

Demonstration *Gathering Storm* game

Opening set up

Setting up *Gathering Storm* involves placing counters on the indicated spots on the five scenario cards, the mapboard, and the balance of power charts.

Axis scenario cards

The German and Italian scenario cards are shown below:



The German scenario card is typical.

Starting at the top, the German gold bar counter is placed on the “Added Income” row to indicate any modifications to the German income. Factory counters are placed in the three factory rows – the location of these counters will change as the German economy evolves. On the “Military Factory” row, German factory support counters are placed in the indicated locations, to remind the German player that when he mobilizes a fourth military factory, Germany receives +1 support, with another +1 support for a sixth military factory, and so on.

Below that the Active and Reserve German armor, infantry and air units are placed. The “Active” row is conveniently immediately below the Germany military factories – the difference is the German maintenance level (one tile point for each active unit in excess of the number of German military factories). No maintenance is paid for reserve units.

Finally there is the German shipbuilding chart – the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* are placed in the indicate locations.

The Italian scenario card is very similar to the German, with the difference in potential economic strength being evident from the difference in the number of factories. As on

the German scenario card, the yellowed factories indicate the starting levels for each of the three factory categories (civilian, idle and military).

Italy can gain only two support increases from mobilizing its factories, which limits its income and often its aggressive potential as well.

On the bright side, Italy has four 3-factor battleships under construction (these represent the refits of World War I battleships carried out by Italy in the mid-1930s). Until some of these are launched, Italy can't lay down any new ships.

Allied scenario cards



The British scenario card resembles the German and Italian scenario cards, with different factory and shipbuilding configurations.

Both Germany and Britain start the game with “Research Results” – as we will see, the counters indicated on their scenario cards are placed on the balance of power charts.

Britain also starts the game with two “Royal Navy” counters, which are placed on the naval balance of power chart, to reflect the superiority of the British navy at the start of the game. This superiority can be, and often is, challenged by the Axis, but Britain has a head start.

The French scenario card has one difference. Because France starts the game with trade pacts in Belgium and Czechoslovakia, these are placed on the French “Added Income” track during the opening setup. In Spring 1935, France will receive an additional two tile points in income for these trade pacts, which are worth one tile point each. Placing the trade pact counters on the “1” and “2” cells of the “Added Income” track reminds the French player that his income is two tile points, assuming the Economic Climate remains at zero.

Russian scenario card

Russia's scenario card is the most distinctive of the five major powers.



First of all, Russia begins the game with a -1 support modifier for its cohesion level. This modifier will disappear when Russia has incurred ten purge events (and at 20 purge events, Russia will receive a +1 support modifier for having high cohesion).

Secondly, Russia's active units are placed on the Russian Garrison Chart, rather than in the "Active Units" section of the Russian scenario card. A Russian flag counter is used to indicate the number of active Russian units (from which the Russian maintenance level can be derived, by comparing the location of the Russian flag counters to the Russian military factor level).

At the start of the game, Russia has exactly the required number of active units and research results (one airborne result) to balance the Japanese forces in Manchuria (the first eight counters), the Axis +1 armor and infantry balance of power advantages and the French flag in Poland.

This equilibrium rarely lasts long. A shift in the armor, infantry or air balance of power changes things, as do trade pacts in the four minor countries bordering Russia (Finland, Poland, Rumania and Turkey, in both alphabetical and north-to-south order).

To remind the Russian player of the components of the Russian garrison requirements, the counters for the four minor countries are placed below the Russian garrison track, so they are readily accessible.

In addition, this is a good spot for the three German occupation policy research counters, and the five European Aggression Index counters, because they also count against the Russian garrison. There are even three Polish counters, to cover the rare situation where Poland aligns itself with Germany, obviating the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

Each turn, when determining its income, the Russian player must check the Russian garrison to see whether he gains or loses support. This affects Russia's income, and Russia, while a socialist paradise, is a poor country.

The Russian purge track is located at the bottom of the Russian scenario card. While Russia is often constrained by its lack of tile points and the requirement to build a unit if Russia's support level is negative, the Russian player can console himself by tracking the relentless elimination of enemies of the state, real and imagined. As the Russian purge level increases, Russia gain more freedom of action and the pressure on the Axis is increased correspondingly.

