

OVERVIEW

- In this Solo variant, you are playing against a virtual opponent (AI)
- The goal is that you can use this variant to play when you don't have any other players around or if you want to test several different strategies and/or the characters that are used in the game.
- The approach to create this variant was to provide the player a bigger challenge than simply "make your best score possible". The AI will occupy action spaces in the board, will score Victory Points, will travel, will fulfil contracts and occasionally gain black dies - In fact, he will do what a human opponent would do in a game of "The voyages of Marco Polo". However, this will be simplified so that you don't have to take care of a lot of upkeep.
- The AI's actions are determined by a deck of cards, from which you will draw 1 card in the beginning of the AI's turn. That card will instruct you what the AI will do.
- The inspiration for creating this Solo variant was the "AUTOMA approach <https://boardgamegeek.com/blogpost/37830/automa-approach-i-method-making-solitaire-modes-mu> developed by bgg user [Morten Monrad Pedersen](#). His solo variants created for Viticulture, Between 2 Cities and now Scythe, that consist in a deck of cards that abstracts and simplifies the AI's turn but yet provides the feeling that you are playing against a challenging opponent, were for me a breakthrough. I always tried to come up with solo variants for my favourite games, but usually they were complex and convoluted. A deck of cards that automates the AI is IMHO a clever approach that not only simplifies any solo rules but also makes the management of the AI's turn fast and "clean".

SETUP (differences from the setup of a regular 2 player game are in green)

- Setup the board for a 2 player game;
- AI doesn't collect his player board, money, resources, camels or a character tile
- AI collects only his 9 trading posts, 1 initial contract and the 5 dies of his color;
- AI receives 4 objective cards that are placed face down in his play area;
- AI takes his deck of cards, separates the 24 Action cards from the 4 travel cards, and then chooses randomly 1 of the 4 travel cards to use in the game. The remaining 3 are not used in the game. He then places his 9 trading posts in each of the Big cities and small towns spaces on the card.
- AI places 2 figures on the board: 1 on the scoring track and the other in Venice;
- AI shuffles the Action cards into 1 facedown deck .
- The AI player area is composed of:
 - 1 Travel card with his trading posts placed in each of the Big cities and small towns spaces on the card;
 - 1 contract pile (in the beginning of the game is only composed by the AI's initial contract);
 - AI's 5 dice;
 - The Action cards deck;
 - 4 Objective cards
- AI is the 1st player in the first round;

AI's TURN

- The player will play as normally as in a 2 player. On his turn AI will perform **1 Main action** and possibly 1 additional action. AI's turn structure is the following:
 - **DRAW 1 ACTION CARD:** Draw the top card of the AI's Action deck;
 - **RESOLVE MAIN ACTION:** Perform the action listed on the top of the card. If the action is not possible to be performed by the AI (not enough dies, or there are already dies of the AI color in that space and he has not enough black dies to use), then perform the action listed below. If that action is also not possible to be performed, then perform the action below it. This 3rd Possible action (always the same in all the action cards) is called "compensation" (the AI will use a die to score some Victory Points);
 - **PERFORM ADDITIONAL ACTION:** Some cards will have on the bottom 1 additional action (Complete 1 contract or take 1 black die). If that is the case, perform that action for the AI;
- The AI doesn't roll his dies (only for the "compensation action"). The values of the dies he places are indifferent (except if he is performing the "Favor of the Khan" action);
- The AI always tries to place first the dies of his color. Only if that is not possible he uses a combination his colored dice and black dies. However he can only use black dies that he has taken on a previous turn, if there are already dies of his color in that action space;
- When it's the AI's turn and he has no dice (from his color or black) he passes and the round his over for him;
- If you passed and the AI still has dies to use, continue to perform his turns as normal: Drawing an Action card and resolving it.

