

*'The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is **to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking**; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.'*

(Karl von Clausewitz<sup>2</sup>)

## Summary

- **Austerlitz is a team game: choose your allies wisely.**
- **Understand the economic, geographic, and military factors at play.**
- **Understand the four geographic 'flash points' in every game.**
- **Know your (potential) enemies.**
- **Know yourself; a SWOT analysis may help.**
- **Engage in diplomacy – but be on your guard.**
- **Keep reviewing the situation. What has changed?**

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<sup>2</sup> *On War*, translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) Book 1, 88



The failure was my inability to secure outside support, particularly from Austria and Prussia, who stood on the sidelines watching my inevitable fall. Despite having the best of my enemy tactically, without support I was doomed. No amount of tactical or operational brilliance could save me.

## What do I need to do?

24. The good news is that allies and enemies are the flip sides of the same coin: the analysis is the same.

25. **Step 1a: Analysis.** Otherwise known as *doing your homework*. There are some universal constants in the game that apply regardless of who is playing. Understand the environment in which you will be operating. Factors to consider include:

a. **Economic.** The smallest nations in central Europe have the highest population densities and the highest tax rates (6); they are also the smallest and most vulnerable to economic shock. The further away from the centre a nation is then, typically, the greater their size, the less their economic vulnerability, and the lower their tax rate (except for Britain). Review the starting positions of each nation: you will notice that the small nations also start with the most generous warehouses. It is in their interest to go to war quickly.

b. **Geographic.** Unlike in real life there are few, if any, real geographic barriers. You are not going to have to fight your way through the Brenner Pass to get into (or out of) Italy. However, it is worth being aware of where the dense populations are (ie where you want to conquer), where the traditional invasion routes are, where the trade cities and depots are and, above all, key economic locations – especially ore. ‘Western’ armies operating in the Low Countries will not have to worry too much about ‘slow go’ routes; the glacially-slow Russian army with a choice of swamps, forests, mountains and lakes to contend with, will have to think much harder.

c. **Military.** Become familiar with the Army Tables, and learn to compare the lists. Every nation has military strengths and weaknesses – it is your job to identify them. Try using the Confederation Army Table as a reference: how does your army compare in terms of speed? Of fighting ability? Building and maintenance costs? Do you have any elite troops? In terms of sweeping generalisations, western Europe can field the best, fastest troops at the cheapest price (and therefore have the potential for the largest armies); further out the armies become slower (certainly), more expensive (generally) and less good (with exceptions). Eastern European nations with no historic colonies have ruinously expensive Colonial Troops, for obvious reasons. Games are not won or lost on this; however, it does help paint a picture. Also review the starting positions of the nations: the small nations in Central Europe typically have the largest standing armies at the outset of the game; they will want to use that advantage.

26. **Step 1b: deductions (the ‘so what?’).** What should fall out of the above analysis is that there are four geo-political ‘flash points’ that will determine the course of every game. By April 1808, each of the nations below will either be at war with each other or allied (whether they declare it is another matter). Any ‘Third Way’ is a recipe for disaster. Clearly, what happens at these flashpoints will be influenced – directly or indirectly – by

what else is happening around their periphery; this is particularly true of how much *time* these players think they have.

- a. **Naples v Italy.** Both are relatively small and vulnerable countries which need to expand early in order to develop. Both have a huge dilemma. Italy has considerable options north and east of the Alps, whilst Naples has access to North Africa; however, both capitals are within one month's march of the other. Expect an early war; if not, Naples will focus on Africa whilst Italy attacks France, Confederation or Austria with coalition partners.
- b. **Spain v Portugal.** Portugal is a small country with a large neighbour; a neighbour who in turn is not realistically threatened by France in the early game. Expect an early war; if not, very early co-operation in the colonies.
- c. **Sweden v Denmark.** Denmark has, arguably, the most unenviable starting position in the game, with a capital in Jutland and ore mines in Norway. It cannot defend both, and is largely at the mercy of Sweden, which in turn is not realistically threatened by Russia in the early game. Expect an early war; if not, Denmark will mass its armies in Jutland, whilst Sweden attacks either Russia or Warsaw (if the latter, from 50/12).
- d. **Confederation of the Rhine v everyone.** More than any other nation, the actions of the Confederation shape the game. One of the smallest nations, hugely vulnerable to economic shock (at its narrowest it is only three co-ordinates across), it must expand or die; fortunately, it has the largest – and one of the very best – standing armies, and the largest starting stockpile of resources. The only question is which direction it will march...

