

Tempos and Hierarchy of Defense

Posted By: RobertBrink

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Tempos

When a player moves a piece, it increases or decreases its value. You should always seek to improve the value of units when you move them. Generally, that means moving them forward on the board. Every time that a unit advances to a better position and increases its value, it gains a time "tempo". Material, technology, position, and time tempos are the currency of Axis and Allies. Many newer players don't understand the importance of tempos. Even if you are losing materially (IPC income and on-board units), you can recover the winning position in a game slowly by gaining tempos and position. Disrupt your opponent's flow and keep yours intact. (Example: When the USA moves infantry from EUSA to ECanada, they gain a tempo. When they move to Algeria or Finland, they each gain another tempo. Yet another if they move to Karelia. One more if they go to Russia.) Threats can cause opposing units to lose tempo. By keeping units pinned in Karelia, Germany is preventing allied units from gaining position. If the UK can't move its units from Karelia to Caucas because of a German threat, they are losing tempo.

Losing Tempos

If a unit is shipped twice, a turn has been wasted and it doesn't increase in value. If a transport isn't used because there aren't enough units for it to ship, it lost a tempo. A few examples: USA has moved units to Algeria. Germany's turn rolls around and it buys all armor and shifts all available infantry to EE. USSR and UK are out of position so badly that USA must ship the Algeria units from Algeria to Karelia, or Germany will take it strong enough to hold. USA has lost tempos on dozens of units. The men in Algeria have been shipped a second time. The units in ECanada have been left there and won't improve position. Finally, the transports have actually lost two tempos. They can't ship anything to Europe next turn because they are in the Baltic. It will take them a turn just to regain their former position. That is a drastic example.

Here is a more common example: USSR moves all its armor to Russia and large numbers of infantry to Novo. Japan is forced to move its Yakut infantry back to Manch. They have lost a tempo. Time is valuable in A&A. Try to keep all of your units gaining position and value. Don't have more transports than you have units to ship. -Unless you are Japan and are shuffling units to Africa or picking strays off of Islands.

Naturally, there are exceptions. If you have the opportunity to permanently hold EE or successfully take Germany, losing some movement gains doesn't mean much. Position control is more important than efficiency. That's what tempos are all about, efficient play and board development. Taking Alaska with Japan can be a key move late. It can often completely disrupt USA with only a handful of Japanese units. This move forces USA to move units to WCanada and also place units in WUSA. In a defensive game with very few units traded between either side, gaining tempos and position are your objectives. Not enough units are being traded for either side to build up a significant material advantage. Swarming offenses make very good use of tempo but end up sacrificing the very units that have advanced across the board. It's like having a pawn move into the space just before it can be upgraded only to sacrifice it. -All those moves for nothing.

Hierarchy of Defense

Let's look at the defensive development of USSR and Germany. The goal of Germany and USSR should be to increase the level of defense slowly as the game goes on.

Germany

Level 1

Counter-defense. Germany uses a counter defense for G1 in most games. They threaten to counter-attack EE if USSR moves in hard. This is a weak and dangerous defense. For instance, if USSR takes Ukraine with 7 infantry/3 arm, this defense can break down. Germany can retake EE on G2 if UK/USSR moves in. However, Germany will probably only take it with armor remaining. UK/USSR will then blast the remaining EE units and cripple Germany.

From G1-G3, Germany is often in a counter-defense threatening one side or the other. From G2 on, Germany normally shifts everything to EE and pull out of WE, trading it for a turn or two. With the armor in EE and significant infantry in Germany, the allies know they can't move into WE without being crushed. -Hopefully with enough left over for Germany not to lose its armor in the counter to the counter.

Level 2

Weak-side, counter-defense. On G3-G4, I usually move into WE with enough armor and infantry to keep UK/USA from attacking it. Move in just enough infantry to keep the armor alive if UK/USA does a dual attack. (I usually only use this defense if I can land the fighters in WE, further lowering the infantry requirements.) To setup this defense, you need enough infantry in EE to prevent USSR from being able to take and hold EE strong. Germany must have enough infantry in EE to make it clear that USSR would need to completely expend itself to take it. -Thus leaving USSR open to a powerful counter-attack. This defense allows Germany to stop trading WE or EE. So, it is a step up from a standard counter-defense. This is a risky defense. The allies may take the chance and hit EE or WE at low odds and win big. (Always make sure you have enough infantry/ftrs in WE to ensure beyond question that the allies can't successfully attack and dig into your armor.)

