

Ottoman Sunset Analysis and Strategy Notes

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I really like this game. It makes me feel like my decisions matter, and that I can maximize my chances to win; it's not a case of the game playing me. I've found that doing a little analysis of the cards has had a positive influence on my ability to win. But let's make no mistake, winning is infrequent. I feel like I win maybe 1 out of every 5 or 6 games (of course I include pyrrhic victories, what young Turk wouldn't?), and all the strategizing in the world will not remedy cold dice. So with that said, let me show you what I've learned.

Fronts and Advances

I wanted to know how many advances each Front receives, and the decks (either Morning, Mid-day, or Dusk) in which they are included. As all players know, the Morning deck is enlarged by the Mid-day deck randomly; this allows for Mid-day events to occur before all the Morning deck events have been drawn, and so on with the Dusk deck. Therefore, while the totals are given here in chronological order (by deck), and are tallied that way, they really come semi-randomly. The following chart lists the number of Front advances by deck.

	Arab	Caucasus	Gallipoli	Mesopotamia	Salonika	Sinai
Morning	5	8	3	5	1	7
Mid-day	4	10	7	7	10	6
Dusk	9	4	3	6	4	6
Totals	18	22	13	18	15	19

Reading this chart, for example, shows the Morning deck includes 5 cards that advance the Arab Front, and the total deck includes 18 cards that advance the Arabs.

Taking all this information, plus other Front-specific events that occur in the game, allows us to do a quick analysis of each Front:

Arab: Two Mid-day cards, 23 and 32, place Faisal in Jidda (box 6). As a consequence, some of the Morning deck advances will be lost, which is a good thing, because there are no Front-specific events that help the Ottomans fend off the Arabs. Dusk deck card 40 flips Faisal to Lawrence, and Dusk is where the Arabs have more advances (9) than any other Front. They will keep the pressure on in the south.

Caucasus: 22 advances is a lot (almost half the deck), but there are lots of events that help the Ottomans here. Morning deck card 02 calls for a retreat (yay!), but card 17 brings the Grand Duke in to replace Dashkov. Likewise, the Mid-day deck card 33 brings in Yudenich while card 35 reduces the Front and either retreats it or brings it back

at Kars (box 5). But by far the best event is Dusk card 43, the Bolshevik Revolution, which removes the Front completely. You really want to draw this card after card 35, thereby collapsing the Front for the duration of the game.

Gallipoli: Morning card 11 brings on the landings, which also destroys the guns at Seddulbahir (more about the Narrows later). Mid-day is when the Front is the greatest threat (7 advances), especially after card 16 flips it to the post-Suvla side. Dusk card 24 evacuates the Front forever...and flips the Salonika Front if in play. Of all the Fronts, this is the one to keep track of advances. It is wasteful to take offensives against this front (or any, for that matter) if it is out of advances...especially since you know it will evacuate...keep track of your Gallipoli draws and you will be rewarded.

Mesopotamia: This is the most consistent Front, it just keeps on coming. Luckily, there are three events that really help the Ottomans, but not until Mid-day. Card 27 not only retreats the Front to Basra (albeit with Maude now in charge at strength 4), but you get the Siege of Kut victory marker to boot. This card can be a game saver, truly. The other great Mid-day event is card 34, the Yildirim. These three markers allow you to deny a Front advance in either Sinai or Mesopotamia. I tend to need them more in Mesopotamia, because Sinai has other roadblocks (see below) to slow them down. The Yildirim allow you to leave the Mesopotamian Front on Mosul (box 1) and carry on to fight on another Front, which can be a game saver if you have few actions to play. It is also nice to have these in your pocket when there are only three cards left in the deck! Lastly, Dusk card 36 gives a 50% chance for the Front to retreat.

Salonkia: This Front does not form until Mid-Day card 20, even though Morning card 02 calls for it to retreat. Salonika is a real pain in the Mid-day with 10 advances, and there are no Front-specific resources at the Ottoman's disposal to slow this Front down. You just have to hammer away at it when you can least afford to. Dusk card 24 flips it to the D'Esperey side.

Sinai: Another consistent Front, but it is hampered early on by the need to make attrition rolls in order to advance through the desert without a completed pipeline. This all changes with Mid-day card 23, which not only completes the pipeline, but also triggers Dusk. Mid-day card 22 allows the Ottomans to build the Gaza-Beersheba line at a cost of 2 actions, which is usually a good deal, because once Allenby arrives (Dusk card 39) at strength 4 this Front, combined with the Arabs, starts to bring a lot of pressure from the south. Morning card 19 retreats the Front, and Dusk card 36 gives a 50% chance for the Front to retreat. And as stated above, you may use the Yildirim markers on this front as well.

