

The World on the Brink
Cuban Missile Crisis Game
Version 0.17
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Overview

The World on the Brink simulates the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis - the most dangerous moment in modern human history.

One player plays as the US and President John F. Kennedy and the other as the USSR and Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

Military cubes are used to represent the military posture and forces of the US and USSR. Prestige cubes represent the diplomatic and public relations efforts of the two superpowers. The following colors are used:

US Military	
US Prestige	
USSR Military	
USSR Prestige	

The goal of the players is to avoid a nuclear holocaust while advancing their ideological goals, winning in the court of public opinion. Each player must also fend off internal opposition and attempt to stay in power (in the next election for Kennedy and for Khrushchev by avoiding a 'palace coup,' which he suffered as the historical loser).

Prepare for play

Place the Defcon marker on the 5 space of the Defcon track.

Place the internal opposition markers in the **1** space on each track.

Place the world opinion on the **1** space favoring the USSR.

Place two USSR military cubes in Cuba.

Place one USSR and one US military cube in both Europe and Berlin.

Place one US Prestige cube in the Atlantic.

Place one USSR Prestige cube in Space.

Place the USSR focus marker in Cuba.

Place the US focus marker in Berlin.

Remove the "End Game" event card and shuffle the rest of the event cards. Deal 5 event cards and shuffle the "End Game" card with those 5 cards and place them face down. Place the rest of the shuffled event cards face down on top of those 6 cards to form a draw pile.

The US player goes first.

For a better simulation and to capture the uncertainty of the crisis it is recommended that the players not discuss their in-game actions.

Dice

On the D10, a zero is treated as a 10.

The Map

The Defcon track starts at **5** and ends at **1**. If Defcon reaches **1** nuclear war breaks out, the game ends and both players (and everyone else in the world) loses.

Each player has an internal opposition track that starts at **1** and ends at **5**. If a player reaches **5** on their internal opposition track, it stays at **5** for the rest of the game and they suffer several penalties (see below). If the track is at **1** and a player gains internal support, it stays at **1**.

Message slots. Each player has a 3-slot track they use to send messages to the opposing player. On their turn they "open" the card in slot 3 from their opponent (if any) and implement it. They also place a message in slot one that will reach their opponent in 3 turns. The card is face down, but a cube or cubes (military or prestige) are placed on top of the card and are visible to both players. Once a card and cube or cubes are placed on the message track the card cannot

be viewed by either player till it is opened in slot one. Exception: an event card can reveal a message card, in that case it is still not implemented till “opened”.

World Opinion. World opinion goes from **1** to **5** toward each side (a total of 10 positions). If the game end event occurs, the player with world opinion on their side wins. If world opinion is at **5** and it is called to move toward the player with it already at **5** it stays at **5**. There is no “zero” space and world opinion moves directly from **1** in favor of one side to **1** in favor of the other.

Six locations. The six locations are Cuba, the Atlantic Ocean, the UN, Berlin, Europe, and Space. Each location can hold military and prestige cubes (except the UN cannot hold military cubes). Each location can hold any number of cubes. If a random roll would place a military cube in the UN, no cube is placed.

The Focus Marker

Each side has a focus marker they place, when available, into one of the six locations. The focus marker has the following effects:

- It adds one to the total of prestige cubes for a side when in the location a prestige check occurs in.
- It adds one to the total of military cubes for a side when in the location a military check occurs in (except in the UN space, which is always considered to have 0 military cubes).
- It adds one to the Defcon D10 roll if it is in the location a Defcon check occurs in. (If both focus markers are in the space where a Defcon check occurs, 2 is added to the D10 roll.)

Some events place one player’s focus marker on the message track. It is then unavailable until the message it is on is opened from Slot 3.

Loss of internal support

When internal opposition moves to the **5** space for a side, it remains in the **5** space for the remainder of the game and that side suffers the following penalties:

- That sides focus marker is removed from the game.
- That side can no longer take a special action.
- That side can place a maximum of one cube on each message (messages already sent are not changed).

Sequence of Play

Note that the US and USSR turns are slightly asymmetric. The US makes its prestige check first, then it’s military check. The USSR does military then prestige. This way the D6 roll that indicates the Defcon check location can be visible to the players as a reminder.

