

**EDHD 621: Game Rules**

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**The Age of the Atom**

*“Peace hangs by a Thread, and we hold the Scissors”*

The Age of the Atom starts in the shadow of one of humanity's greatest atrocities. The United States detonated the first two nuclear weapons in history, wiping out the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in an attack of questionable military and diplomatic value. You must pick up the pieces and face the geopolitical fallout, just as the Cold War begins to unfold.

In this collaborative card game, you will take on the roles of anti-nuclear arms movements within countries from the capitalist bloc (U.S, France, UK), the communist bloc (USSR, China), and the non-aligned movement (India). To achieve global survival, you must cooperate and manage resources in order to form diplomatic ties, build diverse radical movements across different nations, and push back against militarization. This is all in pursuit of global nuclear disarmament and avoiding full militarization, which could lead to a catastrophic nuclear exchange.

This game is built upon the idea that countries can work collectively across lines of immense national, ideological, racial, and religious difference to protect themselves and others and build a better, safer world for their communities and the people who come after them.

**Number of players:** Age of the Atom is playable by 3-6 players, along with a facilitator. It is required that at least one player represents the anti-nuclear movement operating within a country from each of the three different blocs: Capitalist, Communist, and Non-Aligned. The facilitator's role is to draw and offer more context to the Global Event Cards, help students keep track of Resource Cards and various tokens, and answer any clarifying questions that may be raised. They will also be responsible for passively tracking the anti-nuclear movements within countries that don't have a player (Pakistan, Iran, North Korea, Israel) and may give limited tips and advice to players and steer them in the right direction. Passively playing means that the facilitator will keep track of Resource Cards and tokens collected by and taken from those 4 countries throughout the game but will not make any active decisions on behalf of the country, such as building achievements.

**Expected duration:** The game could have a maximum of 46 rounds. This simulates the progression of the Cold War

**Intended audience:** The intended audience is high-school/ college history students.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Apply and implement what we have learned about international movements and trans-national solidarity
- Unlearn the logic of nationalism and recognize shared interests across lines of nationality, ideology and race
- Understanding of the political dynamics and obstacles of the Cold War
- Implement our understanding of World Systems Theory and acknowledge the outsized role countries in the imperial core play in driving global geopolitics

### **List of Materials:**

- **Play Aid** → contains important information about each individual country as well as general rules of the game
- **Country Name Plates** → includes: the name of the country, its flag, lists its rival countries, a marker for when it's disarmed, and the benefits once it is disarmed
- **Political Capital Tokens (PCT)** → *represents the amount of social, political and institutional power built by a nation's anti-proliferation movement* and can be gained or lost by the drawing of Global Events Cards, Movement Progress Cards, or Movement Connection-sanctioned exchange of resources (see below).
- **Militarization Token (MT)** → *represents the advancements of that country's military-industrial complex, which advances nuclear capabilities and increases global tensions and the odds of a nuclear exchange* and can be gained or lost through Global Events Cards, Movement Progress Cards, Movement Connection-sanctioned exchange of resources.
- **Global Event Cards** → *represent international events throughout the Cold War* and are drawn at the start of each round
- **Movement Progress Cards** → *represent efforts to build a nuclear disarmament movement and allied liberation movements* and can be drawn after the expenditure of 1 PCT
- Resource Cards:
  - **Popular Will Cards** → *represent the will and ability of a nation's populace to agitate, educate, and organize towards nuclear disarmament* and can be obtained through Global Event cards, Movement Progress Cards and Movement Connection-sanctioned exchange of resources
  - **Elite Opinion Cards** → *represent the extent to which the opinions and beliefs of a nation's decision makers lean toward nuclear disarmament* and can be obtained through Global Event cards, Movement Progress Cards and Movement Connection-sanctioned exchange of resources
  - **Diplomatic Savvy Cards** → *represents the competency of a nation's diplomatic core* and can be obtained through Global Event cards, Movement Progress Cards and Movement Connection-sanctioned exchange of resources

