x 4
Logistical Genius	Playing the card in an attack gives the unit an extra Resource Point at that point.	GERMAN x 1 ALLIES x 1
Operational Genius	The Army is particularly well handled, and this gives it a column shift in its favour combat for one battle, either attack or defence.	GERMAN x 2 ALLIES x 1
Stirring Leadership	The Army is inspired by its commander. One corps can be turned from Worn to Fresh.	GERMAN x 2 ALLIES x 2

Card	Description	Number in play
Fanatical Devotion	The Army is moved emotionally by the crisis and this gives it a column shift in its favour combat for one DEFENSIVE battle.	GERMAN x 1 ALLIES x 2
Fools! Would you live forever!	The Army is infused with Offensive Spirit and this gives it a column shift in its favour combat for one OFFENSIVE battle.	GERMAN x 2 ALLIES x 2



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GERMAN ORBAT

Army	Commander	Strength
High Command	Generaloberst von Moltke	
Right Wing Armies		
First Army	Generaloberst von Kluck.	7 Corps
Second Army	Generaloberst von Bülow.	6 Corps 1 Heavy Artillery Corps
Third Army	Generaloberst von Hausen.	4 Corps
Centre Armies		
Fourth Army	Generaloberst Albrecht, Duke of Württemberg.	5 Corps
Fifth Army	Generalmajor Wilhelm, Crown Prince of Germany.	5 Corps
Left Wing Armies		
Sixth Army	Generaloberst Rupprecht, Crown Prince of Bavaria.	6 Corps 1 Heavy Artillery Corps
Seventh Army	Generaloberst von Heeringen.	4 Corps

Logistics

40 Resource Points at the start

10 Resource points per turn from turn 2 onwards.

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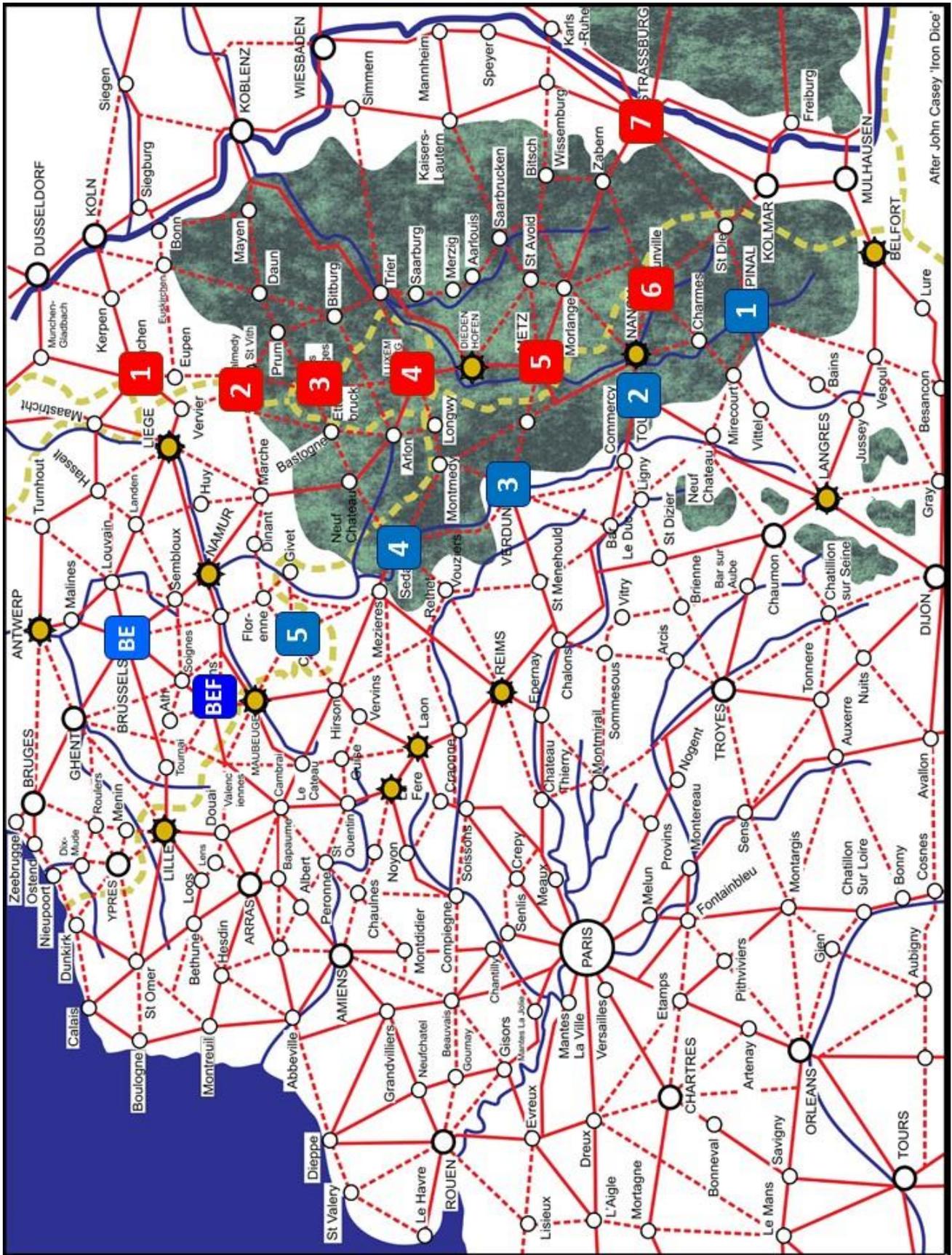
ALLIED ORBAT