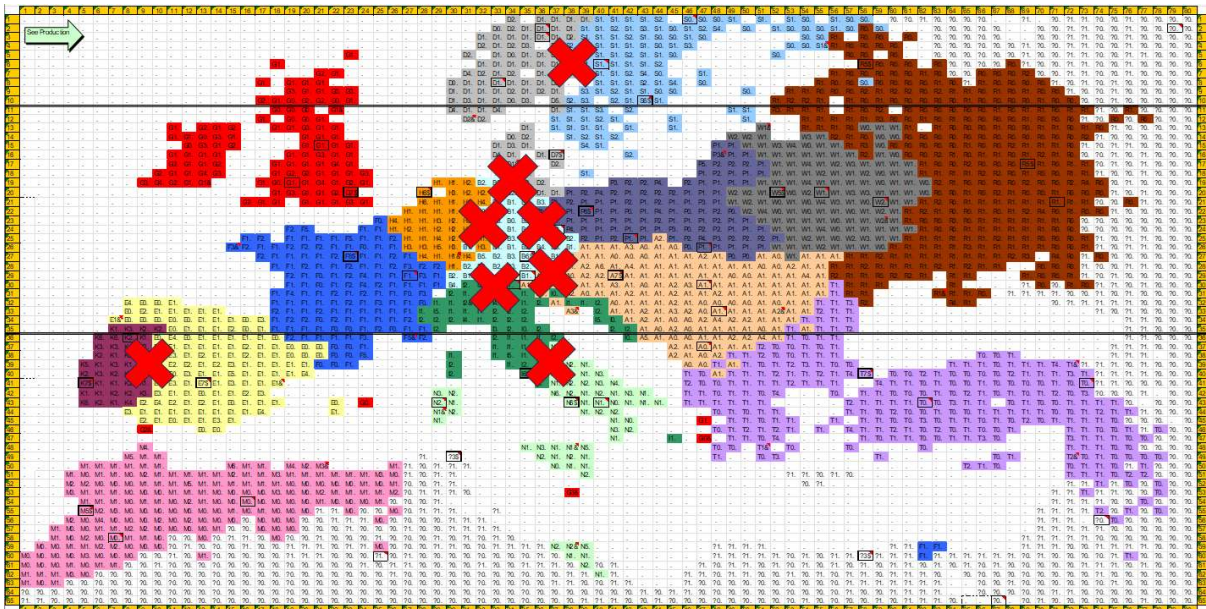


Figure 2. The flashpoints in the game

27. **Step 2: know your enemies.** Step 1 is generic and applies to all games. Of far more interest is trying to get inside the heads of your 15 fellow players to understand their likely intentions. Whilst you can never truly know, there are clues if you know where to look.

- a. **Review players in the game.** A quick look at the player list (page 3 of the turn sheet) may reveal some linkages, such as nationality. At this stage you are only looking for clues; you will use the coming months to confirm or deny your suspicions.
- b. **Review the leader board.** Another quick check will soon reveal how many games each player has won. Whilst this gives no indication of how many games they have *lost* (and therefore their win rate) it does demonstrate a certain competence. Clearly, a single win does not necessarily signify that much: whilst every excellent player had to win their first game sometime, there are plenty of poor players who have hung on to the coat tails of better ones to claim a victory. However, luck will only get you so far. Meanwhile there are the Austerlitz legends like George Hornby with dozens of victories to his name. Like black holes, these players exert their own gravitational pull on the game, their reputations alone striking fear into their neighbours. Link [here](#).
- c. **Review the game winners.** Unlike the leader board, this takes more effort. However, it can provide real insights into which players have played together before – and are therefore likely to do so again. Clearly, it only shows the winners: there may be many times when they worked together and didn't win; or, conversely, when they crossed swords. However, if you have played successfully with someone over several years to ultimate victory, chances are that you are likely to trust them again. Link [here](#).
- d. **Monitor new joiners.** Sam routinely details new games on his emails, and which nations have been taken. Monitoring this will tell you which players have signed up at the same time. It may be complete coincidence; however, if the nations are mutually supporting (Prussia and Austria, let's say) it may not.
- e. **Diplomacy.** What are players saying when the game starts? What are they writing (or not writing) on the forum? Have they written to you and, if so, what was the tone like? Have they asked for an alliance or non-aggression pact (NAP)? Or is there nothing but silence? In general, expect your neighbours to be more cautious than your neighbours' neighbours when it comes to diplomacy.