- Achievement Cards → they open the opportunity for interaction between countries. They can be obtained through the expenditure of resource cards and include the following:
  - **Red Phone**: *defuses a potential nuclear exchange or international crisis between two nations by taking away 1 MT from one of the countries about to enter a nuclear exchange* and can be obtained through the expenditure of 1 Diplomatic Savvy Card
  - **Movement Connection**: *enables movement/exchange of Resource Cards and PCTs between two countries* and can be obtained through the expenditure of resources, which depends on whether the Movement Connection is intrabloc, interbloc, or between Non-Aligned and any bloc. Countries must both sign the Movement Connection card to make it official.
  - **Mass Opposition**: *yields the host country 2 PCTs per round* and can be obtained through the expenditure of 3 Popular Will Cards and 1 Elite Opinion Card. Only 1 Mass Opposition is allowed per country.
  - **Financial Influence** → *represents the outsized economic and financial power of the United States during the Cold War and enables the US to give a total of 4 PCTs to any countries not in the communist bloc, without losing any of its own.*

### **Key Terms:**

- **Full Militarization**: *when a nation acquires all 6 MTs → this triggers the one-time addition of 1 MT and the loss of 2 PCTs for the nation's "major rivals".*
  - Once fully militarized, the country remains as such for the entire game.
- **Nuclear Exchange**: *when 2 Major Rivals both reach Full Militarization (and a Red Phone is not used)*
- **Nuclear Disarmament**: *when a nation removes all MTs and has acquired 10 PCTs → this triggers varying benefits for certain countries*
  - Once disarmed, the country remains as such for the entire game.

### **Safety Tools**

- Before playing the game, the facilitator will hold a short discussion. They can discuss the following:
  - Emphasize the educational intent of the game
  - Acknowledge the heavy historical content
  - Invite players to name any topics they may find especially sensitive
  - Reinforce that discomfort is not failure. It's expected in learning spaces that confront injustice
- Players are invited to ask clarifying questions on terms, people, or history. The facilitator or other players can help clarify those questions. This keeps players engaged and builds collective learning. It also supports students from all educational backgrounds, such as

ELL (English Language Learners) students. Even though we're all in the same classroom, we all have different backgrounds!

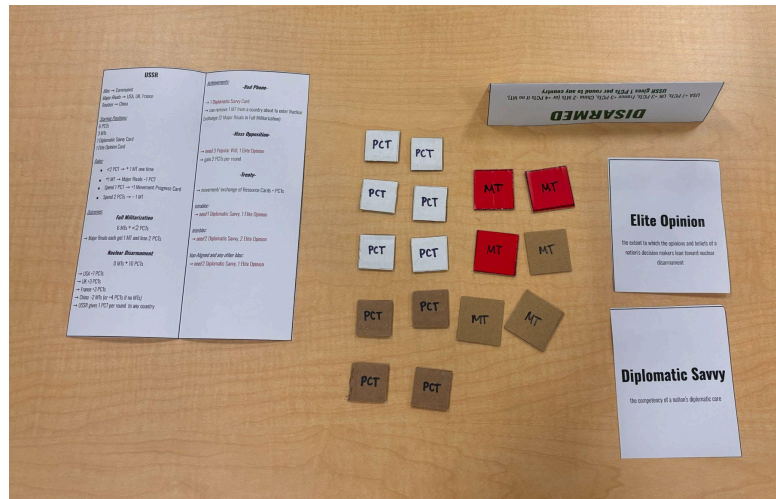
- Players are allowed to step away from the game at any time, for whatever reason, without being penalized. If this happens mid-game:
  - The facilitator can check with them privately if needed
  - The facilitator will play that country passively until they return or the game ends.
- Provide content warning due to the nature of the Cold War. Players may encounter references to:
  - Nuclear warfare and mass destruction
  - Colonialism and empire
  - Civil resistance, protest, and government crackdowns
  - Marginalized identities and struggles for liberation
  - State violence, disappearances, and torture
  - War crimes, civilian targeting, and genocide
  - Political repression and surveillance

## How to play:

### ★ Setup

- Separate the cards into their respective decks
  - The Global Events deck should be placed face down in the middle of the playing space and ordered by year, such that the next card drawn follows the subsequent year starting from 1945.
    - Shuffling this deck allows for endless replayability!
  - The Movement Progress deck should be placed face down in the middle of the group.
  - The Resource Cards should be separated by type and can be placed face up in the middle of the group.
  - The Achievement Cards should be separated by type and can remain face up, off to the side, until they are in use.
- Set up the playing station for each country's movement:
  - Each country should have the following:
    - Its specific name plate
    - Its specific Play Aid Card
    - 6 MTs
    - 10 PCTs
  - Refer to the Play Aid for the proper setup for each country's starting position, which tells you what Resource Cards and Achievements each country has, and how many PCTs and MTs are active
    - Active PCTs and MTs mean the white and red sides are face up, respectively.
  - Individual player station setup shown in **Figure 1**
  - Entire playing space set up shown in **Figure 2**
- Establish who is playing for which country
  - 3 players → each player will play all countries within a certain bloc, with the exception of Pakistan, Israel, Iran and North Korea who will be passively played by the facilitator
  - 4 players → 2 players will select 1 country to play, and 2 players will select 2 countries to play, with the exception of Pakistan, Israel, Iran and North Korea who will be passively played by the facilitator
  - 5 players → 4 players will select 1 country to play, and the other player will select 2 countries to play, with the exception of Pakistan, Israel, Iran and North Korea who will be passively played by the facilitator
  - 6 players → each player will select 1 country, with the exception of Pakistan, Israel, Iran and North Korea who will be passively played by the facilitator

