

# Wargame Campaigns Transferring the map to the table

## By Paul Wisken

### Background

I am a wargame butterfly. I have too many projects on the go at any one time and I am continually inspired to try something new before finishing what is in hand. But I do have four, if memory serves, long-term projects to which I continually return. These are:

1. A European six-nation campaign set in the early 1700s.
2. Operation Sealion – the proposed German invasion of Britain 1940.
3. The Second World War, played in its entirety as a board game, translated to the computer screen.
4. The Second World War, played in its entirety on the tabletop with 6mm models.

Number 3 can be dispensed with easily. I use as a basis the map and rules from the board game “Axis and Allies”, but with approximately weekly turns and trying to follow the actual history as far as possible. The whole exercise is performed using an Excel workbook. The day by day progress is recorded on my blog [www.generalwhiskers.com](http://www.generalwhiskers.com).

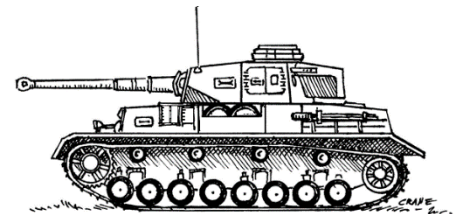
Number 2 is what I would call a “normal” campaign. I have been lucky enough to obtain both the (now out of print) booklets from S2 Publications in the U.S.A. which provide detailed tabletop maps and a full order of battle for both sides. Unfortunately, to fit the popular rule sets the designers have “bathtubbed” their game by reducing each unit to one level lower than its original. Therefore, we are faced with the anathema of, for example:

From 43<sup>rd</sup> (Wessex) Infantry Brigade:  
130<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion (7th Coy Royal Hampshires, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Coys Dorsetshire Bn.

So, although using their order of battle I have restored it upwards to give correct unit titles, but need to use one element to represent a company rather than a platoon, and using appropriately scaled rules. I do need to keep track of where each individual company is during the campaign for which I use my own Excel tracking sheets.

Now I can turn to numbers 1 and 4. These work under a similar principle but differentiated. For both campaigns I have a map. One covers the whole of Europe based on area movement. The other covers the whole world based on movement by map square. In both cases the area occupied by a unit on the map far exceeds any game board, and so it is abstracted.

My premise is that the overall commander does not need to know, or even care, about the exact make-up of his forces in detail. So, in my early 18<sup>th</sup> Century game all that Louis XIV knows is that he has 24 units in Bavaria. Likewise, Adolf Hitler may be aware, in greater detail, that he has 4 armoured divisions and 6 infantry divisions in map square 46, 37 which represents about 1/40<sup>th</sup> of the area of Poland.



## Forces

When it comes to the battles, the overall strength is broken down into gaming units. The local tactical battle is fought, casualties applied, and the result is deemed to have been representative of the whole front.

This is where my two campaigns differ. For the 18<sup>th</sup> century I use a defined breakdown described below. For the Second World War it is more random.

Starting with the 18<sup>th</sup> century, I use a simple table, based on the premise that for every two infantry the next unit is cavalry and for every two cavalry the next unit is artillery. This maintains a good proportional army for the period and works as follows:

Strength Points	Foot	Horse	Guns
1	1	0	0
2	2	0	0
3	2	1	0
4	3	1	0
5	4	1	0
6	4	2	0
7	4	2	1
8	5	2	1
9	6	2	1
10	6	3	1
11	7	3	1
12	8	3	1
13	8	4	1
14	8	4	2
15	9	4	2



And so on.

My wargame units are based on units of 72 infantry, 48 Cavalry or 4 guns with 12 gunners. Each unit for calculation purposes is split into 12 elements of 6 infantry, 4 cavalry or 1 gunner. In this way it is easy to add up the casualties, make whatever adjustments are deemed necessary, and report the final strength back to the campaign. It does not matter if you lost all the cavalry and saved the guns. For the next battle, the total strength will be redistributed.

For the Second World War I use a more random method of determining forces using either cards or dice. For example, my most recent battle was between a German armoured unit (strength 5) and a Polish infantry unit (strength 8) in September 1939.

My concept for this is that there is a lot of different equipment in use in this war and that the local commander has to make the best use of what he has at hand. For convenience I use the

picture dice from the board game “Memoir ‘44”, each of which is marked with two infantry, one tank, one grenade, one star and one flag.

Starting with the Germans I rolled 5 dice. They came up as:

1 tank, representing a normal tank unit for the period. A second roll of a normal die, based on proportions of available tanks determined that they were Pz I.

The 2 grenades were artillery, and because this was an armoured unit, they were self-propelled guns. Again, a second roll for each determined that both were the “SiG150 auf Pz I” type.

The Infantry die was re-rolled for an armoured unit. It produced a grenade, so horse-drawn artillery was added to the force.

Finally, the flag, which was also re-rolled (it could produce various forms of ancillary, support and reconnaissance units). A tank gave me a unit of armoured cars, which a numbered die showed to be the 6-wheeled SdKfz 231 type.

So, my force was:

- One unit of three Pz I tanks.

- Two units of two 150mm SP guns.

- One unit of two horse-towed 105mm howitzers.

- One unit of three SdKfz231 armoured cars.

And now to the Poles. They have an infantry force of 8 strength points.

The 8 dice rolled gave a nicely balanced force of 3 infantry, 3 tank and 2 grenade (artillery).

Further die rolls determined the force to be:

- Three standard infantry units of three rifle elements and one MG element.

- One unit of 7TP tanks with 37mm gun turret.

- One unit of 7TP tanks with two MG turrets.

- One unit of TKS tankettes with one MG.

- One unit of 75mm guns with half-track tractors.

- One unit of horse-drawn 105mm guns.

As you can see, this is a very unbalanced conflict, especially as the terrain was a built-up area to be attacked by the infantry force and defended by armour and artillery.

And this brings me on to the battlefield itself.

### **The Battlefield**

I have experimented with various methods of creating a battlefield. Returning to my four ongoing campaigns:

No. 3 (The Second World War in abstract form) only needs land or sea differentiated, although I have allocated extra defence values to infantry defending cities and industrial areas.

No. 2 (Sealion) is pre-determined by the maps provided with the game books.

For the other two campaigns I resort to my collection of “Squad Leader” game boards which I have accumulated from eBay for this purpose. I normally use hexagon-based terrain for my games, so they are very useful. I dice for which boards are to be used, which orientation they are placed in and the central hexagon of the game board, lay a template over the board(s) and try to reproduce it on the table. For example:



Becomes



All of the above works for me as a solo gamer. I hope it may have provided some inspiration.  
Happy wargaming.