Considering Operational Penetration: The German Invasion of France, 1940

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Elevating Operational Penetration
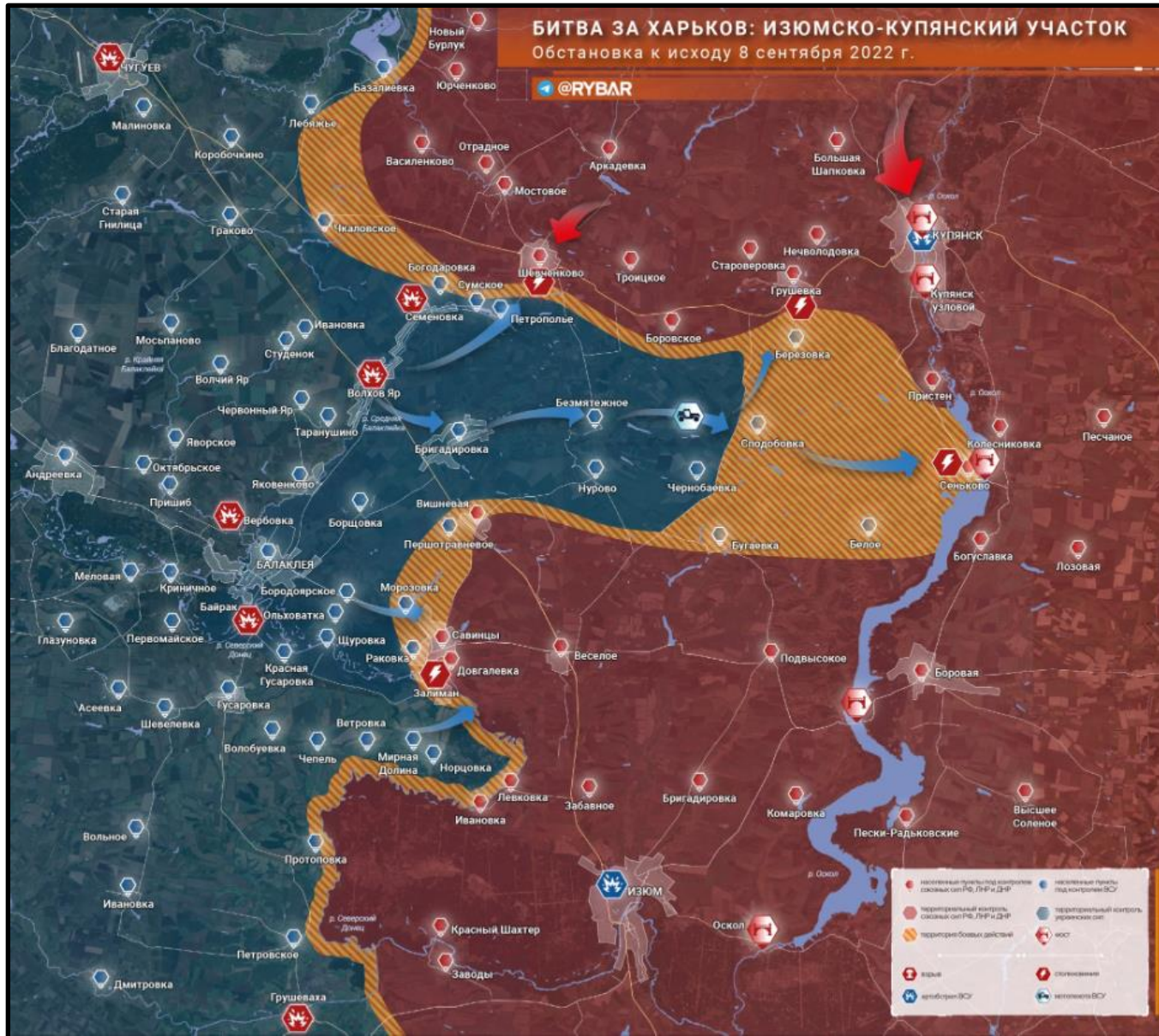## Theory, History, Concept

Concept: rapid operational (deep) penetration along narrow axes to neutralize or isolate critical enemy elements to catalyze systemic collapse across their entire order of battle in order to avoid frontal attrition and achieve decisive outcomes.
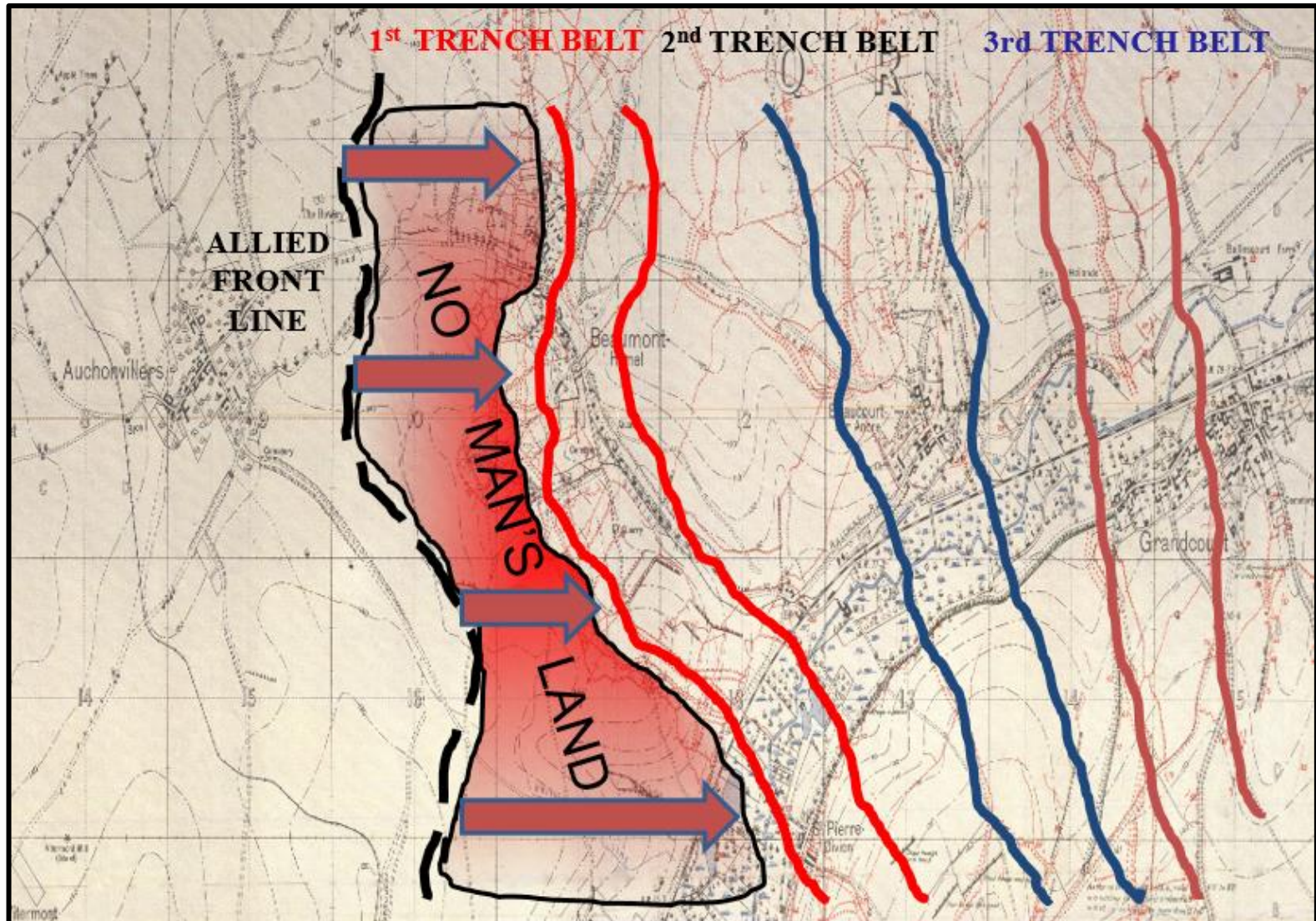
Pattern Analysis

➢ Division penetration occurs as an option in a larger **operational concept (MDO)** that relies on corps shaping efforts and joint dis-integration and dislocation.

