

...It's Full of Stars

"...It's Full of Stars" is produced by Mark Nelson, c/o James Nelson, 112 Huntley Avenue, Spondon, Derby, DE2 7DU, UK. This is a West Riding Press Publication #127.

The last North American Variant Bank (NAVB) Catalogue that I have, (1988), lists some 900 diplomacy variants. The United Kingdom Variant Bank (UKVB) catalogue lists some 450 designs, but includes a number that the NAVB does not have. Since these catalogues were produced another fifty or so designs will have been produced, probably more. My own variant collection contains many old games that are not listed in any variant catalogue. Altogether there are probably somewhere in the region of 1200-1300 diplomacy variant designs.

Of these games, only a small percentage have been rigorously play-tested. The vast majority have not been played postally, the others played only once or twice. Many games are unbalanced and in need of revision. In fact, it's far easier to produce a good variant by revising somebody else's than by designing your own.

Given that few people have a wide knowledge of variant designs, diplomacy variants are being re-invented. It's difficult to think of a new idea for a game that has not already been produced. The game that I am including this issue is no exception. It is a development of games such as Twin-Earth which has two boards and Para-time which has seven. By the way, Para-time was very complicated as each player designed his own regular board variant - so there were seven boards with seven sets of rules! The play-test game collapsed when the original zine folded.

Crazy Whako (CW) Heptadiplomacy

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This game is based on ideas from Don Miller, Lew Pulsipher and Jef Bryant.

1. The 1971 rules of Diplomacy will apply except where amended in the following.
2. There are seven players and seven playing boards. There are two main options: A: Each player plays the same country on all seven boards, and B: A player plays a

separate country on each board. In this latter case the GM will try and ensure that the players are spread out, and that the same players do not neighbour each other in all seven games. It is recommended that the GM chooses option A. Option B is extremely complicated and will probably never run to completion.

3. Movement between the boards is possible. The seven boards will be identified by the numerals 1 to 7. There are three possible options for movement between the boards, the GM should state which one he is using before play starts.

Module 1: Players may attempt to move to the same province on any other board. However, only units on the board to which the unit is moving may support this move. Normal rules on support apply. Example A(1:Par)-3:Par, A(3:Bur)SA(1:Par)-3:Par.

Module 2: Players may attempt to move to any province on any board a unit which it could normally move on its starting move. Example A(1:Tri) can move to Ven, Tyr, Vie, Bud or Alb on any board. This also applies to convoys. However multi-fleet convoys must be on the same board. Fleets may be of mixed nationality as the normal rules.

Module 3: (The Bruce Gyerk game.) This is the same as module two but fleets may be used from any board in any combination for convoys. Additionally, support may be given by the correct units on any given board! This may lead to a nervous breakdown of the GM!

I recommend that module 2 be used, as module 1 is a little dull and module 3 is too frightening for consideration!

4. All valid moves may cut support. Example A(1:Lon)-Wal A(2:Wal)SA(2:Cly)-2:Lpl, A(2:Cly)-2:Lpl, A(2:Lpl)-H. All moves fail.

5. All units should be marked with the board on which it was built. If a unit on board four captures a supply centre (SC) on board five, then it is owned by the board four nation which may only build on board four. GMs must keep a careful track of who owns what, and which units are where.

6. If Option B is being used, then a player may cut his own support if he uses a unit of a different nationality. Example. Suppose a player is Austria on board one and Italy on board five. Then AUSTRIA A(1:Tri)-5:Tri will cut the support of ITALY A(5:Tri)S...(Exception, if module three is being used then it would not cut the support of

ITALY A(5:Tri)SA(5:Tyr)-1:Tri by the normal rules of diplomacy.

7. There are 238 SCs. A winner requires 70 centres at the end of an Autumn adjudication. In the case of multiple wins occurring, all winners are declared first equal. A two-way win may be declared by players having a total of 130 or more SCs between them with each power having 63 or more SCs. A three-way win may be claimed by players having a total of 185 SCs between them, each player having at least 58 centres.

There are no draws. The game must finish in one of the three possibilities above.

A player can make a claim for winning conditional on another player's moves and on his/their SC holdings. He can also make them provisional on another player's builds.

A claim for more than one victory may be made each Autumn adjudication but it should be written carefully. If any problems arise with any particular claims they will be discounted. It is acceptable for player one to submit orders such as the following. Two-way win with player four. If this isn't possible then a three-way win with players four and seven, or if this isn't possible then with three and four.

In my experience those games with large numbers of SCs and complex victory criteria often become dull. Either stalemate lines exist or the games become very boring in the hard struggle for victory. The criteria above are based on those of Mercator. By reducing the victory criteria I hope to ensure that diplomacy will continue throughout the game at a frantic pace. A group of strong powers will have to consider the relative merits of going for a solo win against declaring a joint win. This works well in Mercator.

8. Situations may well arise where the adjudication isn't covered in these rules. The GM should use his common sense. The designer is willing to advise on how he feels 'difficult' adjudications should be resolved.

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