

**LITTLE WARS: THE GEOPOLITICS OF 20TH
CENTURY BOARD GAMES**

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Abstract

Political and cultural geographers are increasingly engaging with the political aspects of play. This "ludic geopolitics" is often studied through video games, particularly war games which place the player in virtual battlefields and reproduce geopolitical discourses. But this work is ahistorical; it has overlooked the contributions that board games over the 20th century have made to shaping and reproducing popular geopolitics.

In this thesis, I reveal these contributions by analysing twenty British war games produced in the early 20th century, from the Second Boer War to the Second World War. I discuss their visual contents and forms, the ways in which their rules function, and their historical contexts to show how they circulate popular geopolitics and discourses of militarism in response to Britain's ever-changing geopolitical climate.

Recurring tropes engage in these board games that historicise modern ludic geopolitical work on video games. These games engage with British popular geopolitics in various ways, by reproducing wartime propaganda, simulating past conflicts, or even making their geopolitical contexts deliberately absent in the game's contents. But even when war games are ambivalent, they circulate similar popular discourses of militarism, demonstrating technofetishism and representing wars as bloodless and as inherently masculine.

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Introduction

"*Little Wars*": Games as Militarism

In 1913, the science-fiction author H. G. Wells published the book *Little Wars: A Game for Boys From Twelve Years of Age to One Hundred and Fifty and for That More Intelligent Sort of Girls Who Like Boys' Games and Books*. (Figure 1) This book recounts the rules to a war game Wells and his friends devised using toy soldiers, toy guns and structures of corkboard and toy blocks to represent physical and urban terrain. By following the rules of this game, two players can enact imaginary battles on this miniature terrain. *Little Wars* can be viewed as an early example of tabletop war gaming, and as a major influence on modern war games (Curry, 2011: 79).

Wells appears keen to diminish the importance of *Little Wars*, in the spirit of playfulness which he probably intended throughout the book. He frames his game by appealing to boyhood, or to a deliberate masculinised childishness; this is seen in the full title of the game, inclusive of all ages of boys while not-so-gently suggesting that girls are not the target audience. Wells writes in a comic style throughout the rulebook, including vignettes in which he transforms into a caricature of a military officer to narrate an example game (Wells, 1913: 63-4), or in which he describes failed versions of *Little Wars* which led to ridiculous scenarios such as drummer boys wielding artillery (ibid: 22).

But this comedic style disappears in the appendix to the book. Here, Wells reveals that an earlier publication of *Little Wars* garnered attention from military officers looking for new methods of training soldiers. This appendix is a more sober attempt to refine the rules of *Little Wars* into a more accurate rendition of war. "If Great War is to be played at all, the better it is played the more humanely it will

be done. I see no inconsistency in deploring the practice while perfecting the method," argues Wells (ibid: 101).

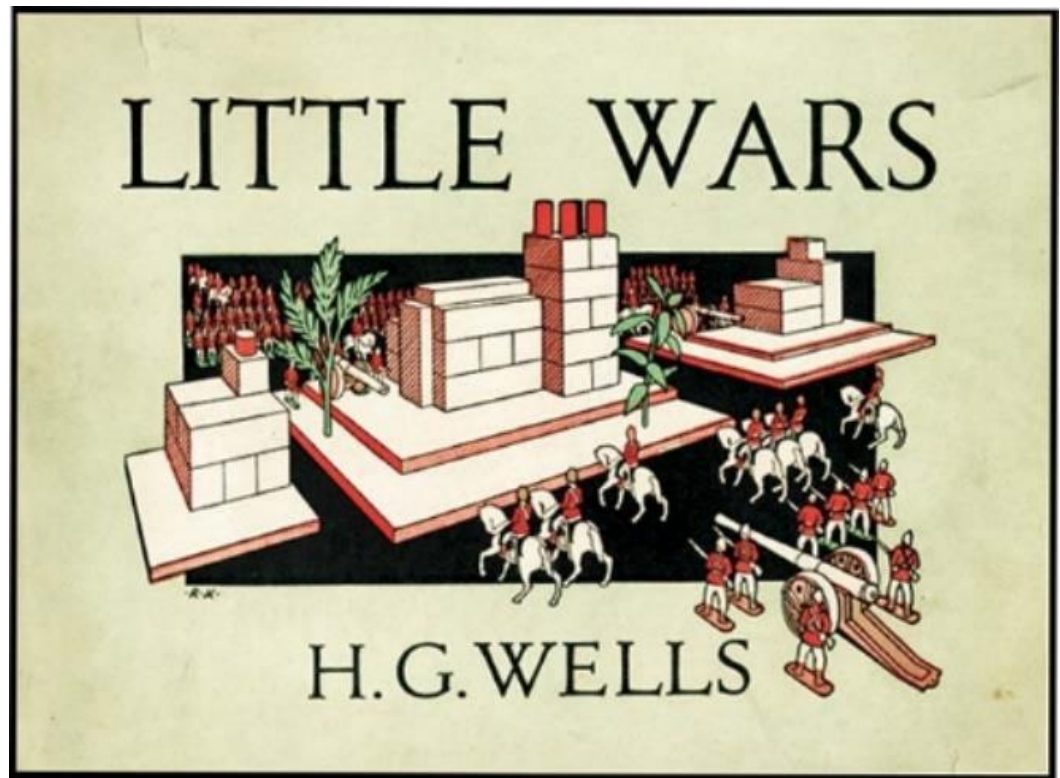


Figure 1: H. G. Wells' Little Wars. (Source: Aleph-Bet Books, accessed 2018)

Well's appendix makes plain the truth of this and all war games. *Little Wars* is not just a representation of war; it is a simulation of war. Toy soldiers on their own visually invoke the iconography of warfare and militarism, but in play through *Little Wars* - or any other set of rules which offers a structure for playing with military toys - they enact the process of battle, of violent struggle over territory. The "little wars" of war gaming are ludic geopolitics, the playful fictionalised politics of territory. Yet even playful wars are designed to mirror the geopolitics and

militarism of real wars, to bring these geopolitics into domestic miniaturised spaces.

To follow this argument is to reveal a long history of play, geopolitics and militarism intertwining with each other, which geographers are still unpicking. This is most strongly reflected in what academia knows about video games. For all the debates about whether video games create violent players and lead to violent crime, cultural and political geographers have been concerned with the representations of war and state-sanctioned violence in video games. Academics and militaries alike believe that war video games influence players' perceptions of war, simulating, normalising and even glamourising military activity. Geographers have flagged up the ability of war games to elide the blood and gore of warfare, for example (Shaw, 2010; Power, 2007). Modified versions of video games have been used as training tools for the military, seen in the transformation of *Doom II* into *Marine Doom* for the benefit of the US Marine Corps (Shaw, 2010: 793), and Shaw has discussed comparisons of the abstraction of drone warfare to video games (ibid: 789-790; Shaw and Akhter, 2012: 1493). The game *America's Army*, in fact, was developed in co-operation with the United States Army with a view to encouraging recruitment among young people (Stahl, 2010: 106). The list goes on, and such relationships between the video game industry and warfare justify geography's close and critical interest in the popular geopolitics of games.

The Importance of Board Games: The Aim of the Thesis

The critical interest of geographers in games has not yet been extended to board games as popular warfare. Yet the board game industry has experienced a revival in recent years, growing by at least 20% since 2009 according to Booth (2015: 1). And board games are every bit as capable of conveying popular geopolitics as video

games. As Yarwood argues, war games are “an inherently geographical practice that is based on representations of geo-politics, the control of territory and scaled representations of people and places.” (Yarwood, 2015: 656). My introductory example of *Little Wars* demonstrates that traditional games are not themselves innocent of geopolitical discourse; for another example which is arguably fundamental to board games as a medium, chess is inescapably a war game in its use of tactical formations and pieces like rooks and knights representing castles and soldiers.

For every damning piece of evidence linking video games to the military-entertainment complex, one can be found from the long history of board games. The war game *Diplomacy*, for example, is inspired by its creator's interest in political geography and geopolitics (Calhamer, 1974). And military historians such as Smith and Van Creveld have shown that games, including modified versions of chess, were used to train soldiers millennia before the first video game was produced. The popular geopolitics of board games are potentially just as powerful as those of video games, and studying them is an important and interesting contribution to critical geopolitics and its understandings of play and warfare throughout history.

In this thesis, I examine the popular geopolitics of board games. To do so, I consider two research questions, focusing respectively on the representational and ludic aspects of board games:

1. How does the appearance and the textual elements of the game shape its vision of war?
2. How are players expected to enact war through the rules of the game?

I refer to *Little Wars* in this introduction and throughout the thesis, but my focus is particularly on games with a pre-designed board. Many of these boards are recreations of the theatres of war of the 20th Century, especially the two World Wars. By focusing on boards, I engage with cartography and history in my

examination of popular geopolitics, alongside the discourses of militarism, gender and childhood suggested by games like *Little Wars*.

To study board games, I use a variety of British war games from 1900-1950 as case studies. The geographical restriction is for reasons of accessibility and practicality (that is, I can only read English and I didn't have enough money to go abroad much), but it also encompasses Britain's role as a major power in imperial geopolitics and warfare. The timeframe brings the spotlight onto Britain's involvement in the Second Boer War, the two World Wars and the interwar period. The fraught and fluid popular and practical geopolitics of this era are amply reflected in its surviving board games.

I describe games as teaching geopolitics here and throughout the thesis. Many of the board games in this study represent geopolitics in a particular way to push a certain narrative. (For example, this is especially visible in the First World War-era board games which portray Germany antagonistically to justify Britain's involvement in the war). This teaching can also be more passive – a war game might make no obvious attempt to represent a current or historical war, yet the assumptions it makes about how war is waged point towards an ideology of militarism encoded in the game. Either way, there are discourses of war, imperialism and militarism embedded in 20th century British board games which offered players compelling ways of thinking about and playing with contemporary geopolitical events. This echoes the current geographical literature on militarism in video games, and I historicise such literature throughout the thesis to reflect on how board games practised similar popular geopolitics a century ago. In doing so, I expose and analyse how popular geopolitics are embedded in the spaces and logics of board games, a medium often overlooked across academia but which has huge historical significance to the histories of play and war.

Thesis Outline

In the next chapter, I review the relevant geographical and sociological literature. Academics have yet to engage substantially with the geopolitics of board games, but much work has been written on adjacent fields, and the arguments presented in this work may be synthesised to suggest the ways in which board game geopolitics could be studied. In my review, I examine how geographers have analysed popular geopolitics through historical research, and how they have studied the geopolitics of gaming and play. I also provide an overview of historical work on board games in general, and of the ways in which geographical techniques have supported geopolitics and military activity (as these techniques may be used in the maps of board games to represent their geopolitics).

Following this, I outline my methodology with reference to further geographical literature. I use board games currently found within museum archives; in my methodology chapter I discuss the politics and considerations of examining objects in archives. I then describe my method of studying these objects, the use of iconographical and textual discourse analysis and historical context to read the geopolitical messages most likely intended or inadvertently coded within by the game designers. I refer to structuralist arguments and geographical techniques to justify my choice.

The actual analysis of board games in my thesis takes place over four chapters, organised by the type of game studied within. I opt for this categorisation, rather than a chronological study, because the different categories of game I discuss often share basic gameplay structures between them. As I study individual games, I often describe or reconstruct their rules as a method of examining their playful aspects. Studying games with similar rules within the same chapter allows for more cohesive chapters in which I can establish the basic expectations of that category of game before examining how each game conforms to or deviates from those

expectations. By contrast, I believe a chronological study of board games would become quite disorientating to read, alternating between studies of simple luck-based games and tactically-rich chess-like games without allowing for an extended evaluation of what these modes of gameplay mean for the simulation of war.

In my first analysis chapter, I study track games. By "track games," I mean games resembling *Snakes and Ladders*; games in which players roll a die to progress along a track of spaces, meaning that the players' chances of victory depend largely on luck rather than skill. Because the gameplay of these games is so shallow, I focus on the visual and textual representations within them. Their use of maps demonstrate that they aim to be contemporary; for example, those games that represent the First World War use political maps that reflect the alliances between nation-states, as in the Allies and the Central Powers. Many of these games could, in fact, be described as propaganda, overtly advocating pro-British, anti-German sentiments and making German perspectives absent. However, the representation of actual violence in these games is virtually non-existent, at most described in vague terms. This introduces a recurring argument in this thesis that board games offer a favourable representation of war by their inability to represent war and violence in any kind of detail; in other words, they offer a "clean" war (Power, 2007).

My second analysis chapter examines the chequerboard game. These games all take place on the abstract space of a chequerboard and draw inspiration from draughts (the first game in this chapter, in fact, is a war-themed draughts board). Here, my analysis includes more of the playful side of popular geopolitics, as players of these games are expected to make informed tactical decisions rather than act at the mercy of a die roll. The chequerboard games I study here are not as overtly geopolitical as the track games of the earlier chapter; instead, their use of tactical gameplay suggests a subtler militarism, in which the motives and utility

of warfare appear to be accepted uncritically even if the specific geopolitics of the war are not discussed.

In my third analysis chapter, I explore a variety of board games based on tactical gameplay which move away from the chequerboard to different ideas for play. This is the most complex chapter, as several of the games here use unique gameplay systems geared towards specific aspects of conflict, such as merchant shipping; the variety of modes of gameplay seen here allow for deeper simulations of warfare. Most of these games appear to disguise any geopolitical bias they may have as they recreate wars on the board; their reproductions of the World Wars are often balanced so that players may play as the German army and win, despite this recreating wartime traumas that led to loss of British life, in contrast to many of the track games and their blatant jingoism. However, the background militarism of the chequerboard games is also on display here, and these tactical games' iconography and deliberate absences reveal the British popular geopolitics which influence and circulate through their textual forms despite their "educational" appearance.

My fourth and final analysis chapter synthesises the strands and arguments presented in the previous chapters into a chronological analysis of a series of board games. During the interwar period, the board game company H. P. Gibson and Sons produced the tactical game *L'Attaque* and several related games which are variants of this original design. Multiple versions of each game are available in various archives around Britain. These games, ordered by time and by type, reveal the shifting geopolitics and evolving militaristic discourses of the early 20th century in Britain. Although *L'Attaque* represents a war between England and France, later games in this chapter attempt to appear a-geopolitical, meaning that they do not overtly represent a past or potential conflict between two nations; however, their visual forms and gameplay over the course of the interwar period are suggestive of British popular geopolitics and technological militarism.

I conclude by summarising the various discourses and geopolitical messages which recur throughout the thesis. Blunt propaganda messages about the morality of the present war are presented alongside more insidious beliefs in the power of militarism and imperialism, as well as the gendering of both real and playful war. I compare these discourses once more to the present geographical literature on popular geopolitics and games, and I suggest that this historicisation of games benefits the further study of ludic geopolitics.

Literature Review

In this literature review, I first discuss critical geopolitics as a research field and a way of interrogating the historical relationship between the military and geography. I highlight the history of geography and warfare here, and its implications for my board game research. I then unpick popular geopolitics, and the ways in which critical geographers have used historical research and audience research to think about this subject.

From here, I focus on "ludic geopolitics," the political geography of play, and discuss how geographers and other social scientists have engaged with toys and games, especially video games. Here it becomes apparent that a substantial engagement with the board game as representation of war is missing, and so I examine academic research on the history of board games and their relationship with the military, particularly their influence on modern war gaming.

Parts of this literature review, particularly the first section on popular geopolitics, draw on a literature review originally written for *Geography Compass* (Harby, 2018).

Geography and Geopolitics

Classical Geopolitics and Military Geography

This thesis is primarily about the interpretation of geopolitics through board games. We can take geopolitics here to mean Teggart's definition, "geography aiding statecraft" (Kearns, 2009: 3, citing Teggart, 1919). This definition encompasses the use of physical and political geography in war and imperialism; geography itself, Ó Tuathail argues, is "a product of histories of struggle between

competing authorities over the power to organize, occupy, and administer space" (Ó Tuathail, 1996a: 1).

Teggart is particularly referring to academic geography of the early 20th century, the efforts of geographers to theorise and guide territorialisation. Two relevant examples here are Halford Mackinder and Karl Haushofer. Mackinder is known for the "Heartland theory", the idea that imperial control of the heart of the Eurasian-African landmass was necessary to co-ordinate land power and thus maximise military strength (Mackinder, 1904); Haushofer drew upon Mackinder (Parker, 1982: 176; Kearns, 2009: 17) to develop his theories of *Lebensraum*, which supposedly demonstrated that certain territories were characteristic of certain races and cultures and thus belonged to them. Imperial geography positions itself as crucial to military strategy in both examples.

The board games I study in this thesis hail from similar time periods in the 20th century, and often echo this military geography's understanding of space. If board games are spatial, then succeeding in a war game is about spatial dominance - about identifying, taking and holding crucial territories in order to enact a strategy. Many games in this thesis specifically mark important areas of the board which influence the direction of the game; spaces may need to be reached to win the game, for example, or playing pieces on those spaces may be immune to capture by opponents. Identifying these playful geopolitics of board games is crucial to understanding how they simulate war in miniature form.

Critical Geopolitics

Geography has largely distanced itself from the imperialism of the early 20th century.¹ A modern typology of geopolitics is set out by Ó Tuathail and Dalby, who argue that "geopolitics is not a singularity but a plurality [... and] a broad social and cultural phenomenon" (Ó Tuathail and Dalby, 1998: 4). This typology is threefold: "practical" geopolitics is practised by the state in war and foreign policy; "formal" geopolitics is the discussion and theorisation of geopolitics by academic and strategists; and "popular" geopolitics is the geopolitics of popular culture, of mass-market publications and broadcasts (ibid: 4-5). It is this last type, popular geopolitics, that is most relevant here. I take board games as a form of mass-produced media which reinterpreted geopolitics as scenarios for household entertainment throughout the 20th century (and which still does). In this thesis, I read board games as both reflective of popular media geopolitics, and reactive to the practical and formal geopolitics which led Britain into and out of world war.

This typology has become broadly accepted in the wider geopolitical literature and is the foundation of "critical geopolitics." This field of geography interrogates the "intellectual practices of unravelling and deconstructing geographical and related disguises, dissimulations, and rationalizations of power" (Dalby, 1994: 595); it is the analysis of geopolitics as a spatialized use of power directed by discourses of society, culture and history (Kelly, 2006: 35), which are continually repurposed to build and react to new "geographies of danger" (Dalby, 2008). If "classical" geopolitics is geopolitics as statecraft, then critical geopolitics is the analysis of precisely how this statecraft operates. My thesis is an extension of this critical geopolitical work, analysing the ways in which popular geopolitics operated in board game form.

¹ Largely, but not entirely. Military geography still exists, applying GIS techniques to aid military control of space. For example, see Beck's application of GIS to counterterrorism operations (2003).

In recent years, some geographers have put forward methodological frameworks through which the material and social effects of geopolitics may be understood. Flint offers a framework with a long-term scope in geopolitical constructs, "the coming together of the behaviour of agents within structures of physical settings, norms, and rules that allow for geopolitical actions," particularly the production of war (Flint, 2016: 10). Flint's example is the Mulberry Harbours of the Second World War, a national project which required the production of "good geopolitical subjects" and other bureaucracies to create.

Dittmer suggests a similar idea with a focus on fluidity and ephemerality in assemblages, through which objects and discourses both form and are formed by geopolitical structures and must be understood by these relations; these objects and discourses are thus dynamic and impermanent, as assemblages reform themselves to appear stable (even if they are not actually stable) in the face of multiple possibilities and exterior pressures (Dittmer, 2014: 393-4; 2015: 910). Dittmer has applied this assemblage theory to games which simulate geopolitics, such as model United Nations groups; such games are assembled by particular territories (such as game boards), material objects (such as pieces) and codes (such as rules) being treated as a cohesive whole. These game assemblages may then become part of greater assemblages of popular geopolitics or military entertainment. (Dittmer, 2015: 910) Dittmer's work points to opportunities for thinking of games as objects, assemblages of objects and components of greater geopolitical projects, but I also find Flint's geopolitical constructs relevant here. Throughout the thesis, I characterise individual board games as ephemeral, often half-destroyed by age and the loss of pieces, obscure and peripheral to the wars and geopolitical tensions they depict; however, the tropes of board games remain the same throughout the two World Wars, and board games remain produced in volume across the 20th century, suggesting a long-term stability and significance of the board game industry to war and the state.

Cartography and Geopolitics

The study of cartography provides a good example of a relevant geographical field where the social geographies of the visual text are important. Harley stresses that "[the rules] governing the cultural production of the map" are related to socio-political and religious ideologies, demonstrated by the ethnocentricity of, for example, Eurocentric maps (Harley, 1992: 236), and that maps are shaped by external powers in the form of patrons who decide what shall and shall not be mapped (ibid: 244); maps depict geographical messages from publishers and their cultures of origin. Pickles, meanwhile, describes maps as "layers of textuality" incorporating the maps and their immediate contexts and wider contexts (Pickles, 1992: 219), and asserts that even the "scientific" map may have "propagandistic elements" when it reflects its cartographer's ideologies (ibid: 226).

Yet there are certainly maps which exist purely for reasons of propaganda, regardless of any scientific value they may claim to have. Boria refers to such maps as "geopolitical maps," which use simple stylised cartographical techniques to present a geopolitical claim to the reader as plainly as possible (Boria, 2008: 281); for example, bold arrows and colour contrasts create "visually violent symbolism" to strengthen the map's message (Pickles, 1992: 207). From this and other articles on geopolitical maps, it seems these maps particularly belong to popular geopolitics in how they use the medium to spread a discourse to a general public, although overlaps exist with practical and formal geopolitics too, demonstrated by Karl Haushofer's use of such maps to demonstrate his political geography (Pickles, 1992: 203, citing Weigert, 1941: 529; see also Herb, 1997, for more on Nazi Germany's relationship with the geopolitical map).

Because of cartography's power to distort and convince, it was a crucial tool for many of the practices of imperial military geography already discussed. Driver argues that cartography provided a scientific justification for colonial exploration in the age of enlightenment, but that this cartography also facilitated the knowing

and conquering of explored territories and imperial statecraft (Driver, 2001: 21-2; see also Black, 2009: 50); such mapping enabled the economic exploitation of colonies for imperial purposes (Hudson, 1977: 15). Beyond statecraft, maps also reinforced the popular geopolitics of imperialism. Heffernan demonstrates recurring imperialist discourses in newspaper mapping in Britain and France from 1875 to 1925; these maps reinforced the popular exploration geographies of the time and showed readers the economic potential of colonial spaces to the empires occupying them (Heffernan, 2009: 271).

The most notorious work of political cartography in Britain, however, is probably the map of the British Empire. Edney quotes a memoir which recalls that the map was "red for Empire and dull brown for the rest, with Australia and Canada vastly exaggerated in size by Mercator's projection" (Edney, 2009: 26, quoting Halsey, 1983: 10); the map used bold colours and a projection which exaggerates certain landmasses to depict Britain's colonies, making Britain's territory appear greater despite its apparent cartographic accuracy. Considering this review of cartography so far, this is clearly a geopolitical map, contributing to a popular geopolitical discourse of Britain as a world leader by emphasising British territory, celebrating its imperialism. This demonstrates that, although much of the literature on geopolitical mapping focuses on Germany, British geography was not above exploiting the power of cartography to support popular geopolitics.²

This section so far has dealt with the supposedly-scientific and economic imperatives behind cartography and geopolitics, but maps, of course, have much

² It should be noted that this is not the same as the author's personal geopolitics. Geographers have employed historical methodologies to expose the map's complex history, revealing that the cartographer, Walter Crane, was a socialist (Biltcliffe, 2005; Driver, 2010: 152) who elsewhere protested imperialism in other visual media such as wood engravings (Briggs, 2013). I explore the tension between the personal politics of authors and the state geopolitics of their times in the next part of the literature review, but this is an early demonstration of that tension. Historical popular geopolitics here challenges easy assumptions about the history of geography and colonialism, and suggests the ways in which visual representations of geopolitics may disguise yet more interesting stories about the production and consumption of these geopolitics.

more direct uses in geopolitics: they are used to understand battlefields and wage war. I have already noted the military's realisation in the 19th century that geography was an invaluable tool for warfare, and cartography was often the form that geography took in military strategy; America's fight for independence from Britain, for example, was characterised by wide terrain which required reconnaissance and cartography to understand (Black, 2009: 53; Harley, 1978: 23-5). The connection between militarism and cartography survives today in the development and usage of GIS software for military purposes (Corson, in Herb et al, 2009: 336; Beck, 2003).

Heffernan's work demonstrates how important maps were to militarism during the First World War. The need for cartography would occupy many of the Royal Geographical Society's resources throughout the war, as maps suddenly became urgently important to military leaders. Heffernan, outlining this history, notes how the discipline of geography was largely unified towards supporting the British military through cartography, despite any moral objections that academics might have had to the war (Heffernan, 1996). Newspaper maps, so beneficially employed to teach imperial values to the public, now became visual aids for the popular geopolitics of warfare, presented as educational political atlases (Heffernan, 2009: 275).

This literature shows the close connections between militarism in the 19th and 20th centuries and geography, particularly cartography. This frames our understanding of what maps of war were trying to accomplish during the early 20th century, in terms of practical and formal geopolitics as well as popular geopolitics, and has interesting implications for the board game as a representation of space. The board is a flat object which is also supposed to represent the topography and physicality of a battlefield space. Some board games reflect this duality, particularly the 19th century military training game *Kriegsspiel*. This game is discussed for its importance to board game history later in the

literature review, but it is important here for how it used topographic maps to incorporate geography into the game; Ahlqvist notes this and further observes that there were linkages between cartography and game development throughout the 19th century as mapmakers contributed to board designs (Ahlqvist, 2011: 279-280, citing Goodfellow, 1998).

As I find throughout my analyses, however, many 20th century board games embrace the flatness of the board and do not model the physical geography of the battle in any significant manner. Where maps of recognisable spaces exist (as opposed to more abstract board spaces such as draughts chequerboards), these maps are usually extremely simplistic, rendering states and territories as depopulated outlines. As Salter says of the game *Diplomacy*, the war game map is "entirely robbed of economy, culture, identity: geopolitics is understood exclusively in militaristic terms where states and state boundaries are fixed and conflict or cooperation arises only along borders" (Salter, 2011: 366). Board game maps, then, are geopolitical maps; they take inspiration from formal geopolitics, as I have previously indicated, but are simplified political maps which use visual cartographical techniques to focus on a specific geopolitical purpose, usually as a backdrop for playful militarism. Understanding the board game map as a geopolitical discourse in itself is key to understanding how popular geopolitics was enacted in many of the games analysed in this thesis.

War History

I base much of my research in this thesis on the observation that popular geopolitics in mass media reflect formal or practical geopolitics and the socio-cultural discourses of their times of production in some way. Therefore, an understanding of the geopolitics of the early 20th century in Britain is essential for any kind of accurate research into board game geopolitics. Throughout my analyses of board games, I constantly refer to various texts by historians on the

two World Wars and the interwar period, checking the dates of each game against the state of international geopolitics at that point in history.

I am particularly indebted to Gilbert (1994, 1995), whose texts on the World Wars were frequently instrumental in reconstructing timelines of geopolitics. Similar books used were written by Stevenson (2004) and Beevor (2012). These are all large books which attempt to capture the scale of global war by tracing the strategies of nations and generals and the geopolitical tensions between them over the course of the World Wars. Although no book could possibly capture all the detail of the World Wars, these books between them offer a helpful picture of the shifting geopolitics of war.

More specific history books are of great help as well. Tuchman (2000) focuses particularly on the opening months of the First World War, analysing what proved to be the construction of modern warfare as Europe learned how destructive modern military technology could be. This text is particularly helpful, as some of the First World War-era board games I discuss display an optimistic view of clean and swift warfare that would soon be proven wrong; Tuchman's book helps to date these attitudes, as well as the representations of certain national militaries whose uniforms and weapons were adapted for modern war during the First World War.

Some historians focus on a specific technology or discourse of war and imperialism. For example, Hippler (2017) outlines the history of aviation and strategic bombing, the murder of civilians as a tool of international governance, and connects this with the drone as the latest stage of aerial warfare and surveillance (2017: 204-5; such post-colonial critique echoes geographical analyses, e.g. Shaw, 2010). Calder (1991) also discusses bombing, but from the perspective of British civilians during the Second World War in order to critically deconstruct modern discourses of the Blitz spirit.

Twentieth-Century War and Conflict (ed. Martel, 2015) is an encyclopaedia of modern military history organised by war, offering a few concise chapters on major

wars as well as a handful of essays on war and certain popular media such as cinema and poetry. Of these general essays, Marlin's chapter on propaganda (2015) is especially pertinent, as it details many of the ways in which governments, the architects of state geopolitics, attempted to shape popular geopolitics through various forms of media and emotional appeals in the two World Wars.

Of course, most of these books focus on the performance of war and state geopolitics; while war has an undeniable influence over popular geopolitics, these texts do not often dwell on the popular discourses of war within Britain. For this, social history is required to get a greater sense of the popular geopolitics of wartime outside of board games. Pugh's *State & Society* (1999) has proven to be one of the most helpful books in this regard, focusing on Britain's social and political history in the 20th century, and contextualising the British perception of war across the two World Wars and the interwar period in doing so. Pugh's *We Danced All Night* (2008) further highlights the interwar period and the British public's relationship with militarism in the aftermath of the First World War. Similarly, Dewey's *War and Progress* (1997) tracks the progression of society in Britain over the two World Wars and interwar period, although Dewey takes a different approach and focuses on the economic shifts for Britain as a nation and population over this period.

Despite the range and scope of all these historical texts, however, they cannot cover every detail of total war. There were many instances during research when some small visual detail of a board game – the depiction of battleships, the colouration of uniforms, and so on – appeared to reflect some specific moment in military history, but I was unable to confirm or disprove the assumption using these texts, and more specific historical texts were either unavailable or prohibitively expensive. In these cases, I have sometimes turned to amateur historians who work as hobbyists outside of academic spaces. This work must be used cautiously as with board game histories, as it often exists outside of formal

academia; however, I do not wish to imply that this work is worse than that within academia, as it usually appears to be written with care and dedication, sometimes using the authors' own archival materials or anecdotes. Such work focuses on the minutia of military and domestic life during wartime, detailing, for example, the precise composition of military uniforms (Furey-King, 2011) or the experience of life under black-out conditions (Anon., 2015); these small details can shed far more light upon the domestic aspects of the board game as military entertainment than the grand-scale texts of military historians in academia.

This overview of military geography and wartime history has shown how the practical and formal geopolitics of warfare influenced the popular geopolitics of Britain, as well as how cartography may reflect geopolitical ideology. Having circled popular geopolitics during this chapter, it is now time to tackle the subject more directly. Board games may take cartographical influence from formal and practical geography, but it is popular geopolitics that they most directly reflect; examining how critical historical geographers have engaged with popular geopolitics provides useful examples of how these geopolitics can best be contextualised and analysed.

Historical Popular Geopolitics

Popular Geopolitics

This thesis understands the geopolitics of board games of the 20th century as reflections and recreations of popular geopolitics; though they may draw on practical or formal geopolitics, they are mass-media products aimed at the public.³

³ A criticism made of an earlier draft of this thesis by my examiners was that I often use the term “reflection” to describe the relationship between representations and real geopolitics, and that this de-emphasises the agency of both game designers and players. This is fair, and in this draft I have made the intentionality of such representations clearer. However, I think “reflection” also captures something of the *unintentionality* of these representations. For popular geopolitics does

Dittmer understands popular culture as "one of the ways in which people come to understand their position both within a larger collective identity and within an even broader geopolitical narrative, or script" (Dittmer, 2005: 626), drawing on Edwardson's argument that popular culture can convey the symbolic aspects of national identity to a wide audience (Edwardson, 2003). In addition to teaching a national or regional mythos, popular culture may also simply teach justifications for practical geopolitics, visible in almost any wartime propaganda film or poster (for example, see the work on propaganda mapping by Herb, 1997). It would be a mistake to think of popular geopolitics as prescriptive, or of consumers as passive receivers of geopolitics (Dittmer and Gray, 2010; this argument is explained further below), but popular culture must still be recognized as a methodology for disseminating and exploring geopolitics beyond the academy and the state.

Critical geopolitics treats geopolitics as a product of the social and cultural as well as the geographical and political. As such, critical work on popular geopolitics engages particularly with the mass media products that reflect or influence the socio-cultural contexts of war and diplomacy. This work may examine film, television, comics, cartoons, art, literary fiction, magazines, video games, and many other forms of communication. Some of this work will be discussed below, but first, it is important to recall where these socio-cultural contexts come from. Ó Tuathail argues that critical geopolitics assumes a "relentless continuity to international politics" (1996b: 176); that geopolitics does not just happen, but draws on previous geopolitical realities. For example, Dalby argues that the post-9/11 geopolitics of the United States draws on its geopolitics of danger during the

not just capture war and propaganda – it also encapsulates the militarism that supports these wars but is often so banal that it goes un-noticed. Several games in this thesis, I argue, take certain geopolitical discourses for granted, both unadvertised and unquestioned, such as the necessity of war, its representation as a battle of wits rather than a fight to the death, and so on. These are reflections, I think – I am not sure the designers even noticed they were there, but they nevertheless correspond to the social history of war and militarism, providing insight into how and when these games were produced and sold over the course of the 20th century.

Cold War, recalibrated to replace the now-defunct Soviet Union antagonist with a new terrorist antagonist (2008: 414). In other words, history is a key factor in critical geopolitics; historical narratives influence present-day narratives. In this literature review, I primarily focus on popular geopolitics work which emphasizes the historical. This historical work can sometimes be lacking, as much of popular geopolitics focuses on ever-shifting, contestable present-day geopolitics (Dittmer, 2007: 402), but the work that does exist signposts the ways in which critical popular geopolitics can make full use of historical research.

Historical Popular Geopolitics and Vision

There is a strong tradition of visual media in popular geopolitics work. Much of critical popular geopolitics tackles vision and representation in some way, usually as a reflection or distortion of their socio-cultural contexts translated by creative producers to an artistic format. As Hughes argues, "ways of seeing" - the television, the film screen, and so on - "and geographies of international relations are constituted in and through each other" (Hughes, 2007: 978); relatedly, Virilio has discussed how war is waged through the use of spectacle and the affective and emotive impact that shocking imagery such as the atomic bomb can have on popular geopolitics (Virilio, 1989: 6; see also Stahl on how the spectacular war leads to war as consumable and marketable, 2010: 31-5). This connection between geopolitics and the visual in political geography dates to Ó Tuathail's discussion of visual strategies within classical geopolitics (1996b), which was itself critiqued for a lack of visuality in its arguments (for example, see Heffernan, 2000: 348-9).

Illustration is a format which is particularly well-explored in the literature via comics and cartoons. This work is relevant to board game studies as many games in this thesis use cartoons and illustrations to depict warfare, often in a sequential manner (corresponding to the spaces of the board rather than panels in a comic). Dittmer's work on *Captain America* (2005, 2007) is a key example of work with

comic books. For Dittmer, the character of Captain America is a symbolisation of the United States' national identity, acting as nationalism on the scale of both the nation-state and the individual (Dittmer, 2007: 405); he is the intersection of foreign policy, internal order, and the body (Dittmer, 2005: 627). Dittmer demonstrates that the Captain reflects popular geopolitics rather than the state's geopolitics by contrasting *Captain America* comics pre-dating the attack on Pearl Harbor, which depicted him beating Hitler, with the isolationist state geopolitics of the time (Dittmer, 2007: 407).

Similarly, Riches shows how British war comics during the Boer Wars and the Second World War promoted tropes of British nationalism by celebrating heroic British successes such as the survival of Mafeking and ridiculing Britain's wartime enemies (Riches, 2009: 9; Rech, 2014: 40). Dunnett shows that comics practice the geopolitics of imperialism and control as well as warfare in his analysis of *Tintin* comics; Tintin's adventures in colonial lands are interpreted as the product of the author Hergé's association with conservative Belgian popular geopolitics in the press (Dunnett, 2009). Rech demonstrates the lasting influence of comics on popular geopolitics by studying Royal Air Force posters produced in 2009 to encourage recruitment. These posters, Rech argues, use visual imagery and composition codified by war comics to suggest cultural narratives of the righteousness of war (Rech, 2014: 45); for Rech, not just its visuals but the comic format itself suggests popular geopolitics of militarism. In comics, then, characters like Captain America and the tropes of visibility in comic books can reflect current events to visually represent nationalist popular geopolitics.

As well as comic books, the cartoon may also reflect popular geopolitics, especially the political cartoon. Dodds's early work on the cartoonist Steve Bell (1996, 1998) demonstrates how political cartoons may express a popular geopolitics which not only reflects, but satirises state geopolitics, much like *Captain America's* protests against American isolationism. Historical context is used to decode the meanings

of both the cartoon and the geopolitics that they depict; for example, Bell's Falklands Wars cartoons demonstrate and ridicule the use of the Second World War as a justifying mythos for British warfare (Dodds, 1996).⁴ More traditional forms of art may perform similar discursive work for popular geopolitics influenced by history; as a less subversive example than the cartoons of Bell, Sage compares American astronomical art to 19th century American landscape art as an expression of the popular geopolitics of Manifest Destiny (Sage, 2008). As well as demonstrating the continuity of popular geopolitics, this example is interesting in how it explores an entire genre of art as a vehicle for popular geopolitics, echoing the ways in which Rech interprets the war comic as inherently representative of British nostalgic nationalism (Rech, 2014).

This work details visible motifs in popular geopolitics, but invisibility or absence can be equally telling. Two papers discussing the popular geopolitics of cinema attest to this. Scharf's critical reading of West German cinema notes the absence of the Berlin Wall in this film genre and connects this to the popular geopolitics of historical trauma, so dominated by discussion of the Holocaust that the nation was unable to begin processing its relationship to the Cold War (Scharf, 2005: 381). Dodds similarly uses absence in his discussion of Cold War-era James Bond films, particularly the production of *Dr No*; the antagonist of this film was rewritten from a lone mastermind to a "Red Chinese agent" to exploit popular American fears of Cuban and Russian interference (Dodds, 2005: 274-6), and then rewritten again as an agent of the fictional, placeless organisation SPECTRE (ibid: 277). The final absence of geopolitical motivations for Dr No becomes interesting when historical research reveals his politicisation during development. Cinematic geopolitics literature shows that the absence of geopolitics can suggest the anxieties and traumas of both producers and media consumers. In my analysis, I use similar

⁴ See also Dodds's 1998 chapter in which similar work is performed with more recent geopolitics, in this case the Bosnian Crisis as understood through Bell's use of cartoon iconography.

strategies to problematise the representations (or lack thereof) of war in certain wartime board game.

Beyond the visual, we must also note the role of text and geopolitical literature in shaping popular geopolitics, as some of the representational work performed by board games is purely textual, in their titles or in asides in their rule books. Some of the work on textual popular geopolitics deals with British imperialism; for instance, Driver discusses "Geography Militant," the ways in which narratives of exploration were hugely influential on the British public's understanding of British imperial territories at a time when explorers held a celebrity status (Driver, 2001). Post-colonial academia and literary criticism has dissected the colonial literary fiction that this age of exploration inspired, most notably in Achebe's critique of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a paternalistic interpretation of Britain's relationship with its African colonies which is imbued with deep racism despite its own critique of imperialism (Achebe, 1977).⁵

Relatedly, literary criticism has discussed invasion fiction, which imagined possible near-futures in which Britain was invaded by some geopolitical rival; such literature was usually written by military figures playing on British fears of rival nation-states to inspire more military spending (Bulfin, 2015: 482-3, 485; Matin, 2011: 802). Bulfin and Matin's papers both explore the purposes of invasion literature; Clarke (1997) discusses the various literary media, novels and tracts and plays, through which authors have attempted to stir geopolitical panics over the centuries. Both colonial literature and invasion literature wrote narratives which appealed to popular geopolitical discourses of the time, playing on British fascination with colonised "exotic" spaces and cultures or on British anxieties about its status as a military power respectively. Such imaginary literary

⁵ See also Barnett on postcolonial theory, which is discussed in terms of its approach to representation which refocuses from what is being represented to who is writing the representations (Barnett, 2006: 153-6)

geographies are present in board game spaces and texts too, as boards and rulebooks construct scenarios which explore or resolve the practical geopolitics of warfare.⁶

Historical Popular Geopolitics and the Body

The work I have reviewed so far primarily deals with representations. This is useful work, as my methodology, which I set out in the next chapter, deals with board games as textual objects. However, this representational work has been critiqued in recent critical geopolitics, particularly from a viewpoint of feminist political geography. These critiques suggest that this form of popular geopolitics follows an elitist and gendered binary between the "public/political" and the "private/apolitical," whose treatment of media power as the site of geopolitical production often comes at the expense of analysing practices of consumption (Dittmer and Gray, 2010: 1666; Koopman, 2011: 275). Dittmer and Gray argue that the focus on representation that this entails loses the "pleasure, thrills, and tragedy from people's experiences of popular culture" (Dittmer and Gray, 2010: 1667), and have called for a "popular geopolitics 2.0" which heeds methodological lessons from non-representational theory, feminist theory and audience research to bring geographies of embodiment into this research (ibid: 1671-3).

This "popular geopolitics 2.0" is pertinent to board games. As I explain below, games require the participation of players to operate as texts; the players interact with the board game as object to enact its geopolitical messages on the board. Board games are thus more than texts, requiring the participation of the player to

⁶ For example, *Transports*, discussed in the third analysis chapter, explores the possibility of warfare in the English Channel. The two players take differing roles, one as a naval force defending merchant shipping, the other as an invasive force. As I argue in the chapter, this is a coded representation of a defensive British protagonist and an attacking German fleet.

build meaning. Therefore, an understanding of the ways in which the public may consume or resist popular geopolitics is essential to working with board games.

If popular geopolitics is the geopolitical activity of the general public, then one way to analyse the effects and affects of geopolitical consumption may be to analyse the behaviour of the general public in response to geopolitical production. In what ways do populations act on the geopolitics of representations and discourses? This approach is explored by Flint in *Geopolitical Constructs*. This book discusses the construction of the Mulberry Harbours in the Second World War, but Flint argues the Harbours were more than their physical forms; this geopolitical construct was also the ways in which British workers' beliefs and behaviours were reshaped to facilitate their construction (Flint, 2016). The "good geopolitical subject," the soldier or labourer who contributed to the Harbours, was moulded by the emotional affects of the construct; pride in their contribution to the war effort, but also anxiety from the risk of failure if the Mulberry project was poorly built (ibid: 91).

Flint's work shows how popular involvement in geopolitics may influence the behaviour of the population, and hints that individual behaviours and bodies are sites of geopolitical discourses and tensions. This idea is explored more fully in feminist critical geopolitics work, which explores "who does [geopolitics], how and at what scales" (Koopman, 2011: 276), especially considering how individuals negotiate or resist these power relations. For example, Koopman argues for an "alter-geopolitics" which constructs security at the local grassroots level away from (inter)national securities. Mills examines the role of gender in the popular militarism of the Scouting movement, for example, by discussing the Girl Scouts and their appearance in spaces intended for boyhood (Mills, 2011). Interestingly, this is framed not as resistance to gendered militarism, but simply as the product of young girls wanting to play in similar spaces to boys.

Similarly, Macdonald's historical research on a schoolboy who travelled across Scotland to witness the launch of the Corporal missile in 1959 centralises the child as audience. Macdonald adopts a methodology which uses representations as a prompt for questions of observation and affect (Macdonald, 2006: 54-5); for him, the popular geopolitical representation of the Corporal as both weapon and space rocket, merging discourses of war and peaceful science (ibid: 54), was so compelling that it became an all-encompassing visual discourse for the schoolboy, "recruiting him into a web of military hardware that fostered unexpected visual intimacies with both raptor and rocket." (ibid: 64). Although popular geopolitics may be intensely political in terms of their textual discourses, Mills and Macdonald illustrate that entertainment, childhood and play may be more important to individuals than the deliberate negotiation of political spaces. Representations of geopolitics are not just observed, but make the observer-body complicit in geopolitics; this point is crucial to the board game as a medium which observers are expected to actively interact with, further employing their bodies in the construction of geopolitics.

Historicising Embodied Popular Geopolitics

This literature shows how historical research in popular geopolitics can investigate both representations and the more-than-representational concerns of "popular geopolitics 2.0". I must say that, as far as I can tell in all my reading, there is much more geographical work available on the former than the latter. I think this is due to how recent the turn towards popular geopolitics 2.0 is, and perhaps also due to the availability of archival material – one is much more likely to find a publicly-distributed film or comic than a surviving diary detailing a particular historical experience. This should not be a barrier to historicization, though. As I argue elsewhere, a nuanced application of historicism, even to apparently visual works,

may be an insight into histories of affects, emotions, and public behaviour (Harby, 2018).

My work in this thesis is largely representational – given their maps and static nature (albeit animated in play), board games are an inherently visual objects. But I also access the embodied aspects of board game geopolitics, the ways in which they seek to influence behaviours, or shape perceptions of other nations or institutions. Part of this is the use of social histories to reveal the correlations between board game histories and the geopolitical anxieties of the British people and establishment.

I also take a nuanced approach to the biographies and personal politics of creators. Some recent work argues that a focus on representation and text in popular geopolitics enforces a binary which favours elite producers over the consumers who actually experience and negotiate geopolitics (e.g. Dittmer and Gray, 2010: 1666). However, I do not think that a focus on the "elite" creator necessarily precludes a reconstructive individual perception of popular geopolitics. The creator may themselves be subject to popular geopolitical discourses, rather than being the definers of these discourses; their work may reflect their own anxieties rather than the expected anxieties of their times. Additionally, many creators may have their own political tensions to work through and are not just uncritical supporters of geopolitics (for example, see Driver, 2010, on Walter Crane, both a socialist and an imperial cartographer). This is borne out in my analysis chapters, in which inconsistencies emerge between board game discourses and their designers where their personal histories can be traced.

The work cited here valuably reveals some of the ways in which historical geography has tackled embodiment and affect. By thinking about embodiment, we begin to move into more complex ways of discussing games; much of the earlier literature on critical and popular geopolitics helps to understand the visual forms of board games, but what of the ways in which the game itself contributes to its

geopolitics? There is very little in critical geopolitics directly about board games; however, there is an increasingly strong body of work on "ludic geopolitics," the geopolitics of play, especially modern video games. This review now explores this ludic geopolitics literature in greater detail to understand how a game, by its very nature as well as in its visual forms, can reproduce geopolitics and militarism.

Ludic Geopolitics

Ludic Geographies: Play and Society

The above discussion of historical popular geopolitics has primarily engaged with passive media; media in which the audience is an observer of geopolitics rather than a participant within the scenario depicted. In this section of the literature review, I examine the game as an expresser of geopolitics. Games require the active participation of the player to construct or explore their geopolitics worlds, making geographical conceptualisations of other visual media clumsy to apply. Thus, a strong body of literature has emerged in geography and social sciences focusing on the possibilities of the game, and of play in general.

One of the most notable texts on play is Caillois' *Man, Play and Games* (1962), cited in many other examinations of play (e.g. Thrift, 2003; Booth, 2015). Caillois attempts to define and categorise forms of play, an activity that he argues is "free," "unproductive," and "make-believe," amongst other characteristics (1962: 9-10). Caillois understands the game as constructed by "precise, arbitrary, unexceptionable rules that much be accepted as such and that govern the correct playing of the game. [...] The game has no other but an intrinsic meaning." (ibid: 7). These rules, he argues, create and sets the limits of a separate reality or narrative confined to the board: "The one who plays chess, prisoner's base, polo or baccara, by the very fact of complying with their respective rules, is separated from real life" (ibid: 8). I mention this text because it influences much of the later

literature on games, but I think Caillois is overlooking war games, which test the limits of this argument. As in other games, the rules and the ways in which players navigate them to outwit opponents create new playful realities; however, all of the war games in this thesis are in some way imitations or representations of real ways or military logistics, and some games' rules ensure that players who follow then cannot stray from a politicised, nationalist reading of real wars (such as *The Way to Berlin*, the first game discussed in the analyses). War games are not quite their own realities, but rather distillations of geopolitics.

More geopolitical and critical readings of play help to pin down the relationship between war and games. The potential linkages between geography and play have been outlined by Woodyer, collected under the term "ludic geographies," "the study of being playful throughout the lifecourse and a playful way of working as geographers" (Woodyer, 2012: 313). She notes two opposing academic viewpoints on play, a "utilitarian perspective" (play as a "process of social and cultural learning") and a "non-instrumental perspective" (play as an unproductive activity, quoting Schechner, "'tainted by unreality [and] inauthenticity'") (Woodyer, 2012: 314, citing Schechner, 1993: 27; this also recalls Caillois' definition of play). She then argues that the existence of these two viewpoints suggests a third route where play is treated as ambiguous and indistinct (Woodyer, 2012: 315). Play represents reality by "mirror[ing] and refract[ing] aspects of society, thereby rendering them more comprehensible" by highlighting the players' involvement in societal relationships (ibid: 317, citing Katz, 2004); such reproductions are not simple representations, but surpass the representational in, for example, their embodied and affective natures (Woodyer, 2012: 319).

So play can be a reflection of society (or, for our purposes, geopolitics) which implicates the player to become both representational and affective. Woodyer's third route of play echoes the two strands of popular geopolitics as representational and/or embodied and reconstructive; the dual nature of play

synthesises these strands. This is visible in the ludic geographies of toys, which are both visual and tactile objects; they are interactive representations of socio-political formations. For Thrift, toys – particularly “supertoys,” computerised toys with their own software-driven agency such as tamagotchis – are a way of training children into adults able to navigate a world of technological commodities: “we might well have to ask ‘who is playing with whom?’ as these toys begin to configure their users as appropriate subjects to deal with the new spatial order.” (Thrift, 2003: 390, drawing from Nadesan, 2002). But even inanimate toys have always performed this function, as noted by Barthes. He argues that toys are “a microcosm of the adult world [...] all the things the adult does not find unusual,” designed to teach children the social roles they will be expected to fulfil later in life; for example, baby dolls marketed to girls teach “the causality of house-keeping, to ‘condition’ [the girl playing with the doll] to her future role as mother.” (Barthes, 1972: 53). And as Barthes argues. one of these “things the adult does not find unusual” is war.

This is ludic geopolitics: popular geopolitics disseminated and explored through playful objects and interactions. It is my argument throughout the thesis that board games in Britain in the 20th century produced and naturalised ludic geopolitics, in the same way that Barthes’ toys do. Geopolitical and militarist discourses inspired game designers, and through play their games continued to circulate and strengthen these discourses. This is an argument shared by many writers in this literature review, but it is most clearly articulated by Woodyer in an article for the V&A Museum of Childhood’s website:

It is precisely play’s banal and taken-for-granted nature that enables domestication and sanitisation of military technologies and logics, and allows its role in popular geopolitical imaginaries to go unchallenged. Toys do not merely respond to geopolitical climates and cultures, but help to constitute them. (Woodyer, 2014)

Woodyer demonstrates this with an account of the product history of the G.I. Joe line of toys, repackaged in Britain as Action Man. In order to establish Action Man as a household name, the manufacturers incorporated specifically British themes, particularly nostalgia for the Second World War, to appeal to the British market. Every national variant of G. I. Joe followed the same strategy; notably, the German version was less obviously militaristic, styled as a UN Peacekeeper rather than a soldier (Woodyer, 2004, citing Le Vexier, 2004). And as public enthusiasm for war shifted, so did the marketing of the toys. G.I. Joe originated during the Vietnam War, but in the face of growing disapproval of the war and military toys, he became an adventurer and explorer (Woodyer, 2014). The toy remained fundamentally geopolitical (shifting from warmongering to imperialism), but reacted to popular geopolitics to sustain its appeal to the market.

Transitional Space: How Games Teach Ideology

The above literature argues that toys are reflections of geopolitics and other socio-political processes, and I argue that games share this quality. But what complicates the relationship between play and militarism is its interactivity. Ludic geopolitics have an affect greater than popular geopolitics in more passive media, as Penny argues:

When soldiers shoot at targets shaped like people, this trains them to shoot real people. When pilots work in flight simulators, the skills they develop transfer to the real world. When children play “first person shooters,” they develop skills of marksmanship. So we must accept that there is something that qualitatively separates [interactive media] from a static image [...] or even a movie of the same subject. That something is the potential to build behaviours that can exist without or separate from, and possibly contrary to, rational argument or ideology. (Penny, 2004: 80-1, cited in Higgin, 2006: 79-80)

The space of play and interactivity influences the behaviours of the player. Shaw conceptualises this affect of games through Winnicott's theory of "transitional spaces," referring to the space between embodied internal realities and external realities in play. Video games mediate the player's external reality of facing a screen and holding a controller with their internal reality of being embodied as the protagonist within the screen, creating a moment of "co-mingling" (Shaw, 2010: 791, citing Winnicott, 1971). Players experience a game's world as "simultaneously participants and observers" (Longan, 2008: 27). This understanding of video games as affective, not just representational, is reflected in Bos's research on military games, wherein ethnographic data and interviews with players of war games suggests that players recognise video games as a sensory engagement with virtual space rather than purely a visual one (Bos, 2018).

The power of transitional space, then, lies in its ability to make the player an actor within the game's world. To play the game effectively, the player must learn the ways in which they are rewarded for acting. A video game teaches a player "how to be" by teaching them the skills needed to advance in the game's space and narrative, such as the ability to recognise threats (Fisher, 2011: 75). As the player learns these skills, they can inhabit the transitional space of the game more fluidly and effectively.

Giddings adds nuance to the idea of transitional space by demonstrating just how fluid this transition is. He studies his two sons playing the video game *Lego Racers* and finds that they assume various roles throughout play, as children playing the game but also as racers and other figures within the game. "Thus the players here are generated by the game event, compiled from parts that are human and nonhuman, virtual and actual." (Giddings, 2009: 155). The spatialities of the players and the game feed into each other. Giddings' sons' play slips between the game and the room in which they are playing, suggesting that "clear conceptual distinctions between virtual and actual space are unsustainable." (Giddings, 2009:

151). The space of the video game is nested in the space of the living room (or wherever the game is played), argues Flynn, and so the game can only be fully understood in this wider spatial context (2003: 574; see also Ash and Gallacher, 2011: 357-8).

This is apparent in a board game as well – players interact with the virtual space of the miniature battlefield, but the game is also played in the actual space which contains it through face-to-face interaction between players, collections of captured pieces, and so on. Stewart has discussed how miniaturisation in toys and models is a powerful distortion of space. Observers and players simultaneously accept the space of the models and exist “outside the possibility of a lived reality of the miniature”, a contradiction which is resolved by fully immersing oneself in the miniature time and space of the model through play (Stewart, 1993: 65, 76). Thus, Yarwood argues, “[m]iniaturisation is powerful because it can be used to coerce or manipulate the observer into seeing the world in a particular way.” (Yarwood, 2015: 657). Yarwood has explored the implications of Stewart’s argument for wargaming, particularly the tabletop variety of wargaming exemplified by *Little Wars*. In such games, the viewer has a “panoptic ability” to gaze across the whole landscape of the game; “players see the world through as if they were a general, imbued with the power and vision to control the troops in an imagined world [...] this momentary vision enrolls the gamer into the gaze of the powerful, creating, in this case an empathy with the military gaze.” (ibid: 657; 663, citing Koch, 2010).

If players are free to gaze across and move between physical space and game space, however, their freedom in that game space is much more limited. The player’s ability to interact with the game is often striated in some way, perhaps by the rules and number of pieces of a board game, or by what has and has not been programmed into a video game. This may be for practical reasons; a board game, which can only contain so many different playing pieces and rules and

contingencies before becoming inaccessible to actually play (see Sabin, 2012: 19-30). There may be (geo)political reasons too, limiting the ways the player can deviate from the game's core ideology, as I discuss throughout this literature review.

Thus, there are often actions which are forbidden in games, either by omission (for example, an action which is not programmed in a video game) or by design (for example, restrictions on how far a piece can move in a board game). Ash calls this the "limited ethology" of games, the ways in which "the boundaries of and accessibility to entities within videogame environments are predetermined by the games designers" (2010: 417). Ash draws on Deleuze here to argue that control and space in games is dynamic; that is, the player has the "illusion of complete or total access to that space" but in fact they cannot move or act in any ways that are not allowed for within the design and construction of the game (Ash, 2010: 415, citing Deleuze, 1992). The rules of the game, its possibility space, becomes an aspect of representation which goes unnoticed by the player who subconsciously accepts these possibilities; in our case, what is permitted in war games suggests the designers' perceptions of war and what is or should be possible in such a war.

In board games, then, the player transitions between the reality of themselves, playing the game in a domestic household space, and the leader of a miniature army, surveying and controlling the battlefield space of the game. But the "limited ethologies" of board games force particular interactions with this transitional space. As I show throughout my analyses, the presences and absences within the possibility spaces of board games are instructive; certain technologies and strategies are often elided to present a tactical vision of war in which players dynamically outwit and outmanoeuvre each other, a far cry from the trench warfare and gas attacks of the "real" World Wars.

“Statecraft”: Games as Simulation and Culture

“Transitional space” treats games as spaces nested within the household; these are spaces which players can gaze across, in which players are empowered, but which can only be navigated by following the game’s rules, accepting its logics, learning the meanings of this symbol or that virtual threat. This is arguably the primary concern of critical theorists with games: their ability to teach meanings. For it is not just semiotic and skilful meanings that a player learns; they must also engage with ideological meanings. As King and Krzywinska argue, “[g]ames do not exist in a vacuum [...] They often draw upon or produce material that has social, cultural or ideological resonances, whether these are explicit or implicit and whether they can be understood as reinforcing, negotiating or challenging meanings or assumptions generated elsewhere in society” (King and Krzywinska, 2006: 168). For example, for a player to learn how to beat other players in a competitive game, they must first accept the “core assumption of capitalist ideology” that life is naturally competitive, and that people are rewarded for merit rather than fortune (ibid: 188). Such discourses may not be intentional, or consciously noticed by game designers (ibid: 169), yet they still exist. It is this basic argument that much of the critical geographical literature on war games, including this thesis, is derived from: that games encourage militarism by rewarding players for accepting and engaging with discourses of militarism. For Shaw, games exemplify “the ‘banal’ as a site of politics”; transitional space is “always-already a political moment” (Shaw, 2010: 791).

The rest of this subchapter of the literature review outlines this critical literature, and the many ways in which games may teach geopolitics. A good place to begin is with games where this teaching is at its most overt – with games that exist for education as well as entertainment. Games can be simulations of political theory: a set of rules and representations can be designed that mirror political theories and real situations, in order to experiment with how these theories might operate

in reality (Asal, 2005: 360, citing Ellington et al, 1998: 2-3). Educators such as Asal have recognised the potential of such simulation games as teaching tools. Asal argues that such games are more engaging than lectures, suggesting that play is more effective for learning international relations than simply hearing about them (2005: 361); he is discussing their use in universities, but the potential of more domestic war games for enacting particular theories of geopolitics in the home is plain.

Dittmer argues that play in simulations is future-oriented, modelling possible political scenarios with these ideologies (Dittmer, 2015: 912). This recalls the utilitarian model of play discussed above, suggesting that games may train geopolitics as well as teach them. But Dittmer notes that the futures of game simulations are “utopian in that their coding, algorithms, and ludic structures produce spaces in which reductionist notions of geopolitics and [international relations] can unfold without the messy complexity of real life.” (ibid: 913). As Dittmer shows while recounting his experiments with using the game *Statecraft* as a teaching tool, competitive assumptions and Western liberalism are encoded into these games as the way that political systems “should” be. Games present simplified idealised versions of geopolitics which may make them more appealing to players and students.

Statecraft proves to be an interesting example, as the competitive assumptions encoded within it undermine its other political lessons. Whereas real geopolitical assemblages such as nation-states work to perpetuate and preserve themselves, assemblages within a game only last for the duration of that game. Thus, many of Dittmer’s students throw every resource they have at their objectives towards the end of the game in ways which would be entirely unsustainable and self-destructive if their fictional nations were to continue existing beyond the final turn (Dittmer, 2015: 919). The possibilities offered by the rules of the game attempt to force a sober political simulation, but cannot contend with the realities of the

game as medium and the competitive space in which it exists. This interesting aside demonstrates the limitations of games as political sandboxes, elsewhere identified by Sabin's work on the construction of war games as teaching tools. When war game designers simulate real wars, they must develop a set of rules for a compelling game which also pays heed to the logistics of war; slavish recreations of the minutia of war lead to impenetrably complex games (Sabin, 2012: 30). In war games and political simulations, there is a difficult balance between entertainment and accuracy, which *Statecraft* fails to achieve when its simulation breaks down in the pursuit of victory. This is worth keeping in mind throughout the thesis; board games may deviate from realistic simulations of geopolitics deliberately simply to be more fun to play.

But perhaps entertainment and education are not the only two purposes of simulation. Crogan deals with simulation and games in his book *Gameplay Mode: War, Simulation and Technoculture*. This is specifically about video games throughout, discussing the relationship between games and military technology, but he makes the intriguing suggestion that ludic simulation is an aid to cultural memory:

Bernard Stiegler describes media forms of all kinds as mnemotechnologies— that is, exterior memory supports that ground human historical experience by preserving and making available experiences that we who live today have not ourselves lived. Any mnemotechnical form arises from a selective process of (re)construction that is not equal to real experience. These mnemotechnical forms condition— and have always already conditioned— experience, and as such are its condition of possibility. A pure opposition between simulation and real experience is, in this view, untenable. (Crogan, 2011: 162, citing Stiegler, 2009)

Games act as an archive of memory, offering a simulation of a wartime experience not available to the average player outside of games. The player may play at being part of historical or contemporary military interventions through games which situate the player in control of or as part of a virtual army. Although Crogan is

talking about video games, there is a similar appeal to board war games. As my literature review of board game history shows later in this chapter, board games and miniaturisation have been used for millennia as models of real battles.

Yarwood's interviews with and observations of tabletop wargaming clubs also identify this appeal. Some gamers identified wargaming as a form of remembrance, positioning and justifying games as a form of cultural memory (Yarwood, 2015: 670). But games can offer not just a realistic simulation of battlefield tactics, but a utopian simulation as well. The players may set up a recreation of a historical battle in miniature, and then "reproduce the battle as it 'should have gone', rather than experience any of the mistakes that occurred historically to the cost of people's lives." (Yarwood, 2015: 663). The "alternative, utopian temporality" of the miniature battlefield (Koch, 2010: 779-780, cited in Yarwood, 2015: 663) allows players to investigate cultural memory with some degree of empathy for the leaders of the wars represented in wargaming.

"Explore, Exploit, Expand, Exterminate": Games Supporting Imperialism

The war board game, with its all-seeing view of the whole battlefield, allows players to play at being a wartime tactician and geopolitician, to experience contemporary or historical wars by forming their own strategies and moving their own armies across space, and to investigate the (geo)political systems that have been simulated within them. However, if a game is an archive of cultural memory, then it is one that is curated with reference to popular geopolitics and militarist ideologies. If they are utopian simulations, as Dittmer, Yarwood and Koch separately argue, this is only because the games disguise the most violent and gritty effects of imperialism and militarism, either by accident of the medium, or by deliberate design choices.

Geographers and other academics have picked up on the parallels between the control of space in strategy games and the control of space in imperialism. For example, Magnet analyses *Tropico*, a video game which casts the player as a Caribbean dictator managing the economics and politics of their island nation. Magnet critiques the game as a "landscape of colonization for players who would be kings" (Magnet, 2006: 142) pointing to familiar imperial tropes such as the use of maps as a facilitator of resource exploitation (ibid: 152-3), but also to empowering tropes specific to video games such as the player's ability to control the speed of the simulation (ibid: 153-4); the player is in total control of the island, but must accept the geopolitics of imperialism to succeed.

We see the power of strategy video games here to teach geopolitics, even when no war is involved. But the "4X" genre of strategy games, which tasks the player with founding and developing a nation or civilisation, is particularly associable with imperialism. The term "4X" was coined by games journalist Alan Emrich, named after the four "X"es of this genre of video game: Explore (the surrounding map), Expand (your nation state's territory), Exploit (the land's natural resources), and Exterminate (your territorial rivals) (Quick, 2002). The connections with imperialist discourses, particularly the geographical justifications for British imperialism and the subjugation of natives in British colonies (Hudson, 1977), are obvious.

It is a shame that the geographical literature on 4X strategy gaming is so light, as a thorough geographical analysis of virtual imperialism would be valuable to ludic geopolitics. However, King and Krzywinska unpick some of these discourses by studying the 4X game *Sid Meier's Civilization*. This game series is an example of the embedded notion of capitalist competition that I cited earlier in the review from King and Krzywinska's work; in *Civilization*, the player must found and develop a nation-state and empire by competing for territory and resources with other players or computer-controlled civilisations. The player can win by defeating other players in world wars, or by achieving the greatest cultural or scientific

development. However, the development of the player's civilisation ultimately depends on resource acquisition and management, and only one player may be the victor by any metric the game offers, so that even these diplomatic, non-violent routes to victory are "another form of dominance, based on diplomatic wheeler-dealing rather than enlightenment or notions of viable mutual co-existence" (King and Krzywinska, 2006: 190). To make progress, a policy of colonialism is essential; the player must engage in imperialism and claim territory as theirs to gain resources of any kind.