➢ **Mobility**: the division *must* reach and neutralize assigned objectives.

➢ **Sustainment**: continued supply is critical; logistical culmination will risk defeat.

➢ **Asymmetries**: Joint, combined arms, or technological offsets have proven essential in order to enable the required rate of march at depth.

➢ **COG Analysis**: accurate understanding and targeting is required to inflict systemic collapse on the enemy order of battle.

➢ **Deception**: prerequisite to create favorable breach/endurance conditions.

➢ **Leadership**: Senior C2 fights forward to problem-solve and manage tempo.

➢ **Attrition**: assume no major follow-on force and protect operational viability.

➢ **Operational Art**: penetration success must result in positions of continuing strategic advantage and avoid nuclear/strategic escalation.

➢ Deduction: Historically represents a **high risk/high reward** option; most commanders have elected to flank or envelope because it is less risky.
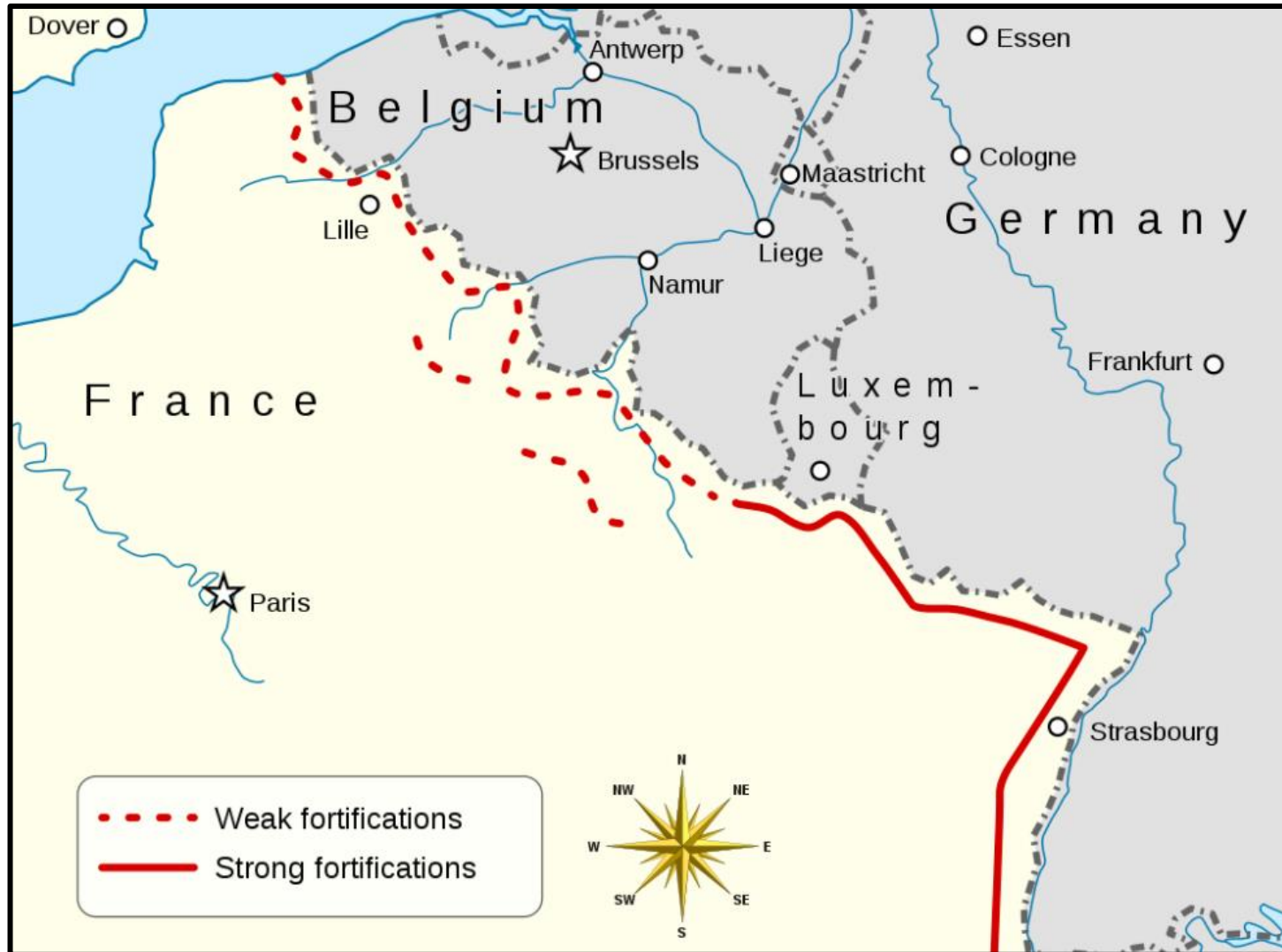
Example: Ukrainian Army at Kharkiv

Background to 1940:
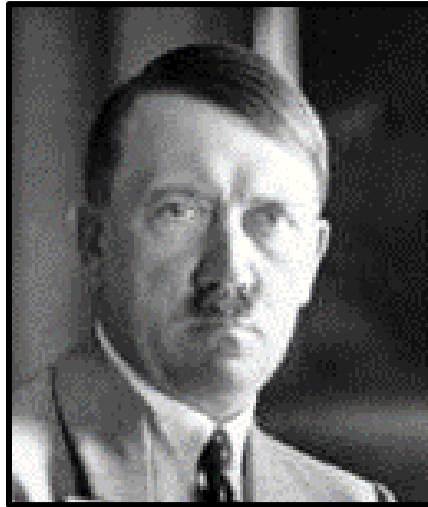## The First World War & Attrition