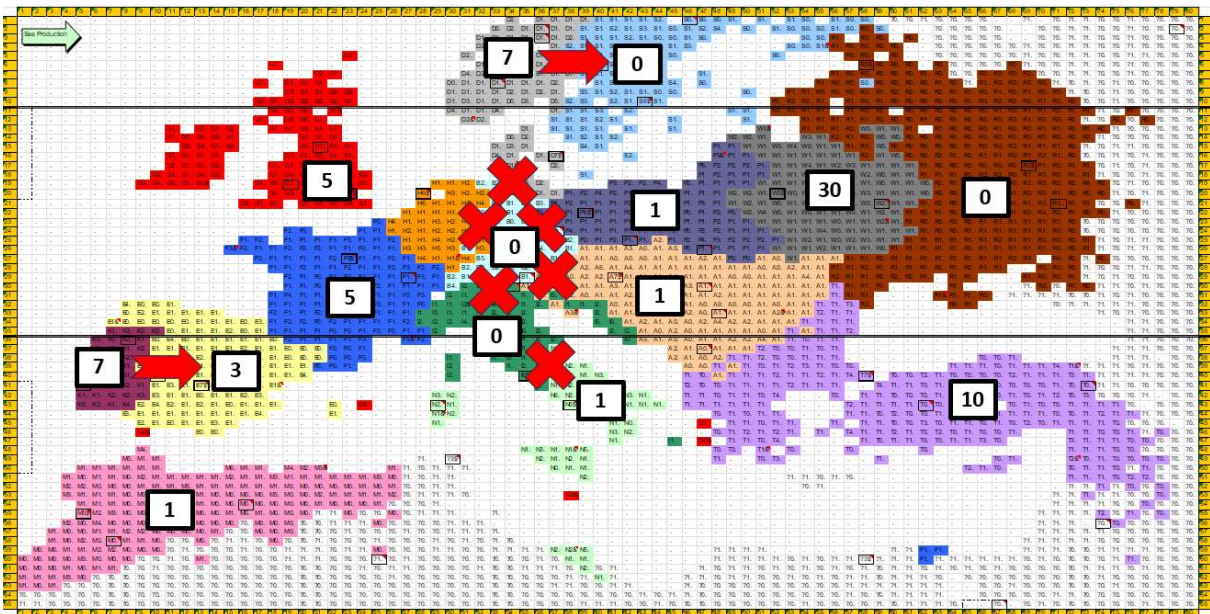


Figure 3. AU409 player victories

### AU409H. The opening scene

As Holland in 409 I had done my homework, and even a cursory view of player wins overlaid on the flashpoints gave a pretty good indication of first moves in the game.

I knew Portugal to be a good player, who would probably wish to take control of the Iberian Peninsula. Equally, an experienced Denmark would probably wish to exploit his neighbour's inexperience by attacking Sweden and then, probably, into Russia.

What would happen in the cockpit of Europe around the Confederation I still knew not.

Beyond those flashpoints I had my eye on Britain (always a good idea), the Ottoman Empire (a seemingly competent player with a lovely corner position) and Warsaw, who I knew to be a very dangerous player.