This literature demonstrates how competition and imperialism are embedded in strategy gaming, illustrating their own power to engage players in virtual geopolitics. The "limited ethologies" of these games ensure that policies of colonialism and spatial control are required to succeed. Similarly, in the more tactical war games analysed in this thesis, aggressive control of space is frequently required for players to out-manoeuver their opponents. Indeed, the ethologies of the games of chance in the first analysis chapter are so limited that players cannot help but take over the space of the board, which often represents antagonist empires such as wartime Germany.

The "Clean War": Games Supporting the Military

No institution has recognised the power of games and transitional space as much as the military, particularly the United States military. Much recent work in critical geopolitics has drawn out the linkages between video games, the military and American geopolitics (e.g. Power, 2007; Shaw, 2010). These linkages arise within practical geopolitics, within military industries and warfare; they can be seen in the development of military technology by game developers and vice versa (Stahl, 2010: 94), in military software which modifies games as training simulators (ibid: 96), or in military technology interfaces, where drone pilots are separated from combat by a screen and a controller (Shaw, 2010: 789-790). Recruitment is also a

factor — the franchise *America's Army* aims to encourage young gamers to enlist, its entertaining glamorous depiction of militarism and gunplay shaping the geopolitical perspectives required to be useful in the real army (Stahl, 2010: 106).

This shows that militarism and video games are arguably inseparable, but it is the domestic transitional space of the game itself where these industrial geopolitics become popular geopolitics. Stahl (2010) draws a parallel between the histories of video games and the two Gulf Wars to show that video games chase warfare in an effort to be as contemporary as possible, inspired by the spectacular nature of the televised war and its constant ahistorical present. For example, Operation Desert Storm was followed by Desert Storm-themed games for years (ibid: 100-1), and many games use "rogue states" or other racialised groups who are in conflict or diplomatic disputes with the US as antagonists and threats to the player (Power, 2007: 272-3).

In doing so, however, games recreate another ideological structure identified in gaming by King and Krzywinska, the "Manichean moral structure," or the good-versus-evil dichotomy, which allows game developers to "contextualize violence [...] to avoid possible censure or restriction to niche markets" (King and Krzywinska, 2006: 176). In other words, these war games work on the assumption that the player-as-US-protagonist is inherently good, whereas the opposing state or racial group is evil. Sympathy for US geopolitics is often assumed and naturalised in war games.⁷

The good-versus-evil dichotomy neatly sidesteps the inherent ethical questions of waging war. The morality of the video game war is clear: your character is good,

⁷ Of course, games may be used to subvert dominant geopolitical discourses as well, either by satire (see Annandale, 2006: 98-9, and Redmond, 2006: 112, on *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, which caricatures US governance through a corrupt and petty government agent character) or through resistance (see Stahl, 2010: 134-8, on the "reversal" of ludic geopolitics in games which cast the US as the antagonist). But it is far more common for games to represent war uncritically, and the board games analysed in this thesis exhibit this strategy.

and the people you are shooting are not. *America's Army* even ensures that its players always see themselves as military protagonists and their enemies as terrorists, even in multiplayer games where these "terrorists" are other human players who see themselves as the military and their own opponents as terrorist avatars. The game's director once commented "if we let kids elect to play 'bad guys' we couldn't bind them to the Army's rules and values [...] and the point would be lost." (Huntemann, 2010: 181).

Quite apart from the telling use of "kids" here indicating the very deliberate educational and recruitment purposes of *America's Army*, this also shows how games such as this underline their morality with a constant automatic "othering" of opponents. Shaw elaborates by arguing that war games exhibit a colonial reduction of "a 'complex and nuanced us' versus a 'simplified them'", where the majority of 'them' are simply computer-controlled targets representative of terrorists and other geopolitical foes for 'us' the player-as-US-soldier to attack, allowing for consumers to participate in the virtual war "without the attending moral dilemma that the enemy may be just like them" (Shaw, 2010: 796). The "bad guys" are simultaneously heightened and amoral, where enemies can be both "Islamist or drug/people smuggling terrorists" and "abstract, apolitical, simply enemies." (Salter, 2011: 363).

This ethical neatness is then supplemented by a physical neatness in their representations of battle. In Power's words, war games can present "a clean war with clean battle lines [...] Death and bodily dismemberment are often banished from games [...] so that war becomes more palatable as the 'mud of battle' is pasteurized" (Power, 2007: 285). Injuries to the player character are represented by temporary penalties to an arbitrary amount of "health" the player has, rather than the grievous injuries one might expect from being shot several hundred times in a war zone, and the player is usually "respawned" or replaced in the game's world upon death to try again; injuries to others are often limited to visible blood

sprays and stains, and the bodies of fallen enemies disappear after death in some games (in order to save computer processing power). Death is reduced to a mechanism of gameplay in war games. As Burrill argues with reference to James Bond videogames, "death becomes the reason to play the game, to both kill and avoid dying." (2002: 187).

There are two major implications here. Firstly, the graphic violence of war is sanitised in these ways, and thus appears significantly less traumatic than "real" war. As Stahl quips in his discussion of *America's Army*, a gory and terrifying depiction of war "would undermine the recruitment effort" as well as limiting the audience in the first place with a stricter age-appropriate rating (Stahl, 2010: 108). Secondly, as Salter argues, the respawning of heroic bodies and the destruction of enemy bodies "has the effect of depoliticising the violence inherent in war and indicates a fundamental shift in the conception of the body and the (virtual) battlefield" (Salter, 2011: 360). The geopolitics of the visual video game war are disguised by entertainment, as the constant recreation and empowerment of the player allows them to fulfil the geopolitical mission of the game's narrative. The geopolitics of war games, then, are sanitary, usually palatable to view, and safely non-provocative. The player is taught to be literate in a virtual soldier identity in an entertaining and deliberately uncritical manner.

This literature on the clean war, it may be apparent, largely focuses on first-person shooter video games. The player is embodied as a virtual military protagonist with a selection of guns, and directly enacts violence on virtual enemies in a way which assumes the ethical superiority of American geopolitics. There is no direct equivalent to this genre within board games; there are board games where one player controls one or two powerful pieces, but none where the violence inherent in warfare is so visible (if sanitised) as in video games. On the other hand, however, no war is physically cleaner than the board game war. Pieces are not bloodied, they are not killed; instead, they are removed from the board, making the violence

and death they represent in war games instantly invisible. As Yarwood observes in his discussion of tabletop war games, “[d]eath, then, is curiously absent from an activity that seeks to portray war accurately. [...] [L]ittle, if any, recognition is made of civilian deaths or the ways that women and children are caught up in wars. Wargames present a vision of war that largely reflects a male gaze and one that focuses on fighting rather than the wider social or political effects of war.” (Yarwood, 2015: 668)⁸.

In terms of visual representation, then, the "clean war" is a hugely important concept for board game analysis. The ethics of the clean war - the good-versus-evil morality of ludic geopolitics - are also important to board games, but here each board game approaches war differently. Some echo the above literature by casting, for example, the German state as the evil force, and the Allied Forces as the protagonists; others make their war games more abstract in an apparent effort to avoid commentary on geopolitics. Each game must be taken on its own terms here, and so I elaborate on this more in the analysis chapters as I draw out the assumed morality of each miniature war.

⁸ Note the reference to the “male gaze,” the connection between war game landscapes and masculine domination. Burrill argues that war in games is “boyhood,” “a staging of the anxiety of the loss of masculine power [...] Boyhood is, essentially, the recuperation of the immortality of youth, a life without end, a masculinity without pain [...] Boyhood is pushing reset.” (Burrill, 2002: 188, 192). Games allow the performance of a violent masculinity without consequence, providing geopolitical justifications for this violence such as the war games discussed here or the James Bond games that Burrill analyses. Just like the video game war for Burrill, the board game war proves in this thesis to be overwhelmingly male; there are very few representations of women, and most of these are depicted in domestic roles, leaving combat entwined with masculinity. (This reflects the design of the game rather than its audience, of course. Mills's (2011) analysis of girls in early Boy Scouting spaces shows that players may ignore or resist the gendering of geopolitical spaces and objects; see also Carter and Woodyer, 2015, and Peterson, 2012, 2014, which are also discussed later in this review.)

Audience Research: How Players Interpret Ludic Geopolitics

I have described war games here as teaching geopolitics, ideologies and militarism to players. But it is important to realise that players may recognise this; they are not passive and uncritical consumers of geopolitical propaganda. Fisher is clear on this point. The war game players she interviews express scepticism of the representation of WWII in gaming throughout her paper: one participant was motivated to perform research into the military because he did not believe a game's representation of a particular tank (Fisher, 2011: 77), and participants also take pains to separate the historical accuracy of games from the fictionalised entertaining narratives which provide the games their structure, including the frequent focus in these games on the United States' involvement (ibid: 80).

Similarly, Bos's interviews with war game players demonstrate that some players engage with the experience of competitive play rather than the geopolitical messages present within the game, and Bos notes that such audience-based work reveals the dangers of assuming a universal acceptance (or even acknowledgement) of popular geopolitics by consumers (Bos, 2018: 58-9). The popular geopolitics of children's toys suggests that some audiences may not even take notice of represented geopolitics; Carter and Woodyer's study of children's play shows that although toys may reflect modern warfare through, for example, action figures of British soldiers and the Taliban, in play these toys may be repurposed in different war stories or even subverted in new scenarios such as the zombie story which the authors observe (Carter and Woodyer, 2015).

I point out this literature to recognise and mark out the limits of my thesis. The board game texts I study here speak for board game designers, not players; as I recognise in my methodology chapter, it is difficult to make judgments on the practical effect these board games each had on public geopolitics. However, as I have previously argued, board game designers are subjects of popular geopolitics as well. Board game texts try to teach geopolitics based on common discourses in

Britain at the time, and this itself offers a substantial insight into the circulation of the popular geopolitics of war.

Lack of Board Game Research

This literature indicates that war games encourage a collapse of the transitional space, or a "co-mingling" (Shaw, 2010: 791), between player and video game protagonist. The player is invited "to cross over and try on a soldier identity"; such a space "merg[es] the home front and the battlefield through multiple channels [...] represent[ing] a nexus of the militarization of cultural space, a medium perhaps best suited for the theme-parking of war into an interactive military thrill ride" (Stahl, 2010: 92). Through this "thrill ride," military game producers present a carefully cultivated and sanitised vision of war and how to be a soldier, potentially encouraging players towards a more substantial engagement with popular and practical geopolitics, such as army enlistment.

Throughout the review, I have flagged up the linkages between this ludic geopolitics literature and board games. There are many tropes in geopolitics video games which can readily be historicised into board game studies. However, there seems to be no geographical literature that substantially engages with board games.

Indeed, there is little substantial engagement with board games across the social sciences. Booth critiques this absence in media studies, despite the ubiquity of board games in homes and their paratextual relationships with other major media franchises (Booth, 2018: 57; Booth, 2015); as he speculates, "because media studies predominantly focuses on *screens* (e.g., movies, television, digital technology), other types of media tend to be elided" (Booth, 2018: 58, emphasis in original). As if to prove his point, the next six pieces in the collection of short articles which Booth's text introduces focus on video games, with no visible

consideration of the greater implications for gaming and play in general. Even Booth himself does not quite escape the screen in his own critical engagement with board games, studying them primarily as adaptations of media franchises from film and television such as *The Lord of the Rings* (Booth, 2015).

So what of academic work which studies the board game itself? Fortunately, many board game historians have drawn out linkages between war and the board game. Much of this work, when read in light of the present ludic geopolitics literature, historicises military-gaming linkages as a product of centuries, if not millennia, of warfare. To complete my literature review, I now review board game history to highlight its implications for 20th century war gaming in Britain.

Board Game History

Ancient Board Games and War

This thesis analyses the geopolitics of board games as a product of historical context and wartime anxieties. However, a good understanding of the development of board games also helps to contextualise this analysis. Board game historians have collectively produced a great variety of texts tracing the development of war games from ancient artefacts to modern video games.

Much of the work on ancient board gaming has been driven by historians tracing the development of chess. Books like Cazaux and Knowlton's *A World of Chess* (2017) and Van Creveld's *Wargames: From Gladiators to Gigabytes* (2013), in addition to other papers (e.g. Smith, 2010), have explored chess's origins in games played thousands of years ago, particularly the Indian game chaturanga and its own use of military iconography on a grid representing a battlefield (e.g. Cazaux and Knowlton, 2017: 47 onwards). Van Creveld goes a step further by suggesting that war games find their origin in combat sports and fighting as entertainment,

arguing that board game history is often "too narrow in that [historians] focus on the kind of games played [...] with the aid of maps and/or boards" (2013: 5-6). My focus on boards falls into the narrow focus that Van Creveld derides, but framing these boards as products of popular geopolitics and not pure simulations of war mirrors his objective to "reintegrate wargames [...] with human culture as a whole" (ibid: 6).

Many of the earliest known board games are track games, simple racing games in which the objective is to reach the end of a track of spaces first as determined by die rolls (Adams and Edmonds, 1977: 368, citing Bell, 1975: 4-5; Brumbaugh, 1975: 137); if these games represented war in any way, this representation has long since been forgotten. Strategy games are similarly ancient, but with these games, archaeologists and historians have been able to draw out their military influences. China's *Go*, for example, "represents troop formations and has been used as strategic training for more than two millennia" (Deterding, 2010: 21, citing Halter, 2006: 19-21). *Chaturanga*, an Indian precursor to chess dated to 500BCE, used pieces that represented the Indian military such as elephants and cavalry soldiers (Smith, 2010: 7-8), perhaps reflected in the military flavour of modern chess pieces such as the rook/castle and the knight. Austin pieces together references in Roman literature and historical studies to a game called *Latrunculi* ("the soldier-game") to suggest that this was an early Roman war game, usually discussed with military terminology in terms of battle strategies, wherein pieces were captured by flanking them with opposing pieces (Austin, 1933: 25-9). Unlike *Chaturanga*, although this game is reminiscent of chess, it is an unrelated game (ibid: 24), suggesting that militaries and war metaphors were a consistent influence on early game development across the world.

***Kriegsspiel*: Board Games and Military Training**

The literature on board game history becomes more detailed past the 16th century, roughly coinciding with the more visible use of wargames in military history as training tools. Such literature historicises the use of games in the military by tracing a lineage through games such as 1664's *Koenigspiel* (Smith, 2010: 8), C. L. Helwig's *War Chess* in 1780 (ibid: 8; van Creveld, 2013: 145-6), and Leopold and Georg von Reisswitz's *Kriegsspiel* in 1811 (Smith, 2010: 8; van Creveld, 2013: 147; see also Deterding, 2010: 23, for a timeline which disagrees slightly).

Of these three games, *Kriegsspiel* is perhaps the most influential, and certainly the game which receives the most attention in the literature. Developed for the Prussian army to simulate war situations, this game was originally a modification of chess designed to demonstrate the tactical nuances of war rather than be inherently entertaining (Deterding, 2010: 23, citing Nohr, 2008). *Kriegsspiel* is especially notable from a geographical perspective, as Georg von Reisswitz adjusted the game to use 1:8,000 topographical maps as game boards (van Creveld, 2013: 149; Ahlqvist, 2011: 279). In doing so, the effects of terrain and slope on logistics could be modelled, for a more accurate simulation of warfare for training purposes. To add further complexity, *Kriegsspiel* sometimes used three identical boards, one for each player and a third for an umpire. This allowed the game to model incomplete information, as the umpire could inform each player on how much of the opponent's forces they could reasonably see with their own pieces (Van Creveld, 2013: 150) - Van Creveld suggests that this reflected a contemporary understanding of the "fog of war" inspired by Clausewitz's work (ibid: 150, citing von Clausewitz, 1873).

Kriegsspiel's influence can be seen in games for both the military and the public through the following centuries; Wells even refers to his *Little Wars* as "a kind of kriegspiel" (Wells, 1913: 100). This influence can be seen in the board games of this thesis, albeit in simplified ways for a general audience. For example,

Kriegsspiel's incomplete information appears in certain strategy games, particularly those of H. P. Gibson and Sons, which use single-sided playing pieces which cannot be distinguished by an opponent seeing their backs, as outlined in the fourth analysis chapter.

The use of complex war games for military training would continue into the 20th century; Smith, whose paper is a good outline of war gaming in the army, notes that such games were used during the Korean War (Smith, 2010: 9). The end result of this, of course, was the use of video game technology that I discussed in my ludic geopolitics review. Board game historians and military historians, then, have shown that the relationship between militarism and gaming which has concerned critical geopolitics researchers in recent years was preceded by centuries of training in military academies.

From Board Games to Video Games

The 20th century marks the point when war gaming became more visible in the public sphere, with the publication of games such as Fred Jane's *Naval Wargame* in 1903 and *Little Wars* in 1913 (Smith, 2010: 7). Nations found board games to be useful tools for communicating propaganda, as Stöckmann demonstrates with reference to the German population during the Second World War; board games of this time outlined the morality of the war (in light of the effects of the Treaty of Versailles) and taught players how to spot possible spies (Stöckmann, 2012: 215, citing Nürnberg Online, 2010). Of course, as this thesis shows, use of games as popular geopolitical tools in this way was not just a German phenomenon.

Between Smith and Deterding, a good account of late 20th century war games can be formed. After the two World Wars, war board games exploded in complexity, especially in the United States of America. This new complexity was driven by the success in the 1950s of Charles Roberts' *Tactics*, created as a means for Roberts to

practice his own strategic thinking skills in anticipation of an army commission (Smith, 2010: 8-9), which used extensive tables and statistics to model the potential outcomes of skirmishes on the board, in ways similar to *Kriegsspiel* a hundred years before (Deterding, 2010: 25). *Tactics* coincided with an interest within the military in mathematical simulations of war and geopolitics (Smith, 2010: 9)⁹, and became a popular and influential war game, selling 200,000 copies by 1963 (Deterding, 2010: 25).

The mathematical style of war gaming would lend itself well to personal computing. War game developers and players took an early interest in video games as the medium formed, as computers could automate the process of calculating and updating the state of the game (Smith, 2010: 11). Deterding argues that because of this early interest, war game players and developers had an indelible effect on the video game industry by shaping the early video game market (Deterding, 2010: 36). Here, of course, the literature joins up with the work in ludic geopolitics already discussed.

Studying board game history lays the groundwork for the historicising of ludic geopolitics which I have argued the present literature could benefit from. The literature shows how board games influence future games and iterate on ideas from previous games (in the transition from *Kriegsspiel* to *Little Wars* and *Tactics*, for example), and it demonstrates the effect that board game cultures and ideas had on the development of video games. However, the literature on board game history ends here, with work on contemporary board games focusing on game theory and models of international relations. My thesis draws out and analyses the connections between board games and the ludic geopolitics literature that this body of historical work outlines.

⁹ For more on this "quantitative revolution" in militarism and geography, see Barnes, 2008.

Tabletop Gaming

Although I do not discuss it in great depth during this thesis, one major genre of wargaming that must be acknowledged here is tabletop gaming, the use of figures and other props on a terrain usually of the players' own devising (as opposed to a pre-packaged board), such as *Warhammer* and *Dungeons & Dragons*.

These are not quite board games, lacking the necessary board, but there are significant overlaps between the two types of game in their recreations of war. For example, I have already referred to Yarwood's (2015) excellent paper on miniaturisation and wargaming throughout my review of the ludic geopolitics literature. Yarwood's interviews with wargamers position the tabletop war game as simulation and memorialisation of war, albeit one which places the player in a position of power, a tension which recurs throughout my analyses of board games. Peterson (2012) similarly discusses role-playing games, especially *Dungeons & Dragons*, as hobbyist exercises in simulation; in doing so, he provides his own substantial history of war gaming and their influence on modern tabletop gaming, incorporating *Kriegspiel* and its predecessors and descendants (204-303).¹⁰

Another game that Peterson mentions here is *Little Wars*, a tabletop game developed in 1913 by the sci-fi author H. G. Wells (Peterson, 2012: 265-270). I do not analyse *Little Wars* here, but I have still named my thesis for it, as Wells codifies and describes many of the tropes of war gaming that are seen throughout my analysis. Most notably, like many games in this thesis, *Little Wars* exhibits a curious duality as playful game and war simulation; its use of toy soldiers and guns is clearly and wilfully childish, yet Wells refers to developing realistic rules for resolving battles that "abolish Horatius Cocles" (Wells, 1913: 32, referring to the legend of a Roman soldier who single-handedly defended a bridge from an army), and

¹⁰ See also Peterson (2014) on the influence of women in the evolution of tabletop games and war games, which also touches on war games as the performance of a military role.

suggests in an appendix (ibid: 101 onwards) that the game could be developed into a military training tool, citing *Kriegspiel* as a point of comparison. This tabletop game, then, reveals the ways in which board games can be simultaneously ludic and geopolitical. Wells' game and similar games using toy soldiers are collected in *The Wargaming Pioneers* by Curry (2011) with annotations which further explore the ways in which tabletop games drew influence from British warfare. Curry argues that such games form a continuous chain of influences, which seems to mirror Ó Tuathail's "relentless continuity" of geopolitics (1996b: 176); "it is difficult to place [...] *Little Wars* in context without seeing the earlier rules that [Wells] clearly based his rules on and how later rule writers adapted [his] efforts" (Curry, 2011: 9). Similarly, we can see in this thesis how board games build on the rules and popular geopolitics set out by earlier games.

The above texts, taken together, provide an insight into the treatment of women in war gaming. Peterson is sensitive to gender issues and highlights the ways in which women have been included in, excluded from, or created their own spaces in war gaming (for example, he draws a parallel between women's suffrage and the first appearance of female gamers in war game rulebook illustrations (Peterson 2012, 281; see also Peterson, 2014). Meanwhile, the full title of *Little Wars* continues "... A Game for Boys From Twelve Years of Age to One Hundred and Fifty and for That More Intelligent Sort of Girls Who Like Boys' Games and Books" (Wells, 1913) suggesting that the spaces of war and simulated war were not considered compatible with femininity in the early 20th century. This gaming literature confirms what will become apparent in the analysis chapters, that most geopolitical board games code war as a masculine pursuit, despite the importance of female labour in Britain during the two World Wars.

General Reference

The above works provide insight into the development of historical board game tropes into contemporary ludic geopolitics. Many board game historians have also compiled more general overviews of board game history, which are referred to throughout the thesis. Such overviews should be used cautiously; because they are not always products of a formal academic process, some of the arguments and facts presented within such works are not always as well-sourced as I would like. Nevertheless, these histories are frequently useful in constructing timelines and learning more about the development of certain games.

Lewin's *War Games and Their History* (2012) is one history book used as reference material throughout the thesis. Here, Lewin surveys a broad range of both military training games (including further information on *Kriegspiel*) and commercially-released games. Because of the breadth of his work, however, many of his analyses of board games are purely descriptive and do not explore their history in any great depth. More useful in this respect is Cazaux and Knowlton's recent *A World of Chess* (2017), which, despite its name, explores the development of a range of tactical games; this work proves helpful during my analysis of H. P. Gibson's *L'Attaque* series of games.

Murray's *History of Board Games Other than Chess* (1952) is also used to explore the history and development of tactical games, particularly draughts and hunting games, although care must be taken with the qualitative arguments within, as Murray draws on an outdated and essentialist social history of race and imperialism to explain why some board games developed on certain continents and not others.

Two other books adjacent to board game history were used in this thesis. Brown's *The British Toy Business* (1996) is a general history of playful objects in Britain. Brown does not discuss board games in great depth, but his book touches on the social history of toys as well as their industrial history, and so the popular

geopolitics of toys and war as revealed here, especially the suspicion of German-produced toys during the World Wars (Brown, 1996: 79-80, 143-144), provides clues to the popular geopolitics of board games at the same time. Finally, Sabin's *Simulating War* (2012) takes a different approach, focusing on the design decisions that shape a war game. Sabin does not delve into history much, focusing on modern computer-aided board game design, and so is not referred to often in this thesis. However, the insight he provides into the development of games is valuable. His early chapter on "Accuracy vs. Simplicity" (Sabin, 2012: 19-30), exploring the tensions between simulating war realistically and creating a fun game, is especially thought-provoking, reminding the reader that "a simple wargame that is played will be more instructive than a detailed wargame that is not" (ibid: 30); this insight is crucial to analysing where and why the board games of this thesis deviate from geopolitics to gameplay.

Summary

There is very little geographical literature on the historical popular geopolitics of board games. However, this review of the literature shows that the geographical and social science literature is comprehensive on many issues adjacent to this gap – both the use of games historically by the military and the contemporary critical geopolitics of military entertainment are covered extensively, and critical geography is also aware of the historical linkages between cartography and geopolitics.

Throughout my review, I have shown how these strands of literature can be unified to research the historical geopolitics of board games. Historical popular geopolitics and ludic geopolitics indicate the types of discourses that one might expect to see in war games, and the methodologies that can be employed to analyse them; the history of geography and the military shows how geography and cartography was

used to serve geopolitics, suggesting how board game maps can be approached; and the history of board games contextualises the medium and its relationship to the military. My thesis combines these strands to achieve the most effective analysis of board game geopolitics, employing a visual archival methodology as outlined in the next chapter.

Methodology

The literature review has shown that few geographers have made a substantial engagement with the board game. This means that there is no entirely relevant geographical work which may be used as a guide to develop a methodology for analysing board games. However, the work on historical and ludic geopolitics demonstrates the value of visual and playful methodologies for various forms of media, and I have highlighted throughout my review the relevance which such work has for board game study. What is required, this work suggests, is a methodology which engages with the visual, ludic and material aspects of board games stored within archives, preserved as close as possible to their original states of publication, and then analyses these aspects with respect to historical geopolitical events and the effects that these events had on the producers and consumers of popular geopolitics.

In this chapter, I describe my methodology for board game research, a textual analysis of board games found in museum archives, and discuss the methodological quandaries that are faced when working with ephemeral objects in archives. In the following section, I examine the role of archives in board game preservation and research and justify my choice of museum archives as a research source. My examination follows geographical work which engages with "the material and documentary properties of archives" and "the contradictory processes of archiving" (Dwyer and Davies, 2010: 89), but here I focus especially on the processes of museum curation and what Geoghegan and Hess term "object-love" (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015) to discuss the tensions between ephemera, preservation and academic research. The museum alters the meaning of the board game from everyday object to delicate artefact, mandating a careful and protective mode of working which abstracts the game from its original role as an

object to be played with and handled; nevertheless, these objects often show signs of decay and absence which complicate efforts to examine them.

After discussing the archives, I explore the ways in which a textual and visual analytical approach may be applied to board games. I treat the board game object as a text, a new addition to a long list of geographical "texts" which already includes painting, maps, and institutions (Aitken, 2005: 234-5, referring to Barnes and Duncan, 1992, and Benko and Strohmayr, 1997) – as I have already argued, there is a significant overlap between board games and other forms of illustration-as-text, particularly the map, reflected in the miniature board territory which players strategise to control. Because of this, although I have engaged with both representational and non-representational methods in my literature review, a textual analysis of historical board games is the most effective way to work with them.

In studying archived games as text, their forms and contents must be examined, their absences must be confronted, and the meanings gleaned from these games must be clarified by situating them in a network of intertexts, hypertexts, paratexts, and the social and cultural history from which they originated. The methodological considerations discussed here draw on the work of structuralist critics such as Genette, focusing on the meaning coded into the original text. Many geographical resources on analysing representations advise structural methods, as these representations are seen as a product of "shared systems of meaning" which hint at the socio-economic and political situations which produced them (Aitken and Craine, 2005: 254) - this mode of thinking drives the ways that geographers working with visual representations appraise their chosen images and texts (Deutsche, 1991: 18, cited in Aitken and Craine, 2005: 260), as made visible in the literature review of representations in historical popular geopolitics and explored further here.

Archives

Museum and Company Archives: Partiality and Absence

The first step in this methodology is to survey the archives. Although there are few collections in Britain focused on games specifically, board games form a significant segment of several museum collections which archive the geopolitical material cultures of war and childhood. As such, I have worked with the Imperial War Museum, the National Army Museum, the V&A Museum of Childhood and the Edinburgh Museum Collections Centre, the archives of Museums and Galleries Edinburgh (including the Edinburgh Museum of Childhood).

The geographies and material cultures of museum space may have some influence over the ways in which curators and researchers view objects. Geoghegan and Hess point to recent geographical work which appears to separate objects of "everyday life" from museum objects (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015: 449; Cook, 2004; Gregson, 2007), and cite Walter Benjamin's claim that "objects enter their 'after-lives' in museums, indicating a terminal moment and assigning the object an ethereal quality, brought about by the act of preserving it" (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015: 449, citing Gilloch, 2013). Why have these supposedly mundane objects been selected for an "after-life" of curation, transitioning from an everyday object of the past to an artefact of cultural significance? This highlights the power of museums to select and preserve objects.

The selectivity of the archive is a "social and political process" which forces the historical geographer to confront archive partiality (Moore, 2010: 263; Ogborn, 2004). Sekula argues that "archives are not neutral; they embody the power inherent in accumulation, collection and hoarding as well as that power inherent in the command of the lexicon and rules of a language" (Sekula, 1986: 155). By "language," Sekula refers to archives as collections of icons or objects which form meanings; his essay is mostly concerned with photography, but the limitations of

any archive, practical or self-imposed, form the possible representations of culture and history that may be derived from their contents.

The V&A Museum of Childhood, for example, exists as an arm of the V&A focusing on objects relating in some way to the history of childhood. Its Bethnal Green site was revamped in the 1970s specifically as a site for archiving and historicising childhood (Anonymous, 2010a). This museum has one of the most substantial collections of board games in Britain, yet because of this purpose and because all museums only have limited resources, the Museum of Childhood can only cultivate those board games which have an obvious or arguable linkage to childhood. The purpose of specific museums is why certain objects get selected by certain museums, but this inherent selectivity complicates archival methodologies; it suggests that the researcher inevitably cannot get a full picture at that particular museum, but it also colours our perception of research objects. The fact that a board game was found in the Museum of Childhood implies that its audience was primarily children, regardless of any independent research. Similarly, a board game found in a museum of war is characterised by the history of militarism because of where it is found.

It is not just museum archives that reflect such power. Although most of my archive visits were to museums, I was able to work with the corporate archives of Gibsons, a game and toy manufacturer which published several significant strategy games in the interwar period under the name H. P. Gibson and Sons. Staff members, including descendants of H. P. Gibson, were very helpful, and kind enough to answer questions about the history of the company. However, I was working with the narrative of a corporation. These surviving games reflect a carefully curated private history of the Gibsons family company, and only this company – any lessons about war and geopolitics are incidental to lessons about Gibsons, making this an overt example of archive partiality. The archives here present a lopsided view of war gaming which marginalises information about other

manufacturers, leading to an absence of material about the other types of game through which geopolitical messages could be filtered.

In addition to discussing what objects are present in an archive space and why, we must also engage with what objects may be absent. What objects have not been selected? Many of the games I study arguably qualify as ephemera; these may be cheap prints from a magazine which reflect a specific moment in time, perhaps asking the players to assemble their own counters, or they may have been produced quickly to generate a short-term profit. (I expand on this argument below.) Without the intervention of the museum, these games would probably be forgotten; indeed, most of the games I studied live in storage, remaining invisible to anyone only visiting the public space of the museum. The obvious question here is, what games *have* been forgotten? Are the games I have found in the museum archives a representative cross-section of geopolitical board games in the 20th century, or have some important games been unable to find a home in the archives?

In fairness, the absences of archives may not be the result of archive partiality, especially when working with ephemera. Many games which fit my research interests may never have made it to an archive, much less been rejected by one; the objects found in this thesis are largely items which civilians, not just museums, thought worthy of preservation (by donating them to a museum rather than throwing them out). What ephemeral objects spoke to and influenced popular geopolitics yet was disposed of after its apparent value had been expended? Working with domestic military history is further complicated by the history of war and destruction. Not even Gibsons possesses its own documents about its games; according to Gibson representatives, any such documents were lost during the Second World War, when the Gibson family's factory was bombed in an air raid. Even the developmental process of ephemera may itself be ephemeral and easily lost. This is an early significant indication of the role of loss and decay in historical

studies of ephemeral material, a problem which haunts my methodology throughout this paper.

It must be remembered, then, that archives select and cultivate objects which reflect on the narratives and histories that it is their remit to explore. This is especially important when a board game is rare enough that it is only found in one museum, in that particular narrative space - without other perspectives on this game, how much of my research is influenced by the spatial and archival context I found it in? Additionally, museums are not able to tell the full story of popular geopolitics since only objects which survived to be preserved in a museum space are available. This is not to suggest that archive partiality is a deliberate manipulation of discourse; it is more often a necessary side-effect of absences and limited archival resources. I counteract this partiality throughout my analysis by verifying facts and assumptions about the game-as-archive object from other sources where possible and by the range of museums I visited, so that, for example, I do not solely use childhood museums, which might lead to solely examining childhood geopolitics and omitting other audiences for popular geopolitics - in particular, many of the games found in Gibsons are compared with versions found in other museum archives, expanding the story of H. P. Gibson to the story of war gaming in broader terms. There is very little I can do about archive absence, however, other than reflecting that most works of historical geography share similar problems in our own archive partiality - we focus on small and carefully-chosen data sets representing media or populations or organisations, and must keep in mind that our own research is unable to tell a full story of historical geography, shaped by absence and our own limited resources.

Archive Curation and Object Love

This discussion of archive partiality is important, but it also limits our understanding of archive power. The ability of museums to preserve and care for

ephemeral objects is an equally important kind of power, and one with implications for the actual performance of my research. Ephemeral objects are not automatically saved by their presence in the museum – they continue to change in both their material forms and what they represent, as they decay and as historical context is lost, meaning that the museum must work to protect or restore their physical states and to rediscover this lost context (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015: 451, citing Tythacott, 2011).

Ogborn describes museum archives as "ecologies where the materials of remembrance are living, dying, and being devoured" (Ogborn, 2004: 240), and DeSilvey adds to this that "the 'nature of cultural memory' becomes apparent in the gradual consumption of evidence and images" (DeSilvey, 2006: 330). The implication for historical research is that ephemeral and preserved objects demonstrate that the link between images and the history that contextualises them is tenuous; it is easily forgotten what the purpose or meaning of an object even is, or where it one belonged. The "consumption" of cultural memory is apparent even in museum catalogues - some of the board games I researched only had approximate dates attached to them, where evidence of their provenance has been lost before their appearance in the museum and must be reconstructed by comparing the games to what is known elsewhere about military history (a technique I use throughout my analysis by, for example, comparing board game maps depicting the countries involved in the First World War to the timeline of the War in order to date the game on the basis of what countries are absent).

So although museums exercise power in deciding what objects best represent history and culture, this power is also mobilised to protect these objects and resist the threat of decay. Geoghegan and Hess think of this protection as "object-love," provided by a specialised and controlled archive geography and by the care of the curators (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015). The notion of "love" moves the discussion of museum power beyond authoritative presentations of historical narratives.

Protecting the object is not just a job but a relationship between human and culture, where the mistreatment of objects - that is to say, any use of them beyond what is required to preserve them - is unthinkable even when no consequences are likely to materialise, such as the curators in Geoghegan and Hess's article who see the intended use of old dentistry chairs as a transgression in the context of archive preservation, even as the interviewee pokes fun at himself for not daring to sit in the chairs (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015: 460).

Object-love is partially fostered by a stringent set of internalised rules for curators which shape their treatment of and attitude towards the objects in their care (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015: 460). Academics may have difficulty accessing the objects interactively, as the geographer Geoghegan does in comparison to her museum curator co-author Hess (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015: 453), because they are not party to these rules, and must be refereed by curators as supervisors. This was my experience in most museum archives; usually, I was accompanied by a curator at all times and was advised on how to handle the fragile objects, if I was permitted to. I rarely felt frustrated with this arrangement, as the curators were all reasonable and more than happy to help, and I was usually able to handle the board games with care; however, in instances where the tactility of the board game seemed especially important, it was unfortunate that the objects were sometimes too fragile or too carefully protected to move freely. There was one exception to this setup when a curator left me alone with a set of board games for an hour, which I am not sure they were supposed to do; by this point in my research, I had internalised for myself the fragile materiality of archive objects and the guidelines governing their safety, so that even when I had free rein over the games, my own object-love took over (or perhaps an "object-fear" of damaging a century-old game and getting myself and the curator in trouble) and I took the greatest care I could in turning the objects about.

So the concept of "object-love," and my own experience with it, suggests that research interactions with archived objects are shaped by the wish of curators and researchers to preserve objects their archives judge to be of cultural significance, even if these objects are relegated to storerooms and unlikely to ever be known to the public. Researchers are encouraged to care for the objects they study because of the care already put into them by curators. This has interesting implications for the study of affect and objects. The board games I study, at some point in their history, were presumably cared for by players before curators, and so object-love might be useful for understanding the affective power of such geopolitical objects; on the other hand, care for an object because it requires preservation is not the same as care for an object because it provides a perspective on contemporary geopolitics and militarism. Object-love in a museum is welcome for the ways in which it encourages object care, but it may also cloud the researcher's ability to see the potential emotional appeal of the object in its original historical context. In addition, object-love could also have implications for archive partiality on the individual level of the curator and researcher as well as the spatial level of the archive. Are these board games inherently interesting as a signifier of popular geopolitics in wartime Britain, or are they interesting because our object-love suggests that they are interesting? Both object-love and archive partiality are reminders that these board games are studied in controlled archival spaces, not in their intended domestic settings. By using social histories as references for my readings of popular geopolitics, I try to make allowances for the space I now find these games in, as their original spatial contexts and original audiences are no longer available.

Board Games as Ephemeral Objects

In this chapter I have treated board games as ephemeral objects, objects that represent a particular moment in time and are disposable, never intended to be

read outside of their immediate historical contexts. This is in keeping with the ways that board games are preserved in museums; for example, the Imperial War Museum catalogues many of its games with the letters "EPH."

The concept of "ephemera" does not describe all board games, of course. The high prices and manufacturing quality of some of the games stored in the Imperial War Museum and elsewhere suggest products intended to last for years, and these games may ensure that they remain enjoyable and relevant to their owners by avoiding any direct mention of real-world geopolitics, so that they do not date themselves. (The fourth analysis chapter, on *L'Attaque* and related games, provides a fuller explanation of geopolitical absence in board games.) But other games in this thesis are clearly the products of cheap and fast manufacturing, created in direct response to geopolitical events at a particular moment in time, acting as propaganda for the outbreak of war or teaching safety procedures for attacks on civilian spaces. Brown suggests that the companies which produced such ephemeral games were sometimes just as ephemeral themselves, formed to produce small quantities of geopolitical games and bankrupted before the wars they profited from were over (Brown, 1996: 84-5).

Over decades spent in the household and the archives, though, all board games may become ephemeral in another way: in terms of decay and material absence. I refer to missing pieces, boards and rule sets, almost inevitable given the complexity of some of these games, but nonetheless resulting in an incomplete object of study in the archive, characterised by loss. It is almost miraculous that some games in the archives have survived with all their original pieces. But many games have not, and these objects force us to confront the difficulty of retaining information over decades when this information is in the form of tiny cardboard cut-outs of soldiers and thin sheets of aged paper.

This loss of information leads to different knowledges about board games, though. DeSilvey reflects on the role of decay in material cultural geography as part of her

work on an abandoned and dilapidated Montana homestead and the everyday objects left to rot within it for decades. Seeing such forgotten and decaying objects as waste risks distracting from the culture and history of the object, when in fact both its history and its reclamation by natural processes of decay can generate knowledges about material culture (DeSilvey, 2006: 323).

DeSilvey primarily refers to objects left uncared-for, and so her argument may at first appear unsuitable for working with the archives and object-love, where the natural decay of ephemeral objects is resisted by controlled environments and careful behaviour. But this argument reframes the absences of incomplete board games as evidence of their former lives as objects of play. It is easy to forget this in the controlled space of the archive, but these games were, presumably, once played with in family homes before being donated to the museum or company archive. If museums are the "afterlife" of objects (after Benjamin's argument in Gilloch, 2013), then lost pieces and damage speak to a rich life before the archive, and thus to a shift in spatial context from domestic plaything to archived curiosity. Board games and their components are mobile objects; the game is moved from cupboard to living room, the board is unfolded and refolded, rule books are rifled through before and during play, pieces are shifted across the board, accidentally (or deliberately) scattered, herded back into their container or lost under furniture. The fact that board games were used does not by itself reflect on how their geopolitical messages were received, but it shows that these messages were at least once disseminated to an audience that cared enough to play with the game; even if we are separated from the domestic spaces of board games by time, they are visible in the absences of the used game. To connect this back to DeSilvey's perception of material culture, half-lost board games are not useless waste, but rather indicate the circulation of popular geopolitics through homes and families.

The role of previous owners in the formation and circulation of popular geopolitics becomes clearer when evidence of object-care in domestic spaces is visible. In some board games, absences have been repaired; several games in the archives include substitute pieces, where some previous owner seems to have lost a piece and replaced it as well as they can. As an example, the pre-First World War game *Transports*, a naval strategy game stored in the V&A Museum of Childhood (Mead & Field, c. 1910-1912), uses illustrations of ships printed on card stood in metal bases as its playing pieces. In the Museum of Childhood's copy, a couple of these pieces are missing, but some pieces are obviously home-made replacement ships, painted in slightly crude watercolours which stand out next to the ink printing of the original pieces on the back of what appear to be cut-up pieces of an invitation to a formal event of some kind. Somebody cared enough about *Transports* to not only source replacement pieces for the game, but to craft new pieces which replicated the illustrations and colours of the original game.

The intervention of owners is not limited to the repair of games but can be found in their assembly too. The *Snakes-and-Ladders*-style British First World War game *The Way to Berlin* (*Children's Magazine*, 1914) asks players to assemble miniature flagpoles by cutting the appropriate flags out of the game and gluing them around a pin, which could be stuck into the map once it was mounted on a suitable board; the Imperial War Museum's copy of this game includes small flags which demonstrate that a previous owner followed these instructions. A similar First World War game, *Dash to Berlin* (Bigco Toys & Games, 1914), is missing its pieces, but the numerous pinholes in each space suggest a similar method of marking player progress, as well as demonstrating that this copy of the game, at least, found an audience to play it several times. In fact, *The Way to Berlin* features no pinholes in its map. Was this game assembled and then never played? Or, as both this and *Dash to Berlin* are in the Imperial War Museum, is it possible that the same original owner appropriated pieces from one game to play another? Here, we can see that the visuality of board game objects suggests how strongly they affected

audiences, and how players cared for and used the game, if at all. Some of the literature on popular geopolitics cited in the literature review suggests that studying representation and the visual in popular geopolitics risks overlooking the practices of consumption of popular geopolitics by audiences (e.g. Dittmer and Gray, 2010); here, the ephemerality of games, and the ways in which previous owners have cared for their games, shows practices of consumption on the individual level, showing that these historical popular geopolitics at the very least found their way into people's homes and leisure time.

If the ephemerality of board games indicates their socio-political lives, however, it also proves frustrating for research in their after-lives. For the purposes of historical research, as well as representing an engagement between environment and culture like DeSilvey's homestead, absences present a void of information which complicates any conclusions to be drawn about the form and function of the overall board game. Often, these voids could be filled, or their original contents inferred, without much trouble; games like *L'Attaque* were prolific enough to survive at several locations around Britain, for example, and each copy's missing pieces, if any, would be present in at least one of the others; alternatively, enough identical pieces were present in games like *The Strand War Game*, a draughts variant played with a board representing First World War-era Europe (Strand Magazine, c. 1914-1916), to reconstruct the absent pieces based on the rules.

Sometimes, however, these absences confronted me with a loss which could not be surmounted. The most egregious example is the Imperial War Museum's mysterious *EPH 1884* (Anon., c. 1940) (*Figure 2*), titled by its catalogue number in the museum's archives, an artefact consisting of a cardboard rectangle on which is printed several rows and columns of numbered spaces and a handful of illustrations of Second World War British soldiers, and nothing else. The numbered spaces suggest a route for players to follow as in *Snakes and Ladders*, but where are the snakes and the ladders? How is it played? What is the title of this game?

What is its date of origin? Who authored it? Even the curator supervising me was baffled. The pictorial representations of war on this board may at least be evaluated, but the total absence of contextual information and other game pieces renders this board otherwise inscrutable. Here is an object which only makes sense in the context of a larger research project; without establishing the tropes of war games which use the *Snakes and Ladders* model of gameplay, and without the game's location in the archives alongside other war games, it is difficult to begin to analyse as a war game. Without any other pieces, it is even difficult to tell if the game was played with; a handful of missing pieces implies that pieces were mislaid in the home, but a complete lack of pieces (and no indication that there ever were pieces to begin with) makes the life of the object impossible to trace. The absences of *EPH 1884* are so major that it is impossible to perform any substantial historical analysis of the game as a conduit of visual or ludic geopolitics.



Figure 2: *EPH 1884*. (Location: *EPH 1884*, London: Imperial War Museum. Author's own photo.)

Despite the difficulty of working with old games as text, however, they are valuable evidence of geopolitical production and consumption. Board games and similar ephemeral objects remind the researcher that they are not simply museum artefacts; rather, they had former lives as mobile objects of leisure, engaged with by members of a public British audience. We cannot say whether the geopolitical discourses these games may convey were internalised by their previous owners - occasionally, the games are in such a state of loss that we cannot say what discourses they conveyed to begin with - but these discourses were successfully delivered from game designers to players. The interventions by previous owners to repair their games also challenges the authority of museums as sole resistors of ephemeral entropy; these previous owners displayed their own object-love in their attempts to preserve the ability to play the game. Board games offer opportunities to play with geopolitics, and we must be mindful in our appraisals of games, as with other toys and ephemeral objects, that they are part of a human history as well as a political history.

However, with this comes one final point of caution, on the responsibility of working with human histories. Board games bear the marks of previous play, and with this the personalised marks of previous owners; a geopolitical analysis must be careful to unpick the difference between representation and audience consumption. When we discuss the repair of games like *Transports* as evidence of consumption, are we making unfair assumptions about the owner, who may not have cared for the geopolitical messages of the game, and, indeed, may have been repairing it for somebody else in the household? More importantly, this aspect of board game research comes with ethical considerations; as previous owners may be anonymous and have almost certainly passed away (especially when working with Boer War or First World War-era games), there is no possibility of obtaining informed consent to work with their personal possessions and their creative interventions in preserving them (Moore, 2010: 267-8). The personal element of board game geopolitics must be acknowledged, but the boundaries of personal

information and consent must be respected as in any other ethical qualitative work of geography.

Analysis

Board Games as Text and Discourse

Once I had studied the board games in the archives, my next step was to analyse each game and consider its position in the geopolitical discourses of popular culture during the 20th century. As I argue above, board games may be read as a geographical text just as maps and other visual media can, as board games possess their own grammar and common forms which operate together to generate meaning (see Aitken, 2005: 234-5). Most board games feature a board, playing pieces and a set of rules, perhaps including a die or some other means of calculating the next move that each player can make, but each game's design merges these elements in different ways. A textual and visual analysis of these elements may derive hints of popular geopolitics from something as superficial as the illustrations on the board, or from something as fundamental as how the player can move across the board's space.

As the appearance and the mechanics of each game are studied, it is necessary to remember what the objective is: to reveal the geopolitical discourses that may be encoded, intentionally or otherwise. Here I draw from Rose's overview of discourse analysis and visual methodologies, in which discourse is treated as a "particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it" (Rose, 2001: 136). This definition agrees with the broader geographical and sociological understanding of "discourse" as a textual producer of reality as outlined by Campbell, who draws out the ways in which discourses operate as situated knowledges, shaped by historical practice and context, which are constantly performed at multiple scales by multiple creators

(Campbell, 2009a). Campbell's outline matches the reproduction of popular geopolitics, circulating at multiple scales in mass media, influenced by the "relentless continuity" of geopolitics (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 176). Discourse is the method by which popular geopolitical ideas are reproduced textually and sustained. Therefore, an ability to analyse discourse is key to understanding the popular geopolitics of board games and any other medium.

Rose defines two forms of discourse analysis: in the first, discourse encompasses "all forms of talk and texts," and the analysis focuses on texts and images (Rose, 2001: 140, quoting Gill, 1996: 141); the second considers the power formations, practices, and "regimes of truth" of institutions (Rose, 2001: 140). Visual discourse analysis is undertaken by comparing the text to practices of power, historical context, intertextuality (discussed in detail below), and simple "common sense" (ibid: 149). I accept Rose's two conceptualisations of discourse analysis against the other varied potential methodologies that Campbell lists (Campbell, 2009b) for two reasons. Firstly, her text is specifically written with visual methodologies in mind, and it is impossible to ignore the visual aspects of the board game. Secondly, although I primarily perform Rose's first definition of discourse analysis as an engagement with text and vision, the literature review has shown the relationships of military and geopolitical power inherent in war games; throughout my analyses of board games, I attend to the ways in which they reflect normalised militarism as well as specific wars.

An analysis of any textual object which aims to expose discourses needs to interrogate every aspect of the object. Many geographers have outlined their own approaches to working with texts in this manner. Aitken recommends that the text analyst pays attention to the authorship of the work, the grammatical and syntactical structure of the work, and the subtexts and silences of the work (Aitken, 2005: 242). The visual aspect is equally important; Rose invokes Panofsky's iconography, the study of the meaning of art, to encourage an engagement with

the visual text beyond its form (Rose, 2001: 144, citing Panofsky, 1957: 26). Visual analyses are vital to the largely visual texts that geographers naturally engage with, particularly landscapes and maps (Aitken and Craine, 2005: 251), and many geographical studies have mobilised such analyses in the study of visual media, Cosgrove and Daniels' study of landscape painting perhaps foremost among them (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988). Within critical geopolitics, Dodds's work on Steve Bell is a strong example of iconographical techniques used to study popular geopolitics; Dodds refers to the texts as "geopolitical iconography" in order to understand the importance of the visual aspect of Bell's cartoons (Dodds, 1998).

Schapper provides a good case study of how a geographer can apply textual and visual analysis to a less traditional form of visual media, in her case the graffiti of a women's toilet. Schapper makes note of "the level of formality and authority of the text, whether authorship was identified, its tone and its relationship to other items within the toilet [...] the use of exclamatories, the font size of the text, the use of upper or lower case and any decorative addition" (Schapper, 2012: 497). This example demonstrates how every property of a text may be used to analyse it; not just the linguistic content of the text, but its visual form and its spatial and intertextual context is employed. Works like this demonstrate the value of analysing the medium itself, not just its context.

I have aimed to apply these analytical possibilities to the study of board games. In my research notes, I have written about:

- the *content* of the board game as text (the space represented on the board, whether topographical or abstract, the appearance of the playing pieces and what they represent, the written rules themselves, the title, the box);
- the *form* of the text (the font, size and layout of written text, the shape and size of the board and of the areas of the board that players can move on, the shape and materiality of the pieces, the placement and style of illustrations and other graphics);

- the *function* of each component (how the rules synthesise the board and pieces into a game, how players can move, the relative importance of playing pieces to each other and their interactions);
- and the historical *context* of the game itself (its designers and publishers, its date of publication, its relationship to geopolitical conflicts and tensions at that point in history, the popular geopolitical culture of that time in Britain).

This is not an exhaustive list, but it makes apparent the range of avenues of inquiry opened by the board game format.

In addition to this, as Rose says, "[a]bsences can be as productive as explicit naming; invisibility can have just as powerful effects as visibility" (Rose, 2001: 157-8). I have already explored how absences in the form of the object can indicate a life of mobility and domestic use. The "invisibility" that Rose refers to, that inherent in the context of the work, can also have significant implications. By representing a war in such a way that certain aspects of it are absent, board games can suggest a particular narrative of war. For example, several board games studied in this thesis represent the First World War by having the players control pieces representing Allied armies. In some of these games, there is no equivalent option to play as a German or Central Powers army. This is a natural exclusion to expect in a nationalist board game rallying against a geopolitical foe, as the designers and the general public may have wanted to avoid sympathy for the enemy. That is why the absence of a potential German narrative is so important in such games; absence confirms the geopolitical anti-German discourse suggested by other aspects of the games. Thus, what is not in the board game as text is as important as what is in the game to demonstrate the ways in which they reproduce popular geopolitics. Absences such as this need to be searched for in board games, as the geopolitics of board games may be strengthened by the invisibility of any

resistant discourses, as well as the invisibility of any historical context which might challenge the discourses reproduced by the game.

Content, Form, Function, and Ludic Approaches

Above, I have broken my interpretation of discourse analysis down into four concepts: content, form, function and context. Here, I wish to discuss the first three of these (researching context is a branch of historical research in itself and is explored in the following section). Content, form and function are basic to any textual methodology, and the above section has already shown some of the ways in which geographers and other academics may interpret these aspects of various texts. However, such analyses are largely aimed at structural analysis of static text media. Games are different because the players are active participants in the construction and exploration of popular geopolitics. A war game text requires its readers to wage simulated war on each other to fully express its view of war; indeed, the function of such games (or one of their functions) is to entertain by being played with. Recent critical literature on popular geopolitics has argued that the production of popular geopolitics should be de-emphasised in favour of practices of consumption (Dittmer and Grey, 2010; Koopman, 2011); with games, in which the geopolitical discourses are completed by play, this must be especially true.

Ludic geography has begun exploring playful methodologies to analyse the impact of geopolitics on their consumers: Carter and Woodyer observe children at play with toy soldiers to discuss how children accept or ignore geopolitical discourses (Carter and Woodyer, 2015); Bos observes video game play and the ways in which militarism is made fun to players (Bos, 2018). Unfortunately, these methodologies are impractical for the study of historical board games. Object-care is at work here, as those old board games which are complete enough to play may be damaged if taken out of their controlled environments of preservation. More importantly,

there is a gulf between the historical contexts of the board games (and their intended times of consumption) and the modern contexts in which a playful methodology would take place; for example, any player interactions and comments on a First World War-era game would have to be analysed with the caveat that the player knows the outcome of the First World War, rather than being situated in the potential climate of uncertainty and anxiety of wartime. So if a playful methodology cannot be undertaken in this thesis, in what ways may my textual approach appreciate and incorporate practices of play and consumption in its interpretation of content, form and function?

One way forward is to keep in mind poststructuralist approaches to text, meaning approaches which foreground reader interpretations rather than author intentions. As Aitken and Craine warn, "[a]n important element of the visualisation of geographic space is the idea that the creator constructs a representation that is then seen and experienced by the viewer. Both participants add their social subjectivity to the interpretative act" (Aitken and Craine, 2005: 265). This folds an element of poststructural criticism into analytical methodology; that is, the idea that text is fluid and inherently intertextual, and that "to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read: they are quotations without inverted commas" (Barthes, 1977: 160, quoted in Allen, 2000: 69). This quote from Barthes encapsulates his argument that texts carry a plurality of meanings, to be constituted by the reader rather than by the author.

This argument reflects modern critical geopolitics and its focus on practices of consumption. The board game may have its prescribed geopolitics, but players may develop their own interpretations depending on their own perceptions of geopolitics. The original geopolitical discourses of the game could be further reinterpreted by individual practices of play; just as the war toys Carter and Woodyer's observed children's play are repurposed as props for zombie stories

(2015), so the war game can be reimagined with new narrative scenarios, replaced and redesigned pieces, and rewritten rules. In other words, as we read board games as texts, we should recall that in play, their discourses may have been radically altered or ignored. I cannot engage with poststructural approaches such as this as closely as I can with the more structuralist textual methodology I advocate above, since I cannot observe play in its historical context in the same way, but this shows how poststructuralist arguments put into perspective the precise relationship between board games and popular geopolitics; they reflect what appear to be the popular discourses of their time but did not necessarily have much influence on discourse themselves. I use the poststructuralist idea of intertextuality in places to engage with the board game text, however, as I explain later in this chapter.

Another way of engaging with play is simply to work through the implications of the board game as playful object as well as text to be analysed. Textual analysis might appear to be a dry way of working with games in contrast to the playful methodologies cited earlier, but by centring their entertainment purposes, the potential interactions between geopolitical discourse and play become obvious. Such a methodology can be seen in MacDonald's work on the domestication of the Corporal nuclear missile as a miniature children's toy in the 1950s, which uses historical context and intertexts such as advertisements to evaluate the meaning of the toy. Justifying his research by arguing that "playing at or with warfare is a constituent part of warfare itself" (MacDonald, 2008: 623), he notes that the control of the missile by children normalises nuclear geopolitics:

Children thus become geopolitical agents through their mastery of the missile event. And, characteristically, it must be repeated over and over again. Walter Benjamin recognised that 'repetition is the soul of play, that nothing gives ... [the child] greater pleasure than to 'Do it again!' For Benjamin, it is a way of overcoming frightening fundamental experiences. (MacDonald, 2008: 626, citing Benjamin, 1999)

MacDonald's analysis is not removed from the toy as playful, but rather folds the purpose of play into the core argument of his paper. Barthes similarly mobilises the playful aspects of the toy in his essay on French toys; he argues that toys represent the functions of adult life in miniature for children, so that these functions can be mastered in preparation for the social roles of later life (Barthes, 1972: 53). The playfulness of the toy is ultimately part of its context which influences how it can most effectively be analysed.

In war games, playfulness is facilitated by rulebook texts. Board game text is transformed by play into the tactile and tactical movement of objects, which in turn is suggested by the visual aspects of the game board to be a miniature representation of war and the movement of soldiers. Throughout the thesis, I work through the rules of each board game and consider how the mobilities and obvious strategies that arise out of these represent geopolitics and militarism. For example, which pieces of each game are the most powerful pieces (the pieces able to move the furthest in a single turn, or the pieces which can withstand capture attempt from less powerful pieces), and what does this imply about the military technology represented by these pieces? In what ways does the mobility of miniature soldiers on the board game map reflect or defy the World Wars on which they are so frequently based and the trench warfare which defined them? By considering how the content of the rulebook shapes play, I may analyse the function of the transitional space between the game board and the militarism it mimics.

I have also employed quantitative analysis for a handful of board games in the first analysis chapter, in which progress is decided by luck and measured in numerical steps. Here, I measure the effects of spaces which send the player forwards or backwards, and take the average of these to determine how often the player can expect to be sent forward or backwards. I do not base this on any previous geographical methodology in particular; the aim is mostly to get a sense of how the gameplay of these games may feel. If, for example, it turns out that the player

can expect to be sent backwards a lot by random chance, this suggests that the game in question is slow-paced and heavily based on luck. Slow gameplay such as this can suggest that war is being represented as a battle of attrition, or, more likely, that the game has been designed poorly. I elaborate more on this methodology throughout the first analysis chapter as I use it, since different games require slightly different approaches to best quantify the element of chance within them.

Context: Publication and Authorship

For each board game I have studied, I have tried to collect its publication information – its author and date in particular – to know the cultural and political milieu against which it should be studied. This is a necessary part of the analytical process, as discourses are socially produced and the social modality of a text and its context influences what discourses are likely to be present within it (Rose, 2001: 140). The study of cartography provides a good example of a relevant geographical field where the social geographies of the visual text are important. I have already outlined the geopolitics of the map in the literature review, but to quickly summarise here, maps can be thought of as "layers of textuality" which incorporate their historical and ideological contexts (Pickles, 1992: 219. 226) and the wishes of patrons and publishers who decide what is and is not mapped (Harley, 1992: 224). As well as showing how a medium's inherent social geographies and publication contexts can have implications for its popular geopolitics, this example is directly relevant to games: many board games feature maps of a theatre of war (often Europe, when they are based on the World Wars), so their geopolitical discourses may draw power from cartography as Harley and Pickles argue. The rules and pieces governing how one may interact with the board game map are equally important and may also reflect contexts revealed by the

games' publication histories in their own forms and their own reflections of popular and publisher ideologies.

As I discussed earlier, the absences and ephemerality of old everyday objects such as board games often obscure such context. In my research, many game publishers whose work survives in the archives have long since closed or been merged into larger companies, and the lack of documentation for many games means their dates of publication can usually only be approximated. As part of my analytical methodology, I have attempted to situate each game in its historical geopolitical context as accurately as possible (when no other reliable document or work by other board game historians exists) by paying close attention to aspects such as copyright information, represented geographies and visual styles, and then comparing these to social and cultural geographies over history as established in other archive materials, historical academia, and even other ephemera. A basic example from my research would be the multiple First World War games whose original design (if not necessarily their publication) I could date to the first year of the war based on the representation of Italy on their board maps of Europe; Italy would join the war alongside the Allies against the Central Powers in 1915, and it seems unlikely that British designers would miss a chance to depict another major European power rallying against their enemies. Here, comparing the political geographies of the board games to the political geographies of Europe throughout the war limits their possible dates of origin quickly.

A big part of this contextualisation of board games is understanding who their authors/designers were. If texts reflect the ideologies of their socio-cultural context, then the ways in which their authors understood these ideologies can provide insight into how their work reflects geopolitics, intentionally or otherwise. This is best demonstrated by example, and there are many on the popular geopolitics literature to choose from. Authorial context is vital to Dunnett's analysis of *Tintin* comics, in which a biography of Hergé, the writer who spent his

youth in the Boy Scouting movement and his pre-Tintin career as a conservative in the Belgian press, contextualises Tintin's interactions with colonial spaces and the popular geopolitics that are implied by such comics (Dunnett, 2009); the author's personal politics point to an intentional politicised reading of the spaces of Tintin, and suggest that such spaces are inspired by Belgian popular geopolitics.

Understanding the author can also prevent misguided readings of the text, as in Dodds's analysis of Steve Bell's Falklands War cartoons. Dodds recounts his analysis of a recurring character in these cartoons, a penguin; he reads the penguin as a metaphor for the ambivalence of Europe as onlookers to the unfolding war. He then interviews Bell himself, and subsequently learns that Bell forgot what the penguin was supposed to represent as he was drawing the comics and had to improvise a role for it (Dodds, 1996: 577). This anecdote is a reminder that any analysis of geopolitical iconography must be aware that authorial intent may contextualise this iconography in unexpected ways.

In my methodology, I follow the lead of these geographers and others, and incorporate the socio-political contexts of the authors into my analyses. Often this proves difficult, as many games were designed by anonymous or obscure authors and published by imprints which have not survived to the present day. In these cases, I can still work from the text and its likely historical context to analyse their discourses successfully. But when a game can be attributed to an author, the historical analysis of the game often becomes more complex and rewarding as connections arise between the author's biography and the geopolitics of the game - or, occasionally, tensions between popular geopolitics, which may have been normalised at that time or easier to sell to the general public, and the personal ideologies of the author, which could potentially have been radically different but unsuitable or unacceptable for a British war game at that time.

Intertextuality

One of the major challenges of reading board games as text is to assess their likely meanings by contextualising them against other relevant texts when they can be linked to the original game, as well as against the cultural geopolitics of the day. By seeing games and their representations or maps of war as "part of a series of wider texts and contexts," the "full power of the image" may be made more visible (Pickles, 1992: 208). In other words, board games must be read as intertextual, part of a "network of textual relations" (Allen, 2000: 1) which may be able to fill the absences left by the decay of the games in addition to clarifying their meaning.

McKee argues that intertexts, which he defines as "texts that are explicitly linked to another text," are a vital source when studying the possible interpretations of text, especially those interpretations that are picked up on and discussed by the audience of the text (McKee's particular focus is on audience research and fandom) – he asserts that "consumers learn how to make sense of [...] texts just like learning any other parts of language" (McKee, 2003: 89), returning my methodology to the concept of the archive as a linguistic system in which objects and texts construct meanings. As new texts and intertexts are added to the research process, the networks of these texts form new meanings which may be used to review previously-studied texts in the archive, so that discourse analysis is an iterative process (Rose, 2001: 154).

This intertextuality has been taken up in different ways throughout the thesis. In my final analysis chapter, for example, I examine a series of strategy games based on a similar core design - each game is analysed based on this design and its own iterations of concepts developed in its previous and subsequent incarnations. Each game can be read on its own, but knowledge of its alternative forms published at different points in the 20th century raises an array of new research questions to ask about its shifting geopolitics over time. But intertextuality is also open to texts outside of the medium being studied; that is, board games draw influence from

other media and other objects. One recurring theme throughout the thesis is the dreadnought, the cutting-edge battleship that became symbolic of Britain's perceived naval superiority against Germany in the early stages of the First World War (for example, see the *Daily Graphic*, 1909). This dreadnought appears as a symbol of military might in several naval war games; understanding the dreadnought as a text in which the discourse of militarism and technological pride can be read leads to new readings of these naval games. And of course, by this understanding of text, every use of contextual information to analyse the design of a game is itself a use of intertextual methodology.

