

# Bismarck's Dance

A Solitaire Game of  
The Balance of Powers  
1870 – 1890  
by Nils Geilen






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*By 1871, after a series of three short but decisive wars, Bismarck has forged a new German Empire with iron and blood. The chancellor sees that the young empire might get to dominate the European continent and thus upset the Balance of Powers and find itself surrounded by hostile powers. He therefore reinvents himself as a peace-maker and declares Germany saturated – without any desire for further conquests. As imperial chancellor, he pursues a cautious foreign policy which tries to isolate France and plays the other European powers against each other and their geostrategic interests to prevent the formation of an Anti-German coalition.*

## 1 Components

Print-and-play components:

- 62 cards:
  - 29 crisis cards
  - 33 event cards
- 1 board (A4)
- 5 flags
- 3 action tokens:
  -  Reroll token (see 3.2.1)
  -  Honest Broker token (see 3.2.4)
  -  Intelligence token (see 3.1)

Additional components:

- 6 influence discs
- 2 six-sided dice

## 2 Setup

Lay the game board on the table, shuffle the 62 cards and put them next to the board as a draw pile (see Figure 1). Place the 5 Flag tokens onto the correspondingly marked space of the Diplomacy Track. Put the 3 Action Tokens in front of you with their active side up.

Draw 5 cards from the draw pile and lay them above the board as the Event Card Row. You may now cancel any card in the Event Card Row by putting Influence discs onto it, the 1st (leftmost) card requires 1 disk, the 2nd 2, ... and the 5th card 5 disks. Put the remaining Influence disks into the Influence Pool.

## 3 Turn Structure

Each turn is structured into three phases: 1. Influence Allocation Phase, 2. Event Phase and 3. Action Phase.

### 3.1 Influence Allocation Phase

Take any Influence discs from the Influence Pool and allocate them to the Event Pool, the Diplomacy Pool or the Politics Pool. You can put all Influence into one pool or distribute the Influence freely between different pools.

Before the Influence allocation, you can spend the **Intelligence token** to discard the Event Card Row. Move all cards from the row to the discard pile and refill the row (see 3.2.6). Put any Influence on discarded cards into the Influence Pool. After refilling the row you can spend any Influence from the Influence Pool to immediately prevent as many events as you can afford. To prevent the 1st (leftmost) card, put 1 Influence on it, 2 for the 2nd and so on.



### 3.2 Event Phase

In the 2nd phase events are executed based on a die roll.



#### 3.2.1 Roll Dice

Roll the dice. When both dice show the same side execute the corresponding Balance of Power Event, then reroll until they show different numbers. This might trigger further Balance of Power Events (see 3.2.2).

After seeing the result you can spend the **Reroll token** to repeat the die roll. To spend the token turn it on its inactive side, it is then not usable until an event allows you to turn it on its active side again.



#### 3.2.2 Balance of Power Event

Whenever you roll doubles, execute the corresponding Balance of Power Event. For  to  the event affects a power, see the table in the bottom right corner of the board to see which power is affected. Move that power's flag 1 space in the direction of the gray arrow at the bottom of its space on the Diplomacy Track.

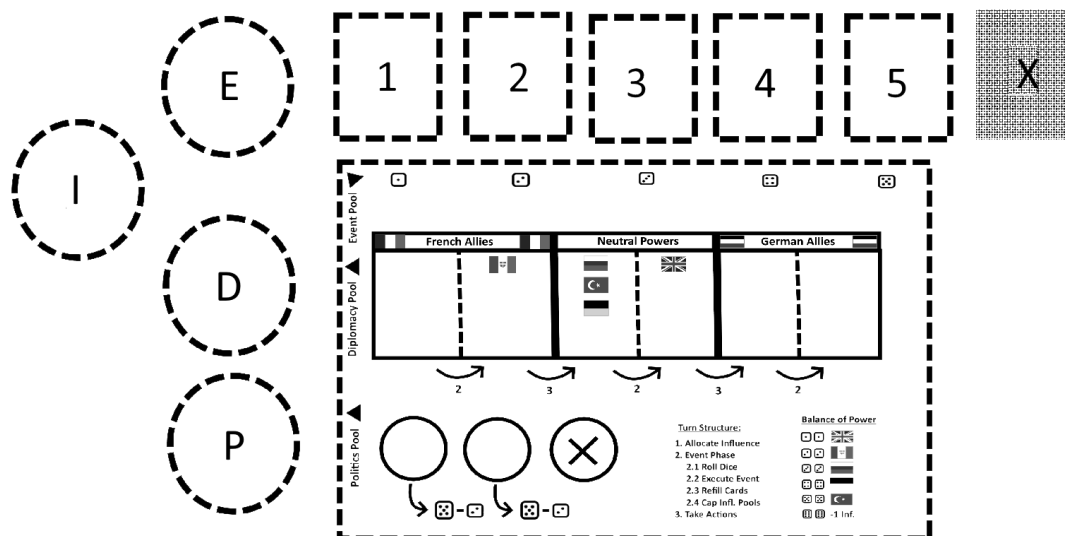


Figure 1: Game Setup: Cards 1-5 above the board form the Event Card Row, X is the draw pile. The pools to the left of the board are just areas in which Influence disks are stored, they are blank table surface except for the Influence disks which might be stored there. I is the Influence Pool. E is the Event Pool located to the left of the Event Card Row. D is the Diplomacy Pool located to the left of the Diplomacy Track. P is the Politics Pool located to the left of the Politics Track.