28. **Step 3: SWOT analysis.** A quick SWOT analysis is a useful tool to shape your grand strategy and bring together the analysis above.

a. **Strengths and weaknesses (know thyself).** By now you should have a really good feel for the strengths and weaknesses of your chosen nation. The trick is to try to play to your strengths as much as possible, whilst guarding against your weaknesses. So you're playing Russia, and have a really slow army? Treat this as an opportunity to build heavy artillery to boost defensive firepower, which would otherwise slow other nations down; or perhaps build plenty of flying columns of Farmer Militia or even Cossacks. Or you have quickly realised that your Moroccan army is the worst by far in the game? Maybe, but it is ridiculously cheap, and every bit as good as colonial auxiliaries if you want to deploy them overseas.

b. **Opportunities and threats (know your enemy).** This is where you have to do more educated guesswork, and piece together what you know – or think you know –

in order to make sense of what you don't. You now know the flash points; now try and think through the second and third order effects. Portugal and Spain are both competent players who have won together before, and who signed up at the same time? Probably a good bet that they have a pre-game alliance and will therefore be working closely together in the colonies. The question is now, do they have a third ally; or, if not, who might they be angling to ally with? Looking at where they deploy to in the colonies will tell you much, especially regarding their relationship with Britain.

#### **AU409H. SWOT analysis**

My immediate concern as Holland was understanding the threat from the Confederation and France. I ensured that I moved spies in my first turn to Paris, Munich and 33/19.

However, the outline of a plan was already forming. The two key players in the game for me were Portugal and Warsaw; to win I would need to ally with one and, ideally, both of them.

Outside of those two known quantities, Britain, Turkey and Denmark were the ones to watch.

29. **Step 4: determine your grand strategy.** If nothing else, you should have some idea of which nation(s) are likely to be your biggest realistic threat, and how soon they might move against you. You should also have a game plan as to who you wish to attack first, and who you might attack after that. Just as with chess, the further you can plan the better; and, as with chess, your opponent gets a vote in how things turn out too. Things can – and will – change. However, it is always better to modify a plan rather than wing it as you go along. To implement your strategy there are three levers of state:

- a. **Military.** The subject of the remaining chapters.
- b. **Economy.** As well as optimising your own economy, you should seek to gain an economic advantage over the opposition in order to maximise your war effort and undermine theirs. Trading well is a key part – in its most simplistic terms buying low and selling high. But there are other options that you can consider: dumping goods in trade cities to undermine other players' revenue streams; piracy (I'm not a huge fan since it will invariably become common knowledge); becoming neutral to prevent selling in your trade city (again, this can be misconstrued). Targeting trade routes will be dealt with later. The other economic consideration is how to assist allies. It never ceases to amaze me how few players actually do this, and sit on a huge stockpile of ore, for instance, when an ally with spare factory capacity could easily convert it to ecpts. Remember the key tenet – this is a *team game*.
- c. **Diplomacy.** This is a very personal subject, and each player will need to develop his own approach. Some players conduct no diplomacy whatsoever; others are verbose to an extraordinary degree. But it is an area which you cannot afford to get wrong. Here are some thoughts:
  - 1) **Intent.** Remember why you are doing this – to win allies and confound enemies (or potential ones). You cannot win without allies, and you cannot win allies without talking to other players. Embrace it.

- 2) **Silence sucks.** There are some players who will not communicate under any circumstance. With some peripheral nations – perhaps Britain – you *might* be able to make it through to the endgame. But don't count on it. If a player fails to respond to my emails nowadays, I assume the worst and automatically place them on the target list.
- 3) **Be courteous.** As the saying goes, it's nice to be important, but it's important to be nice. This is just a game – let's keep things civil. Not only that, but a little humour and a bit of self-deprecation go a long way; other players will forgive you far more readily.
- 4) **Non-aggression pacts (NAP).** A useful diplomatic tool for reassuring yourself that a particular border is 'safe'. However, whilst they have 'moral' value, they can be open to interpretation. Player beware.
- 5) **Alliances.** I would argue that there are three levels of alliances. Firstly, there is a simple temporary relationship of '4' – to hand over territory, for instance, or to allow troops to move through territory. This, to my mind, is not an alliance. Secondly, there is the verbal agreement that two or more players are now allied. This may – or may not – be accompanied by a change in state relationships. Often a 'secret' alliance is invaluable if you do not want to attract the unwanted attentions of other nations; again, player beware. Finally, however, there is the alliance where allies share their turns. Since the turn sheet reveals all, this is the ultimate act of trust - and commitment.
- 6) **Guard your reputation jealously.** A clever use of diplomacy and 'diplomatic language' is one thing; treachery is quite another. Beware losing your name – it will haunt you in future games. Austerlitz is a small gaming community, and the breaking of agreements such as NAPs can cost you your reputation.

