Conspiracy

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Number of Players   4
Game Length   30-90 minutes
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Equipment

- 1 piecepack (see www.piecepack.org)
- 1 opaque bag or bowl to hold 24 coins
- Paper and pencil
- 1 game board (optional, see Initial Setup below)

Introduction

Unknown to most citizens of the world, huge conspiracies of unfathomably powerful people compete with each other on a global scale. These people wield the tools of national government, international economies, world wars, and religious dogma with the ease that you or I move pawns on a chessboard. And all of them share the same goal: control of a new world order tailor made to suit their personal tastes.

A conspiracy with almost unlimited resources can afford to take the long view. They must view time on the scale of years, decades, and generations. A recession in the U.S. this year can lead to an increase in public sentiment favoring war in 10 years, which in turn can lead to the issuance of a papal bull condemning assassination. And no one knows how these events benefit the Rosicrucians or the Bilderbergers until the desired fascist dictatorship emerges in Columbia two generations hence.

This game is intended to put the players in role of one of these global conspiracies. Major global forces are abstracted into the 4 piecepack suits: Crowns for Sociopolitical influence, Arms for Military influence, Moons for Economic influence, and Suns for Philosophical influence. Through the clever positioning of piecepack coins (representing events) on the piecepack tiles (representing desired results), the players can construct far-reaching plans, and plans within plans, which they must foster carefully to see them come to fruition. Throughout the game, _time marches on_! Each row on the game board represents about a decade of time, with the top row representing "now" and the rest of the rows representing plans being laid in the future. Periodically, the clock will tick forward, and plans that have been successfully completed in time will come to be in the present, while foiled plans are forgotten in the sands of time (and probably never noticed at all by the general public). Each player has a secret goal, and the first player to see his goal realized wins the game. Of course, the other players are simultaneously trying to achieve their own, possibly overlapping goals. You must make your decisions very carefully.

Initial Setup

1. If desired, print out the game board on the last page of these rules and lay it out in the center of the table. The board consists of nothing more than a

simple grid to help keep track of tile placement. This board is made to fit the "standard" 2 inch piecepack tiles. You can create a different board to fit different size tiles, or you can play the game easily without using the board if you wish.

> *Design Note - The choice of three columns on the board is very important. The first draft had four columns, but that seemed to be too easy for each of the four players to pick a column to work in and avoid conflict with each other until very late in the game, if at all. So I reduced the number of columns to one fewer than the number of players to virtually guarantee that the players would have to be fighting for "elbow room" right from the beginning. For now, this game is only really intended for 4 players, but feel free to try it with 3 or 5.*

2. Shuffle all 24 piecepack tiles together and deal all of them facedown evenly to the 4 players. Each player receives 6 random tiles. Each player may look at his own tiles and may keep them secret from the other players.

3. Mix all 24 piecepack coins into the bag. Each player must draw 3 random coins from the bag. Each player must choose the following:

   • One of the suits (Crown, Arms, Sun, or Moon) represented on at least one of the coins he drew, *and*
   • One of the numbers (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) represented on at least one of the coins he drew. Note that for this purpose a blank coin denotes the number 0 and a spiral symbol denotes the number 1.

You may choose the suit and number from the same coin if desired. You must note your chosen suit and number on a piece of paper and keep it secret from the other players. This is your secret goal for winning the game! When finished, you must return all 3 coins to the bag.

> *Strategy Tip - Take a look at the tiles you were dealt before you choose your suit and number. You would probably do best to choose a goal that is the best match for your tiles.*

Object of the Game

To be the first to end your turn with both your chosen suit and your chosen number shown in the top ("present") row of the board, representing your conspiracy's domination of the world.

Sequence of Play

Once setup is complete, the game is played as a series of rounds. Each round consists of the following activities, in this order:

1. Determine the order in which the players will take their turns this round (see Determine Player Order below).

2. Check each of the 3 columns on the board to see if any advance (see Time Marches On below).

3. In the determined order, each player takes his turn (see Execute Player Turns below).

4. If no one has won the game, return to 1 to start the next round.

D e t e r m i n e   P l a y e r   O r d e r

1. If any player(s) have a coin face-up before them from their previous turn, players will take their turns in descending order of number showing. Consider a blank coin to be 0. Spiral coins are special -- see 4 below.

2. Break ties by die roll, highest roll going first. (Consider the blank face on the die to be 0 and the symbol face to be 1.) Re-roll as necessary until all ties are resolved.

3. Players with no coin face-up before them are considered to have a 0 showing. Thus, all players with no coin and all players with a blank coin are tie for moving last. Resolve these ties if necessary by die roll as described in 2 above.

> *Example - One player has a coin showing 3 face-up before him, two players each have coins showing 2, and one player has no coin. The player with the 3 coin will play first this round. The two players with the 2 coins each roll a die, getting a 4 and symbol. The player who rolled the 4 will play second this round, and the other player will play third. The player with no coin will play fourth.*

> *Design Note - At the start of the game, no players have any coins yet; therefore, player order for the first round must be determined solely by die roll.*

4. A player with a spiral coin face-up before him has a wild card. He may choose to take his turn in any order he chooses during the upcoming Execute Player Turns part of the round. He is <u>not</u> required to declare when he will take his turn in advance. Determine the order of the other players normally, excluding the player(s) with a spiral coin showing. Then, during the Execute Player Turns part of the round, a player who has a spiral coin showing may decide to take his turn immediately before or after any other player as the opportunity presents itself, interrupting the determined turn order.

    a. If two or more players with spiral coins showing all choose to take their move at the same time, resolve the ties by die roll, with the player rolling highest taking his move. The player who wins the die roll must take his turn now, but the player(s) who lost the die roll may still choose to jump into the player order any time later.

    b. If a player with a spiral coin showing has not yet taken his turn after all other players have taken their turns, he <u>must</u> take his turn last. If this applies to two or more players, they must take their turns in descending die roll order.