Level 3

Weak-side, hard-defense. This is the same as a weak-side counter only you have enough units in EE to ensure that USSR can't take EE.

Strong-side, counter-defense. Between G3-G5, Germany can move approximately 10 infantry into WE and try to hold it permanently with just infantry. With the ftrs and armor in EE, the UK/USA know that if they take WE they won't be able to hold it. The improvement over a standard counter-defense is that the allies would need to expend significant effort to take WE. They must risk planes to AA fire and even if they take it, Germany can easily counter with enough to hold it permanently.

Level 4

Strong-side, hard-defense. Between G3-G5, the ftrs will no longer be needed in Germany/EE. Germany can then attempt to defend WE, Germany and EE all at the same time. This is the same setup as a counter-defense except Germany puts enough infantry and ftrs in WE to make the odds of a successful dual UK/USA attack very low. With a strong-side counter defense, the allies probably have the odds to take it but only at such an expense that it is unappealing. With a hard-defense, they don't have the odds to take it at all.

Level 5

Power defense. This is the stage after a hard defense if you are using a German "Turtle" or "Fortress Europe" strategy. (Turning Germany into an impregnable defensive block.) When EE and WE can be secured with the available infantry and ftrs, Germany can move its armor into Germany. This discourages UK/USA from making a move on Spain. Plus, it has the advantages of a counter defense. Even if the allies beat the odds hitting WE or EE, the armor and infantry in Germany should be enough to counter and hold. Germany can also begin building a higher percentage

of armor at this stage. That will discourage the allies from shipping units to Africa and force them to keep more forces in Karelia. It can trap a large number of allied units in Karelia.

These are the standard defenses for Germany. A couple of variants exist. Here is the most common:

Level 3-4

Power-threat defense. This is a complex and risky defense. It's like a power defense except WE is left unsecured. Germany buys so much armor that the allies must ship all available units to Karelia to keep it from being crushed. Germany keeps just enough infantry in Germany to trade WE. The USA will take it with a handful of units and airpower. Germany will take it back with the same. For this defense to work, you must know that the allies must ship every available UK unit to Karelia for it to be safe defensively.

If UK/USA thinks you are bluffing, they will do a dual landing in WE planting about 16-18 units there. Germany must now make a major decision, hit WE or Karelia. If you can't plant about 12 units in Karelia, you're in a world of hurt. Sure, Germany can easily retake WE but they'll be leaving armor only there. UK/USA will hit WE and cripple Germany's offensive strength permanently. If you can't plant a large number of units in Karelia, UK/USA will counter and the allies will still have WE under their control. – A complete disaster. This is an advanced and risky defense that I rarely use. However, some top players like Jdsmithbbk are successful with it consistently. A special note on this defense: You can't maintain it for long. It should be used to pin the allies just long enough to get Japan in a strong position. Eventually, the threat becomes phony and Germany is left with limited defensive strength. If you're going to use this, you need to be precise with it.

USSR

USSR has essentially the same hierarchy of defense as Germany. Substitute Karelia for EE, Novo for WE and Russia for Germany. (Naturally, there are some differences.) The goal for USSR should be to setup a power defense. Armor goes to Russia, enough infantry is in Novo to keep Japan out of Yak or Sinkiang. USSR places infantry/armor in Russia every turn. It then shifts enough infantry to Novo every turn to keep it from falling. (While still maintaining a powerful threat on EE.) Because of the use of UK ftrs, USSR can often shift blocks of units throughout Asia.

Example: USSR moves all the Novo inf and Russia armor to Yak. The UK ftrs then land on Yak to keep Japan from successfully counter-attacking. Japan is backed up into Manch. The problem is this completely relieves the pressure on EE and allows Germany to improve its defensive value a level. However, this is also a higher defensive level for USSR. It all depends on what the overall allied long term plan is.

