

# Ernie III's Three-Sided 4<sup>th</sup> Age Gunboat Game

## General Description

All three allegiances will be in play, with all 25 nations involved. Some special rules will apply in addition to 'normal gunboat' rules.

Need at least 9 total players/teams willing to sign up based on those rules. ☺

SNA #31 (+20 to kidnap/assassinate) is not allowed. All other SNAs allowed.

The game ends either after 52 turns as per normal gunboat rules, or when one of the three allegiances has more active nations than both other allegiances combined. For this purpose a kingdom counts as two nations. A strategic pop center victory is not allowed.

## Team Rules & Restrictions

The three allegiances will be broken down into 9 teams, 3 teams per allegiance, with special rules for each allegiance, as follows:

Free: 3 teams of 3 regular nations. Each team must consist of 2 nations of men and 1 nation of either dwarves or elves.

Dark: 3 teams of 3 regular nations each. Each team must consist of 2 nations of men and 1 nation of non-humans.

Neutral: 1 team of three regular nations and 2 teams each consisting of a kingdom and a regular nation. All neutrals have to be men as usual. No allegiance changing allowed.

The reason I am specifying two nations of men and one nation that is some other race for the Good and Evil teams is that 4<sup>th</sup> Age is supposed to be "the Age of Men" with some isolated areas of other races, so I wanted mostly men but with a scattering of others.

NOTE: the neutrals have 2 fewer nations than the other allegiances, but not only do they include the kingdoms, but each kingdom team will have its initial turn 0 recon of all non-kingdom capital areas, a definite information advantage. Also, since the kingdom locations are known, the third neutral team of 3 nations can attempt to set up taking advantage of that.

Starting relations will be adjusted so that every nation has tolerated relations to all other nations of their allegiance and disliked relations to all other nations.

Each team may be played by a single player, but if two or three players want to join up to play a single team, that would be fine too, spread the cost and the fun.

## Registering to Play

Need 9 teams total, each team can be 1-3 players, note however that a 3-player team cannot select a kingdom/neutral combo.

We will also do allegiance assignment and region selection, but we will need to break that down into steps, for reasons outlined below.

Step 1 will be to establish 9 teams...

## **Step 1 – Assigning Teams**

Email to request a team slot, providing a preference list from most to least preferable, of the following options:

Good (3 available)

Evil (3 available)

Neutral Non-Kingdom (1 available)

Neutral North Kingdom +1 (1 available)

Neutral South Kingdom +1 (1 available)

NOTE: please only sign up if you are willing to be flexible on what allegiance you play, and not just be willing to play a kingdom team or a particular allegiance. With only 9 teams it may well be that I have to resolve some ties and some teams may not get their first or even second choice. I'll roll dice as needed to resolve conflicts. Hopefully everyone will get the allegiance of their choice, but everyone who signs up should be willing to play whatever allegiance they get.

Once I have 9 teams, sorted out into 3 Good, 3 Evil, and 3 Neutral, we'll move on to step two...

## **Step 2 - Nation Locations**

It is important not to let a single team dominate in any theatre; 3 free people nations on the same team all in the south, say, could coordinate to a degree that would be unfair to everyone else. So region selection will be modified somewhat in order to maximize mixing of allegiances and minimize proximity of nations within a team. The setup map will consist of three areas, called theatres, as follows:

Western Theatre (North Kingdom in Arnor plus 7 other regions):

Angmar, Arnor, Dunland, Enedwaith, Eriador, Forlindon, Harlindon, Rhudaur.

Northeastern Theatre (9 regions):

Eastern Mordor, Iron Hills, Lorien, Northern Mirkwood, Northern Mordor., Northern Wastes, Rhovanion, Rhun, Southern Mirkwood.

Southern Theatre (South Kingdom in Gondor plus 7 other regions):

Far Harad, Gondor, Harondor, Khand, Near Harad, Rohan, Southern Mordor, Umbar.

Each three nation team must submit a separate preference list of regions for each nation. One nation must select its preferences only from the 7 available regions in the western theatre, one nation must select only from the 7 available regions in the southern theatre, and the third nation must select only from the 9 available regions in the northeastern theatre. Thus every three nation team will be split up between the three separate theatres.

For the two teams containing a kingdom and a regular nation, the kingdom will already have its region known, but the regular nation must submit a preference list of regions in the northeastern theatre. So the two kingdoms will each have one neutral teammate in the northeastern theatre, while the non-kingdom neutral team will have one nation in each region.

