

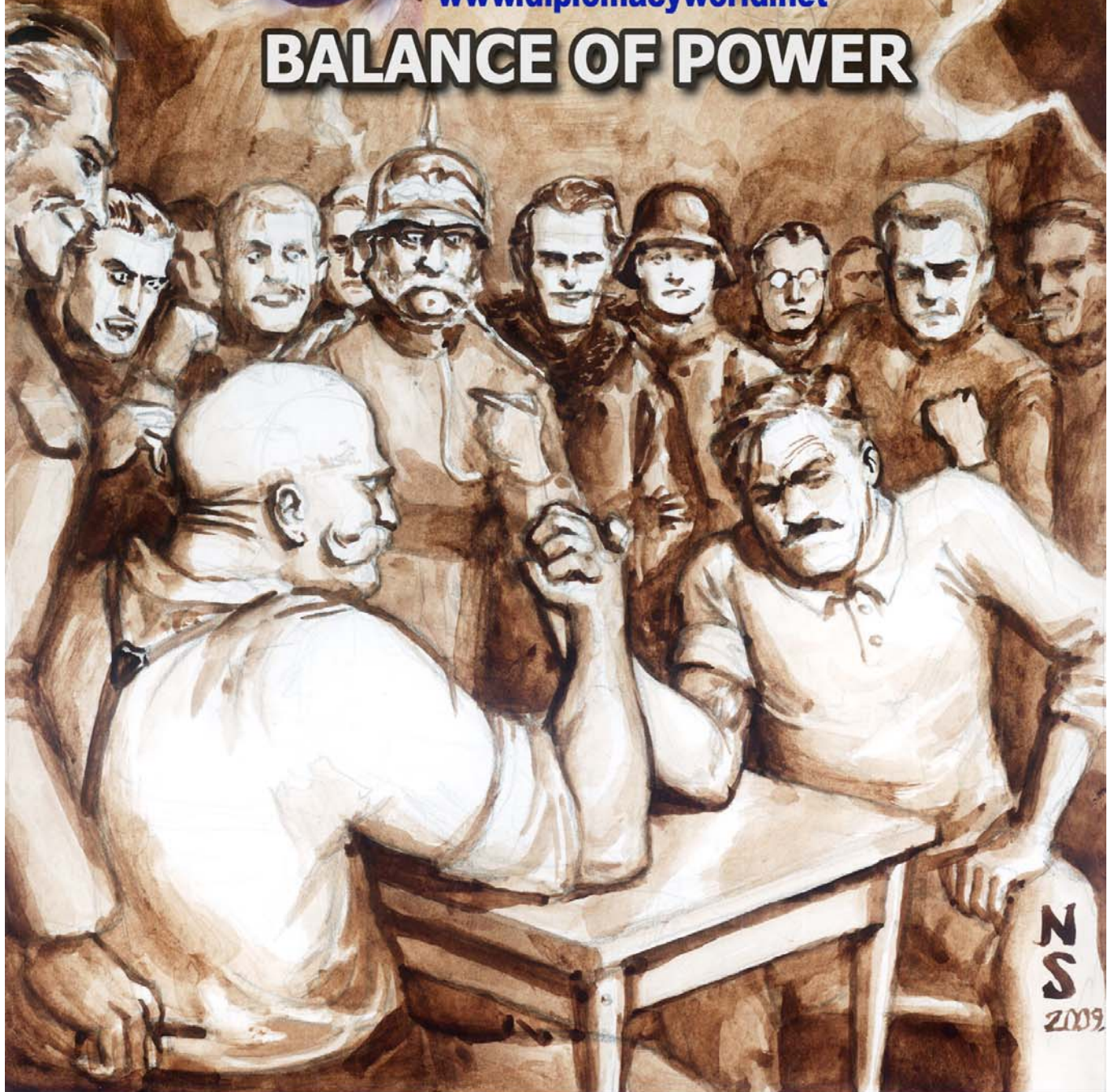
#107

Diplomacy *World*



www.diplomacyworld.net

BALANCE OF POWER



NS
2009

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to another issue of Diplomacy World, which has now served as the flagship publication of the Diplomacy hobby for over 35 years. The hobby has seen a great deal of change over that long period, and Diplomacy World will continue our efforts to adjust to those changes, and when possible to be at the forefront.

One of those efforts is the welcome addition of Chris Babcock as Technology Editor. With the advances in social networking and on-line gaming, the opportunities to see real breakthroughs in the way Diplomacy games are available worldwide are countless. Chris has been at the forefront of some of those projects, and his knowledge both of the possibilities and the pitfalls will certainly make his articles, and those he solicits from others, exceptional reading.

But Chris is not the only change to the Diplomacy World Staff in this issue. Mark Zoffel is stepping down as the Strategy & Tactics Editor. Real life has simply not allowed Mark the time he hoped to have to spend on this post – a problem we have all encountered. So while he plans to continue submitting articles when he is able, he felt the time to open the post to someone else was now.

And that someone is none other than Joshua Danker-Dake. Joshua has been treating us to terrific articles for a number of issues, and I believe he will fill the post admirably. For those of you unfamiliar with Joshua, here is a quick mini-biography he provided:

I've been playing since 2006 (not my fault; I hadn't heard of it until then) - it seems longer; I really took to it. I've been playing board games my entire life. The first time I played Diplomacy was by email with friends of a friend; I died immediately, but there's a good story behind it, and I think I'll write it up as an article. My experience playing face to face has been excruciating; generally I play online through the Diplomacy Pouch judges. I also have that horrible, horrible PC game. I enjoy standard Diplomacy at a reasonably brisk pace, the occasional gunboat, and I think I like Build Anywhere.

I live in Tulsa, as I said, with my wife and pampered cat. I also enjoy board games of all kinds (well, good ones, anyway), especially Warrior Knights, Cities and Knights of Catan, and Carcassonne - Inns and Cathedrals.

Now, on to this issue. There are a few items I want to call your attention to, beginning with Tom Anthony's proposed World Series of Diplomacy. This is a very interesting project, and those of you who enjoy team Diplomacy events should be certain to check his article out.

Next, allow me to point out the Diplomacy World Variant

Design contest. This is a contest which was inspired by one which ran decades ago in Diplomacy World. Despite the somewhat lackluster response some of prior contests have received, I've got my fingers crossed that the longer timeline (and attractive prizes) will bring out some new and original variant designs. If not...well, add it to the list of failures in my life. Long list, folks...L-O-N-G list.

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find a news blurb about a remarkable sponsorship deal the Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy hobby has worked to acquire. I had hoped to get a full article on how they accomplished the achievement, but for this issue at least you will have to be satisfied with the announcement itself.

Of course there are a slew of interesting articles you can sink your teeth into. Those of you who have been following the Demo game "After the Rapture" will enjoy the finale of the game this issue. Not only do we have the final game years (along with the normal turn-by-turn commentary), but we also have all the End of Game statements from players and commentators alike. It has been quite a battle, and now everyone can see where the commentators were right and where they were wrong as the game progressed. In the meantime, make sure you are following the Demo game of the Known World variant, which continues this issue.

You will also find a number of different viewpoints of the latest HuskyCon event. Mind you, they are all positive, which isn't surprising since it is regarded as one of the most enjoyable Diplomacy event around. But it's always nice to see it from different angles, including one from a newbie and the European view (where it sounds like people are much more comfortable with public nudity...read on to discover what I mean).

As always, let me remind every Diplomacy World reader that each issue is only as good as the submissions we receive. The DW Staff does its best to put together a quality issue, but most of the content comes from outside that small group. So that means we rely on you! What has stopped you from ever submitting an article? Email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com and let me know. Maybe we can overcome that barrier together, and in three months **we'll see your name** under one of these articles!

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is January 1st, 2010.

Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So email me! See you in the Winter, and happy stabbing!

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Contributions are welcomed and will earn you accolades and infinite thanks. Persons interested in the vacant staff positions may contact the managing editor for details or to submit their candidacy or both. The same goes for anyone interested in becoming a columnist or senior writer. Diplomacy is a game invented by Allan Calhamer. It is currently manufactured by Hasbro and the name is their trademark with all rights reserved.

Themes for Upcoming Diplomacy World Issues:



Diplomacy World #108: Face-to-Face Diplomacy Deadline for #108 Submissions – January 1, 2010



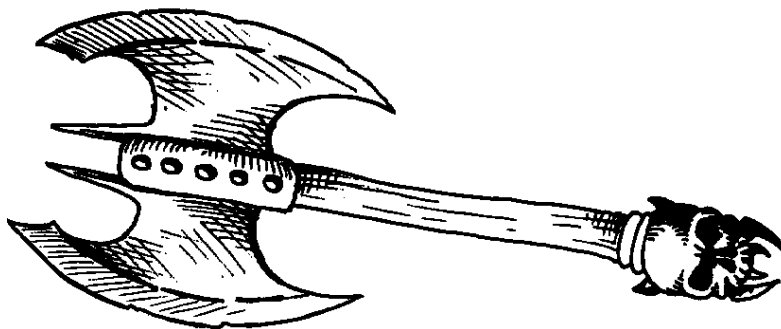
Diplomacy World #109: Economic Variants Deadline for #109 Submissions – April 1, 2010



Diplomacy World #110: Friends and Allies: Relationships On and Off the Board Deadline for #110 Submissions – July 1, 2010

In This Issue:

Editorial: <i>Notes from the Editor</i> by Douglas Kent	Page 2
Contest: Diplomacy World Variant Design Contest	Page 5
Tournament Report: <i>The D(N)WC Final Report by TD</i> by Jeremie Lefrancois	Page 6
Tournament Announcement: <i>World Series Diplomacy Tournament</i> by Tom Anthony	Page 8
Variants: <i>The Making of "1648"</i> by Charles Féaux de la Croix	Page 10
Variants: 1648 version 3.0 Rules and Map	Page 15
Theme Article: <i>A Wide-Ranging View</i> by Jim Burgess	Page 20
Strategy & Tactics: <i>The Russian Bear's Soft Heart</i> by Tom Anthony	Page 23
Convention Advertisement: DipCon XLIII / Whipping VII Advertisement	Page 24
Convention Report: <i>HuskyCon – The Naked Truth</i> by Frank Oosterom	Page 25
Feature: <i>Metagaming Up – A Few Considerations About Team Tournaments</i> by Giovanni Cesarini	Page 26
Theme Article: <i>Balance of Power – Philosophy of Play in Practice and Theory</i> by Edi Birsan	Page 27
Feature: <i>The Official Formal Rules of Planning an Ad Hoc Diplomacy Game</i> by Chris Sham	Page 28
Strategy & Tactics: <i>Finding Purpose When Victory is Unattainable</i> by Joshua Danker-Dake	Page 30
Convention Report: <i>Grand Prix Watch</i> by Jim O'Kelley	Page 31
Convention Report: <i>HuskyCon – The European View</i> by Cyrille Sevin	Page 32
Selected Upcoming Conventions and Diplomacy Events	Page 33
Technology: <i>Creating the Perfect Storm for the Future of On-Line Diplomacy</i> by Chris Babcock	Page 34
Feature: <i>Building a Better Con One Brick at a Time</i> by Conrad Woodring	Page 37
Convention Report: <i>All-Time Finnish Diplomacy Masters Game</i> by Juho Malin	Page 40
Convention Report: <i>Conquest 2009 – Santa Clara</i> by Edi Birsan	Page 41
Feature: <i>History of the "D" World Part Deux</i> by Jerry Jones	Page 43
Hobby Service: <i>Ask the GM – An Advice Column for <u>Diplomacy World</u></i> by "Game Master"	Page 44
Convention Report: <i>HuskyCon VII – Perspective From a Tournament Noob</i> by Christopher M. Sterbenz	Page 45
Demo Game: <u>Diplomacy World</u> Demo Game "After the Rapture" – Spring 1913 through Game End	Page 46
Hobby News: DAANZ Sponsorship Announcement	Page 66
Demo Game: <u>Diplomacy World</u> "Known World" Variant Demo Game - Spring 903 through Winter 904	Page 67
Letter Column: <i>Knives and Daggers - The <u>Diplomacy World</u> Letter Column</i>	Page 105



The Diplomacy World Variant Design Contest

After reading through old issues of Diplomacy World, I found a contest where readers were asked to design and submit new, original variants in exchange for prizes. And I figured what the heck, even if my prior Diplomacy World writing contests had been met with less-than enthusiastic response, perhaps I could generate some more excitement with something on the designing side of the game.

The rules are pretty simple. Design and submit an original variant, using one of the topics listed below. **Multiple entries are permitted** (whether you choose to use more than one topic, or multiple entries for the same topic). This must be a new variant – one which has not been openly play-tested yet (if you and a buddy or two want to try it out to see how it works, to help you make revisions along the way, that's fine). The variant should include the map (if it uses anything other than the standard Diplomacy map), rules, and designer's notes giving some insight into why you chose to produce the variant in the form it ultimately is submitted in. Variants may be for 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9. If two or more people want to design a variant together, that's fine too, but you'll have to figure out how to split the prizes on your own. Speaking of which, the prizes will be:

1st Prize: \$50 (or the equivalent in your local currency) in cash, or in a gift card for eBay or Amazon.com

2nd Prize: \$25 (or the equivalent in your local currency) in cash, or in a gift card for eBay or Amazon.com

3rd Prize: Your choice of a number of DVD's (new and used) from my pile prize. If outside the US or Canada, an alternate prize will be mutually chosen.

I may decide to award additional prizes depending on the number of entries. DVD's, Diplomacy World merchandise, a Diplomacy set, gift cards, or who knows what else. Prizes are supplied by Doug Kent who, while DW Staff may be consulted in evaluating entries, will remain solely responsible for their disposition. Hopefully some useful comments will be received from the readership after publication as well.

All submissions will appear in Diplomacy World (not necessarily all in the same issue, depending on how many entries are received). By submitting these variants, you agree not to submit them elsewhere until they've appeared in DW, giving Diplomacy World right of first publication. All other rights remain with the author. We would just like the variants to appear in Diplomacy World first since they're being created for this contest.

Now, for your choice of topics, I have selected six historical periods. As I said, you may submit multiple variants, whether that means different topics or all for the same topic. ***The final deadline for variant submission will be March 15, 2010.*** This gives you nearly 6 months to complete your entries, with the idea that at least ***some*** entries will appear in Diplomacy World #109.