    > *Example - Player A and player B each have a coin showing a spiral face-up before them. Players C and D resolve their turn order normally, while the players A and B have no defined player order yet. After seeing the results of the Time Marches On part of the round, both players A and B decide that they would like to play first this round. They each roll a die; A gets a blank and B gets a 2. Player B takes his turn first. When he finishes, player A may now choose to play ahead of C, but he decides to wait. Player C plays next. When he finishes,*

player A then decides to take his turn ahead of player D. Finally, player D gets the last turn of the round.

Time Marches On

1. This activity may be skipped in the first round of the game and any other round that there are no tiles currently located in any "future" rows (which is quite unlikely after the first turn).

2. Each column is checked independently of the others. You can check them in any order you wish; advancement is considered to be simultaneous. However, you must check all 3 columns and you must identify the column you are checking before you roll the dice.

3. To determine if a column advances, roll all 4 piecepack dice at once. If at least 2 dice are successful, the column advances. If fewer than 2 dice are successful, the column does not advance.

4. A die is "successful" if it shows a symbol (Crown, Arms, Moon, or Sun) _or_ if it shows a number (2, 3, 4, or 5) that is less than or equal to the highest number showing on a face-up tile of the same suit in the column being checked. <u>Do not</u> include tiles already in the "Present" row for this determination.

> *Example - The column you are checking contains a face-up Crown-2 tile, a face-up Crown-5 tile, a face-up Arms-3 tile, and a face-down tile. You roll Crown-4, Arms-5, Moon-0, and Sun-1 on the 4 dice. The Crown die is successful because 4 is less than the Crown-5 tile. The Arms die is not successful because 5 is greater than the Arms-3 tile. The Moon die is not successful because the blank is <u>never</u> successful. The Sun die is successful because the symbol is <u>always</u> successful. The face-down tile is not considered at all because it is face-down. This yields a total of 2 successes, so this column will advance this round.*

> *Design Note - Even columns with <u>no</u> face-up tiles in them can advance if you roll 2 or more symbols on the dice. This gives a minimum of a 1 in 6 chance for a column to advance even when no one has completed any plans in it yet to prevent players from "sandbagging" too much.*

5. When a column must be advanced, all of the "Future" tiles in that column will move up one toward the "Present", and the current "Present" tile in that column may or may not be replaced. Perform the following steps for the tiles in the column being advanced only:

   a. If there is a face-up tile in the "Future 1" row, remove the tile (if any) from the "Present" row and give it to the active player. The player who receives the tile may add it to the tiles he was dealt and he may play it normally.

      i. For advancements performed during the Time Marches On part of the round, the "active player" is considered to be the first player, as determined in Determine Player Order above.

      ii. For advancements performed during the Execute Player Turns part of the round, the "active player" is considered to be the player who initiated the advancement check.

iii. If the removed tile was marked by one or more players (see Declare Progress or Victory below), simply return the markers to them. Those players no longer have any chance of declaring victory this turn.

> *Design Note - Tiles never leave the game. They keep getting recycled from player to player. This helps prevent the case where the tiles you need to win have been removed from the game. But beware! If another player knows that a certain tile is valuable to you, he may choose to keep it out of play to harm you.*

b. If there is a face-down tile (or no tile) in the "Future 1" row of the board, leave the tile in the "Present" row where it is. Remove the coins (if any) on the tile in the "Future 1" row and return them to the bag. Remove the tile (if any) from the "Future 1" row and give it to the active player, as described above.

c. Finally, move each tile remaining in a "Future" row up 1 row toward the "Present" row, regardless of whether the tile is face-up or face-down. Thus, a tile in the "Future 1" row would move to "Present", a tile in the "Future 2" row would move to "Future 1", and so on.

Execute Player Turns

Each player, in the order determined in Determine Player Order above, takes his turn, performing the steps 1-10 below:

Draw Coins

1. Pick up the coin (if any) you had saved from last turn.

2. Draw enough coins randomly from the bag to equal 3 in your hand. If you saved a coin from last turn, you will draw 2 from the bag. If you did not save a coin from last turn, you will draw 3 from the bag. You may look at the coins drawn and may keep them secret from the other players.

> *Design Note - Yes, this means that you get to re-use the coin that you used to determine player order. The means to affect when you take your turn is also the only means you have to save a coin from round to round. This becomes a double-edged sword: If you want to save a low-numbered coin, you're more likely to move later, after other players have had a chance to meddle with what you were hoping to accomplish. If you save a high-numbered coin, you may move first, but all of the other players will have a chance to undo your achievements. Spiral coins are very powerful, but they have their own limitations (see Unexpected Effects below).*

3. If there were not enough coins available in the bag to fill your hand to 3, draw as many as are available, and then pause play for a mandatory advancement of all 3 columns on the board!

   a. Do *not* roll the dice to determine whether or not the columns advance. You *must* perform the advancement steps on each column as described in Time Marches On step 5.

   b. Continue performing advancements until at least enough coins have been returned to the bag to allow you to fill your hand to 3. (However, you must advance each column an equal number of times.)

