

CLUSTER DIPLOMACY  
A Diplomacy Variant by Steve Doubleday

RM77/07

Introduction: Those of you who've read Piers Anthony's Cluster series of novels will readily recognise the basis of this little variant. In those novels, the author takes the hypothesis that certain individuals have a higher aura than others and can therefore do things which others can't. The following rules mimic in game terms some of those things and, I hope, provide an additional tactical element to normal play.

For those that haven't read the novels, provided you like science fiction with a blend of fantasy with ethical and moral dilemmas, I can recommend these novels. They are collectively known as the 'Cluster' series:

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1: Vicinity Cluster | 2: Chaining the Lady |
| 3: Kirlian Quest    | 4: Thousandstar      |
| 5: Viscous Circle   |                      |

I hope you enjoy them as much as I did. All of these are published by Panther (at least the copies which I've got). They're pretty much of a romp in places, but they do have pointers to the moral, ethical and religious dilemmas posed in the "Tarot" series - which are much less popular, but much better books.

The Rules

0. Unless specifically stated below, the normal rules of Diplomacy will apply.
1. At the commencement of the game, each player will have: one 3 times force unit; one 2 times force unit; and the rest (1 in all cases except Russia) will be normal strength.
2. The position of multiple strength units is hidden unless and until that multiple strength is used. Players may defer either of their two multiple strength units and nominate a later build as that unit. Once a unit's strength has been used as a multiple, that unit will continue to be reported as a Multiple unit.
3. A multiple strength unit can be convoyed in the same way as any normal unit.
4. A multiple strength unit, which is supporting, will have its support reduced by the level of any single attack (or supported attack) upon it.
5. A number of additional orders are available to units. All Research and Transfer of these are secret and are not reported.
- 5.1 Scattered around the board randomly are 21 Sites of the Ancients. The GM does this randomly before play starts. (See 6. below) There are three types and seven of each type:
  - Level 1) These are archeological remains, with no Knowledge Value, but with the power to allow Transfer and Mattermission.
  - Level 2) These are Transfer and Mattermission Sites, with a Knowledge Level of Transfer. (See rule 5.2 below)
  - Level 3) These are Transfer and Mattermission Sites, with a Knowledge of Mattermission. (See Rule 5.3 below)
- 5.1 Research. A unit can be ordered to 'research'. If it does so, it's strength is reduced by one. Thus a normal strength unit will not be able to defend itself, unless supported (such a unit may be supported). A researching unit is reported as standing. The results of research are reported to all players. Note that only Level 2 sites have a knowledge of Transfer and that only Level 3 sites have a knowledge of Mattermission. Until a player has researched the correct type, or had

a transferee in place above a site, does he gain use of it.

- 5.2 **Transfer.** A unit can be ordered to 'transfer', if its initial strength is greater than 1 and the owning player has Knowledge of Transfer from an Ancient Site. A 2 unit can be 'transferred' to a 1 unit; a 3 unit can be ordered to transfer to a 3 or a 2 unit. To accomplish this, the unit must be on an Ancient Site. Transfer takes place before movement.

A unit ordered to 'transfer' takes over the Target unit and the Target unit follows the orders of the owner of the transferee. The transferee is worth its original value -1. Each game year (i.e. two seasons) following the transfer, the transferee is worth -1. Thus a 3 unit 'aura' will only last 2 game years in a normal foreign host. The drop in the transferee's Aura level takes place after transfers, but before movement (thus giving the transferee a chance to move out). If the transferred aura drops below the host unit's level, it dies, as does the original unit. The original unit stands in position - if dislodged it dies (note that under rule 2 it is reported as a 3 or 2 if that strength has been used in combat). A 'transferee' can order its host unit to follow the orders of the host player! Transfer can only take place to a unit of equivalent type (i.e. Fleet to Fleet, Army to Army) A 'transferee' automatically discovers any Ancient Site on which it finishes a turn.

- 5.3 **Mattermission.** As a result of research, or being a transferee on the relevant site a unit can discover a Mattermission Site. This allows the transfer of a unit to within 4 spaces of the Mattermission Site. Thus a Fleet in London could Mattermit to Marseilles, but not to Gulf of Lyons. Mattermission takes place at the same time as normal movement. Any unit may be Mattermitted. Note that the effects of being a transferee allow an automatic research of a space! Mattermission may only take place from a Mattermission Site. Any unit Mattermitted to the same space as another unit destroys itself and all other units moving or Mattermitted there. Mattermitted units cannot be supported.

6. **Distribution of Ancient Sites.** Although the distribution of Sites should be random, there are certain guidelines which will apply. No more than 3 of each type of Site may be at Sea and 1 at least of each type should be at sea. Each type of Site may not be placed in an adjacent space to another of its own type. No more than 2 of each type of Site may be placed in any one country.

For the purposes of this variant, countries will be defined as their home supply centres with the addition of:

**Austria:** Boh, Gal, Alb  
**France:** Gas, Pic, Bur  
**Italy:** Apu, Tus, Pie  
**Turkey:** Syr, Arm

**England:** Yor, Wal, Cly  
**Germany:** Ruh, Sil, Pru  
**Russia:** Ukr, Lvn

The principal difference is that Russia has been reduced by 1 (Finland) to ensure that it doesn't gain additional chances for the presence of units. Turkey's position is so good that this is counterbalanced by the reduction in Ancient Site possibilities

7. **Players can summarise as follows:** Research=RES; Transfer=TRA; Mattermission=MAT; the GM will report RES and TRA as Stand.

#### **Extroit**

Well, there you are. I'll be interested to see whether or not people will 'conceal' their multiple strength units, or use them right from the outset. With the Transfer and Mattermission options, no Stalemate lines can be set up and certainly there is plenty of scope for tactical activity.