The mapboard

Setting up the mapboard follows the same principles as the scenario cards. Counters are placed where indicated, to reflect the political situation in Spring 1935. Once play begins, these starting indicators lose their meaning, and the players look only to the actual counters on the mapboard.



The first inset picture shows the Time Track. Not much is happening yet – the game hasn't started! The turn marker is placed in the Spring 1935 box.



As units are mobilized, they will be placed on the turn boxes in which they come into play. A Russia flag can also be placed in the turn box in which Russia is next permitted to mobilize, although this may change as Russia cohesion increases.

The Balance of Power, European Aggression Index and Economic Climate tracks are below the Time Track. The counters on the Balance of Power and Economic Climate tracks indicate that they are both at zero at the start of the game.



The European Aggression Index is tracked using the counters shown at the bottom of the picture. Light brown counters indicate temporary modifiers, including random events (which are very temporary) and civil wars (which can end, but sometimes seem to last forever, even today). Dark brown counters, which relate to Axis aggressions and the Nazi-Soviet Pact, indicate permanent modifiers.

As a bonus, this picture also shows the diplomatic and civil war tracks for Spain. A tile draw has already been made and Spain starts with one civil war event, which is indicated by moving one of the five Spanish civil war event counters onto the track.

A quick tour of Europe begins in Scandinavia, where everything is pretty quiet. No one has any diplomatic influence in Norway or Sweden, only the single German flag in Finland disturbs the tranquility of the north. This may not last.



Western Europe is an early focal point of the game. The natural pro-German alignment of the demilitarized Rhineland (reflected in the two starting German flags) is balanced by the French trade pact with Belgium (the counter for which is on the French scenario card). The factory counter is a reminder that Germany gets an idle factory if it remilitarizes the Rhineland.

Central Europe is chaotic even at the start of the game. Czechoslovakia is strongly pro-French, with the counter for the Czech trade pact on the French scenario card. France also has a flag in Poland, to Russia's discomfit, while Austria is looking to Germany and Hungary is subject to some Italian influence. Successful German aggression against both Austria and Czechoslovakia will provide Germany with additional military factories.



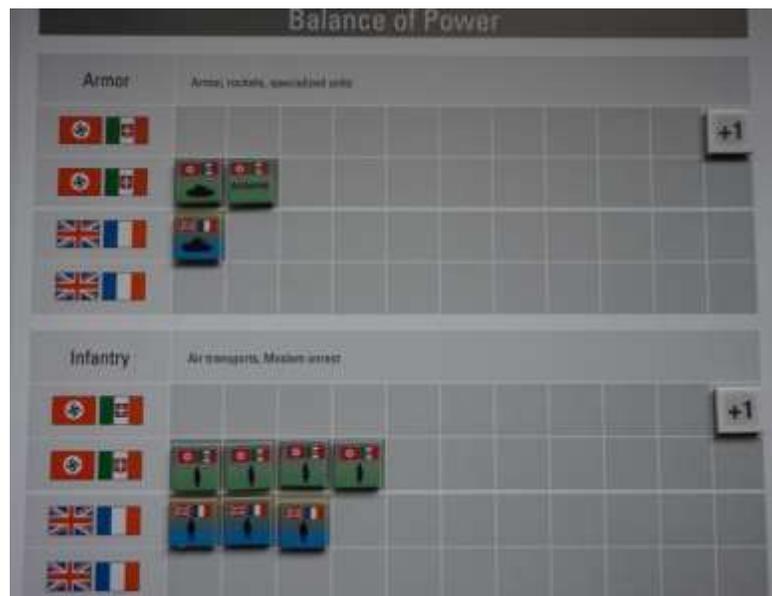
The Balkans are a near empty slate at the start of the game, with Italy having a flag in Albania. Both Yugoslavia and Greece have civil war counters ready to record increased internal tensions if random events are drawn for those countries.



