

Koalition^{v4ish}

Designed by Hartmut Witt, redesigned by Jacob Nixon

Forward{

Koalition was originally published in 1992 by Salagames...I do not think they exist anymore. I looked into it, there appears to be a company called SALAGAME which makes web browser-based games, but I see no evidence that these are/were the same entity. I stumbled upon Koalition in my never-ending search for relatively decent-weight party games that accommodate more than six players circa 2010. I was delighted to purchase Koalition from the BGG Marketplace-- this game could entertain ten(!) players. I did not know that I had actually purchased the 1992 version, which caps out at eight players, not the 1995 Hexagames (which might be the same company as Salagames...) re-print which had the cap at ten.

One play into this now clearly inferior version, I scoured the internet to find the component differences, re-design and print them out, and get myself up to 1995 speed (component-wise anyway). I also went ahead and updated the selection of EU countries to include the likes of Cyprus, Estonia, Slovakia. This helped stretch out and add some differentiation into play sessions. Which 15 countries will make an appearance this time? For no particular reason, I did not bother to print out the 1995 rules. We played the 1992 rules with some scaling done for higher player counts to get a playable game. These sessions did not go perfectly and unfortunately caused some of my friends to sour on the game, though not irreparably. They did give us some evenings filled with laughs and quick card play which, for those of us that got even marginally decent hands, served up some unique and think-y trick-taking with a side of negotiation and loud table-talk.

This game has noticeable flaws in design. Keeping the "action cards" (2x, egg, etc. as they are called in the 1995 version) in with the regular cards, as they did in 1992, can cause dramatically unbalanced hands. Frequently, the winner of a game will have 50ish points, while nearly everyone else suffers in the mid-teens or worse. The 1995 version gives out points to players just for playing cards in winning coalitions, which is a nice step towards correcting the point differential. Unfortunately, Hexagames/Witt also decided to depart from the round-based format of 2-4 sets of complete hands that players would have, instead waiting until at least one player had less than two cards left, before shuffling and redistributing **all** cards. This takes away, a key element of the game in which you must save cards for later in the round in the hopes that Germany or another big fish country will come by when other players have wasted all their top cards on Luxembourg. Action card play here causes the game to shift into a tit-for-tat alternate universe where other players will either cancel the action card or just waste time thinking about it. Choosing to play with action cards, which invite some of the most entertaining and tense diplomatic situations that can arise, adds about 50% to the play time. Not ideal.

The changes to the design I have made focus on three pillars—scaling the game up, simplifying the rules, and maintaining a medium-weight, engaging, social game. Scaling the game up lies in the cards. I went ahead and added a faction, the Yin-Yang (or Taoists, whatever you want to think of them as), so that at higher player counts more players can be party leaders during coalition negotiations. I removed 1 and 2 vote politicians. Nothing is worse than getting a hand where you will likely have no possibility to be a party leader at least 33% of the game. To lean towards simple vs. fiddly, I put the action cards back into regular play, while separating them from the politician cards you draw. The one or two action cards you get per round will all feel significant, and each should spark awe from the table when played. My rules are also originally written in English, although I must give some recognition and thanks for those who translated the 1992 and 1995 versions that are available on BGG.

Over 25 years later, I offer the rules to follow so that the internet at large can have the experience that I have been able to craft together with this game. I call it 4thish edition as I have incredible respect for the version played at FallCon, which I have stolen a little from. I am not supplying the unique and noteworthy art of Andreas Steiner or any raw assets...there is plenty of that available just on BGG alone. I am giving you the skeleton and design of an experience that I guarantee, if you get 5-12 folks who like playing a highly social, engaging, and entertaining card game together, you'll have a good time. That all said, time for you to open some cold beverages, gather friends and/or strangers round a huge table, and show off your realpolitik.)

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Players{5-12}

Duration{~5 minutes/player}

Objective{

Become the strongest international political power broker in history by strategically negotiating your candidates into positions of authority within the European Union.}

Components{

72 Politician Cards, in 8 unique suites with wild cards

Roses: 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 7, 8, 8, 9, 10, 10

Top Hats: 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 7, 8, 8, 9, 10, 10

Leaves: 3, 3, 5, 5, 6, 6, 7, 7, 8, 8

Lemons: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12

Crosses: 4, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10

Acorns: 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10

Fists: 3, 4, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10

Yin Yangs: 6, 7, 8, 11

Jokers: 5, 5, 5, 7, 7

28 Country Cards

1 each of 4/3/2/1 (4): Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy

1 each of 3/2/1 (3): Spain, Poland, Romania, The Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Czech Republic, Portugal, Hungary, Sweden, Austria, Bulgaria

1 each of 2/1 (2): Denmark, Finland, Slovakia, Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Latvia, Estonia

1 each of 2/1 (1): Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta

17 Action Cards

8 “x2” cards

3 “Egg” cards

3 “Shakeup” cards

3 “Cash” cards}

Game Setup{

The game is played over the course of **three rounds each made of five country elections**. Consult the chart below to determine the number of maximum politician and action cards given to each player per round.