USSR threat-defense

Between R2-R5 you may have the opportunity to permanently force Germany out of EE using a threat defense. USSR buys all armor and shifts all nearby infantry to Karelia. USSR defends Russia with just armor, ftrs and the withdrawn Asian infantry. This usually gives up Novo permanently and is risky. Germany must be weak or infantry short to use this method. (This move will often work against players who buy excessive levels of armor with Germany.) Against them, you'll need to leave the armor and ftrs in Karelia for defense. Russia must not be under significant threat from Japan because only the retreated Asian infantry will be available for defense. Only use this move when you can put Germany, WE, and EE under such universal threat that it breaks down Germany's defensive structure. Russia will almost always be forced to permanently give up Novo when using this move. Novo for EE is a good deal. Just make sure you look at what Japan can send to Novo every turn and make sure that UK/USSR can more than match it. (Japan may roll HBs so you'll want to have a defense capable of withstanding a tech roll.)

End-Game Defenses

Generally intermediate players understand the above defenses but are at a complete loss when things begin to break down. Let's look at some defenses when WE or EE has fallen permanently. If properly played, a mistake by your opponent combined with pressure from Japan will allow Germany to recover to a normal defensive stance.

Weak-Side, counter defense. (End-game variation).

This is the most common position you'll find yourself in as Germany. The allies will put so much combined force on EE that Germany must withdraw. Not even added Japanese ftr support will keep EE from falling. Generally, to pull this off, the allies have used Spain or a big WE landing to force a good share of units out of EE. Regardless of why, Germany has lost EE. It may be a situation where Germany could successfully attack but would only take with armor, leaving them open for allied destruction. Put all armor and as many inf as are necessary in WE to keep UK/USA from attacking it. You'll have enough to defend Germany. Whatever was there when you withdrew from EE plus a turns worth of placement. That makes for a total of the EE units plus about 20 more. You should have plenty to spare for WE. Initially you'll be trading SE. – For a round or two. Eventually, the allies are going to move into SE hard and evacuate EE. This marks the end of the Germany. If they can move into SE and you can't blast them out, Germany's time is limited. The sheer mass of units threatening EE will keep the allies tied up and allow Japan to sprawl and roll for tech. Since the major attack force will be USSR, you may have opportunities arise. The weak side counter defense will keep you safe for a time. If the USSR is forced to move its armor back this frees up Germany. They may be able to get into a more threatening defensive position: The central press defense.

Central press defense.

If you create a target in Novo for USSR's armor, you may be able to get USSR to hit them and remove the threat from Germany. If this is the case, you may be able to change to a more threatening position. If you can successfully hold SE and Germany, withdraw from WE into SE. Move the armor and ftrs into Germany to make SE an unappealing target.- infantry only. Germany is the top priority to defend but you need to also make sure SE could only be taken at tremendous cost. Since the main threat, USSR, removed its attack strength, you can now do a little threatening of your own. Every available German unit is in a position to hit EE or WE. The allies can only move 16-18 units in WE. By this stage of the game, Germany should easily have enough firepower to be able to clear them out with plenty to spare. This would return Germany to a weak-side defense but it would cost the UK/USA each a round of production at limited cost to Germany. Ideally by shifting all units into position to hit EE you can back the allies out. Generally, this is not the case. However, it's not out of the question if Russia has been dedicating units to fighting Japan and not sticking units in Karelia to fortify its EE holding. UK/USSR are the only nations in position to quickly reinforce EE. If you can back the allies out of EE, you can switch to a strong-side defense.

Strong-side counter defense. End-game variation.

A strong side defense is where Germany has lost WE to the allies and can't retake it. However, Germany still has EE. It's better to let the allies have WE than to have all three allies in position to hit you with their combined forces. In addition, it makes it much harder for the allies to gain control of the SE IC. Most likely UK will hold WE, so if they put an IC in it's relatively meaningless. If they try to move into SE hard, you can withdraw from EE and crush the units in SE. -Setting up a center press defense. If you can distract USSR's armor for a time, you can shift the armor and the minimum number of infantry to keep them safe to EE and setup for an attack on WE. The mere fact that Karelia is still under threat will keep the allies from shipping

everything to WE. Alternatively, can exploit this situation by setting up a threat defense on Karelia. You keep just enough armor and infantry in Germany to keep the UK/USA from attacking and keep the majority of your forces in EE to maintain a threat on Karelia, thus pinning down USSR. You will have no threat on WE and the allies will be trading SE with you but it may allow Japan to move into Novo. That can often break an allied death lock on Germany. Either setup to blast the allies out of WE after they have committed their resources or aid Japan in setting up to take Russia.