The historical topics are:

**The Napoleonic Era
Post-Soviet USSR
Ancient Greek States
Current-Day Global Dominance
Ancient Israel Region
Yugoslavian Breakup**

Submissions should be emailed to diplomacyworld@yahoo.com. Have fun, and good luck!

D(N)WC : Final report by TD

By Jeremie Lefrancois

This is intended to be the official report of the first Diplomacy national team tournament, by the Tournament Director himself. I could not resist adding a bit of my life so that you could understand how I fell into all this.

1992. I got my first job as a computer engineer, in Defence Electronics. Several young colleagues, like me, knew of the game of Diplomacy, so I offered to master a game. I started writing a little adjudicator "just to save time". At this time the "Minitel" was very popular in France. It was a little device with 40 column text, which served as the internet of today (text only) in France. So a server to play Diplomacy on the Internet was operational in 1994. I got a contract with a French company selling the "Diplomatie" game in French, but the project stalled after Avalon Hill never gave Jeux Descartes the authorization to start (anyway this project was more for rich people or people who had the opportunity to use the Minitel without paying, because it would have been very expensive to spend hours writing messages at a per minute cost basis). And is it really playing Dip if not spending hours writing and exchanging messages?

So there was a pause for Diplomacy for me.

2003. I was asked to be a replacement in a game with French tournament set up by Gabriel Lecointre named "Interzines", for a French speaking team named "Vopalie", which was a French paper zine I was a member of. As a player, I started thinking (a lot) about tournament structures and regulations. I also had some free time then (as a contract isolated me during the week alone, in a city 250 miles away from home and family) to build a few more Diplomatic tools (mapping mainly).

2005. The tools were gathered in a website, the "stabbeurfou". That site hosted the Interzines II tournament, which was a gathering of 10 French speaking teams (diplomatic communities).

At that time, negotiations were not possible on the site, so one had to use traditional emails. The only real incident in this event was the "false start". A bug (my mistake) in the system allowed for a couple of days to see all the orders of all other players. It was detected between Spring and Autumn 1901, so the decision was made to completely restart the whole event. The funny part about the results was that the three first teams in the second game were exactly the same ones as in the first edition.

2006. Gabriel brought to my attention an attempt to run an adaptation of the world soccer cup, so I joined the fun. It took me three months to get the site bilingual, and an additional two to have a decent bid (mainly writing

and adapting rules and regulations for all aspects of this special tournament).

2007. Most of first semester was spent advertising for that D(N)WC., and a lot of spamming. (I remember getting kicked out of the DipAI mailing list for that, although being a very modest AI builder myself). We had more than a majority of American players registered, so a great effort was made in splitting the nationals in subgroups. In September the event could start, and despite all my efforts I never managed to get teams from Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, or Switzerland; places I knew that had potential for at least a single team. The sad part of the experience was about Scotland, since decision at council (which I voted as well) was to have Scotland play as part of UK (and not separated) – which about half of the Scottish refused to accept and left the tournament. The funniest part of this experience was realizing there was such an antagonism between the south and north states of Australia. We have the same in France between Marseilles and Paris!

The start of the tournament was a real rush; mainly with all the questions from the participants, with the late replacements, players not understanding the site features, or forgetting their password. But it worked. More and more software was added to ease the work of the tournament director, and to try to get the interface as clear as possible. Since the programmer and the TD were the same person, that was much easier.

You have to be patient to be a TD - not because of questions from players, but because of time spent to repeatedly explain to the tournament chairman that you did not make any mistakes when he seems to be soooo ready to think the opposite ☺. A tournament organizer is like a plumber, fixing the leaks (players leaving) with players willing to join the fun, introducing them to their new team.

At that time all adjudications on site had to be pushed manually. The only real incident in this round came from a player from team "Ohio10" who got most of the players in his table upset towards him. Since this was becoming more than unhealthy, I made a decision to have him replaced (and not by his 10 year old son!)

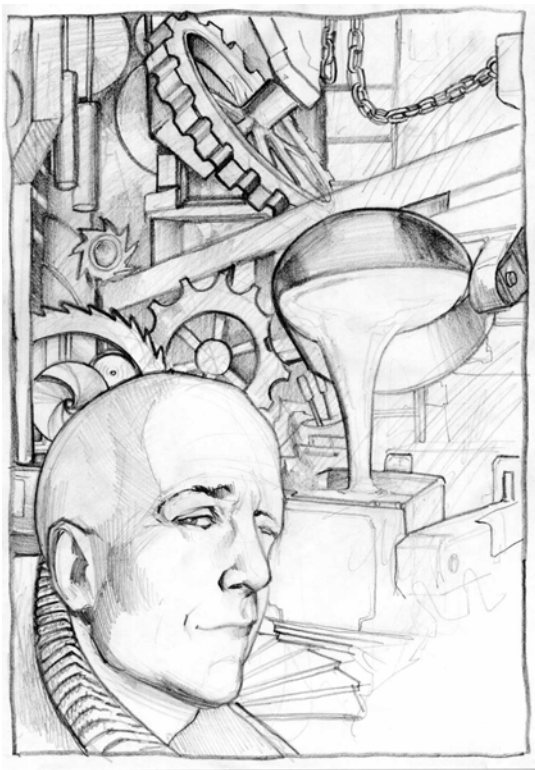
The two major points about the results of round one were the poor performance of USA teams (the 5 of them were eliminated) and the outstanding performance of the French teams (First, Third and Last).

In a parallel of this I made an attempt to host an adaptation of famous "World Masters" on the site. The original "owners" of the WM rejected my offer for reasons that remain still unclear to me today. Yet the

event did actually start with a different name ("Wonderful Mansion" as a wink) and was quite successful, even if the 500 player goal I had hoped for was not reached. This event is still ongoing, round two (semi final) started in September.

2008. In September, round two of D(N)WC started with the magnificent seven : France (three teams had mixed) , Argentina, Italy, Russia, Germany (two teams had mixed), Australia (two teams had mixed) and China. The number of N.M.Rs – already very low – dropped dramatically, and this was a real pleasure. My experience tells me that much more than half of the drop outs occur during the first Diplomatic year.

The only real incident in D(N)WC round two was internal to the French team. It seems the French Captain had very high expectations for his players. So he used his right to remove a player from a game for another which he had hoped would fare better. Needless to say, the original player was not too happy to leave the game. Life is tough sometimes! Still France won the event, but that is another story...



Now to the results!

For those who have not figured out the acronym, D(N)WC stands for Diplomacy World Cup. The "N" is for national, i.e. national teams. The first successful attempt (from what I know), it took place between September 2007 and May 2008 (you can see the round one report in Diplomacy World #102). The second round had the seven best, in a classical 7x7 fashion. The winner was France, led by captain Gwen Maggi. French victory was

confirmed by a solo from French lieutenant Fabrice Essner. This was the only solo in round two, but the second of Fabrice, because he did the same trick on first round.

Since the three sub tournaments of round one were named after three schools of the Harry Potter books and film plots, the final round was named after the fourth school "Gryffindor". Each game received the name of one of the most famous characters.

Note you may get full results directly on:

<http://www.stabbeurfou.org/Tournoi.php?nom=Gryffindor>

To get the detailed results, best powers, board details, stats on negotiations and negotiations versus results, awards, opening moves, opening moves versus results go to:

http://www.stabbeurfou.org/docs/articles/en/dnwc_final_report.html

Conclusion

What changes do I foresee for the next edition? The main change that was considered was inserting a first individual round. From this round the best individuals from every country may be determined, and then form a team in the same manner as in edition one (vote for a captain, then figure out which players play which power).

Less important changes being considered are:

- scoring system to switch to more consensual "Manorcon" square,
- game duration extended from 1909 to 1911,
- structure of team round to be in a single tournament with interaction between teams made as small as possible (see my article "Fighting Crossgaming" in Diplomacy World #106)
- list of allowed countries to be made more flexible to allow "countries" such as Scotland, instead of just ONU
- a TD to be distinct from TO, and not French.

Of course these are only suggestions that my experience allow me to make. Many details remain unclear for next edition, although a start no sooner than September 2010 is likely, because I very much doubt another site could be fully ready for next September (and there seems to be a preference in changing the site to host the event, or at least giving any other site or whatever a chance to bid.)

Stay tuned!

World Series Diplomacy Tournament

By Tom Anthony

As Edi Birsan mentioned in a footnote to his article in the last issue of the Diplomatic Pouch, I am intending to run the inaugural World Series Diplomacy tournament. In light of his suggestions and my experience running tournaments on webdiplomacy, I have devised rules for the first World Series Diplomacy, which is due to start in January.

The basic format is that there are 7 teams in a league, each with 5 players. Each player plays in one game, competing against players from all 6 other teams. The scoring is 12 for a win, 12/n for an n-way draw.

Naturally, I am not in any way sure of how wide or narrow the interest in this tournament will be. If there are 14 or more entrants, I will make more than one league, and sort the teams into them as explained in the rules.

To allow smaller groups to compete in a tournament without being destroyed by 1000 member websites,

there is a Minor level, where the restrictions are much relaxed, and face to face groups with fewer than 40 members can sign up a team. This means that Face to Face clubs can now compete in an official representative diplomacy tournament against other clubs across the world, rather than just a few people local to them.

To add to the opportunity to participate in the biggest websites, 2nd and 3rd teams can be added for sites with over 400 and 800 members respectively. These teams won't be allowed to meet each other in games to avoid meta-gaming.

Please apply by sending an email to worldseriesdiplomacy@googlemail.com in the way explained in the rules below; I shall be taking applications right until the New Year. If you are unsure of any aspect, please feel free to email the above address to ask questions.

World Series Diplomacy Rules

Tournament Director Email:
WorldSeriesDiplomacy@googlemail.com

Disclaimer: Because it is impossible for these rules to consider every possible scenario, the Tournament Director reserves the right to act not in accordance to these rules if he sees fit to do so.

The Games and League

Each league consists of five games, with each teams' top player playing on board 1, each second player playing on board 2 etc. All games start at the same time, in January. Games are hosted on webdiplomacy.net, are of the winner-takes-all type and phases are 72 hours long.

Pauses

If a player is absent for a week or less, they may request a pause, which must be granted by all players. Otherwise, a reserve should "sit" their account for them whilst they are away.

NMR and Civil Disorder

There is no penalty for NMRs, however a point will be deducted from a team if one of their players enters civil disorder. The player should be replaced promptly by a reserve.

Meta-Gaming and Cross-Gaming

Teams may not enter into agreements or alliances spanning more than one game, although they may

consider different teams' league positions in their decision making within a game.

Scoring

Teams will score 12 points for a solo, 12/n for an n-way draw, and nothing for survivals or defeats. In the event of a tie, the teams will be differentiated between by giving extra weight to points on higher boards, so the better from the top 4 boards will be ahead. If that is also tie, the better from the top 3 boards etc.

Promotion and Relegation

Each league will have 2 players promoted and 2 players relegated. If a team withdraws at the end of a season, one fewer team will be demoted in all the leagues below the withdrawal. For a second withdrawal, one extra player will be promoted in all the leagues below the withdrawal, a third will result in a second team not being relegated. All further withdrawals will result in an increase in the number of teams promoted.

In the event that a second or third team entered by a site would clash if they were promoted or avoided relegation, they are dropped out of the promotion spot and replaced there by the next best team, or in the latter case dropped into the relegation slot, to avoid two teams from the same site playing one another. If this would result in a team dropping off the end of the leagues (because they have to be relegated from the bottom league), the site will have to reduce the number of teams it enters until it hasn't a team in the lowest league.

Ordering New Teams

New teams will be seeded by the number of eligible players they had. For second or third teams, this is the number of eligible players greater than the minimum to be allowed to enter that many teams.

New teams are necessarily below teams that have played in the previous year.

Team and Player Eligibility

Major Level

Any diplomacy group entering the major level must have at least 40 eligible players. For a player to be eligible, they must have played diplomacy with the group (live, PBM or PBeM) at least once in the two months leading up to the tournament (November and December), and must have been a member of the group before the October 1st preceding the tournament. Players who are members of more than one group may count towards the 40 eligible players, but may only play for one team. Groups may not exist totally within the confines of another entered group, so, for instance, if a group were to exclusively play games on a larger diplomacy website, they would not be eligible.

A group with over 400 eligible players may enter a second team, and a group with over 800 players may enter a third team. Two teams from the same group may not play in the same league. If it is the case that after the normal promotions and demotions two teams would be in the same league, one team will be pushed down a league. If this results in a team being pushed down from the bottom league, that team may not enter into the next season.

If a group has grown so that it is eligible for more teams than it currently has, and it has no team in the bottom league, it may add an extra team for the new season.

Minor Level

A Minor level will run for small organisations such as local or school groups etc. who wouldn't be able to compete against the bigger groups.

Any diplomacy related organisation may enter the minor level, unless it is eligible for the Major level. A Minor level group may have at most two players who are also playing in the Major level. For a player to be eligible to play in Minor level, they must have been a member of the group before the October 1st before the tournament. In order to be eligible for the Minor level, a group need not be a diplomacy-playing group; it can be a discussion group, 'zine or other organisation.

Minor level teams may move up to major level if the number of entrant teams to the major level is not divisible by seven. In this case, any players who were also playing in the major level must choose between the

teams. Only one team may be entered by each organisation in minor level.

Team Members

Each team must have five players, with a playing order from Top board to fifth board. They must each have 2 reserves, a manager and a deputy manager. The manager and deputy manager may or may not be among the players and reserves. The manager is responsible for dealing with replacing players who fall into civil disorder in the team by replacing them with reserves. Should a team suffer 2 civil disorders, they may name an extra two reserves. The deputy manager will take over the responsibilities of the manager should the latter be unavailable for some reason.

Selecting the Manager and Deputy Manager

Groups should decide amongst themselves by their own process how many teams they wish to enter and who will manage the teams (including which manager will manage the first, which the second and which the third team). Should more teams than are allowed be applied for (see below) the bottom team(s) will be ignored.