On double ❷ lose 1 Influence immediately (see 3.2.5).

### 3.2.3 Execute Event Card

Activate the card in the Event Card Row in the position corresponding the smaller one of the rolled dice. If it is a normal Event Card, execute the text on the card. If the card was cancelled and at least 1 Influence disk remains on it, the event is cancelled and nothing happens. If an event causes you to lose Influence proceed as in 3.2.5. If a power is made inactive by an effect, turn its flag to its blank side. Events or crises that would push a power's flag out of the six-space Diplomacy Track move the flag the last space and have no further effect, a flag cannot be moved beyond the track.

If it is the special card Spa, nothing happens when it is activated, this card has an effect which is active as long as it remains in the Event Card Row with no Influence disks on it.

After executing a card's effect, remove it from the Event Card Row to the discard pile.

### 3.2.4 Execute Crisis Card

Crisis Cards are special Event Cards, which can be recognized by their red title. Most Crisis

Cards have 1 or more Theatre icons (Balkans, Africa, Asia). When a Crisis Card is activated, all other uncanceled Crisis Cards in the Event Card Row that share a Theatre with the original crisis get activated as well. Every power which is present on at least 1 of the activated Crisis Cards is involved the crisis. You now have to side with one of these powers at the expense of your relations with all of the other involved powers. Move the chosen power's flag 1 space to the right on the Diplomacy Track, move all other involved powers 1 space to the left.

Germany and France are special. If Germany is involved and you do not choose Germany, lose 1 Influence (see 3.2.5). You cannot choose to side with France, when France is involved double all effects, move flags 2 steps and lose 2 Influence should Germany not be chosen.

After applying the crisis effects, execute a **Crisis Check**. If the French Allies zone contains more powers than the German Allies zone, the crisis escalated into a global war between the great powers and you lose the game, otherwise proceed with refilling the Event Card Row (3.2.6). Inactive powers do not count towards the Crisis Check, after the Crisis Check turn any inactive powers to their active side.

After executing the Crisis and the Crisis Check, discard all involved Crisis Cards.



The **Honest Broker token** can be spent to skip a Crisis Check. Turn the token to its inactive side, it cannot be used anymore until it has been turned to its active side by an event.

### 3.2.5 Lose Influence

Whenever an event causes you to lose  $x$  Influence, you have to move  $x$  Influence disks to the Politics Track. Take these disks from the Influence Pool, and if that is empty from one of the Event Pool, the Diplomacy Pool or the Politics Pool, and if all of those are also empty take it from one of the cards in the Event Card Row.

Whenever a 3rd Influence disk is added to the Politics Track, you have lost the support of the Kaiser and immediately lose the game.

### 3.2.6 Refill Event Card Row

After executing the event and discarding the card, slide all remaining cards in the Event Card Row to the left until they form a continuous group. Move any Influence disks on a card with it. Then draw new cards and fill the row until it contains 5 cards again.

### 3.2.7 Cap Influence Pools

At the end of the Event Phase, for each of the Event Pool, the Diplomacy Pool or the Politics Pool which holds more Influence discs than the greater number of this turn's die roll, remove all excess Influence discs to the Influence Pool.

**example** If you roll  $\text{Ⓜ}$  and  $\text{Ⓜ}$ , remove disks from any pool which holds more than 4 disks until only 4 disks remain in that pool

## 3.3 Action Phase

During the last phase of each turn, you can take any number of Cancel Event, Diplomacy and Politics Actions as long as you can pay the corresponding cost.

### 3.3.1 Cancel Events

This action allows you to prevent events and crises. Move Influence disks from the Event Pool onto a card in the Event Card Row. Cancelling the 1st (leftmost) card requires 1 Influence disk, the 2nd 2, ..., and the 5th card costs 5 disks.

The disks remain on the card until it is activated during phase 2.

### 3.3.2 Diplomacy

This action allows you to sway great powers towards your side. Choose 1 power and move it 1 space to the right. Moving inside a zone (over a dotted line) costs 2 Influence disks from the Diplomacy Pool to the Influence Pool. Crossing a solid line out of the French Allies zone or into the German Allies zone costs 3 Influence.

### 3.3.3 Politics

This action allows you to regain Influence which was entangled in internal politics. Pay Influence disks from the Politics Pool to the Influence pool equal to the difference between the greater die and the smaller die (as they were rolled during 3.2.1). Then move one disk from the Politics Pool to the Influence Pool.

**example**  $\text{Ⓜ}$  and  $\text{Ⓜ}$  would result in a cost of  $5 - 2 = 3$

## 3.4 Cleanup

Move any remaining Influence disks from the Event Pool, the Diplomacy Pool and the Politics Pool to the Influence Pool.

If at the end of a turn neither a victory nor defeat condition is reached, start the next turn with its Action Allocation Phase.

## 4 End

You win the game when all 5 flags are in the German Allies zone as you achieved your goal of isolating France. You cannot win during the execution of an event, the victory condition has to be met after all effects of the event have been executed.

You lose if you fail a Crisis Check, put a third token on the Politics track, or draw the last card from the deck.

## **History**

**Blood and Iron**

**Colonies and Crises**

**Cartell and Center**