> *Design Note - Without this contingency, it might be possible (or even likely) for the players to place all the coins on the board and leave the game in a stalemate. Mandatory advancements are a good way to keep the game moving -- no stalemate is possible.*

4. Now add to your hand any coins that may have been passed to you by other players since your last turn. These are *bonus* coins that you may use this turn. They do *not* count against your 3 coin draw limit.

Take Actions

5. You may take any combination of the following actions, in any order, as long as the total number of action points required does not exceed 2 and you have all the coins the actions require.

a. Place Coin

i. Placing a new coin on the board costs 1 action point.

ii. The coin you place must be selected from your hand and placed in an empty space on the board. Additionally, the following criteria must hold:

    a) The coin must be placed *number side up*.

    b) The coin must be placed horizontally, vertically, or diagonally adjacent to another coin already on the board *or* a face-up tile already on the board.
Exception: You can always place a coin in an empty space at the top of "Future 1" row, immediately adjacent to the "Present" row.

    c) The coin must be oriented such that its directional mark points to a horizontally, vertically, or diagonally adjacent coin or face-up tile already on the board.
Exception: You can point to an empty space in the "Present" row.

    d) Coins may only be placed in the square spaces on the back of face-down tiles on the board. Coins are *never* placed directly onto the board nor onto face-up tiles. (See iii below for placing new tiles onto the board.)

> *Design Note - This means that you must place coins such that they form connected chains. Most chains will lead back to face-up tiles in the "Present" row or elsewhere. To start off the game when there are no face-up tiles on the board, you must start building from the spaces directly under the "Present" row, extending downward into the "Future" rows.*

iii. Before you place the coin, you may place 1 new *tile* from those you hold onto the board for no additional cost, provided that the following criteria hold:

    a) The tile must be placed <u>face down</u>.

    b) The tile must be placed horizontally or vertically (*not* diagonally) adjacent to at least one other tile already

on the board. *Exception: You can always place a new tile in an empty space in the "Future 1" row.*

   c) The tile must be placed in one of the 3 fixed columns on the board. (You cannot create new columns.)

   d) However, there is no limit to the number of rows you can have, even though the board only shows a total of five. If you want to put a tile in "Future 5", just keep building the board off the edge of the page.

   e) The coin you are placing must be placed on the new tile and must still adhere to all criteria under ii above.

iv. If the coin you placed shows a spiral symbol (a "wild card") you must immediately check for an unexpected effect. See Unexpected Effects below for instructions.

Strategy Tip - If you only place coins on tiles you want to reveal and protect, the other players will soon see through you like a window. They'll know to just meddle wherever you last placed a coin. Mix up your plays with some attacks and some bluff placements so your opponents waste time defending themselves and chasing red herrings. And make sure it's not too obvious what type of tiles you're placing, or your opponents will know for certain how to most effectively prevent them from being revealed.

b. Reveal Coin

   i. Revealing a number-side-up coin on the board costs 1 action point. (Symbol-side-up coins are already revealed and cannot be revealed again unless they somehow get turned number-side-up again.)

   ii. In addition to spending the action point, you must also give any 1 coin of your choice from your hand to another player of your choice. If you do not have a coin to give, you may not perform the Reveal Coin action.

Strategy Tip - Look for opportunities to negotiate with the player to whom you give the coin. If you agree to give him one he needs, perhaps he will agree play it in a way that is mutually beneficial (or at least not harmful to you). Or maybe he'll play out that tile he's been keeping from you? Giving coins as a payment for performing certain actions is the only way of exchanging coins between players, so use it to your benefit.

   iii. A number-side-up coin may be revealed if either of the following conditions are met:

   a) There is exactly 1 number-side-up coin pointing at the coin to be revealed and the number it shows is exactly equal to the number on the coin to be revealed.

b) There are 2 or more number-side-up coins pointing at the coin to be revealed and the total of the numbers they show is _greater than_ the number on the coin to be revealed.

iv. On the coin to be revealed, a blank counts as 0 and a spiral counts as 1.

v. On the coin(s) pointing at the coin to be revealed, a blank still counts as 0, but a spiral is wild. You may count it as any number you wish.

vi. To reveal a number-side-up coin, simply turn it symbol-side-up in its place. _When turning the coin over, you must make sure the directional indicator on the symbol side points in the same direction as the number side did._

> _Strategy Tip - The fastest way to reveal a coin that no one else has played on is to use your first action to place a spiral (or a matching number) pointing at the coin you want to reveal, and then use your second action to reveal it. Otherwise, the best you can hope for is to play 2 coins pointing to the coin you want to reveal this turn, and then wait until next turn to reveal it. Unless of course you can cut a deal with another player to share in the placing and revealing somehow?_

vii. After revealing a new coin, a chain reaction of one or more additional reveals may be caused. Any number-side-up coin that is pointed to by at least 2 symbol-side-up coins must immediately be revealed, as described in vi above. Continue to reveal coins in this way as necessary.