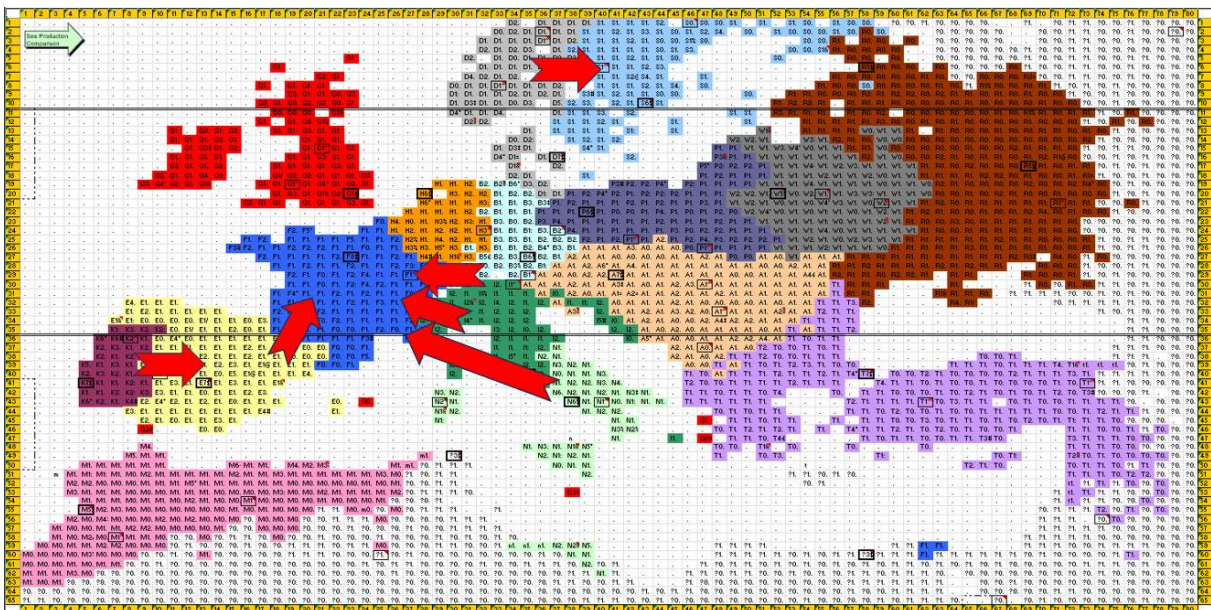


Figure 4. AU409, February 1808

	Working European Production Sites															
	Austria	Rhine	Denmark	Duchy	France	Britain	Holland	Italy	Morrocco	Naples	Ottoman	Portugal	Prussia	Russia	Spain	Sweden
Factory	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	1	2	1	
Weaving Mill	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	
Mint	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Prime Estate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Estate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Prime Sheep Farm	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	3	3	3	0	3	1	1	1	
Sheep Farm	0	1	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	3	0	0	
Prime Horse Farm	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Horse Farm	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	
Lumber Camp	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	
Quarry	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	
Gold Mine	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Ore Mine	1	1	2	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	
Vineyard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
EUROPEAN TOTAL	9	9	10	10	6	10	9	9	10	9	10	10	10	10	9	
CARIBBEAN TOTAL	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
INDIAN TOTAL	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
GRAND TOTAL	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	9	

Figure 5. AU409, February 1808 production sites

### AU409H. The opening gambits

Remember Chapter 1? Well, the very first turn revealed:

- **Spain** had built only 9 sites, of which two were quarries and two European estates.
- **Russia** had built 10, but they included a quarry and an estate.
- **Sweden** had only built 7 sites, including only one mine and one factory.
- **Austria, France and Naples** had built 9.