An email to enter teams must then be sent to the Tournament Director by the Manager of the first team. This email should:

- State the manager(s) and Deputy Manager(s) for the team(s), giving email addresses for all of them.
- State the level of play being applied for (Major or Minor).
- Provide some evidence that the team is eligible for the tournament level and number of teams being entered.
- Should more than one application be made, the tournament director will email all people who applied to enter a team and attempt to resolve the dispute. If no resolution can be made, no team will be entered.

Team Selection

The Tournament Director will play no part in the selection of the team members. The manager and deputy manager hold this responsibility.

The Manager should send an email to the Tournament Director stating the five players and two reserves chosen, giving email addresses for them all. All players should have already registered on webdiplomacy.net when the list is sent to the Tournament Director, and hyperlinks to the players' profiles on webdiplomacy should also be included in this email.

[[Tom Anthony is going to have his hands full if he gets this thing up and running!]]

The Making of “1648”

by Charles Féaux de la Croix

In last issue's article about **1648** I wrote about the two main sources of inspiration which prompted me to tackle such a variant design project. Briefly put, those were:

- A) A rules mechanism first featured in ***Ambition & Empire***, a variant designed by Jeff Kase and Baron Powell. Its neutral supply centres are garrisoned by minor power units whose actions players may secretly influence by bidding Diplomacy Points (DPs). Being fascinated by the whole new layer of design-making introduced in this manner, my thoughts turned to historical scenarios well-suited to this mechanism.
- B) Next to the basic requirement of multiple powers being roughly equal in strength, I believe the DP mechanism works best when more territory is initially not controlled by player powers than was the case round 1900. The mid-17th century makes for an ideal historical scenario on both counts, so it didn't take me long to narrow down my search for an adequate historical scenario to the aftermath of the Westphalian peace settlement of 1648.

Now, initially I conceived this project as resulting in two standalone variants, one encompassing the whole world and the other being limited to Europe itself. In 2003 David Cohen, Ian Coburn and I launched ourselves into a collaborative design project seeking to tackle the challenge of a global variant project. Yet ultimately sheer size, complexity and the difficulties of a “design by committee” approach saw this perhaps overly ambitious project flounder. I then focused entirely on the more manageable project limited to Europe. 58 supply centres were quite enough to handle and in time I lost the appetite for revisiting the 120+ SC beast, no doubt because the struggle for European hegemony alone is sufficiently intriguing as to sustain my interest.

First Steps

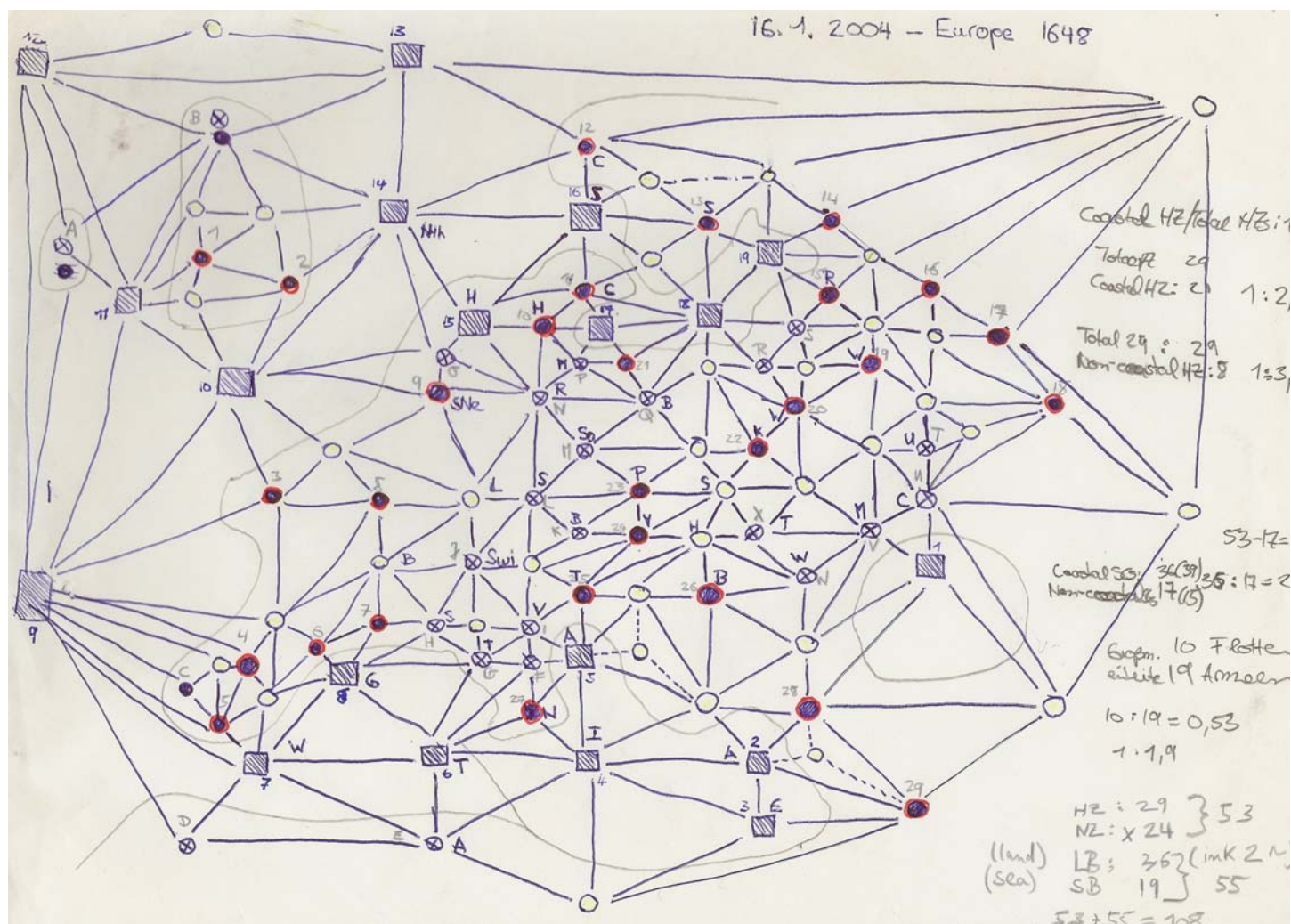
Having established my historical point of departure and identified nine great power positions, the actual crafting of the variant began with jotting down on a map rough political boundaries and possible supply centre locations. Those presented the basic framework I would then work with.



A first “brainstorming exercise”

When it comes to working out province adjacencies and SC locations, I find it easiest to do so with pencil and paper. Rather than drawing actual provinces, I sketch things out by drawing circles (land provinces), squares

(sea spaces) and connect these with lines that indicate adjacencies. MAPMAKER, a Diplomacy mapping tool, does much the same. I found this method provides greater conceptual clarity than if drawing a proper map.



Working out province adjacencies, January 2004

"On the Shoulders of Giants"

I worked out these province adjacencies consulting many a historical atlas and having done in advance a fair amount of historical research. Yet I wasn't reinventing the wheel. Being familiar with variants such as **Ambition & Empire** and **1600**, I was well aware of how other designers had tackled not entirely dissimilar scenarios. For instance, Denmark-Norway being a playable power has compelled previous designers to increase the number of intervening spaces between England and Denmark in order to reduce Anglo-Danish friction. It is no coincidence that the designers of **1600** and **Ambition & Empire** both independently came up with much the same solution.

1648 is effectively my take on what **Ambition & Empire** would have looked like had it been set in the mid-17th century. I should say rather few of **1648**'s province

adjacencies mirror **Ambition & Empire**'s since the respective geopolitical situations are quite different, yet here we have one example in which this is the case.

The more pervasive influence on province adjacencies stems from **Ambition & Empire**'s Diplomacy Points mechanism being used in **1648**. For instance, no pure map variant would be well served with such an abundance of neutral supply centres. Only relative scarcity creates the necessary friction between the great powers. **Ambition & Empire**'s minor power garrisons fill an otherwise all-too-great power vacuum and delay the conquest of neutral territory.

One equally has to take into account that such minor powers both present an opportunity (i.e. as a conquest target or source of military aid) as well as a potential threat if so influenced by great power rivals.



Once having worked out the basic province adjacencies with pencil and paper, I sought an accurate map template to use thereafter. I was lucky enough to come

A map of Europe and its surrounding regions, color-coded to represent different political or administrative divisions. The map includes Iceland, the British Isles, Scandinavia, Central Europe, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. Various colors like blue, green, pink, orange, and brown are used to delineate these regions.

Diplomacy World #107 - Fall 2009 - Page 12

Generally, I consider state boundaries sacrosanct and I do not casually alter them to suit gameplay purposes. And indeed, I have really only taken two real liberties, I should think, in this regard.

- Hungary: The old Hungarian kingdom had split into three distinct parts following the disastrous Battle of Mohacs: the Principality of Transylvania, Turkish Hungary and Royal (i.e. Habsburg) Hungary. Croatia and the Hungarian plains were pretty devastated by perpetual warfare. For gameplay reasons, I chose to lump together both the Habsburg and Turkish parts of central Hungary and do the same in respect to Croatia. So you have effectively a No-Man's-Land between the two sides' major bases (i.e. Vienna and Belgrade), flanked by the powerful Principality of Transylvania that so often played a key role in the struggle over the Hungarian plains. I like to think this amounts to a fair portrayal of the basic geopolitical situation.
- Courland & Prussia: These two autonomous fiefs of the Polish Crown weren't actually quite adjacent to another, yet for the gameplay's sake, I "cheated". However, since a number of less accurate historical maps show the same, I didn't have too great scruples on this count.
- Moldavia & Crimea: I awarded territories directly ruled by Turkey to its semi-independent vassals, namely Budjak to Moldavia (formerly Moldavian territory, for access to the Black Sea) and Yedisán to the Crimean Khanate (equally once Crimean territory).

Here, I might note that I made nominally Polish and Turkish territories which enjoyed great autonomy or de-facto independence, into independent minor powers. Perfectly reasonable from an historical viewpoint and beneficial to gameplay, I should say.

The Hardest Nut to Crack

Back in the 17th century the Spanish Crown's far-flung territories effectively encircled Bourbon France. Phillip IV's European holdings included the Kingdom of Naples, the Duchy of Milan, the Franche-Comté and the Spanish Netherlands. Hence the greatest challenge in designing a 17th century variant is arguably to get Franco-Spanish friction down to manageable levels. For I do not believe any two powers ought to be condemned to fighting each other.

So, how to configure the Spanish Crown's domains? Since Castile remained its primary power base, I resolved that half of its initial SCs ought to be located there. The Franche-Comté could be readily left aside as being of secondary importance. One then is left with three important extra-Iberian domains: Naples, Milan and Flanders. Something had to give. A total of five SCs might have been justified during the reign of Phillip II, yet

by no means in an age of decline.

Hence, the Duchy of Milan was made into a buffer province and the Flemish outpost wasn't given any building privileges (much as the Austrian Netherlands lacks these in ***Ambition & Empire***). France now still faces Spanish units on multiple fronts, yet also needs to concern itself with England and Austria.

This Spanish SC configuration was quite straightforward, yet for a long time I tried to make the variant work with a 4-SC France. So dissatisfied was I with the resulting overly antagonistic Franco-Spanish relationship that I turned my back on the project for a good five years.

Only earlier this year did I revisit this half-forgotten project of mine. Considering the amount of work I had already invested, it seemed a shame to leave the design indefinitely in limbo. A fresh set of eyes after so long a time allowed for what I consider a critical breakthrough. I dropped all 4-SC France schemes and settled for three French supply centres. Suddenly, I felt as if all the pieces had fallen into place and all subsequent work became a matter of tweaking a basically sound structure.

Fine-tuning

Too many changes have been made, since then, for me to discuss them all. One important change, however, was the extension of the map further to the East. I added Turkestan and Persia as minor powers for Russia and Turkey to fight over, thereby increasing the initial conflict-potential between them. My sense is that such potential gains and dangers in their rear somewhat lessens the "corner power" nature of their positions.

Naturally, any Russo-Turkish conflict ought to allow for naval contests over the Black Sea. And so I made the Crimea a potential Russian build-site as it is in ***Ambition & Empire***. Similar access to the seas had to be granted to Poland-Lithuania, both to the North and the South.

At first I gave Austria building rights throughout the Holy Roman Empire so as to account for the Habsburgs' possession of the Imperial Crown. In part I wanted to allow for the building of an Imperial Fleet up in the North as had historically been done in the 1620s. Yet it occurred to me that the elective monarchy of the Holy Roman Empire would be best done justice, if any power were allowed to seize the Imperial Crown. These extra building-privileges further enhance the map centre's importance in seeking victory.

Together with the special rules relating to the Holy Roman Empire, the other major change to the ***Ambition & Empire***-based rules concerns the Diplomacy Points (DPs). Unlike all other great powers, England starts off with merely two units and hence only two DPs. To place

among allies as well as DP investments being spread out more. I must confess I liked this tweak to the DP rules so much that I also applied the same tweak to my **1926** variant, despite all powers in that variant starting off with a full complement of three DPs.



Only recently has the first **1648** playtest concluded. Though Austria succeeded in reaching the 18 SCs (31% of total SCs) required to win in a matter of six years, I wonder whether the map's SC density makes solos overly difficult to pull off. My current hunch is that *on paper* solos ought to be inherently unlikely in **Standard**, **1648** and indeed a good many other variants. Yet in practice, I guess, the "human factor" comes into play and increases the chances for a solo.

Charles' first 1648 article appeared in DW 106. I'd love to get some comments or articles from players who've tried the variant. Maybe some strategy tips?

1648 Rules Version 3.0

Introduction

1648 is a nine-player Diplomacy variant set in Europe following the Peace of Westphalia, the first adjudicated season being Spring 1649.

1648's rules are based upon those of Ambition & Empire, a variant designed by Jeff Kase and Baron Powell. As its most striking departure from Standard Diplomacy, the latter first featured armed neutrals whose actions players may secretly influence by bidding Diplomatic Points (DPs).