US Player

- Open USSR message in “to US slot 3” (if any) and execute it. If it is a minus and a cube (or cubes) is removed, move world opinion toward the USSR. If the US focus marker was on the message, it is again available to the US player.
- Slide USSR message card from “to US slot 2” (if any) to “to US slot 3”.
- Slide USSR message card from “to US slot 1” (if any) to “to US slot 2”.
- Place a US message card face down and one cube (or two cubes if permitted) in “to USSR slot 1”. If two cubes are used, they must be the same type.
- Move the US Focus marker, if available, to any location it is not currently in.
- Optionally select a Special Action.
- Execute a Prestige Check by rolling a D6
 - D6 specifies the area to check (as marked on the map). If US prestige is greater than USSR, move world opinion one towards US. If USSR prestige greater than US, move world opinion one towards USSR. (If the **Go against civilian advice** special action was chosen by the US player, 2D6 are rolled and the US player chooses one of the D6 results to use.)
- Execute a military check by rolling a D6
 - D6 specifies the area to check (as marked on the map). If the UN space is rolled, the military check is skipped. If US military is greater than USSR, move one step towards **1** on the US internal opposition track and move world opinion one towards US. If US military is less than USSR, move one step towards **5** on the US internal opposition track and move world opinion one towards USSR. (If the **Go against military advice** special action was chosen by the US player, 2D6 are rolled and the US player chooses one of the D6 results to use.)
- Execute a Defcon check by rolling a D10
 - The area to be checked is the military area from the previous step. (If **Go against military advice** was chosen and two different numbers were rolled, check against both areas.)
 - If the **Make Public Concession** special action was chosen by the US player, 2D10 are rolled and the higher value is used.
 - If D10 rolled plus focus markers is less than the number of all cubes in the area checked, lower Defcon by one. (If **Go against military advice** was chosen and two different numbers were rolled, both areas must individually fail to lower Defcon.) If Defcon moves to **1** the game is over. If Defcon is moved to a value other than **1**, **Nuclear Terror** occurs. First the USSR, then the US player can optionally remove a cube from the location their focus marker is in. If they choose to remove a cube, they gain one step of world opinion. (If the sides focus marker has been lost or is on a message card they are not eligible to remove a cube.)
- Reveal the top Event card and implement it.

USSR Player

- Open US message in “to USSR slot 3” (if any) and execute it. If it is a minus and a cube (or cubes) is removed, move world opinion toward the US. If the USSR focus marker was on the message, it is again available to the USSR player.
- Slide US message card from “to USSR slot 2” (if any) to “to USSR slot 3”.
- Slide US message card from “to USSR slot 1” (if any) to “to USSR slot 2”.
- Place a USSR message card face down and one cube (or two cubes if permitted) in “to US slot 1”. If two cubes are used they must be the same type.
- Move the USSR Focus marker, if available, to any location it is not currently in.
- Optionally select a Special Action.
- Execute a military check by rolling a D6
 - D6 specifies the area to check (as marked on the map). If the UN space is rolled, the military check is skipped. If USSR military is greater than US, move world opinion one towards USSR. If USSR military is less than US, move world opinion one towards US. (If the **Go against military advice** special action was chosen by the USSR player, 2D6 are rolled and the USSR player chooses one of the D6 results to use.)
- Execute a Prestige Check by rolling a D6
 - D6 specifies the area to check (as marked on the map). If USSR prestige is greater than US, move one space towards **1** on the USSR opposition track and move world opinion one towards USSR. If USSR prestige is less than US, move one towards **5** on the USSR internal opposition track and move world opinion one towards US. (If the **Go against civilian advice** special action was chosen by the USSR player, 2D6 are rolled and the USSR player chooses one of the D6 results to use.)
- Execute a Defcon check by rolling a D10
 - The area to be checked is the prestige area from the previous step. (If **Go against civilian advice** was chosen and two different numbers were rolled, check against both areas.)
 - If the **Make Public Concession** special action was chosen by the USSR player, 2D10 are rolled and the higher value is used.
 - If D10 plus focus markers < the number of **all** cubes in the area to be checked, lower Defcon. (If **Go against civilian advice** was chosen and two different numbers were rolled, both areas must individually fail to lower Defcon.) If Defcon moves to **1** the game is over. If Defcon moved to a value other than **1**, **Nuclear Terror** occurs. First the US, then the USSR player can optionally remove a cube from the location their focus marker is in. If they choose to remove a cube, they gain one step of world opinion. (If the sides focus marker has been lost or is on a message card they are not eligible to remove a cube.)
- Reveal the top Event card and implement it.

Message Cards

Each player has a set of cards used to send “messages” to the other player. For each location they have a plus and minus card. When playing a message card into slot 1, they place the card face down and one or two military or prestige cubes on top of the card (two of the same is permitted, one of each is not). The US player places US cubes on its messages, the USSR places USSR cubes. As the card and cube(s) slide down the message track, they stay linked.

When a “message” is opened, a cube or cubes is added (for plus) or, if any are on the location, removed (for minus) that matches the location and the cube(s) on the card. If a military cube or cubes is on a UN plus or minus card, no cube is placed or removed, and world opinion moves one away from the sender.

If a minus card removes any prestige or military cubes, the sender of the message moves world opinion one towards their side.

After the message is opened and implemented, the message card is returned to the sending player for possible reuse.

Unsent message cards should be kept hidden from the other player.

Special Actions

In the special action step, you may optionally select **one** of the following actions. If you select a special action, move world opinion one toward your opponent. You may not take a special action if your internal opposition is on the **5** space.

Redeploy:

Action: Move one of your Military cubes from one location to another.

Political Intrigue:

Action: Move one of your Prestige cubes from one location to another.

Make Public Concession:

Action: Roll 2D10 for Defcon check, use higher roll.