In total there are only 10 Front-specific cards-events that assist the Ottomans. Two Fronts (Gallipoli and Caucasus) will eventually collapse (Caucasus may reform), and one will fall back to its starting point (Mesopotamia). The only other card that can help during Ottoman Offensives is Mid-day card 30, the Asia Korps. This gives a +1 drmm on all offensives on any single front for one turn. Card 30 has three actions, so it is tempting to use it right away since you get 3 additions to three offensives. The kicker is

that they all have to be against the same Front. Since it makes sense to maximize the damage and push a Front back 3 spaces, generally I'll only use it against Arab or Sinai Fronts, rarely against the Caucasus or Mesopotamia. Both of the latter Fronts will fall back on their own at some point, but the others won't, and they have plenty of space to retreat into. Only in dire straits will I use the Asia Korps against Salonika or Gallipoli Fronts.

Actions and Averages

There are 49 cards in the deck, and all but one give a varying amount of actions to the player. The following table breaks down the distribution of actions per card, per deck.

	0	1	2	3	4	Totals
Morning (13 cards)		3	7*	3		26 actions
Mid-Day (21 cards)		7	11**	3		38 actions
Dusk (15 cards)	1	2	7***	4	1	32 actions

*Card 4 gives 2 actions that must be used against the Caucasus Front.

**Two actions may be exchanged to build the Gaza-Beersheba Line.

***Two actions may be forfeited to claim the Dunsterforce Defeat Victory Marker.

Reading the chart, for example, shows that there are three cards in the Morning deck that give 1 action, seven that give 2, and three that give 3. One of the challenges of the game is to make the best use of these actions. As can be seen, the Morning deck averages 2 actions per card, when only three Fronts are in play. By Mid-day, all six Fronts can conceivably be in play, with an average LESS than 2 actions per card. Obviously, these two decks will get mixed together at some point, but it gives the player an idea that some of the early actions must be expended to lay the groundwork for a successful campaign.

Off Map Madness and National Will

If all you did with your actions was roll dice against advancing enemy Fronts, this would be a boring game. The added depth afforded by the Intelligence Bureau for the East (what a great name, by the way), the Resource/German General Staff markers, Coups and Off-Map Battles all affecting National Will go a long way toward making this game a classic. The Ottomans simply must expend effort (actions) in order to keep their

National Will from disintegrating. One way is to win Off-Board Coups and Battles. Let's deal with the Coups first.

Coups occur in India (Morning card 5), Persia (Mid-day card 6) and Afghanistan (Mid-day card 21). If the Intelligence Bureau for the East is in the appropriate box when the Coup occurs (and it costs an action to move it there), the Ottomans get +2 to the die roll resolution, which gives them a 50% chance to succeed. If it occurs without the Intelligence Bureau for the East, the Ottomans need a 6 to succeed, a 16% chance. The hard part is figuring out where to place the Intelligence Bureau for the East. I advocate using Optional Rule 12.3 Military Intelligence, which is a game changer in my opinion. This rule states that if the Intelligence Bureau for the East is in Turkey, EVERY OFFENSIVE AGAINST A FRONT ON A BOX 1 GETS A +1 TO THE ATTACK DIE ROLL! If you play with this rule, then you can see why I say leave the Intelligence Bureau for the East in Turkey, you will need it eventually. A failed Coup does you no harm (it doesn't count as a defeat), a successful Coup adds a marker to the Victory track. The ONLY case I see for moving the Intelligence Bureau for the East into a non-Turkey box is if you KNOW a Coup will show up there soon (it's the end of a deck and two other Coups have been drawn already, etc.) AND you can afford the action to move it back to Turkey (obviously no one should be too close to a Box 1). So far, I can see very little reason to move the Intelligence Bureau for the East marker once card 01 is played. You will have 3 16% shots at a Victory marker, rather than spending multiple actions for 50% shots. To my way of thinking, the actions are far too valuable.