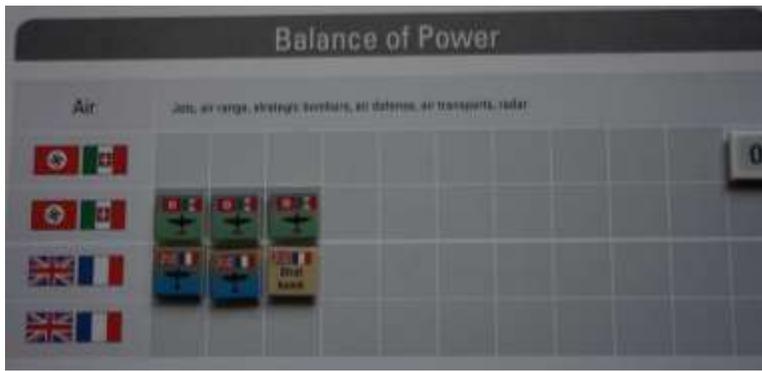
The balance of power charts

The balance of power charts can be placed by the eastern (right) edge of the mapboard.

The armor and infantry balance of power charts are shown at the left. Axis and Allied balance of power armor counters are placed on the appropriate rows of the armor balance of power chart, along with a counter to reflect the initial Axis airborne research result. Axis and Allied Infantry balance of power are similarly placed on the infantry balance of power chart.

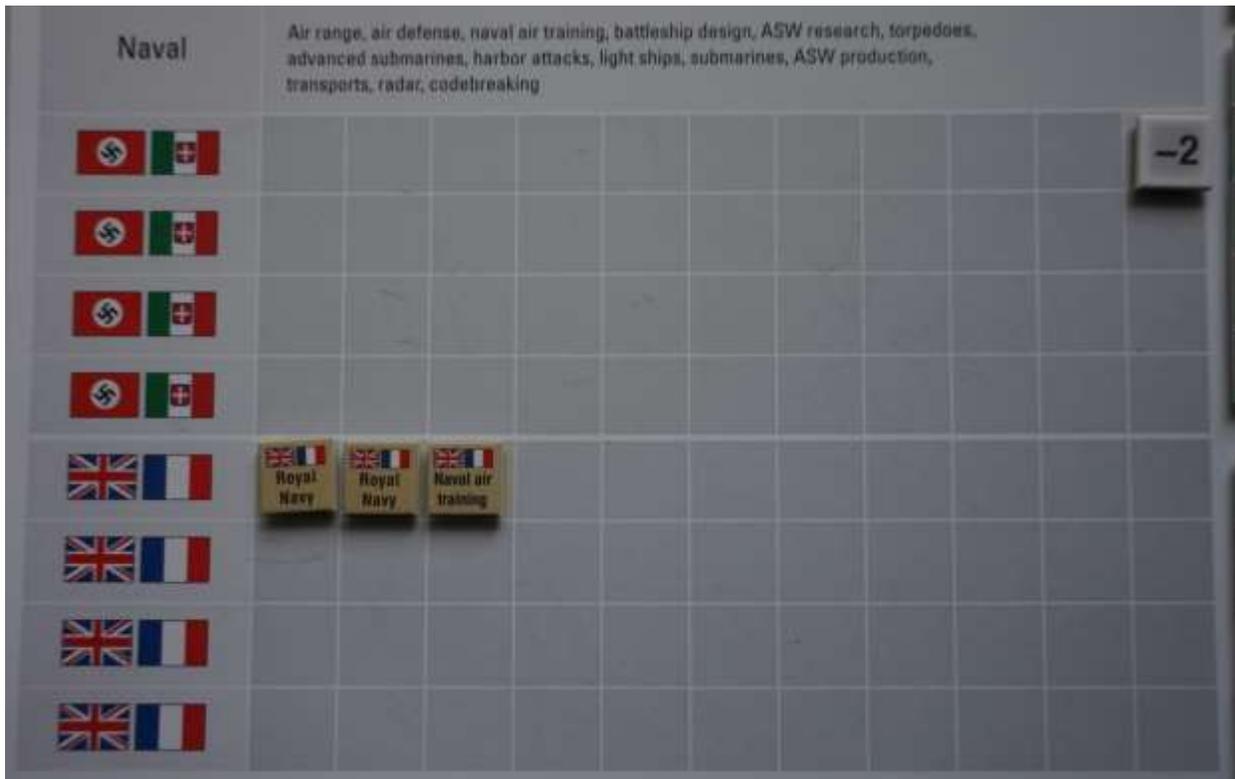


Numbered counters are placed in the upper right corner of each of the four balance of power charts to show the current balance of power for that category. The balance of power for each category can't exceed +/-3. The net balance of power for the turn is the total of the four numbered counters, plus the battleship race.