> _Strategy Tip - Through careful planning and coin placement, it may be possible to chain a large number of coins together in such a way that one action could cause many coins to be revealed. This could be an ultra-fast way to get the necessary support on a number of tiles all in one turn._

c. **Attack Coin**

i. Attacking a coin on the board costs 1 action point.

ii. In addition to spending the action point, you must also give any 1 coin of your choice from your hand to another player of your choice. If you do not have a coin to give, you may not perform the Attack Coin action.

iii. To attack a _number-side-up_ coin on the board, perform the following steps:

a) First, place a new coin from your hand onto the board following the exact same rules as given for Place Coin above. _The coin you place (the "attacking coin") must point at the attacked coin._

b) If the number showing on the attacking coin is _greater than or equal to_ the number showing on the attacked

coin, the attacked coin is removed and returned to the bag.

- Blanks always count as 0.
- If the attacked coin is a spiral, it counts as 1.
- If the attacking coin is a spiral, it counts as any number you wish.

> *Design Note - Attacking a number-side-up coin is nothing more than performing a normal Place Coin action with the added cost of giving away a coin for the privilege of removing a coin from the board. Requiring the cost of a coin in addition to the action means that you will only have enough coins to make one attack per turn, unless someone else has given you another coin as part of their action costs. It's no accident that this can help encourage players to back-stab each other.*

iv. To attack a *symbol-side-up* coin on the board, perform the following steps:

    a) First, place a new coin from hand onto the board following the exact same rules as given for Place Coin above. *The coin you place (the "attacking coin") must point at the attacked coin.*

    b) If the number showing on the attacking coin is *greater than or equal to* all numbers showing on number-side-up coins that point to the attacked coin ("supporting coins"), the attacked coin is flipped back to its number side.

- Blanks always count as 0.
- If a supporting coin is a spiral, it counts as 1.
- If the attacking coin is a spiral, it counts as any number you wish.

    c) Additionally, you may choose to give a *second* coin of your choice from your hand to another player of your choice in order to *remove* the attacked coin instead of flipping it. If you do not have a second coin to give, you may only flip the attacked coin.

> *Design Note - Attacking a symbol-side-up coin is exactly the same as attacking a number-side-up coin, except it's a little more expensive to eliminate the target completely. But just flipping the coin off of the symbol side may be enough to delay your opponent as much as you need. Remember that just the simple cost of one action to re-reveal the coin (assuming all of the supporting coins have been left in place) is enough to prevent him from revealing the tile (which costs 2 actions) in the same turn.*

i. Revealing a face-down tile on the board costs 2 action points. (Face-up tiles are already revealed and cannot be revealed again unless they somehow get turned face down again.)

ii. In addition to spending the action points, you must also give any 1 coin of your choice from your hand to another player of your choice. If you do not have a coin to give, you may not perform the Reveal Tile action.

iii. A face-down tile may only be revealed if there are currently at least 2 symbol-side-up coins on that tile.

iv. To reveal the tile, perform the following steps:

   a) Remove all of the coins from the tile and turn the tile face-up in its place on the board. Add up the values of the coins that are symbol side up. (*Ignore* coins that are number side up.)

   - Coins whose symbol matches the tile's symbol are worth their printed value. (Blanks count as 0 and spirals count as 1.)

   - Coins whose symbol *opposes* the tile's symbol are worth *minus* their printed value. (Crowns and Arms oppose each other; Suns and Moons oppose each other.)

   - Coins whose symbol neither matches nor opposes the tile's symbol are worth 1 regardless of their printed value.

   b) If the total value of the symbol-side-up coins is *greater than or equal to* the value of the tile, the tile must remain in place face-up. (A blank tile counts as 0 and a symbol tile counts as 1.)

   c) If the total value of the symbol-side-up coins is *less than* the value of the tile, the tile must be removed and given to the active player.

   d) Regardless of the outcome, all of the coins that were on the revealed tile are returned to the bag.

   e) All other tiles and coins on the board remain in place regardless of their placement or orientation. This may mean that some coins now point into an empty area of the board, or a tile is "disconnected" from the other tiles. That's ok.

   Example - A tile with an Arms (3) coin, a Crown (1) coin, a Moon (blank) coin, and a 5 (Arms) coin on it is revealed and found to be the Arms-4 tile. The 5 coin is ignored because it is not symbol side up. The Arms coin is worth its printed value, which is 3. The Crown coin is worth minus its printed value (because Crowns oppose Arms), which makes -1.

The Moon coin is worth 1 because it neither matches nor opposes Arms. That gives a total of only 3 points, which is less than the 4 on the tile, so the tile must be removed. If the tile had been a Sun 2 tile, then it would have remained in place because the Arms and Crown would have contributed 1 point each while the blank Moon would have subtracted 0, giving the minimum necessary 2.

e. Advance Column

    i. Attempting to advance a column on the board costs 2 action points.

    ii. Choose a single column and roll the dice and perform the advancement if successful exactly as described in Time Marches On steps 3-5 above.

Design Note - This is the voluntary version of Time Marching On, useful when a player has all of his plans in place and he only needs to hurry them along. However, this action is costly and not a sure thing since you have to roll the dice, plus it blatantly advertises to the other players that you have a vested interest in a tile in the column you're advancing. On the other hand, you could also take this approach as an offensive measure to try to eliminate tiles you don't like in the "Present" row. So which is it?

Save/Discard Coins

6. If you have any coins remaining, you may choose 1 of them to save for your next turn. The coin to be saved must be placed *number side up* in front of you where all the other players can see it. You are not required to save a coin if you wish to discard them all.