Chris Matthews' spreadsheet will deduce this instantly for you: see Figure 5.

This all confirmed what I had thought. Furthermore, the Turk had not optimised his moves: was he perhaps not as good as the leaderboard suggested?

Meanwhile, diplomacy was flying thick and fast. The Confederation, Italy, Naples and Spain had quickly agreed to invade France, and invited me to join. This further confirmed my assessment that Portugal would conquer Iberia. It also presented a dilemma. On one hand I knew I had to take the opportunity of conquering France (and denying much of it to BEIN); equally, I knew that five doesn't go into three. This coalition was not destined for a podium finish, and I therefore had to be careful not to be next on the menu. Equally, I expected a border with Portugal, and didn't want to be drawn into a war with a nation I hoped, ultimately, would be an ally.

At the same time, Warsaw was not responding to my emails, and I was increasingly convinced of a Warsaw/Prussia/Austria Central Alliance. If true, this would prove very dangerous.

The other opportunity I did take was to be really aggressive in the colonies. I knew that France would soon fall, that Spain wouldn't be far behind, and that Britain – for now – was friendly. I therefore maximised by colonial expansion for very little risk and cost.

### What next?

30. **Identify possible allies.** I suggest that you need to look for three things in a potential ally: **competence**; **communication**; and **coordination**. The perfect ally will

demonstrate all three, but you should always strive for two. A player who is competent but uncommunicative is a solo player; remember, this is a team game. Conversely a newer, less experienced player who communicates well and is happy to work towards a common alliance strategy will always be welcomed.

31. **Monitor moves.** Mark your map up, and learn to love your highlighter. Look for conquest of uncontrolled territory, not least in the colonies. Watch for fleets, especially those that appear off a coast: is it a bodged move – or a landing?
32. **Monitor production site builds.** Is a player building more lumber camps and textile mills than justified by the number of factories? He is probably building a navy. Try to work out why.
33. **Player database.** If you are reading this, it is likely that you have already been hooked. If so, this will not be your first and last game! When you next sign up to a new game, you may well notice a few familiar player names. It is worthwhile making a few notes about the players you come across to jog your memory in future. Whilst what they build and how they fight will probably change with time and experience, there will be a few constants worth noting. Were they instinctively aggressive, or passive? Did they respond quickly to opportunities, or were they more cautious? Were they communicative, or silent? And, most importantly, were they *trustworthy*?