France's Maginot Line, 1940
The Ultimate Linear Defense

German Interwar Innovation: Solving for WW1 Attrition
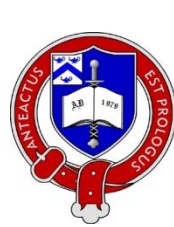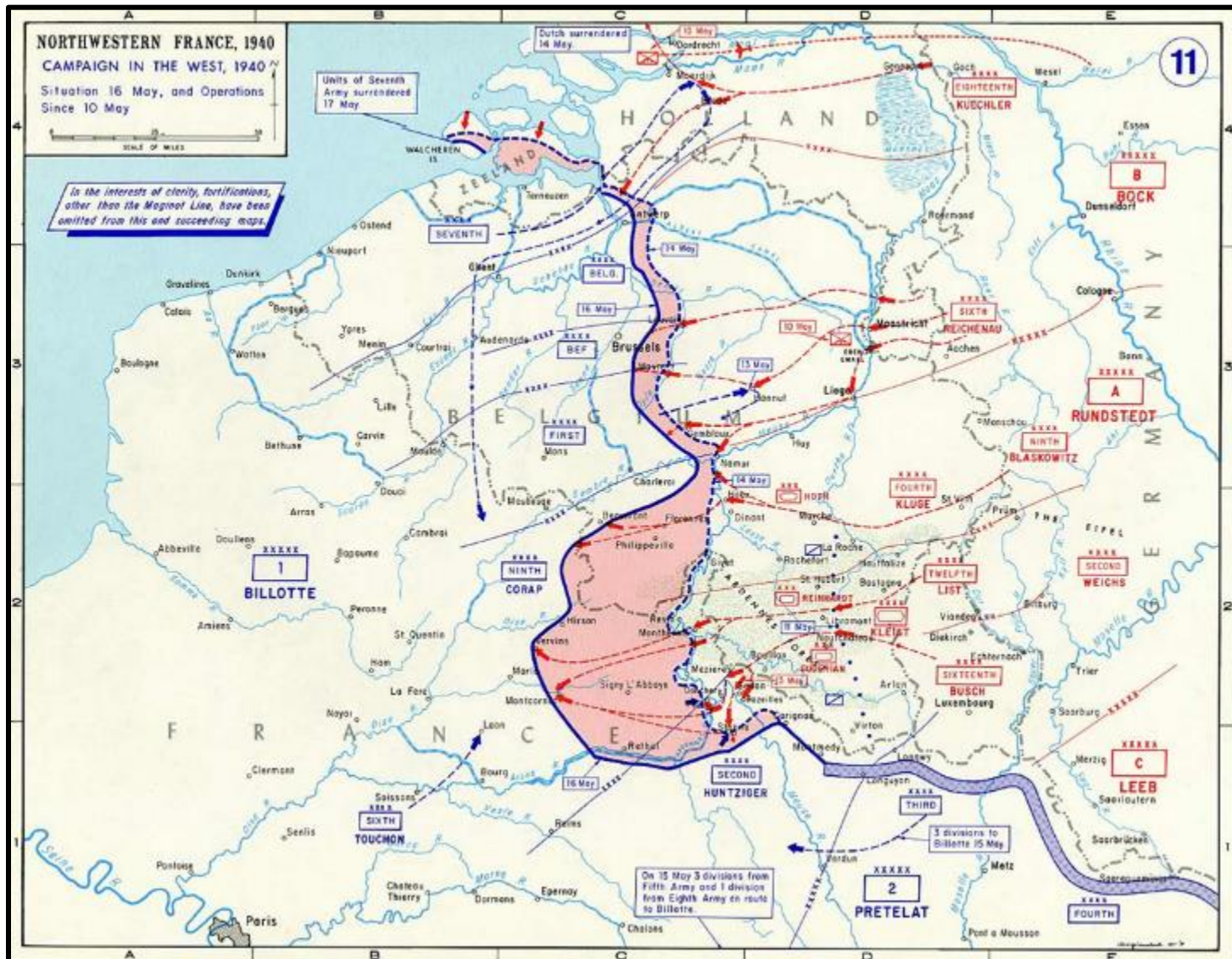

Adolph Hitler

Heniz Guderian

Panzer I

Panzer III

German Invasion of Poland, 1939
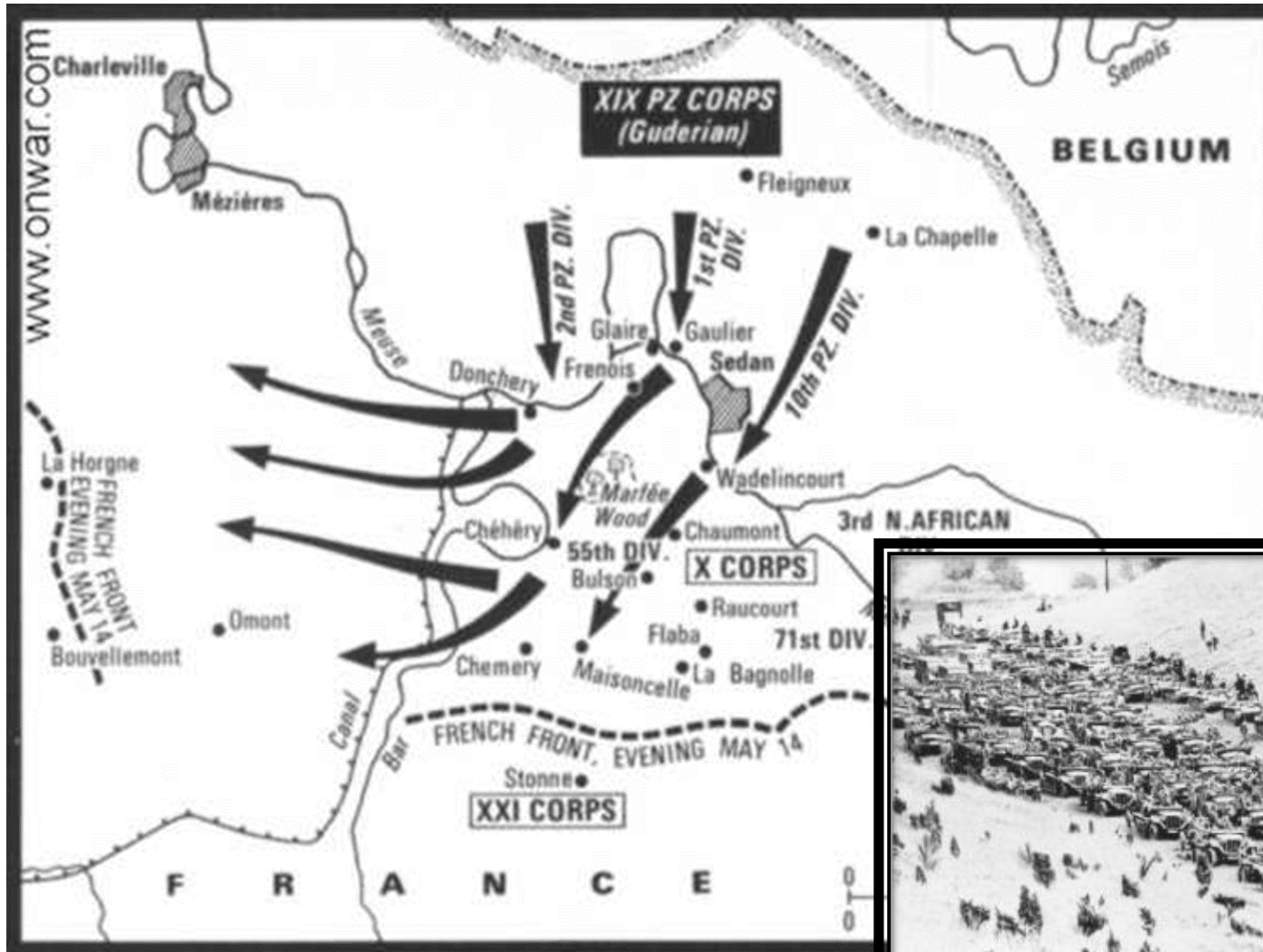## Testing the Blitzkrieg Concept