Ok, so now we come to the Off Board Battles...these are decisive. Just look at the names. Jutland? The Somme? Verdun? The designer has decided that Turkish Resources could impact all of these Battles depicted...and as a player of Ottoman Sunset you have to share in this delusion. Every Off-map Battle has a direct impact on your ability to carry on the war effort, to the point of defeat. Other than the Kaiserschlacht, once you resolve an Off Map Battle, it is done. So, it behooves you to grab as many advantages as possible (read: drms) before these Off-map Battles begin. What's the best strategy? Let's look at when these Battle events come up in the deck:

Off-map Battle/Coup Distribution

Morning	1 East Battle Gorlice-Tarnow (2)	1 West Battle Second Ypres (4)	0 Naval	1 Coup India (5)
Mid-Day	2 East Battles Brusilov (3) Italy Joins (3)	2 West Battles Somme (3) Verdun (4)	1 Naval Jutland (5)	2 Coups Persia (5) Afghanistan (5)
Dusk	2 East Battles Dorfmann (2) Vittorio Veneto (4)]	6+ West Battles Kaiserschlacht! (3-5)	1 Naval U-Boats (4)	

I believe this chart, when coupled with everything else, tells me to follow this path:

Morning: ASAP, place a resource marker (costing 2 actions) in the Western Front Box (hoping to influence Second Ypres; you can't help but win or stalemate Gorlice-Tarnow since a 1 is always an EPIC FAIL); if possible, place a second one in the West before Mid-Day. You will need these for the Kaiserchlacht.

Mid-Day: If you have two Resources in the West, begin placing Resources in the East. These are easily the most winnable battles, and even one resource will make a huge difference. If you can get to two Resources in the East before Dusk you are ahead of the curve.

Dusk: If you have only one Resource in the East, the priority would be to place another in the East before those Battles are over. Don't allocate any towards Naval unless of course the East battles are done and the Naval battles have yet to occur...which can happen. Since there are only two Naval Battles and they are harder to win, it makes sense to focus on the East (5 Battles) and West (3 battles and the Kaiserschlacht) instead. Most likely, as the game progresses and enemy Fronts close in you will start to feel the need to use the General Staff Reserve to give you another bonus action. Basically, this is like spending \$2 in 1914 so you can spend \$1 in 1917, which is bad economics, but hey, this is war! Anyway, if that is the case and you need to do this, use every Reserve except the Western ones. You will need these for the Kaiserchlacht again and again, and when War Weariness comes into play, you will need them even more. I would plan on playing 4-5 Resources in a normal "winning" game, and using 2-3 Reserves down the stretch as needed. You should only use the West Resources if you have multiple Fronts on 1 Boxes, or you have won the Kaiserschlacht and don't need them to win the National Will game.

Finally, the Gauntlet!

I'm not gonna lie...it is awfully tempting to just ignore this event (Forcing the Narrows, Mid-Day card 8), either accepting the 50% chance that the U-Boats (Mid-day card 14) will close the straits before the Royal Navy shows up, or conceding the victory without spending actions building up the Narrows defenses. This is probably my biggest beef with the game. I have played many a game when I built up those Narrows to the hilt, and then the Royal Navy with its damn British Fortitude Marker blithely steams up the Dardanelles and promptly negotiates the 2 mines, 3 artillery posts and 3 more coastal defenses with nary a scratch to win the game. It is unfortunate that there is no way to stop this...and I have lost many a game this way. Personally, I think Running the Gauntlet is too easy, especially when all the Narrows defenses are in order. Using the part of Optional Rule 12.10 to rebuild the Sedulbahir guns at a cost of one action may help. If you don't like that rule, I would suggest the following optional rule: if all the Narrows defenses are built, the British Fortitude marker starts on 3 if the Royal Navy has to Run the Gauntlet; otherwise, it starts on 4 normally. This would encourage the player to build the maximum defenses and receive a real benefit...both of which improve the game in my opinion. Regardless, if you play this game TO WIN, you have to

somehow squeeze in 4-5 actions before the Mid-Day deck gets added in order to build the 2 minefields and three artillery emplacements so you can greet the Royal Navy with a smile when they attempt the Narrows. That is not always easy, but I like to play with Optional Rule 12.13, which allows the Turks to cannibalize their guns for a +1 drm during an offensive. So if I've fought off the Brits, or the U-Boats have saved my bacon, I can still get something back from the actions I spent to defend the Narrows. It's not nearly as bad as the German General Staff Reserve 2=1 math, in fact it's a lot better, but there are only three guns to use, so be judicious.

Conclusions

I hope this has given you some insight into the game, and that it will help you win. I like how this game makes me feel, especially when I win! Sure, there is lots of die rolling (by the way, you can save tons of time by using a die-rolling app on your smart phone--give it a try! I save 5-7 minutes a game), which means luck can do you in, but it also means that luck can save you! I always feel that luck will even out and randomize the die rolls, which means my decisions have more of an impact on the outcome of the game. I have read session reports of woeful losses, which are possible, of course, but then so are International Victories...I have actually had one of those! It's all in the cards, my friend! Play On!