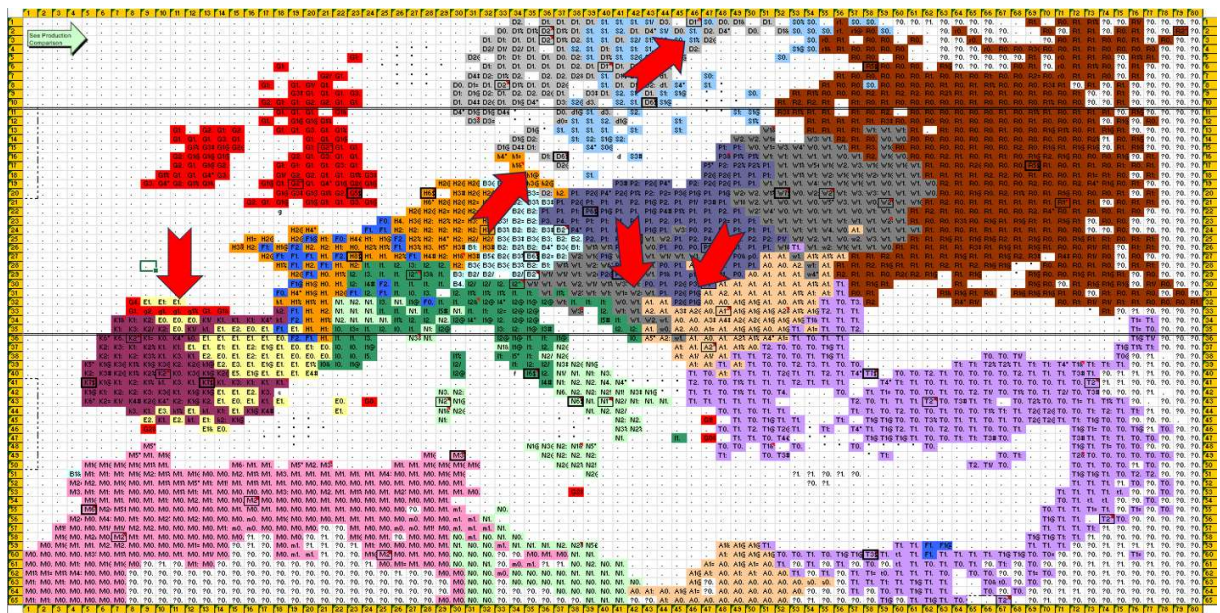


Figure 6. AU409, March 1809. Invasion of Jutland

**AU409H. March 1809: the invasion of Jutland**

By the end of 1808, France has fallen. Spain is under significant pressure, not helped by an amphibious invasion by a new British player. As expected, Denmark is making considerable headway in Sweden, and is nearly on the Russian border. Meanwhile the Central Powers alliance I feared was a chimera, with Prussia and Warsaw now deep into Austria.

Having now established a good relationship with Portugal, I knew that I was ready to expand eastwards. With Denmark fully focussed on defeating Sweden, he had left a single brigade guarding Jutland: it was an opportunity I couldn't ignore. I knew it would sour relations with Denmark – to say the least – but there was more for me to gain than to lose.

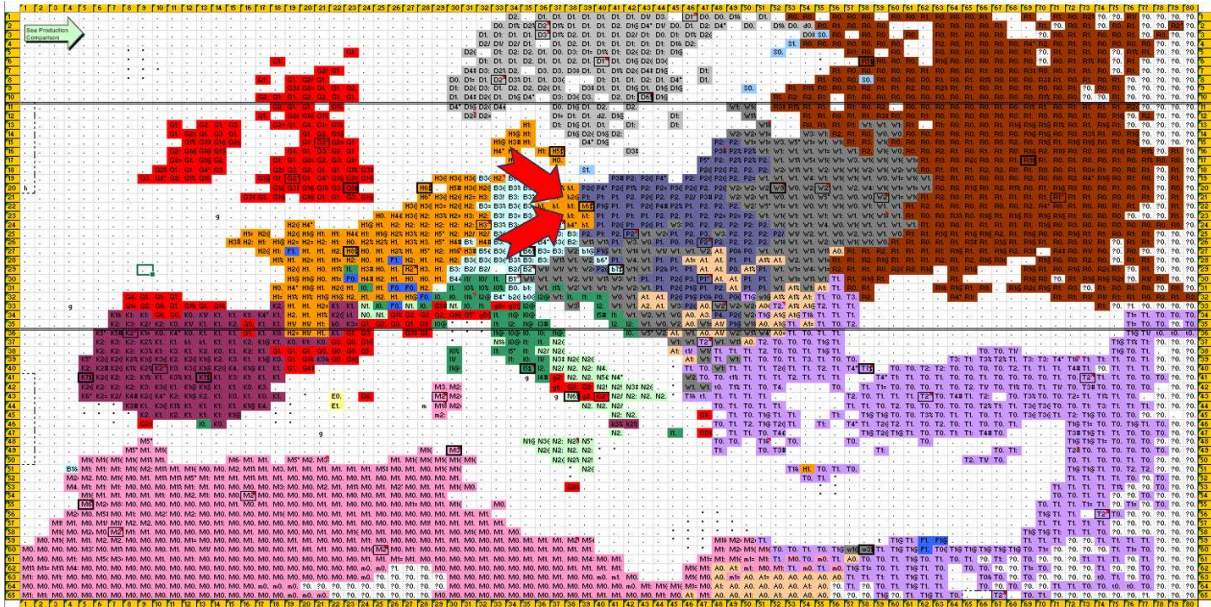


Figure 7. AU409, February 1810. Elbe-Vistula Campaign.

### AU409H. February 1810: Elbe-Vistula Campaign

By now I had secured an alliance with Portugal who, in turn, had a working relationship with Britain. Together they had defeated Italy and Naples, and subdued the Confederation. It was now time to accelerate my expansion.

