

Kremlin Rules!

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First I want to give a big thanks to the creator of Kremlin, Kurt. To me, Kremlin is the best thing going in the A&A community. The best thing about Kremlin is every game has the potential of showing a new start and a large array of strategies. Very seldom will 2 games have the same openings. In Kremlin you have more opportunities for variations of Pacific Strategies and most games will look very different from normal db1 games. I will offer some of my thoughts on the different aspects of the game.

I. Options Phase

A. How to choose. When selecting your options, this phase of the game should not take 30 minutes. I've had games where I would select an option and my opponent would take 10 – 15 minutes to counter my option. This isn't rocket science. Loads of research and analysis is not required to select options. Just look down the list of options and you basically have one of four ways to go with the options you select.

1. Make 1 country strong. Whether it's 2-4 options you may select all the options to make 1 particular country extremely strong. As an Axis player I tend to make Germany as strong as possible. If they are collecting 40+ ipcs for 4-5 rounds they are tough to beat. For Allies, I like to make Russia as strong as possible, so they can be an aggressor towards either Germany or Japan or both.

2. Spread your picks evenly among your allies. What you do here is pick the strongest options available and spread them among your countries. You want your countries working together to weaken your opponent. Sometimes this requires the options be spread among your allies. A good idea is to single out who you want to go after. One of my favorites is going after Japan and

3. Counter your opponent's options. Bidding second helps here but even when bidding first you can begin the counter selections after the opponent selects his first option. As you see where your opponent is trying to make an area strong, you counter and make a strength in the same area. An example would be if UK is given a capital ship in the North Sea, you would select a couple of subs to reach the North Sea for Germany.

4. Blocking your opponent's options. Since once an option is selected it may affect the availability of other options, you may try to prevent your opponent from selecting an option. The alternate history scenarios are by far the most powerful available. You may select your first couple options to block or prevent your opponent from choosing something. An example would be selecting a Japanese tranny in Wake Sea zone and thereby preventing USA from selecting its most powerful option... USA takes initiative in pacific. The key to this strategy is to use your earliest options on blocking your opponent. Of course the counter to this is selecting your alternate history scenario with your first option.

II Bidding

- A. **How to bid.** This should be the only stage of the pregame process that should be given any serious thought. Some would say the game is won and lost at this stage but ultimately dice will decide the game. If you need to, in order to get a better visual of the setup, set the board up with the options and take a look at which side you deem is more powerful. Before the bidding begins, I like to have a "magic" number in mind that I will use as a cutoff.
- B. **Know your limit.** Knowing how to bid your opponent down is a game in itself. I use to be a gambler and during the bidding process I get me some of those old feelings I had when I gambled. It's such an adrenaline rush to go from 12 to -30 or whatever. You have to know your limit on how far you want to bid and try not to bluff too much. You just may get stuck with a bid you did not want to take. It's important to know how to play both sides, as the more flexible you are with playing either side, the lower you can take the bid. If you're a stronger Allied player, don't worry about driving your opponent down too far. Just give him what you feel is comfortable for you to play the side you feel has the advantage.
- C. **Negabidding.** If you do end up with a negabid, here are some of the units I remove. Obviously we start with the islands. Only, I think it's a huge mistake to get rid of all the island infantry. I would just assume take away infantry from Germany than the entire island inf. Caroline, New Guinea, and Borneo are about the only 3 inf I would want to remove from the islands but I will go as high as 6 inf removed if Axis options are that much more powerful than Allies, never more than 6. . If Germany has some strong options and will be building some income for a few rounds, don't worry about removing some tanks from there. Germany is basically looking at a defensive position for the first couple rounds anyway, so 3 or 4 tanks from Finland, WE and GERM will not hurt. I try to not remove the Finland inf as they seem to have a big impact on the game for the first 2 rounds. But again if Axis is so strong that they can do without them, I will remove them.

III Combat and Purchases.

A. Early Rounds.

- 1) **Russia.** Biggest mistake I see opponents make with Russia is they buy too many infantry. Depending on what options are chosen, Russia should be buying tanks and make them a threat against EE and keep Germany out of EE. If Germany had to remove tanks from a negabid, Russia has to buy tanks and make sure Germany never holds EE. And the great thing about all these extra tanks is you can use them to go east and keep Japan in check.
- 2) **Germany.** Early rounds, they are just building up income, so lots of inf. Should be looking for an IPC victory. Given equal options for Axis and Allies I like the Axis chances of getting a quick ipc victory. If Germany has an extra fighter, I like to be risky and spread out on my first round attacks. Buying a plane on 1st round is also a good way to prevent UK from buying a navy 1st rd. The longer UK is delayed to coming to Africa increases the chances of your Axis ipc victory
- 3) **United Kingdom.** Basically, by time they get to play first round, the board can look so different than a normal RR or non RR game, they have too many options, but in most cases, you want to build a fleet and have a fleet up and running as soon as possible. They need to get to Africa as soon as possible to stop the IPC Vic, the Axis player should be trying for.
- 4) **Japan.** Don't be afraid to buy complexes. You should be shooting for an IPC victory, so don't have to worry about hbs hitting you as there's no tech until round 5. Depending on board setup you may or may not be able to buy a complex round 1.
- 5) **United States.** Same as UK, will have to make your decisions based on what the board looks like, so nothing predetermined. You want to get to Africa as soon as possible. I also like pacific strategies with USA. UK and USA double teaming Japan is unfair fight. Half of my losses as Axis have come against the double team of UK and USA verse Japan. By time Germany can take Moscow, Japan is off the mainland and UK and USA can turn their attention to Germany.

These are the basics for playing Kremlin. Again it's hard to say what to do with the Allies as each game is going to look different. As Allies, I love having a complex in India early and giving Japan fits. (I dislike very much when this is done to me!) Pacific strategies are so much fun and very workable given the right setup. I usually play for the Axis as I believe it's just easier to go for early IPC victories. As far as basics and not going into much detail without specific setups, that's all I really have for now. But if I may, I would like to offer the following...

The most important piece of advice I can give is... HAVE FUN! I love Kremlin because of the so many variations it offers from the standard 3rd edition rules. Each game is so unique and win or lose I know I'm going to have fun playing. When this game becomes no fun anymore, I will leave and find something else that will help me take a break from reality. You're going to have good dice and your going to have bad dice. When the bad dice come, fight till you have been beaten and find another game. That's the great thing about this gaming world we live in, win or lose; you will always have another opportunity to play another game. We all have competitive juices and it feels good to win, but winning is honestly secondary to me. I love meeting players and building online relationships. If I get to write another one of these columns, I'll go into more specifics of game play and 'advanced' strategy with specific setups. For now, as you see me in the zone, ask for a game, and regardless of rate, I'll play you with the intentions of "having fun" and enjoying a relaxing game of Kremlin. Hope to see you on the battle field.

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Jeremiah 29:11-13