- Once each player knows which country's movement(s) they are playing, countries should sign Movement Connection cards to represent existing Movement Connections.



**Figure 1:** Individual Player Station Setup



**Figure 2:** Entire playing space once all stations are set up.

## ★ Round Structure

### ○ Preparation Round

- Distribute benefits of disarmaments or achievements that have already been obtained.
- *Note: as the facilitator progresses through the questions in the preparation and action phases, players can discuss amongst themselves to decide who is in the best position to act first. This applies to both the preparation and action phases.*
- Facilitator asks these questions in the following order but players may act simultaneously :
  - Does anyone want to exchange 1 PCT for a Movement Progress Card?
  - Does anyone with an existing Movement Connection want to move/exchange Resource Cards or PCTs?
  - Does anyone want to convert 4 identical Resource Cards into 1 different Resource Card?
  - Does anyone want to expend Resource Cards to build an Achievement Card?
    - If Red Phone is built, it remains active until used to diffuse a country about to enter nuclear exchange.
    - If a Movement Connection is formed, both countries must sign the Movement Connection card and may begin moving/exchanging resources.
    - If a Mass Opposition is built, that country may collect their 2 PCTs.
      - Only 1 Mass Opposition is allowed per country.
  - Does anyone want to remove 1 MT by spending 2 PCTs?
- If a country reaches Nuclear Disarmament, that country flips its name plate, and players update their stations based on the benefits listed on the Play Aid of the disarmed country.

### ○ Action Round

- The Facilitator draws a Global Events Card
  - *While events and rules refer to actions taken by the affecting countries, remember that players always represent anti-nuclear movements operating within those countries. Your role is not the state. It's the resistance.*
- Players update their stations depending on the outcome of the Global Events Card, starting with any positive outcomes and ending with the worst outcomes.
- If a movement's country gains 1 MT, its major rivals lose 1 PCT.

- If a country reaches Full Militarization, each of its major rivals gains 1 MT and loses 2 PCTs.
- If a country falls below 2 PCT, it gains 1 MT.
  - Even if a country experiences consecutive rounds where it has less than 2 PCTs, it would only gain a total of 1 MT for that stretch of rounds. If a country replenishes PCT and then later in the game falls below 2 PCT again, they would lose another MT.
- If 2 countries reach Nuclear Exchange, the game ends.
- Finally, an International Forum opens the floor for players to discuss what just happened. They can discuss how their countries fared, which country is approaching full militarization, who needs support due to low PCTs, who would like to form a Movement Connection, etc.
- The action phase ends.
  - Repeat Preparation and Action Rounds until the Win/Lose Condition is met or Fukuyama declares the end of history!

### **Win/Lose Conditions**

Standard: The Nuclear Disarmament of the USA and the USSR

*Players lose if a Nuclear Exchange occurs*

Challenging: The Nuclear Disarmament of the U.S, France, UK, USSR, China, and India.

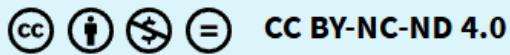
*Players lose if any of those 6 countries fully militarize and/or a Nuclear Exchange occurs*

Difficult: the Nuclear Disarmament of all countries

*Players lose if any country fully militarizes*

### **Debrief (post game)**

- Did you win? What helped you build an international movement?
- Did you lose? What frustrated your efforts to build an international movement most?
- Do you think this game would be harder if less people were playing? Is that realistic? Why or why not?
- In what ways is this game realistic? In what ways is it not?
- Which countries had the largest effect on the gameplay and, by proxy, the world? Why?
- Were some countries passive? Why do you think that is?
- Do you remember any global events we learned about that weren't in the Global Event Cards?
- What kinds of changes would have to happen within countries for the things to happen in real life as they did in the game
- Stars and wishes?



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