7. If the coin you saved shows a spiral symbol (a "wild card"), you must immediately check for an unexpected effect. See Unexpected Effects below for instructions.

8. Return *all* other coins in your hand to the bag. (Thus, at this point, you must have at most 1 coin remaining in your possession, and if you have 1, it must be face-up in front of you.)

Strategy Tip - Saving a coin serves two purposes: Not only are you choosing one of your three coins for next turn, but you get a chance to affect what order you play in. It's easy to let the saved coin just turn into a simple choice of turn order, but don't forget that you might be able to ensure a good move for yourself next turn if you choose the right coin to save. Maybe you will need a certain number next turn to reveal a key event or attack another player. Or maybe you need to make sure you have a particular suit in hand to get a tile revealed. Saving a coin for the suit on it is particularly sneaky because the other players only get to see the number side of the one you save. You may be able to bluff by making them think you need the number for a certain play when you actually need the suit. But saving a coin is not always the best play. If none of the coins you have left are particularly useful to you, you might be better off discarding everything and taking your chances playing last. Or in those times when there are only a couple of tokens left in the bag, the coin you discard (or refuse to discard) may make the difference between the

next player making some mandatory advancements or not. And if you do it just right, you may even get to discard such that you essentially get to choose which coins the player after you will draw. Can you influence him to make a play in your favor?

9. At the end of your turn, if either your secret goal suit or your secret goal number (or both) is shown on any tile currently in the "Present" row, you may choose to mark one tile to indicate progress toward your victory.

Design Note - The idea of being required to indicate that you were getting close to victory was not originally part of this design. However, it seems that being able to deduce whether or not a player is making any progress just from the clues of his coin plays is very difficult, particularly for first-time players. I came up with this as a patch to add some tension to the game, so it's not just all of a sudden over and you have no idea what happened. It does make it harder to defend yourself and can increase game duration. If you don't like it, play without it.

    a. You are not <u>required</u> to mark a tile just because you are able to, but you may not declare victory until at least the next round <u>after</u> you have done so.

    b. The tile that you mark must show either your secret goal suit or your secret goal number (or both), but you are not required to reveal which one is the match.

> *Strategy Tip - Don't mark a tile to show progress prematurely. If the second tile you need to win is not already in the "Present" row or ready to move into it, revealing that your goal is half met will only give information to the other players that you'll wish they didn't have. Also, don't mark a tile to show progress if your defense of that tile in the "Present" row is shaky. As soon as the other players know the tile represents half of your goal, they'll do anything possible to remove it. Ideally, you can declare progress by marking a tile far from the easy reach of the other players while you secretly have the second half of your goal ready to be advanced with a near-sure-thing die roll on your next turn. Watch for opportunities to take "back-to-back" turns to win: take the last turn in one round, declare your progress, and then take the first turn in the next round and win before anyone can do anything to try to stop you!*

    c. Even if both your suit and your number are shown in the "Present" row (and you have not previously marked a tile to declare progress), you should only mark one of them. You are not required to reveal both matches.

    d. You may mark a tile even if another player has already marked that tile to show his own progress. (You're in a race to victory!!)

    e. You may use any method that is convenient to mark the tile. Using one of the piecepack pawns is recommended, as long as you can remember which player is represented by each pawn.

10. At the end of your turn, if both your secret goal suit _and_ your secret goal number are shown on _2 separate_ tiles currently in the "Present" row _and_ one of those tiles was marked _by you_ on a previous turn, you may reveal the record of your secret goal and win the game! Congratulations!

> _Example - Your secret goal for world domination is Moon & 3. The tiles now in the "Present" row are Sun-3, Moon-2, and Crown-0. Last round, you marked the Moon 2 tile at the end of your turn, declaring that your goal was half met. At the end of this turn you can announce that you have won, because your Moon goal is met by the Moon-2 tile and your 3 goal is met by the Sun-3 tile. If the tiles in the "Present" row were Sun-2, Moon-3, and Crown-0, you could _not_ announce victory because you can not meet both parts of your goal on just one tile._

Unexpected Effects

1. Each time a spiral ("wild card") coin is played (onto the board through a Place Coin or Attack Coin action, or in front of a player as a saved coin), an unexpected effect may occur.

2. Immediately when the spiral coin is played, roll 1 die twice to determine a random tile on the board.
   a. The first roll indicates a column on the board: 0 (blank) or 1 (symbol) indicate the left column, 2 or 3 indicate the middle column, and 4 or 5 indicate the right column.
   b. The second roll indicates a row on the board: 0 (blank) indicates the "Present" row, 1 (symbol) indicates the "Future 1" row, 2 indicates the "Future 2" row, and so on.

3. If there is a tile at the indicated column/row location, it is immediately flipped to its other side.
   a. If the tile is in the "Present" row, remove it from the board and give it to the active player. (This is the only case where the tile is not flipped, because face-down tiles can not be located in the "Present" row.)
   b. If the tile is face up, turn the tile face down in its place.
   c. If the tile is face down, return all chips currently placed on it to the bag and turn the tile face up in its place.