More details about the complexities of intertextuality can be explored by referring to Genette's structuralist analysis of the concept which he refers to as "transtextuality" (Genette, 1997a, cited in Allen, 2000). Two of his transtextual modes are especially relevant to board games. One is "hypertextuality," through which a text, or hypertext, draws on structures and concepts from an earlier text, or hypotext, without offering commentary (Genette, 1997a: 5, cited in Allen, 2000: 107-8). This is similar to how other authors define intertexts (for example, Allen, 2000: 108; McKee, 2003: 89), but hypertexts are distinguished in Genette's work by being deliberate in their influences, so that a hypotext or intertext can be positively identified as an antecedent.

The inspirations of board games are usually clear; *Snakes and Ladders*-style track games are all hypertexts, since we know they are influenced by the same game structure, and as such I place them in the same analysis chapter as iterations on the same form of gameplay. However, specific hypotexts are difficult to pin down, since this task requires figuring out, for example, what specific variations of *Snakes and Ladders* the anonymous developers of board games may have drawn from in creating their own version. In my analysis, I trace hypotexts in a general sense by researching types of game as they appear in my thesis to discuss the origins and purposes of these types of gameplay. However, many of these types are ubiquitous

in the board game medium, so that identifying a direct hypotext, if one exists, is difficult unless direct information from the hypertext's designer is available.

Such extra information is often supplied by "paratextuality," the other relevant mode of Genette's transtextuality. Paratexts are texts which lie on the threshold of the central text; these include peritext (chapter titles, notes, etc.) and epitext (authorial and editorial correspondence and press) (Genette, 1997b, cited in Allen, 2000: 103). Paratexts frame the text without being wholly outside it, and the presence or absence of a paratext may change the main text without affecting its core contents. To take Allen's example, an illustration which precedes a novel may shape our perception of the text to follow and our expectations of the symbolism and motifs to be aware of, as well as the appearance of characters (Allen, 2000: 104-5).

The challenge that paratext presents is to decide what it actually is in the context of a board game. What is the central text of a board game? I treat it as everything necessary to play a game with it, to be identifiable as a board game - the rules, the board and the pieces. This definition makes the peritext the title, blurb and illustrations that shape our intended perception of the game. This means, however, that the bulk of representation that transforms an abstract game into a readable simulation of war and militarism is found in the peritext rather than the central text. Because of this, I do not concern myself with separating text and peritext in my analysis chapters, as both work together to present ludic geopolitical discourses. Epitexts in this case would be external documents such as author biographies and patent information - this provides another way of thinking about authorial context, as intertexts for the central board game text. The idea of paratext is not fully suitable for studying board games, as this paragraph probably demonstrates, but it provides a way of breaking down the component intertexts of the board game and examining what component performs what part of geopolitical discourse.

This overview of intertext largely boils down to another way of thinking about historical texts. The textual components and the influences of board games can be broken down into their components, and the interactions between these studied as reproducers of geopolitical discourse. In practice in my analysis, the taxonomic specifics of intertextuality do not matter, but their effects do - the relationships between these intertexts serve to create the board game as a cohesive commercial product (its core text and peritext) and as part of a tradition of geopolitical exploration in domestic entertainment (hypotexts, epitexts, and its sister and rival board games). An attention to intertextuality serves to place the board game text in its historical context in mass media.

Summary

The methodology of this thesis applies a textual and visual discourse analysis to board games found in museum collections. The archived board game is a text which, although often incomplete and obscure, may be contextualised by the progression of British historical geopolitics and understood in relation to its author, the wider board game industry, and other intertexts.

In examining this visual medium, methodological challenges commonly experienced by cultural and historical geographers working with representations take new forms. In the archives, the politics of preservation and decay become more complex due to the fragmentary nature of partially-preserved, partially-missing board game texts, which may also bear signs of wear, tear and repair from previous anonymous owners. The absences in such texts also complicate a relatively straightforward analytical approach to representation; the questions that must be asked of the content and form of a text or image become difficult to answer if parts of it are unavailable, and intertextuality is relied on not just to place a board game in its proper context, but to identify what contexts are appropriate

in the first place after decades of obscurity disguise the publication information of board games. The presence of previous owners, who act as players to participate in (not just receive) geopolitical discourses, also allows opportunities for both structuralist and poststructuralist approaches to meaning when examining board games.

None of the individual components of this methodology are new. Geographers have tackled similar questions while interrogating maps, landscapes and toys. However, I believe this research marks the first instance of a sustained attempt to analyse the cultural and historical geographies of the board game, a format which synthesises the above media into a new fragmentary physical medium. In this respect, my methodology offers an opportunity to take new approaches to the study of archived ephemera and of ludic geopolitics.

During my explanation of my methodology and the ways in which I can perform discourse analysis and historical research on board games, I worry that some of my arguments may appear defeatist, where I explain why certain types of intertext research and contextualisation may be more difficult with board game research. I merely wish to highlight the tensions between working with visual and affective approaches to historical popular geopolitics and working with archived ephemera which saw a life of frequent use by players. Approaches which seem to be taken for granted in relevant methodological literature - compare the text with its intertexts and historical context, focus on its emotional affects on readers - are often difficult or impossible when working with ephemera by its nature, as its life becomes obscured by decay and absence.

I do not believe that this harms the analysis I set out in subsequent chapters. There is more than enough information revealed or implied by the board game text's forms and archival after-life to satisfactorily place it in a history of war and militarism in Britain. Board games are inherently geographical texts, exhibiting cartographical forms and both domestic and geopolitical contexts which make

textual and intertextual approaches a natural choice for historical geography even before considering non-representational approaches.

Just as the current popular geopolitics literature on play is ahistorical in its approach, its methodologies do not fully work for board games, an ephemeral medium prone to the loss of material through play and the loss of contextual information on designers and players through obscurity. A flexible variety of textual approaches to analyse representations and affect, each of which will work for some board games and not for others, is both necessary and useful for working with historical popular geopolitics in this medium. As such, I draw from diverse ways of working with texts and archives, as well as diverse sources of information in the literature, in order to analyse the discourses of these games. The methodology for working with board games that I have set out here is a renewed engagement with representation and historical context in popular geopolitics which also accepts and respects the roles of affect, embodiment and play in the formation of gaming geopolitics.

Track Games: Snakes, Ladders and Warfare

Track games are board games in which players race against each other to the end of a track of spaces. Such games are usually games of pure chance with extremely limited ethologies, controlled only by rolling a die or some other random mechanic. Players may be aided or hindered by what I will term "event spaces" – spaces presented as events which affect the player's position on the board or which cause them to miss turns or gain an extra turn. *Snakes and Ladders* is perhaps the best-known track game, in which the snakes and ladders are the event spaces.

Modern versions of *Snakes and Ladders* may be plain, featuring literal representations of snakes and ladders. However, track games like *Snakes and Ladders* originate from an Indian ancestor, *gyān caupad*, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Some versions of *gyān caupad* acted as track games but represented Hindu ethical values on the board; earlier spaces of the track were labelled as various hells or states of vice, and later spaces were more virtuous, so that the players' progress along the track represented a spiritual ascent (Topsfield, 1985: 203-4). The first known English-language track game, *The Mansion of Happiness*, similarly extolled narratives of spirituality and religious conduct, where event spaces represented vices or virtues which could change the player's position on the board (Adams and Edmonds, 1977: 368).

These early examples of track games show that this board game format can demonstrate moral messages and educate players on good conduct. Many of the track games about war studied in this chapter perform similar work; players move across the track in accordance with various event spaces representing scenarios that may befall a soldier or civilian during wartime, and the design and illustration

of the game itself often thematically reinforces geopolitical messages which may be embedded in these hazards. By analysing the ludic geopolitics of the track games in the following chapter, popular narratives of violence and the morality of war may be revealed.

The First World War: Patriotism and Bloodless Battlefields

This thesis studies many British games dating from the First World War, in both this and later chapters. What quickly becomes apparent from a quick overview of these games is that, for British board game designers, the Great War was a war on Germany in particular. The years before 1914 were characterised by longstanding geopolitical tensions between British and German imperialism, including the two empires' race for naval superiority (Gilbert, 1994: 4) and the struggle for control of Persia (ibid: 7). The First World War acted as a release for these tensions. Anti-German sentiment was rife in the early months of the war, fostered by propaganda and news reports of Germany's actions in Europe, especially Belgium (Fox, 2014).

As a result, the demand for German-manufactured goods fell sharply, providing profitable opportunities for the British toys and games industries, which had hitherto competed with German imports (Brown, 1996: 79). Advertisements proclaimed the superiority and patriotism of British toys, and Christmas 1914 saw no shortage of toy soldiers and military trinkets (Brown, 1996: 80). This moment of profitability for games and toys proved to be fleeting, however. Many of the new manufacturers who had formed to capitalise on pro-war sentiment and reduced German competition closed before the war was over, struggling with limited capital (Brown, 1996: 84-5), and toy manufacturing was scaled back in 1916-17 as resources and raw materials were redirected to the war effort (Brown, 1996: 86-7).

Thus, the games studied here – *The Way to Berlin*, *Dash to Berlin* and *Sink the Submarine* – capture a specific moment in time, when Britain was confident in the brevity of war and in the moral justification for defeating Germany. If modern wargaming allows players to experience historical battles as they “should have gone” (Yarwood, 2015: 663), then these war games allow players to experience future battles as they *should be*, idealised jingoist visions of success in the Great War. The geopolitics in *Way to Berlin* and *Dash to Berlin* reflect these public geopolitical views, presenting a picture of a non-violent war in which the fall of Germany is only a matter of time. *Sink the Submarine*, however, does not appear to reflect the same view of war – its careful neutrality, and certain quirks of its design, possibly suggest that German products still managed to infiltrate British markets in disguise.

The Way to Berlin: Racing Across the Map

The Way to Berlin (*Children's Magazine*, 1914) (Figure 3) is a track game currently stored at the Imperial War Museum in London (Imperial War Museum, 2016a). The game is a sheet of paper originally published with a December issue of a publication called the *Children's Magazine*, probably distributed in 1914.

The Way to Berlin is themed around defeating Germany in the war by advancing across Europe to Berlin, in the role of either Britain, France or Russia, the three major Allied powers during the early War. Each Allied power has its own track, overlaid onto a political map of Europe. Each track winds across the map to Berlin from its respective capital city (London, Paris, or Warsaw, standing in for Moscow due to the dimensions of the map and Poland's status as a Russian territory at the outset of the war).

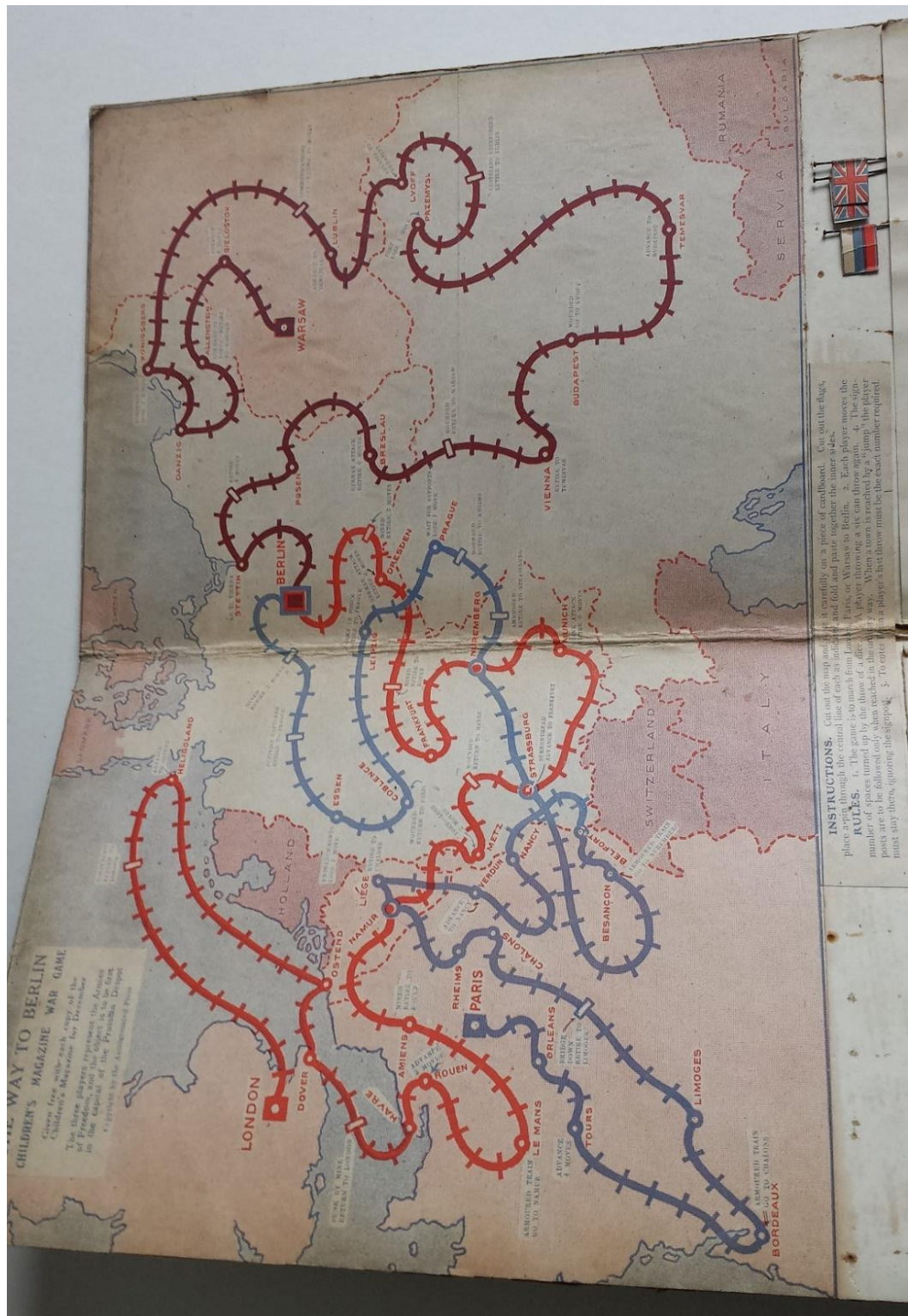


Figure 3: The Way to Berlin. (Location: EPH 10977, London: Imperial War Museum.
 Author's own photo.)

Each track passes through several towns marked on the map. These towns often act as event spaces. For example, in *Way to Berlin*, if the British player lands in Le Mans, they may progress forwards 12 spaces to the town of Namur. *Way to Berlin* also comes with playing pieces, assembled in the Imperial War Museum's copy by a previous owner; as directed in the game's rules, flags representing the playable Allies were to be cut out of the magazine and glued around pins to create miniature flagpoles, which could be stuck into the map to mark player positions.

An inscription in the top-left corner features the title and publication details, as well as the blurb (*Figure 4*):

"The three players represent the Armies of Freedom, and the object is to be first in the capital of the Prussian Despot"

This paratext makes *The Way to Berlin*'s purpose plain. The game very clearly defines its protagonists and antagonist, casting the Allies as agents of freedom and liberation, and Germany as the oppressor (the "Prussian Despot" being Kaiser Wilhelm II, presumably). The discourse of "freedom" implicitly provides a moral justification for the war and the invasion of Germany depicted in this game. Note, also, that players cannot play as Germany – this is reminiscent of recent critical geopolitical work arguing that post-9/11 popular geopolitics were constituted by excluding from the public sphere narratives which challenged the "climate of fear" pervading western political discourse (Butler, 2004: xx, in Dittmer and Dodds, 2008: 439), a process of marginalisation which, Sidaway reflects, has its roots in British imperial discourse from a century prior (Sidaway, 2008: 3). Hence, *The Way to Berlin* operates as propaganda – it may not be a product of official government sources, but it is aimed at children, a potentially impressionable audience, and thus educates its players in a geopolitical cultural message about the morality of the war, with no possibility of sympathy for the "Prussian Despot".

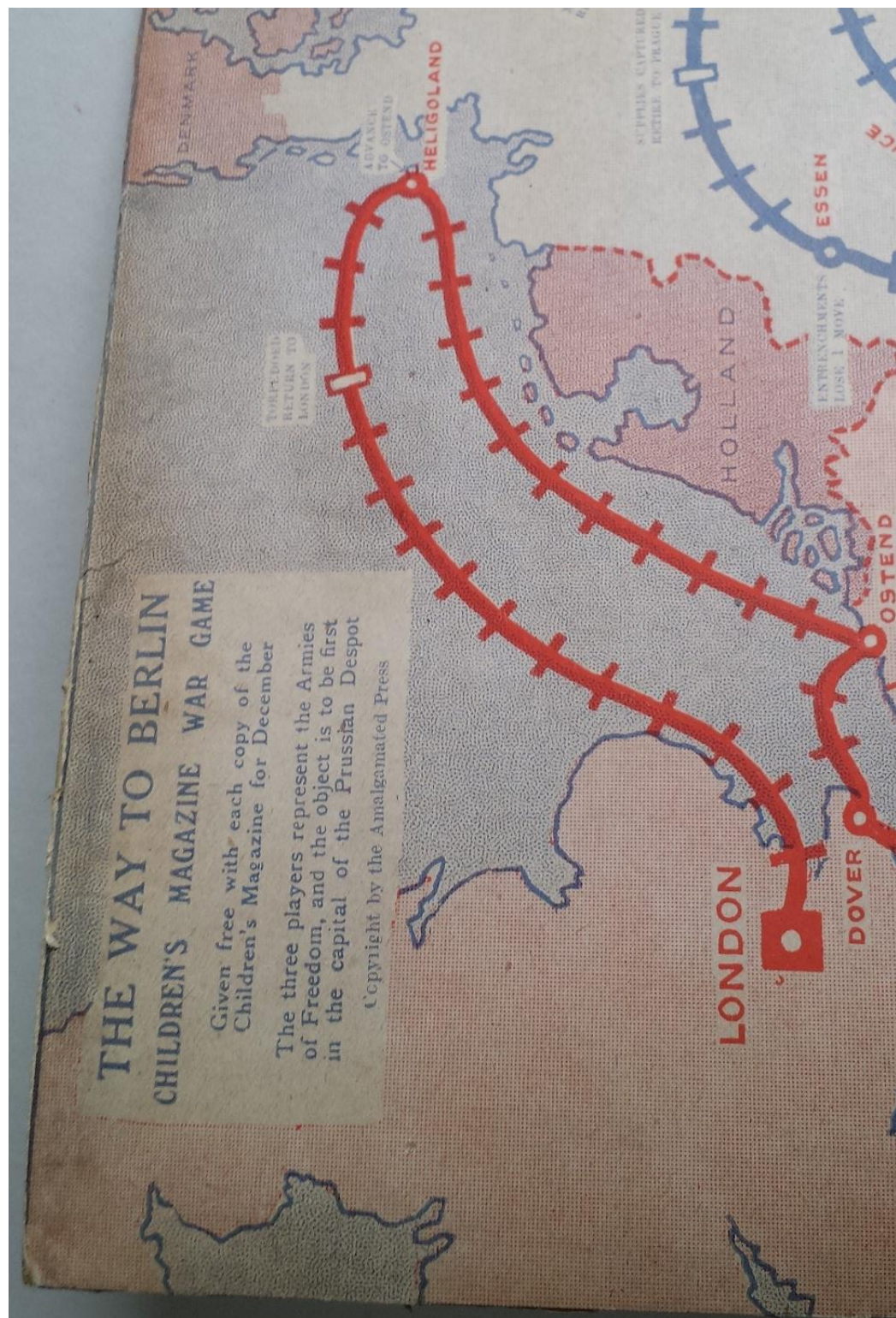


Figure 4: Close-up of the blurb and publication details of *The Way to Berlin*.
(Location: EPH 10977, London: Imperial War Museum. Author's own photo.)

This message is expected from a British product from the First World War, of course. However, the function of the board game is to provide opportunities for players to work through this message by play, as opposed to more passive media like the propaganda poster. By examining the manufacturing context and the design of *The Way to Berlin*, we can refine our understanding of how this geopolitical message was adapted for play.

We can start with the obvious point that this game reflects the specific context of British geopolitics. Note that Germany's ally, Austria-Hungary, is not targeted in the content of this game despite its aggression towards Serbia causing the war (only the Russian track passes through it on its way to Berlin). This is because British popular geopolitics was specifically concerned with German imperialism. For example, the belief in 1909 that Germany was planning to build fourteen dreadnoughts, at that time the most powerful battleship yet devised, led to deep concern in Britain, which possessed six and felt that its necessary naval superiority was under threat (Pugh, 1999: 160). The government pledged to build additional dreadnoughts, which the *Daily Graphic* newspaper predicted would "be welcomed throughout the Empire" (*Daily Graphic*, 1909, in Read, 1973: 325), but German naval ambitions would continue to be a concern during the pre-war period (see Gilbert, 1994: 7-8). Such history demonstrates that Germany was culturally cast as an antagonist years before the war began, and *The Way to Berlin* is an extension of this discourse.

The game's publisher, the *Children's Magazine*, was an educational publication for children, originally known as the *Children's Encyclopaedia*. This publication took several names during its life, but eventually settled on *My Magazine* sometime in 1914 (Hahn, Carpenter, and Prichard, 2015: 123); this places the design and publication of *The Way to Berlin* within the early months of the First World War. The editor, Arthur Mee, wrote from a nationalist viewpoint, expressing a deep belief in the British Empire as a force for good (Paulin, 2002: 162). In issues of the

Magazine predating the war, Mee also expressed admiration for Germany's accomplishments, placing particular value on its social reforms and its concern for child welfare (Paulin, 2002: 166), dissenting from popular British concerns about Germany. Apparently, the *Children's Magazine* turned against Germany when the war began. This suggests that British nationalism and prevailing anti-German sentiments are the key factors influencing *The Way to Berlin* and demonstrates how counter-narratives may be silenced in geopolitical cultures.

Each player's track passes through many notable cities in Europe, taking circuitous routes just to meet them (for example, the British army's route from London to Dover somehow manages to pass through Heligoland), so *The Way to Berlin's* event spaces are often focused around these cities. This relationship is not exact, as some towns have no events attached to them, and some events occur between towns. However, a handful of the events which are based in towns are contextualised by what happened in those towns. For example, the Russian player can land on Przemyśl, where they are instructed "Fort. Lose 1 move." Przemyśl was a fort held by Austro-Hungarian forces in the first few months of the war, placed under siege by Russia; delaying the Russian player here reflects this siege stalling Russia's advance. The French player can be sent backwards 6 spaces at Liège, possibly reflecting its invasion by Germany in the early war, although the space does not give a reason for sending the player back. This lends *The Way to Berlin* a kind of realism, or an aspect of simulation, as the player roleplays an army capturing notable strategic points on an unstoppable march to Berlin.

Many hazards the players can encounter, however, appear to be generic hazards of war such as "Wounded" (British space 64) and "Ambushed" (French space 71). These descriptions are all we learn of the actual hazards, and they work to present the "clean war" identified by Power (2007) and discussed in the ludic geography literature. "In war, bodies are put at hazard" (Saunders and Cornish, 2014: 2, quoted in McGeachan, 2014: 826), yet the player learns about this hazard in an

abstracted way, divorced from the pain and trauma faced by soldiers. Meanwhile, civilian casualties are completely elided, reflecting the broader cultural marginalisation of civilian bodies during war, illustrated by Hyndman's work on the Iraq War, for example (see Hyndman, 2007: 38). The problem is one of scale – as *The Way to Berlin* reduces the international scale of the war to the domestic scale of children at play, it eliminates the individual scale of bodies in pain. Most of the games studied here suffer from similar problems, but *The Way to Berlin* benefits from the absence of trauma in its map. Spaces like "Wounded" acknowledge the horrors of war without forcing the player to confront them, and thus the discourse of the war as a force for good remains unchallenged.

As for the gameplay itself, *The Way to Berlin* appears to be fairly balanced as a competitive game – by "balance", I mean that none of the three playable countries has a clear advantage over the other two. However, statistical analysis reveals which players are more likely to encounter difficulties on the path to Berlin. To perform the following analysis, I took the total movement caused by each event space and derived the mean of these movements. This mean is a simple indicator of whether event spaces are beneficial to the player or not. In most of these statistical analyses, I have excluded from my mean calculations event spaces that cause the player to miss a turn or take an extra turn. This is due to the difficulty of evaluating the effect of a missed die roll, which could be a difference of 1-6 spaces relative to all other players, plus the probability of those other players landing on event spaces which further influence the effect of this roll. An extra die roll poses similar problems for the effect of the original player's movement. In general, the board games seen here feature more missed rolls than extra rolls, so we can assume that the means seen in this section slightly overestimate the average movement from event spaces. (However, see my work on the game *A.R.P.* later in this analysis chapter for an attempt at statistically analysing a board game with a high number of missed and extra die rolls, and see the next section on *Dash to Berlin* for a board game which demands specific die rolls.)

The mean distance the British player is likely to move if they land on an event space is -8.58, about 8-9 spaces backwards. By contrast, the Russian player can expect to move -8.62 spaces, and the French player -11.08. This makes France the Ally who may suffer the most from event spaces; at Coblenz, in fact, France can be sent back to the start, a penalty of 85 spaces, the largest such punishment in the game (compared with a maximum of 78 spaces backwards for Russia and just 48 for Britain, still almost half the track). Perhaps this reflects the partial invasion of France by Germany in the early war, or Arthur Mee's less favourable opinions of France in comparison to Germany (Paulin, 2002: 166).

Perhaps surprisingly, Britain is not the clear best nation to play – it has a slightly better overall average movement, but Russia has a couple of spaces which can send it around 30 spaces forward, a third of the track. However, the British player must only navigate nine spaces which confer negative effects on the player; France and Russia contend with ten and eleven such spaces. (All Allies pass four positive spaces each.) Britain is less likely to get sent backwards to begin with, a major advantage in a game of chance. This may be a coincidence of game design, but it reflects the nationalistic outlook of the *Children's Magazine*.

To summarise *The Way to Berlin's* geopolitics, it is helpful to return to propaganda. The game is pro-Allies, particularly pro-Britain, without German opposition. I argue *The Way to Berlin* is comparable to propaganda mapping. Pickles argues that propaganda cartography is so convincing because it suggests a scientific survey of the landscape, and thus "a claim to true knowledge" (Pickles, 1992: 196-7) – unlike Pickles' examples, *The Way to Berlin* does not blatantly use cartographical techniques to distort geopolitics, but this claim to science, and the use of real battlefields, lends a factual weight to the image, especially since this game was part of a magazine that acted as an encyclopaedia for children. The true messaging value of this game, however, lies in the board game elements superimposed onto the map. The tracks to Berlin on a "scientific" map suggest an inevitable march into

Germany, and the use of miniature flagpoles as playing pieces symbolises the Allied empires claiming territory, eating into Germany. Overall, *The Way to Berlin* paints a morale-boosting picture of Britain's supposedly-certain victory, while also demonstrating how board game elements can create compelling geopolitical narratives and silences for consumption through play.

Dash to Berlin: Racing Across Terrain

Dash to Berlin (Bigco Toys & Games, 1914) (*Figure 5*) is a track game stored in the Imperial War Museum (Imperial War Museum, 2016b). The board is a square of cardboard with a set of tracks printed on it, published by Bigco Games. One amateur historian names Bigco as an imprint of "British Indoor Games" (Hickling, 2002), and this company in turn is cited by Brown as one of many toy and game manufacturers which were founded in the early months of the War, tempted by the opportunity to make a profit and the disappearance of competition from Germany. Brown goes on to note that British Indoor Games produced *Dash to Berlin* in September 1914, but its "substantial" sales were not enough to sustain the company, which filed for bankruptcy in 1916 (Brown, 1996: 84-5). This dates the game's design and production to the early months of the War, and explains why little information about this short-lived company survives.

Dash to Berlin shares a similar title and theme to *The Way to Berlin*, despite apparently being an unrelated game: both games feature sets of separate tracks leading to a final space labelled "Berlin". However, there are several important differences. *Dash to Berlin* features four, rather than three, tracks, but these take the form of abstract grids, rather than paths laid over a map of Europe. Each track is a 9x9 grid of spaces (referred to in the game as "paces"), all featuring identical event spaces, arranged around the central Berlin space like the arms of a plus sign. The Berlin space, in fact, is a red square set within a larger blue area; from the end of each 9x9 grid, a final section of eight spaces (referred to as "stairs") extends to

complete the route to Berlin. Each track is 90 spaces long in total, including paces, stairs and Berlin. There are no playing pieces with the Museum's copy of the game, but the large number of little holes in the board suggests that previous players used pins to mark their positions. (See *Figure 6* for a close-up photograph of one of the four tracks of *Dash to Berlin*.)

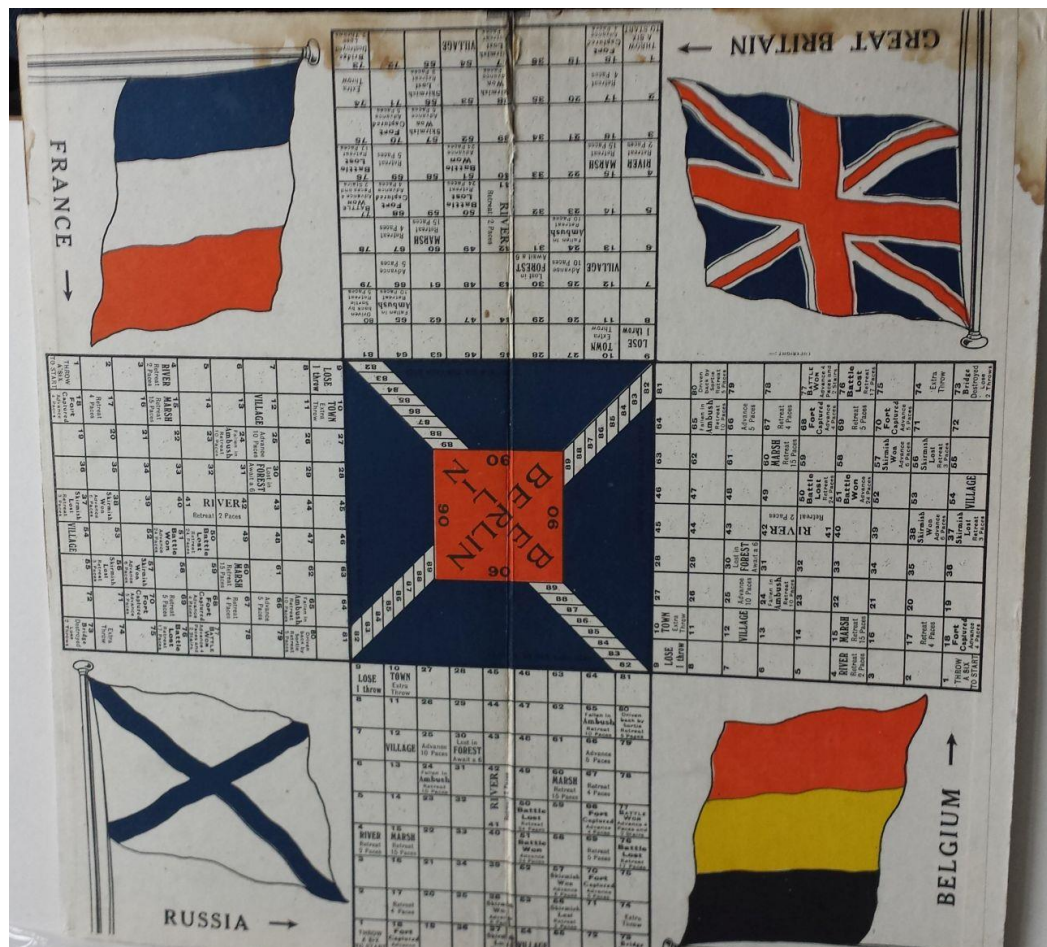


Figure 5: Dash to Berlin. (Location: EPH 1830, London: Imperial War Museum. Author's own photo.)

As in *The Way to Berlin*, *Dash to Berlin* associates each of its tracks with a major Allied power: Britain, France and Russia (providing no opportunity for the German

narrative to make itself visible again). *Dash to Berlin*'s fourth track, though, belongs to Belgium. Belgium was not a major military force in the First World War, but its inclusion here can be attributed to British popular geopolitics. At the beginning of the War, due to a chain of diplomatic commitments being honoured across Europe, Germany faced a two-front war against France and Russia. Germany attempted a strategy called the Schlieffen Plan, which necessitated invading and passing through Belgium to circumvent the Franco-German border and reach Paris; Britain had demanded that Germany respect Belgium's neutrality in the war, so the breaking of this ultimatum caused Britain to enter the war. (For more on the Schlieffen Plan and its role in Britain entering the war, see Gilbert, 1994: 29.) German military attacks on Belgian civilians (Gilbert, 1994: 41-2) fuelled British atrocity propaganda describing these attacks in lurid detail (Fox, 2014). As *Dash to Berlin* was produced in September 1914, such atrocities would have been fresh in the public's mind; indeed, the game may have been produced in response to these events. Belgium's presence in this game reflects British sympathies for Belgium in the War and creates a narrative of reprisal in which Belgium turns the tables on Germany and invades it.

The inclusion of Belgium suggests that *Dash to Berlin* was probably strongly influenced by perceptions of the war and military imagery within Britain. The flags on the board also hint at this. Each playable nation on the board is represented with a flag, usually its national flag. Russia, however, is represented with a blue cross on a white background, which appears to be Russia's naval flag. Perhaps images of the war surfaced in Britain which commonly depicted Russia's navy, and its flag was mistaken for the national flag by Bigco's designers.

Event spaces in *Dash to Berlin* (more visible in *Figure 6*) are spaces marked simply with printed text instructing the player on what to do next; none of them are illustrated. Events have effects like other track games; players can be sent forwards or backwards, miss turns or take extra turns. Some spaces in this game also force

the player to roll a six before they can advance when landed on. *Dash to Berlin* does not reflect any specific cities other than Berlin, but many of its event spaces are themed around geographical features which might influence military movement. For example, unnamed towns and villages are represented on each track; villages appear to do nothing, but the town on space 10 grants the player an extra turn. Physical geography features are also present: two marshes, on spaces 15 and 60, each send the player back 15 spaces, probably reflecting the difficulty of the terrain, and space 30 instructs "Lost in FOREST[;] Await a six." (As space 1 is the starting space for each track, this means the marsh on space 15 sends the player back before the start. This effect is probably a misprint.)

Interestingly, military combat is also represented on the board, as ambushes, skirmishes and battles. Ambushes are simply spaces that send the player back 10 spaces, but skirmishes and battles take up two spaces each. The first space represents a military loss, but the space immediately afterwards represents a victory. For example, space 50 instructs "Battle Lost[;] Retreat 24 Paces," whereas space 51 has the opposite effect, "Battle Won[;] Advance 24 Paces." In these paired events, the negative effect always precedes the positive effect. This very simply simulates military combat; if the player rolls too low a number and lands on "Battle Lost," they have fallen short and must fall back. Like *The Way to Berlin*, *Dash to Berlin* simulates the march of an army into Germany, but achieves this with geographical features and simple battles rather than with the political geographies of towns and battlefields.

Of course, the phrase "Battle Lost" leaves no room to mention the casualties that must ensue from such a conflict. The trauma of war is hidden again, but unlike *The Way to Berlin*, which acknowledges the risks of war with terse descriptions like "Wounded," here such trauma is entirely elided. The reason for this difference might be in the two different approaches to the enemy exhibited by these games. *The Way to Berlin* is a battle against the "Prussian Despot," and may have aimed to illustrate to children in a semi-educational context how harmful the German forces could be, if only in the softest of ways. *Dash to Berlin*, as I suggested when I discussed Belgium above, may be motivated by a desire for revenge; perhaps it was felt that enough blood had been shed in Belgium, and that by treating wins and losses in battle as bloodless, players could indulge a desire for retribution against Germany without indulging in similar violence.

The final stretch of each track, the "stairs," has a special rule for movement across it: the player must roll a six for each step. There are no events within these eight spaces, and so no opportunities to hasten this final round of die-rolling, although being sent forward by winning the battle on space 77 allows the player to skip two stairs. Statistical analysis shows that it takes an average of approximately 4.5 turns each stair to roll a six. This seems counterintuitive for a 1-in-6 chance, but can be calculated by examining the probability of not rolling a six. Assuming a six-sided die, there is a 5-in-6 chance of not rolling a six per turn. This applies to every turn, so to calculate this outcome remaining the same for multiple turns, or n turns, this 5-in-6 chance is brought to the n th power (since the chance of not rolling a six for multiple turns is $5/6 \times 5/6 \times 5/6 \times \dots$). After four turns, this probability is $(5/6)^4$, which is about 0.48, or 48%. This means that all the outcomes in which the player has rolled a six within four turns is 52%. So approximately 50% of the time a player will progress in four turns or less, and 50% of the time it will take five turns or more, leading to the figure of 4.5. If the player is starting from the beginning on square 82 rather than skipping stairs, they can expect to take about 36 turns to climb the stairs to Berlin.

There is a large amount of variance here, of course, as random chance means that an unlucky player can theoretically be rolling the die an infinite number of times (17 turns produces a 95% chance of rolling a six (using the formula in the previous footnote, $(5/6)^{17} = \text{about } 0.045$). 95% of players will make it up the steps to Berlin within $(8 \text{ stairs} * 17 =) 136$ turns), and an extremely lucky player can climb the stairs in eight turns (the chances of rolling a six eight times in a row are $(1/6)^8 = 0.0000595\%$. This is quite small). Even before this, however, the game is likely to have been slower than it might appear, as the mean movement from event squares is $-2.13 - 2$ squares backwards for each square which doesn't influence die rolls – and there are 14 events with negative effects in comparison to 9 positive effects. 36 turns make a significant length of time to add on to this, which indicates that the final march to Berlin can be frustratingly slow. This could be intentional, perhaps to reflect a well-defended Berlin after a war of attrition, but it seems odd for a propaganda-influenced game to suggest that the enemy will be very difficult to defeat. Most likely, this is just a gameplay design decision to slow players down towards the end and make the race to Berlin appear to be close, as 36 turns should be enough time for all but the unluckiest of players to catch up to this ladder.

Unlike many of the other games in this thesis, we have some indication of how well this game was received, from Brown's history of British toys and from an advertisement disguised as an article in the *Aberdeen Daily Journal*. The *Journal* notes that *Dash to Berlin* "has been selling very freely" and that "a large supply" has been prepared for distribution (apparently by the London Rubber Company, of all companies, who would later become Durex) (*Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 1915: 2), and Brown notes that the game's sales were "substantial" enough to encourage Bigco, or British Indoor Games, to move into larger premises (Brown, 1996: 85). So it seems that the game was successful in playing on popular geopolitics. Indeed, the *Journal's* advertisement makes use of these geopolitics, comparing the pace of the game favourably to the struggle of attrition that the real Great War was

becoming and suggesting that it might make a great gift for injured soldiers or those "in the convalescent stage" (*Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 1915: 2).

However, the business ultimately became unsustainable by 1916 (Brown, 1996: 85). The reasons for this decline are unclear, but Brown reflects that many businesses like Bigco were opportunistically founded to profit from the industrial and geopolitical situation of a war which was supposed to be over by Christmas (ibid: 84-5; here, he also suggests a financial reason for the collapse of Bigco and other businesses, as even banks believed the war would be over soon, and were reluctant to fund toy and game companies which would surely have to compete with Germany again within the next few months). As the war drew on, and the nature of trench warfare became apparent, it seems war ceased to be entertaining enough to profit from.

Dash to Berlin, in summary, is a fairly simple reactive propaganda game. It exploits popular geopolitical hostility towards Germany, and sympathy towards Belgium, to produce a track game which offers a clean, superficial vision of hard-won yet inevitable revenge against Germany. The intertexts of newspaper articles and modern histories show that *Dash to Berlin* was very much a product of its time, however. It succeeded as a game because of the clean and buoyant vision that it offered, but this vision was ultimately ephemeral, and as the real war dragged on and claimed more lives, *Dash to Berlin* became unsustainable as a fun simulation of geopolitics.

Sink the Submarine: Seascapes, Board Space and Absent Geopolitics

Sink the Submarine (Anonymous, c. 1914-1918) (*Figure 7*) is a track game dated to the First World War by the archive which currently holds it, the V&A Museum of Childhood (V&A Collections, 2016c). No exact rules or manufacturer details are provided or known.

This game is themed around submarine warfare, a new technology of the First World War. The track of this game starts in the bottom-left and ends in a large "finish" space which takes up much of the centre of the board and which depicts a seascape featuring a submarine, a fleet of ships, and an unidentifiable rocky outcrop of land. Many of the small spaces also depict submarines, often in combat situations; these spaces act as event spaces, with accompanying text which implies that the player is in the role of a submarine engaged in a series of battles and support tasks. For example, players may be sent forward when their counter or submarine "Escorts Troopship" (space 13) or "Sinks Enemy Ship" (space 21), or punished as their submarine "Loses Periscope" (space 26) or "Runs Aground" (space 50).

Again, bodies are absent from this game, even when casualties are certain; this suggests, again, that there is a deliberate effort to avoid narratives of trauma. But it is difficult to identify the geopolitical narratives that *Sink the Submarine* is trying to express, if any. The Museum of Childhood's estimate of First World War-era Britain is probably correct, since the game's text is in British English and since submarine warfare was a major aspect of the war. However, I have found it difficult to identify the submarines depicted on the board, if they are based on specific vessels. The submarine in the Finish space could be based on British Royal Navy submarine designs – the fence-like structures around the edges of the deck are characteristic of designs such as the B-class Royal Navy submarines which began construction in 1904, and the central tower is reminiscent of the G-class design of 1914. But the U-19 series of German U-Boats are also similar in their basic design and deck shape. No submarine that I can find a picture of matches the tower shape exactly. I believe the submarines shown here are probably not a specific class of submarine, but instead are a generic design, painted from imagination rather than reference.

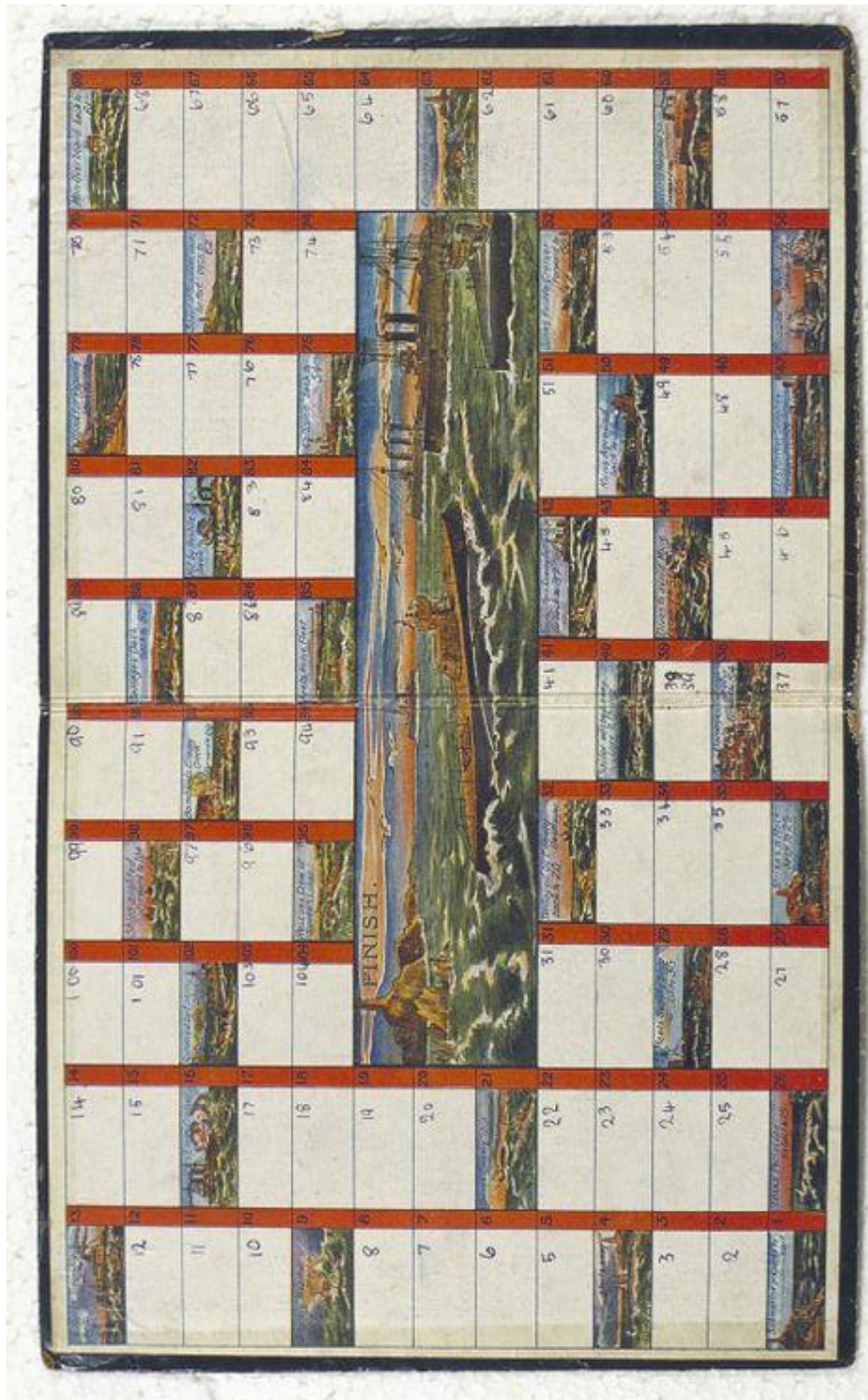


Figure 7: Sink the Submarine. (Location: MISC. 841-1986, London: V&A Museum of Childhood. Source: V&A Collections, 2016c.)

The ships depicted on the board similarly appear to be generic. Taking the fleet seen in the Finish space as a reference point again, the steam chimneys and masts of the ships bear resemblances to transport ships as well as light cruisers of both British and German designs. Curiously, none of the boats depicted in *Sink the Submarine* appear to be dreadnoughts. I have previously discussed how dreadnoughts became a locus for popular British geopolitical anxieties about the British-German naval race. Such panic suggests that dreadnoughts should be a symbolic presence in *Sink the Submarine*; their absence from this game arguably places it outside of popular geopolitics in the run-up to the First World War. (By contrast, dreadnoughts are a presence in other pre-First World War games such as *Jutland* and *Dover Patrol*, discussed in later analysis chapters.) Of course, other factors may be that this game was produced later in the war when dreadnoughts were less culturally significant, or that the artist simply preferred painting other models of ship. The upshot of this, however, is that *Sink the Submarine* is not locatable in geopolitical space as the other two games were.

Before exploring the implications of this, I want to study the form of the game itself. The board game track follows an unconventional path. The route zigzags up and down underneath the Finish space, before moving up to cover the half of the board above the Finish. This strange track layout leads to some interesting movement quirks, revealed once it is noticed that the entire board is a seascape, divided roughly into a sky above and a sea below by the Finish space's horizon. When the board is interpreted in this way, some of the event spaces act out the events described in them. For example, on space 44, the player "Dives to avoid Mine," moving forward to space 51. This takes place in the bottom half of the board, as the player moves up and down column-by-column. To move from 44 to 51, the player's path makes a U-shape, forming a literal diving path as the player dives to avoid a mine. Similarly, six hazards are concentrated in squares 63 to 82, which fill the top-right of the board, after the player has passed up the right-hand column of the board's grid; the player "surfaces" and is immediately exposed to

hazards. Most of these hazards send the player backwards far enough that they "sink" below the waterline again.

This movement through a seascape recontextualises the use of space in war games. Many games are representations of battlefield spaces, in which armies move across maps or terrain, as seen in the previous two games, *The Way to Berlin* and *Dash to Berlin*. In reality, the board game is usually a two-dimensional plane, a flat surface seen from a bird's-eye view for pieces to move across regardless of physical geography. *Sink the Submarine* takes this two-dimensional plane and turns it sideways; indeed of moving across a map, players now cut up and down through the sea. This reflects the new capabilities that submarine warfare introduced to naval movement. The submarine moves freely through the water, whereas the boat is restricted to the plane of the sea's surface (unless it sinks, but this is not usually desirable). In terms of the physical game, of course, the player is still on a plane rather than moving in three dimensions, but this reimagining of board game space shows how *Sink the Submarine* plays with the idea of piloting a submarine on the board space. By adapting the mobility of submarine warfare to the board, the game introduces a transitional space; spatially navigating the hazards on the board simulates commanding a submarine, if only very vaguely, similarly to how *The Way to Berlin* suggests that players are navigating real battlefields.

As for the actual effects of the events, as in any *Snakes and Ladders* game, they vary in severity, but not always in an intuitive fashion; for example, losing a periscope (space 26) sends the player back by 11 spaces, but "Bombed by Aircraft" (space 56) is less severe at 10 spaces. These effects also tend to be very punishing; the very last event space the player can encounter, "Rammed by Enemy Ship" (space 102), sends the unlucky player back to the start, a penalty of 101 spaces; the next most punishing space is a penalty of 26 spaces, for a similar reason ("Hit by Hostile Ship," space 82). By contrast, the most helpful event only adds 16

spaces. Negative effects outweigh positive effects throughout the game; of the 30 event spaces in *Sink the Submarine*, 13 are positive and 17 are negative. If the player lands on an event, they can expect an average movement of -2.22 squares, but this excludes the 101-space penalty as an outlier; including this, the figure rises to 5.75 squares backwards. This demonstrates that events in this game are generally punishing to land on, and that they generally work to slow the player's progress.

In considering what we have learned from this game – the lack of easily recognisable or politically contemporary fleets, the use of the board as a seascape map and as a simulation of submarine technology, and the difficult gameplay for a track game – we are faced with a tricky question: are these features evidence of a deliberate process of meaningful design by which messages about war and geopolitics are imparted, or are they simply accidents? This could have been asked about the other games studied here, but without knowing much about *Sink the Submarine*'s production, there are fewer historical contextual clues to help. On its own, *Sink the Submarine* presents a form of naval warfare which is without specific place or identifiable belligerents, in which submarines must navigate a range of damaging hazards with skilful piloting. Is this intentional, or a by-product of applying a naval theme to a *Snakes and Ladders* template? I suspect the latter is more likely, and that the game was themed around submarines to reflect and profit from the most current naval technology. This might explain the lack of dreadnoughts: as it became apparent that submarine superiority was directing the naval war, *Sink the Submarine* prioritised this aspect of the war.

But with this answer, some mysteries remain. The title "*Sink the Submarine*" is a curious choice for a game in which the player controls a submarine. It is notable that submarine warfare in the First World War is much more associated with German naval strategy than British; although Britain operated submarines, particularly in the Baltic Sea (Gilbert, 1994: 194), the German U-Boat campaign was

central to German strategy throughout the war to pressurise Allied countries by sinking merchant ships (Gilbert, 1994: 67). Perhaps the player is controlling a U-Boat – this seems very unlikely for a British First World War-era game, but this confusion is not helped by the non-specificity of the landmasses and fleets depicted, which extends to event spaces that declare, for example, "Damages Enemy's Harbour" (space 38), rather than "Damages German Harbour." This space also demonstrates a strange stylistic choice to capitalise all nouns, a rule of German grammar.

There are two theories I would like to advance which may explain these oddities. The first is that an element of the game has become lost in the archived version I accessed; if the players are acting as submarines, perhaps another player is meant to be in a defensive role, trying to prevent submarines from reaching the Finish space by somehow forcing them onto event squares which send them backwards. The second theory is that *Sink the Submarine* is originally a German game, adapted for British audiences with updated versions of the same printing sheets. As Dittmer and Dodds point out, "the agency of the audience [in interpreting text] is [...] structured by the spaces in which texts are read" – cultural location and social consequences limit readings (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008: 449). Who would expect a German-produced game in a British context? Such an adaptation would not be unique among war games. Lewin discusses a Second World War track game, *Aerial Attack*, similarly attributed to an unknown British publisher, which proved to be reprinted from a German game called *Feindliche Flieger in Sicht!* (Lewin, 2012: 173-5); one of the other games I discuss in this thesis, *L'Attaque*, is a strategy game published in Britain which stems from a French design (see the fourth analysis chapter for a full discussion of the *L'Attaque* family of wargames). Not enough archive material is available to me to prove or disprove these possibilities, but they illustrate that even a simple board game without rules or contextual information can offer a wealth of information on the ways in which games manufacturers may have navigated and capitalised on popular geopolitics at times of war.

The Second World War: The Individual at War

During the interwar period, Britain became less militant than the eager warmongering of the First World War's board games would suggest. Government policies emphasised demilitarisation to appeal to voters who were still traumatised by the effects of the First World War, and anti-war organisations grew; however, when fascist regimes in Europe gained military power and policies of appeasement towards Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany met with limited success, the British public accepted the inevitability of another war (Pugh, 1997: 237-8). Even when the Second World War occurred, however, the British public was generally more sceptical of pro-war rhetoric, ignoring or rebelling against government propaganda and instructions on aiding the war effort (Pugh, 1997: 256).

The track games in this section reflect the years immediately before the Second World War, as well as the war itself, as popular geopolitics negotiated this new era of militarism. These games make a striking contrast with the First World War set of games; whereas those games exhibited a jingoistic outlook and equated military successes and the defeat of geopolitical enemies with success in the game, the following games – *A.R.P.*, *Annie Wants Her Stripes*, and *Pinpoint the Bomber* - often focus on the individual scale of war, emphasising personal success and safety alongside or instead of the defeat of others.

A. R. P.: War Games and Education

A.R.P. (Glevum Games, c. 1938-39) (*Figure 8*) is a track game currently stored in the V&A Museum of Childhood (V&A Collections, 2016a). It is a track game themed around air raid precautions (whose acronym gives the game its title), dated to 1938-39 by the Museum of Childhood, probably appearing no earlier than September 1938. (The ATS, a women's volunteer brigade that was formed in

September 1938 (Crang, 2010: 350-1), is named on space 56 of *A.R.P.* See the next game, *Annie Wants Her Stripes*, for more on the role of the ATS in the Second World War.) *A.R.P.* was published by Glevum Games, a Gloucester-based producer of toys and games (Watkins, 2009).

A.R.P. seems to have been published before or at the beginning of the Second World War. German air raids on Britain did not begin until 1940 (Royal Air Force Museum, 2012). This means that the battles shown in this game anticipate the Blitz, rather than representing it. This knowledge situates the game in the context of Britain's interwar rearmament. For much of the interwar period, rearmament was a highly unpopular policy, particularly in the late 1920s and early 1930s, until the rise of fascism in Britain and Germany caused some reflection on the success of appeasement (Pugh, 1999: 237-8). Beyond 1935, a series of military crises, particularly Germany's invasion of the Rhineland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, and Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, "[made] war seem much more likely, and also a just and necessary risk to many people" (Pugh, 1999: 238; also see Dewey, 1997: 276). As a result, Britain began to remilitarize in anticipation of a coming war. Part of this was preparing for air raids, perhaps motivated by the bombing of Guernica in 1937; the Air Raid Wardens service, established in 1937, trained British civilians on how to act during a raid, and various eventualities were prepared for including fires and gas attacks (Mason, 2012).

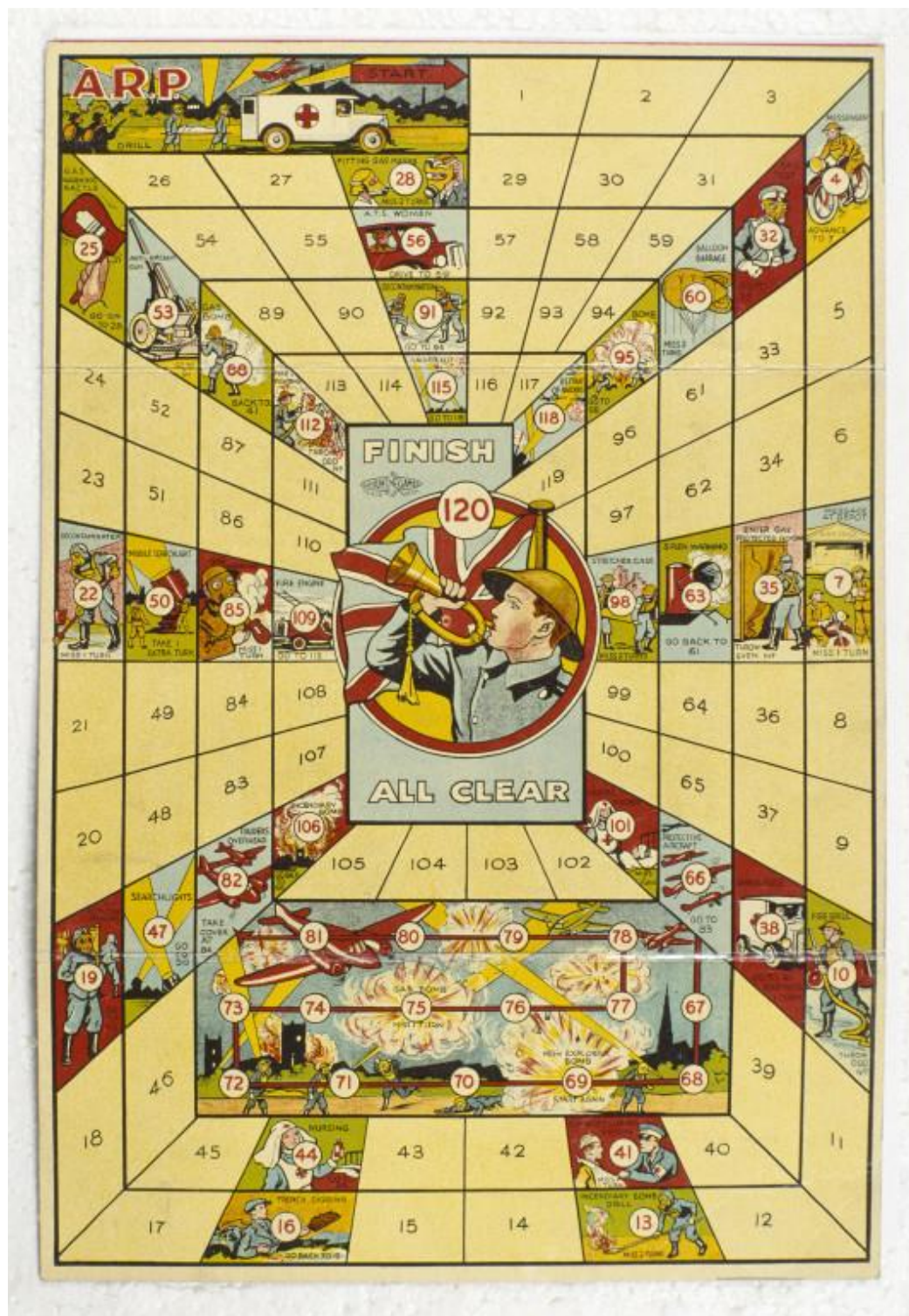


Figure 8: A.R.P. (Location: MISC. 848-1986, London: V&A Museum of Childhood.
Source: V&A Collections, 2016a)

This history is reflected in the game. *A.R.P.*'s track is 120 spaces long and progresses in a rectangular clockwise spiral from the top-left corner of the board to the centre. Event spaces are based around the various tasks that civilians and emergency service workers were expected to handle during air raid conditions, such as wearing gas masks. (The British public and government were concerned that German bombers might drop mustard gas onto British cities, although this never occurred in practice.) These event spaces, and other special areas of the board, suggest a narrative. The starting corner depicts a scene of emergency vehicles setting off, and many of the early events concern air raid precautions such as gas masks and drills. Spaces 67-81 occupy one larger area of the board, a scene depicting a bombing raid on a British town; here the hazards are more life-threatening, and one space, a "gas bomb" on space 75, sends the player back to the start. After this, the event spaces suggest a continuing air raid and emergency response, such as extinguishing fires, before the enemy planes depart on space 118 and a bugler sounds the all-clear on the central Finish space. Taken as a whole, *A.R.P.* appears to be about preparing for and surviving an air raid.

The visual design of the board is striking. The spaces are mostly aligned with each other so that they appear to emanate from the central Finish to the edges. Event spaces are lined up to form alternating radiating stripes of event spaces and normal spaces, printed in yellow. The Museum of Childhood suggests that this gives the effect of staring down a tunnel, but I believe this design is meant to evoke searchlights, a recurring motif in *A.R.P.*, visible in the Start and air raid scenes.

I believe that *A.R.P.* is meant to be an educational game, raising awareness of air raid precautions. This is achieved using event spaces to depict various steps one can take during air raid conditions. But *A.R.P.* educates its players with its ludic design as well as its representational design by pairing many of its event spaces. An example of this is Spaces 19, "Put on protective gear. Go to 22," and 22, "Decontamination. Lose one turn." 19 has a beneficial effect on the players

movement, but it also leads them to another event space, 22. 22 has a negative effect, but the event depicted is an activity that requires protective gear. The two spaces may be two halves of the same scene, which affect the player differently depending on how they are landed on. 19's protective gear skips the player to 22 with no ill effects; if the player lands on 22 by die roll, they must not have landed on 19's protective gear, and therefore they are not prepared for 22's event and suffer its ill effect.¹¹ There are many other examples of this relationship in *A.R.P.*, like a fire engine preceding and leading to a fire; although it does not always logically follow that the latter event would be harmful to a person without the former event, it is clear that *A.R.P.* is trying to establish the value of certain precautions, and of preparing or training for certain eventualities of war, by rewarding players who land on preparation spaces.

Some of these related spaces serve to establish a geography for *A.R.P.*'s setting as well. This is illustrated by space 41, "Casualty clearing station," where the player misses a turn (presumably while being hospitalised). Space 38 is an ambulance which causes the player to move to 41 and miss a turn; space 88, "Gas bomb," also sends the player to 41. The nearby space 44, "Nursing," sends the player ahead 4 spaces, which implies that the player has benefited from hospitalisation. Taken together, these event spaces establish a location for a hospital on the game board. (*A.R.P.* has two other spaces which suggest medical treatment, 98 ("Stretcher case") and 101 ("Hospital treatment"). These don't refer to space 41, but their proximity to each other suggests a separate medical facility, perhaps in response to the air raid that occurs during the second half of the game.) Similarly, the game's

¹¹ This assumes that *A.R.P.* plays like a normal track game, and that event spaces are not consecutively obeyed if one leads to another. Since the rules of this game are unavailable, it is possible that this assumption is wrong. However, note space 38, "Ambulance. Go to 41 and lose 1 turn." Space 41, another event space, instructs the player to miss one turn. So space 38 is effectively instructing the player to go to another event space and follow its condition. No other event which leads to another event does this, which implies that in all these cases, the player is not supposed to follow the next event.

setting features a military depot on space 7, to which a message is delivered from space 4. The setting itself is not clear, but it appears to be a non-specific British town. We only see this town's skyline in the Start space and in the air raid scene, but in both instances, church towers and spires dominate the landscape. Church buildings are hallmarks of the quintessential or stereotypical small British town, frequently visible in similarly widely-distributed imagery of British settlements. (For example, see Brace, 2003, on the representation of British towns on the covers of Batsford books.) We can be certain the towns depicted here are British because *A.R.P.* makes sure to establish its own nationality by featuring a British soldier and a Union Jack prominently in its central Finish square. However, the lack of specificity in the town's skyline suggests that the events of *A.R.P.* could be occurring in any British town. So this board game depicts a functional British town which may stand in for the player's town; I think this is a deliberate design choice, to subtly encourage players to imagine their town as the town under attack in *A.R.P.*, and to take its messages to heart accordingly.

Despite this careful work performed in educating players, the game is occasionally inconsistent in establishing the damage that an air raid can cause. Spaces 75 and 88, for example, both feature gas bombs, which presumably injure the player, as they both have negative effects. However, whereas 88, as previously mentioned, sends the player to a hospital on space 44, 75 only causes the player to miss a turn. 75 occurs during the air raid landscape on the board, which suggests that this space should be riskier, especially since a nearby bombing event, space 69, sends the player back to the start. Two "decontamination" events on spaces 22 and 91 are similarly contradictory, causing a missed turn and sending the player forward 2 spaces respectively (although, as 91 takes place in the aftermath of the air raid, this could be read as the player being rewarded for helping to decontaminate a building from gassing). The instances in which *A.R.P.* establish spatial and narrative relationships between event spaces seem too carefully designed to be coincidental, so it is strange that these events such exhibit such oversights in

design. This supports my view that *A.R.P.* is meant to be educational, however; the use of precautions to avoid injury in air raids seems to have been thought through, but apparently at the expense of simulating the effects of these injuries.