MAIN ACTIONS

MARKETPLACE: Gold/Silk/Pepper/Camels:

- Place the number of dies required in that action space¹;

FAVOR OF THE KHAN:

- Place 1 die on the next available space. Set the die value **1 pip higher than the last placed die** in the favor of the Khan track);

OBTAIN 2 CONTRACTS:

- Take the the highest VP contract(s) on the contract offer and place the contract(s) on the bottom of the AI's contract pile (in the beginning of the game his contract pile is composed only of his starting contract) .
- When choosing which contract(s) to take, ties are broken by the other rewards the contract(s) would give in this order: New contract > Black Die > other rewards

¹ The only purpose of the Marketplace actions for the AI is to constrain the players actions.

TRAVEL 1/2/3 SPACES

- AI travels 1, 2 or 3 Spaces. Look at the AI travel card and advance the meeple on the game board following the depicted route on the card:
 - You read the travel card in English reading order, from left to right and from top to bottom;
 - Circles represent the oasis spots on the board;
- When AI arrives or passes through a Big City(brown) or a Small Town (blue) you take the respective trading post from the travel card and place it in the respective city or town on the board.
- When AI collects the bonus tile of a Big City (by being the first player to place a trading post there) that tile is removed from the game. AI gains the bonus if the bonus tiles are:
 - Collect 1 black die: AI collects 1 black die;
 - Gain 1 contract: AI gains 1 contract (places it on the bottom of his contract pile)
 - Travel 1 space: AI travels 1 space;
- REMEMBER: AI doesn't have to stop when arriving to a city as a player normally would. It is possible for the AI to place trading posts in several cities only with 1 travel action;
- When the AI places a trading post in the small town that has the 3VP bonus tile, he gains 3VP immediately and 3VP at the beginning of each round (just like a normal player)
- When AI builds his 8th and 9th trading posts, he gains the respective 5 and 10 VP's;
- When the AI places his trading post in Beijing, he gains the respective VP's according if he was the first or second to place a trading post there;
- In the end of the game, reveal the 4 objective cards, and check which combination of 2 objective cards would give him more points. Then score those 2 objective cards for the AI;
- If the AI was the last player travelling, he will be first player in the next round;

COMPENSATION (the third possible action on the top of an Action card)²

- When none of the 2 top actions are possible, then the AI performs this action;
- He rolls a die of his color (or a black if he has any of his color) and gains VP's depending on the die roll:
 - on 1 or a 2: AI gains 1 VP
 - on 3 or a 4: AI gains 2 VP
 - on 5 or a 6: AI gains 3 VP

² The "Compensation action" tries to emulate when a player uses a city card to score some points (via goods conversions, or contracts scoring, etc). Also it avoids an infinite loop of trying to find a possible action in the case that there are not many.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

TAKE 1 BLACK DIE

- AI gains 1 black die. This die can be used in future turns;

COMPLETE 1 CONTRACT

- AI completes 1 contract. When completing a contract, the AI doesn't have to discard any goods like a normal player would do, he simply fulfills the contract³;
- He takes the top contract of his contract pile and gains the respective rewards:
 - He doesn't collect any goods or money. The only thing the AI collects are the VP's, black dies and new contracts;
 - When collecting a new contract, simply add it to the bottom of the AI's contract pile;
- Each completed contract is set aside of the AI's player area. In the end of the game, if the AI completed more contracts than the player (which normally will happen), he will gain the 7 VP bonus;

END OF ROUND 4

In the end of round 4, just before starting the last round of the game, take all discarded Action cards and shuffle them into the remaining cards on the deck, to form a new Action cards deck. This will create some uncertainty in the last round of the game.⁴

LESS LUCK VARIANT

- If you find that the "Compensation action" relies a lot in the luck of the dies, then you can use this variant;
- Instead of rolling the die for the AI when performing the "Compensation action" simply give him a number of VP's according with the difficulty you want to face:
 - 1 VP in easy mode;
 - 2 VP's in normal mode;
 - 3 Vp's in hard mode;

³ If the AI would collect or spend goods and/or money for purposes of completing contracts or traveling, that would imply a lot of bookkeeping for the player. That's why this fact was abstracted in this variant. The only things the AI collects are things that would help him score points directly: VP's, new contracts and black dies to be rolled in future turns.

⁴ Rule suggestion by BGG user [Wretched Git](#)