An intelligent Agent for the board game Risk

# Introduction

Risk is a strategic turn-based game for two to six players. The standard version is played on a map of the Earth which is divided into forty two territories. These territories are grouped into six continents. (Asia, North America, Europe, Africa, Australia, South America).

The goal of the game depends on a player’s given mission. The available missions include conquering specific continents, conquering a given number of countries or wiping out a specific enemy. There is also a variant of the game called “Wolrd Domination” which assigns the same mission to all participating players: conquering the whole world by defeating all other players.

Players use armies which have a distinct color for each player to conquer and defend countries. Dependent on the strategy the player plan the placement and the use of this armies Depending on his preferred strategy the player distributes his armies between his countries. In general this means either distributing armies equally to all countries or just putting all of them in one country to use them as an attack army. Winning depends partly on the strategy used and luck at throwing the dices.

# Rules

## Preparations

First the game principle has to be decided. There are two alternatives.

1. “World domination”
2. Cards with different missions (conquer special continents, conquer specific countries, defeat a specific player)

At the beginning of the game so called Risk Cards are mixed up handed out to all players clockwise. It is possible that players receive unequal amounts of cards. Risk Cards display a country and an symbol (either a soldier, a cavalryman or a canon). The players go through all their cards and place one army on each of the countries displayed on the cards. There needs to be at least one army on each country at all times.

After all countries have been filled with one army the Risk Cards are recollected and mixep up together with two joker cards (cards which contain all three symbols).

With the second alternative each player would also be given one mission card.

With all preparations done the normal game play begins.

## Game Play

Risk is a turn based game beginning with the player left to the one who received the last Risk Card. Each turn is divided into 4 phases:

1. New Armies
2. Conquering Other Countries
3. Relocate Armies

### 1. Phase: New Armies

The player receives new armies which he can place on his countries. The amount of armies depends on how many countries the player controls. The number of countries is divided by 3 with the result defining the number of armies (decimals are ignored). E.g. a player holds 14 countries. The equation would be 14 / 3 = 4.67 and therefore result in the player receiving 4 armies. Even though a player might have too few countries he always receives at least 3 armies.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Continent | Bonus Armies |
| Africa | 3 |
| Asia | 7 |
| Australia | 2 |
| Europe | 5 |
| North America | 5 |
| South America | 2 |

In addition to this armies a player can receive bonus armies for holding whole continents. The number of bonus armies depends on the continent. The table on the right shows the bonus armies per continent.

If a player has at least 3 Risk Cards he may be able to exchange them for additional armies. Therefore he needs either 3 cards with the same symbol (soldier, cavalryman or canon) or 3 cards with each showing a different symbol. A joker card is equivalent to any of the 3 symbols. The number of armies received for exchanging cards raises each time a player does so. The table below shows how many armies are received based on the number of exchanges. After the 6th exchange each new exchange yields 5 more armies than the previous one.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of Exchange | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th |
| Armies | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 15 |

The player has to place all received armies directly and can not store them for later turns. He can decide himself on which of his countries he places his armies. He could also place all armies on only one of his countries.

### 2. Phase: Conquering Other Countries

The player can use each of his countries with more than 1 army inside to attack other countries that are directly adjacent to the country from which he attacks or have a connection by sea (lines on the map).

During the attack victory and defeat is decided by dice. The attacker can use up to 3 dices with each dice representing one army. Since one army needs to be left behind for defense purposes this one can not be used during the attack e.g. if the player has 3 armies in a country which he uses for the attack he will only be able to use 2 of them in the actual attack resulting in using only 2 dices. To use all 3 dices he needs at least 4 armies in the country. Having more than 4 armies in the country only results in more throws with 3 dices but not in using more than 3 dices.

The defending player can use all of the armies inside the attacked country but with a maximum of 2 dices.

After the dices have been thrown their values are compared dice for dice. To win the attacker needs to have a higher values. Equal values with the defenders dice will result in victory of the defender.

E.g.: The attacker throws 3 dices resulting in a 5, a 4 and a 2. The defender throws two dices having a 5 and a 3. This would result in attacker and defender loosing one army each because 5 is equal to 5 (attacker looses one army) and 4 is higher than 3 (defender looses one army).

Throwing dices continues until all armies in the attacked country or all but one army in the attacking country have been eliminated. The attacking player can also decide to stop attacking if it suits him.

If the attacker succeeds in conquering the country he has to move all armies who took part in the last throwing of dices to the conquered country (which means depending on used dices either 1, 2 or 3 armies). He is allowed to move additional armies to this country from the country which he used for the attack as long as at least one army is still in the origin country. The player can now run further attacks from the conquered country or any other country with at least 2 armies.

If the player defeats the last army of another player the defeated player leaves the game and the player who defeated him gets all his Risk Cards with the option to directly exchange cards (his own and the newly gained ones) for armies. These armies need to be placed directly.

### 3.Phase: Reposition Armies

When a player is finished with attacking other countries he can reposition remaining armies (while leaving at least one army in each of his countries). All armies that have not been used during attacks can be repositioned. Repositioning is only possible between neighbored countries of the player.

When the player is done repositioning armies the turn of the player to his left begins his turn with the first phase.

## End of Game

Depending on the chosen alternative the end of game varies. With “World Domination” the game ends as soon as one player has conquered the all countries of the world. This player wins the game.

In the variant with missions the game ends when one player fulfills his mission. He does not necessarily need to do so himself e.g. when the player with green armies defeats the last country of the red player and the blue player has the mission to defeat all red armies, the blue player would win.

If two players complete their mission at the same time the winner will be the player who actually completed his mission himself as the following example shows:

The blue player has the mission to conquer Asia and Africa. He currently controls all of Asia and all but one country of Africa. The last country of Africa is controlled by the red player. This is also the last country the red player controls. The green player has the mission to defeat all red armies. When the blue player defeats this last country of the red player both the green and the blue player’s mission is completed. Since the blue player actually made the last move he wins the game.

# Developing an Intelligent Agent for Risk

Since using mission cards adds enormously more complexity to rules for an intelligent agent this project will focus on the alternative “World Domination”.

At first it needs to be decided which kind of strategy the agent should use. There are different approaches to playing Risk.

One approach would be to distribute all received armies equally to all countries. The result would be that all countries contain the same number of armies with some having one less because there were not sufficient armies available to distribute exactly the same amount on all countries. During the second phase (conquering other countries) an agent using this strategy would always conquer only one country which contains preferably as few armies as possible. In the third phase (repositioning of armies) it would try to balance the amount of armies in all countries as far as possible.

Another approach is to put all received armies in one country as an attack army. A modification of this strategy would be to also defend the continent border countries of continents completely owned by the player before putting all armies inside one attack country. This results in better defended continent borders (and therefore probably more bonus armies in the next round) but a weaker attack army.

During the second phase the agent chooses a path of countries to conquer. This decision is based on an algorithm described later in this document.

During the reposition phase the agent would strengthen his continent borders.

The second strategy shall be realized during this project in an example program.