On this note, in common with all other games in this chapter, yet again the bodies of war are absent. In *A.R.P.*, though, injuries are acknowledged with its depiction of hospitalisation. More importantly, *A.R.P.* aims to establish the safety measures that civilians can take to avoid injury in air raids – it is quite reasonable that the designers may not have wanted to undercut this by illustrating bodies and thus highlighting the traumatic results of air raids. Although Hyndman's criticisms of the marginalisation of civilian bodies (Hyndman, 2007: 38) are vindicated by *A.R.P.*, Glevum Games appears to prioritise the education and reassurance of players who, at this point in time, were expecting a war with Germany sooner or later, and who may be old enough to remember the trauma of the last World War.

In analysing most games in this chapter, I have largely excluded the effect of event spaces which cause the player to miss or gain a turn. This is due to the unpredictability of die rolls making the calculation of a precise average movement difficult. However, ignoring these spaces is not an option for *A.R.P.* Of the 34 event spaces on the board, 12 affect the player's turns, and 3 hold the player in place until they roll an even or odd number. As these latter spaces have a 3-in-6 chance, or 50%, of holding the player still each turn, I estimate that they cause players to miss an average of 0.5 turns. (Following on from the mathematics expressed while analysing *Dash to Berlin*, 50% of the time the player rolls the correct type of number on the first turn and moves on, and 50% of the time it will take two turns or more, giving an average of 1.5 turns. If the player rolls a correct number on their first turn after landing on this space, they will effectively move on as normal; only subsequent turns hinder the player, meaning that 1.5 turns is equivalent to 0.5 missed turns.) Missing 1 turn can cause a loss of 1-6 spaces relative to each other player on the board, and a half-turn is treated as 0.5-3 spaces. From this I have

calculated a maximum average movement, using the average best-case scenarios for a player who lands on an event space (only losing 1 space relative to all other players when they miss a turn, as the other players all roll 1 each), and a minimum average movement for the worst cases. (This assumes that other players do not land on event spaces, which may send them further forwards or backwards. I cannot account for all the probable effects of event spaces here, which is partially why I exclude die roll events in other analyses.)

This range of average movement is from -3.01 to -5.59. Even for the luckiest players, event spaces are likely to cause a backwards movement of 3 spaces; the unluckiest players suffer almost double this effect. *A.R.P.* is a difficult game to make rapid progress in, then. This is compounded by the large number of negative event spaces (21) in comparison to positive spaces (13). Although positive spaces are consistent overall, providing a mean range of 4.08 to 4.46 (probably because they tend to send the player forward to the next negative event to help them avoid it), negative spaces are likely to cause a movement of -7.64 to -11.57, possibly influenced by two outliers, bombs on spaces 69 and 88, which send the player back 68 and 41 spaces respectively. The averages seen here suggest a punishing game where events are likely to be hazardous to the player as a civilian negotiating the air raids seen here; all the more reason, perhaps, to try to land on positive event spaces and follow the air raid precautions.

Two themes emerge from this examination of *A.R.P.* Firstly, it establishes a geography which is specifically British, and which appears to be functional on the local scale, but which is loosely-defined as a town, enabling it to represent all British towns. This contributes to the second theme of *A.R.P.*, the ways in which the game educates the player on air raid precautions by encouraging them to empathise with the depicted events and recognise how such precautions can help to avoid injury. Between these two themes, it seems there is no strong commentary on the geopolitics of the Second World War. Yet the rearmament of

Britain and the establishment of air raid precautions was a response to the threat of militant fascism in Europe, so the board game must reflect this international situation. *A.R.P.*, however, seems to be careful not to reflect these specific geopolitics. The enemy planes depicted launching the air raid on the game's town are only identified as "raiders" – the plane designs do not appear to reflect any real designs that I can find, and they do not carry any insignias that would associate them with another state. The geopolitics expressed in *A.R.P.* are entirely defensive, focused on protecting the players rather than defeating other militaries, in contrast with the other games studied so far. I think this is a reflection of the climate of rearmament. Social history literature on this period suggests that rearmament was undertaken reluctantly rather than because of jingoism, and *A.R.P.*'s unidentified enemy military reflects this reticence to go to war again so soon after the First World War.

Annie Wants Her Stripes: The Gendered War

Annie Wants Her Stripes (*Woman Magazine*, c. 1940-1945) (*Figure 9*), stored in the V&A Museum of Childhood, is a Second World War-era track game published by the magazine *Woman*. Like *The Way to Berlin*, the board is a single sheet of paper, probably published in an issue of *Woman* (V&A Collections, 2016b).

This is the first, and the only, game in this thesis to consider the role of female soldiers in war in any depth, in comparison to the primarily masculine representations of soldiers seen in all other games. However, the scenarios depicted within this war game are presented as comical and ridiculous. The contrast between the content of *Annie Wants Her Stripes* and its form demonstrates more clearly than any other game the gendering of popular geopolitics, by making ludicrous the possibility of women in spaces of militarism even at a time when female soldiers and labour were vital to the British war effort.

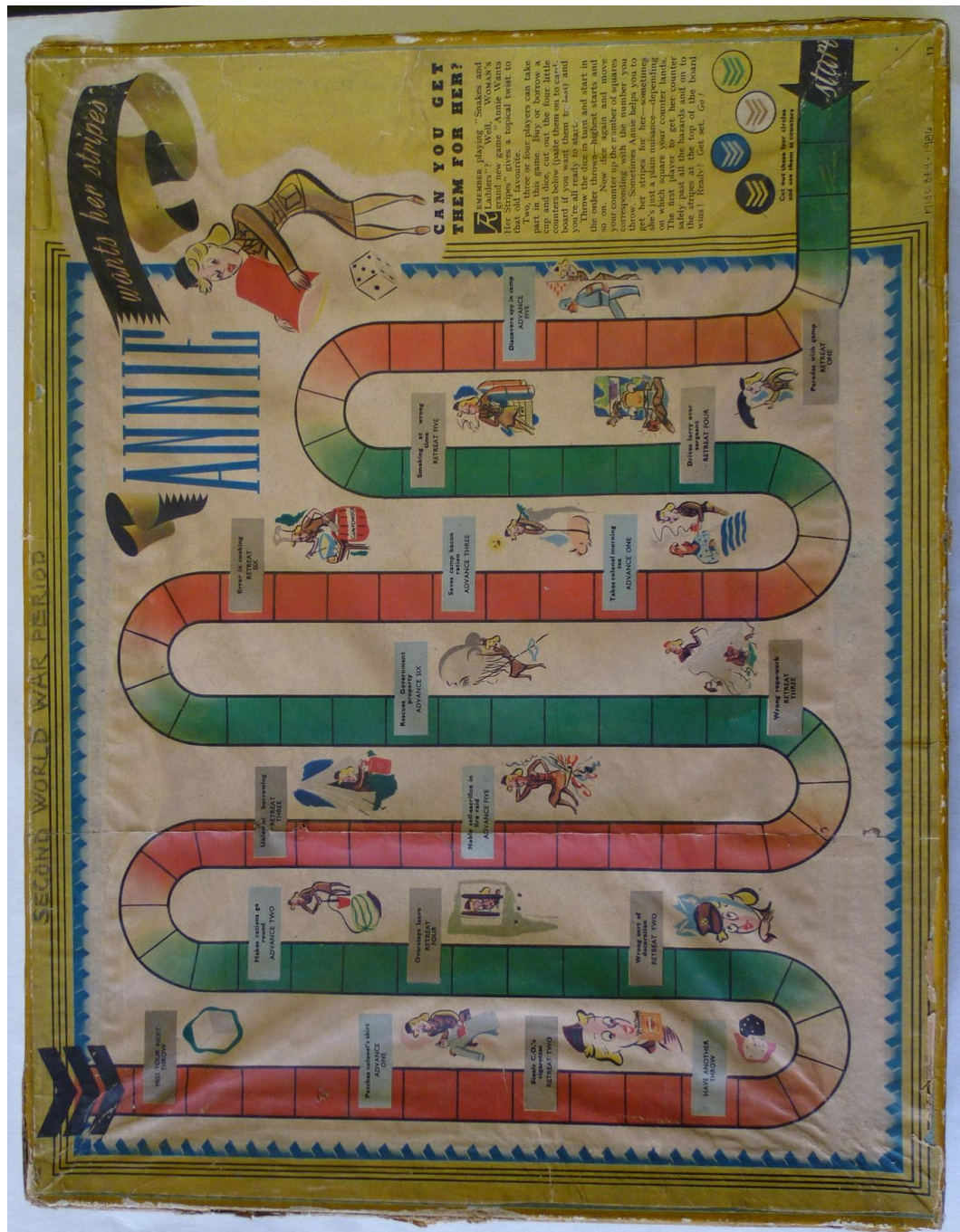


Figure 9: Annie Wants Her Stripes. (Location: MISC. 849-1986, London: V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)

The rules of the game describe *Annie Wants Her Stripes* as "a topical twist on that old favourite" Snakes and Ladders. It is themed around a woman's career in the military as she rises to a three-stripe rank (i.e. sergeant or equivalent). The game is set during the Second World War, suggested by the presence of a Nazi officer in one of its illustrations. Event spaces affect the player's movement as in *The Way to Berlin* and other track games, and depict events in Annie's career – for example, "Discovers spy in camp" (space 11), or "Drives lorry over sergeant" (space 24). The cartoonish style of these spaces gives *Annie Wants Her Stripes* a comedic tone. Four counters are provided, each depicting an icon of sergeant's stripes.

Knowing this game is a product of *Woman* suggests a female audience for this game, at a time when women were fulfilling both domestic roles and industrial roles (in ammunition factories, for example). To understand the context of *Annie Wants Her Stripes* and its representation of the Second World War, it is necessary to examine the wartime role of women's magazines, which acted as "disseminators of information and morale-boosters" (Ballaster *et al.*, 1991: 110). Such magazines were cheerfully written, providing support and comfort when it was sorely needed during the war (White, 1970: 123). Women's magazines also provided domestic advice for the wartime climate, such as cooking with rations – White cites recipes for 'fruit flans' made with carrots, for example (White, 1970: 123). *Woman* aimed to fulfil both functions on its launch in 1937, describing itself as a source of both entertainment and practical help (cited in White, 1970: 97).

In targeting themselves at women, women's magazines have inevitably reflected the changing socio-political roles of women, as well as changing attitudes towards these roles (Ballaster *et al.*, 1991: 109). However, such reflections are filtered through the interests of the magazine and what the editors believe women want to read about, indicating that they have agency in shaping these roles and attitudes as well. Throughout the Second World War, women's magazines consistently centred on the domestic sphere, despite upheavals in the gendering of labour and

of social roles in Britain brought about by the First World War, and despite the formation of women's army services to employ the many women petitioning the government to allow them to take part in national service (Crang, 2010: 351). In cooperation with the British government, magazines foregrounded "homemaking as the only suitable work for women" and stressed a domestic role for women alongside their wartime labour duties (Ballaster et al, 1991: 121-2). To put this another way, women's magazines exhibited a gendering of roles where women needed only to be concerned with the domestic and the local, all other scales presumably being the domain of men (a gendering consistent with feminist scholarship on gender and political scale, such as Freeman's work on globalisation as a "masculine" or de-feminised subject (Freeman, 2001: 1012)). For its part, *Woman* experimented with journalism on progressive social issues, but discontinued these articles after they seemed to produce a drop in sales (White, 1970: 112). Although women's magazines acknowledged the new feminine roles available and required, such roles were contextualised against women's supposedly more important roles in the house.

With this in mind, it is surprising that *Annie Wants Her Stripes* exists, considering its focus on a woman in a military career rather than a domestic role. The event spaces on the track reveal how *Woman* aligns the domestic and military spheres for Annie. Many of her tasks revolve around performing some kind of homemaking chore in the military; she "Takes colonel morning tea" on space 32, and patches his shirt on space 95 (the final event square illustrating Annie's career – presumably, she is still repairing clothes as she climbs the ranks). Mistakes that Annie makes which send the player backwards are usually the result of her failing at a domestic duty (such as "Error in cooking," space 39, which depicts Annie adding gunpowder to a cake batter) or behaving poorly as a soldier, for example bringing decorative touches into the military sphere in a manner which is meant to be read as inappropriate ("Parades with gamp," space 5). Annie is rewarded for performing domestic duties in the "correct" spaces and ridiculed for failing these

duties or for performing (caricatures of) femininity in non-domestic spaces. Only three out of 18 event spaces depict Annie successfully performing a non-domestic military duty, when she discovers a spy on space 11 (*Figure 10*), "Returns Government property" on space 48, and performs a "Noble self-sacrifice in fire raid" on space 64. Yet like most of the other events, these are depicted comically: the "spy" Annie discovers is a Nazi soldier complete with prominent swastika armband, the "Government property" is a runaway barrage balloon, and her "self-sacrifice" is to sit on an active incendiary device without apparently noticing. (*Figure 10* depicts further examples of event spaces in the game.)

The depiction of Annie's duties, then, leans towards the comical and the domestic, and away from the trauma of war. The conflict between domestic femininity and war suggested by *Annie Wants Her Stripes* can be further contextualised by discussing the actual military duties available to women during the Second World War. The game appears to be set in an active military regiment, given the fire raid that Annie survives. This suggests that Annie is a member of the Auxiliary Territorial Service, a women's volunteer service integrated with the Territorial Army (Crang, 2010: 350-1). This is corroborated by Annie's uniform, exhibiting the green jacket and khaki shirt typical of the standard ATS uniform as well as the forage cap which many ATS members privately purchased (Furey-King, 2011 — this suggests that Annie's coveted stripes may not indicate the role of sergeant, but rather the ATS-specific role of "section leader," retired in May 1941).



Figure 10: Detail photograph of certain event spaces in Annie Wants Her Stripes. (Location: MISC. 849-1986, London: V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)

Annie's position in the army is important because the role of the ATS changed over the course of the Second World War. In the early war, members of the ATS were

enrolled in support duties resembling some of the domestic tasks which Annie undertakes, including cookery and driving (Crang, 2010: 350). More duties became available to women as the war progressed and female recruits proved their competence; for example, mixed-gender searchlight regiments were formed in 1942 after a 1941 trial, the "Newark Experiment," made it apparent that women were perfectly capable of operating searchlights (Brigstock, 2007: 11). However, women never saw active combat, being forbidden to handle lethal weapons or fire anti-aircraft guns (Summerfield, 1997:6). This narrow variety of roles limits the situations which Annie can be involved in (assuming that *Woman* was interested in representing war accurately). Her duties tend to be homemaking roles, as opposed to military support roles like searchlight operation, but this could be because *Annie Wants Her Stripes* was produced in the early days of the ATS, predating more combative roles for women.

Even considering this historical justification, though, *Annie Wants Her Stripes* seems more concerned with poking fun at female soldiers than with representing their potential contributions to militarism. Annie is not depicted as assisting directly with the war effort, relegated almost entirely to chores rather than anything of strategic significance. Only the fire raid and the Nazi spy (as seen in *Figure 10*) anchor *Annie Wants Her Stripes* in a battlefield scenario – beyond these hazards, the game is all but disconnected from contemporary geopolitical events. And even though Annie is probably on the frontlines, because she is a comic figure working on domestic duties she does not negotiate or suffer any death or trauma, even when under attack. Like *The Way to Berlin*, the horrors of war are elided, but this game takes place on the personal scale. Obviously, this is because *Annie Wants Her Stripes* is from a light entertainment magazine, whose readers probably did not want to confront death within its pages. However, this serves to present another bloodless war, justifying its morality and erasing the danger which Annie faces.

Annie herself is characterised as inconsistently competent – the rules state that "[s]ometimes Annie helps you to get her stripes for her – other times she's just a plain nuisance [...]" and many of Annie's mistakes are obviously avoidable. This is, of course, meant to be humorous, rather than a sincere critique of women in the military — after all, Annie can reach the end of the game and get her stripes. But *Annie Wants Her Stripes* appears to be one of very few wartime games depicting a woman as a central protagonist in the military; it is certainly the only such game found in my research, amidst several other games depicting male soldiers battling on the frontlines. (Compare this game with, for example, *A.R.P.*, which depicted police officers and most soldiers as men; although ATS drivers were depicted, women in that game are mostly in medical roles.) *Annie Wants Her Stripes* subverts the idea visible throughout 20th century war games of war as masculine, yet Annie is not quite the "good geopolitical subject" (to borrow from Flint, 2016: 91). *Woman* caricatures Annie by joking that the domestic duties which women are apparently supposed to be performing conflict with her military duties; she is a ridiculous figure, often incapable of performing military duties in the correct ways. The single visible female protagonist in the selection of games I analyse is presented as a comic figure, gendering militarism by poking fun at women rather than through the absence of women.

We can quantify exactly how much of a "nuisance" Annie is with the overall effects the event spaces have on the player's movement. Of the 18 such spaces that can affect the player, 8 confer a positive effect and 10 a negative effect. The average movement these spaces produce altogether is -0.44, or half a space backwards. While I think an attempt was made to balance the game – positive and negative event squares alternate for much of the game, preventing areas where the player may be stymied or sped up by a cluster of events – these statistics show that players are punished by events slightly more than rewarded, and since these events are the result of Annie's conduct in the military, they suggest that Annie tends towards incompetence.

By depicting Annie in this way, *Annie Wants Her Stripes* exemplifies the concerns of critical feminist geographers on the gendering of political geography – more specifically, the masculinities of military heroism. Tickner, for example, writes on the erasure of the feminine from public images of heroism on 9/11, which largely depicted men searching through the Twin Towers' remains (Tickner, 2002, cited in Sharp, 2007: 384-5). Young meanwhile, highlights the depiction of Afghan women as un-liberated as part of the War on Terror's justification, despite expectations of loyalty from US women, or as victims in contrast to the masculine protector figure (Young, 2003: 2-3, cited in Sharp, 2007: 384). Tickner and Young both discuss the contemporary US, but *Annie Wants Her Stripes* represents Annie similarly – despite the severity of her situation, she is a silly character, prevented by the designers from engaging with war and danger as other male game protagonists might.

In terms of popular geopolitics, this is important because it undercuts Annie's role as a geopolitical actor. *Annie Wants Her Stripes* is less a celebration of the female soldier than it is a comedy which deepens the division between the feminised local and the masculinised geopolitical. *Woman's* depiction of Annie is understandable in terms of the magazine's commitment to entertainment and domesticity. Certainly, no one can blame the magazine for producing such a colourful game during such a difficult period of Britain's history. However, the design of the game suggests a subtler narrative about women's supposed roles in the Second World War. Annie faces scenarios which could have been realistic for a member of the ATS to have encountered (albeit depicted as comedy), yet this focus on homemaking and Annie's incompetence present no sense that women are suited to the army, or that readers are obligated to follow Annie's example.

In this way, *Woman* fulfils its dual aims of entertainment and domestic advice for women, while avoiding the commercial danger of social justice journalism. It reflects geopolitical cultures of gendered heroism which continue to exist today, and presents a clean war without challenging it. Since women's magazines

collaborated with the Government to disseminate messages at this time (Ballaster et al, 1991: 121), perhaps *Annie Wants Her Stripes*' true purpose is to gently remind women of their duties to the home during the war, in balance with the propaganda need not to undercut the war.

Pinpoint the Bomber: Reading the Board Game Map

Pinpoint the Bomber (Chichester, 1942) is a board game developed by the aviator Francis Chichester and published in 1942, currently stored in the Edinburgh Museum Collections Centre. This game is themed around performing a bombing raid on a German target, reflecting its Second World War setting; the players are in the roles of aircraft navigators, and playing pieces, silhouettes of aircraft, are provided in the board to be traced onto paper. *Pinpoint the Bomber* is, in fact, a book with a fold-out map included; the map functions as a board, and the book, authored by Chichester, includes advice on navigation and several sets of rules and puzzles which determine movement in the game.

As a game themed around navigating a plane on a bombing raid, *Pinpoint the Bomber* should be contextualised as part of Britain's aviation history in the Second World War. This game's date of 1942 places it after the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, which concluded in May 1941 (Royal Air Force Museum, 2012) – British civilians would have survived German bombing raids at this point in time. 1942, more importantly, was the year in which Britain began a policy of "area attack" on Germany, where British bombers targeted industrial and civilian areas (Kirby and Capey, 1997: 662, 665). In fact, Kirby and Capey argue that "[t]he concept of strategic bombing as a decisive contribution to military victory was a decisively British phenomenon" as British officials believed bombing runs contributed to the collapse of Germany in 1918 (Kirby and Capey, 1997: 661). This suggests that bombing and aviation were significant to the British war strategy and probably to

the general public's geopolitical awareness when *Pinpoint the Bomber* was published.

Chichester is described in this game as the winner of the Johnston Memorial Trophy for Navigation, 1931, and his previous works on navigation are listed below this (Chichester, 1942: 3), establishing him as an authority on the subject. In fact, the game was advertised by its publisher as the work of "one of the greatest authorities" (The *Observer*, 1942). Chichester was an accomplished navigator, making his name as an aviator by being the first to fly solo across the Tasman Sea, developing new navigation techniques to succeed. However, Chichester never fought as a pilot during the Second World War – he was not permitted to join the Royal Air Force until 1943, when he became a navigation officer at the Empire Flying School (Heath, 2004). This means that Chichester had not flown in the war when this game was published, so had no first-hand knowledge of flying on bombing raids. This frames *Pinpoint the Bomber* as an unofficial contribution to the war effort, a method for Chichester to pass on his knowledge of navigation techniques before he could join a Flying School.

Pinpoint the Bomber's map (Figure 11) acts as its board – it is a political map which depicts a strip of Europe reaching from Kent in the United Kingdom across to Western Germany. A straight line of 71 spaces (or "pips"), marked by red circular outlines superimposed on the map, reaches from Manston in Kent to Koblenz (Coblence) in Germany. Several lines of spaces branch out from this main path, and more spaces form a figure eight centred on Koblenz. These spaces represent the paths the player can take as the navigator of a bomber plane on a mission from Manston Air Base to Koblenz.

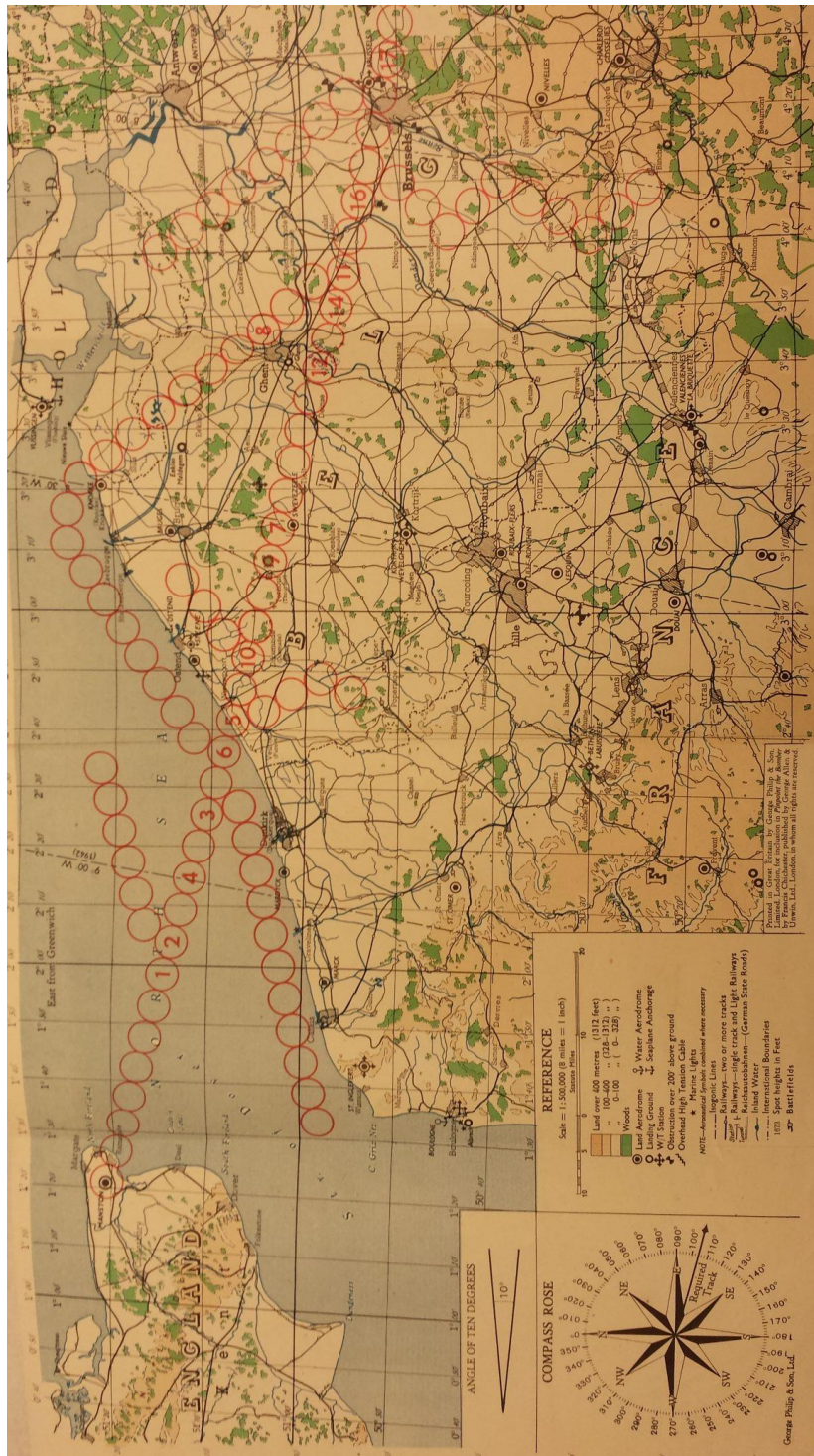


Figure 11: Part of Pinpoint the Bomber's board game map. The board is too long to fit in one photo with any detail, but the beginning of the track, the lines of red circles, can be seen. (Location: MC418.e.94, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo.)

Event spaces are marked with numbers, which refer to paragraphs in the main book. The book provides three different variations of *Pinpoint the Bomber* that can be played with the map, and the corresponding paragraph is different for each version. The first set of rules, the Black Game, is a game for one player which is presented as a series of puzzles rather than a track game; for each numbered space on the map, the player reads a scenario which poses a navigation problem and must use the information provided to locate a position on the map. For example, the player may be given a sketch map or aerial photograph of a location to identify on the main map, or they may be told their navigation instruments are faulty and must correct for this information to discover their actual location. (See *Figure 12* for an example page.)

The second variant, the Red Game, is a game for four players which uses the track of spaces and a pair of dice or pack of cards for movement. (To move with a deck of cards, an ace is treated as 1, a jack as 11, a queen as 12 and a king as 13. The amount of movement provided by these cards or a pair of dice implies a much quicker game than the other track games in this chapter and suggests that the player is expected to invest more time in the navigation puzzles than in racing other players.) When the player lands on a numbered event space, they read an associated set of instructions, usually a navigation puzzle like its Black Game equivalent, and move to the space closest to the solution to the problem. This often places players onto the branching paths, signifying that they have flown off-course and delaying them as they rejoin the flight path. (Because of these branching paths and the variable instructions for event spaces, it is difficult to provide much statistical analysis for *Pinpoint the Bomber*, and so I have foregone quantitative data for this case study.) If players fail to solve the problem the next player may attempt the problem and can gain an extra turn for a correct answer, whereas the original player moves to the location described but misses a turn. These problems are interspersed with standard track game events which allow the player to take an extra turn or try to roll or draw a number for a bonus.

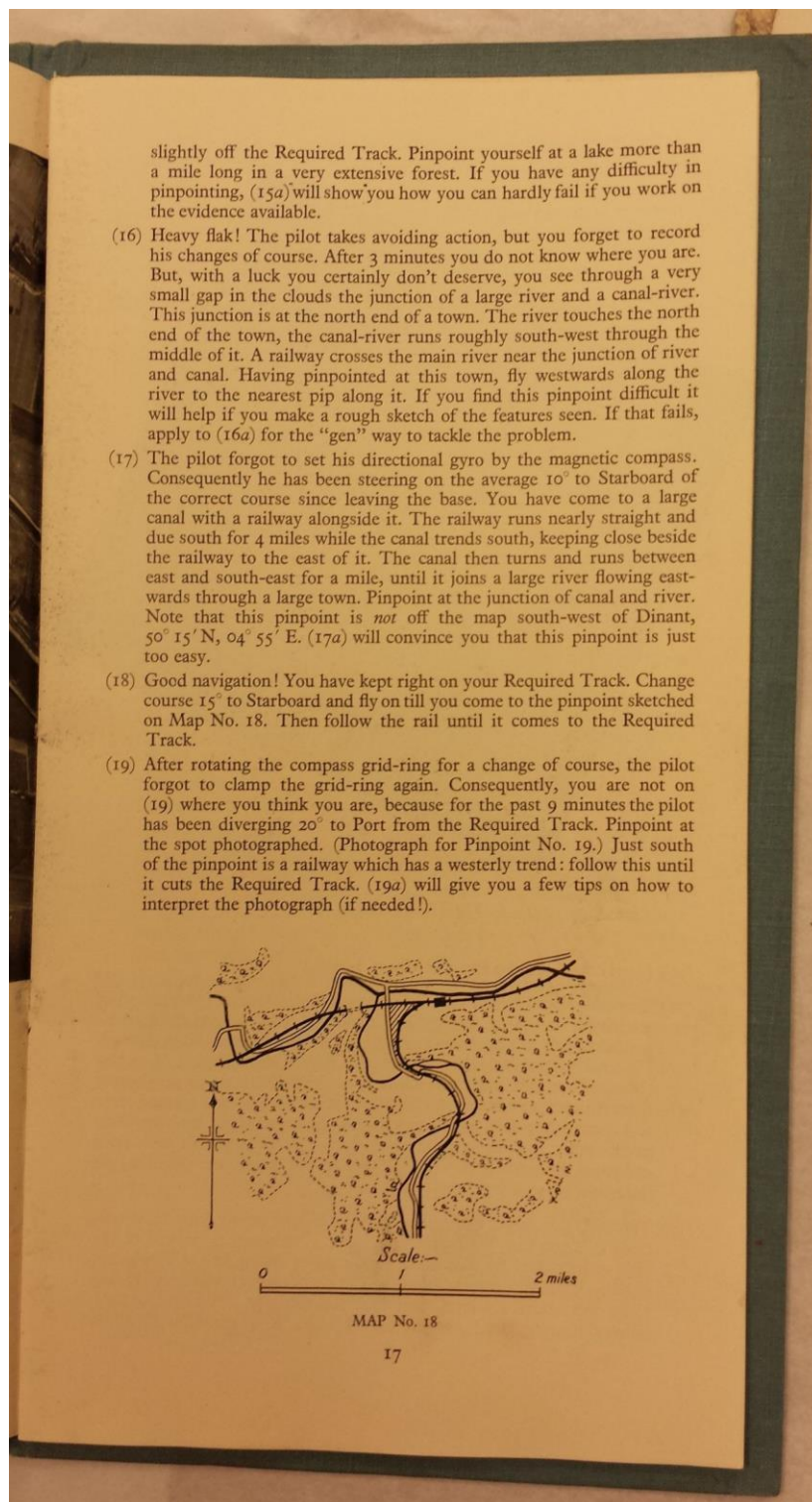


Figure 12: Example page of navigation puzzles from *Pinpoint the Bomber's Black Game*. (Location: MC418.e.94, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo)

The Green Game, finally, is "the easy one" (Chichester, 1942: 5), a track game for any number of players which dispenses with the puzzles and provides simpler instructions for events. Even this game aims to train the player, however, by referring to spaces by their latitude and longitude on the map, so that players are encouraged to learn how to work with map co-ordinates. In the Red and Green Games, the winner is the first player to land directly on Koblenz, thus bombing the target.

The navigation tasks in this game are aimed at teaching navigation skills. Chichester claims that players "can learn more about the art and principles of map-reading from two hours with the game than from two hundred hours' air experience if untrained" (Chichester, 1942: 9). In this way, *Pinpoint the Bomber* is sold throughout the book's introductory chapter as a vital training tool for anyone interested in aviation. In places, this focus subsumes the board game – the Black Game, for example, is not so much a game as a list of puzzles which require navigation techniques to solve. Chichester also aims to simulate the experience of being a navigator in flight across all three variants of *Pinpoint the Bomber*. For example, the map is an accurate map including latitudes and longitudes, so that the player's navigation techniques are applicable to maps more likely to be used for military navigation. Many of the scenarios arises from a fictional error the player makes, such as forgetting to note a change in direction during a dogfight. Chichester also argues that if the players make an error in their solutions, it is "usually because of one of the blunders which air navigators are subject to under the stress of cold, height, speed or enemy action. This is a valuable point for any player hoping to become part of an aircrew; if he can get these blunders engraved on his memory, it will save him a lot of worry in the air and may save a disaster [...]" (Chichester, 1942: 10). *Pinpoint the Bomber* is comparable with training games used by the military in how it uses a game with an accurate map in order to teach skills to soldiers (especially work on Kriegspiel – see, e.g., Ahlqvist, 2011:

279), despite the fact that Chichester had not operated within the military at this time.

The map itself is credited to the London Geographical Institute and to George Philip & Son Ltd; this intertextuality further contextualises *Pinpoint the Bomber* as a product outside of official military production. The Institute was founded by George Philip in 1902 (Herbert, 1983: 88). Confusingly, this Philip was the Son in George Philip & Son; his father and his own son were also Georges, and all three were cartographers (Herbert, 1983: 88; Fullard, 2004). The London Geographical Institute appears to have simply been the cartographical arm of Philip's business (Willett, 1991: 40), which worked with prominent geographers such as Mackinder to produce atlases (Fullard, 2004), but which mainly produced maps for petrol companies before the Second World War (Willett, 1991: 39). This suggests that the London Geographical Institute produced maps privately rather than in an official capacity, which corroborates the argument that *Pinpoint the Bomber* was a personal project of Chichester's to teach navigation outside of the military.

It is interesting that *Pinpoint the Bomber* represents Chichester, operating outside of the RAF despite his wishes, rather than any person or institution who represented the military, because this means that this game is more likely to reflect popular geopolitics than military influence. These geopolitics, however, interact with Chichester's own voice, and his desire to train a new generation of aviators, to produce a distinctive representation of the Second World War, and of navigation and aviation's role in fighting Germany. For example, the aim of all three games is to bomb a target in Germany. Like *The Way to Berlin* and *Dash to Berlin*, the players race to be the first to defeat the enemy in some way. This implies a display of military heroism where the player performs a daring feat with the help of skilful navigation. (The idea of flying a plane into enemy territory is reminiscent of aviation fiction such as the Biggles stories, although Chichester does not invoke the comparison. It must also be noted that Chichester assumes players to be male

throughout the game's book, corroborating the argument made while discussing *Annie Wants Her Stripes* that most war board games associate courage and danger with maleness.) However, the player is not necessarily written as such by Chichester. The author assumes the voice of a stern teacher, and many of the scenarios in *Pinpoint the Bomber* are written with a playfully hostile tone of voice, chastising the player for mistakes made before the game began:

You think you are above Pip (7) don't you? But you are mistaken. Not only have you been travelling 10° off track to Port since you left Base because you forgot to allow for magnetic variation (west), you stooge, but [...] (Black Game, Pinpoint 7) (Chichester, 1942: 14)

[Y]ou forget to record [the pilot's] changes of course. After 3 minutes you do not know where you are. But, with a luck you certainly don't deserve, you see through a very small gap in the clouds [...] (Black Game, Pinpoint 16) (Chichester, 1942: 17)

(All examples here are derived from the Black Game puzzles, but many of the descriptions here are identical to the descriptions for events in the Red and Green Games, with different instructions for what to do with the results of the problem depending on which game the player is reading for.)

Although occasional compliments are given where the player is said to have succeeded prior to the scenario, Chichester's writing tends to tease the player. This forces the player out of narratives in which they are a heroic or flawless protagonist, but casting the player as not always successful or competent helps Chichester to emphasise the "blunders" a novice navigator may make – the author is possibly trying to suggest that these embarrassing situations which must be navigated out of are far more common than any controlled skilful flights for first-time navigators.

The location of the target in Germany suggests that this game reflects the program of area bombing in Germany. The target in all variants is specifically described as

a concentration of barges at the bank of the Rhine where the bridge crosses from Coblenz to Ehrenbreitstein. This bridge is almost on the same site as the bridge crossed by Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, on his march into Germany in the Danube in 1704, where he won the great victory of Blenheim. The British infantry marched over 400 miles in 6 weeks before the battle. (Chichester, 1942: 4)

The target is defined not in terms of any strategic significance it holds for the Nazis or other enemy states, but in terms of a past British military victory which is irrelevant to the present situation. While this emphasis on British military superiority is a return to the geopolitics of First World War track game which predicted a decisive victory, it is more interesting that this bombing mission does not have any obvious implications for the war. *Pinpoint the Bomber* does not engage with why the war is ongoing, only referring to "enemy planes" throughout the book rather than any specific conflicts. It is not even clear what the barges are carrying.

Without any understanding of the target's strategic significance, it is hard not to read it as a fictionalised part of Britain's program of area attack bombing raids. This is a point that must be approached with some care, as Chichester was not part of the RAF at this time and so it is unclear what he knew of Britain's aerial warfare strategy. But the choice of a target so deep in Germany – in addition to allowing a lengthy map on which to set many navigation puzzles – is suggestive of an attack on Germany's civilian and industrial population rather than directly on its military. The ethical concerns of such area bombing are obvious, and widely shared by critics of Britain's war strategy (Kirby and Capey, 1997: 662, 665). Although Chichester's focus is on navigation rather than battling – throughout the game's puzzles, enemy planes are escaped from rather than engaged with – this final act of violence on Koblenz, the goal of the game, exposes a lack of critical engagement with the trauma of war. Civilian casualties are elided yet again, yet there is little possibility that Britons were unaware of the civilian costs of bombing, in the aftermath of the Blitz. Chichester is not interested in the reasons for or aftermath

of bombing, so it is difficult to explain his choice of target, but it is possible that certain British people would not find this attack on a German city too problematic in light of such events.

Pinpoint the Bomber is an interesting case study, as it is both more complex than the traditional track game, and simpler than its contemporaries in the vision of pro-British military geopolitics it suggests. Players are educated in navigation techniques, guided by Chichester's personable and often playfully hostile writing style, yet also placed in a situation with no counter-narrative available to question the geopolitical situation or bombing mission the game revolves around. We also have an unusual amount of detail on this game's authorship, demonstrating that *Pinpoint the Bomber* was an independent creation of people who probably worked outside of government and military spheres. I previously suggested that *A.R.P.* was aimed at an audience reluctantly facing rearmament and that *Annie Wants Her Stripes* may have reflected government influence in the gendering of wartime roles. Perhaps, then, the wholly-independent, wartime *Pinpoint the Bomber* is the truest reflection of British popular geopolitics. Although it still marks a move away from the overt jingoism of First World War track games, it is aimed squarely at prospective aviators considering a career in aviation warfare, and may well have succeeded in attracting such players.

Discussion: Simplified Warfare

Track games are possibly the least complex type of board game commonly available. Their gameplay is rarely anything more complex than depending on die rolls to make progress. If games are playful exercises with their own realities and unpredictable outcomes (Caillois, 1962: 7-8), then many of these are barely games, but rather miniaturisations of war progressed by chance die rolls.

Yet even within this simple structure, the games shown here all work to represent popular geopolitics in complex, if not nuanced, ways. As one would expect, these games are products of their historical milieus, whether they reflect the eager militarism of the First World War or the more guarded self-preservation of the Second. No game here goes so far as to critique the reasons or the traumatic effects of war, though – to varying degrees, they try to avoid images of death and bloodshed which might undercut the morality of the war, and even those games which do not overtly support their respective World Wars at least appear to accept war as a natural and normalised state of geopolitics.

All these games feature training or educational aspects as well, sometimes tied to their support of the British war effort. *A.R.P.* exploits the format of track games similarly to *gyān caupad* or *Mansion of Happiness* to tie forms of behaviour to positive and negative events, and Pinpoint the Bomber folds navigation puzzles into its events to teach cartographical skills. More subtly, the uncritical representations of public geopolitics in many of these games serve to normalise and reinforce these representations. Games like *The Way to Berlin* and *Dash to Berlin* take Britain's (and the Allies') moral and military superiority for granted, and *Annie Wants Her Stripes* clearly demonstrates a gendering of military roles. These games offer no opportunities within the game to resist such narratives, as the march along a linear path to a predefined conclusion is the only way to win them.

However, we must also treat these games as opportunistic – the new economic situations and public anxieties spawned by wars created markets for war games, for the British public to understand the war or possibly just vent their frustrations against the enemy. Games like *Dash to Berlin* and *Sink the Submarine* were almost certainly introduced to British markets to profit from war, for example. *The Way to Berlin* and *Annie Wants Her Stripes*, both magazine features rather than standalone board games, may be exceptions to this but may also have served to bolster sales of their respective magazines by targeting specific audiences.

All track games here exhibit ludic geopolitics by exploiting the format of the board game. All the games use event spaces as a medium for demonstrating risks and dangers to the player, whether these concern soldiers or civilians. The addition of a map to some games (*The Way to Berlin*, *Pinpoint the Bomber*), or the establishment of a fictional-yet-recognisable geography (*A.R.P.*), transforms the track from a series of events into a navigation of space and place, grounding the geopolitics of the game in a local or national setting. Yet the simple rules of each track game prevent any ludic deviations from their established geopolitical narratives. Subsequent analysis chapters will demonstrate how geopolitically-motivated game designers control or liberate the player in less structured board games which require more complicated strategies to prevail in.

Chequerboard Games: Draughts and Geopolitics

Track games provide a template for designers to mobilize geopolitical discourses in an almost purely aesthetic way. There is little consideration that needs to be paid by the designers to the act of playing the game; in a simplified track game, players will always move in a randomised manner, meaning that it is the appearance and textual qualities of the board and the pieces, more than the gameplay experience, which performs the representative work of recreating war.

Many war games, however, feature more involved gameplay which requires the player to make strategic and tactical decisions about the movement of their pieces. Such games often mirror ideas of territorial control and formal geopolitics, in that controlling and using the space of the board effectively is key to winning the game. I call these games "strategy games" throughout the thesis, referring to the strategies that players must develop to work towards controlling space and winning the game. (I also refer to these games as tactical, referring to the short-term tactics of using pieces effectively to gain an advantage over the other player.)

Rather than victories being the result of a die roll, players must make deliberate choices to move the pieces under their control in such a way as to meet the game's criteria for victory and prevent rival players from doing the same. As a result, the design of such strategic games is more complex than the design of track games, as the options available to the player complicate both the potential outcomes of the game and the potential ways in which a battle or a war can be represented. Unless a strategy game is designed restrictively (and an example of such a game, *Chase the Enemy*, is studied in this chapter), the eventual victory of one side is not a foregone conclusion as in games like *The Way to Berlin* and *Dash to Berlin*. The narrative (the flow of battle) of a strategy game, if equal opportunities for victory

are afforded to both players, is not usually predetermined, and so the challenges of representing war and geopolitics are taken up by the rules and what actions they permit or prohibit.

As with track games, however, some 20th century British strategy games took inspiration from pre-existing games with well-established rules. This methodology of game design presumably led to games that were simple to create, and simple for players to learn due to their resemblance to more famous games, but which allowed for a recreation of a battle or war between two players, an opportunity to match wits and play at being a military general or tactician, as opposed to the rote die-rolling of a track game. Such games provide a bridge between the simplicity of track games and the complexity of strategy games with entirely original designs, allowing a slow introduction of the gameplay-oriented aspects of ludic geopolitics into this thesis, which has thus far mostly dealt with visual and textual representations.

The games studied in this chapter are all versions or modifications of draughts. I begin by examining the influence of draughts on British board games during wartime. A draughts board in the National Army Museum demonstrates how manufacturers could invoke contemporary geopolitics, in this case the First World War, with an unmodified draughts board, before two variants of draughts present two different approaches to marrying tactics and geopolitics. *The "Strand" War Game* adapts draughts into a pan-European war strategy game, as equal teams of pieces representing the Allies (Britain and France) and Germany battle to capture each other's capital cities; by contrast, the battle seen in *Chase the Enemy* is much more uneven, as one indestructible "Allied Attack" piece captures as much of a German fleet of ships as possible and players compete to see who can sink the most German ships. A Second Boer War-era game, *The New Game of Kopje*, is also examined; though this game is now incomplete, its resemblance to draughts

suggest a simulation of a battle to control a kopje, a geographical feature of tactical importance during this war.

Draughts: Militarising Games

There is surprisingly little written on the history of draughts in academia – de Voogt claims the first PhD thesis about draughts was written as recently as 1997 (De Voogt, 1999: 6). H. J. R. Murray is one of the major historians who collates historical information on board games such as draughts. Murray argues that draughts was a war game in its earliest form; he uses a Chaucer poem mentioning the game's original name, *ferses*, to suggest that it could be compared to chess as a representation of a battle (Murray, 1952: 74-5), and shows that the nomenclature of the game across Europe was derived from the queen in chess (Murray, 1952: 72-4). Draughts still evokes the structure of chess, combining its form with a jumping capture mechanic derived from an ancient game, *alquerque* (Murray, 1952: 65, 75; Begy, 2010: 10, citing Parlett, 1999: 243). Like chess, draughts requires the player to control units over an abstract chequerboard space. The term "king" for a powerful draughts piece recalls both the importance of the king in chess and the strength and power of its queen, so that both board games reinforce a hierarchy of authority and power. If chess is a war game, then its sister game draughts can be interpreted as one too, albeit a far simpler representation of war which doesn't evoke the theme of battling as strongly as chess does with its knights and castles.

Draughts therefore must have been an appealing template for many board game designers. The game is a simple game of strategy between two players with twelve pieces each, which can only move forward diagonally, and which jump over opposing pieces to remove them from the board, the player winning if their opponent has no valid moves left. Such rules do not take much imagination to reframe more explicitly as a war game, the pieces representing troops or armies.

Additionally, the game was widespread and remains relatively simple in its rules, so that games based on the draughts template would be accessible to a large part of their target audience. But the simplicity of these rules also allowed game designers to iterate on them and add new gameplay mechanics, to emphasise a particular geopolitical message or force a particular balance of power in the game.

Perhaps because of its connection to war, draughts could not escape being directly reframed as a war game during the World Wars in Britain. The National Army Museum stores two examples of the same draughts game apparently dating from the First World War in its archives (where it is listed as "Decorative checkers") (Anonymous, c. 1914-1918), demonstrating how draughts was tied to war more strongly without adjusting its fundamental rules or form. One of these examples of *Draughts* (I am formatting the name of this specific game / archive object as "*Draughts*" to distinguish it from "draughts", the generic board game and template for other board games in this chapter) is printed on a large, roughly A2 sheet of paper, and the other is a similarly-sized canvas. No manufacturing information or precise date is available.

Both versions depict the same layout. An 8-by-8 checkerboard grid (*Figure 13*) takes up much of the centre, flanked by various illustrations mostly depicting army and navy troops playing draughts, coloured in brown and blue. This is surrounded by a border incorporating images of soldiers and draughts pieces (*Figures 15, 16 and 17*). Set in this border is the game's title, simply "*DRAUGHTS*", and a slogan, "The favourite game of our soldiers in the trenches and our sailors on the sea." Wooden draughts pieces have survived with the board (*Figure 14*); these are simple circular pieces with circular curves and ridges carved into them, resembling the pieces depicted in the board's border without performing any further illustrative work.



Figure 13: Canvas board for Draughts. The title has unfortunately been obscured by the fluorescent lighting in the archive room where this was taken. (Locations: 2001-04-860-1 and 2005-03-40-1, London: National Army Museum. Author's own photo.)

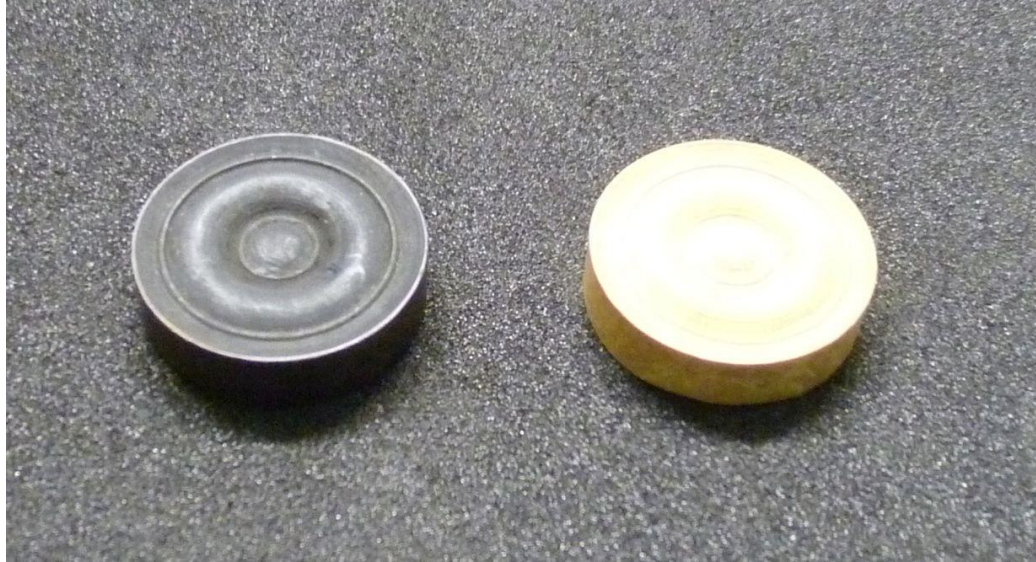


Figure 14: Top and bottom of Draughts pieces. (Locations: 2001-04-860-1 and 2005-03-40-1, London: National Army Museum. Author's own photo.)

No rules survive with either of the boards at the National Army Museum, but there is no reason to suspect that this game is not using a standard set of rules for draughts. Draughts has many different regional versions with their own modifications to the rules, but the version intended here is almost certainly English Draughts, as suggested by the size of the board (some versions of draughts use grids larger than 8x8) and, of course, the country of likely origin. No manufacturing information is available to confirm that the game is of UK origin, but the use of British English and the illustrations of soldiers in British First World War army uniforms suggests that this game was at least intended for a British audience, as well as establishing a First World War timeframe for its publication.

Because the fundamental game of draughts has not apparently been changed or updated in *Draughts*, the work of connecting the board game to a First World War milieu is performed by its paratexts, the caption and illustrations surrounding it. The most prominent of these illustrations, apart from the chequerboard itself, are images of soldiers and sailors playing games of draughts while serving as active

participants in a war. For example, in the lower-left corner, two soldiers in a Scottish regiment are sat down at a draughts board in a trench (*Figure 15*). (The soldiers are most likely Scottish because their uniform features a kilt, patterned socks and a Glengarry bonnet, resembling a sketch of a Highlander infantryman by the military and sporting artist Snaffles (Gordon Highlanders, 2010). The tartan patterns worn by Scottish regiments all differ, making regiments identifiable by their patterns (Scottish Tartans Authority, 2004), but as the pattern worn by these soldiers appears to be a simplified blue diamond pattern rather than a tartan, I think they are wearing generic or imaginary uniforms rather than uniforms that represent a specific regiment.) Behind them, a row of soldiers lines the wall of the trench, aiming over it with their rifles. One rifle is left unattended, presumably belonging to one of the two players. In the distance, a plane is flying over the battlefield. These background details suggest that an active combat situation, or a situation which is expected to escalate to conflict soon, is currently happening, in which case it seems curious that two soldiers would be able to sit down for a game of draughts. The illustration has probably been composed to emphasise the role of soldiers as combatants or fighters in perilous situations, and thus to connect this role with the recreational act of playing draughts.



*Figure 15: Detail of illustration on Draughts board depicting Scottish infantry.
(Locations: 2001-04-860-1 and 2005-03-40-1, London: National Army Museum,
Author's own photo,)*

Opposite this, in the lower-right corner, another illustration performs similar work to couple draughts with the act of war. Three soldiers –an English regiment this

time, judging by their caps and plain uniforms – are crouched behind a bush with an artillery gun (*Figure 16*). Two of these soldiers are poring over a game of draughts laid out on the grass in the foreground; in the back, the third soldier is working with the artillery gun, apparently aiming it over the bush. It appears that the soldiers are deployed in the field in a covered position, which again suggests a scene of combat or of imminent combat; again, though, the soldiers playing draughts are engrossed in the game rather than the battle. In the upper-right corner, meanwhile, two sailors are lying next to a game of draughts, looking very relaxed (*Figure 17*). Above them, the barrels of two large battleship guns are pointing out to sea, towards two approaching battleships on the horizon, while another plane flies overhead. It is difficult to tell from the small foreshortened silhouettes of these distant battleships, but their shape and double masts resemble German dreadnoughts (*Naval Encyclopedia*, 2016). Once again, the scene is very suggestive of an incoming battle. All the draughts-players depicted on the Draughts board, then, play while they are in immediate danger, and thus represent a dual role as game players and fighters in the First World War. A fourth illustration in the upper left of the board is a seascape of a battleship and submarine, rather than a further iteration on the theme of soldiers playing draughts.



*Figure 16: Detail of illustration on Draughts board depicting English artillery.
(Locations: 2001-04-860-1 and 2005-03-40-1, London: National Army Museum.
Author's own photo.)*



Figure 17: Detail of illustration on Draughts board depicting sailors. (Locations: 2001-04-860-1 and 2005-03-40-1, London: National Army Museum. Author's own photo.)

It is fair to speculate that *Draughts* could have been produced for soldiers in the trenches. The version of the board game printed on canvas would be ideal for carrying around, able to be rolled up and stowed away without damaging the

board, and a draughts game would certainly be easier to carry around than other more complex strategy games produced during the First World War. However, I argue that the paratexts in the board indicate that it was (also) aimed at domestic British audiences. The caption, "The favourite game of our soldiers in the trenches and our sailors on the sea," implies some distance from these soldiers — that they are being talked *about*, rather than *to* — and suggests that the manufacturers of *Draughts* wish to appeal to a pro-military audience by reframing draughts as a military pastime. The illustrations militarise draughts further by depicting the game alongside scenes of combat, creating visual similes in which draughts is a comparable pastime or an alternative to shooting or shelling an enemy. Therefore, the caption and illustrations imply, playing *Draughts* is a way to share the experiences of an active British military on the front lines.

The way this militarisation of draughts is performed, however, does not strongly suggest that *Draughts* is comparable to war itself. Compare *Draughts* to *Chase the Enemy* and *The "Strand" War Game*, studied later in this chapter, which both employ specially-designed draughts pieces and boards which overtly represent military units and warzones respectively. *Draughts* does not take the same route; its pieces do not appear to represent anything other than draughtsmen, and there are no modifications to the chequerboard itself. No representations of war have been brought into the gameplay of *Draughts*; rather, it has taken the opposite tack and brought draughts into representations of war.

The primary purpose of *Draughts*' invocation of war, therefore, is to suggest that soldiers play draughts as well as civilians. I believe this is intended to appeal to the support for soldiers on the frontlines by the British public, and to frame playing this version of draughts as an act of empathy for the military. In this way, the classic game of draughts is made to function as a transitional space; the player is invited to play like a soldier, and so draughts becomes an act of popular geopolitics.

Bernazzoli and Flint outline the importance of cultural hegemony to militarism, where the diffusion of militaristic discourse into civil society encourages an acceptance of militarism (Bernazzoli and Flint, 2009: 398). *Draughts* embodies a very mundane form of this, in which draughts as a leisurely pastime is employed as a point of emotional connection between the civilian and the soldier. This point of empathy with the figure of the soldier, intentionally or otherwise, works in tandem with a core argument of militarism that Bernazzoli and Flint identify, that "those who do not support military actions are anti-soldier" (Bernazzoli and Flint, 2009: 401). If that is true, then in a militarist worldview, those who are pro-soldier support military actions. *Draughts* plays on and encourages a sympathetic view of the soldier, and this pro-soldier view serves to naturalise the images of war presented in the illustrations by combining them with soldiers at play. The game of draughts becomes a supportive act for the military, and therefore for the geopolitics of war. This may well not have been what the designers of *Draughts* intended; most likely, they hoped that framing this version of draughts as a military pastime would encourage sales to a pro-war audience. But representation is a key means of naturalising war (Rech *et al.*, 2015: 52-4; Woodward, 2004), and *Draughts* performs this naturalisation by placing playful civil figures into scenes of war.

Chase the Enemy: Hunting the Geopolitical Enemy

Draughts illustrates that even an unmodified form of a classic board game can become emblematic of geopolitical cultures. But some board game designers went further and added new rules and illustrations to draughts so that it would better reflect contemporary wars. The first case study I have of this is *Chase the Enemy (A Game of Thrills)* (Castell Brothers, c. 1940-1944), a board game currently stored in the Edinburgh Museum Collections Centre. No dating or publication information is directly present on the board, but copyright information printed on it describes

the game as a "Pepys Series game," a brand of Castell Brothers. An online database of Pepys card games dates *Chase the Enemy* to 1944 (Retroactive Vintage Games, 2012), whereas Lewin estimates a date of 1940 (Lewin, 2012: 244). This range suggests that the war represented in this game is the Second World War.

Chase the Enemy functions similarly to draughts. The board (*Figure 18*) is a 9x9 chequerboard, with the rules of the game printed around the border. On one half of the board, some of the dark squares feature the name and image of a naval unit; three U-Boats, two "flying boats" (seaplanes), destroyers and cruisers, one aircraft carrier and one battleship. The rules indicate that corresponding pieces are to be placed on these squares at the beginning of the game, but no pieces are available with this copy of the game. On the other half of the board, in the two rows along the far edge, all the dark squares are marked "HARBOUR" apart from one central square, "ALLIED ATTACK" which marks another lost piece's starting position.

Chase the Enemy is intended for two players. One is the "Defence," and must advance the fleet of ships across the board to the Harbour squares where they are safe from the opposing player, the "Attack." Defence pieces move like draughts pieces, only able to move one square forward on dark squares. The attacking player only controls the Allied Attack piece, but this moves "exactly as a King in Draughts" to quote the rules – it may move up to three spaces in any direction over dark squares and is the only piece able to capture other pieces, by leaping over them as in draughts. A round of *Chase the Enemy* ends when the Defence player is unable to move any more pieces forward, at which point any ships not on Harbour squares are considered shipwrecks. Both players play a round as Attack and Defence, and the player who salvaged the highest total value of ships on Harbours (determined by a scoring system that values the Battleship at 7 points, the Aircraft Carrier at 6 points, and so on down to the U-Boat at 2 points) is the winner.

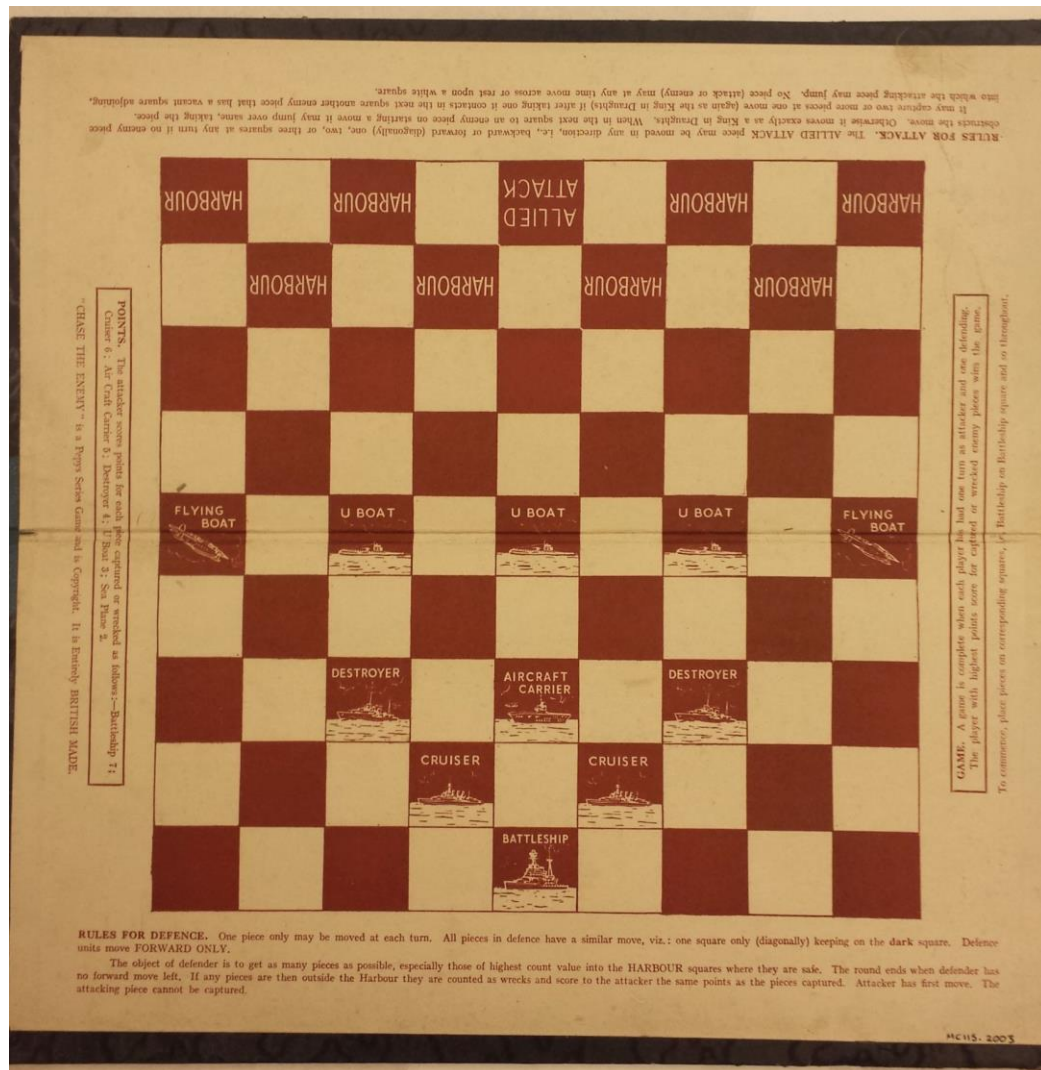


Figure 18: Board for Chase the Enemy. (Location: MC1152003 box 20, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo.)

The balancing of this game, which empowers the Attack side and endangers Defence pieces, suggests that *Chase the Enemy* draws influence from both draughts and a specific genre of strategy game called a "hunt game". In the standard hunt game template, one player has many pieces, representing a team of hunters, and the other has four or less, representing the prey; the hunters aim to attack or trap the hunted player's pieces (Murray, 1952: 98). *Chase the Enemy*

reverses the quantities of pieces so that the hunter, the Allied Attack, is outnumbered, but in this it is not unique among hunt games. The traditional British game *Fox and Geese* is similarly structured; in this hunt game, one player as a single fox must take as many of their opponent's geese as possible by jumping capture (indicating more of the influence of draughts). As *Fox and Geese* was widely played in the 20th century it could well have influenced *Chase the Enemy* directly (Murray, 1952: 103); in fact, Murray discusses a very similar variant of *Fox and Geese* played on the chessboard, in which pieces move diagonally and do not capture (Murray, 1952: 106). However, in *Fox and Geese* the geese have a route to victory; they may defeat the fox by hemming it in so that it is unable to move or capture (Murray, 1952: 103). In *Chase the Enemy*, it is specified that when no legal moves are left, any Defence ships not on a harbour square are wrecked and do not count towards the player's score. Thus, hemming the Attack player in only leads to the loss of the ships used to trap them, and the most successful strategy for the Defence is to flee to the harbour squares and not try to attack.

To understand *Chase the Enemy*'s geopolitics, first the two opposing sides must be identified. This is simple enough, as the Defence's U-Boats suggest that it is a German fleet, and the phrase "Allied Attack" points towards an Allied army being the attacker. This is a very broad set-up to establish the two sides of the naval battle seen here – I initially misidentified this game as a First World War game because there is nothing to indicate which World War is being represented here, other than the fact that the Pepys Series of games didn't exist until 1937 (Retroactive Vintage Games, 2012). *Chase the Enemy* may represent any naval battle between Germany and the Allies.

In this light, the propagandistic qualities of *Chase the Enemy* become apparent. The Allied Attack piece is powerful – it may cover large distances in one move, may attack without fear of reprisal, and may destroy boat, submarine and plane alike. The German defence, meanwhile, is defenceless, and can only flee. The mismatch

between the eleven Defence units and eight safe Harbour squares means that, if the Allied Attack is played aggressively, over a quarter of the fleet is going to be destroyed in that round no matter what happens. There are no advantages to certain ships that one might reasonably expect, either; the U-Boat cannot move under other ships, for example.

In *Chase the Enemy*, then, draughts has been unbalanced to permit one all-powerful Allied unit to destroy several lesser German units. A narrative of each round has been enforced in which a single outnumbered Allied unit overcomes what should be overwhelming odds to demolish a fragile fleet, and the question posed by the game is not "who will win, the Allies or the Germans," but "which player can lose the least badly as the Germans?" This is similar to many of the First World War-era track games studied earlier in which the loss of the Germans is treated as an inevitability, such as *The Way to Berlin* and *Dash to Berlin*, but in *Chase the Enemy*, Attack players directly control an Allied naval unit (presumably what the Allied Attack piece represents) and must use tactics to defeat many German units by their own skill rather than being at the mercy of a die roll as in track games.