Rules

All the rules of standard Diplomacy apply save those noted below:

Great Powers

Initial Setup

Austria:	A Prague, A Trieste, A Vienna.
Denmark-Norway:	F Christiania, F Copenhagen, A Holstein.
England:	F Bristol, F London.
France:	F Brest, A Marseille, A Paris.
Poland-Lithuania:	A Cracow, A Vilna, A Warsaw.
Russia:	A Moscow, A Novgorod, A Voronezh.
Spain:	A Flanders, A Madrid, F Naples, F Seville.
Sweden:	A Abo, A Riga, A Stettin, F Stockholm (East Coast).
Turkey:	A Belgrade, F Constantinople, A Damascus.

Home Supply Centers (HSCs)

Note the additional HSCs (underlined below) on top of those controlled at the start of the game and Flanders not being considered a Spanish HSC.

Austria:	Prague, Trieste, Vienna.
Denmark-Norway:	Christiania, Copenhagen, Holstein.
England:	Bristol, London, <u>Ireland</u> , <u>Scotland</u> .
France:	Brest, Marseille, Paris, <u>Lorraine</u> .
Poland-Lithuania:	Cracow, Vilna, Warsaw, <u>Courland</u> , <u>Moldavia</u> , <u>Prussia</u> .
Russia:	Moscow, Novgorod, Voronezh, <u>Crimea</u> .
Spain:	Madrid, Naples, Seville.
Sweden:	Abo, Riga, Stettin, Stockholm.
Turkey:	Belgrade, Constantinople, Damascus.

Holy Roman Empire (of the German Nation)

The Holy Roman Emperor may build in any SC within the Holy Roman Empire (HRE) he controls. Following SCs (marked by a burgundy red circle border) belong to the HRE (hereafter HRESCs):

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------|
| • Bavaria | • Lower Saxony | • Saxony |
| • Brandenburg | • Mecklenburg | • Swabia |
| • Flanders | • Prague | • Trieste |
| • Holstein | • Rhineland-Westphalia | • Vienna |
| • Lorraine | • Stettin | |

The Great Power owning the most HRESCs is considered the Holy Roman Emperor and enjoys the described building privileges. The title only is transferred whenever one single Great Power other than the present office-holder (initially Austria) has the most HRESCs.

Minor Powers

In addition to the nine Great Powers, there is also a host of "minor powers", which are non-player neutral Supply Centres (SCs) representing the smaller states of Europe, North Africa and the Near East. These include (space names in bold) the following:

- The Regency of **Algiers** (an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire)
- The Electorate of **Bavaria**
- The Electorate of **Brandenburg**
- The Venetian Colony of **Candia**
- The Duchy of **Courland** (an autonomous fiefdom of Poland-Lithuania)
- **Rhineland-Westphalia** (representing various territories belonging to the Lower-Rhenish, Electoral Rhenish and Lower Saxonian imperial circles)
- The Khanate of **Crimea** (a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire that includes the lands of the Crimean and Nagay Tatars)
- The Kingdom of **Ireland**
- The Duchy of **Lorraine**
- **Lower Saxony** (representing various territories belonging to the Lower Saxonian and Lower Rhenish-Westphalian imperial circles)
- **Mecklenburg** (representing the Duchies of Mecklenburg)
- The Principality of **Moldavia** (a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire)
- The Sultanate of **Morocco**
- The **Papal States**
- **Persia** (the Persian Empire)
- The Kingdom of **Portugal**
- The Duchy of **Prussia** (an autonomous fiefdom of Poland-Lithuania)
- The Duchy of **Savoy**
- The Kingdom of **Scotland**
- **Swabia** (representing various territories belonging to the Swabian, Franconian and Upper Rhenish imperial circles)
- The Swiss Confederation (**Switzerland**)
- The Principality of **Transylvania**
- The Regency of **Tunis** (an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire)
- **Turkestan**
- The Grand Duchy of **Tuscany**
- The **United Provinces** of the Netherlands
- The Republic of **Venice**
- The Cossack Hetmanate of the **Ukraine**
- The Principality of **Wallachia** (a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire)

Each minor power, although a "non-player," starts with a unit (unit colour is white). All minor powers start with an army except for the following minors that start with a fleet: Algiers, Candia, Courland, Portugal, Tunis, the United Provinces and Venice.

Minor power units prevent a Great Power from simply moving into an empty space and gaining control of the SC. To occupy a minor power SC, a Great Power will need to move in with support. A minor power unit that is forced to retreat is disbanded. If a Great Power does not occupy the minor power SC at the end of a Fall turn, the minor power's unit is automatically rebuilt in the Winter.

As in standard Diplomacy, a Great Power controls a minor power SC when one of its units occupies the space after a Fall turn has been played and completed. Once a Great Power gains control of a minor power SC, it can leave the SC vacant and still keep control of it as long as that SC is not occupied by another Great Power at the close of a Fall turn.

Minor power units do nothing but hold in place, unless the unit has been ordered by a Great Power using its Diplomacy Points.

Diplomatic Points

At the start of the Spring and Fall turns, each Great Power receives one Diplomacy Point (DP) for each SC it controls, up to a maximum of three DPs per turn. During each Spring and Fall turn, each Great Power may

allocate none, some, or all of its DPs to minor powers that still have units on the map, though no more than two of its DPs may be allocated to a particular minor power.

(Design Note: *This is a departure from the Ambition & Empire rules.*)

For each DP allocated, the allocating Great Power submits an order for that particular minor power's unit. A Great Power may only order a minor power to hold or support. A minor power can not be ordered to move/attack.

Unused DPs may not be carried over into the next turn. They are simply lost.

Players are not required to tell each other how they allocated their DPs. Just as with negotiations, players may honor their agreements with other players or not, as they see fit. Only the GM will know how Great Powers have allocated their DPs. DP allocation is not published in the adjudication; only the end results are published.

The GM determines how DPs have been allocated. In the event of a conflict, an order for a particular minor

Civil Disorder

If a player is lost during the game, the GM is strongly encouraged to find a replacement player for the affected Great Power rather than have it lapse into civil disorder. In the event no replacement player is found and the GM declares the Great Power to be in permanent civil disorder, the following rules apply:

- All units of the Great Power in civil disorder (GPCD) are immediately disbanded.
- All SCs controlled by the GPCD that are unoccupied are immediately considered newly independent minor powers. Minor power army units are built in those minor power spaces.
- All SCs controlled by the GPCD that are occupied by a unit belonging to another Great

Victory Conditions

As soon as one Great Power controls **18 SCs**, the game ends immediately and the player representing that Great Power is the winner.

If two Great Powers each gain control of 18 or more SCs at the same time, the player representing the Great Power with the most SCs is considered the winner. If the two Great Powers each control the same number of SCs, the game continues until one player has 18 or

Map Clarifications

- Ingria is a canal province (much as Copenhagen), thus allowing units to move from Abo, Lake Ladoga, the Gulf of Bothnia, Novgorod (South Coast) and Riga to Ingria

power's unit is followed if it is supported by more DPs than any conflicting order. See the following example:

In Spring 1649, Austria allocates one DP to Swabia to get it to support an Austrian attack on Bavaria. France allocates one DP to Swabia to get it to support a French attack on Lorraine. In support of Austria, Spain allocates one DP to Swabia to get it to support the Austrian attack on Bavaria. Although Austria, France and Spain each allocated one DP to Swabia, the Austrians get the Swabian support because the Spaniards supported the Austrian diplomatic efforts with the Swabians.

If, during a Spring or Fall turn, a Great Power allocates more DPs to minor powers than it is entitled to or exceeds the limit of allocating two of its DPs to one particular minor power, all of that Great Power's DPs are forfeited for that particular turn.

Power are unaffected. If the occupying Great Power moves its unit out of the GPCD's SC so that the SC is unoccupied at the conclusion of a Fall turn, a minor power army unit is built there and that SC is considered a newly independent minor power.

- For the remainder of the game, all newly independent minor powers are subject to the provisions of regarding minor powers. In particular, this means the new minor power can be influenced using Diplomacy Points.
- Once a Great Power is declared to be in permanent civil disorder, it may not be played by an active player again.

more SCs and that player has more SCs than any other player.

Players may terminate the game by mutual agreement before a winner is determined. If this occurs, any decision reached by the players (e.g., concede game to one player, concede game to an alliance) must be accepted unanimously. If the players cannot agree, all players who still have pieces on the board when the game ends share equally in a draw.

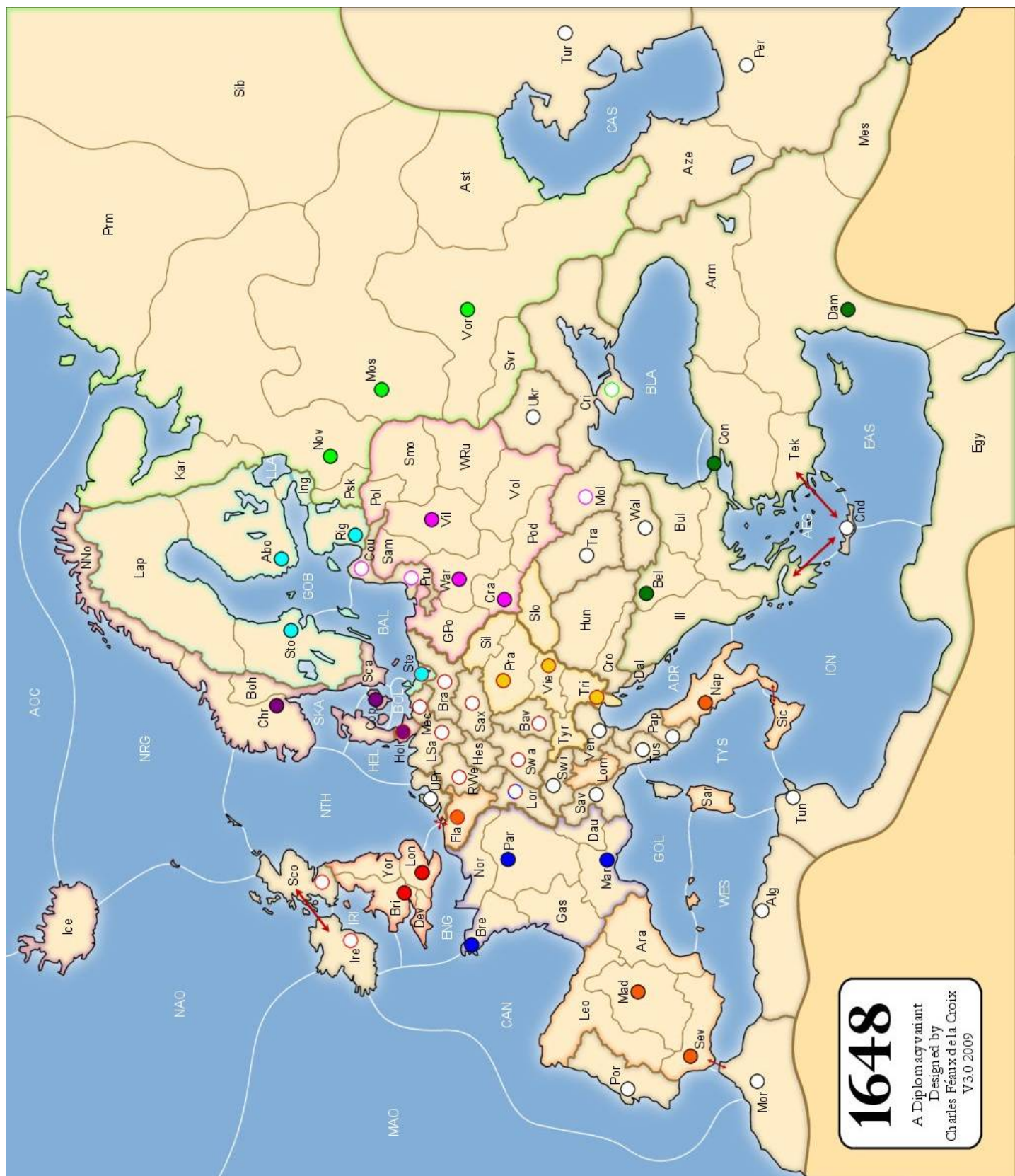
(and vice versa). The River Neva is shown on the map to indicate this.

- Red arrows indicate that two spaces are adjacent to another, allowing any units to operate across it.

Space Names and Abbreviations

All spaces on the 1648 map, along with their abbreviations, are listed below. SCs are annotated with an asterisk (*).

Abo*	Abo	Pskov	Psk
Algiers*	Alg	Rhineland-Westphalia*	RWe
Aragon	Ara	Riga*	Rig
Armenia	Arm	Samogitia	Sam
Astrakhan	Ast	Sardinia	Sar
Azerbaijan	Aze	Savoy*	Sav
Bavaria*	Bav	Saxony*	Sax
Belgrade*	Bel	Scania	Sca
Bohuslan	Boh	Scotland*	Sco
Brandenburg*	Bra	Severia	Svr
Brest*	Bre	Seville*	Sev
Bristol*	Bri	Siberia	Sib
Bulgaria	Bul	Sicily	Sic
Candia*	Cnd	Silesia	Sil
Christiania*	Chr	Slovakia	Slo
Constantinople*	Con	Smolensk	Smo
Copenhagen*	Cop	Stettin*	Ste
Courland*	Cou	Stockholm*	Sto
Croatia	Cro	Swabia*	Swa
Cracow*	Cra	Switzerland*	Swi
Crimea*	Cri	Tekke	Tek
Dalmatia	Dal	Transylvania*	Tra
Damascus*	Dam	Trieste*	Tri
Dauphiné	Dau	Tunis*	Tun
Devon	Dev	Turkestan*	Tur
Egypt	Egy	Tuscany*	Tus
Flanders*	Fla	Tyrolia	Tyr
Gascony	Gas	Ukraine*	Ukr
Greater Poland	GPO	United Provinces*	UPr
Hesse	Hes	Venice*	Ven
Holstein*	Hol	Vienna*	Vie
Hungary	Hun	Vilna*	Vil
Iceland	Ice	Volhynia	Vol
Illyria	Ill	Voronezh*	Vor
Ingria	Ing	Wallachia*	Wal
Ireland*	Ire	Warsaw*	War
Karelia	Kar	White Ruthenia	WRu
Lapland	Lap	Yorkshire	Yor
Leon	Leo		
Lombady	Lom	Adriatic Sea	ADR
Lorraine*	Lor	Aegean Sea	AEG
London*	Lon	Arctic Ocean	AOC
Lower Saxony*	LSa	Baltic Sea	BAL
Madrid*	Mad	Bay of Lübeck	BOL
Marseille*	Mar	Black Sea	BLA
Mecklenburg*	Mec	Cantabrian Sea	CAN
Mesopotamia	Mes	Caspian Sea	CAS
Moldavia*	Mol	Eastern Mediterranean	EAS
Morocco*	Mor	English Channel	ENG
Moscow*	Mos	Gulf of Bothnia	GOB
Naples*	Nap	Gulf of Lion	GOL
Normandy	Nor	Helgoland Bight	HEL
Northern Norway	NNo	Ionian Sea	ION
Novgorod*	Nov	Irish Sea	IRI
Papal States	Pap	Lake Ladoga	LLA
Paris*	Par	Mid-Atlantic Ocean	MAO
Permia	Prm	North Atlantic Ocean	NAO
Persia*	Per	North Sea	NTH
Podolia	Pod	Norwegian Sea	NRG
Polotsk	Pol	Skaggerak	SKA
Portugal*	Por	Tyrrhenian Sea	TYS
Prague*	Pra	Western Mediterranean	WES
Prussia*	Pru		



A Wide Ranging View

by Jim Burgess

"The balance-of-power player will usually fight to the last and will deal with anybody and everybody. To save the game, he will come to the aid of players with whom he has no alliance, even if an alliance is necessary to do so." (Allan Calhamer in "Introduction to Diplomacy," <http://www.diplomacy-archive.com/resources/calhamer/intro-calhamer.htm>.)