Go against military advice:

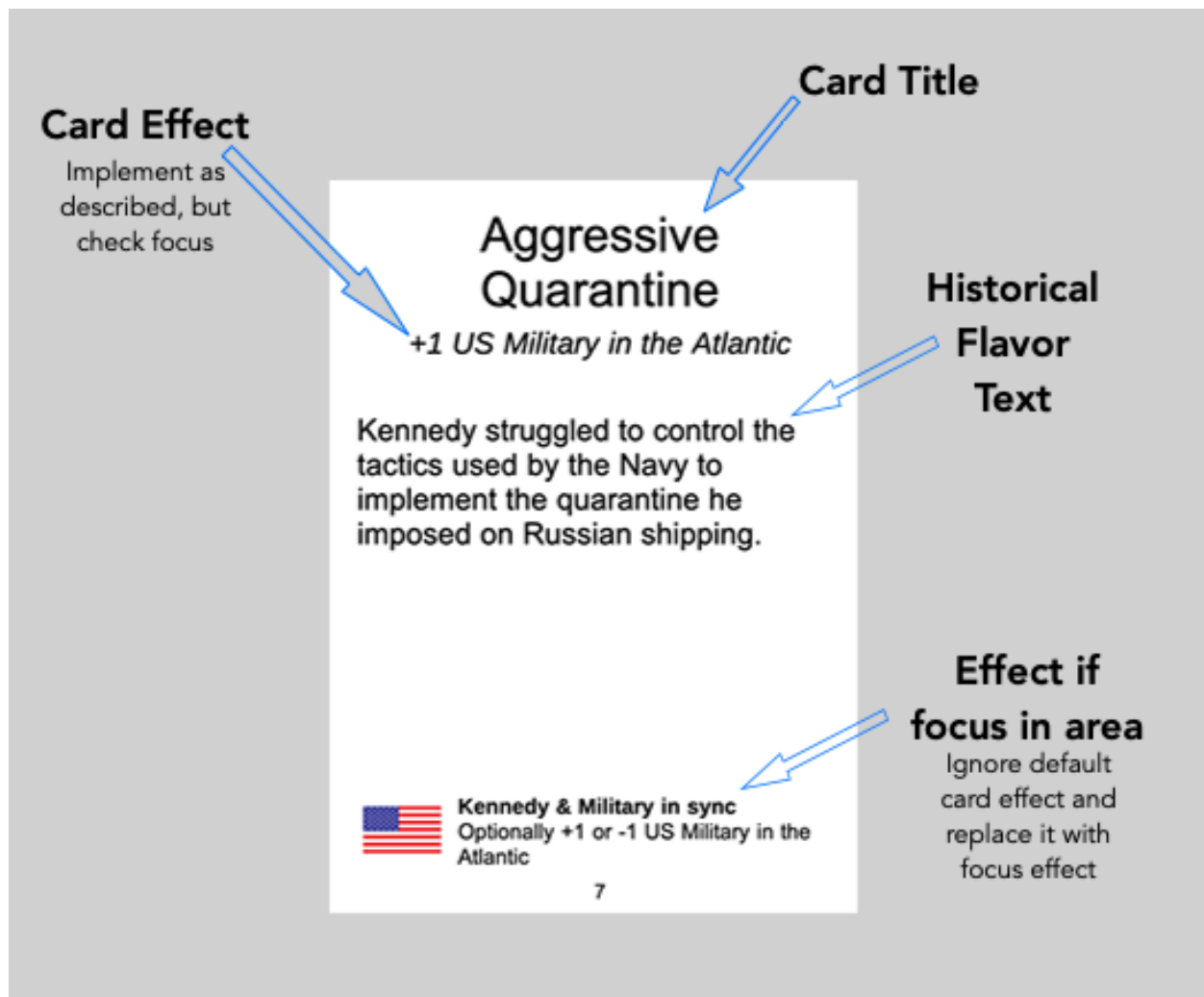
Action: Roll 2D6 on Military Check, choose area from numbers rolled.

Go against civilian advice:

Action: Roll 2D6 on Prestige Check, choose area from numbers rolled.

Note: You may take a special action even if world opinion is already on your opponent’s **5** space.

Event Cards



When an event card is revealed follow the text on the card.

For some events the focus marker can change the event. If there is a US Flag and the US focus marker is on the location specified by the event, the event is changed to the text adjacent to the US Flag. Do not implement the original event.

If there is a USSR Flag and the USSR focus marker is on the location specified by the event, the event is changed to the text adjacent to the USSR Flag. Do not implement the original event.

If both flags are on a card and both focus markers are on the location, first implement the event text for the current players flag, then the opponents. Again, do not implement the original event.

Roll a D6 to determine any random location.

When an event card calls for removing a prestige cube for a side and it has no prestige in the specified location, add one prestige for the opposing side instead.

If the End Game event is revealed, the game ends immediately and the player with world opinion on their side wins.

How you can lose

Defcon goes to **1**, both players lose, game over.

Tournament Scoring

In a tournament or other situation where a winner is needed for each game, the game still ends when Defcon goes to **1**. The winner is the side with fewer total cubes in all locations. If that count is tied, the winner is the player with public opinion on their side.

Credits

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