A nation can put down "Any" for its region choice but then indicate the theatre the nation must be located in, i.e. Any (Western), Any (Northeastern), or Any (Southern).

I will then resolve region selections, adjusted for the theatre definitions. All teams should be fairly well split up, although players can certainly try to get regions in different theatres that are close to each other in order to enable military cooperation – part of the setup strategy for a team will be to consider such options. The duos which include a kingdom will have a slight advantage in terms of knowing where the kingdom is located when submitting the preference list for their partner nation in the northeastern theatre, but that is simply part of making the duos approximately equal in total strength to the tries of regular nations.

The end result will be a mix of allegiances in each theatre. The western theatre will have 2 neutrals (including the North Kingdom), 3 good nations and 3 evil nations; the southern theatre will have 2 neutrals (including the South Kingdom), 3 good nations and 3 evil nations; and the northeastern theatre will have 3 neutrals, 3 good nations and 3 evil nations.

The idea is to have each theatre be a potential hotbed of conflict right from the start – though as always, actual region allocation may result in some advantages or disadvantages for specific nations, teams or allegiances – and at the same time, to prevent any one team from having too much immediate ability to coordinate. If a team does manage to get its nations relatively close to each other by getting their 1<sup>st</sup> choice regions, at least those nations will have less starting gold!

### **Step 3 - Nation Designs**

Once I have assigned the regions to each nation in each team, teams will need to design their nations. Except as specified here, standard 4<sup>th</sup> Age setup rules from MEGames apply.

Again, +20 to Kidnap/Assassinate, SNA #31, is not allowed, all other SNAs are allowed, within racial and allegiance restrictions as normal.

To reiterate, it is the Age of Men! Each Good and Evil team must consist of two nations of Men and one nation which is not Men. Thus there will be 3 nations which are Dwarves or Elves, 3 nations which are Non-humans, and all the rest of the nations will be Men. Each Good and Evil team can decide which of its three nations will not be Men, i.e. there are no theatre-specific limitations, but obviously mountainous regions work better for non-Men than for Men.

However, for this scenario only, a special rule applies to Men of all allegiances – camps and villages are allowed in mountain hexes. Only non-Men can start with towns or larger in mountain hexes, but during the game, of course, Men can improve their mountain holdings as much as they want and can afford.

Harbors and ports may only be placed where ships can actually access major rivers or open water; note that it will be allowed to have a harbor or port at the “tip” of a major river, such as was the case with Esgaroth in the 1650 scenario. Any number of harbors or ports can be taken as long as they satisfy those requirements but only one of each qualifies for bonus points. (That is part of the standard setup rules but some folks don't realize it.) So access to a major river can be a hex at the tip of the major river, or along a hexside, while access to open water requires a hexside of coast, either or both are acceptable.

Good Men normally have fewer options for their racial bonus to character skill ranks than Neutral and Evil Men, i.e. Good Men cannot use +10C to increase existing Command rank and also do not have a 30E option, while both Neutral and Evil Men can use +10C to boost existing Command rank and do have a 30E option. That was done in part to counter the fact that, for the Good allegiance as a whole, Dwarves and Elves have some nice racial SNAs etc. But for this scenario, as there is a limit on how many Dwarves and Elves are allowed, Good Men will have the same racial bonus options as Neutral and Evil Men.

I will review all nation setups and resolve any setup issues with the teams, and when all issues are solved, I will forward them all to MEGames to get the game set up officially, and work with MEGames to make sure

there are no problems prior to turn 0s being sent out to the players. Obviously, discussion of setups with anyone outside one's team is not allowed. Honor system is in play. ☺

### **Additional Special Rules**

MEGames will list the nation numbers that comprise the various teams as per normal for Gunboat games.

There will be no diplos for this game. Each team and allegiance are on their own, and must rely on the information they can gather through normal in-game methods. Standard "no screwing around trying to send messages in funky ways" Gunboat rules...

### **Final Notes**

It is likely that more than one nation will find itself in a position where it is near several adversarial nations and gets overwhelmed. Be prepared that you may lose one of your nations early, and if you have bad luck, possibly even two... This scenario is not for the faint-hearted! Chaos will ensue, I am sure! So please join the game with willingness to continue playing your "team" even if it is reduced by an elimination or two. Make the enemies fight for every conquest!