German Invasion of France, 1940
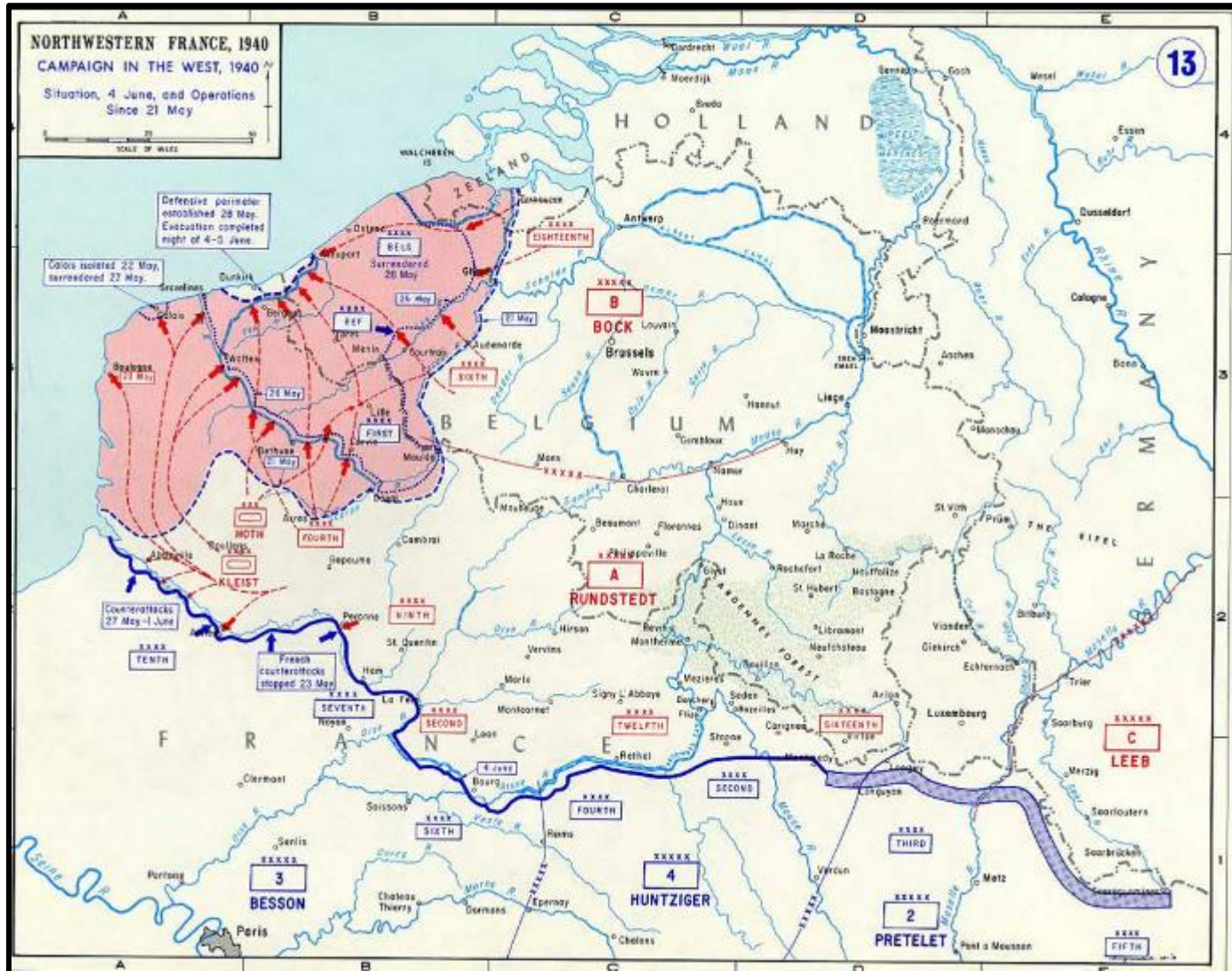## Validating the Blitzkrieg Concept

Guderian's Decisive Point: Penetration at the Meuse River
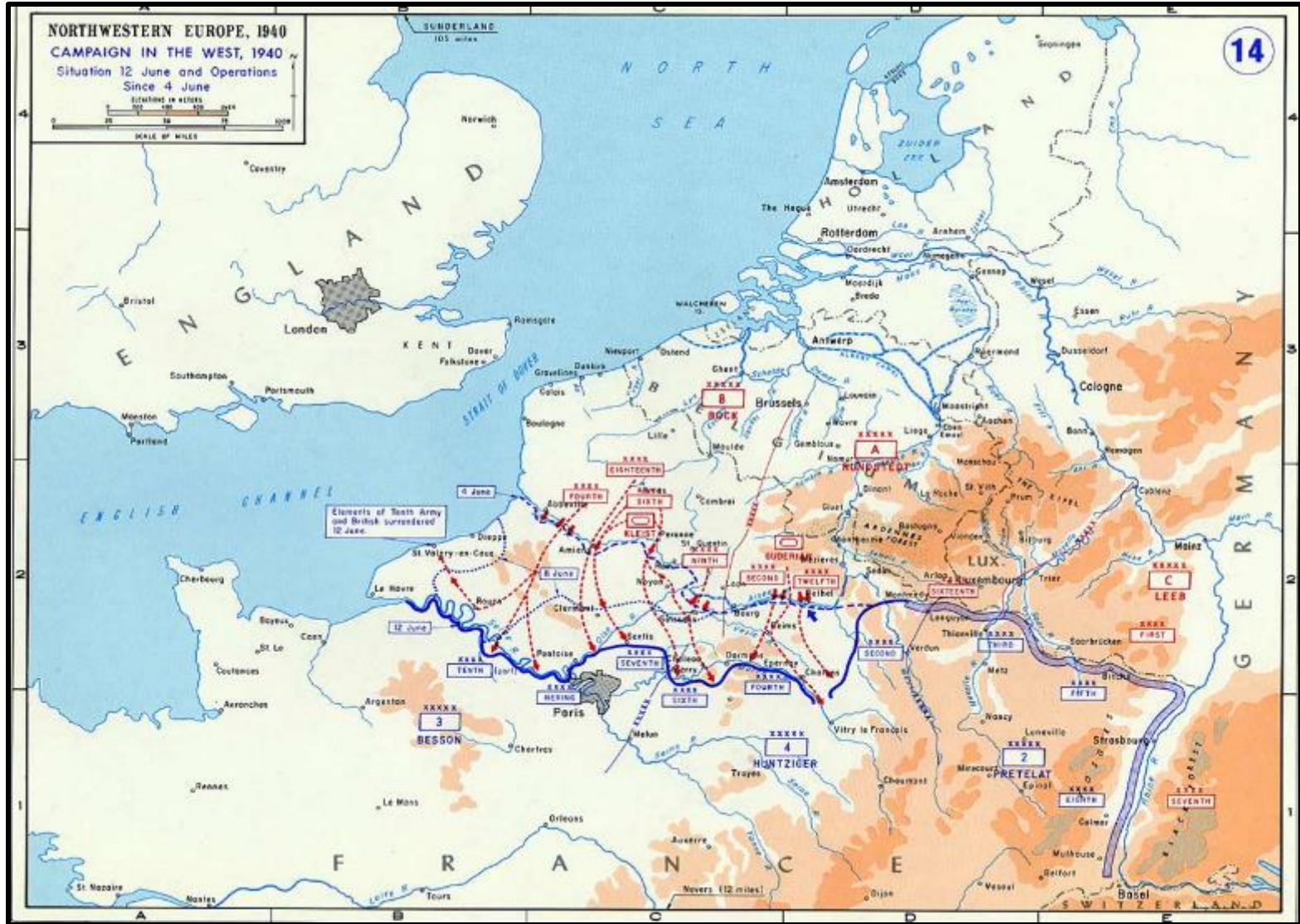
German Invasion of France, 1940
Exploitation and Isolation