Either way, the key to getting a death lock off of Germany is with a Japanese threat on Russia. You can do a few power retreats if you'll kill your opponent at a two-to-one ratio. But, eventually Germany is going to be reduced down to one province if you can't sneak your way back into a standard defense. That's just how it is.

However, with 7-9 round of production condensed into one province, the allies will have a very difficult time finishing Germany off. Combine that with the fact that the allies must send resources to Russia to keep Japan from taking it and you'll see that Germany's options are still open.

Japan either needs to move enough conventional forces to Novo to back the allies off of Germany or they need to tech. If you can see that Germany will be forced into an end-game defense within a couple of turns, Japan needs to make a decisive move. (Generally tech.) However, if you have a powerful conventional force, infantry and IC's in place, then you can go the ground troops round. Make a move to take and hold Novo thus threaten Russia. That will force the allies to defend Russia rather than attack Germany. If moving on Novo is out of the question, tech is your only recourse. Tech and tech hard, you'll need it immediately.

USSR End Game

One of the most important things to learn when playing allies is not to panic. It is extremely difficult to kill the USSR conventionally. If USA units are in Karelia/USSR, it's also very difficult for the Axis to pull off an IPC victory. Even if the dice have gone badly and USSR is forced back to Russia by Japan, the game is still under control with proper defense.

USSR end-game defense.

If UK/USA are putting 10-16 infantry a turn into Karelia, it's very hard for the axis to time a German/Japan strike on Karelia/Russia. You can leave Russia in a position where Japan could take it. However, UK goes before Japan and after Germany. This allows UK to transfer units to Russia after defending Karelia. For Japan to take Russia, Germany must make a risky attack on Karelia. (Naturally take the UK units as the last casualties if this happens.) Otherwise, UK ships the 6-10 infantry from UK to Karelia and the ones that were already there to Russia. This system should keep Karelia/Russia intact indefinitely. Meanwhile, the allies can be regaining position. Since the entire allied airforce is in Karelia, trading the provinces in Europe and around Russia should be easy. No matter how much armor the axis buys, they shouldn't be about to offset the 20+ infantry being planted in Europe/Russia each turn. Especially since UK infantry are doing double defense against both Germany and Japan in the same round.

"The March to Caucus"

If a German player has been "turtling" all game, he won't have the armor to threaten Karelia, however, he will sometimes have the defensive power to march an army to Caucus. If Russia has limited armor, they won't be able to crush the infantry when it moves to Caucus. This means that allies must withdraw from Karelia; an absolute disaster this late in the game. The allies have a few choices. 1) They can go for a German/USSR trade. 2) Try to lock down WE or EE and give up Karelia 3) Attack the Caucus stack. It all depends on the resources available. If the allies go for a Germany for USSR trade, they may get IPC'ed if they aren't careful. It will be USSR

taking Germany most likely. USSR doesn't go until the start of the next round. With Russia in German hands, the Axis may have enough for the IPC victory. Trading Germany for USSR basically means buying all armor when German moves to Ukraine, then moving to EE when Germany moves to Caucus. Then attack Germany just after Germany takes or attacks Russia.

I prefer option 2. Nothing shuts down the march to Caucus faster than moving a large force into WE. Ideally, move into EE if Germany has huge amounts of infantry but no attack strength. Sure, Germany can hit your troops in EE with everything it's got and retreat back to German. However, that ends the march to Caucus and you may pull off a material gain. Option 3 also works. You have two rounds to buy armor to setup up for the attack on Caucus. Japan will land its fighter there so account for that when determining how much force you'll need to crush the stack. You can retreat back to Russia when only a handful of German troops remain if a Japanese force is also threatening Russia.

If you can learn to use properly use defenses and tempos, you will often be able to turn around games where the dice have been unkind to you. In addition, your opponent often won't tech because he feels he's "winning", thus you can recover and turn around a game before he or she realizes it is too late. When substantial units are on the board in the proper position, nations with tech can often be overwhelmed. (Or counter-teched.)

RobertBrink
General of the Army,
Spring 1942