

Diplomacy Variant

Father Mauro's Map

It is very difficult to come up with any scenario which has not been covered by a Diplomacy variant at some time or the other. In search of originality, I thought I would go back to an idea I had way back in my teens, but never got around to developing.

One reason why I like Diplomacy variants is the fact that I have always liked maps. And one map in particular has always stood out for me – it is the map created by Father Mauro, a Venetian cartographer around 1450 (which is shown on the cover of this issue). He tried to place accuracy over doctrine by not showing Jerusalem at the centre of the world, But he did not appreciate that the earth was a globe and of course this was forty years before Columbus.

Fra Mauro's map was a remarkable achievement for the time – it is a circular map with a diameter of over 2 metres, surprisingly orientated with the south at the top. It included more than 3000 annotations and is a work of art in itself.

However, it is not at all accurate compared to any map of the world that we would recognise today. So I got to thinking – what if you took the 1450 Mauro map and used that as a basis for a Diplomacy variant? It would have to be a global variant (maybe a bit like Zeus), but with crazy geography based on a 15th century understanding of the world.

The map itself has many rivers and lakes, but it is not a political map in the sense that it has no political borders. Also, given that this will be a mini-global variant, it is going to be more about competing cultures than about competing countries. I originally played with the idea of generating a seven-player variant, but in the end I came down to five powers. These are Christian Europe, the Khanates, the African states, the Indian states and the Eastern states (China and Japan).

Having a circular map with a sea all the way round certainly makes it an unusual map. I thought the sea spaces could be used to facilitate movement around the globe, increasing tactical options. However, if you have large sea spaces with the standard fleet rules, then the game could become very static with stalemate positions stopping movement around the globe. To prevent this and to encourage use of the sea I have made all sea areas special

spaces where any number of units can reside, and no conflict is allowed within them. Thus, units can pass each other in opposite directions and stalemate lines cannot be established.

I then decided to go all the way and abolish fleets entirely. Therefore, units in Known World can move on land or sea. This makes the game far more fluid and creates extra strategic options. I was concerned that keeping the armies/fleet distinction would unduly constrain the directions some powers could move in.

Comments welcome!

New Diplomacy Variant

The Known World

By Stephen Agar

0. All the usual rules of Diplomacy shall apply, save where modified below.

1. The game shall commence in 1451, Each turn shall equate to one calendar year, every second year constituting "Autumn". Thus, the first builds/removals would take place at the end of 1452.

2. There are no armies and fleets in this variant, only units. Units may move on sea or on land.

3. Sea space are special spaces in the any number of units may be present in them and no combat within them is possible. However, units in a sea space can influence events in coastal spaces in the usual way – e.g., by moving there or supporting an action there. A supported offered from a sea space cannot be cut. It follows that if a power has two units in the same sea space he can order (for example) U(North Atlantic) s U(North Atlantic) – Norway.

4. The starting positions shall be as follows:

The African States: Units in Ako, Kho and Swa

The Eastern States: Units in Nan. Bei and Jap

The Europeans: Units in WEu, Neu and SEu

The Indian States: Units in Del, Guj, Vij

The Khanates: Units in Cri, Sha. Oir

5. There are 25 supply centres. 13 centres are needed for victory.

6. Map clarifications. The British Isles is not a space. As units can travel on land or sea, a unit can enter a land space from the sea on one side and exit it on the other side. Sea spaces or lakes that don't have names are not spaces (e.g. the Caspian Sea). For the avoidance of doubt. the Mediterranean Sea includes the Black Sea as well (and the NAO includes the Baltic). There is a land bridge from Eastern Europe to Ottoman Empire; Northern Europe to Norway; Swahili Kingdoms – Beduins; Nanjing – Japan; Beijing – Japan; Western Europe – Berber Peoples

7. Abbreviations

Ako Akon States (*)

Ast Astrakhan Khanate

Ban Bantu Peoples

Bed Beduins

Bei Beijing (*)Ben Bengal

Ber Berber Tribes

Con Congo
Cri Crimean Khanate (*)
Del Delhi Sultanate (*)
EEu Eastern Europe (*)
Eth Ethiopia (*)
Guj Gujerat (*)
Jap Japan (*)
Khm Khmer (*)
Kho Khoisan Peoples (*)
Kor Korea

Lit Lithuania
Mal Malagasyan Peoples (*)
Mam Mamluk Sultanate (*)
Man Manchuria (*)
Mon Mongolia
Nan Nanjing (*)
Neu Northern Europe (*)
Nwy Norway
Oir Oirats Khanate (*)
Ott Ottoman Sultanate (*)
Pol Poland
Rus Russia (*)
Saa Saami
Sha Shaybanids (*)
Sib Siberia
Sum Sumatra (*)
Swa Swahili Kingdoms (*)
Swe Sweden (*)
Tib Tibetan Kingdoms
Tim Timurids (*)
Tua Tuareg Tribes
Vij Vijayanagar Empire (*)
WEu Western Europe (*)
ARA Arabian Sea
ARC Arctic Ocean
ECS East China Sea
ESS East Siberian Sea
IND Indian Ocean
MAO Mid Atlantic Ocean
MED Mediterranean Sea
NAO North Atlantic Ocean
SAO South Atlantic Ocean
SOU Southern Ocean