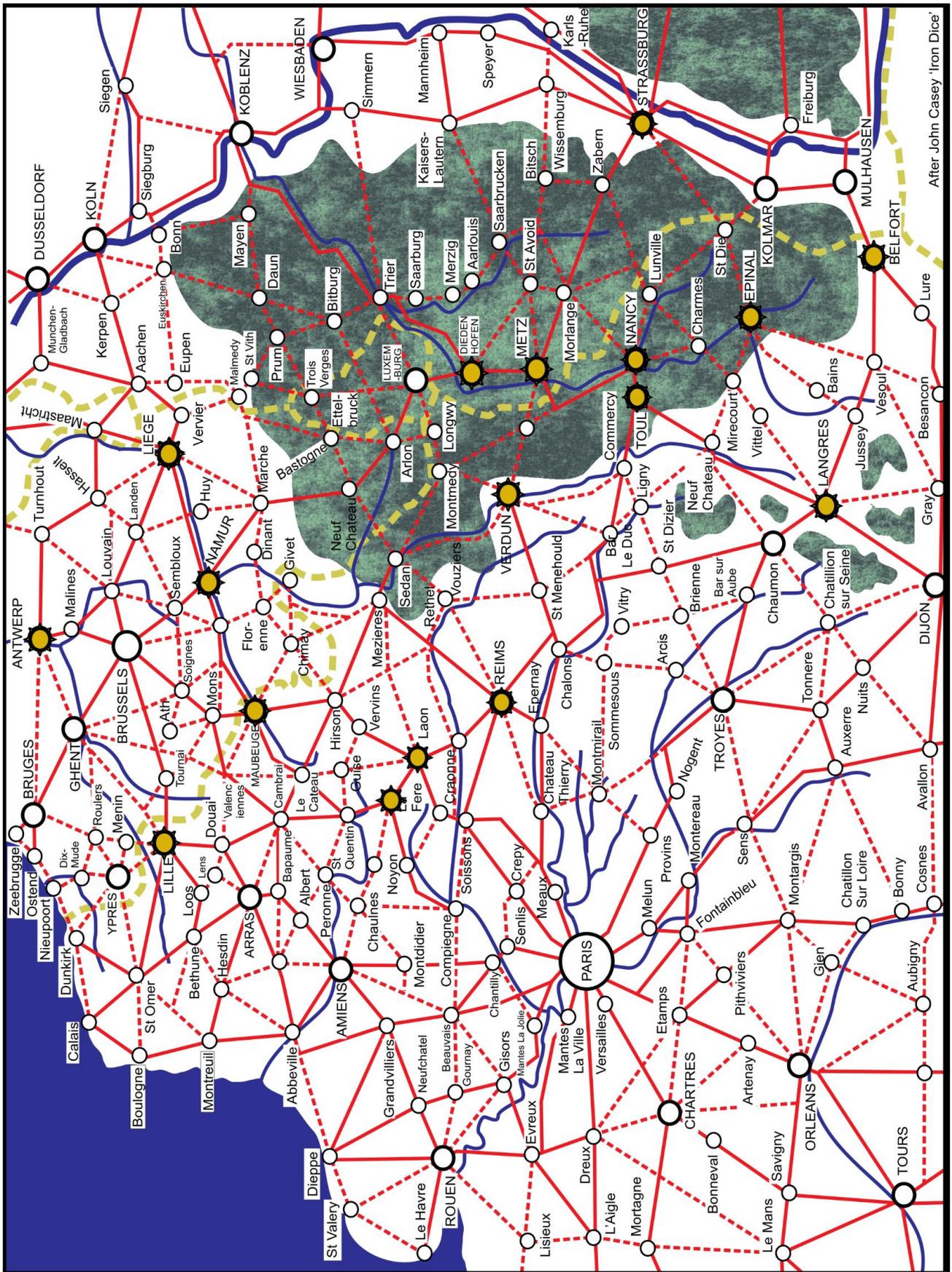
Army	Commander	Strength
Belgian Army	King Albert I	3 Corps
BEF	Field-Marshal Sir John French	3 Corps
French High Command	General Joseph Joffre	
Right Wing Armies		
First Army	General Auguste Dubail	5 Corps
Second Army	General de Curières de Castelnau	5 Corps
Third Army	General Ruffey	3 Corps
Left Wing Armies		
Fourth Army	General Fernand de Langle de Cary	3 Corps
Fifth Army	General Lanrezac	5 Corps

Logistics

35 Resource Points at the start

9 Resource points per turn from turn 2 onwards.





COMMITMENT



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COMMITMENT



MOVEMENT



MOVEMENT



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MOVEMENT



STRENGTH

FRESH

WORN



STRENGTH

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