With Prussia and Warsaw working together, I knew that they could never be part of our fledgling alliance. Therefore, with their armies now deep in the Balkans I took the opportunity to flood into western Prussia from both Jutland and the Confederation, taking Berlin on the first turn.

Whilst Prussia could easily have fought on at that stage, this surprise attack so shattered his will that he promptly dropped. My armies then flooded through the rest of Prussia and, without pausing, straight into Poland.

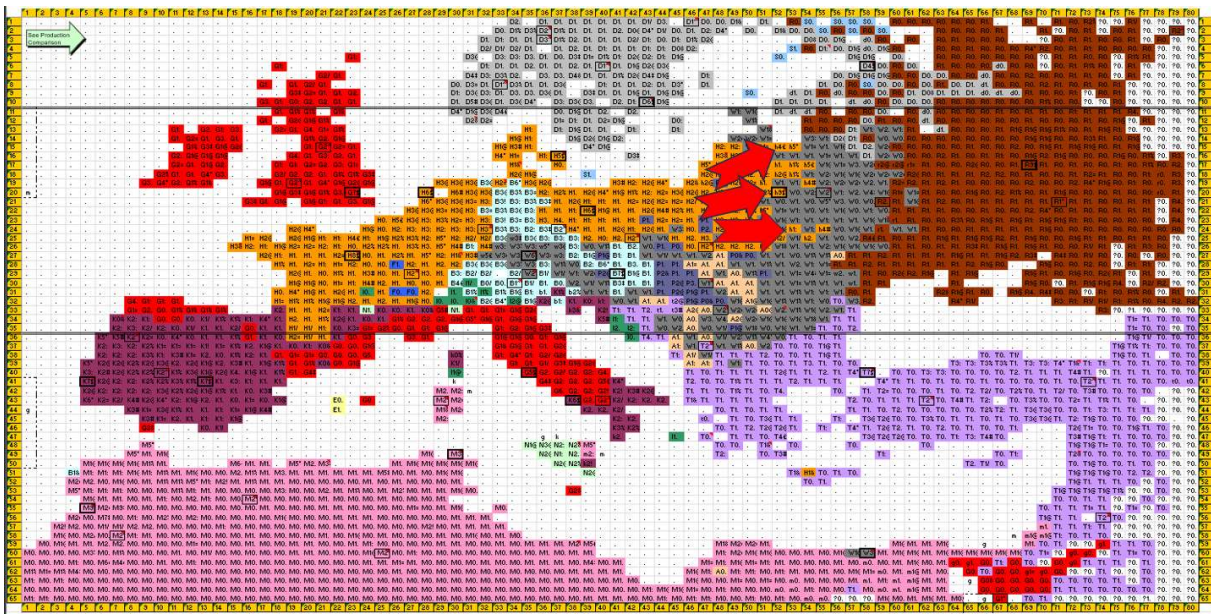


Figure 8. AU409, September 1810. Invasion of Poland

### AU409H. Grand Strategy: final thoughts

So, by the end of 1810 the Dutch army was on the Russian border. However, far from admitting defeat - despite losing his home country - Warsaw would launch a surprise counterstroke through Austria, sweeping aside the Confederation and destroying the reinforcements I was building in Amsterdam. By then, the Dutch Army had reached the Urals, been betrayed by the Russians, and had to conduct a fighting withdrawal all the way back to Holland. But this is a story for another time.

As I write, Game 409 continues to play out to the finish. Holland, Portugal and Britain are a solid alliance with – largely – aligned strategies, and communication is excellent. Conversely our allies are disunited and divided. Whilst I have no doubt that they were generous in economic support to Warsaw, it remains a fact that they wasted an opportunity to unite and strike a serious blow. They have subsequently been defeated in detail: the Moroccan army has been destroyed on the Polish/Austrian border, whilst the Ottoman army waits in Constantinople for its fate. The final act is expected to be with the Danish army...

The key lesson for new players is that the whole game that has played out was effectively determined in the first couple of months. Yes, things go awry, and plans have to change. However, for those prepared to invest the time to think, the shape of every game is there to deduce.