Rome in Crisis

The years 235-284 AD were turbulent ones for the Roman Empire. During that period no fewer than twenty Emperors, managed an average of a mere two and a half years per reign. Each gained power by being the most prominent soldier, by being the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard or by being the favorite of SPQR, the Senate and People of Rome. But always, before very long, they died. The causes were many: battle, plague and not least, the treachery of their own soldiers. Some showed brief flashes of glory – one was even struck by lightning – but it was not until the reforms of Diocletian that this tumultuous era came to an end.

In this card game for 2-4 players (best with 4) they try to gain power as often as possible and gain as much glory as possible before succumbing to the inevitable …

Cards (64)
48 Influence cards (Goths, Persians, Palmyra, SPQR and Gold)
10 two-sided Candidate cards (showing a different candidate on each side, and his special ability)
5 Office cards (Emperor, Legatus, Cavalry Commander, Praetorian Prefect, Senate Leader)
1 Emperor selection method card

Setting Up the Game

1. The oldest player becomes the first Dealer, shuffles the influence cards and deals two face down to each player to form the initial hands.
2. The Dealer checks his cards and decides the selection method for the first Emperor – Military, SPQR or Praetorian – and indicates the decision by placing the corresponding side of the Emperor Selection card against the edge of the deck.
3. Lay out all of the candidate cards on their A sides and also the Cavalry Commander, Praetorian Prefect, Senate Leader and Legatus (except that Legatus is not used in a two-player playing). Beginning with the player left of the dealer and continuing clockwise, each drafts a card and leaves it face up. Then, beginning with the last player, each takes another, in reverse order. After this it begins again with the original first player and again goes clockwise, etc. When taking an office, it must immediately be assigned to a candidate having a rating in the office's category. Players continue to draft until each player has two candidates and all of the offices have been taken.
   For example, Cavalry Commander is in the Military category. Thus, this office may not be held by Gordian I who has no Military rating.
4. The Dealer splits the deck in half, inserts the remaining candidate cards with their A sides face up and puts the halves back together.

Playing the Game
The game is played over a series of turns consisting of repeating the following steps:

1. **Reveal Cards and Draft.**
   Factions acquire Influence.

   The dealer deals out face up a number of cards equal to 3 times the number of players. (If there are insufficient cards to do so, each player removes an influence card from the hand or display of the player to his left and places it in the middle. Repeat this until the number of cards is sufficient. If there are more cards than necessary, those left over after drafting are used to re-form the deck.)

   Starting with the player to the left of the dealer, in clockwise order players each take one card into hand.

Then the last player to draft a card drafts another and each player takes one in anti-clockwise order.

Finally, the player to the left of the dealer drafts a card and this continues in clockwise order.

No player may draft a candidate card if any other player has fewer than he does, unless it is the player's turn to draft and candidates form the only remaining choices.

When a candidate card is drafted, it is immediately put into play.

If the deck has become exhausted, gather up the discards and shuffle them to form the new deck.

2. **Select Emperor and Legatus.**
   Players bid to become the next Emperor. The process may also result in a new Legatus if this office is in play.

   The orientation of the Emperor Selection card indicates how the Emperor will be selected.

   Starting with the player to the left of the dealer, each player must put forward a single eligible candidate for Emperor, if able. Eligible candidates must have a non-zero rating for the current selection method. If there are no eligible candidates, then for the current turn only, all candidates are automatically considered eligible. If there are no candidates at all, phases C and E are not conducted.

   Once the candidates have been determined, players conduct an auction to become Emperor.

   Each candidate's starting worth is computed by adding together his rating for the current election type, his office (if any) and any applicable influence cards played on his card.

   An office held by a candidate adds to his starting worth, depending on the selection method being used, as stated on the cards.

   Then, beginning with the player immediately left of the player having the highest rating so far (if there is a tie, first such left of the dealer), players take turns playing one or more of their hand cards to his candidate so long as they match the current election type and the new total exceeds the worth of every other candidate.

   However, no player is permitted to play all of his cards during this phase. Each player must save at least one.

   Cards played must match the election type:

   - Persians, Goths, Palmyra – contribute to Military
   - SPQR – contribute to SPQR
   - Gold – contribute to any

   A player who cannot or will not exceed the highest rating must pass and drops out of the election. When all players have passed on playing cards, the candidate having the highest total becomes Emperor. (If there is a tie because no one played cards, the first tied player left of the dealer is considered highest.)

   All cards played on a candidate stay face up with that candidate.

3. **Set Selection Method.**
   Determine how the next Emperor will be chosen.

   The first player who passed, or did not have a candidate, in the auction for Emperor chooses the selection method which will next be used, which may not be the same type as the current election. Indicate this by placing the corresponding side of the Emperor Selection card against the deck.

4. **Emperor Actions.**

a. **Assign Offices.**

The Emperor card is now assigned to the winning candidate.