4. If there is no tile at the indicated column/row location, there is no effect.

> _Design Notes - This is just an interesting random effect to spice up the game a bit and give a couple of opportunities to introduce a sudden unexpected change that the players must deal with. This not only helps keep players in the game by giving a chance of harming the leader or helping a non-leader, but it also mitigates the power of the spiral wild cards by attaching some risk to playing them. If you have a number of tiles that could meet your goal face up and ready to advance, you may be wise to avoid the temptation of playing the powerful spiral coins. Think of the spirals as particularly dangerous or unstable events._

D e s i g n   N o t e s

I saw a mention of the piecepack "Time Marches On" contest in rec.games.board on 21-Feb-2002. This was the first time I had heard of piecepack, but I like to enter something into any game design contest I can find if possible, so I looked into it. I design games just for the fun of designing them. I've never yet attempted to publish anything, although I hope to someday.

The theme of the contest immediately intrigued me because time is a concept in which I am highly interested, and I have attempted to work aspects of time, particularly time travel, into a number of past game designs. In fact, there is one design that I have been tinkering with for literally two decades with the working title "Tempus". I first conceived of it some time in my high school days as an improvement to the old Yaquinto "Time War" board game. I loved the concept of that game (changing history to meet the goals of the present), but I always thought Yaquinto's version was much too dry and uninteresting. After going through at least three very distinct versions that never got past the paper stage, I finally created a functional prototype about 4 years ago, but it still never quite gelled. It's been sitting on the shelf since then.

"Time Marches On" immediately made me remember "Tempus", but "Tempus" relied on seeing all of time as a fixed "fabric". You could go back and make changes here and there, but the whole thing was always "there".   There wasn't really any "marching" to speak of. So I inverted the concept somewhat and thought about vast global conspiracies (just as interesting to me as time travel) not traveling back in time, but building vast Byzantine plans out into the future, hoping to see them realized when the present caught up to them. I wanted to capture the idea of a network of interconnecting global events, combined with the delicate balance of making plans far enough in the future that the plots have time to bear fruit, but not so far that there is time for the plots to be detected and overcome by your enemies.

Looking at the piecepack parts, I saw that they were an excellent fit for most of my existing ideas already, even though I had to completely retool everything from scratch to make it work. I had once done a little exploration into making an abstract version of "Tempus" that could be played using a deck of standard cards, so I already had such ideas as the grid and the four suits in my mind. As it turns out, the two-sided tiles and the matching coins (with directional sensitivity!) and dice really made some of my problems with regular playing cards melt away. I'm calling this version 2.1 because "Tempus" was a version 1.0 of sorts, and 2.0 was my first draft on scratch paper.

I got the basic game rules worked out right away; I knew how I wanted the game to flow and what I basically wanted the players to be able to do, but I got hung up on how to make the exact mechanics of the Reveal and Attack actions work out right. Once I settled on centering everything around playing coins onto the board, everything clicked together.

There is one thing in the piecepack specifications that I still find mysterious: the spiral icons on the "ace" coins. I realize that an icon that was distinguishable from the suit icons was needed, but the choice of a spiral still somehow seems not quite right to me. So for that reason, I just had to work in some kind of

special effect connected to the spirals. It was a late add-on to the basic design, but I think it fits rather nicely.

I admit that these rules got quite a bit lengthier than I anticipated, but I do still think that the core of the game is quite simple; I'm just a fan of thoroughly written rules that cover all the possible cases. I also admit that this design has been very minimally playtested, but I believe I was able to flush out most of the obvious first-draft trouble spots, which accounts for most of the special cases and extra explanation that padded up these rules in places. In terms of the judging criteria for the "Time Marches On" contest, I believe this game is in the ballpark of playable in an hour, is very focused on displaying the strengths of a piecepack, and has a fun and interesting theme (as much as an abstract game can have). I'll leave it up to the judge to say whether or not the rules were anywhere near quick to read and easy to remember, but I suspect I may have overshot his tastes in that area. That's ok -- I really did it all for myself anyway.

Future development of this game would obviously include lots of playtesting, plus testing for different numbers of players. I have a feeling that there may be a number of degenerate strategies inherent in the mechanics that haven't emerged yet, but I'm confident they could be addressed with tweaks to the costing of the various actions. I would definitely like to do some more work on distinguishing the suits from each other, too. As it stands, it's a little more symmetrical and abstract-y than I'd prefer. In my opinion, the key difference between a pure abstract game and a strongly-themed game is abstract games are usually completely symmetrical, and strongly-themed games usually strive for balanced asymmetry. I have ideas about tailoring certain aspects of the game, depending on what types of tiles are in the "Present" row at any given time. For example, maybe players draw 1+N coins each turn, where N is the number of Moon/Economic tiles in the "Present" row, representing varying levels of economic funding.   Or maybe the different types of coins have different attack effects. For example, Sun/Philosophical attacks allow you to rotate the attacked coin, Crown/Sociopolitical attacks allow you to flip the attacked coin, and Arms/Military attacks allow you to remove the attacked coin. I actually had some of those sorts of ideas in version 2.0, but I deleted them since they were complicating the rules even further and I didn't have time to work them out fully anyway. And in my heart of hearts, I'd really still like to take the improved ideas I got from this exercise back to my original non-abstract, custom-card-driven game.