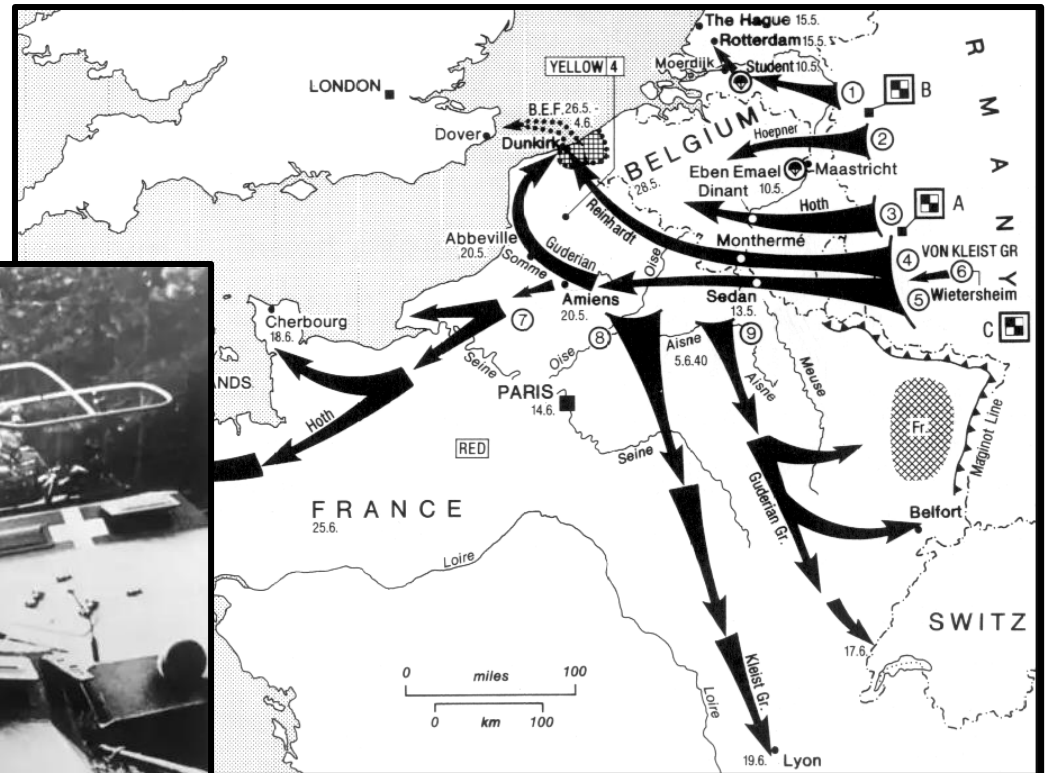# German Invasion of France, 1940
Reorienting the Scheme of Maneuver

German Invasion of France, 1940
Theater Pursuit and Consolidation

Battle for France, 1940:
A Paradigm Shift in Warfare

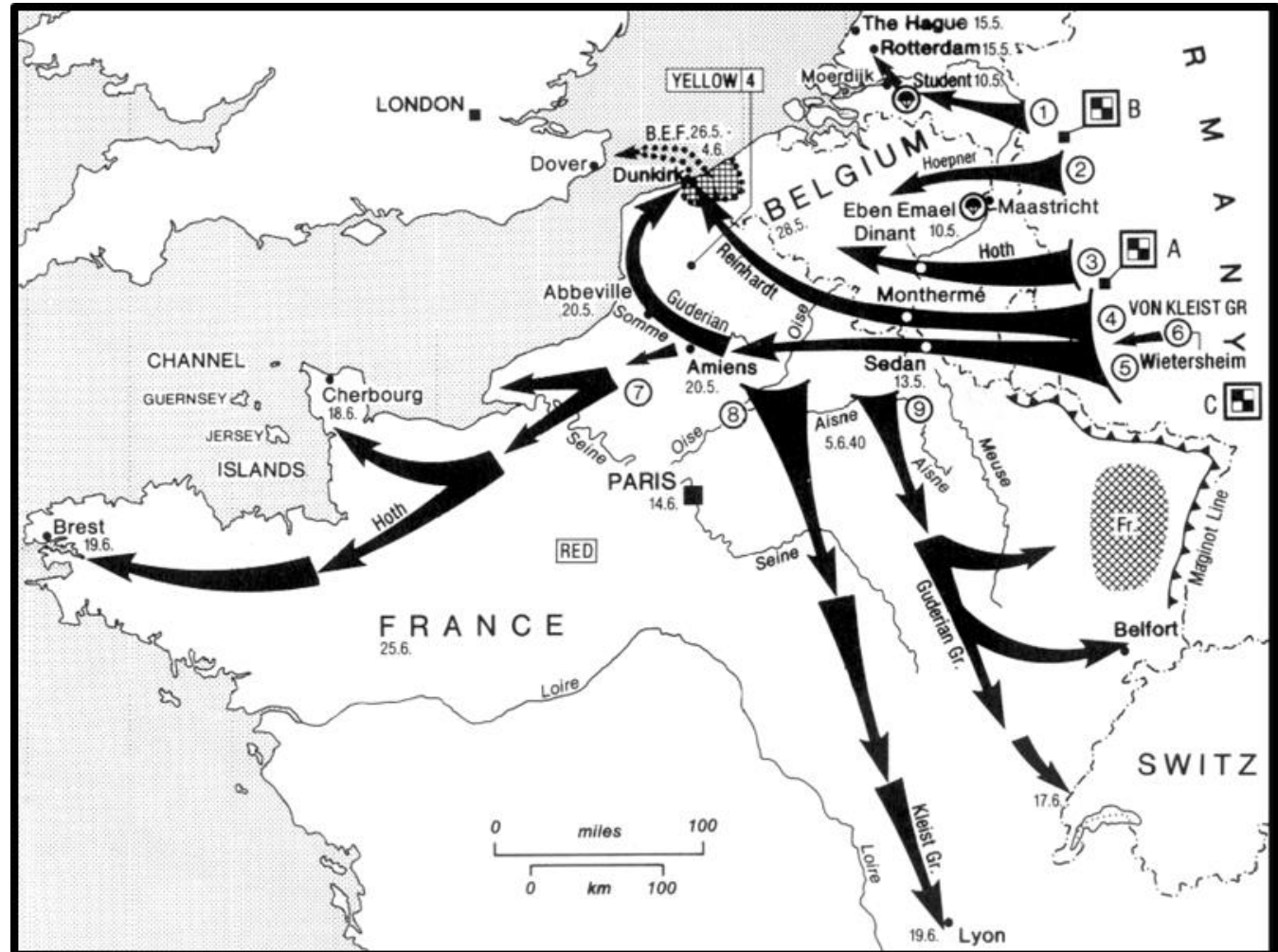| Nation	Casualties, WW1	Casualties,1940
Germany:	7,142,558	157,621
France:	6,160,800	360,000
B. Empire:	3,190,235	68,011
Belgium:	93,061	23,350

Explaining the Impossible: How did the Germans Win?

