

Victory Locations in TLNB

At one time I was against the use of location VPs. I thought they were a cheap and artless way to get the players to fight historically. Now, I have partly changed my mind, and I find them useful, when used sparingly in a larger formula as one of several factors. —KZ

Victory Conditions are artificial, like endings in the movies: a neat and tidy way of winding things up (see sidebar). In real life, things are never this simple and clear-cut—events never cease happening and their effects linger long afterward.

The current Victory Conditions go back to the Days series game *1806*. I was having problems and turned it over to David Collins, the developer, who worked out the first draft of the idea—a list of 4 factors contributing VPs in a balanced way. From that game three things carried over to TLNB (26.11), and others joined, gradually, without disrupting overall balance.

As a player, your main way of influencing events is by the use of your combat units. Everything else plays into that ability to maneuver, attack and defend. The game will actually be won on the map, so no need granting a lot of VPs to the player over and above the inherent benefit of controlling the board. This is a Napoleonic precept—defeat the enemy army and in due time all secondary objectives will be obtained by default.

Most of the time the award for units eliminated will not be more than 10 VPs; there are more VPs at stake for captured places, baggage, and cards. A player will juggle all these factors to come up with a win, without focusing too much on any one category of VPs.

VP Locations

Players will find themselves drawn to the VP locations and may expend much effort attempting to take them. The ideal would be 15 VPs for a half map, 30-35 VPs for a full map, total for locations. We have set the limit for VP locations of no than 35-40 points on a fullsize map.

The trick is to provide VPs for objectives of military value, such as a cross-roads, bridge, or church with a wide view of the countryside. You don't want to give them out just because a town



Victory: Games & Reality

When designing a game we usually wait until the end of development to work out the Victory Conditions. Naturally we need to see what is feasible, what might be too simplistic. We want the Victory Conditions to reflect the actual strategic situation. Here we need to step out of the operational level and see the big picture. We say the French won the historical 1807 campaign because they defeated the Russians at Friedland and pursued them off the map. But what were the Tsar's goals? He succeeded in making life difficult for Napoleon, and cost him 100,000 men. Was he already looking toward the next campaign?

Webster's defines "Victory" as 'Final and complete supremacy or superiority in battle or war.' This situation rarely applies anymore; certainly it did not apply in July of 1807. In the ancient world, one big battle decided the war, and usually one army would fail utterly once its line was broken. So the term "Victory" had an objective correlative that was unambiguous.

How many times is "The Fall of the Enemy Capital" trotted out as a Victory Condition? Yet in 1805 and 1806 the Fall of Vienna and Berlin did not stop the fighting. We need to question this way of looking at Victory, and to foresee outcomes on the days after.

Hollywood has a schematic way of approaching endings devoid of real resolutions. In a video game, you shoot the terrorists, they fall down and you score points. In real life, those "terrorists" had a family, and now you have their hatred, more terrorists. Our cardboard troops march through a blank zone—where are the civilians?

I've heard it said that all movie endings are artificial; it is also said there can be only one natural ending, but that is still one more ending than real life has to offer. In the "typical" movie, the guy has an immediate goal. For her, that ending is just the start.

Victory conditions are susceptible to the same criticism as movie endings. In real life there are no endings, the camera keeps rolling, something else happens. We "win" the war and take Baghdad, but then what? The screen doesn't go dark, the people don't leave the stage. So we have a way of perceiving reality that is seriously distorted by the forms of entertainment that we have learned our habits of mind from. There is no closure, there is only a temporary hiatus.

has an important location. It should be a place that you want the players to fight over, in the contested zone between armies.



Case in point

Victory conditions include a balance of 8 different factors. VP locations are only one of those 8. We added these additional dimensions to the victory calculation as a way to double-check who really won. These same victory conditions have worked well in all types of battles: delaying actions, meeting engagements, all out attacks. Naturally, if you have obtained no VPs from Enemy SPs Eliminated, or Enemy Corps Demoralized, or Captured Enemy Baggage Trains, then the control of VP hexes will take on a greater significance. This can happen when one sides is outmatched and on the defensive.

During his planning for the campaign of the Hundred Days, Napoleon had determined on taking Brussels. He set about to threaten Brussels, hoping that the Coalition would fight a battle to preserve it. He believed, according to Tim Clayton, that "the Belgians would join him and eject the king of the Netherlands from Brussels and Louis XVIII from Ghent. This would bring down the hostile Tory government in London, the Whigs would make peace, and without British finance the other allies would lose their enthusiasm for war."¹ In other words, a strategic victory.

The strategic goal was Brussels. We accepted that and placed VPs on and around important road junctions on the main highway to Brussels.

Mont St. Jean, with its 10 VPs is the focus of the road net—five major routes focused on that hill just before the Fôret de Soignes. We have discussed elsewhere how the road net forces Wellington to concentrate his troops there. Mont St. Jean is important in VPs because it really is the key position on the battlefield, both to the defense and the offense.



VP locations are usually selected to portray the operational intent. On the NLG South map, they all lie in the path of a maneuver from QB to Ligny or vice versa. Having this lane of movement open would have given Napoleon the central position, and controlling the central position is the key to this campaign.

Napoleon's precept seems to tell us to let battlefield losses tell the whole story. The problem is, in most Napoleonic battles, losses on the battlefield were roughly equal. It was not *until one side retreated* that Pursuit would bring the graveyard of armies. Pursuit comes the day after battle. So, you might say, our VP schedule predicts when your strategic intent has been thwarted, and you are going to retreat from the battlefield (after the game's end, of course) and suffer further losses on your way back toward your supply base.



¹ Tim Clayton, *Waterloo*, p. 43