

# By the Grace of God

## Politics and Conflict in the Three Kingdoms, 1646-1649

On the 5th of May, 1646, Charles I, by the Grace of God King of England, Scotland and Ireland, surrendered himself to the Scots army besieging Newark, effectively bringing an end to the First English Civil War. However, the country is more divided than ever, and Charles's reluctance to negotiate with his captors is not helping. Some sort of settlement must be reached before the country dissolves completely into chaos - what form that takes will be decided in a high-stakes game of negotiation and realpolitik.

### The Game

By the Grace of God will primarily be a struggle for hearts and minds. Players will vie for influence over the army, the church, foreign powers, and the voting public - as the loyalty of these groups shifts, so will the balance of power. Armies will vie for control over the country, quelling discontent and putting down uprisings in their territory, and if necessary repelling invasion. Royalist agents and Parliamentary extremists will stir up discontent, while the interim government attempts create legislation that will empower their servants without provoking further dissent. No one faction has the influence to take control of the situation by themselves, so players must also negotiate compromises and coalitions in order to make progress. And anyone who can make a deal with the King will gain a great deal of influence - if they can live with anything he's willing to agree to.



Charles I under house arrest at Carisbrooke Castle

### The Issues

What started as a dispute over the Divine Right of Kings has exploded into a free-for-all: the Grand Remonstrance, presented to the King by Parliament shortly before the Civil War, contained 204 separate points. Three main topics sit at the centre of national debate.

**Religion:** the Church of England, with its centrally appointed bishops, independent courts, and conservative theology, is seen as a tool of state control at best and a front for a return to Catholicism at worst. Reformers wish to replace the bishops with locally elected elders and presbyters, broaden the acceptable forms of worship, and even separate the state and church entirely.

**Money:** England has traditionally enjoyed low taxes compared to the rest of Europe, leaving money (and power) in the hands of landowners, and allowing trade to flourish - often at the expense of central government. The King, and the emerging middle class, wish to increase tariffs, protecting local industry, and use England's growing navy to maintain a trade advantage by force, rather than direct competition.

**Mandate:** the Privy Council, the executive branch of government, is entirely appointed by the King. Parliament is summoned, and dismissed, at the monarch's pleasure, meaning that the Privy Council cannot easily be held accountable for its actions. Which, of course, is only right and proper if you believe in Divine Right; less so if you believe the monarch derives their mandate from their subjects. Reformers desire a regular Parliament with a minimum term, a Parliamentary veto on Privy Council appointments, and in extreme cases a widening of suffrage that would make the Commons an almost democratic body.

### **Factions and Roles**

Players will take on the role of Generals (military and naval activity), Divines (religious activists and influencers), Agents (working underground to ferment or exploit discontent), Governors (generating money for their faction), Politicians (drafting and passing legislation) and Journalists (reporting on events, shaping public perception). Not every faction will have the same mix of roles, giving each faction a unique challenge.

The **Royalists (12 players)** still fight for Charles's Divine Right to rule, with whatever weapons they can lay their hands on.

The **Middle Party (4 players)** are Parliament's conservative faction, still loyal to the King and distressed at the direction events are taking.

The **Presbyterians (8 players)** are Parliament's moderate centre, pushing for cautious reform.

The **Providence Island Company (4 players)** want free trade and colonial expansion.

The **Independents (5 players)** are Parliament's more hard-line faction, pushing for major reforms, and willing to consider a world without the King.

The **Puritans (4 players)** are Parliament's radical religious wing.

The **Levellers (5 players)** are a populist movement campaigning for radical democracy.

The **Fifth Monarchists (4 players)** are an apocalyptic cult who believe the King must be killed in order to ensure the nation is not punished in the fast-approaching End Times (no, really).

The **Covenanters (6 players)** are the dominant political faction in Scotland

The **Irish Confederation (6 players)** hopes to take advantage of the conflict to win and keep a measure of independence for Ireland.

And of course the **Control Team (6-8 noble volunteers)** will be doing their best to keep the show on the road...