Present

Future 1

Future 2

Future 3

Future 4

Sequence of Play
1. Determine Player Order
2. Time Marches On
3. Execute Player Turns
4. Repeat

Player Turn Sequence
1. Draw Coins
2. Take Actions
3. Save/Discard Coins
4. Declare Progress or Victory

Player Actions
A. Place Coin...............1 (+)
B. Reveal Coin.............1 (+)
C. Attack Coin.............1
D. Reveal Tile..............2 (+)
E. Advance Column.......2

Player Turn Sequence
1. Draw Coins
2. Take Actions
3. Save/Discard Coins
4. Declare Progress or Victory

Sequence of Play
1. Determine Player Order
2. Time Marches On
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Player Actions
A. Place Coin...............1
B. Reveal Coin.............1
C. Attack Coin.............1
D. Reveal Tile..............2
E. Advance Column.......2

Extended Example

Setup

The tiles are dealt out:

Player A: | ♣ 5 | ☾ | ♛ 2 | ⚜ | ☾ 2 | ☀ 5 |

Player B: | ☀ 3 | ☾ 4 | ☀ 4 | ☾ 3 | ☾ 5 | ⚜ 4 |

Player C: | ☾ | ♛ 3 | ♛ 5 | ⚜ 2 | ♛ 4 | ☀ 2 |

Player D: | ♛ | ⚜ | ☀ | ⚜ 3 | ♛ | ☀ |

Then the players draw coins from the bag to determine their secret goal:

Player A: Draws ☾/④, ⚜/○, and ♛/④
Chooses ⚜ and ○

Player B: Draws ☀/④, ♛/○, and ☾/○
Chooses ☾ and ④

Player C: Draws ☾/③, ⚜/◎, and ☀/◎
Chooses ☾ and ③

Player D: Draws ☾/⑤, ♛/③, and ☾/②
Chooses ♛ and ③

It's just a coincidence that 3 of the 4 players chose their suit and number from the same coin -- each player focused on making choices that best fit the tiles they were dealt. Players make a note of their secret goals and then return the chips to the bag.

Round 1

Determine Player Order

First, player order for the round is determined. No one has any coins yet, so all 4 players must roll a die:

Player A: **5**
Player B: **3**
Player C: ♛
Player D: **3**

Player A will play first.

Players B and D roll off their tie, resulting in player D playing second, player B third.

Player C will play last.

Time Marches On

No need to check in round 1.

Player A's Turn

Player A begins by drawing 3 coins. He gets ⚜/⑤, ♛/②, and ♛/③. The Arms-5 would be great for getting out the Arms-5 tile in his hand, but he doesn't really have a way to make that happen quickly, and he doesn't want to risk losing that tile so early in the game. So he decides to begin a little less aggressively by playing the Moon-0 tile in column 3 and placing his Crown-2 coin on it (action 1), followed by his Crown-3 coin diagonally below it (action 2). Notice how the coins point a path back to the "Present" row. To end his turn, player A saves his Arms-5 coin for next turn by playing it ⑤ side up in front of himself.

Present		
Future		②
		③
Future 2		
Future 3		

Player D's Turn

Player D draws ♛/④, ⚜/③, and ☾/②. He would like to stake out his own claim early too, and he really doesn't have any hints at all about A's goals yet, so he plays his Crown-1 tile in column 1 and puts his Moon-2 coin on it (action 1). Then he boldly grabs column 2 as well with his Arms-1 tile, placing his Arms-3 coin on it (action 2). He would like to see the Crown-1 tile advanced, but he really doesn't care about the Arms-1 tile much. It's a red herring so if another player wants to attack him, there's a 50% chance he may attack the tile that D doesn't care about. Also, by blocking the "Future 1" row, he's helping prevent the next players from quickly making progress. Player D then saves his Crown-4 coin on the ④ side and ends his turn.

Present		
②	③	②
		③
Future 2		
Future 3		

Player B's Turn

Player B draws ☾/○, ☾/③, and ♛/◎. His immediate prospects are slim, but he decides he wants to get his Moon-3 tile on board with his Moon-3 coin on it. He could do this by playing a coin below one of the coins D played

in columns 1 or 2, but that would cause him to burn a coin and an action, so he decides to play it directly off of the second coin placed earlier by A (action 1). Then, because he can, and because he's worried that A has a good chance of revealing the tile he played soon, B plays his spiral coin as an attack on A's 3-coin (action 2). First, he must pay his last coin (the Moon-0, which he didn't really want to save anyway) to a player of his choice, and he chooses Player D, who has already moved, so it can't be used against him this turn. D sets the coin aside for next turn, separate from the coin he saved for himself. Then, as the spiral ("wild card") coin is placed, B must check for unexpected effects.

He rolls ☐ then ④, which indicates the "Future 4" row in the left column. There is no tile located there, so there is no effect. (There are only a few tiles on the board so far, so there was little risk.) Then he resolves his attack. He would need a 3 or better to remove the attacked coin, but the spiral is wild, so the attack is successful and the 3 coin is removed and returned to the bag. Player B then has no coins to save or discard and his turn ends.

Player C's Turn

Player C plays last in the first round. He draws ☀/◎, ⚓/④, and ☀/③. Note that this is the fourth 3-coin that has been seen already, so C knows the two 3s still on the board are definitely not Suns. Coin-counting and deduction are important for figuring out what your opponents are trying to do. C decides to set himself up for a good move next turn. He plays his Arms-4 coin off of the 2-coin (action 1) and then plays his Sun-3 coin on his Crown-3 tile off of that. Then, he saves his spiral coin by playing it ◎ side up in front of him. That triggers another unexpected effects check, and he rolls

a ④ followed by a ♛, which indicates the second row down ("Future 1") in the middle column. The tile there is flipped face-up and the Arms-3 and Arms-4 coins on it are returned to the bag!   C's turn, and the round, then ends.

