

THE GREAT NORTHERN WAR

War of the Ring for 2 to 5 players

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SPI's WAR OF THE RING is a very good game, but it suffers from rules that deny Sauron important options he enjoyed in "real life". Under the standing rules, Sauron lacks the resources to launch his "northern offensive" which was fought simultaneously with the attack on Minas Tirith.

The war in the north was no insignificant skirmishing; the Easterlings drove King Brand into Dale where, aided by Dain II, he fought a three-day battle. The Easterlings had the victory and both northern kings were slain. Erebor was sieged, Thranduil's realm invaded and Lorien assailed from Dol Guldur. With time, Sauron's northern army might have prevailed--but the fall of the Dark Lord insured its rout.

This northern war lends great scope to the war, but it is rare to see it materialize in **WAR OF THE RING**. Bound in the straitjacket of Shadow Point limitations, the Dark Power Player cannot afford to provoke the Men, Dwarves, and Elves of the north until Gondor and Rohan are crushed (an event that seldom comes to pass, for the vast majority of games end in a Ring Victory).

One does not need to play many games of **WOTR** before he begins to yearn to see these never-used northern armies in action. A few optional rules can allow the northern war to blaze, as well as turn **WOTR** into a multi-player game for up to five players.

RULE CHANGES: The Dark Power Player

The forces of Sauron that are deployed at start, via Search and through mobilization above and including the hex row containing hexes **2220W**, **3220W**, **1620E**, etc., require no Shadow Points

to move or engage in combat as long as they remain in *that* northern area. The Easterlings (50 strength points) are deployed in Rhun, along the River Running.

Northern Dark Power (DP) army units that move south of the designated hex row always require the expenditure of Shadow Points. Southern DP army units that move north into designated hex row still require a Shadow Point expenditure unless they enter the northern area as "replacements".

Replacements are forces sent from the south to make up battle losses suffered by Sauron's northern army. To be classed as a replacement (and thus be relieved of Shadow Point expenses), the DP combat units must remain in the south until the northern army has suffered losses. Losses are replaced strength point for strength

point, the *type* of DP unit (Men, Orcs, Trolls, etc.) being irrelevant.

To have a chance of success, the northern DP armies require a leader. This leader(s) can be the Mouth of Sauron or the Nazgul, deployed and supported by Shadow Points as per the standard rules. Most players will, however, find an additional DP leader convenient. Since the Easterlings must have had a competent leader to defeat two such doughty warrior-kings as Brand and Dain, we propose the leader be called the "Chief of the Easterlings" and that a character counter be made for him. The Chief of the Easterlings is deployed upon the mobilization of the first Easterling unit in Rhun. He shall have a Combat Rating of "-3", a Morale Rating of "2", and Endurance Rating of "5" and a Ring Rating of "0". The Chief of the Easterlings must not move out of the northern area of the map unless he becomes a semi-Ring Wraith. He is not killed by army combat.

If there is no separate Saruman Player,

Saruman's forces may also be used as replacements for the northern army. The Chief of the Dunlendings may lead only forces belonging to Saruman. The Chief of the Easterlings may not lead Saruman forces. Saruman himself is capable of leading any DP force.

The forces of Dunland do not become part of the original DP northern army, even though they may be mobilized in the northern area.

RULE CHANGES: The Fellowship Player

The units of the Northern Alliance (the Western Allies, Dwarves, Elves) mobilize if attacked by the DP Player, as per the standard rules. They may also be mobilized by a proper die roll after the mobilization of Sauron. The Fellowship player makes a roll prior to his movement phase, in each turn subsequent to Sauron's mobilization. If he achieves the result of "13", the north mobilizes.

Forces of the Northern Alliance may move and fight as the Fellowship Player desires. If, however, Galadriel's Palace or Thranduil's Palace is captured by the DP Player, Elves have zero combat strength on attack if fighting army combat in the south. Elves fighting at zero combat strength are ignored when calculating losses.

Celeborn and Thranduil may possess the Magic Cards deployed in the two Elf palaces once they are mobilized.