Such game design anticipates the modern-day tendency of video games to cast the player as a single character defeating or killing an overwhelming number of enemies, and reflects some of the critical geographical critiques of such games. These games, particularly modern US-centric war games, "can provide a (heroic) experience of winning a war single-handedly" (Power, 2007: 286) as the player, in an individualised identity as a (usually) western soldier, overcomes many enemy bodies representative of a collective geopolitical enemies – "a 'complex and nuanced us' versus a 'simplified them'" (Shaw, 2010: 796, citing Sisler, 2008). The concern of geographers and other critical commentators is that "the simplification of [other] cultures and [war] history is itself a form of violence" (Power, 2007: 286), enacted when games pit a heroic western protagonist against an "other"

comprised of essentially cannon-fodder without any concession to the morality and "tragic responsibility" of killing and violence (Shaw, 2010: 797). Deck draws a direct connection between war video games and propaganda, as games utilise these amoral narratives to contextualise the player's actions (Deck, 2004: 10, cited in Power, 2007: 285).

Video games establish a geopolitical order and a militarist ethos by establishing an enemy and entreating the player to kill them without often exploring the morality of this violence. Compare with *Chase the Enemy*; here, the objective for Allied players is to sink as many German ships, presumably carrying anonymous and invisible (at the scale of this board game) troops, as possible. They are flagged as "The Enemy" by the title of the game, since the Allied Attack is the piece which "Chase[s]" (or hunts, to return to the "hunt game" terminology); the naval units cannot affect the Attack piece by chasing it. The violence of this game is rendered invisible by the nature of the board game; captured pieces are removed from the board as a practical act, to keep track of which pieces remain in play, but this has the effect of removing wreckage and bodies from the board. This argument applies to almost every other board game with a capturing mechanic but is especially egregious when the pieces represent people at war and the game is scored by the number of pieces remaining in play at the end of each round.

This comparison between board and video games offers some insight into the role of the German defence in *Chase the Enemy*. In a single-player video game, the collectivised "simplified other" consists of relatively simple digital avatars controlled by computer code; they exist to perhaps offer some form of reflexive challenge for the player but ultimately die from the player's bullets. But the Defence in *Chase the Enemy* is controlled by both players for one round each, competing to see who can rescue the most ships. The Defence player can and probably will offer active resistance against the Attack player in order to score as highly as possible to win the game. This troubles the propagandist narrative of

Chase the Enemy in which the Allied Attack overwhelms the German navy with impunity, since if the Germans can fight back against the Allies, the strength of the Allies as inscribed in the rules is undercut.

Two features of *Chase the Enemy* counteract the agency of the Defence player in order to preserve its pro-Allied narrative. Firstly, the Defence player for each round is always designated by the title as "the Enemy," as opposed to the Attack player. This naming convention removes ambiguity and establishes the moral superiority of the Allied Attack piece. The labelling of players as "Enemy" has been recreated in multiplayer video games where teams of human players battle, most prominently *America's Army*, in which opposing teams always appear to each other as terrorists, and to themselves as American army personnel; the game's project director Colonel Casey Wardynski explains that this is "so we can bind both teams to the value structures and rules of war and engagement the Army operates under. If we let kids elect to play 'bad guys' [...] the point would be lost." (Huntemann, 2010: 181). *America's Army's* purpose is to paint the army in a positive light to encourage recruitment among young people (Stahl, 2010: 106; Huntemann, 2010: 179), and so it takes pains to avoid depicting the Army in an antagonistic role against the player. In *Chase the Enemy*, being the "Enemy" is enforced by the rules mandating that the players switch roles after one round, but they are cast against the Allies, implicitly heroic by not being "the Enemy," by being on the same side in the Second World War (the game boasts that it is "entirely BRITISH made"), and by being the more active role in the game, able to capture as well as move. This is *Chase the Enemy's* second feature which downplays the agency of the Defence: unlike the Allies, the Germans can only flee and try to salvage what they can. They have absolutely no capacity to fight back, meaning that the Allied Attack remains the strongest and most capable piece on the board, and meaning that the pro-Allied narrative of the game cannot be disrupted by whatever happens over the course of the game.

Thus, a ludic representation of war which tries to marry tactics and pro-Allied propaganda ultimately becomes a friendly competition of who can destroy the most Germans in a situation which would more realistically suggest overwhelming odds and mortal peril. A narrative is written in which the Allies can and must destroy a German fleet, and the moral challenges that this may raise are elided by the text of the game and made invisible by the medium. Many of the strategy games discussed in this thesis offer a relatively even depiction of battles in which both sides, whatever nation they represent, are evenly matched and may win by exercising superior tactical choices to the opponent. *Chase the Enemy* is a rare exception; it employs a hunt game structure to establish a nakedly geopolitical message about the superiority of the Allies over Germany, and shows how a game as simple as draughts can become propagandistic with only a handful of changes to its underlying rules.

The "Strand" War Game: "The Draughts-Board of Europe"?

The previous section demonstrates that draughts can be modified into a hunt game to establish military superiority. But can draughts be modified in such a way that it argues the superiority of military units without unbalancing the power relationship between the two rival players or armies? I now step back chronologically to the First World War to study a game which is more complex and ambitious than the chequerboard games studied so far.

The "Strand" War Game (*The Strand Magazine*, c. 1914) is a draughts-like board game produced by the *Strand Magazine* around 1914, and is of great interest in how it expands on draughts and militarism without the same overt patriotism as *Chase the Enemy*. Copies of this game are located in the Edinburgh Museum Collections Centre (the version I studied) and the V&A Museum of Childhood (V&A Collections, 2017c).

The board (*Figure 19*) is a 12x12 checkerboard grid superimposed over a map of western Europe. The map is scaled so that the bottom-left square of the board corresponds with Bordeaux, and the top-right with Berlin; these squares are marked with heavy borders, as are the regions surrounding them (marking the areas in which players place their pieces to begin the game). Also marked are four "fortified squares" (or "forts"), in either red, white and blue borders (one of these forts corresponds to Paris) or yellow and black borders. The game uses wooden counters (*Figure 20*) with paper illustrations glued onto them, depicting British, French and German soldiers. The Allied soldiers are bordered by red, white and blue stripes (matching two of the forts, and probably doubling as the colours of the British and French flags) and the German soldiers are marked with yellow and black borders (matching the other two forts). A mixture of infantry, cavalry and artillery troops are depicted.

The rules describe a game which resembles a more elaborate variant of draughts. The ultimate objective is different – players control either the Allies or Germany and aim to use their soldiers to occupy the capital city square of the other player, Bordeaux or Berlin – but, as in draughts, pieces may only move on shaded squares, and must capture enemy pieces when they are able to. The rules outline movement and capture rules for different pieces: infantry troops may move and capture one square sideways or forwards, but not backwards; cavalry may move up to two squares sideways or forwards, but only capture one square away in those directions; and artillery guns may move one square sideways, forwards and backwards, and may jump over vacant squares to capture enemies two squares away. If a piece is in one of its own forts, it may not be captured except by artillery; it may not enter an opposing fort unless it is artillery.



Figure 19: The "Strand" War Game. (Location: MC1260 boxes 8 & 64, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Source: V&A Collections, 2017c.)



Figure 20: Playing pieces for the "Strand" War Game. (Location: MC1260 boxes 8 & 64, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo.)

The obvious resemblance to draughts, in combination with the cheap materials used, suggests to me that this game was made quickly and cheaply by the *Strand Magazine*. The *Strand* most famously published short fiction — it was the original publisher of many Sherlock Holmes studies, for example. But the magazine also had an interest in chess, publishing many articles and puzzles in its time. I could not find the "*Strand*" *War Game* advertised within the *Strand's* pages, but an interesting article from about the same time, "The Chess-Board of Europe" (Watts, 1915), explores "the likeness of chess to war." The author annotates a game of chess as a metaphor for the present war, comparing the White player's aggressive early use of a knight to the German occupation of Liège, for example. The chess game ends in the Black player's victory and the war was still ongoing, so the article becomes a fantasy after about 20 turns in which the loss of Antwerp turns out to be a ruse for the Black side Allies to outflank and rout the White side Germans, ending in the "capitulation of Berlin and capture of the Kaiser with the whole of the German Military Headquarters Staff." (Watts, 1915: 119). This shows that even strategy games were not immune to the narrative propaganda that I discussed in the previous chapter on track games. More importantly, though, it demonstrates alongside the board game that the *Strand* magazine perceived war as a game. By comparing war to chess and draughts, a worldview is put forward in which war is a playful battle of wits, which can be understood and solved by applying superior tactics. I circle back to this text later in the analysis, but for now the *War Game's* geopolitics must be explored.

The V&A Museum of Childhood dates the "*Strand*" *War Game* to 1916 (V&A Collections, 2017b), but I believe a 1914 date is more accurate. My first reason for this is that the depictions of French soldiers show them wearing blue shirts and red trousers. This was the traditional uniform of the French soldier at the outset of the war, but its high visibility against machine guns contributed to heavy losses during the early war (Tuchman, 2000; Woodward, 2015: 312) These uniforms would be replaced with more muted colours later in the war (as depicted in Gilbert, 1994:

Figure 48). If the *War Game* was trying to depict a contemporary version of the First World War, the bright red and blue outfits sported by French soldiers in this game dates it to the early stages of the war. Corroborating this, my second reason is that Italy is depicted in this game as a neutral country. This is a similar argument to the one I used to date *The Way to Berlin*; as in that game, countries in the "*Strand*" *War Game* appear to be colour-coded according to their involvement in the war. Green seems to represent neutral countries, including the Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy. Italy would join the war against the Central Powers in May 1915 (Gilbert, 1994: 165-6), making the V&A's date of 1916 seem less likely than a publication date nearer to the start of the war.

The green neutral countries draw attention to a curious separation between the "*Strand*" *War Game*'s gameplay and the geopolitics of the First World War. Pieces are, as the rules declare, restricted to shaded squares on the checkerboard, but these cover the whole map, including the neutral countries. If the play area represents Europe, this means that both the Allied and the German forces can theoretically violate these countries' neutrality by walking through them. This contrasts with other war games like *Dash to Berlin*, in which German violation of Belgian neutrality, and associated war crimes, was integrated into the game as a reason to fight back against Germany. Belgium may be a special case due to the British defensive pact with Belgium shortly before Germany invaded it to attack France, but this example still illustrates the point that the "*Strand*" *War Game* is not attentive to the geopolitics of neutrality and territory. This is in contrast to the *Strand*'s ludic geopolitics in text, in which the invasion of Belgium was integrated into its chess metaphor (Watts, 1915).

Indeed, this war game barely integrates the geography of Europe into its gameplay at all. Since troops are free to move anywhere on the board, cavalry and artillery can be sent over mountains or into the sea if the player likes. Clearly, the "*Strand*" *War Game*'s board represents two different spaces. One is a background

topographical/political map of Europe, which invokes the First World War and contemporary geopolitics. The other is the space in which the game is actually played, an abstract flat field like draughts or chess which only happens to synchronise with the map at Bordeaux, Berlin (in the starting corners for each player) and Paris (one of the fortified squares), and bears no relation to it elsewhere. This represents a battlefield of a much smaller scale than Europe, because the units the player works with are individual regiments or soldiers which make up a full army. (We can probably assume the abstract battlefield is not to the same scale as Europe, because this would mean that an artillery unit capturing two squares away is able to "shoot" over almost the entire length of Switzerland, about 230km – this seems like too much.) The appearance of this game suggests a grand strategic battle over Europe, and the designers have clearly tried to imply this by placing key squares over important cities, but in fact the game is a tactical engagement between individual units. The game can make a claim to geopolitical discourses without requiring a close understanding of military strategy or the current state of the war. This allows players to play at war and at commanding armies without the game tying itself to the individual events and battles of the war, as games like *The Way to Berlin* attempted to do with its integration of important forts into the tracks to Berlin.

The representation of space may be more disconnected from geopolitics than it appears at first, but *The "Strand" War Game* expresses contemporary militarism in a more subtle manner: its representation of military units, particularly field artillery. Unlike a normal draughts board where every square is supposedly equal (ignoring the mathematics of which squares may be better to control), forts in the *War Game* confer clear advantages, so that it becomes important to control these areas of strategic importance. But artillery and only artillery may break these forts, which, along with their freedom of movement and capturing capabilities in comparison to infantry and cavalry, makes artillery clearly the most powerful unit in the game.

This reflects the status of artillery as a relatively devastating technology of war, especially at its outset. Artillery presented major challenges to fortress and battery construction, especially newly-developed high-explosive shells which required reinforced, far more expensive forts (Strachan, 2001: 181). It afforded the ability to kill huge amounts of soldiers with relative ease, as the French army learned to their infantry's cost during their failed offensives in the Battle of the Frontiers (Tuchman, 2000: 254). By 1915, it had become the "weapon of choice for all armies", accounting for more than half of British casualties on the Western Front (Woodward, 2005: 313). But the limitations of artillery became apparent as the First World War moved into trench warfare; Stevenson notes that they were "of little use against entrenchments, especially as in 1914 most field gun shells were not high explosive but shrapnel, scattering fragments that mowed down infantry in the open but lacked the blast effect needed against earthworks" (Stevenson, 2004: 184). He also notes that artillery was inaccurate, slow to set up (giving the targets time to notice and prepare themselves), and inflexible for many battle plans (Stevenson, 2004: 184-5). None of these limitations are modelled in *The "Strand" War Game*; artillery pieces are not invulnerable but cannot be defended against and are difficult to capture (as attempting to do so would put the capturing piece within the artillery's range of attack). The freedom that artillery pieces have to take fortifications suggests that trench warfare is not being modelled here, and that this war game instead represents an early- or pre-First World War view of battle in which artillery is the most devastating war technology available.

So in *The "Strand" War Game*, the technology of militarism takes centre stage; like the "Allied Attack" of *Chase the Enemy*, it is presented as more powerful than anything else in war, the most active and effectual piece. This recalls the tendency of modern militarism towards "technofetishism." Stahl describes this as "the worship of high-tech weaponry" in which "military hardware [is] at the centre of the television war drama" (Stahl, 2010: 28). Military technology becomes a visual motif for the power and potential of military activity. Artillery was not a new

technology to the First World War, but in *The "Strand" War Game* it is clearly privileged as the most powerful and effective unit, with none of the drawbacks that would face artillery in the battlefield. Indeed, its power is strengthened by arbitrary movement rules; there is no clear reason why artillery units can move backwards and yet infantry and cavalry units can't, except to enforce the usefulness and flexibility of artillery. Stahl also suggests that part of technofetishism is that the worshipped technology is tied to the clean war in that it is "inherently more ethical as a means of destruction" (Stahl, 2010: 28, citing Askoy and Robbins, 1992). Years of trench warfare and ineffective bombardments would prove this not to be the case for artillery, but in *The "Strand" War Game*, just like *Chase the Enemy* and all other games with capturing mechanics, the taking of a piece removes it from the board so that the players play at a "clean war" rather than being confronted with the violent effects of artillery and other forms of warfare on bodies.

This idea of the clean war in ludic geopolitics seems to have appealed to the *Strand*. Its article on the "Chess-Board of Europe" (Watts, 1915) works to sanitise the First World War by comparing it to the clean, abstract and entertaining chessboard, before then constructing a fantasy of imminent Allied victory which does not have to engage with the violence of war or the likelihood that the Allied campaign could go catastrophically wrong. *The "Strand" War Game* performs similar work in the board game medium. It uses the structure of draughts to create a war game in which the superior use of military technology, rather than the terrain, is the surest road to victory; its geopolitics are barely related to the First World War itself or the territories in which it was fought, but instead establish a basic technological militarism.

It is striking that, unlike *Chase the Enemy*, this war game does not use its rules to represent one side as more powerful than the other; as the Allies and the Germans have the same units and as the checkerboard is symmetrical, the two armies

should be evenly matched, victory depending on the tactical ability of the player. Theories of propaganda and nationalism do not stick to *The "Strand" War Game* as easily as to other British war games, leaving the representation and movement of the military itself as the primary outlet of militarism in the game. This war game, then, serves as an example of how board games can express geopolitics and militarism in ways that other, less interactive media cannot. By being forced to employ artillery units as carefully as possible to use their power to gain the upper hand in this rendition of the First World War, players must accept and engage with a technofetishist perspective of military power.

The New Game of Kopje: Tactics and Topography

Draughts can be presented as a form of military support (*Draughts*), or it may be modified in the service of nationalism (*Chase the Enemy*) or technofetishism (*The "Strand" War Game*). There is one more game which appears to be draughts-related in a significantly modified form, *The New Game of Kopje*. Again, I take a chronological step back here, this time to the Second Boer War, due to increasing complexity in my analysis; in this case, *the New Game of Kopje* can only be studied in an incomplete form, without the intended rules that explain its form. In this following section I will use draughts and other games to reconstruct its basic content and purpose and suggest how it uses geography to encourage players to perform as Boer War tactician.

The New Game of Kopje (F. H. Ayres, 1900) is a board game currently stored in the V&A Museum of Childhood (V&A Collections, 2017a), which estimates its date of publication at around 1900. This game was published by F. H. Ayres. Only the board and some of the counters, kept in a small box marked "Kopje" (which seems to be part of the original game), survive; there are no rules present with the game.

The board (*Figure 21*) is a large (roughly A3-sized) rectangle of folded card, coated in blue paper on the back with "The New Game of KOPJE" embossed in gold. The board itself is beige and depicts a series of square spaces in black outlines, arranged in tracks like an elaborate Hopscotch game. At the top of the board, marked by the word "KOPJE", a loop of squares form the perimeter of a 5x5 grid, with single-square outcrops at the top-left and top-right. From the bottom-centre of this loop, which is marked by a circle set within one of the squares, a two-space-wide trail zigzags down the length of the board, opening into a small 3x3 grid. The bottom of the board is a row of 11 squares which overlaps this 3x3 space.

Below the bottom row of the play area on the board, some publishing information is printed: "F. H. AYRES, LONDON" and "Registered No 357944 S.A." F. H. Ayres was a toy and games company better known for its rocking horses, amalgamated into Slazenger during the Second World War (Games Board, 2011. Any online search for F. H. Ayres primarily returns rocking horse collectors' websites). The registration number is probably a design registration, which corresponds with the register of designs with the Board of Trade Patent Office for 1900 (National Archives, 2017).

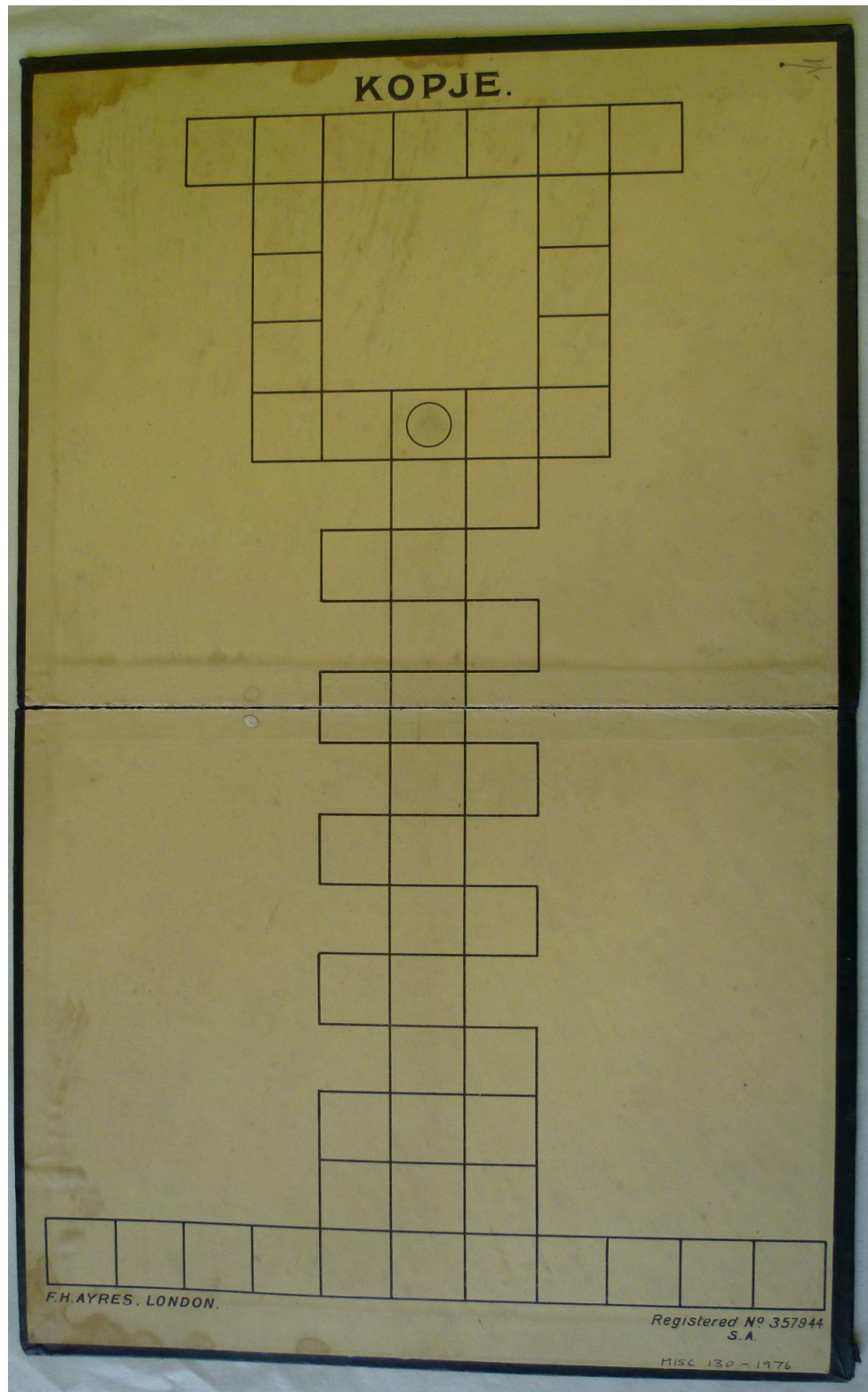


Figure 21: The New Game of Kopje. (Location: MISC.130-1976, London, V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)

Some of the counters (*Figure 22*) are wooden discs with circular designs engraved in them, identical to the pieces used in draughts, particularly the *Draughts* game studied at the National Army Museum. Other counters are plainer wooden discs, which look like they were made from a different type of wood and/or with a less smooth finishing process to the *Draughts*-like counters. I believe these plainer discs are cheap replacement counters for lost pieces; alternatively, the plainer counters could be the originals, but as there are fewer of these than the "nicer" pieces, a significant number of these would have to have gone missing over the years. (A white plastic counter has made its way into the game's box as well, which must be another replacement if it was donated with Kopje. The plastic counter almost certainly does not date from 1900.)



Figure 22: Example pieces stored with the New Game of Kopje. (Location: MISC.130-1976, London, V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)

The rules of the game are missing as far as I know; they were not available with the version of the game I studied. Some time after I studied the *New Game of Kopje*, however, I discovered an article about the game in the *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, written because the manufacturer was based locally. The article explains the premise as follows: "Seven men have to hold a kopje against the attack of twelve. The game is won by advancing four of the attacking party into the centre of the kopje." (*Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 1900). There are 19 white pieces and 6 black pieces with the version I studied, suggesting that the black side is the defending side, and confirming that pieces have been replaced or mixed up with another game.

A kopje is a small hill within a flat area, common to South African physical geography. This and the publication date, 1900, indicate that this game is inspired by the Second Boer War, in which the British Empire fought two Boer free states in South Africa. Kopjes would have made for ideal strategic positions in this war; on a battlefield of flat land, the height advantage would have been easily defensible and would have aided cannons and artillery. Some battles of the Second Boer War, such as the Battle of Spion Kop, were struggles for such positions (Balson, 2006), and Rudyard Kipling's poem about this war, "Two Kopjes," depicts the kopje as a "natural fort" and a potentially treacherous position as a metaphor for the Boer people (Kipling, 1903).

The New Game of Kopje's unique board structure is supposed to represent a kopje. The looping track at the top of the board may be the top of the kopje, a loop around the summit, and the thin track leading to the top from the bottom may be a bottleneck for pieces climbing the kopje, to simulate the difficulty of climbing a fortified kopje against an opposing army. The loop at the top of the board allows a player controlling that space to move pieces away from the bottleneck to reserve for later, simulating the relative safety of the kopje fort. If these assumptions are true, it seems safe to also assume that at the start of the game, the black defensive

pieces occupy the top of the board, or the summit of the kopje, and the white attacking pieces occupy the bottom row of spaces, the foot of the hill. The black player fortifies the kopje with its limited pieces, and the white side have the advantage of numbers but a tactical disadvantage as they are bottlenecked climbing up the kopje, behind which some black pieces can hide in reserve. The square marked by a circle serves no obvious function but is probably the checkpoint which four attackers must reach or pass to occupy the kopje.

Throughout the thesis so far, I have noted disconnects between game boards as maps and as spaces of play. Board games visually represent the theatres of world war, yet their contents treat the battlefield as a flat square plane. *The New Game of Kopje*, uniquely, reverses this relationship. The board is visually plain, yet is shaped to represent the topography of a kopje. The players' navigation of this topography, and their fight to control the space of the kopje according to the game's objective, echoes the linkages between geography and the military on a small scale; by climbing the kopje or defending key bottlenecks, players emulate the importance of cartography and topography to war generals and tacticians, such as the use of scouting by American generals to compose rough terrain maps in the Revolutionary War (Black, 2009: 53). *The New Game of Kopje* requires players to interact with the physical geography of militarism, in addition to its political geography.

This board game geography reconstructs the strategy element of *The New Game of Kopje*, but its tactics, its specific movement rules, are still a mystery. However, I think this game is probably inspired by draughts. Its materiality indicates this — the circular design of its wooden counters resembles the design of traditional draughts pieces, as seen in the *Draughts* game in the National Army Museum — but so does a close inspection of the game's victory condition and the kopje's shape. Since the attacking player wins by getting four of their pieces into a certain location, there is probably an outcome where they lose as well, by not having four

pieces available; that is, an outcome where the defensive player can win, rather than putting off losing for as long as possible. This implies that the defensive player can capture attacking pieces to remove them from the board. If this capturing mechanism is by moving a piece onto the same square as an opposing piece, as in chess, then the game becomes trivial: the attacking player can trade pieces with the defending player, outnumber them, and overrun the kopje; or, if defending pieces are immune from capture, the defending player can blockade the top with a handful of pieces to take any attacker that comes close. I think a draughts-like capturing mechanism is most likely, where pieces jump over other pieces to remove them. This explains the odd zig-zagging path up the board to the kopje, which provides alcoves for both attacking and defending pieces to avoid capture.

However, there must be different movement rules in place to the diagonal-only movement of draughts, as the loop of track spaces at the top of the board and the row of spaces at the bottom requires orthogonal movement to pass from one space to the next, suggesting that at least some pieces are not restricted to diagonals. The lack of a chequerboard pattern, used in draughts to mark the squares on which players can legally move, also implies this. The movement used in *The New Game of Kopje* may be closer to that of a track game, as it is reminiscent of the examples of branching track games studied by Murray. These ancient games employed multiple interconnecting tracks of spaces, gave players multiple pieces, and involved capture mechanics, as well as spaces on which pieces were immune from being captured (Murray, 1952: 140). (This offers an alternative explanation for the circle on the game board — this space could confer immunity from capturing pieces, judging by the comparison with Murray's track games and the use of similar "safe" squares as fortifications in the more open "*Strand*" *War Game*.) In using this track game movement, the *New Game of Kopje* evokes the games of the first analysis chapter, which depicted armies marching inexorably across space towards their goal, but this has been subverted by a closer attention to the physicality of space, adding a tactical dimension to this form of movement.

This is as far as I can reconstruct the *New Game of Kopje*, and there are still some unexplained aspects of the game (for example, there are probably some restrictions on piece movement to stop the defending player clustering their pieces in front of the kopje to block the attacker). But I have demonstrated that this game is a tactical game based on the strategic geography of the Second Boer War in which one team of pieces defends a kopje and the other team of pieces attempts to take it. Without further paratexts being available, I cannot discuss how Boers and Britons are represented in relation to each other in this game in the same way as I could compare the Allies and Germany in *Chase the Enemy* and *The "Strand" War Game*. However, the lack of references (at least on the board) to any specific engagement of the Second Boer War implies that the battle represented in this game is a generalisation of similar battles for kopjes in the War. And in this generalisation, more than in other chequerboard games, geography is fundamental; *The New Game of Kopje* is an asymmetrical hunt game like *Chase the Enemy*, but in this variant of draughts, the objective is to capture space, not other pieces.

I think a comparison to the National Army Museum's *Draughts* board is appropriate here. *Draughts* draws its geopolitical power from elevating draughts to a symbol of military support; here, although no representations of soldiers are visible except in an abstract form as draughts pieces, play is structured around a scenario designed to resemble a Boer War skirmish. The setting of a tactically-important outpost, the awkward shape of the terrain of the board and the asymmetrical arrangement of armies invites players to think critically about how to move around the environment to best preserve their pieces. *The New Game of Kopje*, then, uses the small-scale geopolitics of capturing strategically-important landscape features to ultimately return this chapter to a key argument about war games and militarism, that they encourage players to try on a soldier identity (as tactician, in this game), "a nexus of the militarization of cultural space" where modern war is uncritically recreated for leisure (Stahl, 2010: 92). This argument

applies to all the war games studied here so far, but whereas previous case studies have taken place on arbitrary tracks or abstract chequerboards, *The New Game of Kopje* is the first to truly integrate a military geography of war into the geopolitics of playing at contemporary wars.

Discussion: The God-strategist?

This chapter of the analysis adds complexity to the geopolitics of board games. The games of my first chapter were united by the fact that players did not have free choice of movement; pre-determined board game narratives were played out by random chance through die rolls, making these games largely based on luck rather than (or as well as) skill. In the games studied in this chapter, player decisions and tactics become far more important to the performance of ludic geopolitics.

All the games here use chequerboards or the structure of draughts to disseminate their geopolitical or militaristic discourses. The specific version of *Draughts* studied earlier in this chapter uses epitexts, its illustrations, to present itself as a war game and encourage a sympathetic view of soldiers to public audiences as well as the soldiers who may have played the game in the trenches. *The "Strand" War Game* expands on the basic rules of draughts to produce a simple model of the First World War's Western Front which foregrounds militarism and the technologies of war, while *Chase the Enemy* alters draughts to become a hunt game in order to recreate the simplistic anti-German discourses seen in Snakes-and-Ladders-style games. *The New Game of Kopje* is the most distinct from draughts, moving away from the chequerboard to establish a new board space inspired by the terrain of South Africa, and thus encouraging a collapse of the transitional space between players, games and war by allowing players to simulate a Boer War skirmish in draughts form.

What really unifies these games, however, is an increased emphasis on the player's ability to form and execute strategies to win. Both players in a game of draughts, or *Chase the Enemy* and so on, have absolute vision and control over the abstract chequerboards or grid-like battlefields on which miniature wars are played out. I have referred to such a perspective as an officer role; that is, the player is implicitly in the role of a military strategist, their bird's-eye view of the board-as-map and their ability to direct pieces allowing them to out-manoeuver their opponent's army on the battlefield. Yarwood argues something very similar in his study of miniaturisation in wargames, granting the player a "panoptic gaze" over space as if they were a general (Yarwood, 2015: 657). I have also made mention in my methodological chapter of board games as tactile objects; although much of my analysis has been visual, board game pieces are made to be mobile, to be picked up and set down. These two facets of war board games — their tactility and the abilities of the player — synthesise to provide an experience of geopolitics which is perhaps unique to the board game.

Let me return to the literature on video games one more time. Bos's research on video games uses an ethnographical approach to examine the sensory impacts of video games. These games use technology to provide the visual, auditory and tactile experience unique to computers. For example, first-person shooters use "haptic feedback," referring to electronics inside video game controllers that can "rumble" in a manner easily felt by the player; if, say, an explosion occurs within the game near to the player's character, the controller may rumble violently as a tactile substitute for the impact of explosions in real life (Bos, 2018: 54). This haptic feedback helps to collapse the affective transitional space between the player and their embodiment within the game.

Board games cannot provide this same feedback. The board cannot rumble with each blow an army suffers; the players cannot feel like they are in the thick of battle from their top-down perspective. However, board games are tactile in a far

more subtle way. I have argued that the board game piece is mobile in two different senses: one, that the piece is a representation of an army or soldier and moves across space, in contrast to the trench warfare of real war at this time; two, that the piece is an independent object which is moved with the board, moved across the board, and perhaps lost other successive play sessions. So the soldier-as-piece is an object to be moved and a representation of a moving body. What this means is that the player who can touch and hold a piece not only controls that object; they control that body.

Players move bodies across board-game space. They also move the board itself, perhaps building this space in certain board games such as *Little Wars*. The board game rules decide how these bodies move, and the players control the bodies in these specific ways or devise their own rules of movement. The players do not just play at strategist; by their absolute visual domination and tactical control over these miniature spaces of war, they are placed in God roles.

What this implies for geopolitical representation and militarism is the degree of responsibility that players have for their fictionalised armies. Unlike a real strategist, who might have to attend to matters of morale and logistics and physical ability as they strategise, the player is in absolute control of their soldiers. What happens in the game, as in any board game like chess or draughts, is the result of the player's ability to negotiate the mutually-agreed rules of the game in a more cunning way than their opponent.

This is a new perspective on the cleanliness of the board game war. How does the medium benefit the player-as-God? By not confronting the player with the corpses created by their decisions, the player's ability and the institution of war are both unchallenged. Soldiers are teleported by the player's hand to where they ought to be, unable to express dissent but also free of the constraints of logistics, of supplying food and ammunition and other resources.

This refers to games where the player has a free choice of action. What about the track games discussed earlier, where the player is at the mercy of a die roll? These, too, avoid challenging the player and militarism in any substantial way. Corpses may be unavoidable in some games except by pure luck, but the player's goal is always just a matter of time; given enough die rolls, every player will make their way to the end of the line. It is never in question that Berlin will fall during a First World War game, or that the players will survive air raids during a Second World War game; the track game merely asks which player will be the luckiest.

This makes draughts and the chequerboard a natural fit for war games which place the players in total and responsible control of war. It is possibly convenient for designers to use an existing game structure to build their war game around rather than fabricate entirely new gameplay mechanisms and rules, but it is also convenient for the player. If the player has some basic knowledge of draughts, or the ways in which board game pieces generally move over a board game grid, using draughts as a base for war gaming allows the player to easily adapt to the waging of playful war. A player who is absolutely responsible for the movement of an army in a fictionalised war, but who loses because of their unfamiliarity with the rules of the war, accidentally represents an army marching to its death, a shocking representation of war no matter how clean and non-violent the board game appears. Using the familiar structures and tropes of classic war games like draughts, chess and other chequerboard games helps the player and their army to bridge this gap between death-by-inexperience and reasonable strategic competence, and so the representations of geopolitics and militarism within the war game become less implicitly confrontationally violent and more palatable.

So draughts-like games use the structure of draughts to present a clean and palatable war, unlikely to be subverted or disrupted by the player's failure. But what happens when board game designers model geopolitics in new and unique ways? What of representations which require new ways of modelling and moving

through spaces and geopolitical places? The next chapter deals with original games with more complex rules. Some of these move away from the chequerboard or grid and present players with new ways of navigating ludic war zones; others complexify the role of strategy introduced in this chapter by introducing guesswork and incomplete information, jeopardising the player's control over war by reintroducing their capacity to not know everything about what the other player is doing.

Strategy Gaming and New Mechanisms

The previous chapters have dealt with "classic" game types – track games inspired by *Snakes and Ladders* and its predecessors, and chequerboard games which borrow from draughts. The board games in these chapters synthesise the tropes of these game types with representations of various geopolitical actors in order to simulate a particular perspective on geopolitics; track games act as illustrations of the inevitable victory of Britain, and draughts is experimented with to represent new technologies or new spaces of battle.

But British board game designers of the early 20th century did not limit themselves to these game types. As they explored various facets of geopolitics and wars, they devised new forms of gameplay to suit the narratives of geopolitics that their representations of board games created. The rules and limitations of these war games had to be designed specifically to explore whatever concept the board game was about, and to prevent players from straying too far from this concept. These new forms of gameplay require players to negotiate a set of rules delineating how they can interact with the pieces of a board game, and develop a strategy and a set of tactics for moving or utilising their pieces and outmanoeuvring their opponent(s) to achieve a set victory condition. The resulting games are strategy games, just as the chequerboard games of the previous chapter were strategy games, but these are original game designs in which rules specially tailored to the board can operate as a method of simulating or representing geopolitics. However, when I speak of strategy games and their geopolitics giving greater "agency" to players, it must be remembered that this agency only extends as far as these new rules allow; indeed, as Ash's identification of the "limited ethology" of games (Ash, 2010) suggests, ludic geopolitics is often defined by what the player is not allowed to do, and what absences exist in their representations of war.

This chapter refers to a variety of new strategy game mechanisms across six different games. Some of these may feel traditional, almost akin to the propaganda games of previous chapters. For example, *Transports* uses a grid overlaid onto a representation of the English Channel to anticipate future conflicts with Europe, being published before the First World War; pre-dating this, *Boer or Briton* recreates a then-contemporary war in the Second Boer War, but asks players to divide armies tactically rather than move them freely across a grid. These strategy games sometimes stretch beyond the chequerboard altogether to present new ways of moving pieces; *Black-Out* asks players to negotiate a road map during blackout conditions by pairing cards, and the *Royal Scientific War Games* offer several discrete supposedly-educational board games unified by movement across networks of lines and nodes rather than the rows and columns of grids. These games all allow the player to play the god-strategist role that emerged from the chequerboard games analyses in various ways, but some games subvert the player's omniscience by incorporating guesswork and bluffing; this form of gameplay is seen in the games *Jutland* and *Sky Raiders*, which recreate naval and aerial combat respectively.

What emerges in this subset of games is a distinct caution in the representations of ongoing geopolitics, in comparison to track and strategy games earlier in this thesis which took Britain's future wartime victory as inevitable. Some of these games display this same jingoism to an extent, but many of these games either allow for the possibility of a German victory in the World Wars or make the wartime or geopolitical context that inspired them invisible.

Strategy and Tactics: New Rules, New Geographies

The strategy games I have discussed so far employ the pre-existing structure of draughts to explore popular geopolitics. This reduces the work needed for many players to understand the game (as well as the work needed to design it), but also introduced a geographical conflict. The chequerboard does not align with the geography of a warzone very artfully; *The "Strand" War Game's* chequerboard bears little relationship to the Western Front it depicts, while the *New Game of Kopje* incorporates topography by ignoring the draughts board altogether in favour of a track of spaces.

To investigate popular geopolitics in more flexible ways through strategy gaming, new rules for moving across the board game map are required. In this part of the chapter, I study four very different games of varying scales and complexity: the local scale in *Black-Out*, the national in *Boer or Briton*, and the international in *Transports* and *The Royal Scientific War Games*. The four games featured here all feature board game maps and rules designed to complement each other. The movement of boats in *Transports* is designed for the players to navigate islands and straits; the movement of players in *Black-Out* is particular to its map of London; and so on. The role of geography is enhanced in these strategy games by their content and forms. I progress through these in chronological order to give this section some form of structure, but each game must be taken on its own terms, for their gameplay and geographies have been selected and crafted for their own geopolitical purposes.

All these games are inspired by (or, in the case of *Transports*, anticipate) British conflicts, and are often interested in their specific logistics, rather than treating armies as homogeneous units. The *Royal Scientific War Games* in particular attempt to analyse the totality of the First World War in their six different boards. This interest in logistics sometimes shifts the geopolitical discourses of these

games from specific wars to general ideologies of militarism, but these discourses are still bolstered by the god-strategist role; the rules of engagement are new, but the players still possess mastery of space and of their own military units.

Boer or Briton: Imperialism versus Anti-Imperialism

Boer or Briton is a game by J Jaques and Son, dating roughly from 1900, concerning the Second Boer War. This is a two-player game, and the aim of the game for each player is to control settlements in South Africa and reach their opponent's starting location. The version analysed here is stored in the National Army Museum archives.

This game is challenging to analyse, as it is sadly incomplete; only its box, its rules and a pair of small bone dice survive. No board or playing pieces are present in the box. (Instead, it is filled with various tokens and cut-out capital letters, which are not alluded to in the rules and are therefore probably for an unrelated game or creative project; some of the letters can be used to spell "BOER" but together they do not spell any obviously relevant phrase. See *Figure 23* for the box and *Figure 24* for its contents.) We can infer from the rules and its naming of locations in South Africa that the board was a map of the theatre of the Second Boer War, and the small size of the box suggests that this map was paper or cloth, some material that could be easily folded into a small space. The scale and geography can be compared to the earlier-studied *New Game of Kopje*, another incomplete game which hails from the Second Boer War; whereas that game was a study of a small-scale battle on one physical terrain feature, *Boer or Briton* is far wider in scope, depicting warfare across several colonies and states and the settlements within them. *Kopje* focuses on the tactical geopolitics and use of space by individual soldiers, but *Boer or Briton* aims to represent the entire geography of the Second Boer War, and so more observations can be made about British popular appraisal of the Boer states and the progression of imperial statecraft.



Figure 23: Box of Boer or Briton. (Location: 1975-10-127, London: National Army Museum. Author's own photo.)



Figure 24: Contents of the box of Boer or Briton (minus the rules sheet, depicted separately in Figure 25). (Location: 1975-10-127, London: National Army Museum. Author's own photo.)

The Second Boer War was an imperial war fought between the British Empire and two Boer states in what is now South Africa, lasted from 1899 to 1902 (Judd and Surridge, 2013). This war was notably unpopular by the standards of British colonialism, inspiring protests in Britain and abroad and "widely perceived as being manufactured by the British" to claim natural resources from Boer states (Briggs, 2013). This unpopularity allows me to estimate a date of 1900 for *Boer or Briton* because of the progress of the war. At the war's outset, Britain suffered defeats in important battles, showing the state, in the eyes of the general public, to be

"practically incapable of organising a major campaign at short notice" (Pugh, 1999: 42); in the latter half of the war, "the patriotic euphoria [of the 1900 general election, which had been fought on being pro-/anti-Boer] soon deflated as the war dragged on, proving increasingly costly in terms of lives, taxation and the National Debt." (Pugh, 1999: 41). 1900, the mid-point of the war and a period of "patriotic euphoria," is the most likely date for the production of a game about the Second Boer War in Britain. *Boer or Briton* is indeed jingoistic, arguably published in support of British imperialism (given its apparent uncritical presentation of the Boer War in the face of popular geopolitics), but in a relatively subtle manner that arises from its presentation of the war rather than any overt messages in the text of the game itself.

The rules of *Boer or Briton* (Figure 25) describe a game focused on capturing cities. The game is intended for two players or teams of players, one controlling the British army, the other the Boers. The British begin the game at "the 'Cape' or Durban," the Boers begin at Pretoria, and the objective for each player is to be the first to place their entire army in their opponent's starting location(s). Each town on the map is marked with two numbers, one in red, associated with the British side, and the other in black for the Boers. Each side throws the two dice in turn and moves playing pieces to locations which carry numbers in their colour which correspond to the numbers shown on each die (that is, two playing pieces, one for each die, or one playing piece to the city corresponding to the sum of the dice if it is less than six). This includes towns already occupied by the opponent, in which case the opponent is dislodged and falls back to the next town. The rules allude to "red towns," towns highlighted in red which players "must" go through – it is unclear from the rules alone why this is the case, whether these red towns are strategically or geographically significant or whether they are arbitrary checkpoints to challenge players.

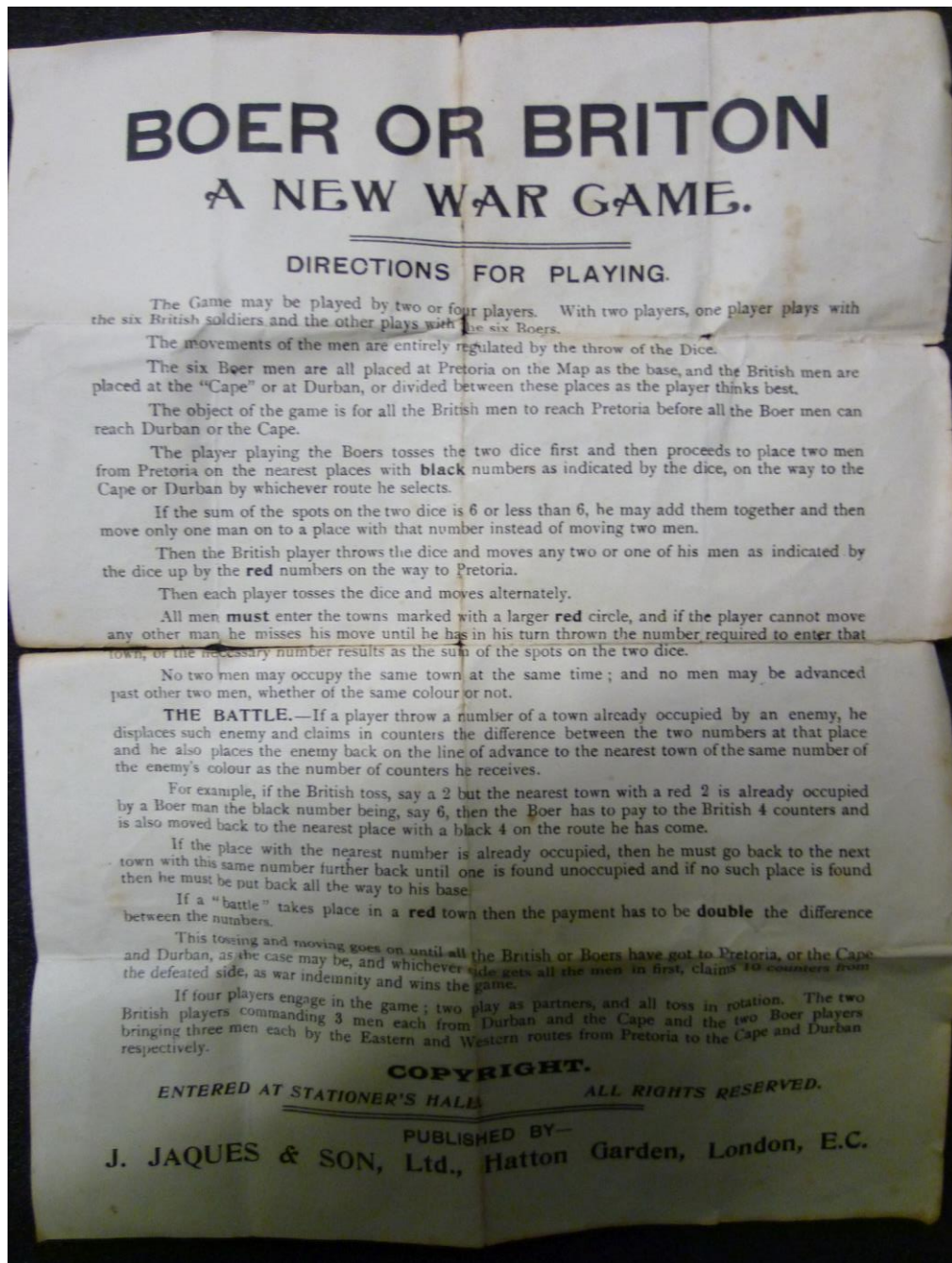


Figure 25: Rules sheet for Boer or Briton. (Location: 1975-10-127, London: National Army Museum. Author's own photo.)

Even from this frustratingly vague overview from the rules alone, geographical aspects of war and war gaming become apparent. The urban geography of South

Africa (by which I mean the area in which the Boer states and the British Empire fought) is critical to success, as certain towns are required by the game's geography or ruleset to be controlled to secure victory; this victory condition, indeed, is the capture of the opponent's "home" territory. The layout of this home territory begins the work of reshaping the Boer War to fit a narrative of British patriotism. If the map of *Boer or Briton* reflects the real geography of South Africa, the British appear to control more territory at the start of the game. The British army player may divide their units at the start of the game between Durban and "the 'Cape'". This probably refers to Cape Town and the Cape of Good Hope, which allows the British army to control much of the south coast of South Africa; even if the "Cape" is one closer to Durban, Britain still occupies two cities as opposed to the Boers' one town in Pretoria. Visually, the effect is one of British dominance, with two British regiments ready to flank the Boer army at the outset of the game. In practice, this arrangement probably favours the Boer player over the course of the game, as they need to get their pieces to the Cape or to Durban, forcing the British player to defend two locations at once. It is quite difficult to evaluate the visual and mechanical effects of gameplay choices without a board to refer to, but as subsequent paragraphs will argue, *Boer or Briton* uses visuals to suggest that the British Empire is culturally superior to the Boer peoples, so I have chosen to highlight the visual effect of the two players' starting positions here to support that argument.

In one respect, this seems an accurate representation of the division of South African territory at the outset of the war; the British Cape Colony did occupy much of the area, including much of the coast. However, the Second Boer War was actually fought against two Boer states, the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Judd and Surridge, 2013: 3; Briggs, 2013). These two states have been homogenised into one undefined and apparently stateless army simply identified as "Boer." The Boer army's starting position on the board, Pretoria, was the capital of the South African Republic; however, the Boers may not start at

Bloemfontein, the Orange Free State's capital. Allowing the British player to split their army between two separate locations in one colony, while conflating the two Boer States to force the Boer player into one specific position rather than the two separate cities which the Boers' actual geopolitical composition would suggest, is a deliberate design choice which suggests that the Boers exert far less control over the region than they actually did. If this is not deliberate, then it shows a lack of care or attention paid to representing the Boers accurately in comparison to the British colony. Either way, the design of the game clearly visually emphasises Britain as the dominant geopolitical power in South Africa.

The choice of colours is also telling. Red is associated with Britain and black with Boers in the game's rules. This is also seen on the game box, contrasting a British soldier in traditional red uniform with a Boer soldier dressed in dark grey. But *Boer or Briton* also highlights "important" cities in red. This may have an innocent explanation; as the colour palette seems limited from the rules, this may be a result of limited ink colours available in printing, and these are also the colours often associated with traditional draughts games, making them natural choices. But red has a powerful discursive connection to the British Empire via its infamous map (Driver, 2010; Edney, 2009: 26), and so the effect is still to visually imply a connection between Britain and urban territory, as if the "important" parts of South Africa are all British. This especially appears to be the case considering the distortion and shrinking of Boer influence within this game.

Pending discovery of a more complete copy of this board game, there is not much more to say about the gameplay itself; it appears to represent a relatively straightforward war game where players tactically divide their armies to control territory and advance towards the other player's space. However, *Boer or Briton* features a gameplay system involving the trading of counters which is unique to this game within this thesis, and merits close examination. This counter trade is tied to the success of players within the war game's narrative of success or failure

in battle. For example, players may capture towns currently occupied by the other side by moving into them as normal; the opponents are pushed out and must pay the capturer the difference between the town's red and black numbers in counters (or double this, if a red town is being captured). Additionally, whoever loses the game must pay the victor ten counters as a "war indemnity."

The counters of this game do not appear to have any purpose within the game's rules and could be excised from the rules without any effect on the rest of the game; in other words, counters are traded for their own sake rather than for any sort of tactical or material advantage on the battlefield. Paying counters at the very end of the game suggests that this counter system does not exist in an individual session of *Boer or Briton*, but rather is supposed to be part of a wider economy of counters across games. Since such an economy is not referred to in the game's rules, *Boer or Briton* must be taking for granted that this economy already exists between players.

In fact, these counters are being used as gambling tokens. This was a common practice in the 18th and 19th century, when families and friends would gamble counters on games of skill and chance. Allusions to counter gambling survive in literature such as *Pride and Prejudice*'s references to fish-shaped counters and lottery games such as whist (Anonymous, 2010b). When *Boer or Briton* requires that players trade counters as cities get captured, it is probably aiming to position itself as part of this social gaming experience, where low-stakes gambling added playful jeopardy to games. Current searches for gaming counters online return many engraved sets of counters, or sets fashioned from mother-of-pearl, suggesting that gaming counters were a status symbol for wealthier families; given the apparently inexpensive production of this board game, in common with other board games in this thesis, any counters provided with the game are more likely to have been made of more accessible materials like wood or metal.

Adding a playful monetary aspect to this war game – integrated into the game by referring to the counters scored from a victory as a "war indemnity" – seems to introduce the economic factors of the Boer War, usually lacking from other war games. However, this is a very simplistic model of the war economy, having no bearing on the actual represented war. The economic logistics of war games – that is, aspects involving the provision of food and other supplies to soldiers, as well as the trading of some kind of money – are often not modelled in commercial war games, in favour of a simplified but more streamlined representation of war which is more accessible to players. (See for example H. G. Wells, whose tabletop game *Little Wars* supposes that "all the ammunition and food needed are carried by the men themselves" (1913: 27), but who establishes gameplay systems that model supply lines and food in his alternate version for training military officers (1913: 105-7).) Rather than enhancing or adding complexity to *Boer or Briton*'s simulation of the Second Boer War, counter trading enhances the game as pure family entertainment, providing low-stakes gambling to playfully add tension to the game. This is a representation of war being pitched as family entertainment, even though the war is ongoing at this point.

Here, it is worth reiterating that the British army is visually dominant in the game's design, but it is also worth remembering that this does not reflect the ludic aspects of the game necessarily. The Boers may win this war – at no point does the game appear to force a narrative where Britain is the inevitable victor (in fact, as noted earlier, the conditions for victory for each player may slightly favour the Boer army). *Boer or Briton* is pro-Britain in its illustrations and layout, but it is not overt propaganda; it may reflect anti-Boer sentiments, but does not contribute to them by aiming to display Boer inferiority in the same manner as other geopolitical games like *The Way to Berlin* and *Chase the Enemy* treated Britain's opponent at those times of war.

Yet the lack of pro-Boer sentiments, in contrast to the empowering representation of the British Empire, is striking. I discuss these board games as reflections and circulations of popular geopolitics, but *Boer or Briton* ignores the anti-imperialist sentiments which the Second Boer War inspired even in Britain (Briggs, 2013: Pugh, 1999: 41-2). It places the player in the god-strategist position that I have identified in previous strategy board games, controlling the map and ignoring (economic) logistics, and asks players in this position of power to build a British or Boer empire in southern Africa for entertainment's sake without any critical evaluation of the geopolitics of the war. *Boer or Briton* performs similar popular geopolitical work to other war games by sympathetically illustrating the assumed military and territorial power of Britain, distorting its representation of the Boer people to do so; however, the structure of the game is less interested in asking players to engage with the reasons and tactical considerations of war, and more interested in asking players to gamble, in line with prior Victorian parlour games. The Second Boer War becomes a mundane, topical background element to an entertainment pastime. The geopolitics of such games must still be scrutinised, as many games in this thesis, along with the wider critical geopolitical literature, have shown that mundanity leads to the normalisation of militaristic endeavours. However, *Boer or Briton* serves as a reminder that in many of these war games, such geopolitics were a commercialised element of the presentation of games rather than their reason for existing. *Boer or Briton* defies the critical popular geopolitics of the Boer War to commercially capitalise on topical geopolitics; it is a parlour game first and a war game second.

Transports: Channel Geopolitics

Transports (Mead & Field Ltd, 1910-12) is a board game published by Mead & Field Ltd, currently stored in the V&A Museum of Childhood (V&A Museum of Childhood, 2017). This game was published a couple of years before the First World

War – the Museum suggests the dates 1910-1912, and the online database BoardGameGeek suggests 1911 (BoardGameGeek, 1997), although this date is probably derived from the Museum in the first place. (BoardGameGeek claims the game comes with 13 pieces, the number of pieces still extant in the V&A Museum's version of the game, rather than the 16 pieces implied by the game's rules.)

Transport's board (Figure 26) is a grid of rectangles representing a sea or lake, with illustrations of islands and ships dotting the board as obstacles. Two harbours are drawn on the board, one in the top-left corner, one in the bottom-right. This game puts two players against each other, one as the "Red Fleet," the other as the "Black Fleet." Each fleet has six warships, marked by illustrated cards propped up in stands (Figure 27): two destroyers, two battleships and two cruisers. The Red player also has four transport ships. Their objective in *Transports* is to sail these transport ships from the top-left harbour to the bottom-right harbour, while the Black Fleet player must sink these transports. Essentially, *Transports* is a game modelling the attack and defence of ships by warships.

Before delving into *Transports'* geopolitics, the playing pieces reveal this game's domestic life. If we look closer at the pieces depicted in Figure 27, we can spot some replacement pieces; one black transport ship and both red cruisers have been painted in watercolour. The back of these pieces show that these have been cut from a ticket for an evening dress event (I am not providing a picture of this because part of a name is legible). Evidently, some family played this game enough to go to the trouble of making new pieces for it. Although I can't find this game advertised in any newspapers of the time, this at least demonstrates that *Transports* had a life in everyday geopolitics; the discourses of this game were circulated in some small way.

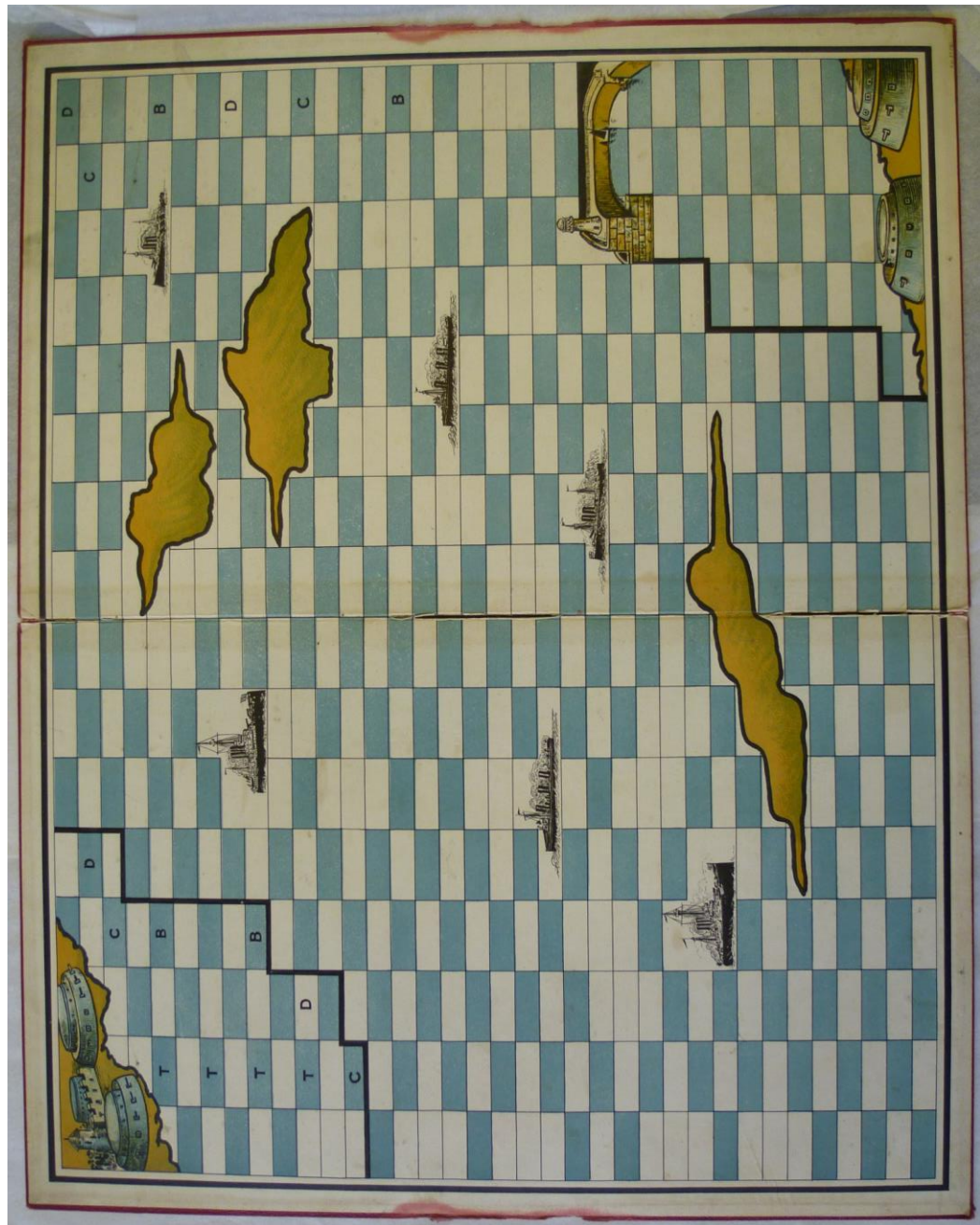


Figure 26: Transports game board. (Location: MISC.87-1981, London: V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)



Figure 27: Playing pieces for Transports. The cards are propped up in the metal stands to form the pieces. Note that some of these are hand-painted replacements. (Location: MISC.87-1981, London: V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)

Thinking about the physical geography of the sea battle represented in *Transports* helps to decode the game's geopolitics. The islands on this map do not resemble any islands I can identify, suggesting that the battlefield shown on this map is fictional. However, assuming that the harbours in each corner are supposed to be connected to larger landmasses, the map is laid out with one landmass in the north-west and one in the south-east. This resembles the layout of other war

games in this thesis from before and during the First World War which focus on a European theatre of operations, with England always visible in the upper left at least, if not represented entirely on the board. The body of water featured in *Transports* as the battlefield is probably inspired by the English Channel, with the islands within the water being fictionalised versions of the Channel Islands. (The coastlines of these islands do not resemble any of the Channel Islands; the islands of *Transports* were apparently designed to fit within its grid of spaces such that unobstructed spaces are unambiguously clear of any landmasses, suggested by the many perfectly horizontal coastlines visible on the islands.) Therefore, *Transports* is probably based on British-French naval sailing routes, and anxieties about the safety of these routes during any future wars.

Reading *Transports* as naval geopolitics presents a compelling way of looking at the "Red" and "Black" fleets. These now represent a British or French trading fleet and an enemy fleet interfering with shipping respectively. Given the immediate pre-War date of *Transports*, the Black fleet can only represent Germany, often the antagonist in British popular anxieties over Britain's "necessary" naval superiority and the challenge presented to it and the country by German naval expansion (Pugh, 1999: 160-1; see also my discussion of dreadnoughts under *The Way to Berlin* and *Jutland*). The Black fleet starts in the upper-right corner of the board, so if the lower harbour represents France, then this fleet is sailing in from Germany's approximate position further up the coast. This is corroborated by the colours chosen to represent each fleet; while red and black are colours often seen in draughts games, these colours have been mobilised in geopolitical ways in other war games. For example, red represents Britain in *The Way to Berlin* and *Boer or Britain* (and the British Empire map, of course); in *Boer or Britain*, Britain's opponent, the Boer army, is represented by black, suggesting a common colour representing wartime antagonists. In *The "Strand" War Game*, another First World War game, these colours are part of colour schemes derived from flags which represent the Allied side, in red, white and blue, and the German side, in black and

yellow. Given these trends in contemporaneous war game design, the Red Fleet and the Black Fleet most convincingly represent British and German fleets respectively. To summarise, although *Transports* is apparently placeless and devoid of geopolitical reflections, positioning it within popular geopolitics and the wider board game industry reveals that it is a coded simulation of a hypothetical attack on British shipping by Germany, whose navy is now equivalent to that of Britain.

These fears for the safety of transports were ultimately not ill-founded; Germany would begin a programme of targeting merchant shipping during the First World War (Gilbert, 1994: 67). An alternate way of viewing this war is that the transports are troop transports, in which case *Transports* represents merely the naval part of a larger war on land as well as sea. Whether the transports are full of goods or soldiers, *Transports* depicts a war between Britain and Germany, evolving from the geopolitical tensions between the two states at the time of this game's publication. One other explanation is that the V&A has attributed an incorrect date to this game, and it was actually published during the First World War, reflecting the war that was going on. However, the German offensive on merchant shipping – and on some warships too – focused on submarines, which are absent in this game and present in other naval-themed war games in this thesis. *Transports* more likely represents an imaginary naval war based on geopolitical anxieties over naval superiority than the actual war that would break out a few years later.

