

# Gerrymandering #5

\*\*\*GERRYMANDERING is an irregular publication dedicated to variants, and comes gratis. You can show your appreciation by sending comments to Tom Swider; PO Box 1324; SUNY Binghamton, NY 13901. Phone (evenings) (607) 729-2830.

\*\*\*The whole reason behind publishing GERRY #5 is to tie up a bunch of loose ends in the variant department. The agenda:

- 1) Proposed PDO Variant Package
- 2) Vari-MaryCon comments
- 3) Editorial on Miller Numbers

\*\*\*I give permission to all publishers to excerpt from GERRY #5 or print it in whole (hahahaha!) if there's some item they feel newsworthy. Let's let the rest of the hobby know that there are things going on in the "variant" subhobby!

## I: Proposed PDO Variant Package:

Back in the "Golden Era" of Diplomacy, a group of mid-westerners published the "MOW Variant Package", which included several variants which were popular at the time, a listing of Miller Number codes and a response form to see whether people felt the MOW Package was worth the money.

But we're in a new "Golden Era" of sorts, and the taste in variants has evolved. The variant world's #1 enemy is general apathy of postal players towards variants. A new "PDO Variant Package" could showcase some of the better variants being played today, direct players to GMS of variants and help out the public image of variants in general. This could in effect be a "Variants Novice Package".

What I'd like from you is some sort of written response. Here are some points to consider:

1) Which variants should be included in this package, and how many variants in total? Limit your lists to ten variants.

2) Costs are a definite factor, but the visual appearance of a package is something which needs to be considered. I think it would be a good idea to have all of the rules in a photo-reduced pamphlet, but the maps on 8½ x 11 sheets of paper. Some maps would have to be re-drawn if done on ditto or were poorly xeroxed. Others might feel that the rules and map should all be loose-leaf, allowing players to pull out the set of rules which they commonly refer to. Which method do you prefer, or do you have a third method of presentation?

3) What would be good topics to discuss in the package? Play balance? A historical perspective of the variant hobby? Openings for "classical" variants? Reviews of several of the "monster" global variants? The Walker/Sacks variant feud?

While I've got some space, here's my list of 10 variants which I think should be included with some side comments. Its biased, I know, but anyway..... (listed in preferential order)

- 1) GRAND TOURNAMENT DIPLOMACY (Drew McGee; modified for fewer than 22 players by me(15-21 can also play) ): Loads of fun, similar to the betrayals and plot twists seen in JUNTA.

- 2) ANCIENT EMPIRES II (John Lipscomb; I believe Fred Davis did an AE III which I have yet to see): The best ancient mediterranean variant I've seen; has rules which match the era, and isn't as congested as Vedder's DIADOKHI.
- 3) FINAL CONFLICT (This is where the bias part comes in I guess...): It is one of the few 7-man global games which is in the 46-48 center range (ie: has a reasonable time length). Could also publish Small World (Davis) or World Dip IV (Stegeman; though he has 77 sc's which makes it a bit on the large side) for comparison/variety.
- 4) ABSTRACTION (Fred Davis) First use of the Davis A/F rules, which allow nasty backstabs. Has also stood the test of time.
- 5) DEADMAN DIPLOMACY (Bob Arnett) A very popular set of "blind" diplomacy rules.
- 6) VACATION DIPLOMACY (Dan Kuszynski) A nice summary of all of the cute rules you'd like to play Diplomacy with, but not enough to constitute a "REAL" variant in its own right. Cosmic Diplomacy (Russ Rusnak) might be published also to allow contrast/variety.
- 7) CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD II (Fred Davis; Original by Pulsipher): One 5-player game which works reasonably. Might need revision according to end-game statements which have pointed to Portugal having a big advantage (game played in SNAFU!).
- 8) THE DOWNFALL OF THE LORD OF THE RINGS AND THE RETURN OF THE KING: (Hartley Patterson; DOWNFALL II By Robert Sacks)! Appeared to be one of the few Tolkien variants which gave a feel for the fantasy era (ie: Sauron's impressive Triple Army, rules for The Ring, Nazgul and Gandalf). I have only seen the original version, though both Sacks and Walker have done work on the variant.
- 9) SIMPLE VARIANTS: One or two variants that have "cute" rule changes actually have merits which might make them popular games. These include TREACHERY (??? Name escapes me) and STABBERS DIP (Konrad Baumeister). Treachery allows you to order one(opponent's) unit each turn; Stabbers allows a-f conversion (if on coastal province) on spring turns. → (Janta-Polczynski)
- 10) WOOLWORTH DIP (Glenn Overby) Good 5-man game; "hidden power" element allows for interesting tactical and diplomatic possibilities. The game begins (quite literally) upon writing ones preference list, for players will want their secret power conveniently located.

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HISTORICAL NOTE TO VARIANT BANK CUSTODIANS: According to the copy of the MOW Package that I have, AIR-SEA DIPLOMACY was invented by David Staples, and not Buddy Tredick. This leads me to believe that "Oaklyn" claimed authorship to other variants unrightfully. Custodians might be advised in replacing "Tredick" with "Unknown" in their catalogues until the true creators can be pointed out.