The Legatus card is now assigned to the candidate other than the Emperor having the best Military qualifications (ties resolved as with the Emperor). If this candidate is holding a different office it is automatically relinquished.

If the new Emperor or Legatus were holding offices, or if any offices were vacant, these are now re-assigned in the order decided by the Emperor, who must observe the following priorities:

- To the player who has an eligible candidate and the **fewest offices** (Emperor is an office):
- If tied, to the player of these having the **fewest victory points.**
- If still tied, to the one of these **closest to the dealer's right.**

If there are multiple eligible candidates belonging to the player chosen, the **owning player decides which takes the office.** If the candidate chosen already has an office, the owner may relinquish it, upon which it is re-assigned as above. If there are no eligible candidates for an office, it is simply placed aside until the next turn.

b. **Crises Mount.**

Factions influence crises and their perceptions.

A crisis is a group of cards representing a challenge to the empire. Crises correspond to influence cards and come in four varieties: War with Persia, War with the Goths, War with Palmyra and domestic crisis (SPQR cards).

The strength of a crisis is determined by adding up the numbers on all of the cards within it.

Each player chooses a card from his hand and places it face down. These cards are simultaneously revealed and added to the crises. A card of a new type begins a new crisis, or if cards of that election type are already present, they are added to that crisis.

When Gold cards are present as crisis cards, all of them are assigned to the crisis which is top-ranked after all non-gold cards have been assigned. (In case of ties, the crisis which has the tiebreaker letter which is earlier in the alphabet has the higher rank.)

c. **Emperor Addresses a Crisis.**

The Emperor attempts to solve a crisis.

- Crises are ranked for significance. Total up the values of all of the cards in each crisis. The one with the highest total is the top ranked, the one with the second highest total the second ranked, etc. (In case of ties, Goths > Persians > Palmyra > SPQR is the crisis order.)
  Hint: To make these rankings clear it helps to order them from left to right.
- The Emperor attempts to resolve any one crisis, regardless of his attributes. The Emperor may play cards from the hand appropriate to the crisis. These are cards which either match those of the crisis type or gold. These are added to any cards already played for the Emperor.
- Total up the Emperor's played cards (not including the ratings on his card) plus any applicable special ability listed on the Emperor's card. Discard cards from the crisis which total up to this amount. If it's not possible to achieve the exact number, discard the largest possible amount that is lower than the Emperor's total. If there are different ways to add up the cards to use, the Emperor player decides which method to use.
  - If no cards for the crisis remain, the Emperor has had a Success and the player receives points as shown on the Emperor card.. Otherwise the Emperor has had a Failure and

receives 1 point for each card of the crisis that was discarded.

- If there are any Gold cards which were formerly part of a Crisis, but are now unattached, they are attached to the top-ranked remaining Crisis. If there are no remaining Crises, the cards remain in place to be assigned on the next turn.

5. Legatus Addresses a War.

The player whose candidate is holding the Legatus office now addresses any one current **war** (Persians, Goths or Palmyra) by discarding one or two cards applicable to the war. These cards can come from those played on the Legatus or from the player's hand or both. These are used to cancel out cards belonging to that war crisis.

If the Legatus did not remove all of the crisis cards for the war, then the player receives 1 point for each card of the crisis that was discarded.

If the Legatus succeeded in removing all of the crisis cards for the war, the player scores points as shown on the Legatus card.

If there now any Gold cards formerly part of a Crisis, but now unattached, they are treated as above.

Unlike an Emperor, the Legatus does not die after this activity.

6. Emperor Dies.

Emperor leaves play.

The Emperor automatically dies. If his A side was being used, the card is flipped over and placed on the discard pile; if the B side was in use, the card is removed from the game.

All of the influence cards that were associated with the Emperor go to the discard pile.

7. Dealer Changes.

The player with the most points becomes the last player.

The deck is taken up by the player having the most victory points. If there is a tie, the deck is passed to the tied player of the current dealer's choice other than himself.

End of the Game

The second time that an Emperor is removed from the game (removed, not flipped over), the game immediately ends. The last player to have been Emperor receives a 3 victory point bonus. Whoever has the most victory points wins. If there is a tie, the tied player having the most total value in influence cards in hand and on candidates wins. If still tied, all such players are considered to have won.

Notes on Emperor Special Abilities

Aemilius Aemilianus: Transfers the Goths card from a rival's display to himself.
Florianus: Takes back the Cavalry Command, Praetorian Prefect and Senate Leader cards and then re-assigns them to factions in any order, but following the usual restrictions for office assignments.
Trebonianus Gallus: In solving a Goths crisis, makes things easier by first cancelling 1 Goths card for each Gold card he uses.

Credits

Playtesters in alphabetical order: David Andrews, Ric Brettschneider, Eric Chang, Jeff DiCorpo, Doug Garrett, Gordon Hua, Joseph Huber, Andrew Martin, Enrico Viglino, Eveleen Tang, Ken Tidwell, Michael Tsuk, Bernard Yeh.

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