The game of Diplomacy was designed around Allan Calhamer's interest in balance-of-power. Europe going into World War I did not actually have seven roughly equal powers, but Diplomacy is not a realistic game in that sense. I have met Allan and corresponded with him off and on for decades and I think it is fair to say that he is NOT a psychologist either, so he did not really design it as a psychological game. Yet at its heart, I will argue here that the balance-of-power concept is inherently psychological. And as such, because the context for each game and the players in it always is different, the game very seldom plays out in balance-of-power fashion. The result is that solos actually occur far more frequently than they "should" if balance-of-power precepts were being followed by all players in the game. At present, we are testing a new DW demo game, called "balance" not surprisingly, to see if seven players committed at the start to balance-of-power play would generate... well, more balance-of-power play. Since I am in that game and it is in the early stages, I will not in any way comment on that game or how I am approaching it here. Instead, I want to lay out some of my wider thoughts on balance-of-power play, hoping to convince you that while Calhamer got a huge amount right, so this is really THE game, ultimately it is the psychology of the people playing each game that determines how much balance-of-power play is exhibited.

Calhamer, in his book and elsewhere, has discussed his thoughts extensively on the state of the European monarchs and diplomacy at the beginning of the 20th Century. Some of this writing is really insightful and it is worth reading, but I'm not going to summarize it here. Instead I'm going to make a few claims (that you may want to disagree with and please Doug with some letters to the editor) or my own that will help me make my points leading to the psychology of the play of Diplomacy THE Game. First, and this seems obvious, but I need to state it, so it is vivid in everyone's mind: rulers of countries are playing with their own real lives and those of their subjects. The early 20th Century was the end of the monarch era in Europe and the beginning of the democracy movement that has led to so much hegemony and the European Union of today. These monarchs and rulers also were maneuvering for the survival of their families and their own personal power. If

you really could recreate this on the board, so that if I lost I really was playing for my family and its true future and prosperity AND for the future of all the monarchs in Europe, more people would play balance-of-power. I would have to consider the stakes.

It is not possible for a game to have those stakes. This is not about money (people have tried "money games" and this does not help, as I would not think it would) so much as ego and power, but true power where I can't pick up and start over again another day because once the power is gone, it is gone.



This naturally leads to Calhamer's first statement that he qualifies only because he knows this is a game, but probably would prefer not to qualify: the balance-of-power player will USUALLY fight to the last. Well, if this really is your life, you cannot bail out; you have to play it out. This is really the crux of the problem. There is very little survival desperation in most players as they start to lose and realize that they will not come back. So, this is the first practical failure of balance-of-power play in Diplomacy, having players who do not view survival as something to achieve at nearly any cost. This gets lost sometimes in other discussions about the goals of Diplomacy, which is a game after all, where people talk about win-only play and some win-only players really don't care about survival once they can't win. In this sense, that is not realistic, we all in our life have situations we do not control, but we choose to "stay in the game" and defer to others. More on that issue a bit later.

The next issue hampering balance-of-power play in Diplomacy is Calhamer's second statement above, which requires dealing with anyone and anybody. Again, this is the reality of the real world, one cannot ignore leaders of other powers. One can try to isolate them diplomatically, but most of the time you deal with

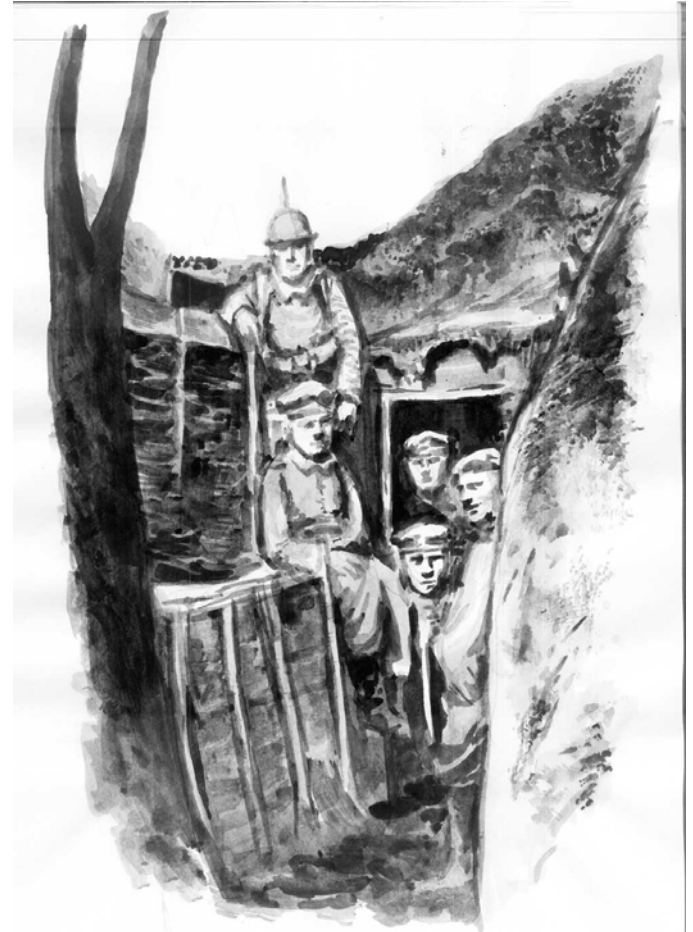
them all. In Diplomacy you do not have to do that. You can choose who you're going to deal with. There are two important issues to cover here that nuance this, first the "time" or "real life" problem, and the second the "fixed alliance" problem, which I will address in turn.

The real life problem is related to the first issue about survival desperation. If one is running a real country, then that has to be the first priority, in Diplomacy the game other factors of life really are the most important. This problem is lessened in FTF Dip where once you sit down over a board, one usually is not doing anything else and is focused on the game in front of them. Real life can decide to end a game early, or lead one to want to bail, possibly lessening survival desperation, but these are relatively minor concerns. In other manifestations of the game, such as E-Mail Diplomacy, the real life factors can decide two things about negotiation: the timing of the exchanges of negotiations and the short cut of choosing an ally so that discussions are easier. If one is playing an E-Mail Diplomacy game and does not want to spend much time on it, the #1 way to do that is to find one ally and just stick with them. One can get away with as little as one E-Mail a game season that way (just an update to one's ally). This can be particularly frustrating within a game, since it can be impossible to get these types of people to respond at all, so there really is just no hope for balance-of-power play. More on this point below as well.



Failure to synch timing of messages also is a big problem here though. When people are busy and messages are not timed well within a negotiation period in E-Mail games, this can hurt the ability to renegotiate alliances and relationships and can become part of the underlying context of games as they develop away from balance-of-power play. Strangely enough, with FTF games, the reverse of this happens. With time limited FTF games, the smaller power actually becomes more valuable and has more time to renegotiate relationships to survive. I do not know what an empirical analysis would show, but I think that I would predict that if we compared the course of FTF and E-Mail games that FTF

games would be more likely to show balance-of-power characteristics with COMPETENT players. That last point is key, since this time issue goes hand in hand with the time pressure itself. Novices and early intermediate players tend to find that managing the clock is one of the hardest things to do, and if they get knocked down early have trouble figuring out how to regain some balance. If you took the same pool of competent players and had them play the same number of FTF and E-Mail games, that would test this idea more directly.



Then there is the "fixed alliance" problem and Allan Calhamer's curiously worded statement that, to save the game, the balance-of-power player will come to the aid of players with whom he has no alliance, even if an alliance is necessary to do so. This takes me to my primary point, the group psychology of a game and the effect on the balance-of-power state of the game. There is much game theory (basic ideas of tit-for-tat, e.g.) that suggests that a good strategy when attacked is to attack back and not make peace with the person who attacked you. But this game theory is mostly based on simple 2x2 structures, not the 7 player scenario of Diplomacy. Allan Calhamer worked very hard, and was largely successful, to enable the structure of the game to support complete balance-of-power play among the powers in designing Diplomacy. Only one player can win, though 17-17 draws are possible, these are not viewed as "joint wins" except by people trying to

circumvent the rules and intent of the designer. So, if one cannot win, stopping the leader and playing balance-of-power would seem to be the best thing to do. In practice, that does not happen all that often. Why not?

Unlike the "real world" where there are many more incentives to hold to balance-of-power and actually "taking out a country" really does not happen all that often in the grand scheme of things, such lower level play happens far more in the game of Diplomacy. I use the term lower level in a very specific sense, my own trademarked sense, that the levels of uncertainty in the game of Diplomacy may be seen as levels of the game. By definition adding a country (or not subtracting it) so that two units are controlled by two powers rather than one makes the game more complex in that way. We are less certain that these two units will act cooperatively. But players are strongly motivated to simplify the game and lower the level of the game to seek order in the game. This works in direct opposition to balance-of-power play. Again, it is to Calhamer's credit, and the strength of the game design, that these forces do not eliminate balance-of-power play entirely. They do not. But it is a rare game that sees all seven players in the game actively approaching it with balance-of-power thinking.

Another psychological factor that comes into play is the building of trust. If one is truly working at a balance-of-power structure to their negotiations and moves in all things, then one never builds up any on-going trust at all, except for people to believe that you will in fact shift your focuses based on balance-of-power thinking, perhaps. Trust is a sequentially "what have you done for me lately" sort of emotion or feeling that one develops. The "recency" effect on the most recent trust or failure of trust seems to be strong in most people. Probably what is needed instead is more of that meta-balance-of-power trust development. This can feel safe in a psychological way among those who try to play this style and trust in it actually can be developed. I know it sounds strange to trust that you can't trust your fellow players to do anything other than balance-of-power play. And remember that this is not a precise definition and itself is subject to interpretation and miscommunication, but that trust can be very powerful in negotiations. I know, I've developed it, I've seen it done to me as well. Yet it is a second level effect by definition and many people resist it and especially resist calling it a trust relationship.

I will close at yet one higher level. The persuasion in Diplomacy operates at an extremely deep emotional power level, the power of one human being over another by those powers of persuasion. Can I convince you that my view of the world is correct and convince you to do

what I want you to do? We have all seen the effect of this. The power exerted in doing this does not have to be overt, muscular, or masculine. It can be subtle (as in Calhamer's closing phrase in the quote above), devious, or feminine. I do not think such issues are inimical to balance-of-power play, they are part of the tapestry of being human and one's attitude toward games in general and Diplomacy in particular. How much does one value intellectual and psychological domination over one's opponents vs. the camaraderie and cooperation built up over jointly followed agreements? These all vary across people and the context of who the opponents are. In an anthropology sense, this is looking for the silver backed male or the alpha dog in a pack to lead vs. those who prefer to be dominated and do not seek the difficulty and responsibility of managing the pack. You would think that people playing Diplomacy are thinking more like elks pounding their horns and heads together and would not play submissive. You would be wrong. And this is the REAL problem with balance-of-power, the fact that this is a game where some are really trying to dominate, but others are not, possibly most are not.

Why would this be, how CAN this be, you might ask? Our genes provide many socialization developments that allowed us to form communities. Fascinatingly enough, what are these communities but the countries and societies of Europe represented on the Diplomacy map. When we play the game of Diplomacy, we are trying to fit into our community, the community of game players and that meta-Diplomacy inhibits most of us from fully engaging our inner elk. The first level of reactions of cooperators is the strong alliance play that builds internal trust within the alliance, but opposes balance-of-power play. But this does not have to be the end of the story as we have argued that we can take the trust to a higher level, the trust that we will be playing balance-of-power. I am not one to argue for convincing others to accept my view of the world, perhaps my own un-elk-like behavior. But Diplomacy can be a game where players engage in fierce balance-of-power play and still embrace each other as friends afterward. In fact, they can do so with even more respect. And that's what makes this a great game. I'm not naïve enough to believe that this state of the world though is going to happen just because we say "this is a balance-of-power game", it is the luck of the draw (or planning) that determines who we play with that largely determines whether we see strong balance-of-power on the board. That's just the way it is. We welcome other opinions, make Doug happy and write a passionate letter of comment or your own article disagreeing with me.

Jim Burgess is Co-Editor and Interview Editor for Diplomacy World

The Russian Bear's Soft Heart

By Tom Anthony

Russia is a very powerful country, the mantra goes. Richard Sharp, in *"The Game of Diplomacy"* offers support for this claim:

Russia occupies more than a quarter of the board, starts life with four units to everyone else's three, can in theory gain more builds in 1901 than anyone else, and has the one golden advantage of being able to build fleets on both sides of the stalemate line. Russia also wins considerably more games than any other country, certainly at postal play and probably at face-to-face as well: fifty outright wins in the first 303 British postal games, well clear of second-placed Germany with thirty-four. The last American list I saw showed Russia with 121 wins out of 774, a slightly lower percentage than in Britain but still well clear of Germany (eighty-three) in second place.