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\*\*\*I should note that these variants are the best of those that I have that could fit in the space limitations which are inevitable. Natch, that exludes publishing YOUNGSTOWN or 2001 in the PDOVP.

\*\*\*If you have a suggested variant you think should appear in the PDOVP, it would be appreciated if you could enclose a copy of it for my variant files. Someday, I'd like to have a collection to rival that of the current variant banks.

\*\*\*I was recently tidying up my variant files, and noticed that 2001 and Youngstown could fit in if the maps could be made smaller somehow. The rules aren't too long, but the maps take 12 sheets of paper in both variants. Or just charge more for the PDDVP. Youngstown would be a nice thing to include, especially since it is THE original variant of Diplomacy outside of the versions for fewer than 7 players.

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## II: Vari-MaryCon Comments:

I just got a letter from Fred Davis about VariMaryCon, and thought I should add in my 2 cents worth into the frey. Although Dick Warner had asked me on the phone to act as variant director, I see no reason why Fred and myself couldn't do the work together.

Additional xyns which would give MaryCon/VariMaryCon plugs would include: Whitestonia, Politesse, Cathy's Ramblings and Magus. I assume everybody is familiar with these xyns and have their addresses. I will enclose them separately for Dick's benefit (since he's likely not to have them).

### Suggestions for VariMaryCon 1985:

1) Dick had suggested that we develop variants at VMC'85, and I have typed up an ad for this purpose, and will forward copies out to various publishers. In the mean time, I could suggest that we can take the opportunity to playtest Rod Walker's remake of Hartley Patterson's "THE DOWNFALL OF THE LORD OF THE RINGS AND THE RETURN OF THE KING". I had planned at one time to do this on my own, but abandoned the project when I heard that Rod was already doing so. The variant is good in my opinion since it introduces a number of rules which make it have its own distinct flavor.

### 2) Additional variants suggested for VMC'85:

ANCIENT EMPIRES II: I have a wooden board version of this variant which appeared in Dip World a while ago; I made such a copy because I felt it was one of the few variants to appear in DW that was worthwhile. Balance is good, and there are rules which make the game distinctly Romanesque.

SIMPLE VARIANTS: These would include BLOWUP, (Millar/Brown) and STABBER'S DIP (Konrad Baumierster). BLOWUP allows players to plant mines whereas STABBER'S DIP allows players to convert units on coastal provinces into armies or fleets prior to spring turns. I have played STABBER'S DIP and have had a lot of fun with it. These simple variants have the advantage in that they can introduce the wonderful world of variants to newcomers. Variants don't have to be major map and rule changed perversions of Dip, but can be simple modifications to the rules.

3) GUNBOAT GAME: Dick Warner and I had tossed around the idea of having a Gunboat tourney running during the entire MaryCon weekend. This would be done in such a way that when players are eliminated from their regular tourney game, they can organize gunboat games on their own, ratable toward the Gunboat Tourney. I have promised to do this for a long time, so I might as well do it right now...next page, I have the proposed Gunboat Tourney Rules for MC'85.

VARI-MARYCON GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY TOURNAMENT RULES  
 (slightly off-center; sort of like Ed Wrobel....)

1) The Gunboat Tournament will run throughout the MaryCon weekend until 3:00 Sunday, whereupon the results will be tabulated. During this time, participants are allowed to play in gunboat games formed by the players themselves, under these restrictions:

- 1) You may not play on the same board with the same person more than twice.
- 2) In order to qualify for the tournament, you must participate in at least three gunboat games.
- 3) You may not play the same country twice until you play all other countries at least once. I doubt anybody will play 7 games anyway...

Outside of these restrictions, players just have to grab 6 other people and sit down and play gunboat. The informality of board formation will allow MaryCon attendees to do something worthwhile should their tourney game end early.

2) When commencing a Gunboat game, an official form must be filled out, including names, country played, supply center chart and result. Like the regular tourney, players must sign the sheet after the game is over. The sheet will be turned in to me after the game ends.

3) Players will have 5 minutes to write their orders. All orders will be collected after the time limit is up; any unordered units hold in place, and can be supported normally.

4) If a player walks out of the game for some reason, a standby can be solicited by the players; otherwise the country goes into civil disorder. A player which plays out a standby position may have the game rated if he feels it is to his advantage (an average performance scoring system will be used).

5) Points will be tabulated as follows:

Win	60 pts				
2 way	30 pts				
3 way	20 pts				
4 way	15 pts	+	1 pt for each	=	SCORE FOR THAT
5 way	12 pts		supply center		GUNBOAT GAME
6 way	10 pts		owned at the		
7 way	0 pts		end of the game		

The scores for a player will be added together and divided by the total number of games played by that player. To the mean score, any bonus points earned for "best country" are added. Winning best country for the following countries earns the indicated bonus.