The air balance of power chart is similar, with the Allies starting with a strategic bomber research counter. This means the air balance of power is equal, as both sides have exactly the same number of counters. This is represented by the “0” counter in the upper right corner of the air balance of power chart.

Finally, there’s the naval balance of power chart. Why is it bigger? Wait and see – it fills up pretty quickly.



The Allies have a -2 naval balance of power advantage, which means the net balance of power at the start of the game is zero. Neither side has an advantage.

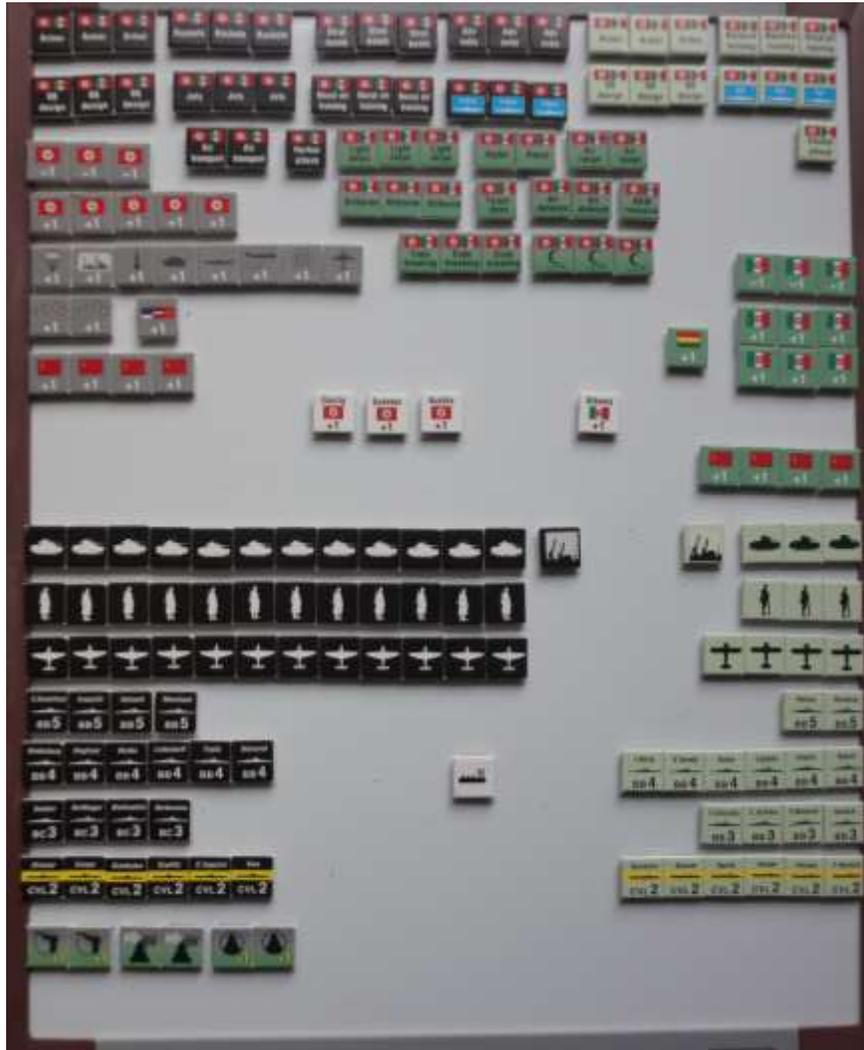
The battleship race is also tied, as neither side is close to launching any modern (four- or five-factor) battleships. Wait for it!

The rest of the counters

With a magnetized set, three 11 x 14 inch white boards are enough to handle the remaining counters.

The counters are fairly easy to find when properly organized.

The Axis counters are a good example:



The German, then Italian, research counters are at the top of the white board. Below them are the joint research counters. The small German-Italian flags on all of these counters remind the players that these counters ultimately end up on the appropriate balance of power chart if the research result represented by the counter is achieved.

The German and Italian support counters are below the Axis research counters. All the support counters for each major power have the same background color, which identifies them as support counters (gray for Germany, dark green for Italy). The support counters for mobilized factories, which are kept on the scenario cards, have the same background color.