However, my experience of Russia is rather different. She has always seemed to be obnoxious about her strengths, and slow to realize the fatal flaws that undermine them.



Richard Sharp says that the ability to build fleets on both sides of the stalemate line is a "golden advantage", but then again, compare Russia to Austria- on either side of the stalemate line Russia only has one place to build a fleet, just as Austria has only one, so to gain significant naval power as Russia is similarly difficult to doing so as Austria, on either side of the stalemate line.

To profit from the "golden advantage", you have to succeed in building a navy from a single supply centre twice. That is a monumental achievement. To be really competitive in a set of seas, be they northern or southern, she would need to have a bare minimum of four or five fleets by 1908. To dominate them, she would need yet more. In addition, she would require at least five armies at that stage, and that leaves her with at least 13 units already, enough to spark an alliance

against her, and even then in truth she is only equivalent to a 6 or 7 centre power on either side of the line- against good opponents, she will loose.

Now, it is true that Austria is often tied down in Trieste, which is part of her problem with fleets, but isn't Russia tied down in Sevastopol- attacking Turkey, unless she is gifted the Black Sea, she will struggle to get a second fleet, and getting a third will be probably be impossible until Turkey is down to one or two centre; not attacking Turkey, she cannot build fleets and keep the alliance going? Perhaps the prospects of building fleets are brighter in the North, but how often do you see a Russia really storming the Northern Seas in top quality games?

What of Russia's extra unit, surely that is an advantage? Most certainly not- Russia has four neighbors, all of whom I'd wager are quite likely to attack her in the first year (England can move to the Barents Sea and convoy to Norway, for instance). Compare with France, say, who, it is true, may be attacked by any of Italy, Germany and England, but Italy is much less likely to attack her than England is likely to attack Russia. Russia is split in two, fighting in North and South, but only has one third extra units for double the number of fronts. Tactically, it is a disaster before we think to mention the effect of the appearance of extra size.

But above everything, Russia is weak because he finds it very difficult to ally with anyone. Germany and Austria don't want to have a powerful Russia, because they will become surrounded. England may or may not be peaceful at first, but likely won't ally, to sandwich herself before France and Russia, unless she is confident of France attacking Russia later. Turkey meanwhile gets the worse deal from the Juggernaut alliance. All of this just makes it easier to for alliances against Russia, and knock him down quickly- everyone will get a centre or two, and nobody will have to worry about the bear again- he's been killed whilst still a cub.

This all being the case, then, how do I explain Russia's incredible record? On webDiplomacy, for instance, Russia has a success rate of 17.3% (i.e. WinRate + 2-wayrate/2 + 3-wayrate/3 etc.), putting her in second place. Well, compare that to when I filter to games with a Ghost-rating average of 200. Then the success rate drops to 10.7%, where Austria sits at 10.4%. Herein lays a warning about the use and abuse of statistics- we need to look at the best games in order to truly understand this game. As for the Bear, perhaps it does suffer a similar fate to Austria.

Be sure to check out Tom's "World Series of Diplomacy" article elsewhere in this issue.

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Huskycon – the Naked Truth

By Frank Oosterom

Here you are: a young (or so he thinks he is) guy from Holland who loves to travel. He enjoys playing Diplomacy or Poker (or both), and tries to have himself a great time on the trips that he makes to play either game. What place can a guy like this absolutely not miss on the tournament calendar?

You've probably guessed it already, and the answer is not just easy because of the title to this article. It's also easy because outside of the always tumbling Diplomacy community (I will NOT discuss politics here!), there's this legend of some blokes and their family, living on this ridiculous strip of land called Long Island overlooking the Atlantic waves, and organizing a tournament like nothing else.

Being the Dutch critical bastard that I am, I always refused to believe these tall tales until I could experience it for myself. And being unable to make it the previous year, with the help of Cyrille and his plans of stripping Vegas and the Grand Canyon, I got myself a ticket to this extravaganza bonanza.

The first person I met was Conrad (one of the blokes in the second paragraph) picking me up in his car, and expressing disappointment in me for not bringing a bottle of discount scotch whisky... Okay... But it would have meant we had to empty it, because I would not have been able to take it with me on the plane to Vegas. Still disappointed, I took it the liberty of spirits would be something to look forward to.

Then we got to this place... Well, I'm not gonna lie and the pictures don't lie: it's just a great place, to be in it and to around it, period. The prospected food (and more important, the booze) were to be plentiful, which in the end luckily didn't catch up with me, cause after each game I was so frickingly tired, I had no other option than to crash into bed.

This last action of each day was actually part of my typically Dutch achievement that weekend. For the people who weren't there: Conrad got me this place to sleep inside a nice shed which was gated by a beautiful glassy double door. These same doors offer able a perfect view of the patio where a lot of people would chill out during the weekend.

Next thing you know, there's this big knackered Dutch fellow who thinks he can slip himself out of his clothes and into bed without anybody noticing it. First night it went alright and unnoticed, second night not quite... And I just realized it when I killed the lights, for a disappointment filled 'Aaaahhhhhh' raised me to the

unexpected attention. Ah well, I thought, so they saw my sexy boxers, so what? And I got to bed and fell asleep.

Next day, which was actually my birthday, I got the surprise of being presented one of the special prizes, namely the Naked Baby Prize, for the nightly peep show I put up with the aforementioned striptease. Whattayaknow? I guess I taught the North Americans something about Dutch 'openness'...

Ah, who am I kidding? For openness, kindness and sheer fun, this weekend couldn't be topped. I mean, who cares about deadlines when the players can set them themselves? Also, the simplicity of the scoring system makes up for a lot if you want to explain it to anybody, including yourself.

And that's just the Diplomacy part of which I can give testimony (not forgetting the crazy double 'guess who plays what' No Press game that took place somewhere in the middle). There were tons of other games going on, as well as inspired and hilarious conversations along the way, and to top it all, even catamaran rides, kayaking, swimming, sunbathing and all the other crazy things you do on holidays.

Whatever you wanna talk about when it comes to this Huskycon weekend, the careless fun is indisputable. So next year make sure you're on this trip (or come back if you were this year), for it seems this crowd of people never gets tired of having fun together.

The End? Yes, but not before I've mentioned as a sideline (could you imagine?) that one of the brothers Woodring made sure the Champion's trophy stayed at home while he managed to stay sober the minimal amount of time. On the other hand you have your humble writer of this testimony, who managed to get drunk in the minimal amount of time, which Conrad could not believe...Ok, I'll promise to take some spirits next time and even bring something of my own so you'll know I'm not with the Salvation Army or anything sensible.

Thanks for a great weekend guys and girls! You know who you are, so don't even try to forget the fun we had at the Woodring's!

Your Big Dutch Baby, Frank Oosterom

[[Maybe next year somebody can get some photos of Frank in his birthday suit, and use them to blackmail him for a center or a stab at the right moment?]]

Metagaming UP! A Few Considerations About Team Tournaments After My Experience in D(N)WC

By Giovanni Cesarini

My experience in team tournaments is not very large: I just played WM2004 as a member of the Virtual Vermonters Team, and more recently played in D(N)WC I, serving as Italy's captain in the first round and in the beginning of the second.

My inspiration for writing this article came from reading the comments on metagaming by Jérémie Lefrançois in Diplomacy World 106. He presents some calculations designed to try and avoid metagaming interactions in team games, on the assumption that a team event should be won by "The team that shows the best sum of skills amongst the players".

My opinion is that a team event should be won by the team which shows the best team cooperation, where the result is not a "sum" of the skills of each player, but maybe the "factorial," or at least a multiplier. A team event must have a team-wide dimension, otherwise it would just be a single player event with some community additions.

I strongly believe that not only should metagaming be allowed in a team event, but the event itself should be built in a manner that every team can metagame on an even field.

My experience from WM2004 was that there hadn't been much team-wide Diplomacy interaction, mostly because we did not have multiple games with the same teams. The team activities, although very interesting, were mostly discussing the games and giving each other advice.

The format of WM2004 added a few problems to team interaction. The main one was that most of the games were manually adjudicated, and a few times there was little external access to the games. None of the game stored press so that teammates could view it. In these conditions the team management, as said, was limited to asking for and giving advice on positions or negotiations.

D(N)WC was played on stabbeurfou.com with all games sharing the same structure as the others. All press was sent through the system, stored and fully accessible to captains and lieutenant-captains. This gave the tournament a much stronger team flavor: each player could easily access his teammates' games and see positions and historical moves. The game standing was (almost) always up-to-date, and everyone could have a clear understanding of how each game was going for the team, and what could be the expected conclusion. The Captain and the lieutenant-captain could have a see all

of the negotiations. The same press was easily available to replacement players and vice-versa after temporary replacements of the original player.

This structural quality was extremely useful, because the rounds were played by 8 teams each (and the final round by 7), so that in the first round each team played 6 games with each other and all 7 in the final. This gave full scope to "team-wide" alliances and policies. All kind of team-wide negotiations were available; not only some basic "go to the leader" proposals, but full cross-gaming strategies could be developed and put in place in order to reach the true goal: winning as a team.

In my opinion, after this experience, the best set up for next edition is to always have rounds of 7 by 7. Possibly with the 7 elimination rounds of 7 teams, only the winner would have access the Final, in order to avoid the problem of teams that played together in round 1 would play again in the Final. In D(N)WC I felt this was quite evenly managed, because at least 2 teams came out of the same preliminary round.

The possibility to affect a player in some other game, by taking action your his own game, reinforced the need of strong teambuilding. This format gave a third dimension to the game, which was how each player's style and diplomacy was affecting the whole team, and games outside his own. This implies that the best player in a team event is not always a very good individual player, because he needs to understand how he is going to affect the team overall.

Managing a team of Diplomacy players is not at all easy. Each player has his own opinion about what is the best way of playing, his own paranoia, and his own approach to other individuals. For a non-English-speaking team (or at least where English was not the first language), there were also some difficulties in fully understanding what was going on around them, and in sending out correct messages.

Another very good thing was that there was not any individual prize awarded. All the players knew from the start that they were playing for a team, and not for themselves. This allowed everyone to focus on the team result rather than personal achievement. This had some impact on the overall level of playing, but it is normal that sometimes a good team structure with average players can be more effective than a sum of super-stars. (See Italy-Brazil 3-2 in the 1982 soccer world cup, for a perfect example what I mean).

In a team environment, without individual standing, the team-level diplomatic side is the added value of the formula. In a 7 by 7 formula this element is brought to the very limit: in each game you can cooperate and deal with each of the teams involved, and so you can effectively and evenly perform team tactics and team strategies.

It is quite clear that the captain and the vice-captain have a very important role in the team, and that a committed one is a big plus, but I would say that this is again a team flavor that should be encouraged by the tournament structure. D(N)WC I was won by a team which fielded a very good captain, but it had world-class players, who were very committed as individuals and as team members as well. As I said before, a **team** won, not just the individuals or the captain.

My suggestion is that reducing the team-wide diplomacat or metagaming aspect in a team tournament is going to spoil this new dimension, and in the end it will become a single player tournament with some team flavor added. Maybe there would be a bigger audience interested in such a tournament, but it would no longer be a team event with team play. Comparing with other sports, it would be more like a world cup of athletics rather than a world cup of soccer, rugby etc.

A team event should be designed in a way that a game can be spoiled because one of your teammates is doing stupid things in his game, or because of some team-wide considerations which, of course, would not normally be there in a standard "single" Diplomacy game. This is the new and interesting side of a team event. Each who

accept playing for their own team (nation) should be prepared to perform "inside the team" diplomatic effort, and to have his teammates play in line with the team goals. This way playing the tournament will be a different experience from an individual one, not only because the results are linked, but also because the games are played in very different way.

My experience with this new dimension has been amazingly enjoyable, and it surely was the only email tournament that I enjoyed from day one to almost the end, even if "Real Life" issues made me abandon the role of team captain and made me commit much less time to Diplomacy than I wanted to. This was possible because I could follow the team effort, and I still could give something to the team.

So in the end: Metagaming UP! But just in Team Tournaments, of course.

Notes: I would like to thank Andrea Ziffer for his help in reviewing the text. His advice was very valuable, and of course any remaining mistakes are fully mine. I also would like to thank all my teammates for sharing their opinions on the article and the subject with me. The opinions expressed in the article should be considered mine alone.

It was a welcome surprise to see a new submission from Giovanni in my email box. Perhaps this article goes hand-in-hand with Tom Anthony's announcement for his World Series of Diplomacy. If you'd like to contact Giovanni directly you can do so at kaesar "of" liberto.it

Balance of Power – Philosophy of Play in Practice and Theory

By Edi Birsan

The idea behind the Balance of Power (BoP) approach in Diplomacy is that you should be trying to keep everyone as much as possible within a very tight range of 'power'. In the European hobby you can see a clear expression of this in a tournament system that ends games at 1907, and offers as its achievement pinnacle the goal of having one more center than the next fellow; these games are often played where the 'winner' is someone with 8 or 9 centers. The underlying action of this approach is that you are expected to attack your ally if he gets ahead of you and the other players, sacrificing your alliance on the altar of BoP. There is also a fundamental - almost cultural - aspect in this between the European expression and what was once considered an American approach to BoP. In the European version, when your ally gets ahead of you there is a stab to take things away from the leader; in the American old time approach of BoP, you gained power to equal or balance

the leader by whatever means but not necessarily by breaking an alliance. So if the leader is two centers ahead, do you take one from him or two/three from the rest of the board?

At the start of a game of Diplomacy there is often the strongest display of a universal appeal of BoP, which then weakens substantially as the game goes on. The bonds of alliance or the annoyance of deception and the impulse for revenge mounts. This can be seen in some classic decisions in Fall 1901: does Germany let Russia take Sweden? For many experienced players one of the key factors is whether Russia is getting Rumania. Likewise, the French and English may react over a potential of Germany getting Belgium along with Holland and Denmark, and the desire to keep him from reaching 6 in 1901. All these actions are the practice of Balance of Power, and can set the tone for the rest of the game.