Player Count	Politician Cards	Action Cards
5	11	2
6	10	2
7	9	1
8	8	1
9	7	1
10	6	1
11	6	1
12	5	1

Remove the Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Malta cards for games of less than eight players. The Country cards are then shuffled. The first country is drawn and displayed in the middle of the table. The starting player on the first country is the player who traveled abroad most recently, or the most aggressive player.}

Gameplay{

From the starting player, players take turns clockwise playing one Politician or Action card onto the country on display until they hit their personal maximum or pass. The maximum number of Politician cards that each player can play on each country is surrounded in parenthesis. Each politician contributes their card value worth of votes to the country in their respective suite. Action card plays must be resolved immediately and do not count against this maximum but do take the player's turn (effectively acting as a "stall"). Players are encouraged to talk and make deals about the cards being played and the cards they hold but are not bound by any agreements and may lie about the contents of their hand. Once a player has passed, they may not play any further cards on the country.

The "2x" action card is the highest card of its given suite and also doubles the votes of all players in its suite. A "Shakeup" action card played on a suite means that the second-highest card holder becomes the party leader of that suite (this may not necessarily be the player that plays the Shakeup card). The "Egg" card allows the player to remove any one Politician card of their choice from the round back to the discard. The "Cash" card allows the player to draw two additional Politician cards from the deck.

After all players have passed or otherwise played their card maximum, the party leaders are determined for the country. The party leader is the highest single-card holder of each suite. Each player may not lead more than one party. If this were to happen, the player must yield all but one of the leaderships to the next-highest card holder. If card holders are tied for leadership, the higher cumulative value of all their played cards is the leader, followed by the larger number of cards played, then a coin toss/die roll.

Once party leaders are determined, party leaders present their total vote counts to the player keeping score, who records it under the given country for each suite. These totals are added together to determine a total number of votes. If a "2x" action card has been played and stands at the end of card play, the number of votes that suite has is doubled. The player keeping score halves the number of total votes and adds one (or rounds up if a $\frac{1}{2}$) to determine the number of votes needed for a majority.

If one suite has at least enough votes to make up a majority on their own, the leader is awarded the highest, left-most number of points on the country card. The remaining players who played cards of that suite are awarded bonuses in the amounts that follow, starting from the second-highest card player up to the number of bonuses listed on the card. For example, Spain is a 3/2/1 country, meaning that the leader will get three points, second-highest will get two, third-highest will get one. Denmark is a 2/1 country, meaning that the leader will get two points, second-highest will get one. Ties are broken just as in party leadership. A player cannot receive more than one of these bonuses per country. Points can be taken as generic only if the player receiving them was not the party's leader. Generic points are counted towards a player's score at the end of the game but do not feed into the party bonuses. All players who played a card in the one-suite majority or any suite within the Koalition are given one additional generic point per card in those suites played. The party leader is awarded the country card and leads the next round.

It is likely that one suite will not have enough votes to make up this majority. In this case, party leaders must form a "Koalition" that satisfies the majority vote requirement. Party leaders are constrained to form Koalitions only with parties listed on their party's cards under "Koalition:". Party leaders also may not build Koalitions with more parties than are necessary to reach the majority number. Once a given set of leaders have confirmed that they have enough votes to meet or exceed majority, they announce to the scorekeeper that they have done so. The leader of the party with the largest number of votes is the Koalition leader. The Koalition leader is given the largest bonus of the country in the suite of points that he led. The leader within the Koalition with the second-highest number of votes gets the next bonus, and so on. If there are three or four bonuses to give and only two parties in the Koalition, the second-highest card player in the Koalition leader's party is given the next bonus, and the second-highest player of the second-highest number of vote gaining party gets the next bonus, each in their own suite or generically. A player

still cannot receive more than one of these bonuses per country, they may choose which to receive and which to yield. The Coalition leader is awarded the country card and therefore leads the next round. All cards played on a country are discarded.

Once five countries have been played through, the round is over and new Politician/Action cards are dealt. Players may retain any number of the cards from the previous round and draw that many fewer new cards.}

Final Scoring{

After three rounds of five countries, the game is over. The points for each player are added up to determine their point sub-total.

The points each party received (over all players) are added up as well. The party that won the most points over the course of the game is given a 7-point bonus, second-most 6 points, and so on. All ties in this game are friendly, meaning that two or more parties could receive the same bonus. The player who gained the most points in each party is given the party's bonus. Players may receive multiple party bonuses, and multiple players may receive the same bonus if they are tied.

Players' point sub-totals are added to the bonuses to determine each player's overall score. The player with the highest overall score has won this game of Coalition! If players are tied, the tied player that took the most country cards is the winner. If there is still a tie, the tied player whose taken country cards have the highest combined card-maximum wins. Further ties are friendly.}