If this game is based on fears of German attacks on British ships, then this game can be read as invasion literature. This phrase refers to a genre of literature, popular in Britain in the decades before the First World War, playing on the fear apparently held by the British Empire that Britain "might imminently find itself facing an invasion attempt by any one of its resentful European 'great power' rivals or even by rebellious colonial subjects" (Bulfin, 2015: 482-3). These texts were intended to make the case for more military funding and to outline tactical

approaches to war which the authors were convinced would be successful in a real war (Matin, 2011: 802). *Transports* does not wholly fit in the invasion literature category; most invasion literature was written by military officers (Bulfin, 2015: 485) but there is no evidence that *Transports* was. (Mead & Field Ltd, the publisher of the game, was primarily a manufacturer of Christmas crackers; I cannot find any evidence of any obvious connections between Mead & Field as a company and the military.) Also, most invasion literature was blatant about its geopolitical messages and the danger posed by Germany or whoever Britain was fearful of at the time (Bulfin, 2015: 485), whereas *Transports* codes its geopolitical landscape as a fictionalised, apparently placeless strait of water. However, *Transports* uses a recognisable landscape, one very much like the Britain-France sea route, as a frame for a tactical naval battle, and the invasion literature perspective shows that if the fictionalised geopolitics of *Transports* represent the hypothetical geopolitics of the near-future, then the naval battle on the board is a simulation of the naval battle of this future war.

So what tactics are important for success at this future war? The game's board features blue and white rectangles alternating like a chequerboard pattern, with islands and larger patches of white space breaking up the blue rectangles to form pathways and bottlenecks. Most ships are confined to these blue diagonal paths, like a game of draughts; battleships, transports and cruisers can move across up to 2, 3, and 4 blue squares in a turn respectively. Destroyers move differently, able to move as far as the player likes in a horizontal or vertical line until obstructed by a ship or an illustration on the board, as long as they alternate between blue and white spaces each time they move. Warships are captured and removed from play if they cannot move – that is, if the opponent's ships have trapped them in place – and the Red fleet's transports are captured if a battleship or cruiser (but not a destroyer) is adjacent. Players may only move one warship per turn, but the Red player may move a transport ship in addition to a warship in a turn.

The above rules suggest that cruisers are important to both players because they can outpace transports (to either defend or pressurise them), and destroyers are important because, although they cannot capture transports, they are difficult to capture themselves (since, unless they have allowed themselves to be surrounded by ships on blue squares, they can move through squares inaccessible to other ships). Interestingly, battleships seem to be less mobile and less able to attack than transport ships; this runs counter to the fetishization of battleships, especially dreadnoughts, seen in other British naval war games of this period, the race for dreadnoughts becoming the focal point for naval anxieties in 1909 (Pugh, 1999: 160-1). This suggests that the tactics that the designers have in mind are not about overpowering opponents, but rather about outmanoeuvring them. *Transports* plays into an idea of absolute mobility of military units — the god-strategist role again, in this absolute control over military units — which is more often, and more egregiously, seen in war games from the First World War featuring infantry (*The "Strand" War Game*, *The Royal Scientific War Games* (examined below), etc). Whereas those games, with the benefit of hindsight, underestimate the influence of physical geography and trench warfare on the mobility of soldiers, *Transports* takes place in open water where a degree of manoeuvrability is more reasonable to expect of ships.

Indeed, this ability to move is made vital in the rules, where being trapped leads to capture, implying an inability of warships to defend themselves while still. The transport ships themselves are more fragile, being captured when a battleship or cruiser catches up to them. Here, the artifice of the game rules becomes apparent as the game designers are forced to stop destroyers being able to capture transports, preventing the Black Fleet player from covering rows or columns with their destroyers' lines of sight so that the Red transports cannot safely cross. Destroyers are still able to help capture other warships, suggesting that this is a conscious decision for the sake of gameplay rather than a simulated lack of destroyer firepower. The designers of *Transports* commit to an interpretation of

geopolitics where superior movement tactics will decide the battle between Britain and Germany, yet they must also allow both players to have a fair chance of winning, and their view of tactics is partly compromised by this.

Transports is a game which represents geopolitical anxieties about Germany's increasing naval power, and which focuses on how to repel a German naval offensive in the manner of invasion literature, with Britain, the Red Fleet, on the defensive and protecting its transport ships. It presents a set of rules which encourage tactics based on out-maneuvring the opponent, as players experience how these tactics can be used to attack British ships and counter-attack German ships. *Transports* is a little difficult to assess as an expression of popular geopolitics beyond this due to the way in which it encodes its war as Red versus Black, shying away from the call to arms and jingoism expressed by invasion literature during the years before the First World War (Bulfin, 2015: 489). Its geopolitics, identifiable by its geography, are held in common with other British war games of the early 20th century, and thus it still contributes to the militaristic views expressed by war games in this period; however, unlike invasion literature, *Transports* must balance a tactical game with a representation of tactics in naval warfare, and this induces compromises in the representation of certain ships' capabilities so that there are no strategies that would guarantee the success of the German Black fleet over the British Red fleet's objectives. This may be the key to *Transports*' geopolitics, and the key to why it became loved enough to merit replacement pieces; by fictionalising British-German tensions and modifying the capabilities of ships, it produces an enjoyable, playful militarism rather than a realistic, potentially frustrating one in which Germany is guaranteed to win.

The Royal Scientific War Games: A Military Education

The *Royal Scientific War Games* (Hastings, 1914) are a collection of war games originally printed on A2 sheets of paper collected in one booklet, currently stored

in several locations in the Edinburgh Museum collections centre. This booklet and its games were designed by a man called Arthur Hastings and is protected by a United States patent dated to December 1914, but I have no information about its design beyond this. The booklet was published by Boots Chemists in the United Kingdom; the front of the booklet carries a credit for then-Managing Director Jesse Boot (*Figure 28*), and the back carries an advertisement for Boots products.

This collection of war games offers six war games for two players, all focusing on various aspects of the First World War, and usually depicting a battle between a British or Allied force and a German force. These games are two Royal Army War Games (one based on a map of the Western front (*Figure 29*), one for the Eastern front); a Royal Aerial War Game (*Figure 30*); a Royal Game of War on Commerce (*Figure 31*); a Royal Set Battle Game (*Figure 32*); and a Royal Naval War Game (*Figure 33*). (Only five of the six included war games were located for viewing in the Edinburgh Museum collections centre's archives; the sixth, the Royal Army War Game on the Eastern Front, was not available.) Each game separately claims to model one aspect of the totality of war, and often the strategic aims of that aspect; for example, the Royal Army War Game for the Western Front (*Figure 29*) models the effect of controlling railway lines and the increased mobility that these bring for troops, in addition to offering a standard strategy game of capturing pieces. Although these were unavailable with the version of the *Royal Scientific War Games* that I studied, the booklet also offers "particulars" of the navies, armies and air forces of all states involved in the First World War and information about commerce and the composition of armies. Taken together, this booklet is clearly intended to represent a full education on the data and practice of the First World War.



Figure 28: Front cover of Royal Scientific War Games. A credit for Jesse Boot and the Boots corporation is visible in the footer of the front cover. (Locations: MC10305 box 24 and MC10309 / MC10305 box 8, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo.)

All the *Royal Scientific War Games* have a similar movement system in common. Instead of a grid of regular spaces as seen in other tactical games in this chapter (such as *Transports*), the *Royal Scientific War Games* all use structures of lines and points. On these structures, pieces move from point to point; depending on the game, some pieces may only follow a line to the next point it meets before stopping, while others may follow a line or curve as far as it runs through multiple points, even if this line runs across the entire length of the board, although these pieces are unable to change direction to another line or curve in the same turn. The effect of these structures is that, unlike a grid-based or chequerboard-based game such as draughts which offers consistent freedom of movement across the board (each square or space having a consistent number of adjacent spaces surrounding it), in this system some points may have more connections than other points, giving differing degrees of freedom of movement in different parts of the game board. This gives each *War Game* finer control over how players may access different parts of the board.

These structures, and the movement they allow, accommodate the basic political geography of the maps they are drawn over – for example, the Royal Aerial War Game (*Figure 30*) places points in important cities in eastern Britain (plus Paris) and northwestern Germany which are marked as areas of strategic significance, as the designers judge these settlements are likely to be attacked by bombing campaigns. In this game, the objective is to occupy the opponent's towns with aircraft. Because the map is (apparently) an accurate cartographic representation of the sea between Britain and Germany, the structure must be shaped to accommodate the actual geography of Europe, and such a distortion is also present in similar games in the collection.

Despite this distortion, however, the structure of points still allows the designer to create an even playing field in each game, one where the layout of each player's starting positions and objectives is more or less identical to their opponent's.

Consider the structure in terms of each point's connections to other points, and it becomes apparent that the board game exhibits symmetry in each player's position and choices. For example, still working with the Royal Aerial War Game, the point labelled "7" for each player (denoting the starting position of one of seven aeroplanes for each side) is not in the same relative position for each player, being northeast of the "6" point for Britain and south of it for Germany, but both are connected to the "6" by one line, and have no other connections to other points, making them equivalent in the choices both players have for the movement of pieces on that point. Almost all the points for each player in this game have a symmetrical equivalent, and most of the nodal structures in the *Royal Scientific War Games* exhibit some kind of reflective or rotational symmetry that balance the game evenly for both sides (with some subtle exceptions in missing points or lines, discussed below). The game that does not fit this symmetrical pattern is the Royal Game of War on Commerce (*Figure 31*), which takes place on a map of the Atlantic (exaggerating the ocean's size to accommodate the game's nodal structure) and which features a more complex web of points to accommodate ports in the Americas, Africa and Europe. Given the *Royal Scientific War Games'* apparent commitment to geographical and factual accuracy, explored below, my suspicion is that this web of connections represents major trans-Atlantic shipping routes in 1914 with additional points and lines to allow opposing ships to out-manoeuver each other; however, I cannot find reliable historic maps of 1914 shipping routes to confirm this.



Figure 30: The Royal Aerial War Game. (Locations: MC10305 box 24 and MC10309 / MC10305 box 8, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo.)



Figure 31: The Royal Game of War on Commerce. (Locations: MC10305 box 24 and MC10309 / MC10305 box 8, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo.)

A grid-based system of gameplay would not have allowed the designer to create an even playing field with the same objective of bombing cities without seriously distorting the geography of Europe; compare the linear layout of Britain and France's cities on the map with the more clustered arrangement of Germany's cities. What becomes apparent in this overview of the fundamental design of the *War Games* is that Hastings, presumably the designer of each game, has taken pains to give the Allied and German sides of each game an equal chance of winning. Whether or not Hastings is successful in practice, this offers a contrast to the propaganda of *The Way to Berlin*, *Chase the Enemy* and other such games in which the balance of the game is weighted towards a British victory and in which Germany either has no agency or no way to claim victory.

In other words, the *Royal Scientific War Games* appear to be attempts to model the possible tactical considerations of each aspect of the First World War – naval battles, aerial battles, and so on – rather than jingoistic predictions of victory against Germany. This is fundamental to the design of the *War Games*, so much so that it is encoded into the collection's name. The word "Scientific" acts as an advertisement of information, presenting the *War Games* as truthful, and as studies of the theory and practice of warfare rather than as partisan presentations of information. The gameplay systems present in the games, and the attempt to balance the gameplay so that each player is on an equal playing field, shift the emphasis of the *War Games* away from geopolitics and towards warfare as a controlled scientific phenomenon. We can think of the *Royal Scientific War Games* as an example of a "utopian" simulation as identified by Dittmer, where "reductionist notions of geopolitics and IR can unfold without the messy complexity of real life." (2015: 913). Here, the "science" of warfare unfolds in miniature, rationally controlled by the limitations of the rules. Indeed, the game is fully intended as educational, suggesting that the game is future-oriented, a simulation preparing players for future warfare and geopolitics (ibid: 912).

In weighing up the lack of overt British geopolitics in the *Royal Scientific War Games*, it is also important to notice that the collection's cover carries a United States patent number. As these games were published in Britain, judging by the British addresses and copyright information printed on the booklet, it seems fair to say that these games were designed by an American for publication in Britain. Perhaps these games were originally published in America, but no online results appear for American versions of the *War Games* or Arthur Hastings, so they were probably published exclusively in Britain. This means that Hastings may have been remote from the nationalism and jingoism of British geopolitics. The United States' role in the First World War was one of neutrality at first, only joining the war in April 1917 (Gilbert, 1994: 318), so anti-German propaganda is not likely to have played a direct part in Hastings' original designs. Because of this apparent lack of deliberate nationalism in the games themselves, and because the designer has opted for an unconventional system of gameplay in an apparent attempt to give both the English and German sides of each game an even chance of victory, I believe the *Royal Scientific War Games*' commitment to "science" is earnest; while my earlier arguments still stand that this appeal to science allow geopolitics to avoid scrutiny, I think Hastings and Boots designed and published this game as a commitment to military science rather than a more cynical use of wartime discourses to sell games.

However, this is not to say that the *War Games* are devoid of geopolitical subtexts. Indeed, such subtexts are disguised by this commitment to a scientific ideal, whether the designer and publisher realised it or not at the time. Critical cartographers such as Pickles have discussed how "science" disguises social structures, using maps, "seen as an on-going approximation to the real, presupposing a correspondence or representational theory of truth" to suggest that the cartographer's decisions are a factual depiction of the world (Pickles, 1992: 196-7). This is the work that the word "Scientific" in the title performs. The booklet of games is presented as educational information, packaged along with

maps forming the game boards and with facts and figures about the composition of each side's military strength in the First World War. Each game is introduced in its rules as "founded on the fact" of some strategy of war; for example, the Royal Set Battle Game (*Figure 32*) "is founded on the fact that in war the general staffs of opposing armies manoeuvre to force the enemy to give battle on a chosen ground, and endeavour either to rout or capture the whole of the opposing force." The strategy of flanking and routing or capturing is presented as an indisputable truth of military battles, with no allowances made for defensive or diplomatic strategies. The games' ethologies are limited to this very specific tactical doctrine. The *Royal Scientific War Games* are presented as a truthful representation of the tactical considerations of each aspect of the war; they teach that an aggressive militarism is the only form of militarism.

This taught militarism is further shaped by the absences that Hastings makes; those aspects of modern warfare that he omits or overlooks in the design of his games. The mobility of each player's units demonstrates this. The movement of soldiers in the Royal Set Battle Game and the Royal Army War Game offer a war in which troops have relative freedom of movement and can outflank opponents. In other words, these are two more games in which trench warfare is either underestimated or ignored as an influence on the direction of modern warfare. The *War Games* carry a date of December 1914 in their patent information; like *The Way to Berlin*, work on the games probably began in immediate response to the outbreak of war, rather than to simulate the way the war was progressing in practice. Yet the disconnect between the "scientific" games and the reality of the First World War in December 1914 highlights the artificiality of these models of war, and the assumptions that went into them. These assumptions reflect military doctrines of the pre-War period which were to be tried in the First World War – compare the movement of the Royal Army War Game's "Anglo-French Force" and the tactical doctrine of the French military in 1913, commanding "no law but the offensive," "tireless pursuit" and similar fast and aggressive phrases (Tuchman,

2000: 44). The *War Games* represent an idealised vision of war as mobile and swift as some military officers – and many other board games – believed in, demonstrating how they are rooted in pervasive public beliefs in militarism.

The physicality of the board games and their maps similarly reflect an idealised war rather than the reality. Although many of the *War Games* are shaped to reflect the political geography of the First World War, they present war in the same manner as an abstract chequerboard game such as chess or draughts; as a battlefield which is a flat plane. Unlike other strategy games in this chapter, physical geography is almost completely absent from Hastings' designs, or its effects are unacknowledged. For example, the Royal Army War Game of the Western Front (*Figure 29*) assumes that soldiers can move consistently across all of France and Germany; comparing this with France's physical geography suggests that armies can traverse the mountainous Massif Central as easily as the flatter areas of northern France. This is a failure to reflect the extra effort and time needed to climb or travel around inclines even in ideal conditions. Travelling across lines rather than between consistent grid squares in some of the other *War Games* also seems to forget the role of distance and travelling time; in the Royal Aerial War Game, one central point in Belgium connects both London and Berlin, meaning that from this point, although Berlin is physically further away than London, both journeys are equivalent and instantaneous within the game. The same criticism applies to every line which takes units across the board map, where travel is more like teleportation than a true model of a military collective moving across space. Although Hastings accounts for differences between types of units by forcing some pieces to stop at every point they reach and allowing others to follow entire lines, the *War Games* still reflects this idea that armies can always move swiftly to outflank and attack opponents, rather than the slowness of travelling through different types of terrain and the stillness of trench warfare.

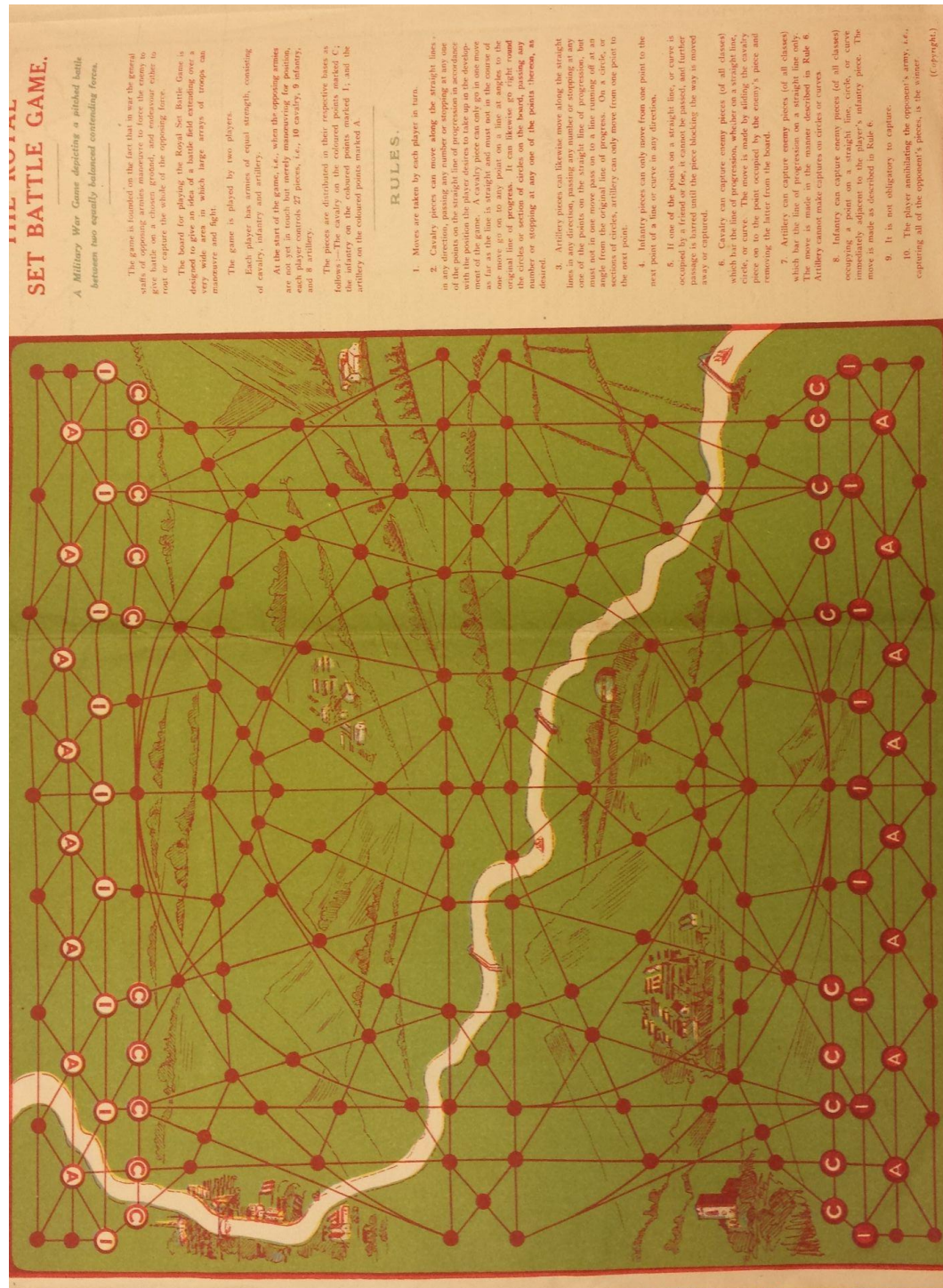


Figure 32: The Royal Set Battle Game. (Locations: MC10305 box 24 and MC10309 / MC10305 box 8, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo)

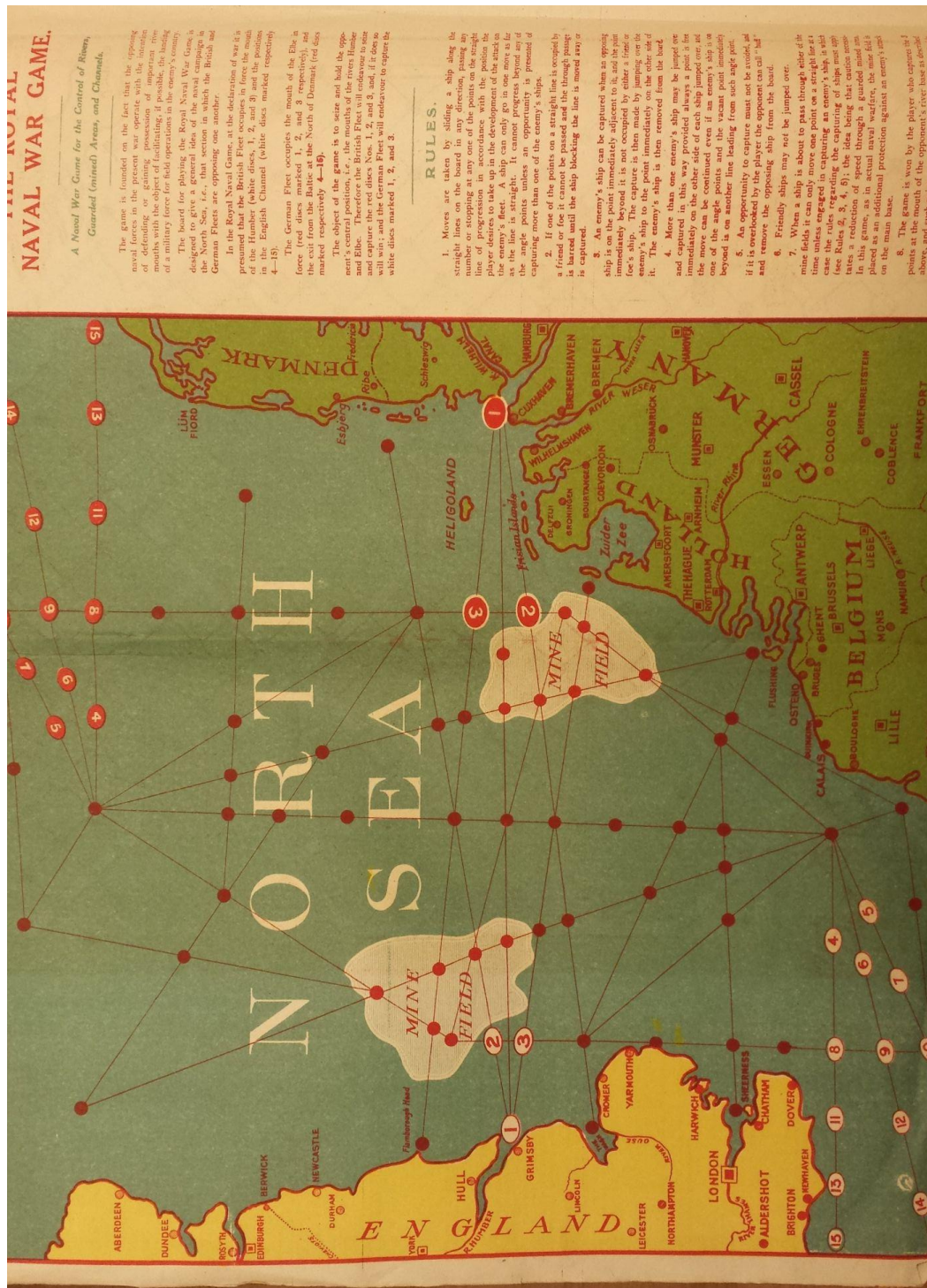


Figure 33: The Royal Naval War Game. (Locations: MC10305 box 24 and MC10309 / MC10305 box 8, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo)

Although the *War Games* do not present models of war free of militaristic assumptions from the pre-First World War era, the games themselves avoid judgment calls on the geopolitics and morality of the Allied and German sides. However, the presentation of these games is still subject to British nationalism, and it is worth examining this to finish evaluating the geopolitics of this collection. I have discussed the use of the word "Scientific" in the *Royal Scientific War Games*, but equally as telling is the word "Royal," incorporated into the title of every individual game in the set. Billig has argued that reminders of royalty, and specifically of the British royal family's presence, operates as a "banal nationalism" which perpetually reproduces and reinforces the British nation-state, the royal family being symbolic of British nationhood (Billig, 1995; 2002: xii). This appeal to the Royal family, a symbol of British imperial power and culture (who, as far as I can tell, had nothing at all to do with the production of the *War Games*), links the board games to this power, an extension of British geopolitics and superiority.

The title page of the booklet (*Figure 28*) emphasises this appeal to Britain's imperial superiority; the title is decorated with the emblems of several belligerents in the First World War, but Britain is front and centre with its royal emblem above the title, and an illustration of a large draped Union Jack borders the top of the page. This positioning suggests that Britain is the most important of the states represented on the title. These other states, whose emblems are arranged to border the table of contents below the title, are France, Russia, Belgium, and Japan. The latter is an odd choice, not apparently represented in the *Royal Scientific War Games* as either a playable army in any of the games or as a visible country in any of the maps (the map illustrating most of the globe, in the Royal Game of War on Commerce, focuses on the Atlantic Ocean, omitting Asia); however, Japan was affiliated with the United Kingdom and the Allies throughout the First World War, joining the war in 1914 against Germany and Austria-Hungary's navies in order to gain Germany's Pacific territories (Gilbert, 1994: 46).

Thus, a pattern emerges in the *Royal Scientific War Games*' choice of emblems: all these countries were allies of the United Kingdom during the First World War. Germany and the Allies' other opponents are absent from the cover, even though most of the games in the collection have one player playing the role of the German military, usually against a British or Allied force, as outlined in the rules for each game. The *Royal Scientific War Games* exhibit a strange contradiction where the games themselves appear to attempt to create an environment where the Allied and German militaries have an equal chance of winning the simulated war (unlike in games such as *The Way to Berlin* or *Chase the Enemy*, where Germany may not even fight back), yet the presentation of the collection emphasises British and Allied superiority. I do not believe that the *War Games* are intentional propaganda, yet the collection is obviously marketed to appeal to British nationalism, between the emphasis on the games being "Royal" and the absence of any symbols on the cover which would imply a German presence or possible narrative.

The presence of Boots as the games' publisher offers another hint to this; the back cover carries advertising copy for Boots emphasising the trustworthiness of the Boots brand: "[the Boots trademark] is a guarantee and a bond of goodwill which you, as a member of the public, hold – it is the security upon which you extend your patronage." Compare this to the extreme distrust of German products which influenced the British public's buying habits at the outbreak of the war (Brown, 1996: 79). Though the Boots advertisement does not play on the company's British origins and headquarters (beyond an address for its "chief London branch" and publication information on the front cover of the booklet locating the Boots headquarters in Nottingham), the absence of German markings on the cover of the collection is most likely a strategy to appease both the British public and the Boots corporation, who presumably wished to publish the *War Games* without any hints of German production jeopardising the trustworthy corporate image they had worked to cultivate in advertisements such as this collection's back cover.

As a collection of six games in one booklet, there is a lot to unpack about the *Royal Scientific War Games*. Themes emerge across the collection when it is taken as a cohesive whole; the games present themselves as a sober and educational evaluation of the tactical side of warfare, a perfect utopian simulation which uses the First World War as a contemporaneous case study of the strategies that players must employ in order to win. Despite its attempt to disengage from the geopolitics of the war, however, it still reflects more pervasive and subtle discourses of militarism in which war is a swift and mobile battle of wits rather than the long and bloody stalemate which was just beginning in the real world. It disguises these discourses as scientific fact, and then it is marketed to exploit popular British geopolitics anyway. If there is one major point to highlight here, it is the presentation of war as a science. This collection is an ancestor of a tendency of war games to treat their virtual worlds as a mirror of real worlds, with the potential for militarism that this relationship implies; the director of the US Army recruitment game *America's Army* discusses how the video game is designed to encourage player identification with the army rather than the "bad guys" (Huntemann, 2010: 181), and Fisher notes the use of war games as a catalyst for historical research (Fisher, 2011). As Fisher cautions, this does not mean that players uncritically accept war games as reality (Fisher, 2011: 77); nevertheless, we must think of the *Royal Scientific War Games* as another set of games trying to be a mirror, both taking in and reflecting back elements of militarism so subtle that they are treated as objective rather than as social constructs.

Black-Out: Play and "the Myth of the Blitz"

The Royal Scientific War Games were educational games, designed to teach a particular vision of geopolitical and military ideologies. The next game now offers an education on a different scale: it maps and plays with a local geography of safety rather than with international geopolitics. *Black-Out* is a board game produced

during the Second World War, probably during the early Second World War. The manufacturer is unhelpfully named as "Games Distributors," but its address in Fleet Street (as listed on the board's manufacturing information) suggests that these distributors may have been part of a wider publishing or newspaper enterprise. The version of *Black-Out* studied here is stored in the V&A Museum of Childhood (V&A Collections, 2017).

The board (*Figure 34*) is a road map of a section of London, with Marble Arch, Hyde Park Corner, Holborn and Charing Cross marked in its corners. The board is mostly black, with the roads outlined in grey and marked with arrows across roads pointing to coloured symbols representing organisations such as the Auxiliary Fire Squad as well as equipment such as sandbags. There is also an inset title on the board in the bottom-right (below Charing Cross), bordered in red, white and blue, reading "BLACK-OUT – A skilful card game – full of interest". A deck of cards (*Figure 35*) is provided with the board game, each decorated on the back with a skyline of London. The fronts share symbols with the icons on the road crossings, representing the Auxiliary Fire Squad or depicting sandbags, for example. Also provided with the game are four playing pieces, illustrations of vehicles (a red truck, a green van, a blue taxi and a yellow saloon car) on card set in wooden bases.

At the outset of the game, each player chooses a vehicle (*Figure 36*) and starts at one corner of the board; their objective is to cross to the opposite corner. Three cards are dealt to each player, and one is placed face-up next to the remaining stack of face-down cards. Movement is along the roads, but this progress is gated by the arrows crossing each road. On their turn, the player takes either the face-up card or the top face-down card; they are aiming to create a pair of cards whose icons match one of the arrows in their way. If successful, they may cross the arrow, and then discard their pair on the face-up pile and take another face-down card, after which their turn ends; if not, they must discard a card face-up and end their turn. (In this way, the number of cards in each player's hand stays at 3 throughout.)

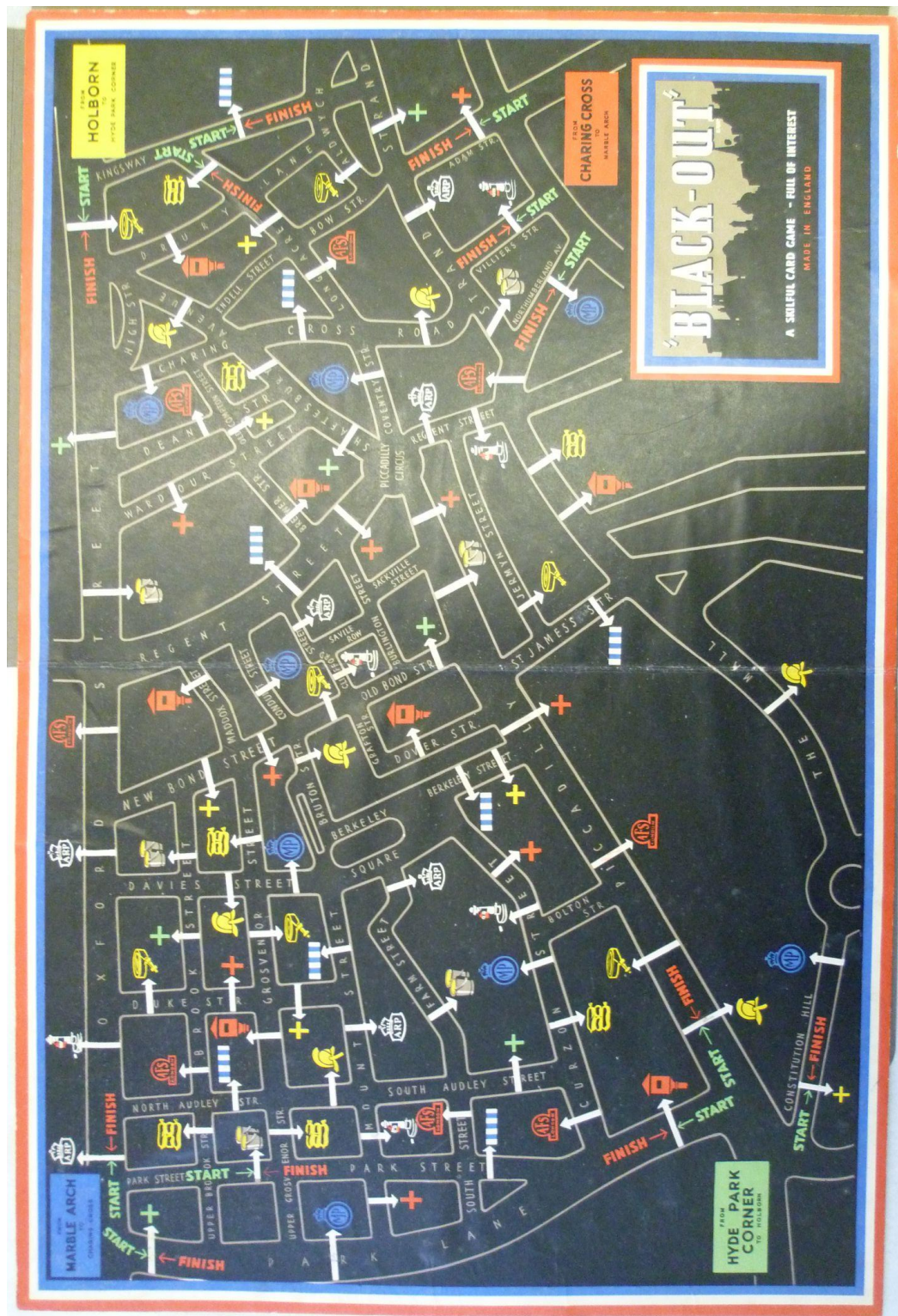


Figure 34: Board of Black-Out. (Location: B.94:1 to 4-2004, London: V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)



Figure 35: The different types of cards players might draw in Black-Out. (Location: B.94:1 to 4-2004, London: V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)



Figure 36: Playing pieces of Black-Out. (Location: B.94:1 to 4-2004, London: V&A Museum of Childhood. Author's own photo.)

This game is based on the blackout imposed on Britain during the Second World War, the board styled black to reflect the lightless conditions. The blackout was a set of regulations imposed on households and businesses aimed at preventing visible light being seen outside (from buildings or headlights, say) (Anonymous, 2015). This was an effort to stymie possible bombing raids, which would theoretically have trouble targeting cities if they couldn't see the cities; the word "possible" is used here because, although Britain did come under attack in the Battle of Britain, the blackout was first imposed on 1st September 1939 before Britain's formal declaration of war. (Blackout conditions were not unique to

Britain. Berlin imposed a blackout at the same time in case of air raid reprisals from Poland, which Germany was currently invading (Beevor, 2012: 25).)

Black-Out may have been designed with blackout conditions in mind, where entertainment may have contended with low lighting if households were unable to entirely blackout their windows. Although the black background and saturated colours of *Black-Out* may be hard to distinguish in low lighting, the use of bright large symbols as the primary determiners of how players can move may be easier to read and recognise than numbers and die-spots. The game's objectives have little to do with the blackout directly, but these various symbols reflect a London prepared to deal with bombings and emergencies - many of the symbols are related to the fire squad, and there is also an A.R.P. warden and an emergency warning system (cards refer to sirens and refuges).

When examined as a contemporaneous product of blackout Britain, it becomes apparent that *Black-Out* is an educational game. The primary gameplay mechanism is to match symbols representing various authorities and locations related to blackout conditions between the board and a hand of cards (*Figure 35*). The logos are depicted as brightly and distinctively as possible, in saturated colour against a black background. There are few landmarks marked on the map, and there is no engagement with the Second World War or the Battle of Britain as a strategic engagement, or even as a violent one; these absences are explored below, but on the surface, the visual and gameplay focus of the game is directed entirely to navigating a simple map and identifying these coloured symbols. This game's primary purpose outside of playful entertainment is to teach these icons to families; this is quite a child-friendly game, and the icons used for gameplay reflect real icons and objects which it would be important to recognise during an air raid, such as the warden's badge.

The road map, even simplified as it is, contributes to this education as it is recognisably a real section of London, with places like Aldwych and Piccadilly Circus

present and labelled. By situating the game's scenario in this represented section of London, the game becomes a simulation of a geopolitical aspect of the real London, in the same sense in which, as I have argued, represented battlefields in war games become simulations of those battles. This playful miniaturisation of London helps to suggest that being able to recognise symbols in the game reflects how players might identify symbols in the real London.¹²

So although *Black-Out* is very obviously a game, players are subtly encouraged to learn to recognise the logos and organisations of wartime Britain for their potential use in a bombing scenario. This is pure speculation, but the total non-specificity of the manufacturers' name ("Games Distributors"), their location near Fleet Street, the publishing hub of London, and the educational value of the game leads me to suspect that some government influence may have been involved in the production of *Black-Out*. I do not know why this would have been hidden, and not declared in the game's publication information, but the government's propagandists were experiencing significant backlash from the public against their campaigns at this time (Pugh, 1999: 256), so perhaps this experience of ridicule was cause to disguise the game's origins.

This is a game which was probably produced during the Blitz and which uses the Blitz and the defensive constructs which it inspired (sandbag distribution, etc.) as the foundation for a game which was educational in nature. However, *Black-Out* carefully makes the geopolitics and inherent violence of its milieu absent. The only mention of the Second World War is in the card types "Air Raid Warden" and "War Auxiliary Policeman" – the rules do not mention the war or make any reference to

¹² The side-effect of this is that it reinforces the geopolitical centrality of London, at the expense of other cities which also sustained bombing attacks at this time. But since London is the most populous city in Britain, it makes sense to map the city where the greatest proportion of the target audience is likely to live. Also, since the section of London depicted is directly next to Fleet Street, the designers are probably mapping the urban space which requires the least amount of original research for them.

its geopolitical context. There are certainly no air raids present in the game, and no pressure on the vehicles in the game to make it to their destination outside of competition against other players. And although the map is of London, many cultural landmarks are absent from the map. Westminster's location is obscured by the *Black-Out* logo, St. Paul's Cathedral is outside the map's boundaries despite being in the *Black-Out* logo's background skyline, and although the site of Buckingham Palace is mapped, the palace itself is not drawn or labelled. These landmarks are absent from this represented battlefield, moved out of the range of bombs.

Black-Out was produced either at the outset of the Second World War or during the Battle of Britain, when victory was not certain. Many historical accounts discussing the British Blitz experience focus on the public, on public figures' perceptions of the population, or on anonymised anecdotes of individuals performing patriotism in the face of personal ruin (e.g. Gilbert, 1995: 150, 155; Beevor, 2012: 138-9). This narrative of the British stiff upper lip gained such traction both during the Battle of Britain and in contemporary accounts of it that it is difficult to gauge the potential range of individual responses to the war. Calder (1991) refers to this phenomenon as "the myth of the Blitz," which constructs and invokes a stoic British national character during the Blitz as a symbol of strength during more contemporary geopolitical conflicts such as the war for the Falklands/Malvinas. As might reasonably be suspected, Calder notes that there is no shortage of horror stories of massive physical and emotional trauma dealt by bombs to individuals and families (Calder, 1991: 157). Accounts of the military side of the Battle of Britain also suggest a more fraught war than the myth of the Blitz; Robson's account of the Battle argues that the lack of British pilots and successful German attacks on airfields such as Biggin Hill brought Germany close to victory, an opportunity squandered largely by its lack of air war direction and its failure to continue this successful strategy of damaging the air fields (Robson, 2015: 325-7).

Even the very basic observation that bombing could lead to traumatic bereavement and homelessness suggests how sensitive the subject could be for the families who *Black-Out* was aimed at. This game could educate and entertain families in adverse conditions without forcing them to confront the potential violence of the situation. This careful absence of geopolitics works to present and map the current "normal" state of night-time London without engaging with the exceptional circumstances that lead to this new norm. In other words, *Black-Out* works to normalise Blitz conditions. By reducing the Second World War to an ultimately mundane scenario in which vehicles need to cross London, without stopping to reflect on the greater geopolitical and societal changes that had occurred in the last few years, the game's context is rendered unremarkable, with only its title and its "Air Raid Wardens" and "War Auxiliary Policemen" hinting at the game's background violence. So *Black-Out* can be placed within a process of normalisation across Britain, transforming the war into a mundane state of being for the nation and the population, alongside propaganda campaigns and, as Beevor notes, the sheer regularity of the bombing raids themselves; instead of reflecting British attitudes to the Blitz, *Black-Out* may be read as one of many creative and political products of war helping to form these attitudes.

Guesswork Games: The Fog of War

As I have noted, the four preceding games, despite their differences, still feature total knowledge and control of the game board. The player is in the god-strategist position, able to survey and understand the state of play at all times. But not all games allow the player such omniscience. During the interwar period, the board game manufacturer H. P. Gibson and Sons — now known as Gibsons — produced many war games alongside other games and puzzles (Grace's Guide, 2016; Gibsons, 2017). Some of these war games feature bluffing as a central mechanism:

the players are able to obscure the location of their own pieces, so that they must develop their tactics based on this element of uncertainty. This subverts the omniscience of players visible in other strategy games, reintroducing the limited information seen in 19th century military war games such as *Kriegsspiel*. This reflects the suggestion by von Clausewitz that war is characterised by a "fog of great or lesser uncertainty" (1873: 101); the "fog of war" is a common trope in computer games (see *Giant Bomb*, 2008, for a list of 272 examples), but is seen in few board games. H. P. Gibson's games introduce this fog of war to playing pieces, but both players are still able to assess the geography and cartography of an entire battlefield, and both players still maintain total control of their own pieces, so that the usual tropes of strategy gaming and militarism are still present, even when the gameplay is radically altered.

One of the H. P. Gibson and Sons war games studied in this thesis is *L'Attaque*, which is notable for its prevalence in archives and for its multiple versions and variants over the course of the 20th century; this game and its variants are discussed in the final analysis chapter. For this chapter, two war games produced by the same company are examined, both alike. *Jutland* and *Sky Raiders* allow players to place pieces on separate boards so that their precise locations are unknown to their opponents; similar gameplay can be seen in the modern board game *Battleship*. Despite their similarity, though, the games reflect differing levels of confidence in British militarism. *Jutland* obscures its geopolitics yet can be contextualised by ambivalence and shaken military pride in the wake of the First World War naval conflict that inspired it; on the other hand, *Sky Raiders* makes its geopolitical representations more obvious in its depiction of Blitz bombings, yet its chronological proximity to this traumatic event, and its willingness to play with this event, suggests security and confidence in the state of the Second World War.

Jutland: Ambivalence and Naval Geopolitics

The New Game of "Jutland": A Fascinating Game of Naval Strategy (H. P. Gibson & Sons, c. 1925) is a game published by H. P. Gibson & Sons in about 1925, currently stored at the Imperial War Museum (2018). This game consists of a pad of paper, on each sheet of which the game's boards, two 10x10 grids, are printed (*Figures 37 and 38*).

The date here is estimated from a range of dates given by different archives. The Imperial War Museum dates this game to 1916, implying that this game was produced directly after the Battle of Jutland after which it is named. (In the following analysis, I use italicisation to disambiguate Jutland the battle and Jutland the region from *Jutland* the board game.) For reasons explored below, I doubt that British game manufacturers wished to reproduce Jutland after the battle, so I think this date is unlikely. The online database BoardGameGeek has two entries for *Jutland*, a first edition in 1925 (BoardGameGeek, accessed 2018b) and a second edition in 1955 (BoardGameGeek, accessed 2018c), this latter date being corroborated by the V&A Museum (V&A Collections, 2018). I think this game must be the 1925 version, judging by the age of the paper, the basic printing process, and H. P. Gibson and Sons' prolific activity during this interwar period, as evidenced by their line of *L'Attaque* games.

This game is an early version, possibly the first version, of the modern board game *Battleship*. In *Jutland*, two players, representing a "Red" fleet and a "Blue" fleet, hide ships in a grid and must guess the location of the other player's ships in a similar grid, taking turns to do so. Each ship, when placed on the grid, occupies a number of squares in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal line; if the opponent successfully identifies each square that a ship occupies, that ship is considered sunk. Each player in *Jutland* possesses four ships: a Battleship of four squares, a Cruiser of three squares, and two Destroyers which are each two squares long. The number of "shots" (that is, the number of guesses) each player has per turn in

Jutland depends on how many of their ships survive; the Battleship and Cruiser have two "guns", meaning two guesses, and the Destroyers have one each for a total of six guesses per turn at the beginning of the game, dwindling as each ship and its guns are sunk. If all ships are sunk, the player loses the game.



Figure 37: Cover art of Jutland. (Location: K 84907, London: Imperial War Museum. Author's own photo)

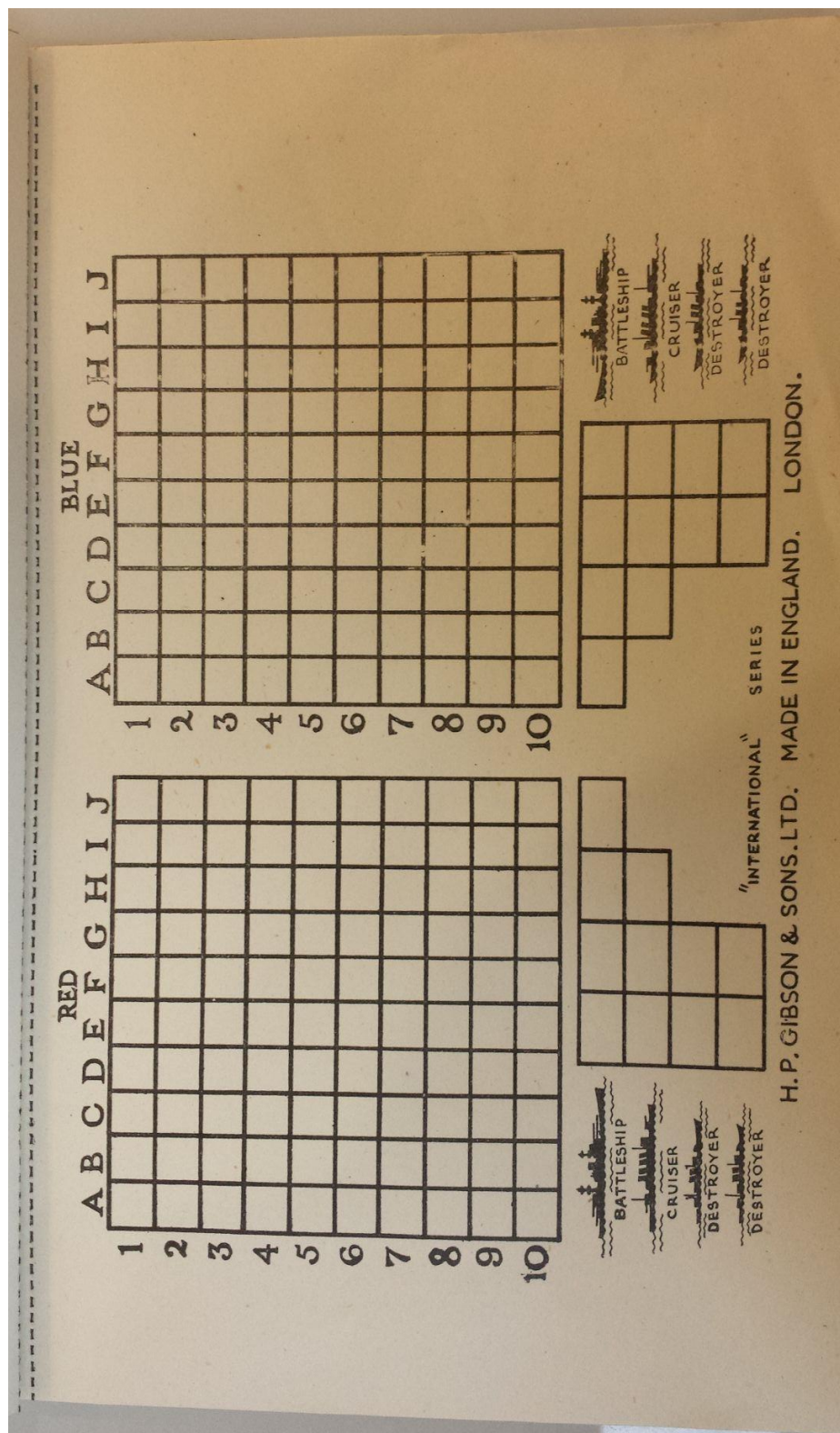


Figure 38: Example sheet of Jutland. (Location: K 84907, London: Imperial War Museum. Author's own photo.)

Each sheet of paper provided with *Jutland* (Figure 38) is a disposable board of two blank 10x10 grids in which ships can be drawn. Illustrated silhouettes representing each type of ship accompany the grids, to help players keep track of which of their opponent's ships have been sunk. The two fleets of ships are practically identical – they are hand-drawn but each Red ship corresponds to its Blue counterpart in its basic shape, number of chimneys, and so on, and vice versa. Similar silhouettes are to be found on the cover of the *Jutland* pad of paper (Figure 37), which depicts two fleets of four ships each, identified as and corresponding to the Red and Blue fleets, firing on each other.

The game of *Jutland* is named for the Battle of Jutland, a naval conflict in the First World War between Britain and Germany. On the night of 31st May 1916, a fleet of German warships hunting for Allied merchant ships off the coast of Norway near the Jutland peninsula encountered a British fleet of ships maintaining the blockade of German shipping (Gilbert, 1994: 251; Stevenson, 2004: 252). The ensuing naval engagement was the only clash of the British and German fleets during the First World War (Hewitt, 2015), despite all of Britain's worries about the race for dreadnoughts and naval superiority which had done so much to stir up public and political anti-German sentiment before the War, and it remains the "leading historical example of an action between steam-powered capital ships". (Stevenson, 2004: 253) H. P. Gibson and Sons' titling of the game *Jutland* invokes Britain's recent naval history to suggest that the game simulates this or similar naval battles, and to place the players in roles as naval commanders by suggesting parallel experiences with the commanders of real naval battles. In this way, *Jutland* becomes a transitional space, used to create the tension of hoping to sink your opponent's ships before they sink yours.

Reminding the British public of the Battle of Jutland is an interesting choice, because the conflict itself was not entirely successful for the British navy. Stevenson lists the casualties: fourteen British ships sunk and 6,094 British sailors

dead, in comparison with eleven ships lost and 2,551 dead on the German side (Stevenson, 2004: 253). The German fleet "clearly had the better of the fighting and exposed some serious British weaknesses" and appeared to be the victor of the battle by ships sunk, the British admiralty believing it had wasted an opportunity to break the German navy (Stevenson, 2004: 254). Despite attempts to spin the battle in a positive light (Gilbert, 1994: 252), and although the German navy had failed to affect the British blockade (Stevenson, 2004: 253), the doubt over Jutland's outcome was felt by the British public; as Vera Brittain recalled,

Were we celebrating a glorious naval victory or lamenting an ignominious defeat[?] We hardly knew; each fresh edition of the newspapers obscured rather than illuminated this really quite important distinction. The one indisputable fact was that hundreds of young men, many of them midshipmen only just in their teens, had gone down without hope of rescue or understanding of the issues to a cold, anonymous grave. (Gilbert, 1994: 252, quoting Brittain, 1933.)

The legacy of the Battle of Jutland was ultimately a grim one, in which victory was qualified and came at an unexpectedly high price. It does not easily fit the narrative of British strength and superiority seen in many other war games studied here; then again, such games were produced at the beginning of wars to highlight the supposed morality of the war, whereas *Jutland* was published some years after the war's end, and about nine years after the Battle of Jutland itself. This period may have allowed the shock of Jutland to lessen, since the battle was eventually considered a victory for Britain in maintaining the blockade.

But this is not the only way in which *Jutland* avoids reviving the trauma of this deadly battle. A closer inspection of the game reveals what appears to be a deliberate decision to avoid all but the most superficial resemblances to the battle. The grids, for example, are blank 10x10 grids, abstract featureless expanses of ocean without any inherent locational information. Compared to similar games that locate their conflicts in geopolitical space (see *Sky Raiders*, below, which

locates a similar guessing-based strategy game over a map of England and Wales), there are no explanations or illustrations to suggest that these grids represent where Jutland was fought. The battleship engagement seen in *Jutland* becomes non-specific, able to represent any naval conflict, or none at all.

The silhouettes seen on the cover and within the game are similar non-specific, judging by my unsuccessful attempts to find convincing matches for all the ships with real ones used in the First World War. I think these illustrated ships are fictionalised to a degree – for example, the two destroyers seen in the Blue fleet on the cover feature an arrangement of three chimney stacks clustered together and what appears to be one large and one small chimney stack next to each other, and I have been unable to identify any naval ship used in the First World War (focusing on the participants in the battle, Britain and Germany) that quite exhibit these same structures. The lack of clear distinctions between the two fleets of ships within the context of the game itself, where both fleets are supposed to be identical, contributes to the conclusion that they do not represent Britain and Germany. This conclusion is supported by situating *Jutland* within two patterns of representation made apparent by the other board games in this thesis. Firstly, *Transports* and *Boer or Briton*, discussed above, demonstrate how geopolitical British games often code Britain's wartime enemies as the colour black; the colours of Red versus Blue do not match this pattern, and both these colours are coded as Allied colours in games such as *The "Strand" War Game* and *The Way to Berlin*. Secondly, as will be explored in the next chapter, the trend in H. P. Gibson and Sons interwar games was to pit two identical armies resembling the British military against each other in their war games; *L'Attaque*, for example, was updated from a pre-First World War design which pitted a British army against a French army to an interwar design which homogenised both armies as British.

So the game of *Jutland* distances itself from the Battle of Jutland by being cautiously non-specific about its use of geography and its representation of navies

as Red and Blue rather than as any easily-identified geopolitical actors. But why call the game *Jutland* in the first place if it avoids reflecting this conflict; why not opt for a more generic title instead (like the modern *Battleship*)? As I argued earlier, invoking a historical battle, and thus suggesting a connection between the players' actions and the actions of naval commanders in real battleship skirmishes, operates as a strategy to immerse the player in their role, and thus increase the tension of the game, even though the presentation of the game itself is plain and ahistorical. This may well connect with Stiegler's suggestion that simulations act as a form of cultural memory (Crogan, 2011: 162, citing Stiegler, 2009). The experience of playing *Jutland* forms a connection with the experience of fighting a naval battle, and the name of Jutland draws this out even if the actual form of the game does not. Another, more cynical reason is that the flourishing of war games in the early First World War proved how profitable war games with some identifiable basis in real geopolitics could be, if only in the short term (Brown, 1996: 84-5). As for the specific choice of name, if *Jutland* had to invoke a specific naval conflict for entertainment and commercial viability, it could only have been Jutland – this was the only steam-powered naval battle Britain fought in the First World War before the naval war moved primarily underwater with submarine action (Stevenson, 2004: 255).

Geopolitically, H. P. Gibson and Sons takes a contradictory and ambivalent position with *Jutland*. The game uses Jutland's name as a tool to sell games and to be more engaging as a game, yet its design avoids invoking the trauma of Britain's costly survival of this battle. *Jutland* may be seen as a complement to board and video games which celebrate the successful, spectacular war. Cultural geographers and game critics highlight the ways in which the militarised video game industry elides trauma and difficult moral questions to fictionalise a successful war for entertainment purposes (Fisher, 2011; Stahl, 2010); here, as *Jutland* fictionalises a disappointing battle for Britain, its presentation is muted. Further along the spectrum, a traumatic war cannot be entertaining – note how most of the First

World War games in this thesis are from 1914, and that *Jutland* is from 1925, leaving a gap from 1915 onwards where war games are conspicuously absent. This underlines an emergent theme in militarised board games and video games. Militarism emphasises its successes; an overly traumatic war cannot be made entertaining, and therefore games of this nature are rarely published, and therefore the ludic geopolitics of war have a commercial reason to lean towards a vision of war as empowering and unproblematic.

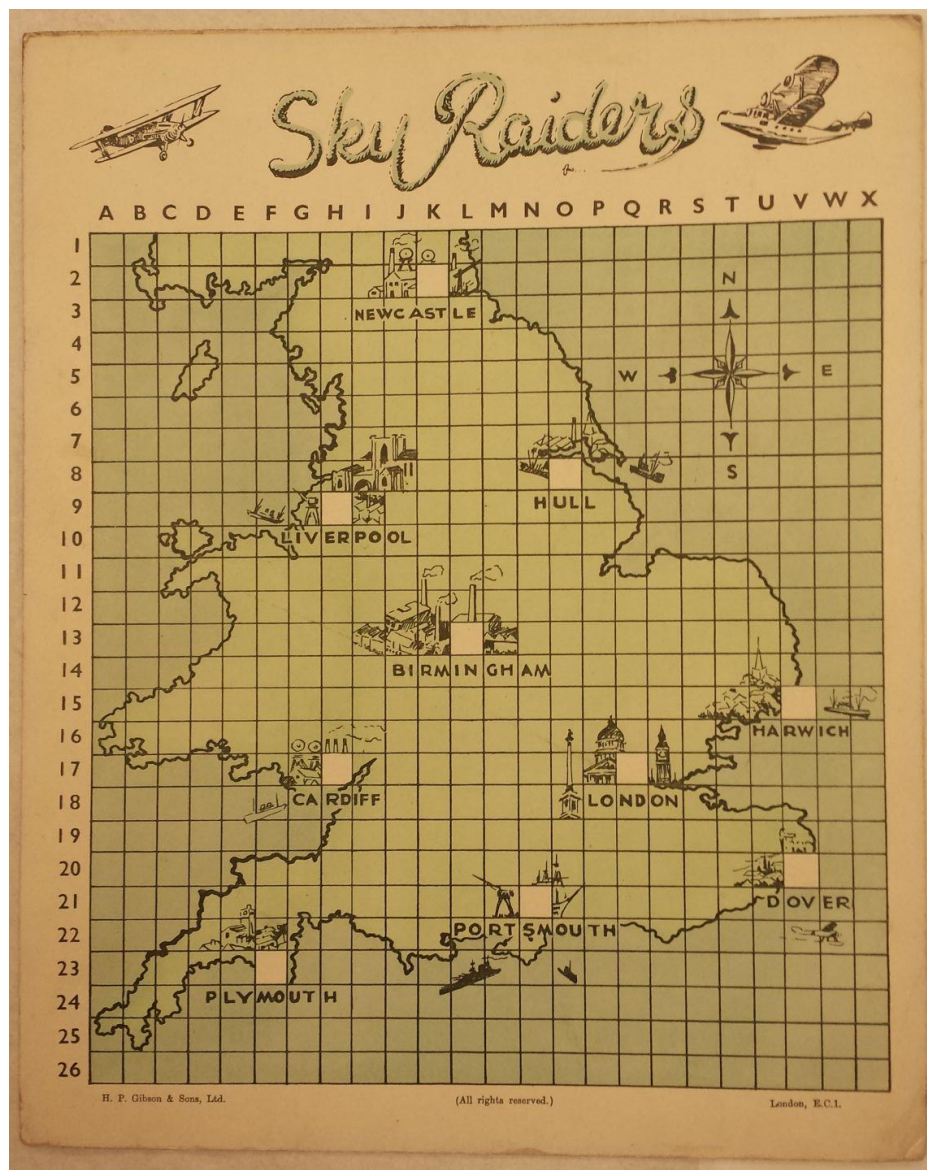
Sky Raiders: Playing with Trauma

Sky Raiders (H. P. Gibson and Sons, c. 1942) is a game published during the Second World War in 1942 (as dated by Lewin, 2012: 203) by H. P. Gibson and Sons. The version of the game studied here is in the Edinburgh Museum collections centre.

Sky Raiders is a strategy game which uses similar guesswork gameplay to that seen in H. P. Gibson and Sons' earlier game *Jutland* and the modern *Battleship*. This game consists of two boards featuring the same design, a 24x26 grid laid over a map of England and Wales, with certain squares of this grid corresponding to ten towns and cities. One board is printed in black ink outlines with a red title and red plane silhouette superimposed on the image, and the other is coloured in flat green and blue for land and sea (*Figure 39*).

Two players take one board each. One player, the "Raider", has a large playing piece representing a squadron of nine bomber aircraft flying in formation. An example placement of this squadron piece, depicting the appearance and arrangement of these bombers, is printed on the red board's grid. (The squadron piece itself is missing from the version I studied, but an image of it can be found in Lewin, 2012: 203-4.) Their goal is to move this squadron across the board and bomb every town, bombing being the result of a plane overlapping a town. The second player, the "Defender", is unable to see the Raider's location – they have

three "shots" (guesses) per turn to locate the squadron and must shoot down all nine planes. The Defender may take three extra shots if the leader, the bomber at the head of the formation, is located, and shot planes may not bomb towns, but the Raider may move two squares after bombing a town, making locating them harder. Thus, *Sky Raiders* expands on the guesswork gameplay of *Jutland* by focusing on the location of one mobile piece rather than multiple static pieces, which allows players to attempt to bluff their opponents during the game.



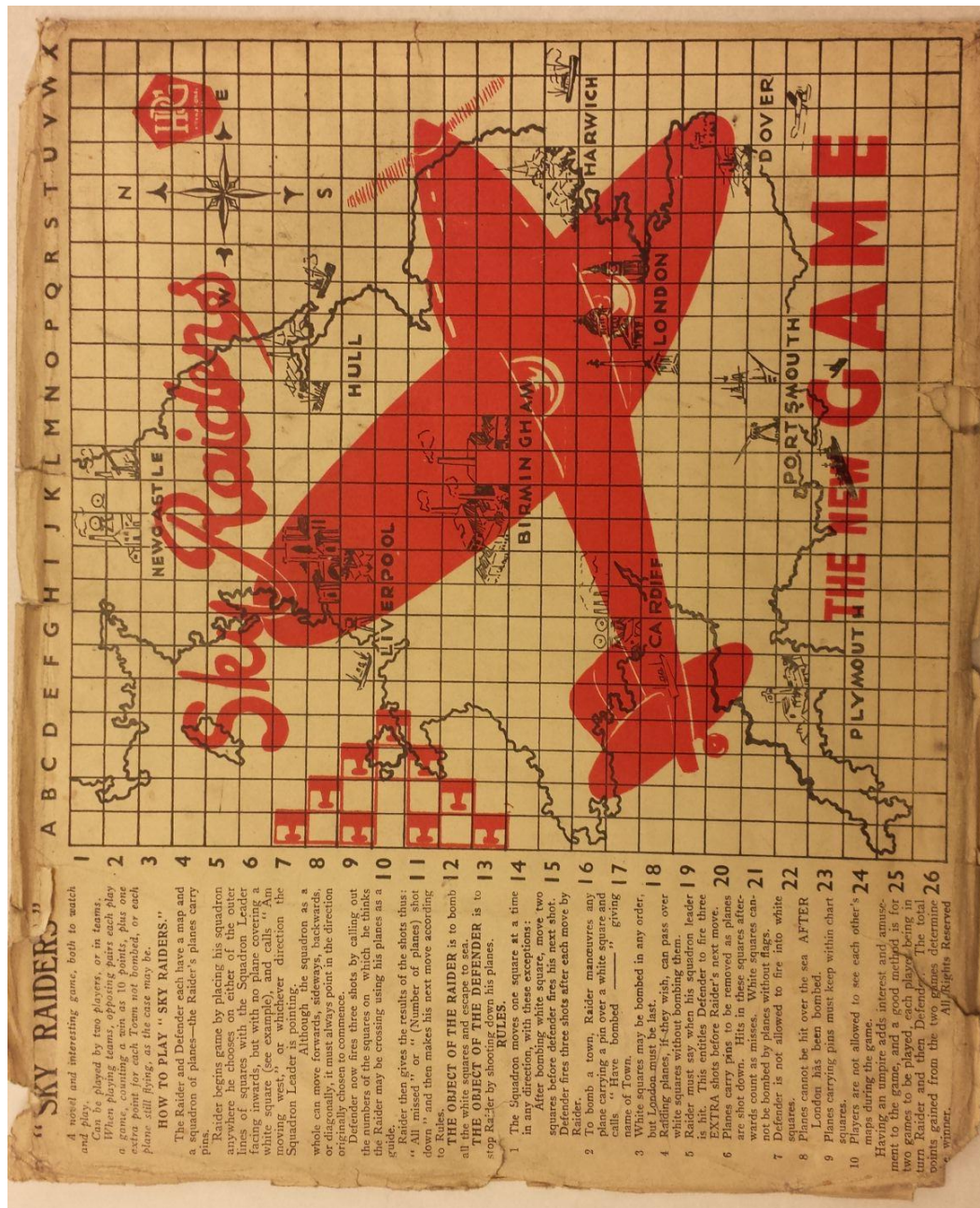


Figure 39: The two boards of Sky Raiders. (Location: MC12988 box 15, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo.)