However, the real interplay of BoP thought is what happens as time goes on, and what does the philosophy make you do? In a tournament or goal perception environment where all participants in a draw share equally, then the alliance looks to create great imbalances so as to sweep the board and reduce the draw size. The other side seeks to form counter-balancing alliances as opposed to individual strength in order to stop the team. After all, if the same board situation was to suddenly be shifted to a European center count priority, the emphasis would not be on a counter-alliance structure but simply on an appeal and an expectation that the leader would be stabbed by his own ally to take away that lead.

So Balance of Power play is something that affects many games, but it has different impacts on games based on what the player's perception of what they want to do in the game, and how they are motivated by the background goals of the setting (such as a tournament scoring system or the lack of it). As in most cases of Diplomacy, it comes down to the pieces sitting around the board not the ones on it.

Edi Birsan, being just about the most active globetrotting Diplomacy player around in the tournament scene, has had ample opportunity to see the differences between American and European playing styles.

The Official Formal Rules of Planning an Ad Hoc Diplomacy Game

By Chris Sham

A lot of the articles in Diplomacy World are written with organized play in mind. They're either about official tournaments or formal gaming organizations and leagues. And that's perfectly understandable, considering that these things represent the upper crust of the hobby, and they bring together a lot of the best, most experienced Diplomacy players. This makes them more interesting to read about (and easier to write about) than, for example, articles like "A Game We Had at My Friend Phil's Place That We Never Got Around to Finishing."

Still, it's almost certainly true that the majority of Diplomacy players and games are much less strict and well organized than the official sort of games you'll read so much about in these pages. In my case, for example, I'd been playing for 4 years already before I finally saw a game end due to anything other than player apathy, and even now I've probably got more unfinished games to my name than completed ones (including proper draws). The rise of online Diplomacy may have helped some people to organize more games, more easily, but in my experience (with play-by-email and phpDiplomacy), a lot of players take online games much less seriously, probably because there isn't the immediate social pressure to participate that you get with a face-to-face game. But face-to-face games are just such a pain to organize; it's a wonder that informal Diplomacy games ever happen at all.

Perhaps it's not as easy to write for the informal gaming crowd, but we clearly need the advice more than the organized crowd (even though these two groups are probably mostly made up of the exact same people). Never having organized a major (or minor) Diplomacy tournament myself, I may be missing out on a few important organizational tips, but I think I've GMed and

hosted enough informal games to have some useful insights on how you can run a decent game without all the (relatively) fancy advertising and (relatively) expensive venues that the major tournaments have at their disposal. If you can think of any good ideas that I've missed, please do write in and tell us about them. If nothing else, I want to hear these ideas for myself.

Know People Who Like Diplomacy

It may seem a little obvious, but it's surprisingly easy to fall into the trap of inviting people who don't really want to play, just because you need to fill gaps. Most of them will just turn you down, which is annoying enough, but a few will feel compelled to sign up, only to lose interest before 1902.

When you're just starting out in the hobby, you don't have much choice in this, but as you go along, try to remember the people who really got into the game and the people who were not that keen on it (for whatever reason). In future games, when you need more players, the former group are the ones you want to call up, even if you barely know them and haven't spoken at all since you last played. If they're really, properly hooked on Dip, then little details like that shouldn't bother them much. And the latter group, who didn't show any interest in the past... Just pretend they don't exist for the purpose of this game. Even if you're good friends. Even if you normally do everything with them. Even if you're married to them. The odds are not good that they'll suddenly have changed their mind about the game, so they're a still a bad bet.

Set Deadlines

There's nothing wrong with putting a little pressure on people, even in an informal game, just to get the ball rolling. I'm sure you can be diplomatic about it (chortle

chortle), but if you don't push people to get started, it's unlikely they'll do it themselves. So make demands, present ultimatums, and enforce deadlines. Let people know that if they can't get their acts together, then they're going to miss out.



Ignore Deadlines

Bear in mind that the previous bit of advice is not an invitation to become a fun-Nazi; your job is to motivate people to play and enjoy themselves, not to push them into a setup they're uncomfortable with. If someone has a serious problem to deal with and you have to push back a deadline, that's usually perfectly alright, so long as you make the reason for the delay as clear as possible to the other players, or they might get bored, annoyed and restless.

Agree on Clear Schedules and Goals

I've seen plenty of games fall apart because new players don't properly appreciate just how long this game can last. To get it across to them most effectively, be sure to use the word 'months'; that should set it quite distinctly apart from the vast majority of other games they've ever tried, and it can easily be true.

Assuming everyone understands that this is a slow game, you should also work out a rough plan for when you're going to play. Will it be a one-day affair, with a set cut-off point and some sort of point system? Will you stretch it over several days, and if so, will you try to cram them into consecutive days, or will you meet every weekend or once a month or what? It's all good and well knowing that the game may last longer than your current meeting, but I've seen almost all my face-to-face games fail to reconvene after a break, purely because we left the planning until the end of the day, when everyone is tired of Diplomacy and doesn't want to think about it again in a rush. So make sure you decide on this at the start of the day, while everyone is still fresh and eager.

If you're playing a mail or email game, you need to work

out a posting schedule that'll suit everyone. That usually looks pretty simple on paper, but remember that unexpected troubles will crop up, so the whole group needs to be flexible enough to cope with these. If you're GM, then it's ultimately up to you to make the schedule amendments, but you can't do that without proper input from all the players. Make sure that they tell you what they can manage.

Find an Easy Venue

It's possible that you'll have access to a seemingly great venue, with plenty of space and several private, soundproofed rooms, where nobody else is going to bother you. And if that works well for everyone, then great, go with it. However, if that venue were inconvenient for even one player, I would seriously consider using a smaller, less perfect venue instead. A nice venue can make the game seem much better, but if one or more players are going to struggle to get there, then you're much less likely to be able to play in the first place.

A venue that's central to everyone is probably best, though you'll have to adjust for what form of transport each player relies on. If you have players relying on public transport, for example, then a venue that's off the public transport routes is going to be inconvenient again. I'm sure there are plenty of similar transport considerations, which will vary from player to player, so just make sure you know what everyone's limitations are and choose your venue accordingly.

I'd also steer away from any venues you have to pay to use, though depending where you live, that may be unavoidable. Even if all the players are tremendously wealthy and can easily afford it, it does add one extra layer of planning and bureaucracy that may put some people off. When you go to play Diplomacy, you don't want to have anything else on your mind.

Have Replacement Players on Standby

If you struggle to find even 7 players initially, then this will be tricky, but if you can, it's always useful to have a couple of extra people you can call on to substitute for players who've left the game early for whatever reason. And the sooner you can get the new player into the game, the better. There's nothing that'll make being a substitute less appealing than arriving to find that all your neighboring powers have had 2 or 3 seasons to move in on your defenseless territory and nibble away at all the previous player's expansion.

All of this will still require quite a bit of work from whoever's organizing the game, so don't think you can escape it. But this should at least help you to put together a game that'll actually get off the ground, and hopefully even play through to the end. Putting in a lot of effort just to start the game up may be a bit tedious, but putting in that much effort for nothing has got to be worse.

Finding Purpose When Victory Is Unattainable

By Joshua Danker-Dake

"To the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee." – Melville, Moby-Dick

Just about everybody's had the experience of having the tiniest power on the board when the game comes down to one huge power at fourteen or fifteen supply centers against a few smaller survivors trying to fend him off. Conventional wisdom states that everyone gangs up on the leader until balance is restored. But is that always the best way to play it?

Let's look at an example. Say the game has come down to this: you've got a 3-center Turkey to go with an 8-center France and an 8-center Germany against a 15-center Russia. As Turkey, you have no realistic prospect of winning the game no matter what you do. (Yes, everybody's heard stories like the one about the 1-center Italy who comes back to win the game, but let's be honest: it's not happening); the only reason you're still alive is because it's inconvenient for Russia to stamp you out completely. You don't seem to be a real threat to anyone – is using your piddling forces to tie up a couple of Russia's units so that France and/or Germany have a better chance at victory really your best option?



Good Diplomacy players play with purpose at all times. They have a reason for every action they take. Extending the game for the benefit other powers has no purpose to it; neither does muddling along, clinging to your infinitesimal chance of pulling an amazing turnaround.

If you have no chance to win, why should you be interested in extending the game for someone else's sake? More to the point, if you have no chance to win, why should you care who wins? On the other hand, you will often care who *doesn't*. And while you may have no chance to win, you will often have an influence on who *does*. In Diplomacy, revenge is a perfectly respectable motive for doing pretty much anything, and stab prevention is an even better one. Diplomacy is not played in a vacuum, but in communities. There will be other games, and you will often see the same players again. Look ahead. Let them know you mean business. It is one thing to negotiate with a power and say, "If you stab me, I will drag you down with me." It is quite another to do it with no regard for your own survival. Isn't it better, long-term, to keep your word and make a statement than to eke out a miserable survival in a game someone else wins? It will earn you a reputation, and it just might help you keep from getting stabbed in future games.

So if the 15-center Russia stabbed you earlier in the game, then by all means fight him with all the strength you have, and help his enemies. But now you're playing with purpose. By the same token, if the 8-center France stabbed you earlier in the game and is now requiring your help, rolling over to give Russia the win sends an equally purposeful message. This is Diplomacy – there's absolutely nothing wrong with sticking it to the player who stuck it to you.

Diplomacy has evolved its own system of what is and isn't sportsmanly – it does, after all, foundationally incorporate treachery. There are the obvious examples of bad sportsmanship: abandoning an online game (or quitting in the middle of a face-to-face game), disbanding all your units in a Build Anywhere game, being a sore loser, and so forth. But if you're that 3-center Turkey and you don't help Germany and France, they may well get on you. They may say you're either a bad player or a bad sport. But what's wrong with looking out for number one? You're a sovereign nation, going your own way. Don't be swayed by sour grapes.

The key here is to play with purpose at all times, whether it's to prove a point or get revenge. You have to do what's best for you, especially in the long-term. There's a great deal to be said for going out in a blaze of glory. Certainly it's better to die a glorious death than to be an unrewarded collaborator. Better still to remain a force to be reckoned with, even in defeat.

Joshua is the new Strategy & Tactics Editor for Diplomacy World

Grand Prix Watch

Sigal Hanging on with Three Events to Go

By Jim O'Kelley

Adam Sigal of New York, the Grand Prix leader all year long, finished a disappointing 28th at Husky Con, held July 24 to 26 in Long Island. Husky was the second largest tournament of the year at 17 boards. Then in September, Sigal skipped the 14-board Weasel Moot, held Sept. 18-19 in Chicago, to observe Rosh Hashanah. These two events staked more than enough points to turn the tide of the Grand Prix, but Sigal's closest competitors failed to capitalize.

Graham Woodring served as Tournament Director for the first six Husky Cons. This year, he's living in China, so his brother, Conrad, took over the TD duties. Graham returned for the event and, playing in his first Husky Con as an eligible participant, promptly won the event, posting the weekend's only solo. He grabbed the brass ring as Austria in the second round.

Colin "Cliff" Davis of New York, who last year earned his nickname by falling off the cliff at Husky, finished second, and Roland Cooke took third. Dave Maletsky of D.C., who had the best shot at catching Sigal heading into Husky, finished fourth to narrow the gap between them. Rounding out the top board were Christian Pedone of Philadelphia, Chris Campbell of New England, and Cyrille Sevin of France.

Meanwhile, Chicagoan Matt Sundstrom won the 140-point Weasel Moot. Sundstrom also won Chicago's CODCon in April. He placed 23rd at the World Diplomacy Championship at Origins in June and currently leads the minor Central Shuffle circuit.

Doug Moore of Maryland, the 2007 World Champion, finished second at the Moot, followed by Peter Yeargin of Chicago. Chicago's Christian Kline was fourth, and Edi Birsan of the Bay Area took fifth. Pete McNamara of Chicago took seventh, and postal hobby legend Melinda Holley, currently of Delaware, took seventh.

There was no Diplomacy tournament at the World Boardgaming Championships in Lancaster, Pa., in August, and GenCon did not participate in the Grand Prix this year. The Bay Area's ConQuest, meanwhile, failed to qualify, reaching just five boards in the three rounds. The cutoff is six boards.

The ConQuest tournament was an unqualified success, however, as a number of new players participated. Many

of these players turned out for a three-board session in the Bay Area on Sept. 27.

So, with three events remaining in the 2009 Grand Prix, Sigal still leads with 372.2 points. Birsan is in second at 333.99. Right on his tail is Grand Prix Administrator Jim O'Kelley at 333.3. O'Kelley, however, is ineligible.

Maletsky is in fourth with 289.81 points in only three events. Conrad Woodring is fifth at 285.64. Australia's Andrew Goff, the 2009 World Champion, is sixth at 252 points. Sundstrom is seventh with 227.83. Randy Lawrence-Hurt of New Hampshire is eighth with 213.45. Yeargin is ninth at 207.16, and Chicago's Christian MacDonald is 10th with 190.62. (All scores are unofficial.)

Columbus, Ohio, site of the world championship in June, will host Buckeye Game Fest the weekend of October 3. Buckeye's inaugural Diplomacy tournament last year fielded six boards over the three largest rounds.

The following weekend, the Potomac Tea & Knife Society will host its signature event, Tempest in a Teapot, in Tyson's Corner, Virginia. Organizers are hoping for 18 boards, which would tie Origins for the largest event of the year. Sigal, O'Kelley, Maletsky, Woodring and Yeargin all are expected to play.

The 2009 Grand Prix will wrap up at Carnage in Fairlee, Vt., Nov. 6 to 8. Lawrence-Hurt will be back in action that weekend. Carnage fielded nine boards last year.

You can find the Grand Prix rules and schedule at its official website:

<http://diplom.org/~seattle/grandprix>.

Follow all the action at the World Diplomacy Database:

<http://www.eurodip.eu> .

Click Results, then Circuits, then North American Grand Prix.

Hope to see you at a tournament soon.

Jim O'Kelley is Diplomacy World's Tournament Editor.

HuskyCon 2009: The European View

By Cyrille Sevin

For me, Husky Con really started in a Cafe in Vienna, just before the World DipCon 2008. On our way from the Pre-Con in Berlin, Oskar Djikhoff, Rene Van Rooijen, Frank Oosterom (the 3 Dutch musketeers) and me were driving in car we'd rented. After some wonderful days in Poland, with a lot of cultural activities (no, no, I'm not kidding, we really did enjoy cultural activities, some of them not to be forgotten), we took a short break in Vienna to see a bit of the city before proceeding to the nice castle hosting WDC.