R o u n d 2

Determine Player Order

Three of the four players saved a coin from last turn:

Player A: ⑤

Player C: ◎

Player D: ④

Therefore, Player A will play first again this round, followed by player D, followed by player B. However, player C may decide to take his turn at any point in that sequence.

Time Marches On

All 3 columns are now checked to see if they advance. At this point, few of the players are hoping any of the columns advance since few of the tiles have had time to be revealed. However, player A probably wouldn't mind seeing the Arms tile advanced for free.

Left column: ③ ② ♛ ⑤

The only success is the Crown symbol (which is an automatic success), since there are no face-up tiles in this row. The left column does not advance.

Middle column: ☾ ⚓ ② ②

That makes 2 successes (the Moon symbol and the Arms symbol), so the middle column advances! There is no tile in the "Present" row middle column to remove, so the face-up Arms-1 tile simply moves up to the "Present" row while player A secretly smiles. The face-down tile in the "Future 2" row then moves up to the "Future 1" row.

Right column: 🌙 **5** ⬜

🔆

Even though the blank is a guaranteed failure for that die, the two symbols rolled are enough to advance the column. Again, there is no tile in the "Present" row to remove, but the tile in the "Future 1" row is face-down, so it must be removed. (A face-down tile can not advance into the "Present" row.) The coin on it is returned to the bag, and player A takes the tile (because he is the first player this round). The tile in "Future 2" moves up.

Player A's Turn

Player C has a chance to take his move first, but he decides to wait and see what Player A will do. Player A picks up the ⚜/⑤ he saved from last turn and then draws 2 coins from the bag to make a total of 3. He gets ☾/◎ and 🔆/④. Since the tile and coins he placed in the first round have all unluckily been removed, he doesn't have much to start with this turn. He just tries to get back on the board by placing his Sun-4 coin on the tile in the middle column (action 1), followed by his Arms-5 coin on his Arms-0 tile below that (action 2). He fears the unexpected effects, but he really doesn't want to discard his spiral, so he plays the ◎ in front of him. He rolls **2** and **5**, but there is no tile in the "Future 5" row in the middle column to be affected by unexpected effects. Before he ends his turn, A decides to go out on a limb and mark the middle column to indicate that the Arms-1 tile satisfies half of his secret goal.

Player C's Turn

Meanwhile, player C has been exchanging veiled hints with player D about what may or may not be on the table, and they realize that they are both interested in getting the tile at the top of the middle column revealed and advanced. They decide to cooperate, so C (who had played the spiral for determining player order) jumps in and takes his turn now. First, he picks up his 🔆/◎ and then draws 👑/② and ☾/⑤. He places his Crown-2 coin in the middle column (action 1), and then reveals the 3-coin that it points to (action 2). This is possible because there are 2 or more coins pointing to it with a total value greater than its own value. (Note how the revealed coin still points in the same direction as originally placed.) The cost of this action also requires him to pass a coin to another player, so he gives his Sun-spiral coin to player D, his ally (at least for the moment). Player C saves his ⑤ for the next turn.

Player D's Turn

Player now picks up the 👑/④ coin that he saved last turn, and draws ⚜/◯ and 👑/⑤ to make a total of 3. Then he additionally picks up the ☾/◯ and 🔆/◎ coins that were each given to him by other players. This gives him many options, but he follows through on the agreement with player C by playing the Sun-spiral coin (action 1) and then revealing the 2-coin that C placed (action 2). This is valid because the spiral is wild and can count as the 2 necessary for the single coin exact count support for revealing a 2-coin. The unexpected effects check is negative, and player D gives the Moon-0 coin to C as payment. Note that D was careful to set up another possible tile for himself in column 1, as a back-up plan in case the tile he already has ahead of it in the same column fails to be revealed. Finally, D saves the ⑤ in front of

him and must discard the other two coins, returning them to the bag.

Finally, player B gets his turn. He did not save a coin last turn, so he gets to draw three from the bag, getting ✳/◎, ✳/○, and 👑/③. For illustration purposes, B decides to reveal the tile in the center of "Future 1" (actions 1 and 2). This may benefit him because if it is a high-value tile, there may not be enough points worth of face-up coins on it yet, and he could get it discarded for the cost of both of his actions this turn. He reveals that the tile is Crown-3, and then adds up the supporting points. The

④ is ignored entirely because it is not symbol-side-up. The 👑 is worth 2 points of support because it matches the symbol on the tile and has a 2 on it. The ✳ is worth 1 point because it neither matches nor opposes the tile. That makes a total of 3 points of support, which is exactly enough to allow the tile to remain in place, now face-up. The 3 coins are returned to the bag. B chooses to save his ③ coin for next turn, discards the other two he held, and that ends Round 2.

A n d   S o   O n …

Round 3 would continue with A retaining achievement of half of his goal (thanks to player D's placement of the tile and a little luck), but C and D have joined forces to try to bring that to an end this round. C or D would be moving first, but A saved a spiral. Can he move first and try to get the second half of his goal met before anyone else can act? Doubtful, because you can see getting a new tile revealed takes at least a couple of turns, even if you have the all the coins you need and maybe a little help. The 2-action limit is a significant throttle on the game, which will reward careful planning and methodical implementation.