This game is of a piece with *Pinpoint the Bomber*, in that it depicts bombing in the Second World War and thus is best considered in the light of the Battle of Britain, from 1940 to 1941 (Royal Air Force Museum, 2012). Like *Pinpoint the Bomber*, this

game was published in 1942, as estimated by the Edinburgh Museum collections centre and corroborated by Lewin (2012: 203) and BoardGameGeek (accessed 2018a). This places the production of the game directly after the German bombing campaign on Britain – the Blitz – and therefore the design of the game probably recreates public perceptions of the previous year's bombing, with the Raider as the German air force (the Luftwaffe) and the Defender as Britain.

Quite apart from the fact that *Sky Raiders* is a game where one player tries to bomb England and Wales, several design features of the game confirm this theory and demonstrate how the British popular geopolitics of the Blitz are constituted by it. Firstly, the planes illustrated on the red board appear to be simplified images of real aircraft in the Second World War, rather than being imaginary. (I focus on the red board here because the blue and green board features no aircraft imagery.) To evaluate these images, in addition to comparing with photographs from the Second World War, I used as an intertext another later H. P. Gibson and Sons game, *Battle of Britain* (H. P. Gibson and Sons, c. 1970s). This game falls outside the current research range of this thesis, decades after the Second World War, but its playing pieces are cards which feature names and simple silhouettes of aircraft used in both the British and German air forces during this War. (*Figure 40*) I used these playing pieces as reference material for how a board game illustrator working for H. P. Gibson and Sons might simplify the designs of airplanes to create distinctive and recognisable shapes (perhaps the same illustrator for both games, although this is speculation).



Figure 40: Silhouettes from Battle of Britain used for comparison with Sky Raiders.
(Location: No reference number available, Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)

Using this reference, the large plane silhouette which covers the red board most closely resembles a British fighter plane, most likely a Hurricane. This is suggested by the rounded wing tips and the single propeller on the front of the plane, matching Hurricane photographs and the Hurricane silhouette in *Battle of Britain*. The Raider's squadron of planes, visible on the red board to illustrate an example placement of the squadron playing piece, all appear to be the same plane, and this would have to be a bomber plane, given its purpose in the game. The small silhouette is too simple to be a match to any of the likely planes in *Battle of Britain* (it is missing a nose and the wings are rectangular rather than tapered or streamlined), but the best fit is the Dornier plane, which features similar relatively squared-off wing tips. The bombers of *Sky Raiders* may also be influenced by memories of the Blitz, and of German bombers passing overhead as viewed from the ground, as well as by the small size of the grid squares each bomber must fit in, leading to exaggeratedly square wings as a visual shorthand for German aircraft.

Comparing the representation of the two planes of *Sky Raiders* is instructive; the Dornier bombers are small (because of the grid's square size) and abstracted to a simple design, whereas the Hurricane is drawn in more detail and visually dominates the board, despite not having a physical, tangible presence in the playing pieces of *Sky Raiders* as the Dornier squadron does. At this point of the Second World War, the Battle of Britain was largely over (Royal Air Force Museum, 2012), with Britain surviving to conduct its own strategic bombing campaign against Germany, as represented in *Pinpoint the Bomber*. The large Hurricane becomes a symbol of British air superiority, covering and protecting the land, suggesting the British fighters' capacity to repel the German bombers. *Sky Raiders'* visual design indicates confidence and pride in the Royal Air Force, the Defender, and marks the aerial territory of Britain as unassailably British, with Germany's bombers to the side appearing puny by comparison.

The towns and cities which are mapped as bombing targets in *Sky Raiders* also reflects the bombing strategies of the Blitz. These cities are mostly major settlements apart from Harwich, which was more important in the Second World War as a naval base (Anonymous, 2012). All these settlements apart from Birmingham are ports, meaning they could be important to the naval war – this is emphasised on *Sky Raiders*' blue and green board by small cartoon warships depicted sailing in and out of these ports. Additionally, each city is accompanied by a small image of a fictionalised skyline. Many of these depict the city in question as primarily industrial, such as Birmingham and Newcastle; others, like London and Liverpool, represent the city's cultural architecture, depicting churches and landmarks. So the bombing targets that the Raider must aim for are variously depicted as centres of military or naval activity, industry, or culture.

This aligns with the patterns in German offensives during the Blitz. Beevor cites an attack on Portsmouth's naval base (Beevor, 2012: 132), and Gilbert lists attacks on docks in Liverpool, Swansea and Bristol (Gilbert, 1995: 125), accounting for the representation of naval activity on the *Sky Raiders* board. Beevor further cites bombing raids on "industrial targets in the midlands" (Beevor, 2012: 137), as probably represented by Birmingham. Gilbert notes one large-scale offensive in September 1940 against "London, Southampton, Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool and Manchester" (Gilbert, 1995: 125). These are far from the only examples of Blitz attacks, but the cross-section they give represents the range of targets attacked during the Second World War, and indicates that the range of targets offered in *Sky Raiders* is an attempt to emulate the bombing strategy of the Germans. Not all the cities listed here are included in *Sky Raiders*, but pragmatism, the need to select several evenly-spaced cities across England and Wales to give the Raider reason to be in most regions of the map, probably played a part in the design of the game.

So the choice of cities targeted in *Sky Raiders* and the depiction of planes are evidence of an attempt at an accurate depiction of the Blitz. The game recreates a conflict that had occurred only a year previously, and thus it allows British civilians to play at a battle which had had traumatic effects on individuals (Calder, 1991) and on the country, with 60,000 civilian deaths and 4 million damaged homes (Pugh, 2000: 257) – *Sky Raiders* arguably plays on these traumatic memories with its simplified images of German bombers as shorthand for silhouettes many civilians may have seen for themselves as a symbol of attack. This is striking for a game produced so soon to the conflict it represents, and it is more striking still that the German side, the Raider, has a chance of winning this board game version of the conflict (by bombing all ten cities on the board and escaping the map).

Contrast this with games like *The Way to Berlin* and the *Royal Scientific War Games*, from the beginning of the First World War, which offer a vision of a burgeoning conflict in which Britain is a protagonist on the offense, with Germany not even represented as an actor in some games like *Way to Berlin* – this is not a completely fair comparison, given that these games are from a different World War and from the beginning of major conflicts (unlike the post-Blitz *Sky Raiders*), but this unfairness highlights the absence of games from late in the First World War, after it had become clear that Britons were dying by the thousands with no end to the war in sight. We can also contrast *Sky Raiders* with H. P. Gibson's earlier *Jutland*, discussed above – both games invoke a prior British-German conflict, but whereas *Sky Raiders* strongly represents its conflict in its visual design, *Jutland* offers a more abstract battlefield and homogeneous player roles, invoking the Battle of Jutland in name only.

But the clearest contrast to draw is between *Sky Raiders* and *Black-Out*, the other Blitz-era game in this thesis. *Sky Raiders* depicts a version of the Battle of Britain in which Germany could successfully attack cities across the United Kingdom because of the normalisation of the bombing raids and the morale of the British people. Yet

recall that *Black-Out* is apparently unable to depict a bombed London or to engage with the violence of the war at all, paradoxically at once focusing on public bodies ensuring safety against the Blitz and removing almost all references to the Blitz or to potential violent or symbolic destruction from wartime London.

So what makes H. P. Gibson and Sons able to play with recent traumatic geopolitics in the Second World War in a way in which games manufacturers from the First World War, and H. P. Gibson and Sons itself in the interwar period, were apparently unable or unwilling to do? Timing plays a part. *Sky Raiders* took place after the Battle of Britain had been survived, so that its air war can appear playful, an alternate history of the current war rather than a possible future of destruction. In comparison, *Black-Out* was produced either at the outset of the Second World War or during the Battle of Britain, when victory was not certain, and *Jutland* was produced after a battle that dented Britain's naval pride.

But further examination of the public geopolitical perception of the Blitz offers an additional explanation. Calder has shown that the "myth of the Blitz" is a reimagining of history (Calder, 1991), but social histories of this period suggest that there really was a form of desensitisation to German air raids, even if this was not quite the stoic nationalism that the myth of the Blitz suggests. Pugh hints at this when he claims that "the population became inured to regular bombing raids" (Pugh, 2000: 257), and Beevor elaborates on how night bombings became part of everyday life:

Many complained of the sirens, whose 'prolonged banshee howlings', as [Winston] Churchill called them, were soon reduced to give people a chance to sleep. 'The sirens go off at approximately the same time every evening and in the poorer districts queues of people carrying blankets, thermos flasks, and babies begin to form quite early outside the air-raid shelters.' Boarded-up shop windows smashed by bomb blast carried stickers announcing 'Business as usual' and the inhabitants of houses destroyed in the east end of London placed paper Union

Jacks on the piles of rubble which had been their homes. (Beevor, 2012: 138, quoting Panter-Downes, 1971: 97-8)

The public displays of nationalism and tenacity seen in Beevor's account, and the contrasting individual traumas suggested in Calder's account, complicate any suggestion of consistent individual reactions to Blitz geopolitics, but the historical literature shows that the signs of danger and imminent destruction became remarkably well-integrated into the mundane routines of the British public. Although injuries and loss during the Blitz took a toll on civilians, the Blitz lost its affective power to traumatize (if not its physical power) as it became normalised in popular British geopolitics. If games become an overlooked site of militarism by making the political banal (Shaw, 2010: 791), *Sky Raiders* is an extension of a conflict which had already become banal, an annoyance as well as a threat to life. This is Stiegler's idea of cultural memory again (Crogan, 2011: 162, citing Stiegler, 2009), as referred to in my analysis of *Jutland*, but it is an experience of war which can be safely simulated and played with this time because the trauma is not so raw in *Sky Raiders* as it was in *Jutland*. *Sky Raiders* can suggest a version of Britain which can be destroyed by Germany because the battle has already been won and already become passé.

The geopolitics of *Sky Raiders* are generally straightforward, yet interesting in how they operate; the relative size of planes hints at a pride in British militarism, yet the game itself is a recreation of the Battle of Britain which allows Germany to claim victory by evading Britain's defence forces. I have compared this game to *Jutland* in how it represents previous battles, with *Jutland* being more guarded in its representation. There are two key differences in the battles of each game which explain this difference. Firstly, whereas the Battle of Jutland was a singular shocking event, the only battleship clash of the First World War, the Blitz became a mundane part of British social life, and thus a less sensitive subject for board games. Secondly, although both conflicts were successful in preventing the German military from achieving victory over Britain, the Battle of Jutland was also

framed as a failure to crush the German navy, making it perhaps a more embarrassing conflict to celebrate than the Blitz. By thinking of *Sky Raiders* in this way, we can frame its geopolitics as the product of both banal militarism and triumphant militarism, able to explore a recent war with confidence in the British military.

Discussion: Context and Ambivalence

The games in this chapter each present new formations of war which test the player's tactical ability. They represent a range of aspects of war in Britain from the First and Second World Wars and encourage the player to interact with these formations in different ways, by outmanoeuvring opponents or building flexible hands of cards or controlling spaces on the board.

Many of the observations made about strategy games in the previous chapter still hold true in this chapter. All the games in this chapter are played on various types of map; a transitional space is formed where the player acts as a strategist in an all-powerful role. The player is removed enough from the battlefield space and from their own military units that they do not have to confront the trauma of war as they play with it. Yet in the previous chapter, I observed that this playfulness is also facilitated by the use of draughts as a familiar game structure, allowing players to toy with war without any disastrous failures disrupting the geopolitical messages of the game. This is not true in this chapter; the new gameplay forms offered are less familiar, so that more of a learning process may be involved. Additionally, the "fog of war" of *Jutland* and *Sky Raiders* disrupts the player's power over the map, so that tactics and strategies may be undone by an inability to read the state of play.

Here, we see what I have argued is the main theme of the games in this chapter: ambivalence; an acknowledgement of the capacity of armies, even player-

controlled British armies, to fail. The ludic geopolitics of these games are inherently less certain or less strident than the geopolitical narratives of games analysed in earlier analysis chapters, even if the presentation of these games is from a nationalist British perspective (as in the *Royal Scientific War Games*). In the following discussion, I will explore how such ambivalence is inherent to the strategy war game format.

The ways in which this ambivalence is emphasised or de-emphasised have varied from game to game in this chapter. These games present a range of possible narratives about the war that the players are about to re-enact on the game board, and thus a range of approaches to the representation of the geopolitical in the game. Some games embrace the geopolitics that inspired them, for various reasons: the *Royal Scientific War Games* each claim to simulate the battles facing Britain and Germany in the near future, for populist or educational reasons respectively; *Boer or Britain* similarly takes influence from the Second Boer War; and *Sky Raiders* plays with recent history to process the Second World War bombing campaign that Britain had survived. Other games, however, seek to disguise the geopolitics that they are products of – *Jutland* and *Black-Out* avoid almost all representation of the battles that they are based on, and *Transports* is a coded representation of the possible coming naval war between Britain and Germany.

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the overt or covert geopolitics of strategy games by suggesting that this is influence by their positions in history; for example, I argue that *Jutland* disguises its influences because it draws inspiration from a bruising and traumatic battle for Britain, whereas its descendant *Sky Raiders* is contextualised by survival and victory and therefore can play with the idea of German success more freely. I want to underline this point by highlighting the absence of jingoism in these games. In contrast to previous games like *The Way to Berlin* and *Chase the Enemy*, none of these games treat the victory of Britain or

the Allies as inevitable or a moral duty, at least not within the context of the game's world. The *Royal Scientific War Games* feature some nationalist iconography on their cover, but this appears to be a marketing strategy rather than a belief in British superiority inherent in the design of the games themselves. These are more guarded representation of British geopolitics, reflecting the process of war rather than the expected or real outcomes of war.

Such caution reflects the nature of the games being played here. Almost all the games in this chapter are strategy games between two players, simulating conflicts between two geopolitical military assemblages. (The exception is *Black-Out*, which simulates civilian life during war rather than the battles themselves.) Strategy games depend on equality between players; as they are tests of superior strategic thinking against an opponent, in a standard strategy game both players should have as close to an equal chance of victory as possible, and neither should have an advantage inherent in the design of the board and the pieces. This commitment to equality is particularly visible in symmetrical board games such as the *Royal Scientific War Games*, which contrive to give both players the same movement options despite the geography of the battlefield being mapped in each game. (Evaluating asymmetric games like *Transports* and *Sky Raiders* is more difficult, but both sides in both games have offensive options to meet victory conditions – these games do not tell narratives of defence and inevitable loss for one side as *Chase the Enemy* does.) From these initial equal conditions, players make their own choices to enact plans and react to their opponent's choices, and the game unfolds in a complex and often unpredictable manner towards potentially millions of possible ending states. Chess alone has an estimated 10^{120} possibilities for how a game might unfold (although this includes all possibilities – games involving poor or stupid moves rather than purely sensible games) (Shannon, 1949: 4), and many of these games similarly offer a variety of moves at each stage which explode into a huge array of possibilities, even assuming that players are playing sensibly rather than randomly.

Because of this, strategy games more naturally correlate to representations of war in which both sides may claim victory, seen in these games and in some chequerboard games like *The "Strand" War Game*. They are usually more concerned with modelling the capabilities of military tactics and technologies and the implications for movement through geopolitical space than with depictions and predictions of military victory for one side. This is the logic behind military training games like *Kriegsspiel* and others discussed in the literature review, tests of how aspiring tacticians use their resources and terrain without any extra advantages. (Some training war games may simulate a real geopolitical network of nation-states and actors to model the potential outcomes of tensions and war in an area. I participated in an example at the Connections UK war gaming conference, modelling a fictionalised desert war in which teams of players played different nation-states or other political-military bodies, each with their own goals. In this case and others like it, advantages and disadvantages for teams of players may be modelled in the game to represent the relative wealth and power of different states. The goal here is not to test player intelligence, but rather to model the decisions they make to model the consequences of the geopolitical situation being simulated. In other words, these games are more of an analytical tool for geopolitics than a training tool for military officers. Sabin discusses the creation and purpose of such games in detail in *Simulating War* (Sabin, 2012).) Military strategy games and commercial strategy games alike simulate the geographies and militaries of a conflict and allow the players to negotiate their own outcome through play.

By contrast, track games feature an inevitable victory for one player, usually the same end-point. This is more useful for a representation of war which predicts a certain outcome; *The Way to Berlin* and *Dash to Berlin* both confidently predict the fall of Germany, for example. This vision of war is sometimes less cautious about the traumatic violence of war, glossing over it with simple instructions for the movement of pieces rather than modelling the loss of troops or sidestepping

violent geopolitics as strategy games have been shown to do. Crucially, it is also often more nationalist, not allowing a possible future where the enemy wins to be simulated; the geopolitical messages of track games are much stronger and less ambivalent about the outcomes of war than strategy games.

This is not to say that strategy games are any less geopolitical than track games. It is important to observe that, although strategy games are less conducive to a jingoistic mode of popular geopolitics than track games, the underlying assumptions which shape their simulation of geopolitical conflicts are a product of militarism. War is treated as a natural science rather than an act of violence, most obviously in the *Royal Scientific War Games*. Few of these war games model any aspects of peace or diplomacy; this is not the purpose of war games, which use war as an entertaining and tense scenario for players to navigate and try to outwit one another in, but they also collectively simulate a world in which war is the sole method of geopolitical negotiation. (The game *Diplomacy* could be mentioned here, as this falls outside the remit of this thesis but is based on players forming alliances to fight over a world map. However, as there can only be one victor, these alliances are fragile, and only serve war against other players. Diplomacy in this game facilitates war rather than peace.) Games like *Sky Raiders* normalise war as a natural state of affairs by reflecting the effects of war on civilians in a banal manner rather than an exceptional one - unless Britain has experienced fresh trauma or fear or damage to its population or army, as in *Jutland* and *Black-Out*, in which case the process of war is carefully made invisible rather than being challenged or protested against. So military activity influences the spaces of these board games to such a degree that no alternatives to militarism can even be considered, even when strategy games are ambivalent about war.

In this chapter, a variety of strategy games have been discussed, each recreating and contributing to militarism in its own way. By jumping between different systems of gameplay, we get a complete sense of the many different potential

understandings in Britain of war and geopolitical tension, but these are all snapshots of different designers at different times, making it difficult to gauge the evolution and transformation of geopolitical and militarist discourses in Britain through the early 20th century. However, there is a family of war games that allows us to observe this evolution. During the interwar period, the company H. P. Gibson and Sons acquired the rights to publish a French board game called *L'Attaque*, a war game based on incomplete information with potential for bluffing or misdirecting the opponent. H. P. Gibson and Sons would use this gameplay innovation in several other strategy games produced during the interwar period. It is these games that I will study in the final analysis chapter, to illustrate how a basic game design can evolve alongside military technology and new geopolitical norms in Britain.

***L'Attaque*: Shifting Geopolitics**

In the previous chapter, I examined *Sky Raiders* and *Jutland*. These two games were produced by the same manufacturer, H. P. Gibson and Sons Limited. Founded in 1903 by Harry Percy Gibson, the company began as a card game manufacturer, but produced board games and jigsaw puzzles after the First World War. During the interwar period, the company could be found exhibiting their games, including a range of war games, at several British Industries fairs. H. P. Gibson and Sons survived the destruction of their London premises in a Second World War bombing raid, and still trades today under the name Gibsons, still owned by the Gibson family, producing board games and jigsaw puzzles.¹³ (This biography is sourced from Grace's Guide, 2016, and Gibsons, 2017.) As the oldest surviving game manufacturer in Britain, Gibsons is an important corporation in the history of British war games. This fourth and final analysis chapter of the thesis focuses on this company, and on a particularly interesting set of war games published by it.

During the interwar period, H. P. Gibson and Sons published a board game called *L'Attaque*. This is a strategy game in which two players attack each other with an army of different pieces formed of cards with illustrations on only one side, representing two armies on a battlefield. Each player only sees the blank back of their opponent's pieces and does not know which is which. *L'Attaque*, then, is a mixture of board tactics and bluffing, as players try to determine which of their opponent's pieces are important or dangerous, while misdirecting them as to which of their own pieces are important. As I noted in my discussion of *Jutland* and *Sky Raiders*, such gameplay subverts the powerful and all-knowing role of the

¹³ To disambiguate, I refer to this company as H. P. Gibson and Sons when discussing its history, and as Gibsons when discussing the present day.

player. And just like in those games, the geopolitics and ideologies of *L'Attaque* thus appear more ambivalent, as I explore over the course of this chapter.

But although I name the chapter after *L'Attaque*, H. P. Gibson and Sons also produced three related games over the course of the interwar period, all employing this blend of tactics and bluffing: *Dover Patrol*, in which the pieces represent naval forces; *Aviation*, based on aerial dogfights; and *Tri-Tactics*, in which the two armies are a mixture of land, sea, and air-based units. In other words, this is a family of war games, all published at different times during the interwar period, which all feature iterations on the same basic form of gameplay.

These games are also notable for how widespread they are. In contrast to many games in earlier chapters which can only be found at certain archives in incomplete states, every game archive I visited had at least one H. P. Gibson and Sons product in storage. *L'Attaque*, in particular, was present in some form at every archive I visited. The games in this chapter, in fact, appear to have been successful on a global scale as well as a national scale, advertisements for these games appearing in newspapers as geographically distant as the *New York Times* (1943) and the *Times of India* (1932). If some analyses in this thesis have been shaped by absence and the loss of objects, then this chapter's analysis is shaped by ubiquity, almost spoilt for choice in the different versions of each board game which can be found and explored.

This series of games, then, forms a perfect case study of how geopolitical influences may produce certain tropes and discourses in war games. *L'Attaque* and its related games may be compared with one another and with the popular geopolitics of the interwar period to see how commercial war gaming represented war as a playful activity according to contemporaneous geopolitical tensions at the state and popular levels. Different versions of the same game can be tracked, and the changes between editions explored to demonstrate the simultaneous evolution of practical, popular and ludic geopolitics.

I was kindly allowed into the Gibsons archives to examine the *L'Attaque* family of war games. There are sadly no surviving documents shedding light on the development of these games – any such documents are presumed to have been destroyed in the Second World War blitz attack – yet the archives preserve several different versions of each of the four games studied here. In addition, other versions can be found in childhood and war museums across the country, albeit in varying states of completion. Between these objects, we can reconstruct the development and alteration over time of each war game, compared to the shifting geopolitical contexts against which they were sold to the British public. I thus use this final analysis chapter to examine these games as a case study of how board games in the early 20th century were informed by and responded to geopolitics.

***L'Attaque*: Armies and Anglicisation**

L'Attaque (Edan, 1908; H. P. Gibson and Sons, 1925c, 1925d) is a strategy game for two players, published by H. P. Gibson and Sons in 1925 (Lewin, 2012: 159). Each player controls an army of pieces, including a flag, and tries to capture the other player's flag to win. The pieces are card, illustrated on one side and blank on the other, so that the nature of each piece is concealed from the opponent until they attempt to capture the piece. This game was primarily studied in the Gibsons archives (see *Figure 41* for two *L'Attaque* boxes found here), although the game is by far the most widespread of the games I study in this thesis; every major archive I visited had at least one version of *L'Attaque* in storage. This suggests that *L'Attaque* was the most successful war game studied here, produced throughout the interwar period and distributed across the country.

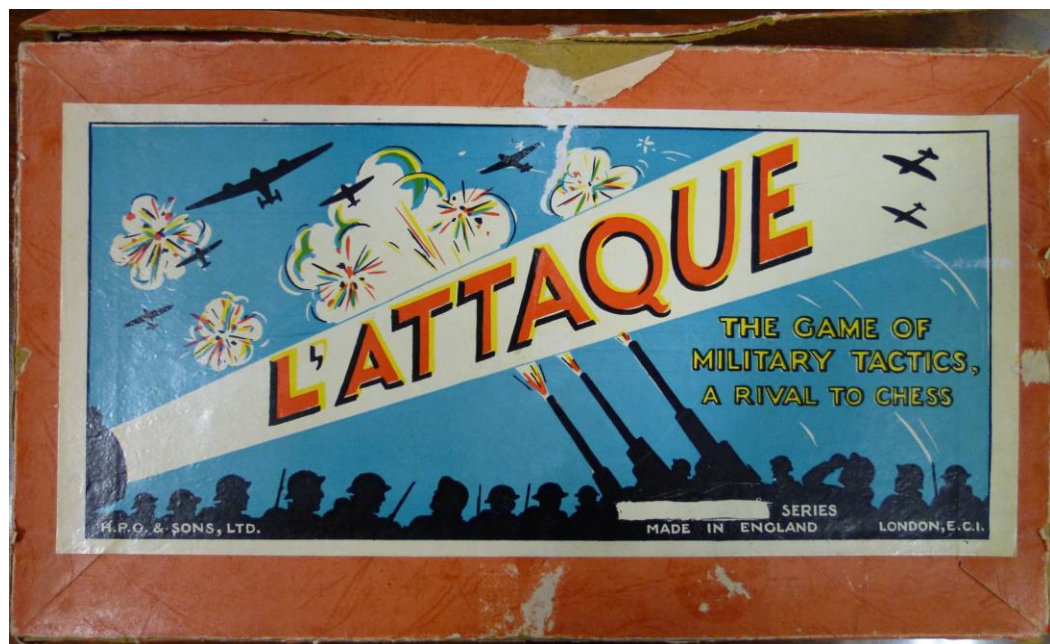
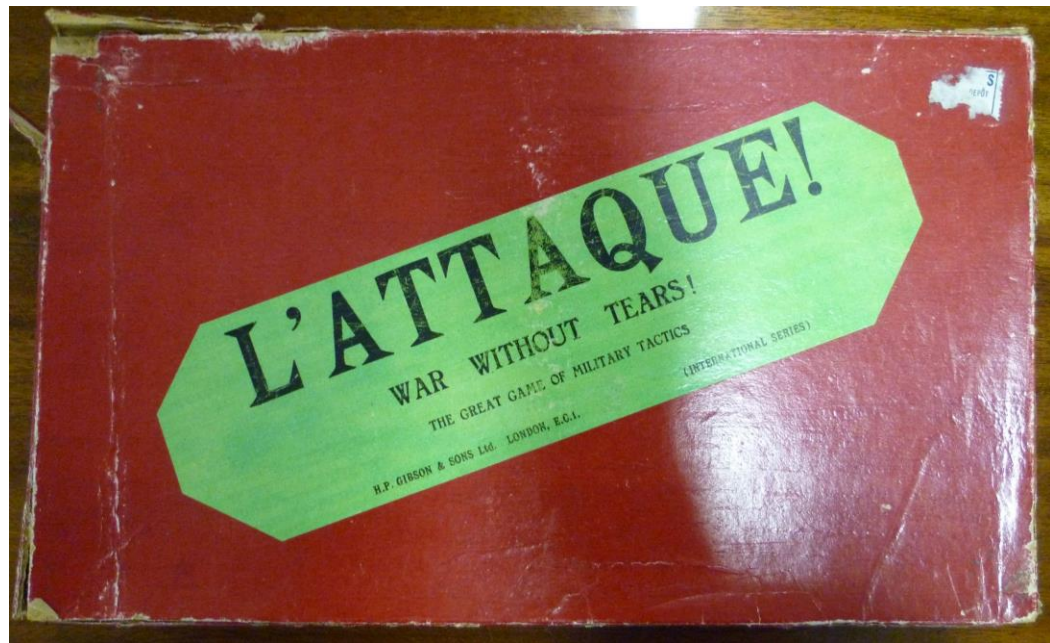


Figure 41: Two examples out of many different designs / publications of L'Attaque. Note the slogans on each: "War Without Tears!", "A Rival to Chess." (Various locations, Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photos.)

L'Attaque is not a creation of H. P. Gibson and Sons; it is originally a French game, patented by a woman called Hermance Edan in 1908, and published in France in 1910 (Cazaux and Knowlton, 2017: 138; Lewin, 2012: 159). In one of the boards of *L'Attaque* studied in this section, the text "Breveté S.G.D.G" still survives, alluding to Edan's French patent (see *Figure 42*). However, the game was not successful in France during its publication there; it became more famous in Britain when the rights to publication in Britain were bought by H. P. Gibson and Sons in 1925 (Cazaux and Knowlton, 2017: 139; Lewin, 2012: 159). *L'Attaque* was republished with new illustrations several times over the next few decades; several different versions produced by Gibson are examined during this section.

Two points are to be remembered here. Firstly, the dates are important; *L'Attaque* was published in Britain in the interwar period, but it predates the First World War, and we will see how this mixed historical context may have affected the original design and subsequent redesigns of the game. The second important point is the designer's identity. I cannot find enough (reliable) information about Edan to expand upon the formation of *L'Attaque* here, but it is interesting to note that *L'Attaque* is the product of a female designer, as opposed to what has seemed to be a very male-dominated industry in this thesis. Indeed, Edan may have been inspired by the patent of another female French game designer (Cazaux and Knowlton, 2017: 138-9).

Peterson quotes a 1975 interview with Linda Mosca, said to be the first published female wargame designer (incorrectly, as Edan's game shows), in which Mosca connects the gendering of war and war games; war was culturally considered "man's domain" whereas women were expected to "direct their leisure time energies into other, less aggressive (less stimulating) activities" (Mosca, quoted in Peterson, 2014). I am comparing the United States in 1975 with France in 1908 here, but the gendering of ludic geopolitics which Mosca identifies has been pervasive throughout this thesis; for example, the only other notable female figure

in this thesis so far, Annie of *Annie Wants Her Stripes*, is a fictional figure devised to make light of the idea of women in the military. I could not find enough about Edan to be sure, but it seems safe to assume that Edan, along with most women, were excluded from both war-making and war-gaming at this time. The point is that although the versions of *L'Attaque* studied here were published by Gibson, the design of this game is not the product of a corporate publisher, but rather of an individual designer who may not have had access to military spaces during the pre-First World War period in France.

At first, this appears to disrupt the idea of the masculine war that has been a background presence throughout the thesis so far. Even as H. G. Wells wrote that *Little Wars* was a game for boys and girls who like boys' games (Wells, 1913), war gaming was not just a game for boys. *L'Attaque*, arguably one of the most successful British war games of the 20th century (if its ubiquity in museum archives is any indication), was the creation of women. But all this analysis of the female designer is not reflected in the game itself; women remain completely absent from *L'Attaque*. Glancing through the images in this chapter reveals rows and rows of male soldiers, even as we move into the post-war era where women have become far more visible in warfare through the ATS and wartime manual labour. And the way that *L'Attaque* was discussed in advertisements and newspaper articles contributed to the masculine war in gaming; for example, Gordon says of the game that "if there are two men in the house no child ever gets a chance to play with it" (Gordon, 1939). So in its origins *L'Attaque* resists the masculine war ideology, but in its form, content and apparent audience *L'Attaque* very much reinforces it.

In *L'Attaque*, each player has 36 pieces, arranged in any configuration in one half of a 10x10 board. The board (*Figure 42*) has a few impassable river tiles in the centre, creating bottlenecks for pieces moving to the opponent's side of the board. The pieces (*Figure 43*) represent an entire army, with soldiers ranging in rank from scouts to a Commander-in-Chief. Each army has a flag, a spy and four mines. Each

piece, except for the spies and the mines, has a numerical value based on the type of piece; the flag has a value of 1, scouts are 2, and so on up to the Commander at 10. The objective of the game is to locate and capture the opponent's flag.

Players take turns to move one piece at a time. Most pieces move one space at a time, though flags and mines must remain stationary, and in some versions scouts can move in a straight line as far as they can unimpeded. Players may attempt to take an opponent's piece as in chess (this is how the opponent's flag must be captured). However, pieces are only illustrated on one side and blank on the other, so that players looking at the blank backs of their opponent's army cannot tell which of their pieces is which. When one piece attempts to take another, the values of both pieces are revealed to both players. Whichever piece has the lowest value is defeated and removed from the board. For example, a sapper (3) will capture a scout (2) but be beaten by a serjeant (4) or a brigadier (9). The winning piece is then obscured again (so that the losing player must remember where that piece is). As the flag has a value of 1, any mobile piece can capture it. There are special cases for some combinations of pieces: mines destroy the other piece and themselves, unless facing a sapper, which disables them safely; spies defeat the commander-in-chief, who is otherwise unassailable (having the highest value of all the pieces), but are beaten by all other pieces; and two equal pieces remove each other from the board.

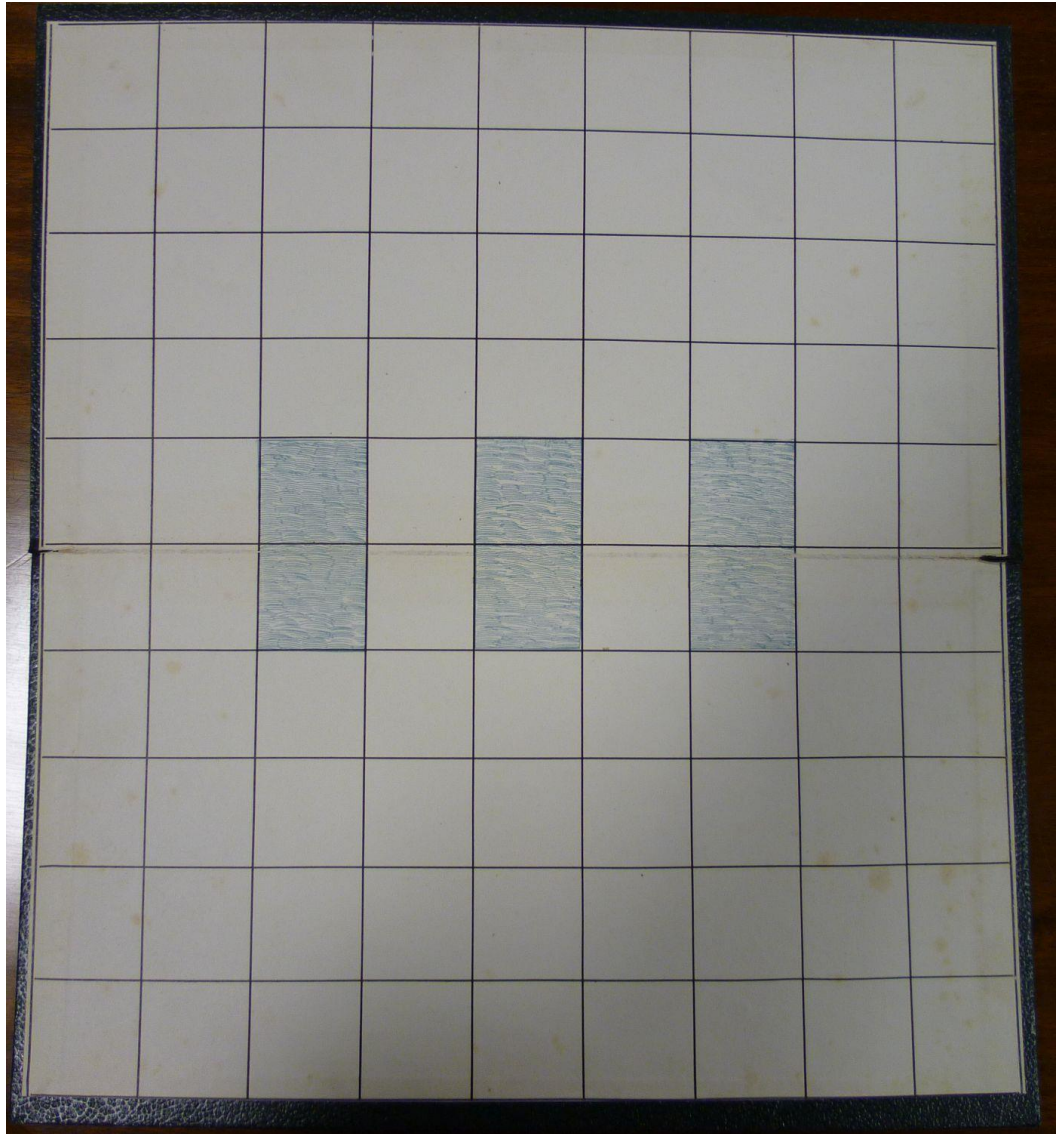


Figure 42: Board for L'Attaque, the earliest version I can find. The greyed-out central squares represent impassable rivers. The text in the lower right reads "Breveté S.G.D.G." (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)



Figure 43: The two armies of L'Attaque's earliest version, the British army and the French army. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photos.)

L'Attaque is a war game depicting a single fictional battle whose central gameplay mechanic is concealed information. The player must guess how their opponent has arranged their army and hidden their flag or other important pieces, and must plan their tactics accordingly, adapting these plans according to whatever information they glean during the game itself (for example, the player tries to capture an opposing piece which turns out to be the commander-in-chief; they lose their own piece, but now they know where the other commander is, and may try to move their spy within range or otherwise keep track of where the commander is going as long as they remember which piece it is). The idea of hidden information is reminiscent of the "fog of war," the modelling of incomplete information about the opposing army, derived from Clausewitz's description of war as "wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty" (1873: 101). The fog of war has not been seen in many other games, but particularly appears in war games played on tabletops as military training scenarios. For example, the Prussian war game *Kriegsspiel* was played on three identical boards, one for each player showing only their pieces plus a complete view of the game for an umpire who resolves moves (Van Creveld, 2013: 150). Wells' *Little Wars* suggests using a curtain across the battlefield while each player arranges their army, so that they can't react to their opponent's tactics until the game begins (Wells, 1913: 61). *L'Attaque* is probably the most elegant modelling of the fog of war, representing battle as something reactive in which strategies must account for the invisible tactics of the opponent, rather than as something purely tactical or logical (like chess or the *Royal Scientific War Games* from the previous chapter).

This gameplay remains the same throughout all versions of *L'Attaque* that I studied; this basic modelling of military tactics and concealed information is fundamental to the game and the subsequent variations that H. P. Gibson and Sons produced. But *L'Attaque* also features distinctive representations of the military, and it is these representations through which the shifting popular geopolitics of war gaming can be analysed. To begin with, we may note the game's connection

between military rank and ability as determined by the value of each piece. Scouts and sappers, front-line soldiers, are rated 2 and 3 respectively, and so are always beaten by more powerful officer roles such as brigadiers and commanders, which one might associate more with strategic duties than with direct involvement on the battlefield. (Presumably, the spy beats the commander by subterfuge rather than direct combat.) There is a hierarchy of power in *L'Attaque* that mirrors the hierarchy of authority in its fictional armies. Relatedly, the lower the rank and value of a soldier piece (and hence, the weaker the piece), the more of that piece there is – continuing the above example, there are eight scout pieces and four sapper pieces in an army, but just one brigadier and one commander. So then, low military ranks are treated here as expendable and weak, perhaps used to bluff or distract the opponent, whereas the rarer officer classes are the real power of the military. (It should be noted that sister games *Dover Patrol* and *Aviation* use a similar value system for the relative power of pieces, as I will show when I analyse these games in subsequent parts of this chapter, but they also use types of vehicles (boats and planes respectively) rather than military ranks, so there is no such rank/merit relationship in those games.)

The effect of *L'Attaque*'s meritocratic gameplay is to conflate military authority and value. This does not necessarily reflect the reality of war, of course, but this is a game, after all, and military ranks seem like natural guidelines for functional differences between game pieces. Additionally, if we treat *L'Attaque* as simultaneously a product of 1908 France, at a time when another war with its geopolitical rival Germany was becoming more and more likely, and of 1925 Britain, after a war had been won at a high cost, it might have been counterproductive to produce a game that suggests incompetence in the officer ranks. Indeed, this could be directly reflective of French popular militarism – during the First World War, the French Commander-in-Chief Joseph Joffre found popularity among the French people and gained the affectionate nickname "Papa Joffre" (*The Observer*, 1931: 14), suggesting a sort of respect and celebrity status

granted to high-ranking military figures in France. So as an arguable product of French popular geopolitics, which did not need to be edited for British interwar geopolitics, the militarism of *L'Attaque* encourages respect for officer classes and suggests the superiority of upper classes in the military.

As a product of the gameplay mechanics of *L'Attaque*, this respect for authority is consistent throughout all versions of the game. However, the illustrations used to represent the armies of *L'Attaque* are not – comparing the representation of the military between different versions of the game shows shifts in popular geopolitics over time. To begin with, we can examine the earliest British version of *L'Attaque*, shown in *Figures 42* and *43* above. This version models a battle between an English army and a French army of identical composition, with one player for each army. These two nations can be identified by the uniforms their pieces wear and the design of their flags (oddly, the British army's flag appears to be the Red Ensign, associated with merchant shipping rather than army forces (Red Ensign Group, 2012). To underline this, English and French troop names are given in their respective languages (for example, the scout piece of the French army is labelled the "éclaireur"). This version is probably a direct reprinting of a French version; as *Figure 42* shows, the board still bears the copyright notice "Breveté S.G.D.G.", denoting a French patent, suggesting that unaltered printing plates were used for the first British edition. Additionally, despite this game being printed after the First World War brought huge changes to militaries and the waging of warfare, both armies are depicted in uniforms predating the First World War – as we have seen with other board games, the blue and red French uniforms and the bright red English coats depict a time before trenches and guns made such uniforms impractical.

Building a game around the English and French armies invokes the historical rivalry between England and France. This does not really reflect the geopolitics of the immediate pre-war or interwar period. Before the war, France and Britain were

more concerned with German imperialism (France had lost territory to what was now Germany in the Franco-Prussian war a few decades ago, and we have discussed the popular geopolitics of Britain and Germany's race for naval superiority in previous chapters) and cooperated with each other to check Germany's imperial ambitions. During the war, of course, Britain and France had allied against Germany, so an England-France battle in *L'Attaque* as a direct reflection of geopolitical anxieties does not make sense, either.

But this version of *L'Attaque* does not seem concerned with representing contemporary geopolitics at all. Its board is a featureless battlefield rather than an identifiable territory, and its rules and supplemental materials feature no contextual information or narrative to justify the battle. *L'Attaque* is apolitical, at least in direct relation to pre-war geopolitics. One of the boxes found in Gibsons advertises the game as a "rival to Chess" (*Figure 41*). This is a game first and foremost, which does not apparently aspire to be educational or a reflection of current events. Perhaps invoking the classic England-France rivalry was more "fun", and less meaningful at that point, than invoking active geopolitical tensions that could potentially lead, or had just led, to war. More practically, of course, the blue and red uniforms of France and England are more colourful and easier to distinguish from each other. In any case, *L'Attaque* uses the iconography of military and geopolitics but seems to deliberately sidestep any possible geopolitical commentary, unlike some of the other games studied in previous chapters.

But the British version of *L'Attaque* does not remain a story of England versus France. A later publication by H. P. Gibson and Sons (1925c) depicts the armies as two identical generic British armies, differentiated by differently-coloured backs to the card pieces (*Figure 44*). I identify the army depicted as British because this army retains the Red Ensign flag seen in *Figure 43*. The uniforms of the soldiers have been updated to the First World War era – the bright red overcoats have been replaced by green trench clothing which resembles that worn by British

soldiers. The army does not seem to reflect the blue trench uniforms of First World War-era France, and no unit names are in French. Other than the title *L'Attaque*, all hints to French roots have been removed and the game has now been completely Anglicised. The update to the pieces, particularly the trench uniforms, reflects an attempt to update the representations of geopolitics to be more current; however, the battlefield is still placeless, and two British armies against each other suggests a deliberate abstraction away from any kind of specific geopolitical message or rivalry. Furthermore, the army only reflects post-war geopolitics in form, not function – there is no trench warfare, but rather armies are still treated as mobile units. *L'Attaque* reflects contemporary geopolitics, but only visually.

However, there is a complication. I list the two versions above as earlier and later, but the later may not have replaced the earlier. A note included with a version of *L'Attaque* found at Gibsons which depicts France versus England informs players that "owing to the loss of labour for the Forces and war work", they will need to assemble the pieces themselves (*Figure 45*). The note lists *L'Attaque*'s sister games, including *Tri-Tactics*, which was first published years later in 1932. (This same version also removes the "Breveté S.G.D.G" which marks other early versions.) Therefore, the "war work" must indicate the Second World War. This means that the France versus England version, which reflects pre-First World War geopolitics, was still in print during the Second World War (most likely in 1939-1940, as the H. P. Gibson and Sons manufacturing premises were destroyed by bombing in 1940 (Grace's Guide, 2016; Gibsons, 2017)).



Figure 44: The British army as seen in alternative publications of L'Attaque which replace the Britain vs France conflict with two identical British armies. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)

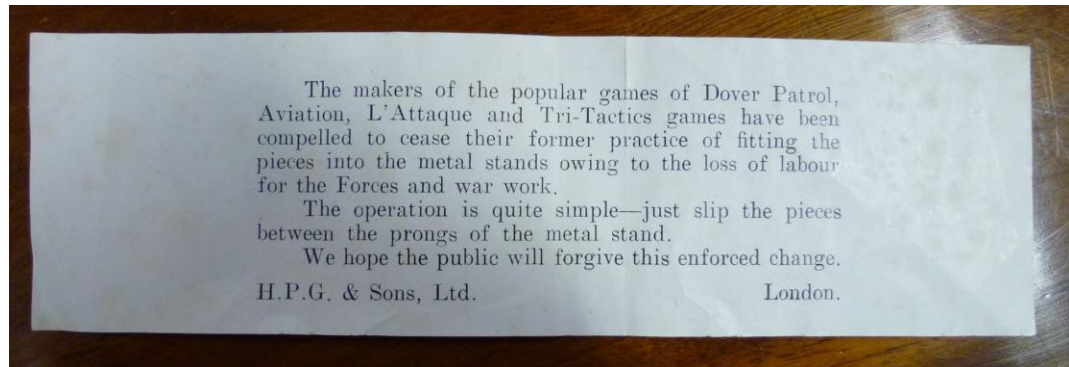


Figure 45: Note found in a France vs Britain version of L'Attaque which suggests that this version was published during the Second World War. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo)

Why move back to or sustain a (superficially) geopolitical version of the game when the later version (depicting two British armies) suggests an attempt to move away from geopolitics? Unfortunately, I can only speculate on this – as I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, archival documents on the development and publication of *L'Attaque* and other H. P. Gibson and Sons games are missing and presumed destroyed in a Blitz attack on the Gibsons premises. Audience reception could have played a part in the decision to republish the geopolitics of earlier versions – the France versus England version is a little more visually interesting, and playing as France may have had a certain appeal to some players. Historically, war game players seem to have enjoyed playing the "villain" judging by old war game magazines like the US's *The General*, whose Opponents Wanted column "was a boisterous, boastful, and sometimes confrontational forum [... in which] some advertisers took on Nazi pseudonyms and personae — though in fairness, a submission from 'Adolf Hitler, Jr.' could be found in the same column as one from 'Gandalf.'" (Peterson, 2014; see also Peterson, 2012: 76-7). This is a different historical and cultural context to *L'Attaque*, of course, but after all, H. P. Gibson and Sons were confident enough during the Second World War to release the

game *Sky Raiders*, in which one player is a German air squadron bombing Britain. I suspect that the French version of *L'Attaque* was briefly retired, then brought back by popular demand so that the British public could keep playing at being or beating Britain's great historical rival, the French.

Alternative versions of *L'Attaque* would continue to be produced long after the World Wars. One version in the Gibsons archives appears to have been published in the latter half of the 20th century, exhibiting more colourful and detailed illustrations and laminated materials, as well as a slightly modified board layout (*Figure 46*). (I will not focus on this version for long as it falls outside the timeframe I am studying in this thesis.) Note that the armies in this version are two British armies facing each other again. Although the uniforms and technology represented in *L'Attaque* have been updated to appear more contemporary (more on this in the conclusion to this chapter), *L'Attaque* continues a move away from geopolitics even far beyond the World Wars.

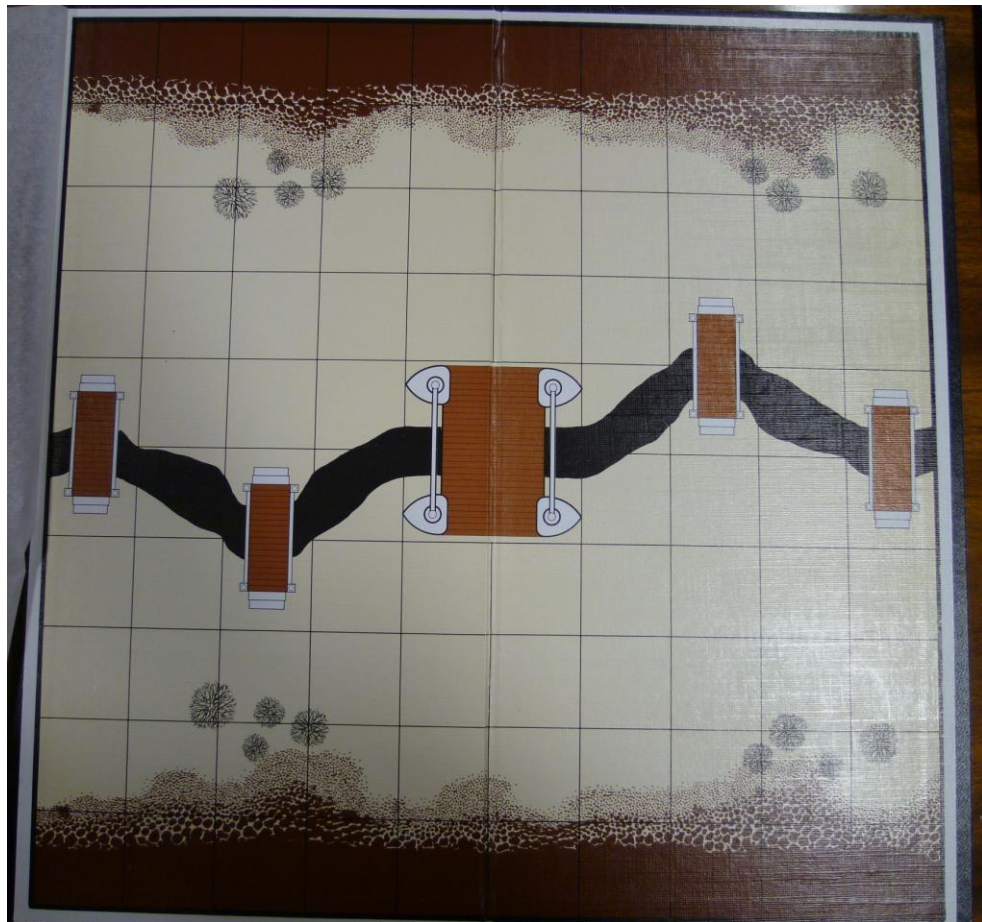


Figure 46: Components of the late (post-war) version of L'Attaque. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photos.)

To finish my examination of *L'Attaque*, I want to discuss one more version of *L'Attaque*, this one found in the Edinburgh Museum Collections Centre (H. P. Gibson and Sons, 1925d). Instead of the cardboard box that this game is usually packaged in (as seen in *Figure 41*), this edition comes in a solid wooden box, with compartments inside to sort the game's pieces (*Figure 47*). I cannot be sure of the date that this edition was produced, because the pieces within appear to be from several different versions of *L'Attaque*, perhaps mixed together during their time in the archives. However, I can estimate a price for this version. In a rulebook for sister game *Dover Patrol* (the version stored in the Imperial War Museum – see H. P. Gibson and Sons, 1919b), there is an advertisement for another sister game, *Aviation*, with prices for several different versions listed. The most expensive version of *Aviation*, apparently, was packaged in a "Polished Oak Box with Lock and Key" for 30 shillings, or about £150 in today's money – evidently a premium version for rich families. I think this wooden *L'Attaque* box is something similar, an ornamental version for the wealthiest players. *L'Attaque* may have been made with a broad cross-class audience in mind, cardboard-packaged versions for working or middle classes and handsome wooden boxes for the upper classes. In other words, the fact that this expensive version of *L'Attaque* exists suggests that the population targeted by the popular geopolitics of *L'Attaque* encompasses as much of Britain as possible; it is tempting in popular geopolitics research to draw a distinction between elite creator classes and consumers in the general public, but the existence of differently-priced versions of *L'Attaque* (and *Dover Patrol* and *Aviation*) breaks down this distinction and shows that these war games tried to appeal to all of Britain rather than a subset of consumers.



Figure 47: Wooden box for L'Attaque found in the Edinburgh Museum Collections Centre. (Location: Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photo.)

Dover Patrol: Naval Pride and Empire

Alongside *L'Attaque*, H. P. Gibson and Sons published another game called *Dover Patrol* in the interwar period. *Dover Patrol*, a game of H. P. Gibson's own design (Lewin, 2012: 159), uses a similar gameplay structure to *L'Attaque*, themed around naval warfare rather than land warfare: two fleets of ships aim to capture each other's flag, but players only see the backs of their opponent's pieces and thus must work on limited information to defeat their opponent. Versions of this game can be found in various locations, but this game was primarily studied at the Gibsons offices (H.P. Gibson and Sons, 1919a) and in the Imperial War Museum (ibid: 1919b). (See *Figure 48* for a *Dover Patrol* box found in Gibsons, although this is a post-Second World War publication and the analyses and images in this chapter use interwar versions.)

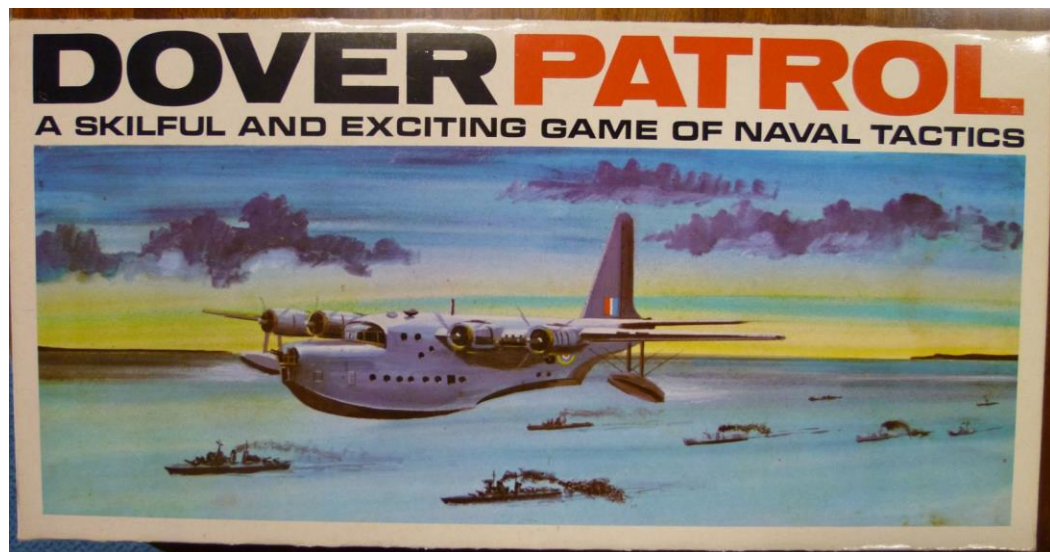


Figure 48: Dover Patrol box found in Gibsons. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)

I have placed *Dover Patrol* after *L'Attaque* in this chapter, which is arranged chronologically in order of design, but I have dated the game to 1919. Lewin (2012: 159) suggests that *Dover Patrol* was designed by H. P. Gibson in 1911 and published in 1919, although he only says this is "apparently" true rather than providing an argument or source. This would be interesting if true, since it would mean that Gibson probably borrowed the gameplay of *L'Attaque* before owning any publication rights to it and adapted it to England's great military advantage, its navy, once again invoking the popular geopolitics of naval superiority in the years leading to the First World War. *Dover Patrol* and *L'Attaque* are similar enough that I do not believe the identical gameplay is a coincidence; Gibson must have seen and been inspired by Hermance Edan's original design for *L'Attaque*. I cannot establish the 1919 date with other sources, and I think there is a possibility that *Dover Patrol* was first published in the 1920s, perhaps alongside *L'Attaque* in 1925. *Dover Patrol* particularly echoes *Jutland*, another H. P. Gibson and Sons game that was a naval game published in the interwar period, and whose careful apolitical rendition of naval warfare (in the wake of the First World War) can be seen in this game too, suggesting that *Dover Patrol* existed alongside this game. In any case, *Dover Patrol* is an interwar game which builds on *L'Attaque*, and so I discuss it here despite its earlier publication date in Britain.

The rules of *Dover Patrol* are similar, but not wholly identical, to *L'Attaque*. The board (*Figure 49*) is an expanse of ocean represented by an 8x12 grid, largely featureless except for two 3x3 "Harbour" regions in opposite corners, one for each player, each of which contains one "Base" square. Each player has 41 pieces (*Figure 50*), arranged in any configuration at either end of the board, plus a "Flag" piece, a clip which can be attached to another ship but which must start on the Base. The objective of this game is to capture this flag piece; not just to defeat it, as in *L'Attaque*, but to steal the flag clip and deliver it to the player's own Harbour. These playing pieces represent an entire navy, individual ships ranging in size from Motor Boats to Dreadnoughts and Flagships, plus Mines, Submarines and other related

ships. Many of these types of pieces have a numerical value corresponding to their relative power and importance; Coastal Motor Boats have a value of 1, Submarine Chasers are 2, and so on up to Vice-Flagships and Flagships at values of 9 and 10 respectively. Some types of ship are not numbered; these types are Mines, Mine Layers, Mine Sweepers, Submarines and Seaplanes (in other words, pieces which are connected to mine-laying or which are not actually ships).

Players move one piece per turn, and all movable pieces can move one square per turn horizontally or vertically. Pieces may attempt to capture each other as in *L'Attaque* or other chess- or draughts-like war games, but as in *L'Attaque*, pieces are one-sided so that a player cannot discern which of their opponent's pieces are which. If a piece tries to capture another, both pieces are revealed, and whichever piece has the lower value is removed from the board, the winning piece being hidden again. (There are exceptions to this rule which won't be listed in full, as the list of special relationships between pieces is more complex than *L'Attaque*. To give a couple of examples, mines cannot move but destroy all pieces in front automatically except for Seaplanes, Mine Layers and Mine Sweepers, the latter of which may remove mines; Seaplanes, oddly, are only vulnerable to Submarine Chasers and Destroyers.) To capture the flag, players move a ship onto the opponent's base, clip the opponent's flag onto that ship, and then take the flag to the player's own base; the opponent may retake the flag by sinking the flag-bearing ship.

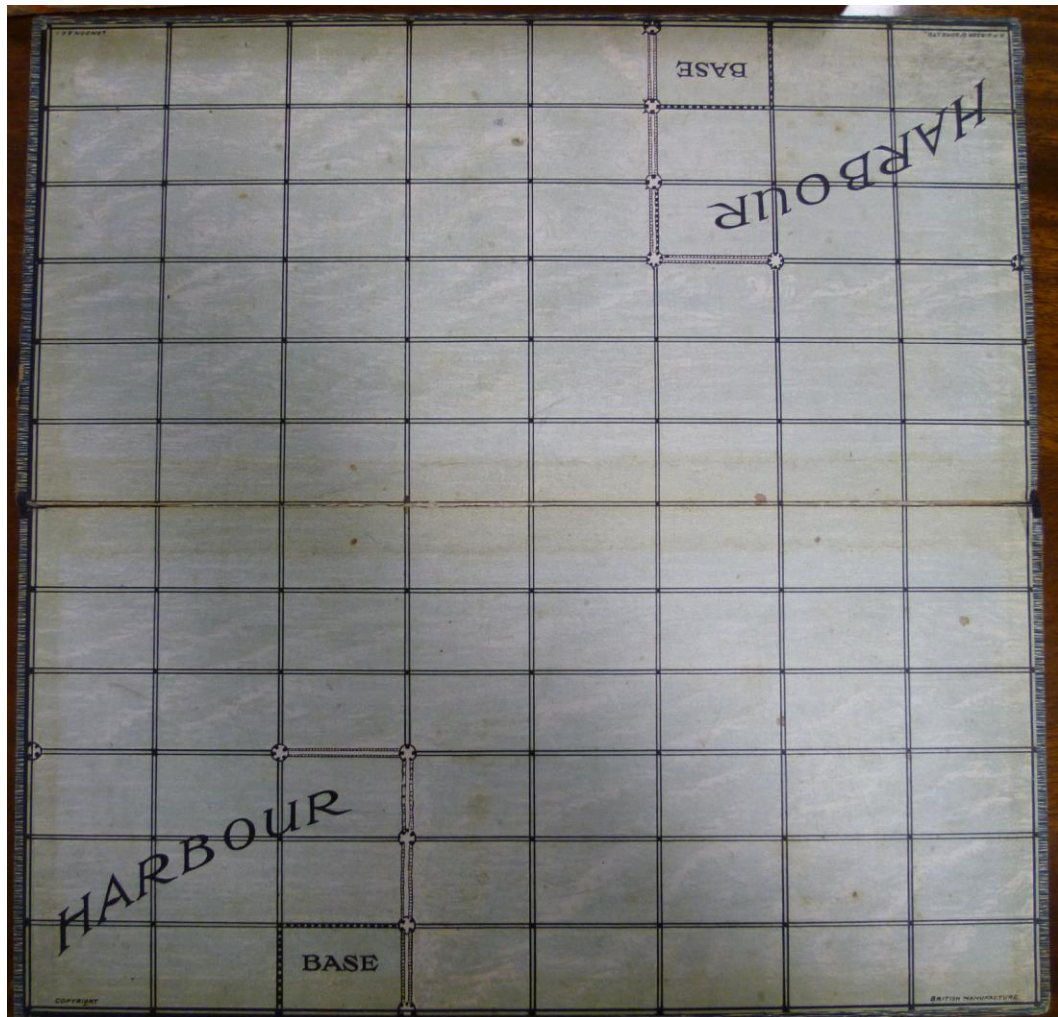


Figure 49: Dover Patrol board. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)



Figure 50: Examples of ship pieces in Dover Patrol. This just shows one navy – the other navy in this game has identical illustrations but different ship names. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)

The gameplay of *Dover Patrol*, then, is basically an advancement on the gameplay codified in *L'Attaque*. As in that game, players have mobility and freedom in the movement of their pieces, restricted by other pieces and by environmental features of the board (the river in *L'Attaque*, and the harbour walls in *Dover Patrol*). This free movement through space is arguably more appropriate in *Dover Patrol*, since *L'Attaque*'s movement across land largely ignores physical geography, trench warfare and logistics, whereas naval movement is more like the flat plane of the game board (assuming calm waters, but there are no storms or climate features present in *Dover Patrol*). However, movement and tactics in both games are hampered by the fog of war, concealed information about the structure of their opponent's navy. The terrain of both games is a terrain of danger as players pick their way through the opponent's playing pieces and mines, but this is especially true of *Dover Patrol*, in which the role of mines has been greatly expanded from *L'Attaque*.

The rules attempt to enforce fair play with this concealed information. I mention above that mines may not be moved; not only do the rules forbid moving the mines, they also forbid even touching the mines, as if considering moving them, to trick the opponent into thinking that they are ship pieces. So sportsmanship has been enforced in the rules of *Dover Patrol*. (Similar clauses in the rules appear in other related games examined in this chapter.) As I will argue, *Dover Patrol* advocates a sort of militarism, but this is a fair-minded militarism with both players on an equal footing. The rules firmly underline that *Dover Patrol* is a game, and not a simulation of war – underhanded or deceitful tactics to win the battle which might have to be tried in a real war are forbidden in this game, more of a meeting of minds, a battle of wits, than a representation of many ships about to be sunk.

The most notable change in *Dover Patrol*'s gameplay is the capture of the flag; whereas in *L'Attaque* the flag must be removed from the board like any other piece to win the game, in *Dover Patrol* the flag must be stolen and transported across

the board. In both games, the flag is an object of symbolic value, connected to the success of the military, perhaps as a representation of whatever nation the players' fictional forces are fighting for. In *L'Attaque*, the destruction of the flag is a symbol of territorial control, of an army or nation vanquished. In *Dover Patrol*, though, the successful player captures the flag and then retreats to their own half of the board, likely making some of their fleet retreat as well to defend whichever ship bears the flag. So it is difficult to argue that there is a territorial takeover here – rather, the invasion of the opponent's harbour apparently serves primarily to embarrass them. In other words, more than in *L'Attaque*, war is a game in *Dover Patrol*. This corroborates my suggestion that *Dover Patrol* is an interwar game alongside *Jutland* – both games depict a naval skirmish and the sinking of ships, but both games, perhaps in the painful wake of the real Battle of Jutland, stop short of the performance of identifiable geopolitics.