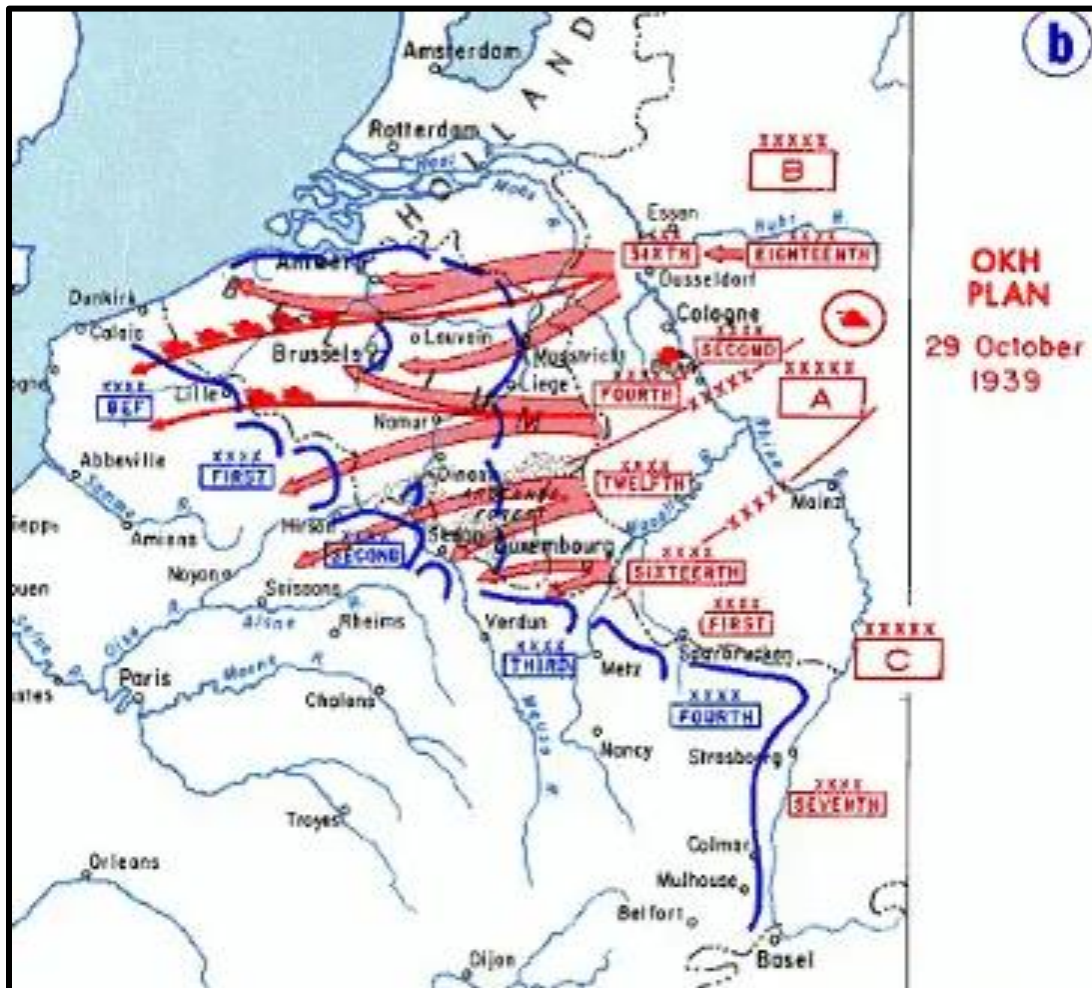# German Operational Art: Strategy, Operations, and Tactics

- Tempo
- Op Reach
- Risk
- Culmination
- Phasing
- Decisive Points
- LOO/LOE
- COG
- Basing
- Endstate

Creating Opportunity:
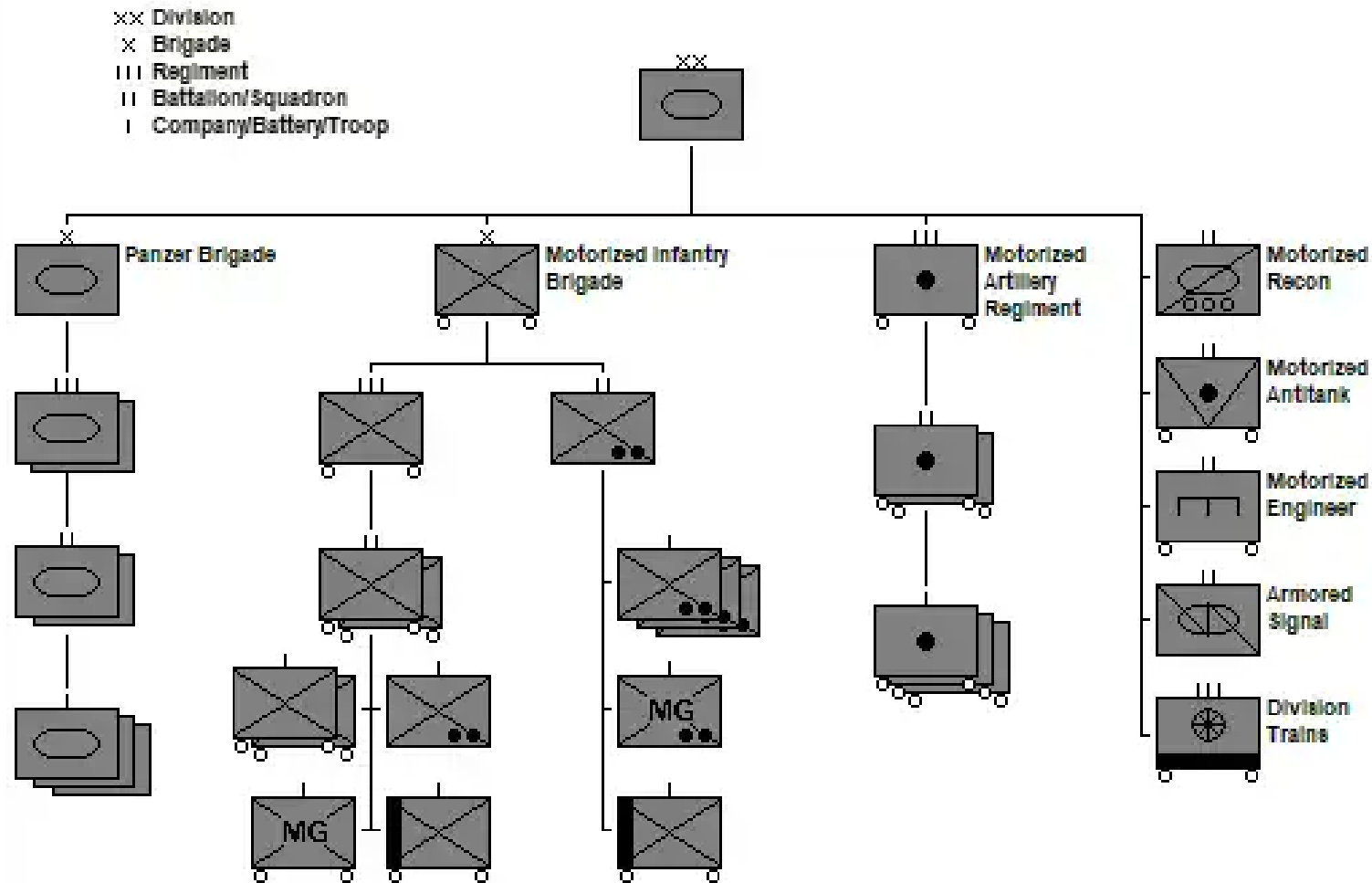# Operational Deception in the North