This also reminds the players that certain game developments yield a +1 support modifier. For example, by looking at the row of German research support counters the German player can quickly see that an 18-step airborne research result give a +1 support modifier, as does an 18-step economic preparation research result, and so on.

Similarly, so does the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, as there's an Italian support counter with the Ethiopian flag on it (if you don't believe me, check the Ethiopia box on the mapboard).

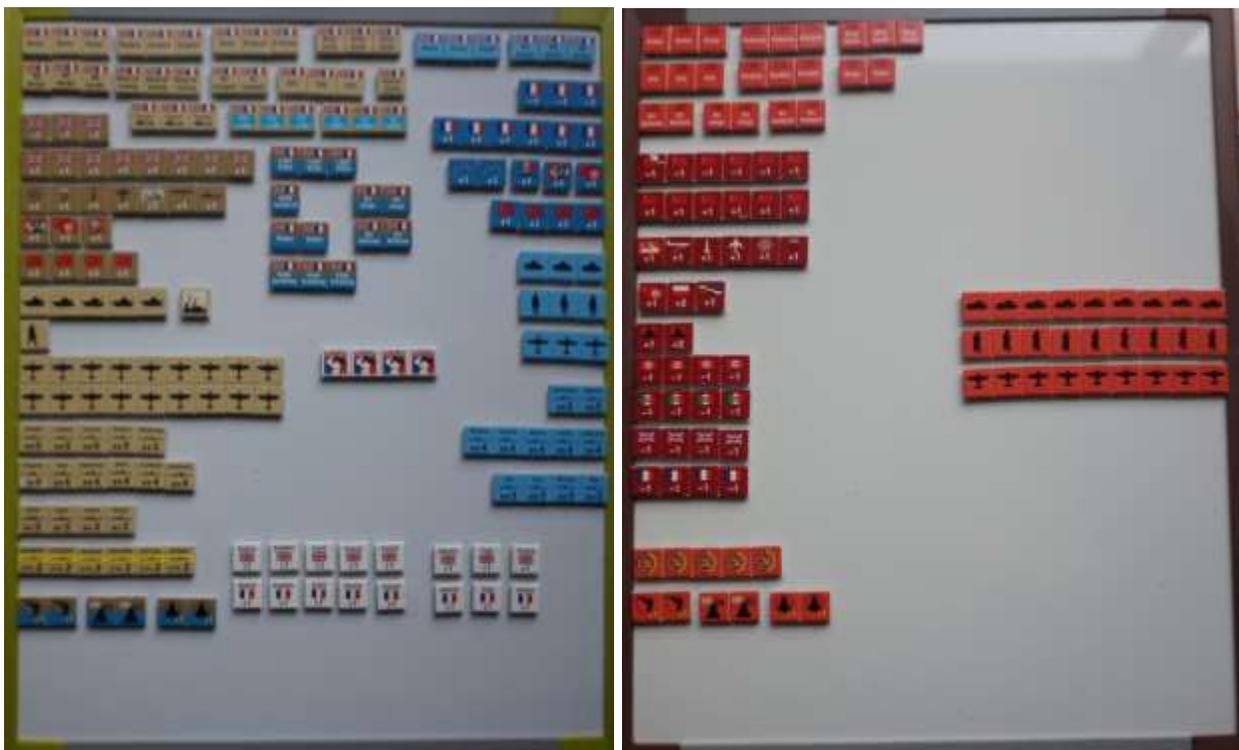
The temporary support counters for German and Italian aggressions are on a white background.

Below them are the armor, infantry and air units. These units are placed on the time track when mobilized, then are moved to the Reserve row of the scenario card once the required number of turns have elapsed.

The German and Italian naval units are immediately below their air units. These units are placed on the relevant shipbuilding chart when they are laid down, although research results are necessary before construction may be started on four- and five-factor battleships and aircraft carriers.

The Axis intelligence counters are at the very bottom.

The Allied and Russian counters are organized in the same manner.



Of course the unused counters can be kept in whatever manner the players wish, but organizing them at the outset saves a lot of time and frustration later. It also reveals an important aspect of the game design – the counters are largely self-identifying, in that balance of power and support counters are distinct and therefore players will soon know exactly where to find them and what they mean.

And that's the opening set up – the game is ready to be played.