AUS	13 pts	((For those who care, I derived the bonus points using the following calculation: $10 + (O_n - \bar{X}_{country})$ $O_n$ being the standard deviation of Country scores listed in DTRS in Dip World 38. $\bar{X}_{country}$ is the mean country score for each individual score listed in DTRS.))
ENG	7 pts	
FRA	8 pts	
GER	11 pts	
ITA	12 pts	
RUS	10 pts	
TUR	9 pts	

6) Alternatively, I may just score each player's best three games, and divide by 3. Any comments? I will announce for certain which method will be used prior to the start of the Gunboat Tourney.

### III: Editorial On Miller Numbers:

\*\*\*Having had Final Conflict recently printed in DW got me thinking about all this. Despite all my protests to Rod, he still refers to it as "Final Conflict III". That sounds TERRIBLE! Would you play a variant called "Mordor Vs. the World IV $\frac{1}{2}$ "? I wouldn't on the basis of its name!

\*\*\*While looking at my copy of the MOW package, I notice the lack of continuity between revisions as far as a particular Miller Number is concerned. Example: Original Youngstown is "bu" while Youngstown III is "db".

\*\*\*I guess that Rod Walker's ARDA listings are a lot more logical than assigning designators strictly by alpha-numeric order, but I feel he could have gone one step farther; that is, getting rid of all of the separate listings for a particular variant. Example: Have all Youngstown variants assigned the same Miller Number. The listing would be much more condensed:

ARDA: xm01 Youngstown II  
xm02 Youngstown IV ("III")  
etc

ME: xm Youngstown/Walker;Walkerdine;Vedder;et al/.12 revisions.

\*\*\*Then, in reports in ALPHA & OMEGA, the specific version played can be footnoted if the most recent version of the game was not played.

\*\*\*I feel that condensing all the variant information will make handling it a hell of a lot easier. Most of the Miller Number designators aren't ever going to be used. Who will play Absurdity I when you can play the more recent Absurdity II? Playing Absurdity I would be outside the norm, or "irregular", and should be footnoted in the A&O report as such (not that "irregular" implies a badly GMed game, just running an obsolete version of a particular variant).

\*\*\*If there is a nostalgic adherence to the ARDA system, it might make things easier to truncate the numeric part of the MN and refer to the game by a shorter form. At least this way EXPLAINING a MN won't be difficult. Just ask yourself how many hobbyists know how Miller Numbers are organized.

\*\*\*A comment to Rod: At least under my proposed way, it won't take you as long to type up the catalogue.....

\*\*\*Since I don't have too many issued of the Miller Number Custodian results publication, I would like to hear from somebody who has access to them on whether it would be possible to have a percentage breakdown of which variants have been played since MNs were recorded, and the breakdown of variant gamestarts in the past 5-7 years. I think it would be neat to see some useful information extrapolated from these reports, to be used in the PDO Variant Package (perhaps suggesting which variants REALLY belong in the package) or as a feature in Diplomacy World. To outsiders, Miller Numbers appear pretty useless. They DO have a purpose, don't they?

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\*\*\*Since I've got an odd number of pages, I might as well print a copy of my first variant ever, Delayed Stab Diplomacy. I don't think it even is registered in any variant bank!

DELAYED STAB DIPLOMACY

By Tom Swider (1979)

1) The rules for DSD are the same as the standard game unless otherwise instructed.

2) Players have free set-up. For each supply center a player begins with, he may position one unit of any type within his borders (no inland fleets!). Example: Germany may start with a RUH a MUN a SIL. EXCEPTION: Russia may not start off with f SPP(NC).

3) The basic flow of DSD is similar to that of regular Diplomacy, except that there exists a delay in receiving all of the results. The timetable of events is as follows:

PLAYER SUBMITS	:	Set-Up + S'01	F'01	S'02	F'02	ETC
PLAYERS RECEIVE*	:	Set-Up	S'01	F'01	S'02	ETC

\* Players also receive additional information, as per rule #4.

4) Players will get a report each season as to the success of that turn's military campaign. He will be told if a move succeeded or failed, and if a unit has been dislodged, along with the nationality of the attacker. In addition, a player will be told of the presence of any enemy units currently occupying a home supply center.

5) Seasons are never separated. If a unit needs to be retreated, you must try to make a legal retreat based on whatever information you have. If your 'guess' is not a legal retreat, the unit is disbanded. You may make your builds and/or moves conditional upon the success of your retreats.

6) Any press received will be printed during the game season which it was received (F'01 press will appear in the F'01 adjudication), unless told otherwise by the author.

DESIGNER'S NOTES: Keeping things brief, I feel DSD is a nice variant which gives the "fog of war" feeling without making the players totally frustrated, as is the case in 100% "blind" variants.

DSD allows players to attempt absurd strategies, usually succeeding when tried. One nasty advantage (?) DSD has is that the presence of some information can harm the player than help him. This occurs most often when a player moves into forking provinces (such as Tyrolia or Ionian) or when a bizarre opening is done successfully (ex: Italy and Austria do a Key Opening to Serbia).

Players should be cautious as to play balance. In this environment, we've found that Russia tends to do the best, and then England. Therefore, players are advised to keep this in mind during negotiations.

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