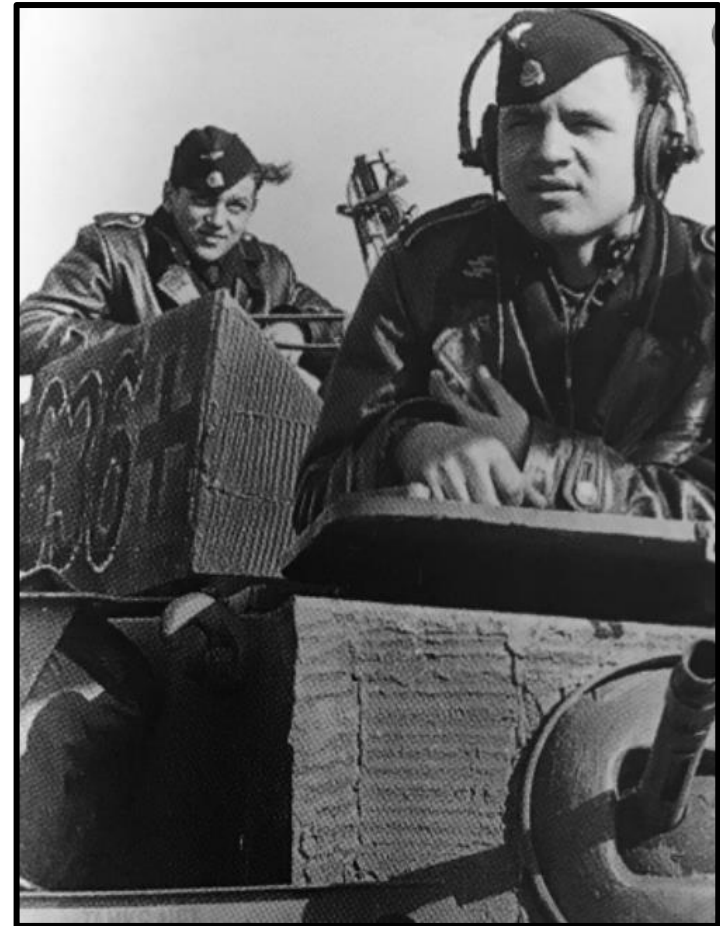# German Asymmetric Advantage: Dedicated Air Interdiction

German Asymmetric Advantage: Combined Arms Panzer Divisions

German Asymmetric Advantage: Radio-Synchronized Maneuver

Enabling Critical Mobility: Improvised Sustainment Packages

Enabling Critical Mobility:
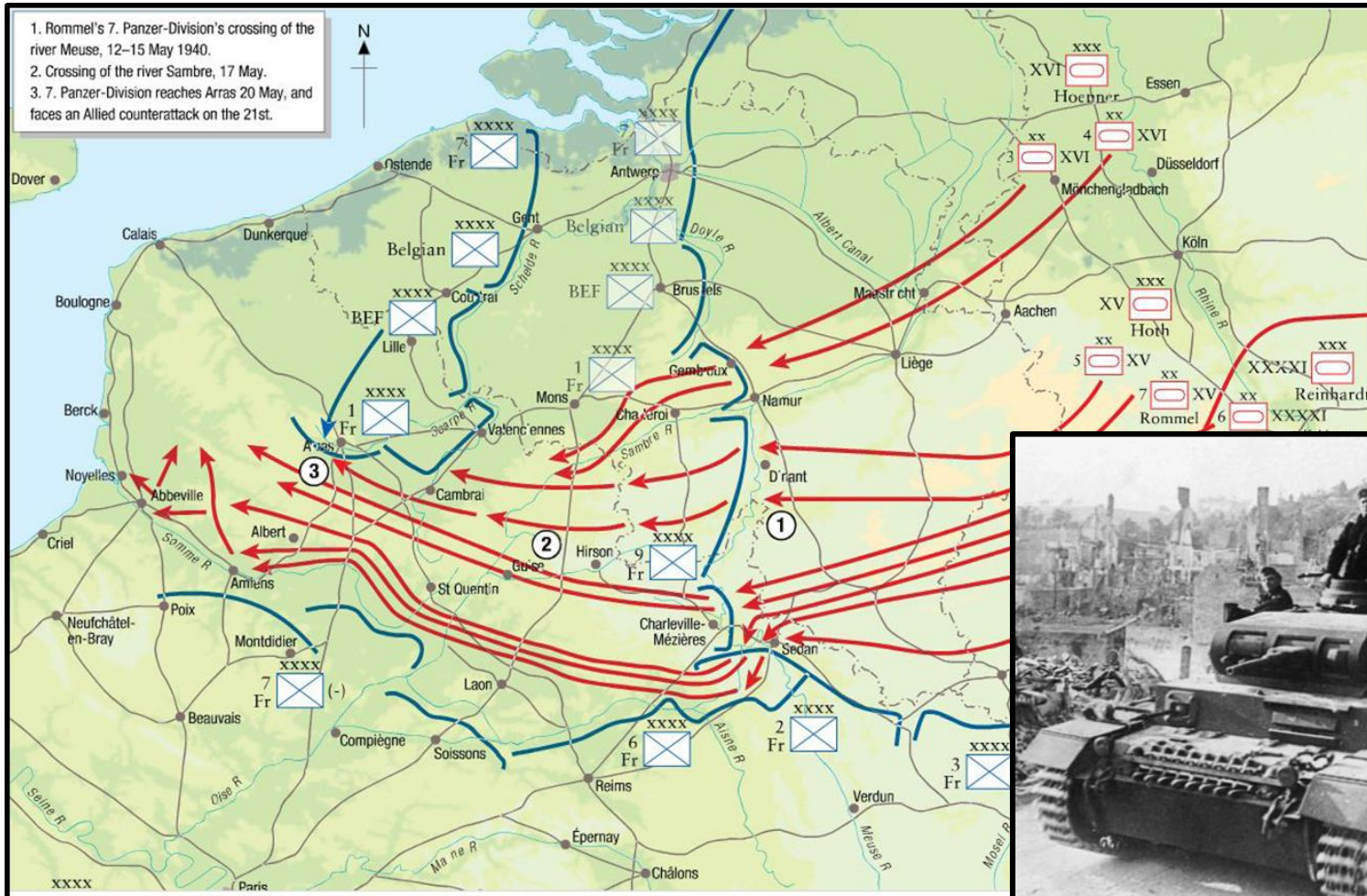## Combined Arms Gap Crossing