This lack of geopolitics extends to the representation of the two navies seen in *Dover Patrol*. Both players' navies appear to be two fictionalised British Royal Navies, akin to the Britain v. Britain version of *L'Attaque*. (One navy is shown in *Figure 50*; the other navy from this version of the game uses different ship names, but the pictures on the pieces are identical.) All ships depicted resemble the general shapes of First World War-era British ships, and the names assigned to each ship are prefixed by "HMS" and sometimes make references to British territory (these names are discussed further below). So like the British vs. British *L'Attaque*, *Dover Patrol* appears to carefully take an a-geopolitical position. If *Dover Patrol* was designed in 1911 as Lewin argues (and left unedited until its 1919 publication), it would be unusual for a British naval game to avoid pro-British, anti-German naval discourses common to other games at the time; if the game is wholly a product of the interwar period, this suggests a return to wargaming without invoking the trauma of Jutland and the war in general.

Each navy is composed of a range of ships from motor boats to battleships, and these pieces have different values dictating their strength in combat according to the type of ship they represent. This is inspired by *L'Attaque*'s similar hierarchy of soldiers and relative combat strength. Earlier, I argued that this hierarchy of power in *L'Attaque* places greater value on greater authority and higher ranks in the army, and that this reflects a belief in and respect for the power of military authority; a commander is consistently and quantifiably stronger than a sergeant in *L'Attaque*, even though this does not necessarily reflect the fighting ability of any given commander or sergeant in a real army. *Dover Patrol* is structured differently; pieces represent ships that are often more materially powerful than other ships. For example, a coastal motor boat (of value 1) is unlikely to win a fight with a dreadnought (7) or super-dreadnought (8), being outgunned and less well armoured, both in *Dover Patrol* and in actual naval warfare. But *L'Attaque*'s connection between power and rank still survives in *Dover Patrol*'s vice-flagships and flagships, of values 9 and 10. "Flagship" is, of course, a title denoting a symbolic position of leadership rather than its own type of extra-powerful ship - indeed, in *Figure 50*, all the ship values from 7 to 10 look like the same shape of dreadnought. Here, though, the flagship's rank makes it quantifiably stronger than a normal dreadnought. So although *Dover Patrol* is based on the material strength of objects rather than the authority of individuals, it continues *L'Attaque*'s fascination with military authority as indicative of physical superiority.

The naming of ships in *Dover Patrol* also plays into this hierarchy of power and authority. The version of *Dover Patrol* found in Gibsons is near-complete (a few pieces are missing) and is corroborated by the less complete version found in the Imperial War Museum, so that it gives a good list of ship names to work from. Numberless ships and ships of low value are not named, but each individual ship from gunboats (of value 3) up the power hierarchy has its own name, even across the two opposing navies. This is an interesting choice, given that the two navies are otherwise functionally and visually identical; it serves to give each ship and

both navies some sense of identity, so that the game more plausibly resembles two navies with their own military histories coming into contact, but as I will demonstrate, the naming conventions are the same across both navies and are inspired in both cases by the Royal Navy, so that they are interchangeable.

At first, the naming conventions of the ships appear uninteresting. Gunboats (value 3), destroyers (4) and light cruisers (5) are named for insects, birds and mammals respectively; for example, the HMS Ant, or HMS Vulture, or HMS Zebra. There is a progression in the relative average size of the animals that matches the progression of the power of the ships as game pieces, and names like Vulture and Zebra hint at the natural history of the British Empire, but within each type of ship there is no further connection or theme within the names.

But more powerful game pieces introduce naming conventions based on Britishness. Battle cruisers (6) are named for major British cities (e.g. HMS Edinburgh, HMS Liverpool), and dreadnoughts (7) are named for counties (e.g. HMS Surrey, HMS Lancashire). The two super-dreadnoughts (8) and two vice-flagships (9) are named for British Empire colonies: the super-dreadnoughts, one for each navy, are the HMS New Zealand and the HMS India; the vice-flagships are the HMS Canada and the HMS Australia. So these more powerful pieces, of value 6 and up, are named for British territory, progressing in relative area size. Casting colonies as the strongest battleships invokes British imperialism and connects empire to power and strength. This is how *Dover Patrol*'s names invoke authority and hierarchy; just as *L'Attaque* connects strength to rank, *Dover Patrol* connects strength to British land, and particularly to the size of Britain's geopolitical conquests. This is concluded by the naming of *Dover Patrol*'s two flagships (10, the highest value in the game). These are the HMS Drake and the HMS Nelson; both are named for important figures in Britain's history of naval warfare. British pride in its navy is reflected here by invoking Drake and Nelson – British history and militarism, not just the Empire, is connected to strength and power here. Placing

Drake and Nelson in the most powerful flagship positions serves to prioritise British militarism above natural history and the nation's own territory.

I have implied in my argument here that the names of these pieces have been chosen by H. P. Gibson and Sons, but it is possible that the ships represented in *Dover Patrol* are directly inspired by and named after real ships of the Royal Navy. However, I have researched ship names in the Royal Navy, and I do not believe that there is a direct correlation between the Royal Navy's naming conventions and *Dover Patrol*. For example, there is no trend in First World War-era dreadnoughts to be named after counties – one or two are, but not as part of a consistent naming scheme. Nor do *Dover Patrol*'s ships appear to be recreations of real individual ships. For example, although there was an HMS Drake during the First World War, this was a cruiser (see Associated Press, 1917), equivalent to *Dover Patrol*'s Battle Cruiser unit (battle value of 6) rather than the Flagship (value of 10) that the game's HMS Drake is. Similarities between the Royal Navy's name conventions and *Dover Patrol* are slight and probably coincidental. The ship naming conventions here are the inventions of H. P. Gibson and Sons and may be treated here as representations of geopolitical discourses and militarism themselves rather than as simulations of the Royal Navy.

Dover Patrol, to summarise, is a development of the gameplay first codified by *L'Attaque*. The rules and conditions for victory are slightly more complex, and the board is slightly more detailed, but the game is recognisably the same. The tropes of militarism and geopolitics in *Dover Patrol* are also similar, but also developed a little further than in *L'Attaque*. Both games maintain an a-geopolitical stance, being an abstract battle between (virtually) identical forces rather than an identifiable war or skirmish, and both games are very definitely games, with *Dover Patrol* advocating fair play and forbidding outright deceit in its rules. But both games also take an uncritical and essentialist stance on military authority as indicating ability and superiority. *Dover Patrol* takes this further by celebrating the

military history of imperial Britain; the more associated with British militarism a ship is, the better it is. Just in this timeline of two games (in which *Dover Patrol* was inspired by *L'Attaque*, even if a date cannot be pinned down with certainty), the geopolitics of these games has begun to shift over time, elevating British militarism while carefully eliding the geopolitics of actual war between nations.

Aviation: Battle of Britain?

H. P. Gibson and Sons' series of *L'Attaque* inspired games would be continued with *Aviation* (H. P. Gibson and Sons, 1925a, 1925b). This game is dated by Lewin (2012: 160) to 1925, placing it alongside *L'Attaque*'s first British publication. *Aviation* builds further on the concealed information gameplay seen in that game and *Dover Patrol*, but focuses on war in the air, being a skirmish between two air forces. (See *Figure 51* for the box.) Although *Aviation* is an interwar-era game like the others studied in this chapter, the photographs in this section are of what appears to be a post-Second World War printing of the game found in Gibsons, judging by its laminated finish, full use of colour, the espionage-inspired box art, and certain representations of planes within (discussed below) – the Edinburgh version is also discussed and reflects *Aviation*'s original date of publication more accurately, but it is too incomplete to perform any substantial analysis on, missing its board, rules and several pieces.

The setup of this game is similar to its previous iterations. The board (*Figure 52*) is an 8x12 grid of spaces with two areas on opposite sides of the board, each two spaces wide, marked "Aerodrome," one for each player. Each player has 42 pieces (*Figure 53*), representing planes and some equipment such as searchlights, arranged however they like on their side of the board. Again, pieces are numbered in a way corresponding to the relative strength of the piece; the weakest planes, reconnaissance planes, have a value of 1, bombers have a value of 2, and so on. However, some playing pieces represent individual planes, and others represent

flights or squadrons of planes. This means that some types of plane recur at multiple values; for example, the twin-seater fighter plane is 4, but "Flight of 2-Seat Fighters" is 7, and "2-Seat Fighter Squadron" is the most powerful piece at 10. Additionally, each player has two troop carrier planes valued at 4½. Equipment pieces (searchlights, anti-aircraft guns, and observation balloons) are not numbered. (I wish to stress that this is specific to the post-war version found at Gibsons— the interwar Edinburgh version, although it is the same game, names and illustrates its pieces differently, as will be explored later in the chapter.)

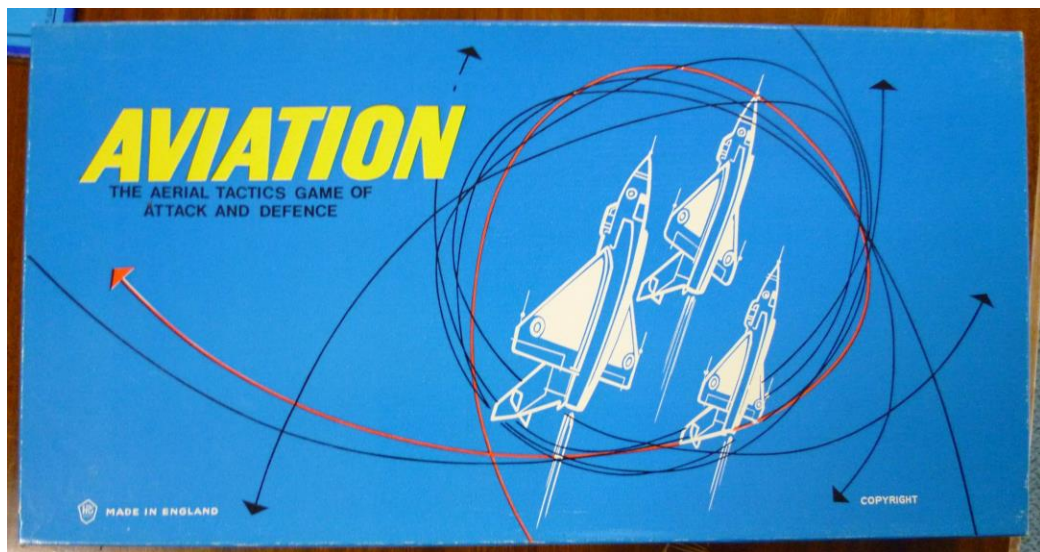


Figure 51: Aviation box from a post-war version. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo)

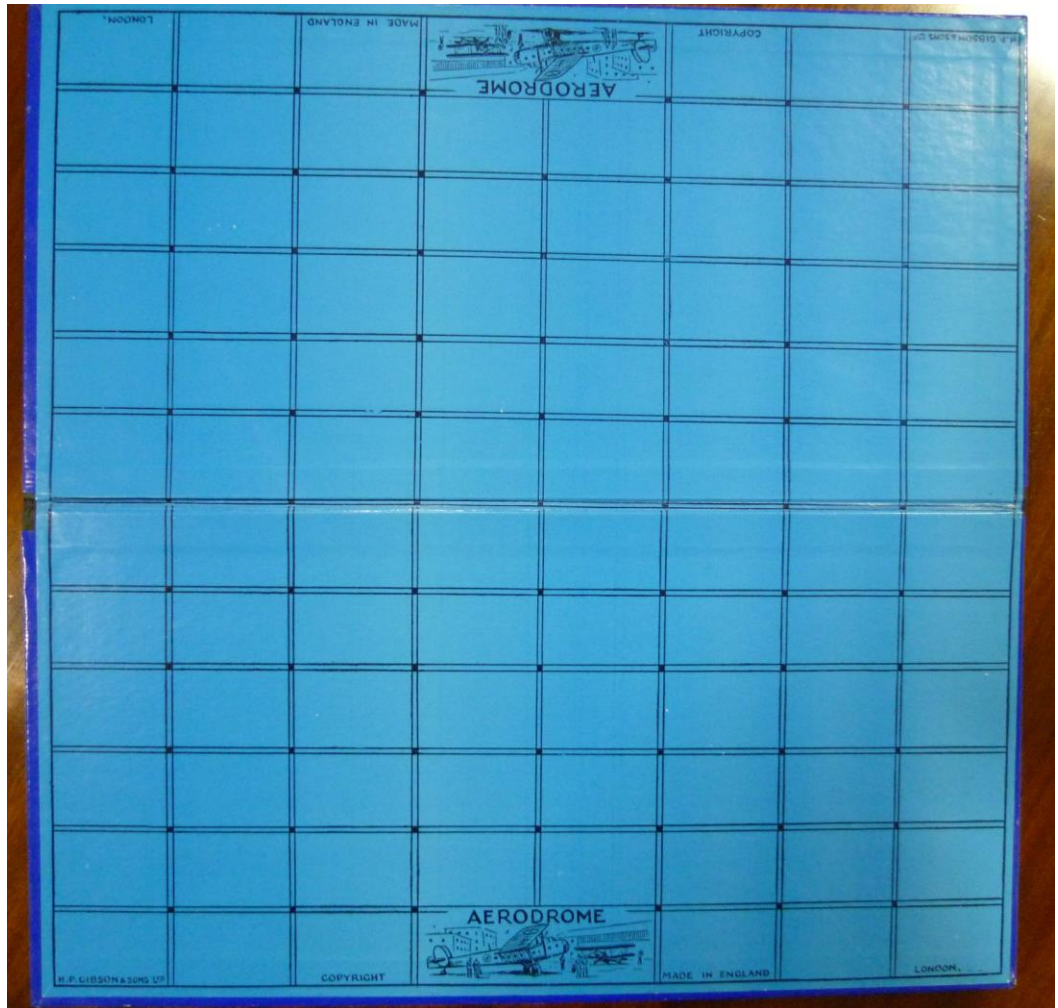


Figure 52: Board for Aviation. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo)

The objective of *Aviation* is to move one of the troop carrier pieces to the opposing Aerodrome. Gameplay works as it does in *L'Attaque* and *Dover Patrol*. Players can move one piece one square per turn, and may attempt to capture the opponent's pieces, but as before, the pieces are concealed from the opposite player until a capture is attempted. Troop carriers are not removed from the board if they are located and captured, but they return to their own Aerodrome and must advance up the board again. *Aviation* further complicates the *L'Attaque* formula with many special cases and exceptions related to the un-numbered equipment pieces which each player has. To give a couple of examples (as there are too many to list effectively), each player has two "3-Mile Anti-Aircraft Guns" which automatically attack any piece up to 3 moves in front, unless the piece is a bomber, which destroys them. There are also 4- and 5-Mile guns which do the same for a range of 4 and 5 moves respectively. Searchlights defeat pieces if there is a gun within 3-5 moves depending on the gun, except for reconnaissance planes. Observation balloons are the same but are also defeated by bombers.

These rules continue a pattern of escalating complexity across the games in this chapter. Although the objective of *Aviation* is simpler than *Dover Patrol*, as more variety is introduced in the pieces the possible interactions get more complex and difficult to keep track of – here, for example, searchlights work in conjunction with anti-aircraft guns, the first time that separate pieces are required to co-operate. This may be a by-product of trying to reflect the function of the military equipment these pieces represent, and it may also be a function of game design – the designers need to create and sell a game that is familiar, but not too familiar, and which escalates the gameplay so that experienced *L'Attaque* and *Dover Patrol* players will continue to buy the games. (However, the design of the board is the simplest yet; the Aerodromes can only be used by troop carriers but they lie on the edges of the board, and the rest of the board is open and unrestricted by physical or built geography, reflecting the three-dimensional mobility of aircraft.)

The objective of *Aviation* moves away from the flag-capturing objectives of the previous games. Here, the play must advance one of their own pieces up the board into the opponent's territory. When discussing *Dover Patrol*, I commented that the navy being used to capture a flag suggested a humiliation of the opponent rather than a defeat or invasion – in other words, a navy used for playful purposes. In *Aviation*, something like the opposite is true. Planes were employed in the First World War to damage the industrial and political capability and morale of nations by the strategic bombing of civilian spaces rather than as the basis for an invasion (Hippler, 2017: xii), as the inclusion of bombers in this game seems to acknowledge. However, the objective of this game is to deliver a troop carrier across the board – this implies that the goal of the aerial battle going on in *Aviation* is not to embarrass or to demoralise, but to invade the opponent's territory, and suggests a greater geopolitical motivation behind the battle in this game.

Yet this is as far as *Aviation* will go – like *Dover Patrol*, the two military forces are identical and not identified as the forces of any specific nation-state. But a close examination of the two air forces of *Aviation* present in the Gibsons version reveals more subtle geopolitics. Unlike *Dover Patrol*, the pieces here are not named individually. None of the pieces are defined as a specific make of plane, but rather are given generic names like "bomber," or "single seat fighter." However, I think the planes are modelled on British planes, just as *Dover Patrol* models its naval pieces on the Royal Navy. *Figure 54* shows a close-up photograph of the single seat fighter piece included in the post-Second World War version found in the Gibsons archives. The fighter plane shown here is clearly based on a Spitfire plane, complete with the Royal Air Force target logo painted on the wingtips. This implies that, again, the two players in this game both use British armies, creating the same kind of careful a-geopolitical battle seen in *Dover Patrol* and some versions of *L'Attaque*.



Figure 54: Close-up of the Single Seat Fighter from Aviation, which resembles a Spitfire. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo)

So far in this study of *Aviation*, the role of hierarchy and authority has been noticeably diminished from its role in *L'Attaque* and *Dover Patrol*. The pieces of *Aviation* are based on strength in numbers – whereas lower-value pieces are single planes, higher-value pieces are squadrons of planes. The progression of the relative power of individual pieces, then, seems to progress in a relatively logical way, where single planes are defeated by multiple planes. However, I have taken care to specify that the above argument refers to a post-war version of *Aviation*. The Edinburgh Museum collections centre holds a version of *Aviation* published in the interwar period whose few surviving pieces (*Figure 55*) feature different representations of planes that more closely resemble how the game may have

originally been published, and this does feature the same hierarchy of authority seen previously.





Figure 55: Pieces from the interwar version of Aviation found in Edinburgh. (Location: MC2579 box 4, MC418.b.94 box 7, Edinburgh: Museums and Galleries Edinburgh. Author's own photos.)

One of the differences between (what is available of) the interwar version of *Aviation* and its post-war incarnation is that, instead of single-seat fighters, the interwar version depicts the "Bristol Fighter" at value 3. In this earlier version, there is a more overt connection between the British air force and the nameless air force depicted; here, specific types of planes are named, rather than depicted anonymously as in *Figure 53*. I do not know why the naming conventions are different between versions, but I do not think this is because of any substantial discursive differences between the popular geopolitics of the Bristol Fighter and Spitfire (although these differences may exist). It is more likely that H. P. Gibson and Sons replaced the Bristol Fighter in the post-war version because it was outdated technology by the Second World War. (Additionally, the Bristol Fighter was a two-seat fighter plane (so described in various newspapers at the time – for example, see the *New York Times*, 1918), so perhaps replacing it with a single seat fighter with a generic two-seat fighter as the piece above it allows *Aviation*'s designers to create a more intuitive scaling of power between pieces.)

Updating the design of the planes to the newest military technology suggests that, although *Aviation* may be a-geopolitical, it is tied to and dependent on militarism. The designers redesign their playful war game to keep pace with real wars. This recalls an argument made by Stahl in *Militainment* which has been cited in previous chapters. Discussing video games, he suggests that "the real significance of the video game war lies in its temporal proximity to war" – games reflect and anticipate geopolitics in pursuit of the amoral spectacle of the televised war (Stahl, 2010: 99-100). Stahl is referring to recent trends in military entertainment in relation to the two Gulf Wars, and yet *Aviation* shows the desire to reflect war technology as it develops, updated in response to geopolitics. This trend has been seen in the other games studied in this chapter, as well as in other H. P. Gibson and Sons products such as *Sky Raiders*, which reflected the Second World War's

strategic bombing campaigns yet was published directly after the Battle of Britain. I will develop this argument in the conclusion to this chapter, but it is worth noting for now that this is the first visible instance in the *L'Attaque* games where their design has reacted to war and geopolitics rather than separating themselves from recognisable military activity.

Another notable change between the two versions of *Aviation* can be found in the high-value pieces. In the post-war version, piece values 8, 9 and 10 are squadrons of bombers, 1-seat fighters and 2-seat fighters respectively. In this interwar version, these three most powerful pieces are the Commodore's Squadron, the Vice Marshall's Squadron and the Air Marshall's Squadron. This association between military authority and relative power/strength was seen in *L'Attaque* and *Dover Patrol*, continuing this militaristic trend in H. P. Gibson and Sons' games. However, unlike in, for example, *Dover Patrol*, where a flagship was more powerful than a dreadnought just because it was a flagship, in *Aviation* these powerful pieces represent greater numbers of airplanes as opposed to the single planes in lower-value pieces; indeed, the post-war version of *Aviation* drops the appeal to authority and focuses entirely on material strength in numbers instead. In the *L'Attaque* series of games, there has been a very gradual shift away from the hierarchy of authority and rank, which will be continued in the next game, *Tri-Tactics* – this shift will be discussed in the conclusion, but it is curious to note that the version of *Aviation* published in Britain after the Second World War appeals less to militarism, rank and battlefield strategy than games published in the interwar period in Britain by the same creators, despite the surge of anti-war sentiment that accompanied the interwar years (Pugh, 1999: 236-9; 2008: 18-9, 439).

Complicating this shift further is another variant of *Aviation*, which falls outside the direct scope of the thesis but is difficult to ignore. Like *L'Attaque*, *Aviation* was updated well into the late 20th century. In this case, the core gameplay of *Aviation*

was adapted into a new game with a modified set of rules, *Battle of Britain* (H. P. Gibson and Sons, c. 1970s). (This is the game I used to compare plane silhouettes in a previous chapter — see *Figure 40* in the *Sky Raiders* chapter for this game's pieces, and *Figure 56* below for the board.) This game is far more overtly geopolitical than any other game in this chapter — it is a recreation of the aerial war over Britain in the Second World War, with players playing a British and German air force. Planes are specifically named and towns are identified on the map, representing the setting in a historically accurate manner. This makes *Battle of Britain* an outlier from the trend of being a-geopolitical found in other games here — I suggest above that the *L'Attaque* series of games becomes less geopolitical and less militaristic (for war games) with subsequent iterations, but this late instalment contradicts the pattern. Note, though, that *Battle of Britain* is defined as a separate game with its own special board — the post-war version of *Aviation* studied in this section would serve to suggest that *Aviation* itself continued as its own game with its own apparently apolitical setting.

Aviation appears to be just another variation on *L'Attaque*, and this is not completely wrong. But what makes *Aviation* interesting is its relationship to the developing militarism of the early 20th century. Whereas *L'Attaque* appeals to classical war gaming and historical rivalries rather than contemporary geopolitics, and *Dover Patrol* is a product of popular geopolitical discourse formed by centuries of naval history and imperialism, *Aviation* is inspired by military technologies of aerial warfare that were actively developed in the First World War. Technology is important to the representations of war in this game, as shown by the development of its playing pieces. Yet as *Aviation* simulates aerial warfare technology in its complex rules and visual appearance, it distances itself ever further from recognisable geopolitics — although the game depicts an invasion and the playing pieces are modelled after the Royal Air Force, it is difficult to highlight popular discourses of imperialism or war present in the game. Throughout the chapter so far, a growing ambivalence about war can be identified, celebrating war

as a complex battle of wits between states and officers yet erasing war as statecraft or as violence. This ambivalence will only be continued with the final game in this chapter and this thesis, *Tri-Tactics*.



Figure 56: Board of Battle of Britain. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)

Tri-Tactics: Total War

Tri-Tactics, the final variant of *L'Attaque* studied here, was first published by H. P. Gibson and Sons in 1932 (according to Lewin (2012: 161) – it almost certainly follows *Aviation*). This is by far the most ambitious game in this chapter; it combines *L'Attaque*, *Dover Patrol* and *Aviation* to represent full military forces of armies, ships and aircraft. In this analysis, I use both what I believe to be an original (or close to original) incomplete version found in the International War Museum and a later version located in Gibsons (using production materials like those found in their post-war version of *Aviation* – see *Figure 57* for this version's box). The lists of pieces in both versions mostly match each other, but as with the above analysis of *Aviation*, there are important variations in the representations of pieces to discuss.

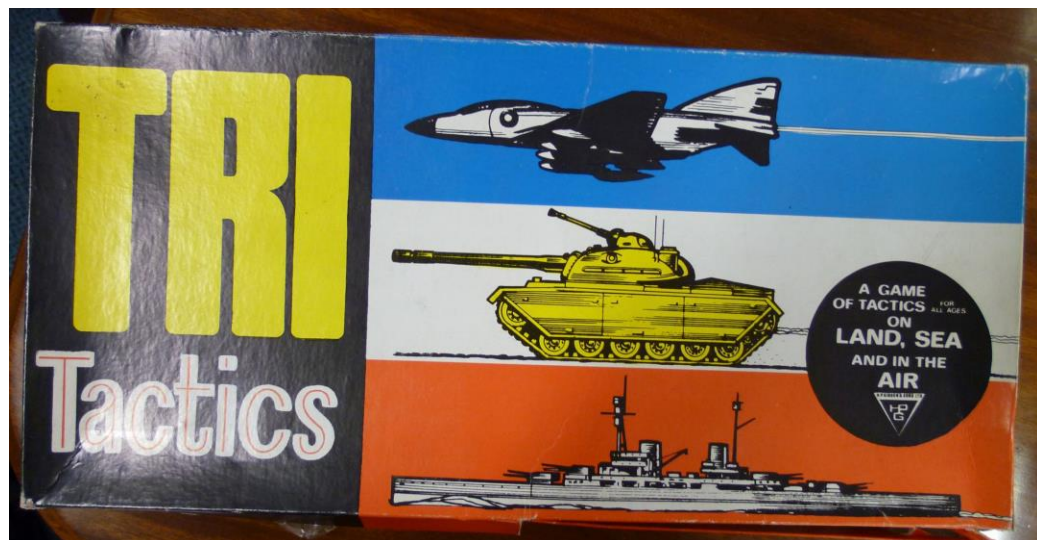


Figure 57: Box for Tri-Tactics, the post-war version in the Gibsons archives. Note the colours, associated with Allied armies in the World Wars (the colours of the Union Jack or French flag). (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)

Tri-Tactics' board is a 12x12 grid (*Figure 58*). Unlike the previous boards, this one depicts a terrain – green land surrounding an ocean with two rivers running up to Lakes which serve as naval bases, one for each player. Each player also has an HQ space. Each player starts with 56 pieces, arranged on their half of the board, comprised of 24 land-based pieces (battalions, brigades, etc.), 15 naval, and 17 aerial (including searchlights). Pieces are again one-sided and usually numbered (*Figure 59*). In *Tri-Tactics*, the numbering never goes higher than 5 (unlike the previous games which scaled up to 10), since types of pieces (land, sea, air) largely only interact with their own type, and there is less variety within each type. For example, the aerial warfare of *Tri-Tactics* is drastically condensed from *Aviation*: there are only three types of plane, Reconnaissance (of value 1), Bombers (2) and Two-Seat Fighters (3), plus searchlights and Flying Boats (marked by their initials instead of numbers). The player's goal is to capture either their opponent's HQ with a land-based piece, or their naval base with a ship that has travelled the length of the river leading up to it.

Movement and capture is basically the same as in *Tri-Tactics'* predecessors; pieces move one space at a time (although searchlights can move further to attack), and may attempt to capture each other, whereupon both pieces are revealed and the higher value piece defeats the lower value. However, the mixture of piece types complicates this basic set of rules. Pieces may move, as the rules say, "out of their element" for as long as they are not caught. For instance, a ship may move over land, but it is immediately destroyed if it is revealed on land to the opposing player, regardless of how it would otherwise interact with the capturing piece.

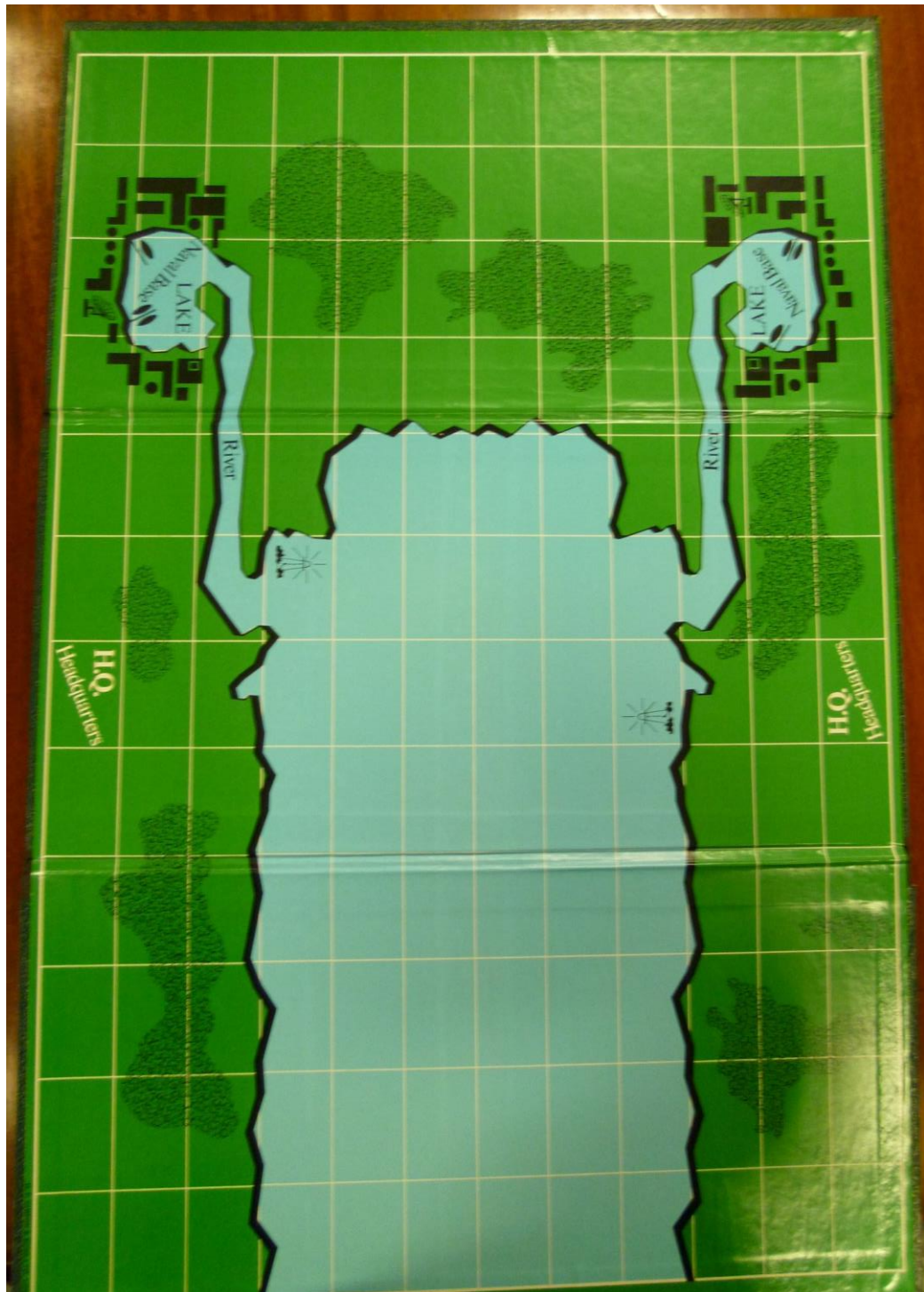


Figure 58: Board for Tri-Tactics. This is the post-war version, but the original 1932 version in the Imperial War Museum is almost identical, just with less detail around the Lake squares. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo)

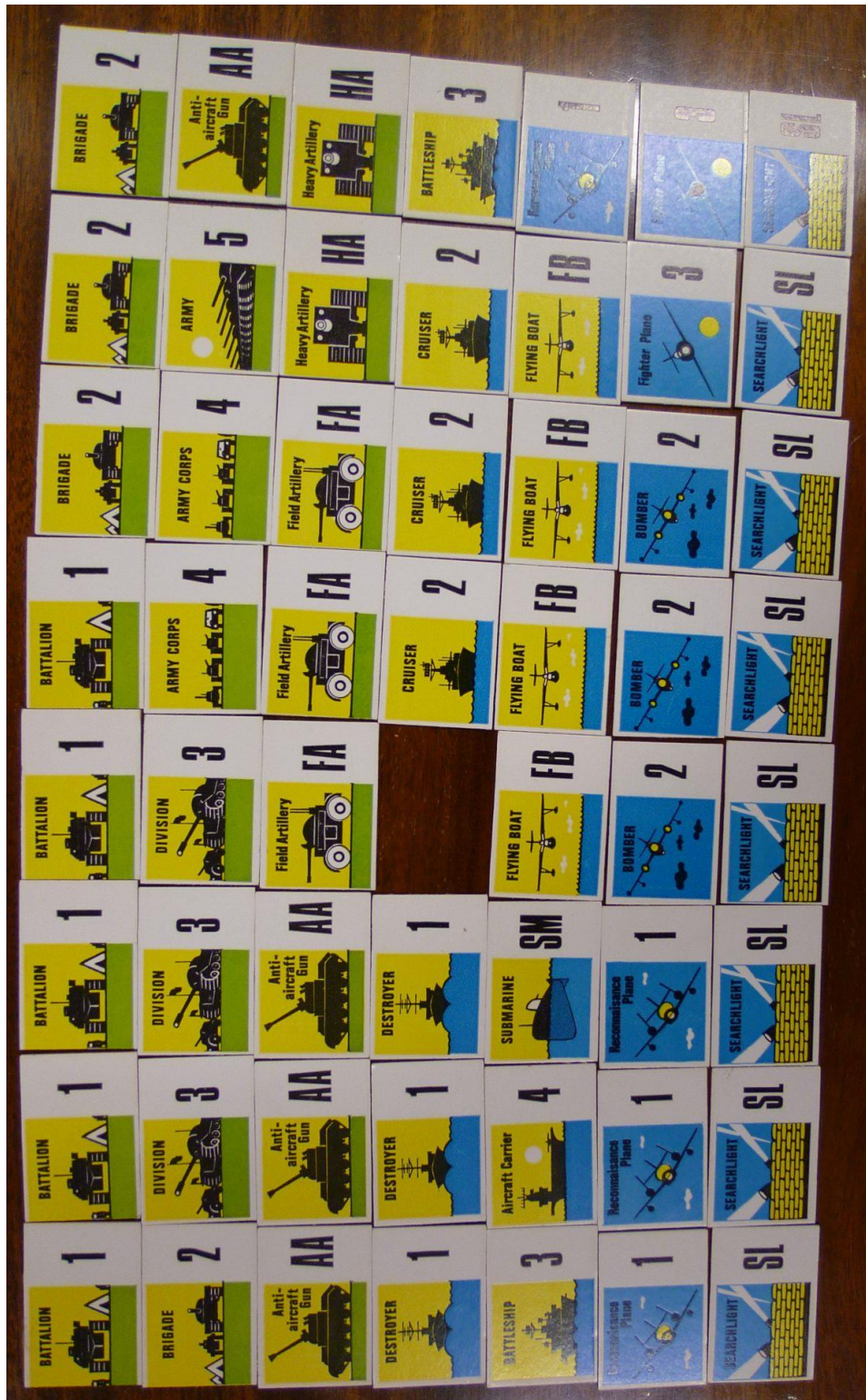


Figure 59: Pieces for one military force in the post-war version of Tri-Tactics (with one boat missing). (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)

Additionally, because there are so many different types of pieces, there are many, many exceptions and special interactions to keep track of. For example, a bomber plane may destroy most land-based pieces, presumably by bombing them, although some of these pieces have to be on coastal squares on the board for bombers to affect them (a rule which is intended to resolve problems with the difficulty of naval and land pieces attacking over the coast and destroying themselves when they end up on the other side of the coastline out of their element); however, the two-seat fighter, which can defeat a bomber, cannot affect any land-based pieces, with the exception of the brigade (but not the less powerful battalion) and the field artillery (but not the heavy artillery), for reasons I do not understand. This begins to demonstrate *Tri-Tactics*' complexity. To assist players in resolving capture attempts, a reference table is included with *Tri-Tactics* which, for any two pieces, shows either the victor or a footnote symbol referring to some special rule for that encounter (*Figure 60*). In the previous games in this chapter, a gradual increase in difficulty and complexity could be detected with each new variation; with *Tri-Tactics*, this increase has become exponential.

Tri-Tactics is the most elaborate iteration of *L'Attaque* yet, and most likely exists to extend H. P. Gibson and Sons' success in war gaming after simulating land, sea and air power separately. This is ultimately why *Tri-Tactics* is the most complicated game in the series – the game must model all branches of the military moving at once on the same battlefield and supporting each other. On paper, it seems that this is the most holistic war game studied in this thesis, putting players in charge of an entire military rather than one branch of the military or one aspect of geopolitics as most war games have done.

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	AA	FA	HA	Reconnaissance Plane.	1.	2.	3.	FB	SM	1.	2.	3.	4.	SL
Battalion.	1.	X	2	3	4	5	1	F.A.				2		§						1
Brigade.	2.	2	X	3	4	5		F.A.	H.A.		§	3	§							
Division.	3.	3	3	X	4	5		X	H.A.		2		§							
Army Corps.	4.	4	4	4	X	5		4	H.A.		§		§							
Army.	5.	5	5	5	5	X		5	H.A.		§		§							
Anti-Aircraft Gun AA		1						F.A.		A.A.	A.A.	A.A.	A.A.	A.A.	+	+	+	+	+	
Field Artillery. FA		F.A.	F.A.	X	4	5	F.A.	X	H.A.		§	3	§							
Heavy Artillery. HA			H.A.	H.A.	H.A.	H.A.		H.A.	X		2				☞	☞	☞	☞	☞	
Reconnaissance Plane	1.						A.A.			X	2	3	*							1
Bomber.	2.	2	§	2	§	§	A.A.	§	2	2	X	3	*							
Two Seat Fighter.	3.		3				A.A.	3		3	3	X	*							
Flying Boat. FB		§	§	§	§	§	A.A.	§		*	*	*	X	F.B.	1					F.B.
Submarine. SM							+		☞				F.B.		S.M.	S.M.	S.M.	S.M.		
Destroyer.	1.						+		☞				1	S.M.	X	2	3	4		
Cruiser.	2.						+		☞					S.M.	2	X	3	4		
Battleship.	3.						+		☞					S.M.	3	3	X	4		
Aircraft Carrier.	4.						+		☞					S.M.	4	4	4	X		
Searchlight. SL		1								1			F.B.							

Figure 60: Table to resolve capture attempts in Tri-Tactics. The back of this card features a list of explanations for the special symbols found in some grid spaces. (Located at Sutton: Gibsons. Author's own photo.)

In practice, this means that the tactics available to the player become quite surreal. The fog of war, the factor of concealed information that has characterised all the *L'Attaque* games, may be used here to disguise the fact that your land-based battalions are currently swimming across the ocean. *Tri-Tactics'* rule book suggests that this is because of the sheer number of pieces on the battlefield. The player's arrangement of pieces at the beginning of the game is highly constrained by the terrain, making the placement of their pieces (especially their naval pieces) predictable unless they place pieces out of their element. Additionally, increasing

the freedom of pieces to move across terrain opens more options and tactics for players to use. This could be seen in the same light as the mobility of troops in *L'Attaque* and similar battlefield games despite trench warfare. There is a tension in war games between realism and fun; between striated gameplay, which recreates strategies used in real geopolitics and warfare but which are slow and tedious on a game board, and open gameplay which allows unlikely or impossible movements and tactics to allow players to progress steadily to a victory or defeat. *Tri-Tactics* is firmly on the "open" end of this spectrum, more plainly than the other *L'Attaque* games. This game represents a complete war, yet also features one of the more playful and absurd representations of war of all the games studied in this thesis.

I have mentioned the terrain of *Tri-Tactics* a few times now, and I must address that this in itself is an advancement on the game's predecessors. All the previous games in this chapter have been on boards representing almost completely featureless battlefields. *L'Attaque* has a few spaces marked as rivers that bottleneck movement, and *Dover Patrol* and *Aviation* have Harbours and Aerodromes respectively, but otherwise movement is completely open and the space is abstract and flat. *Tri-Tactics* is the only game to take place on a tangible physical terrain, defined by a coastline separating sea and land. This allows physical geography to become a factor in the movement of pieces, recalling war games of greater scope, particularly tabletop war games such as Prussia's *Kriegsspiel* and H. G. Wells's *Little Wars*. In those games, geography is a key tactical consideration. The movement of simulated armies is modified by the topography of *Kriegsspiel* maps; by teaching the role of terrain in military movement, *Kriegsspiel* became instrumental in the training of the Prussian military (Ahlqvist, 2011: 279). In *Little Wars*, toy soldiers may use raised ground and toy buildings, constructed by players before the game, as cover from their opponent's guns (Wells, 1913: 17-9); although intended as a game first and foremost, the appendix of this game's rulebook discusses interest from military officers in developing the game's

simulation of war into a full training tool like *Kriegsspiel* (ibid: 101 onwards). These two examples demonstrate the connection between geography and realism in war gaming. By representing a battlefield as a three-dimensional terrain rather than a flat battlefield, war games can reflect the tactical considerations of space faced by military strategists.

In this respect, despite the fundamental absurdity of being able to sneak ships across land if the opponent can't see them, *Tri-Tactics* is the closest out of all the *L'Attaque*-style games to simulating war, and to placing the player in the role of a military officer making informed decisions about space and geopolitics. In comparison to *Little Wars* and *Kriegsspiel*, though, the role of geography is downplayed in *Tri-Tactics*. The land itself remains flat; there are no actual changes in elevation marked on the board, meaning there is no high ground or similar feature to take advantage of (in the same way that British and Boer soldiers took advantage of kopjes in the Boer War, or the same way that armies dug trenches to hold positions and protect themselves from guns in the World Wars). The coastline is an arbitrary border delineating land and sea, rather than representing a continuation of the topography of land underwater, and its perfectly symmetrical and right-angled form follows the lines of the grid, indicating the gameplay considerations that influenced the design of *Tri-Tactics*; it must be as clear as possible what part of the terrain is water and what is land, to prevent any ambiguity in combat.

In fact, the terrain largely serves to facilitate the open movement of *Tri-Tactics*, not to constrain it. Rather than limiting the movement of pieces in a realistic way (for example, hills that artillery pieces might have trouble climbing), terrain merely acts as a definer of "danger zones" for certain pieces (for example, artillery pieces may sail out to sea, but sink immediately if the opponent discovers them). The design of the map almost requires this use of terrain, in fact. As visible in *Figure 58*, the sea is a bay which extends rather into the land along the centre of the

board, separating the two players. Yet because of the number of land-based pieces, if these pieces are restricted to land, the land bridge on one side of the map becomes a severe bottleneck which limits the mobility of both players unless they take full advantage of the lack of movement rules for terrain. This all suggests that geography is modelled only in the broadest possible strokes in *Tri-Tactics*, and demonstrates that, although *Tri-Tactics* is the most advanced war game of its type, it remains a game first and a simulation of war and geopolitics second.

Much of the geopolitical discourses embedded in the *L'Attaque* games have been visible through the design of their playing pieces, and *Tri-Tactics* is no exception. Like *Aviation* and *L'Attaque*, the two different versions I found of *Tri-Tactics* – an interwar publication at the Imperial War Museum and a post-Second World War edition at Gibsons – allow an exploration of how the geopolitics of this game evolved through war. I do not have many photographs of pieces from the early 1932 version (*Figure 61*), and some pieces seemed to be missing anyway, but the combat table and rulebook provides a full list of piece names for both versions studied here.



Figure 61: Pieces from the earlier 1932 publication of Tri-Tactics. (Location: EPH 2583, London: Imperial War Museum. Author's own photo.)

1932's infantry pieces depict formations of soldiers in the drab green uniform of Britain in the First World War. Compare this to *L'Attaque*, which depicted red-coated soldiers as individuals. In *Tri-Tactics*, there has been a modernisation in the representations of British soldiers, updated to reflect trench warfare, and the use of entire battalions rather than individual soldiers as single pieces contributes to the greater scale of *Tri-Tactics* in comparison. This modernisation continues in the post-war version's land-based pieces (*Figure 58*) – these do not depict any infantry soldiers, but armies are now represented by tanks, introducing armoured vehicle technology to the land war of the *L'Attaque* games. The visible technology of war continues to advance with subsequent iterations of H. P. Gibson and Sons' war games. However, although the pieces visually reflect modern trench warfare, in gameplay terms they are even more mobile than in *L'Attaque* – whereas *L'Attaque* soldiers could not cross rivers, *Tri-Tactics* soldiers and tanks can ford rivers and oceans. The modern appearance of the pieces is purely a cosmetic update, and they still carry out classic wargame visions of fluid warfare in practice. (It is worth mentioning that, again, the military forces of *Tri-Tactics* are not identified as British soldiers within the game, but are identifiable as such from the illustration. As more evidence for this, look at the box for the post-war version (*Figure 56*) and its colour scheme, red, white and blue – colours associated with the Allies in the two World Wars (the Union Jack, the French flag), and in games shown throughout this thesis.)

There are also notable differences between the names of some pieces, comparable with *Aviation*'s renaming of the Bristol Fighter to the single seat fighter. That game also had a plane in its interwar version called the "Battle Plane" which was not present in its post-war version; similarly, the Battle Plane of the interwar version of *Tri-Tactics* becomes the "Fighter Plane" at some point after the Second World War. This is not a game-changing difference, but it hints again at the updating of terminology and technology to be more contemporary throughout the *L'Attaque* games.

More telling, however, is the naming of ships in *Tri-Tactics*. In the 1932 version, in order of relative power, the four main types of ship piece in *Tri-Tactics* are "Destroyers," "Cruisers", "Dreadnoughts", "Battleships." In the post-war version, Dreadnoughts become Battleships, and the 1932 version's Battleships become Aircraft Carriers. For one final time in this thesis, the dreadnought becomes a representation of British geopolitics and militarism. In other games, the dreadnought reflected British nationalism and fear of German naval ambitions prior to and during the First World War (it was present in *Dover Patrol*, of course), so it is interesting that it makes one more appearance in 1932, long after it was geopolitically relevant, and perhaps a few years before naval fears would be relevant again. After the Second World War, though, the dreadnought disappears, its discursive power and technological superiority gone for good. This new edition of a game removing the dreadnought shows how such games reflect geopolitical moments in time, rather than an objective geopolitical view of the military; the dreadnought becomes unremarkable and less important than other naval technologies once separated from its iconographical role as the new defender of British sea power.

Tri-Tactics is the culmination of patterns of militarism visible throughout the *L'Attaque* line of games. The game updates its representations of the military and its technology to remain visually up-to-date with the latest developments in war, as its predecessors did; contradictorily, *Tri-Tactics* also distances itself from any sense of realism or any attempt to simulate the geopolitics of the First or Second World War, also like its predecessors. (This is despite any temptation to contextualise the 1932 game in terms of the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany; there is no obvious representation of any force other than a British military force in *Tri-Tactics*, and the game is certainly not framed as the simulation of another World War.) The hierarchy of authority that exists in the prior games is missing here, as the pieces focus on technology and machinery which is materially more suited to battle rather than on relative ranks as in *L'Attaque* or *Dover Patrol*.

However, *Tri-Tactics* also makes the role of geography in warfare more important than in previous war games, albeit in a simplified manner which suits the playful abstract nature of battle in the game.

Since we have dwelled on the evolution of military technology for the whole chapter, there is one last point to be made about *Tri-Tactics* which could be extended to the other H. P. Gibson and Sons war games: the technology is never too fresh or too violent. Trench uniforms and tanks gesture towards modern militarism, but trenches, mustard gas, and other particularly gruesome weapons are never present. *Tri-Tactics* represents a full-scale war, and the technology is constantly modified to remain current, and to represent visually powerful technology like the tank or the aircraft carrier. But in its post-war incarnation, the most geopolitically influential of all post-war technologies, the nuclear weapon, is absent. This weapon of mass destruction far exceeds the playful vision of tactical war that the Gibson family present in their games. How could you possibly incorporate the deadliest of all weapons into a game on the scale of a battlefield? *Tri-Tactics*, and the *L'Attaque* line in general, are caught between embracing technological militarism and making the confrontational geopolitics and trauma of such militarism invisible in the service of play. They hew as close as possible to the technology of the day to remain relevant, but the games are fundamentally committed to a more and more outdated chess-like vision of war as toy soldiers on a battlefield.

Discussion: Evolution of Geopolitics

This analysis has taken a timeline of four related games and studied multiple versions of each to show how geopolitics and militarism in games are updated to reflect and incorporate the real world. Even though the games themselves seem to shy away from making any statements about current geopolitics, trends in their

depiction of the (British) military as a technological power and as a hierarchy of strength can be traced running through all the games.

Firstly, we must remember to treat these games in the way that they present themselves: they are fun "rival[s] to Chess" and, just like Chess, are not supposed to be realistic simulations of war. They reflect aspects of military tactics: as discussed, the use of one-sided game pieces to hide information from the opponent is an elegant interpretation of the "fog of war," the tactics of information-hiding and -gathering in war. But beyond this, like many war games, these are not games played to confront the horrors of war. Conflicts are resolved cleanly and deterministically (piece X will always beat piece Y), and bodies are made invisible, as the board game format often demands.

Similarly, unlike many of the games studied in this thesis, the *L'Attaque* games are not designed to make a propaganda-like point about any potential or ongoing conflicts. The geopolitical representations of *L'Attaque* and its descendants are static, because they attempt to be apolitical – as we mostly see only nameless British-like forces competing on the board, it is difficult to say how popular geopolitics shift with regards to Britain and its friendships and rivalries with other nations. The only "other" seen in these games is France in the early versions of *L'Attaque*, and that is because that game was based on a French design in which Britain was the "other," and perhaps can be thought of as an invocation of historical geopolitics rather than a framing of France or Britain as a contemporary enemy.

Although the representations of war in the H. P. Gibson and Sons war games are a-geopolitical, the player's goals in each game are geopolitical in the sense that they sometimes require the player to seize control of some territory occupied at the start by the other player (the Aerodromes of *Aviation* or the lakes and HQs of *Tri-Tactics*), or of some symbol of the opposing player as nation-state (the flags of *L'Attaque* and *Dover Patrol*). But beyond the Britain-France conflict of *L'Attaque*,

these objectives are only geopolitical in a vague sense – which nations are being invaded? What nations are these the flags of? Since both armies are usually British, the games exist in their own abstract worlds, not representing other nations as friends or enemies.

We can draw a connection to the modern military-entertainment complex here, as much to contrast as to compare. The game *America's Army*, so frequently analysed by critical geographers and media studies academics (e.g. Stahl, 2010; Power, 2007), infamously renders whichever team you are playing on as the US Army and your rival team as terrorists, the "bad guys" – that rival team sees themselves as the US Army and your team as the terrorists. This is deliberately done to encode one geopolitical message for all players in the game, in which the US military is a force for good as opposed to the geopolitical terrorist "other", regardless of which team each player is in each time they play (Huntemann, 2010: 181). *L'Attaque* and the other games manage a similar effect by representing both the "good guys" and the "bad guys" as the same army in most versions. The geopolitics remain consistent for both players, simply because there is no way of drawing a consistently pro-/anti-British army message from the game. It is also important to note that the lack of geopolitics is probably a conscious and unprovoked choice by H. P. Gibson and Sons, rather than an accidental absence. *Sky Raiders*, a game studied in the previous chapter, and the above-mentioned *Aviation* reimagining *Battle of Britain* are two games by the same publisher that make stronger gestures towards the geopolitics of war, both being recreations of Britain's war in the air during the Second World War. Yet *L'Attaque* and its spin-offs are close to apolitical, even in the post-war era alongside these two games. These are deliberate abstract visions of battle rather than simulations of war.

If the geopolitics of war are invisible in the *L'Attaque* games, however, the technology of war is centre-stage. The representation of the British military is constantly modernised throughout these games over time. In *L'Attaque*, we see

British uniforms change from red coats to trench green, updating the original French pre-war design to one that reflects the post-First World War military. In *Aviation*, a "Bristol Fighter" becomes a Spitfire. And other the course of the games we see a ludic representation of war change from a classic soldier v. soldier conflict, such as one might recreate with toy soldiers, to *Tri-Tactics*' vision of total war where land, sea and air technologies interact and react to one another. The international geopolitics of the games may be made absent, but the militarism remains current.

In the book *Militainment*, Roger Stahl discusses the representation of military technology and current affairs in video games. Games have morphed their geopolitics to fit war; parts of games recreate military technology like drone strikes and are based off ongoing wars and geopolitics (such as the War on Terror, the United States versus anti-American terrorists) as well as historical conflicts (Stahl, 2010: 100). Geographers have noted that this is a two-way relationship – games influence the military as well, perhaps most noticeably in the game-like nature of operating a drone through a screen with a controller (Shaw, 2010: 789-790). Studying H. P. Gibson's war games proves that a similar relationship existed with 20th century board games. *L'Attaque* and its sister games may be ostensibly apolitical, but not representing a specific war or battle or other moment in time allows the games free rein to update their visual form to match contemporary militarism. Whether they play realistically is arguable (they certainly don't in the case of *Tri-Tactics*, whose terrain-based pieces stretch the fog-of-war concept to its limit), but they chase a realistic look by reflecting modernity. The games are informed by geopolitics and the current state of military technology that has been developed to keep pace with current wars, even if they appear a-geopolitical.

This representation of technology itself becomes a geopolitical choice which reflects British militarism favourably, as it only represents technology as far as is comfortable or convenient. In no game is trench warfare ever introduced; entire

armies are constantly mobile. And the ways in which technology is employed are only simulated in a deterministic way, like a particularly complex game of rock-paper-scissors: bigger boats always sink smaller boats; anti-aircraft guns always shoot down aircraft. War is clean, smooth and fully operational at all times. This is understandable when we remember that the *L'Attaque* games are games first and foremost; forcing players to deal with broken equipment, or with the exact process of loading and aiming an anti-aircraft gun, or any of the many other small tasks of war might prevent the games being very fun or exciting to play. For all the modern technology presented in *L'Attaque* and its sisters, however, the games present an idealised version of war, a fetishism for technology and strategy in which the right equipment at the right time always works, and in which bigger boats or bigger armies or more planes always make a superior side; military might and modernism is the only way to succeed geopolitically. Additionally, the most gruesome military technology, like mustard gas for example, is conspicuous by its absence. This is in keeping with a criticism that, as I have noted throughout the thesis, can be levied at almost any war board game: the violence is never visible; bodies and wrecks are removed cleanly from the board, so that the corporeal effects of war never confront the players. The H. P. Gibson war games, contradictorily, present both a modern war and a clean war.

Finally, throughout *L'Attaque* and related games there is a suggestion that military authority and power are connected. Many piece names in these games have suggested that the positions in the army, navy, or air force with the highest status are the strongest – for example, *L'Attaque*'s Commander-in-Chief, or the interwar version of *Aviation*'s Air Marshall's Squadron, both the most powerful pieces in their respective games, unassailable without recourse to greater technologies or subterfuge (*L'Attaque*'s Mines and Spy, or *Aviation*'s Guns). There is a great respect for military experience or authority in these games; they are very uncritical of the processes or leadership of militarism, so that even though they appear apolitical, they valorise the experience of directing a battle or war. This forms an interesting

parallel with the player, since, after all, the player is the real commander of their forces, dictating the tactics that change the course of the battle. To criticise authority in any of H. P. Gibson's war games would be to metaphorically challenge the player's complicity in these fake wars. Just as video games provide an uncritical experience of war by flattering the player's character as a war hero or a one-man army, so board games represent the military strategist in the same way. The general geopolitics of *L'Attaque* and its descendants are like those of video games and of more explicitly geopolitical war games; regardless of the violence of war, militarism is made fun and playful through the unchecked authority and power of the player's control of and gaze over the board.

Although a copy was not studied during the research period, the *L'Attaque* mode of gameplay using concealed information has since been borrowed for the more famous game *Stratego*, first published in 1944 (Lewin, 2012: 161; Cazaux and Knowlton, 2017: 139, in which *Stratego* is suggested to have been inspired by a recreation from memory of *L'Attaque*). This game uses Napoleonic war imagery in some versions to represent its battle between two armies. It is interesting how this game's various evolutions have ultimately cycled back to its French roots, even in the 21st century and outside of Gibsons. In this chapter I have studied the historical geopolitics of war games as a reflection of the popular geopolitics of British and French militarism; now, *L'Attaque* has inspired games which delve into historical geopolitics as a theme for its playful wars.

Conclusion

How do British board games of the 20th century historicise popular geopolitics? Over the last four chapters I have analysed twenty distinct board games from a range of publishers, each with their own perceptions of war, geopolitics and militarism, and each trying to market itself in different ways, as propaganda, education or pure entertainment. Yet in this diversity of board games, several distinct tropes have appeared again and again. These ideas tie together the spaces of the household, the miniature board game, and the real wars and geopolitical tensions that they simulate. They allow geopolitics and militarism to circulate through board games and domestic spaces. In this concluding chapter, I identify these tropes and their purposes to demonstrate where board games fit in the existing literature on ludic geopolitics and popular geopolitics.

Games are transitional spaces. Through play, a player may take on a virtual role in a virtual space as well as existing and interacting in the real world. The board game war structures this transitional space to encourage players to imagine themselves as part of a miniature tactical battle. Board games can be assemblages through which players investigate the strategies and ideologies of geopolitics and warfare, and experience these ideologies as a military officer might. But to achieve the playful objectives of the board game war (to capture all of the opponent's pieces, say, or to reach a particular space on the board first), the player must engage with and accept these ideologies. These ideologies, as presented by the game, have often been shaped in very particular ways which make them more attractive and less challenging to the players. They represent the "clean war" more than they reflect the realities of war. Sometimes this is deliberate, sometimes it is an accident of the board game as a medium; nevertheless, this is how geopolitics and militarism are presented in the board game.

For example, a constant refrain throughout this thesis has been that board games avoid the true violence of war. Obviously they are unable to capture the sensory impacts of war; video games can simulate some of this with rumbling controllers and sound and noise, but the highly visual abstract board game has no similar options. But board games are not just unable, but often unwilling to capture war. The historical representation of war in board games is either glorious or made abstract. The Battle of Britain is played with in *Sky Raiders*, a simulation of the aerial wars which scarred Britain only a few years before, but from which Britain emerged victorious. *The Way to Berlin* and *Dash to Berlin* each express the popular geopolitical perception that the allies will simply march into Germany and defeat the Kaiser without resistance. Such confident depictions of war disappear past the first year of the First World War as Britain's body count climbs – note how the ignominious non-victory of Jutland is barely acknowledged in the game named after it. Also note how the technology of war in board games is always mobile and simplified and neat; no trenches to trap soldiers in, no mustard gas to fill them with, just infantry and artillery to walk over each other as one chess piece walks over an opposing piece. Indeed, the war board game is often a product of pre-First World War militarism, commemorated in the old-fashioned out-of-date red uniforms depicted on British and French soldiers in some of these games, even after the advent of trench warfare necessitated a rethink of uniforms pertaining to their visibility on muddy fields to machine gun operators.

Shorn of its traumas and baggage, war is thus made logical and understandable in the board game. This is where my concept of the player as God-strategist is important. The player is granted mastery over the miniaturised war; they see the entire battlefield, they have utter control of their troops, and they encounter none of the troublesome affect of war. Some of the designers in this thesis recognise this power. The *Royal Scientific War Games* are not just a set of games, but a tactical education, possible because the player can survey the entire theatre of war and (supposedly) learn the considerations that a real military officer must contend

with during the Great War. *A.R.P.* and *Black-Out* are literal educations, where the players contend with chance-based gameplay to learn expected behaviours in wartime and see the consequences of following or not following these behaviours. The *L'Attaque* series is notable for subverting these expectations with the fog of war, yet these are still battles fought with wits, not firearms, in which players must bluff and outmanoeuvre each other in a bloodless skirmish.

The board game war is also decidedly conservative; at least, the wartime British board game is. The board games studied here point to a nationalist, imperialist celebration of Britain and its control over territory, and many of the First World War-era games invoke the perception that German imperialism, the wrong kind of imperialism, is an affront to British sovereignty (the military object of the dreadnought and its proud place in several games embody this). Britain is often the protagonist, and never the outright antagonist. The iconography of imperialism is also invoked; Britain's association with red in Boer or Britain (after the map of the British Empire) and similar geopolitical mapping techniques, the naming of ships in *Dover Patrol*, the assembly of miniature flags to claim territory in *the Way to Berlin*, all work to depict the land of the board game war, and thus the landscape of the real wars that it represents, as the subject of British geopolitics. Thus, these board games work to justify geopolitical tensions and interventions, both in wartime and peace.

The conservatism of the board game war is also seen in a subtler, more insidious way through gender. War is a "game for boys"; the representation of people in these board games are overwhelmingly masculine, as are the assumptions made of players, often referred to in rules by he/him pronouns. This occurs despite the presence of female designers such as Hermance Edan of *L'Attaque*. Indeed, the one notable feminine presence in the games themselves, Annie of *Annie Wants Her Stripes*, is a caricature presented by a magazine whose interest was in establishing and reinforcing domestic roles for women.

Beyond these representations of Britishness and boyhood, though, it must be remembered that board games are meant to be played. The experience of play is hugely important to the expression of geopolitics in the game's transitional space. The war games of this thesis sometimes offer a simulation of a past war, or a cultural memorialisation of this war; more often they offer what was then a contemporary experience of an ongoing battle, particularly during the World Wars. This allows players to investigate a safe, sanitised version of the experiences shared by many soldiers and officers in war. But the limited ethologies of these games, the rules which define what can and cannot be done, sometimes encourage or force a sympathetic view of the Allied side of the two World Wars, when it is impossible to play as Germany and thus subvert the intended message of an impending Allied victory; this is visible primarily in track games. Even the rules of more open-ended tactical force a view of militarism as the primary vector of geopolitics. In such games, fighting for spatial control and territory is the assumed mode of settling geopolitics on the battlefield (miniature or full-scale); there are no options for diplomacy except for those invented by the players outside of the game's space and intended rules. Militarism is the only way to achieve geopolitical goals in the board game.

The war board game, then, is war idealised. Here, war is almost non-violent, and features none of the technological developments that made the two World Wars so distressing; it is deterministic, the result of sound tactical thought rather than best guesses and superior forces; it is old-fashioned, harkening back to a time before trench warfare when Britain was the dominant imperial power and war was a boys' club. The ludic geopolitics of historic British board games do not question war, or offer the capacity to question it; instead, they celebrate the way that war "should" be. They support British geopolitics by making them fun and nostalgic, or by distilling war into a favourable abstract form that reflects positively on the real battles happening in Europe.

The purpose of this, of course, is to commercially distribute popular geopolitics into as many domestic spaces as possible. We must remember the producers and consumers of ludic geopolitics as well as the geopolitics themselves. These producers were as much subjects of popular geopolitics as perpetrators of them. Board game designers often assembled and published games to capitalise on national feeling and make a lot of money while they could, but many of these games work through and answer back to geopolitical anxieties, creating a version of war which could be understood. These wars could then be bought and brought into the living room, into a larger safer space where they could be toyed with, brought under control, acted out in entertaining and perhaps reassuring ways, in contrast to the real World Wars which claimed so many lives. If war is the Great Game, a tactical exercise on an international scale with a score measured in bodies, then the board game is the Little War, “war without tears”, a frightening and overwhelming clash of nations defanged and collapsed into a board which can be played with, examined, and then put back in its box and packed away somewhere on the players’ own terms.

The historical popular geopolitics of 20th century British board games are designed to play with war. They make it miniature, knowable and fun; but they do so by eliding the costs of war and militarism, and by appealing to imperialism and nationalism. Wells says in his own *Little Wars* that it could extinguish Great War if only every warmonger could be forced to play it to act out their aggression instead; he then proceeds to outline a set of rules for *Little Wars* designed to train military officers for Great Wars. This, I think, encapsulates the fundamental tension of board games and ludic geopolitics perfectly; they domesticate and toy with geopolitics, they provide a safe and fun experience for players at home, but this ultimately serves to perpetuate geopolitics rather than entirely redirect geopolitics to playfulness.

As I have historicised video game geographies in my literature review to help analyse board games, so these conclusions can be modernised to speak for the present. Video games have supplanted board games as the primary vector for ludic geopolitics, and militaries have embraced their potentials to perpetuate geopolitics even as they contain geopolitics to the console in the living room, with recruitment games like *America's Army*. But the way that such games collapse the space of the battlefield into the space of the house begin much earlier with board games.

Indeed, they begin much earlier than the time frame of this thesis. We may recall that board games have been used for literal millennia as practice for war, as far back as the Roman Empire. The history of board games, of transitional space and militarism, is far longer than the history of ludic geopolitics literature. In this thesis, I have provided a corrective to the current ahistoricity of ludic geopolitics literature in geography by studying board games. As future research continues in this direction, we would be wise to remember that the history of games and play is fundamentally inextricable from the history of geopolitics.

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