THE TWO-PLAYER GAME

In a game of Fellowship vs. Dark Lord (no separate Saruman Player), the Dark Power Player wins the game if he achieves a Ring Victory, or if either Gandalf or Aragorn become semi-Ring Wraiths. He wins via military victory if he is able to capture four of these five objectives: Hobbiton, Thranduil's Palace, Helm's Deep, Minas Tirith and Dol Amroth. He must, of course, also be in possession of Barad-dur.

The Fellowship player may win via Ring Victory, or by preventing the capture of four of the above-mentioned objectives and seizing Sauron's Barad-dur. If neither player achieves his victory conditions, the game is a tie.

THE THREE PLAYER GAME

. In the three player game, there is a Fellowship Player and two Dark Power Players. The DP commander of the south shall be called the Sauron Player; the commander, of the south shall be called the Sauron Player; the commander of the northern army shall be called the Easterling Player.

The two DP Players are equal; neither is subordinate to the other. They share a simultaneous game turn and the armies under their command may combine to fight joint combat against the Fellowship Player.

The Easterling Player's army (that deployed north of the designated hex row) requires no Shadow Points to move, as per the two-player game above. All replacements arriving north also come into his control. There is no way, however, that he can directly force the Sauron Player to send him replacements.

Any Easterling-control led armies going south", fall into the control of the Sauron Player, who may use them with the proper expenditure of Shadow points. The Sauron Player may later return them to his northern ally if he chooses.

The Chief of the Easterlings must stay in the north of the map unless he becomes a semi-Ring Wraith, upon which his control falls to the Sauron Player.

The Sauron Player may temporarily turn over control of the Mouth of Sauron, Saruman, or the Chief of the Dunlendings to the Easterling Player. But the Sauron Player may terminate the loan at the beginning of any DP movement phase. Nazgul may command battles where the Easterling Player's forces are engaged, but the Sauron Player must move and pay Shadow Point costs for the Nazgul himself.

The victory conditions for the Fellowship player do not differ from those described in the two-player game.

The non-military type victories for the DP players do not differ from those of the two-player game. To achieve a military victory, the team must retain control of Barad-dur, capture Hobbiton and Thranduil's Palace, and capture two of the three Fellowship citadels: Minas Tirith, Helm's Deep and Dol Amroth. Even if the game ends in a draw or loss for the DP team as a whole, the Easterling is able to win a Player Victory if he is in possession of Hobbiton and Thranduil's Palace when the game ends.

THE FOUR-PLAYER GAME

In the four-player game, there are two Fellowship and two Dark Power players. The Fellowship Player in charge of the northern armies (controlling the Western Allies, Dwarves, and Elves) shall be called the Northern Alliance Player. The Fellowship Player in charge of the nine Fellowship characters, Gondor and Rohan may continue to be called the Fellowship Player.

In the four-player game, the DP Players follow the rules and objectives of the three-player game. The two Fellowship Players share a relationship similar to the DP team.

All Fellowship armies that are deployed or moved north into the hex row containing **hexes 2220W, 3220W, 1620E**, etc., are controlled by the Fellowship Player. Control does not change until the end of the joint Fellowship turn, but units controlled by different players may freely combine for combat.

Leaders belonging to different Fellowship Players may be loaned, subject to recall at the beginning of any Fellowship movement phase.

The Fellowship team may win the game either by a Ring or a military victory. The team-military-victory conditions are unchanged from those of the two-player game. However, even if the Fellowship draws or loses as a team, it is still possible for the Northern Alliance Player to achieve a Player Victory. A Player Victory requires that the Northern Alliance Player be in control of Thranduil's Palace, Hobbiton and Dol Guldur at the time the game ends.

THE FIVE-PLAYER GAME

The fifth player in the five-player game is Saruman. Actually a separate Saruman Player can participate in any version of the Northern War. Consult the standard rules for the option of Saruman as a separate player. If Saruman, as a wizard, fails to gain his victory conditions (possession of the Ring, all surviving Nazgul, Isengard, Helm's Deep and Edoras), Saruman as a player can at least manage a Player Victory. To do so, he must hold the citadel of Isengard and Hobbiton, while seeing that neither the Fellowship nor Dark Power achieve their victory conditions, other than possible Player Victories.