Enabling Critical Tempo:
Forward Senior Leadership

Decision Cycle Warfare:
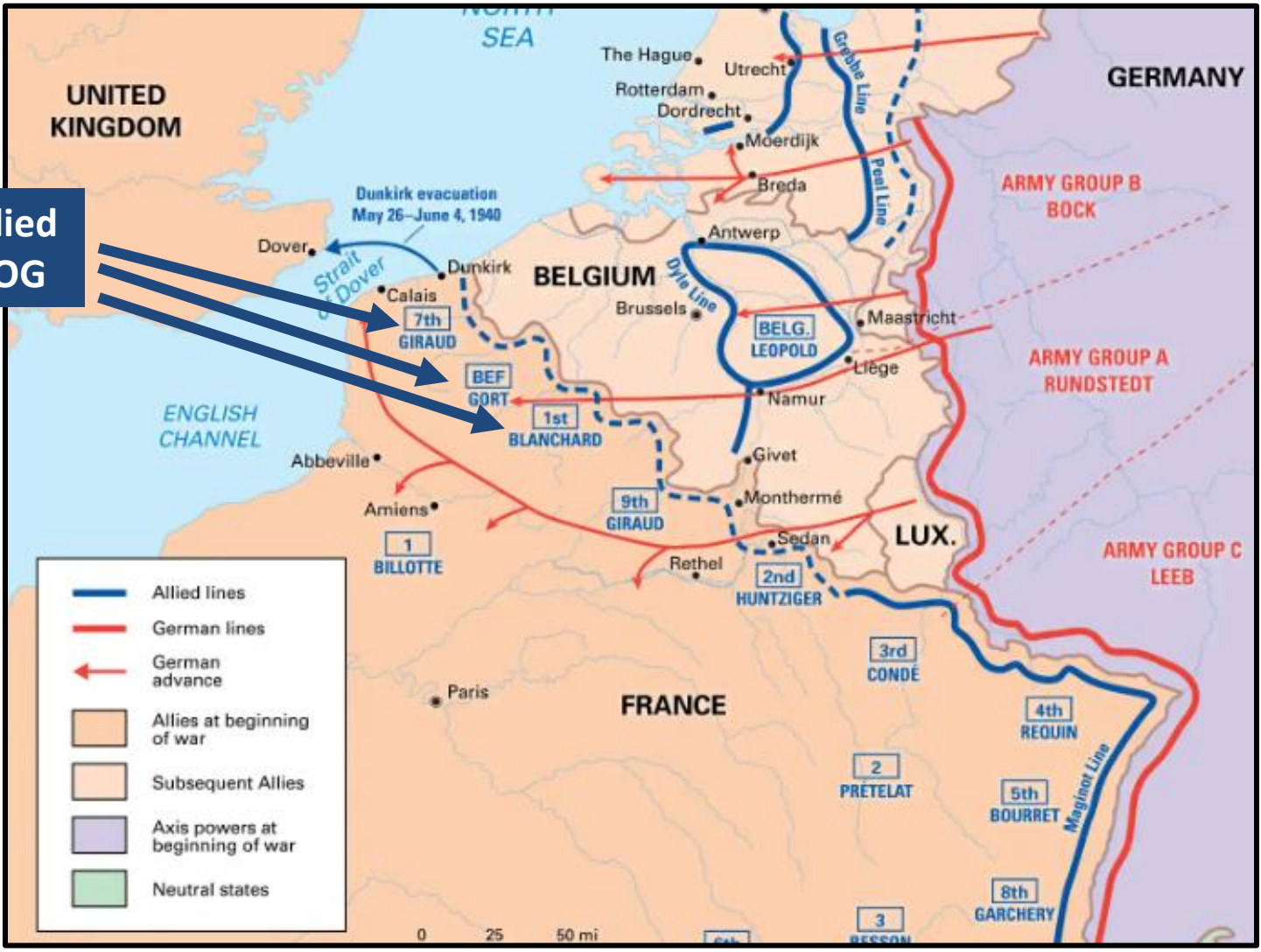## Out-Pacing the Defender

1. Rommel's 7. Panzer-Division's crossing of the river Meuse, 12–15 May 1940.
2. Crossing of the river Sambre, 17 May.
3. 7. Panzer-Division reaches Arras 20 May, and faces an Allied counterattack on the 21st.

Purpose and Intent:
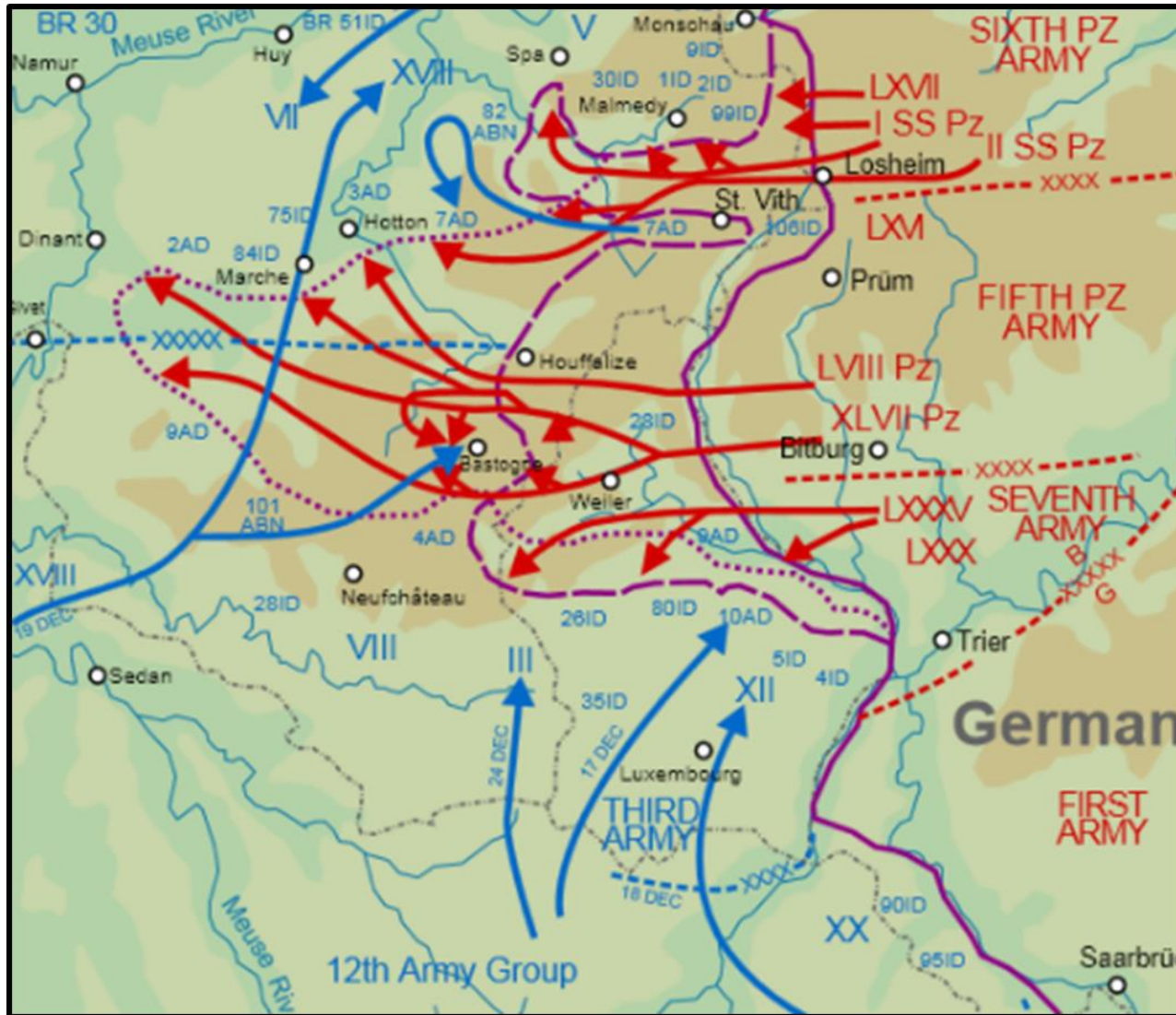## Applying Accurate COG Analysis

German Ardennes Offensive, 1944
Operational Penetration Failure

Final Thoughts

"The 13th of May has been…the best day for the 1st Panzer Division. The division succeed in being the first to cross the Meuse, to punch a whole in the defensive line of the French, and to force a penetration through a defensive zone considered by the French as impenetrable. The decisiveness of this penetration at Sedan had been hammered into every single person from the moment the division was attached to the XIX Corps."

- 1st Panzer Div Daily Log

The Battle of France, 1940: Insights for 21ˢᵗ Century Warfare