While resting in this *café*, we discussed the potential (at this time) future bid for WDC2010 in The Hague. This led - I don't remember how - to HuskyCon and how great it appeared to be (from what we had heard about it). We realized we had a great opportunity to attend all together before continuing our holidays in the U.S.

I must say that for me it was really a terrific idea, as my wife's two best friends both live in New Jersey, I saw an opportunity to attend this Con while allowing my wife to visit and enjoy herself at the same time (and it's always easier to negotiate attending a tournament in this case ☺). All in all, we decided that it would have to be done, and that it would obviously be more fun if we could both make it.

Unfortunately, the politics for Oskar and ... the politics too for Rene (actually it was his girlfriend, but isn't it politics too?) made this impossible. From my perspective, a change in my professional life with my return to Munich at the beginning of August, combined with the need –and the will- to take the whole month of July off work before moving to Munich, made me organize this trip as early as February. Thanks to the World Crisis, combined with the dollar crisis (or the Euro one depending on whether you are on the business side or the consumer side), I found that flights were available for as cheap as 470 Euros from Marseilles. Frank decided to join us and to follow the same itinerary, except for him the return on the 31st would be to go the EDC in Bonn (it turned out that he missed the first round actually ☺). I wasn't able to reach Oskar, and Rene declined.

Despite this, as I wouldn't fly that far just to play Dip, I also organized a trip to the Grand Canyon with one of my wife's friends. 3 nights in Vegas (where we actually only stayed 2 nights) and the flight from NYC, cost us less than \$400 if I remember correctly. It was so cheap that I didn't realize how far away it was. We also found a great deal, with a package Bus Trip and one night at the Grand Canyon for \$230 dollars each. I booked all, and confirmed my attendance at HuskyCon with Conrad. At this time I was one of the first players registered, and I didn't expect such a large attendance.

So, after two days of intensive shopping in NYC, I called Conrad (he was of course already aware of my plans) to let him know which train I will be arriving on. He picked me up at the station and then brought me to the convention site: the legendary Woodring house (actually its parents' home). I saw there were already some tents in the garden as Conrad showed me my room. He knew it would be unlikely for me or Frank to bring a tent or even a sleeping bag (I travelled for ten days in the US so bringing one would have been most inconvenient). At this time, I didn't realize that the whole family was actually hosting people in their rooms and that me and Frank were probably the people best accommodated, better than the Woodring family themselves! But this was only the beginning of the proof of their fabulous hospitality. Frank got the small house in the garden, with its nice glass door, which he paid a price for (see below) ☺

I had arrived in the late afternoon, just in time to start drinking Donald's wine, meeting old and new friends, and having dinner before playing the first round. Around a glass of wine, Don and I were wondering where had met before. We quickly agreed (as I had only played once in the US before, and Don wasn't there so it had to be in Europe) that it was probably at Manorcon 2004, which was hosting WDC that year. And I then thought that he was most probably *the* American who was playing England to my France in the first game (I always had remembered the citizenship of the player but not the player himself). It's the game I remember the most from the tournament because it was really incredible. I get attacked by my 3 neighbors for 4 long years and finally survived, as maybe only France can do, with just one centre (LON) and a Fleet in NTH Sea - and this only by the goodwill of my former enemy England! I just couldn't put a name on that guy. Graham checked this quickly on the EDA database –thanks to Laurent Joly who developed it (from the initially French Web Site 18centres database). Regardless of what else happened at HuskyCon, I now had my forgotten name... so already the trip wouldn't be in vain!

There were 3 boards; I played them all, maybe not in a really competitive way, as I always voted an early draw even if I could have bettered my position over time. But I had my reasons: for the first board I was tired, for the second board I wanted to swim, and for the third board we ran out of time because the tournament had to be stopped. I promise next time I will be more competitive! I was just enjoying the atmosphere too much. Besides, a lot of other games (Board Games, Poker) were being played. The video at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K721jzU9qp4>

provides a very accurate depiction of the positive attitudes and pleasant atmosphere. Every morning, Dan and Lori prepared breakfast (as they did for lunch and dinner as well) for 50 hungry Diplomacy players. This was clearly the most brilliant performance of the whole tournament!

The second round, the next day, was the "costume" one, and about 10 people actually wore a costume. For myself...well, considering I came from across the ocean knowing nothing about the costumes, I consider my costume (an Australian rabbit-leather hat with hiking trousers and sneakers) was not that bad. We all voted for best costume...I felt really sorry that Jim O'Kelly only got one vote with his Batman's costume ☺ Maybe it is that the traditional costumes were a bit more elaborate, to be honest.

On Sunday, the 3rd game (preceded by the wonderful breakfast of Lori and Dan) had to be shortened. Because of the prize ceremony and the fact that many people were leaving, the TD had fixed an end of game, unknown to the players (with an uncertainty of about one hour). Graham eventually won the tournament, but he also generously gave a lot of special prizes, with small gifts he had brought from China. One of the most interesting was the *Naked baby*, won by Frank for unknowingly performing a strip tease in his house, thinking that nobody was watching him because of the dark. What is really funny is that he got caught on the second day...maybe he would have won another *Naked baby* otherwise ☺

On the last evening, several people had already left. Despite this, the evening was really enjoyable, with no pressure anymore and lot of good wine to taste. On Monday morning, Frank and I had to leave pretty early to catch the 9am flight to Vegas. Donald had generously offered to bring us to the station at 6am. Conrad never had any doubt in his father, but nevertheless he showed up at 5.45 just in case! ☺

It turned out that Conrad was right not to doubt, as Don brought us in time for the early train, and we finally got to JFK Airport...just in time to see the two ladies we were waiting for arriving "far too late." I'll let you be judge: the guy from Delta told us nicely "*Sorry guys, you have to check-in 45 minutes before the flight, and it's 42 minutes before the flight now, so you're 3 minutes too late.*" Even his colleagues we asked about the policy, 15 minutes later, didn't find it that fair, but ... shit happens. Thankfully we finally got to Vegas, only 6 hours behind schedule, without any additional fees being. We had fun during this portion of the journey too. The highlight was the visit to the Grand Canyon, which really HAS TO BE DONE, not only by the European guys, but I think also by all Americans! ☺ It is really fantastic.

But that is not the subject of this article. I must say that, while I've only attended two events in North America so far (the other one being the WAC), they were among the nicest and friendliest tournaments I have ever attended. HuskyCon is definitely one event I would consider going to every year...and as I said, maybe next time I'll be more competitive. And maybe sometimes I will say:

Never mind the Bollocks, here comes Cyrille Sevin ☺

Selected Upcoming Conventions

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://diplom.org/Face/cons/index.php>

Carnage - Friday 6th November 6th - Sunday November 8th, 2009 - Lake Morey Resort, Fairly, Vermont - <http://www.carnagecon.com/>

Championnat de France - Friday December 18th to Sunday December 20th, 2009 - Hotel La Louisiane, Paris, France - <http://www.championnat-de-france.org>

Canadian Diplomacy Championship - Saturday January 2nd, 2010 - Sentry Box 1835, 10 Avenue SW, Calgary Alberta T3H 5K3, Canada - <http://stratagem.groupsite.com/main/summary>

Australian Diplomacy Championship 2010 - Saturday January 23rd - Monday January 25th 2010 - Summer Hill Community Centre, 131 Smith Street, Sydney, NSW, Australia – thorinmunro@hotmail.com

TempleCon 2010 - Friday February 5th - Sunday February 7th 2010 - Providence, Rhode Island - <http://www.templecon.org/10/>

Creating the Perfect Storm for the Future of On-line Diplomacy: Persistence, Presence and Push

by Chris Babcock

Persistence, presence and push are three aspects of networking technology that can help us, as Diplomacy players who have Internet access, predict the potential success of Internet-based services for the hobby. While judges and other networked adjudicators are the obvious candidates for this kind of review, the same criteria holds for groups hosting hand-moderated games played over the Internet and groups employing Internet technologies to facilitate meetings for live games. By improving these qualities in our Internet services, we can attract more players to the hobby, make on-line Diplomacy more a part of players' lives and use on-line tools to grow Diplomacy player communities in the real world.

First, persistence is the ability of an Internet service to remain accessible at a consistent location. The use of free services like YahooGroups (formerly eGroups, formerly Onelist) and GeoCities provides a limited degree of persistence, while domain names like diplom.org and asciiking.com that are owned by members of the hobby provide longterm persistence. The ASCII King server also offers free and ad-free web hosting for hobby sites using your own domain name or subdomains on asciiking.com and kolonelpanic.org. The purpose of this hosting is to allow Diplomacy communities and service providers to grow their segment of the hobby without the interference of advertising supported services or the business needs of a hosting provider with a for-profit business model.

Persistence is closely related to findability and locatability. Findability is the ability of the service to be found by those who are looking for similar services, while locatability is the ability of a service to be found by those looking for that service itself. Links to social networks like FaceBook and YahooGroups can improve findability, though sometimes at the expense of locatability. There is room in the hobby for a diversity of persistence strategies. Close ties to existing social networks are good for short term growth, but they expose the hobby site to an additional source of risk in that service providers may unexpectedly change the terms of service, the name and Internet address of services, or expose a game server to additional intellectual property concerns. Hasbro, for example, has allowed Diplomacy hobby servers to continue since acquiring Avalon Hill for its Wizards of the Coast division, but shut down Scrabulous, a Scrabble clone on FaceBook.

Owning the domain on which a hobby server operates and being in control of the server become increasingly important as the application grows, because it may become important to separate hobby activities -

especially game servers - from commercial sites and advertising supported services in order for Diplomacy services to operate within the legal definition of Fair Use.

Presence is the ability to know when players are on-line and available to play. Websites and chat servers usually create presence by being sticky (keeping players logged in) or by being part of players' work flow. A Twitter Diplomacy application, for example, might detect a player's presence by following that player's Twitter account, but sites usually collect presence data by requiring players to log in directly. Forums on sites like Stabbeurfou and WebDiplomacy.com help make those sites sticky so that they can provide meaningful presence for hosted games. On-line adjudicators may compensate for the poor quality of presence information by hosting games with longer deadlines. Players who use the DAIDE platform for real time games compensate for DAIDE's lack of persistence and absence of stickiness by using YahooGroups to push presence information to other players on an ad hoc basis.

Push is the ability to insert information into users' work flow. Email is the most commonly used push technology on the Internet, but most email clients use pull to get email off a provider's mail server. This negates much of the advantage of email as a push technology and makes it unsuitable for real time communication. A typical desktop email client will check for new mail every 10 minutes where a face to face Diplomacy game would have 15 minutes for negotiations and 3 minutes for order entry.

A chat-like connection is much more suitable for real time play, but Diplomacy groups built around general purpose chat protocols do not provide persistence, which would be why the ICQ Diplomacy Guild migrated to a web-forum based system. Likewise the DAIDE client functions quite capably as a Diplomacy client, but it cannot be expected to perform as a general chat client and, consequently, it does not generate the quality of presence information or the user base that a general purpose chat client would even while sharing chat protocols' limitations regarding persistence.

So, the situation that exists today in the on-line Diplomacy hobby is one where no single service is able to provide quality and depth in all three of these areas. This is to be expected, but the consequence is that various compromises are required in order for services to be functional. The most obvious of these is longer deadlines for most on-line games, but opportunity cost in terms of real time and live games that could be played if presence information was more readily available or if

player networks were larger, more cohesive or more generous with general location information is an important hidden factor.

Fortunately, there are growing opportunities to integrate stand alone websites with large social networks and update legacy hobby software to comply with modern standards that offer interoperability and other benefits. These are not trivial tasks, but they are attainable with present technologies. The observations that follow are but a few examples of how existing communities and applications could benefit from leveraging the existing work of on-line Diplomacy hobby communities and updating the technologies deployed to work with emerging Internet standards - not only web standards, but also standards for email and emerging synchronous communication (chat) standards. The most important task for an on-line community to accomplish in this context is a realistic self-assessment that takes into account its current player culture and work flows in order to strengthen outreach and ensure the future of the community without losing those distinctive features of the community that are not mere adaptation to the limits of legacy technologies, truly truly part of the character of the community.



First, providing persistence can be cheap and easy. Domain name registrations cost less than \$15 USD a year, commercial hosting plans start at \$5 USD a month and advanced hosting options for Diplomacy hobby sites are available for no cost on the asciiking.com server and elsewhere in the hobby. There is every reason for Diplomacy communities to have persistence in the form of their own address on the web. Websites are trivial to set up these days and there are several packages that can lend a great deal of stickiness to on-line communities.

In addition to adding value with forums and other social networking features that induce players to log on and stay connected to the site, Diplomacy hobby sites can use social networking APIs and chat bridges to befriend users and become part of their general on-line work flow, even when they do not specifically log in for the purpose

of playing Diplomacy. These advanced features are most appropriate for groups with a more technological orientation, but may be worth investigating if a group that already has a significant amount of presence invested in a social network wants to safeguard its future by establishing an identity independent of that service.

Websites today can have both the locatability of a dedicated domain name and the findability of a presence on popular social networking sites. By creating user profiles and using APIs (application programming interfaces) to automate interaction with social networking sites, a modern Diplomacy site can maintain its independence from the business requirements of advertising supported services while reaching potential users on multiple social networking hubs.

Links with chats and social networks, in turn, create additional opportunities for push so that on-line communities and server implementations can more easily manage a persistent relationship with players in the face of today's environment of information overload. Opening channels into players' regular on-line routines by meeting them in chats and on their social networks, provides more opportunities to include them in the life of the hobby community, whether that consists of on-line games or live events.

In the case of DAIDE, the Diplomacy hobby's own dedicated real time protocol, there needs to be a bridge to enable Diplomacy content, even if it is just links to forming games and new results, to be communicated over chat protocols that people use on a regular basis in order to provide the immediacy, intimacy and addictive properties to compete with commercial services for mind share with potential players.

DAIDE is a formidable technological achievement in terms of its ability to communicate Diplomacy game data over a real time connection, but an unfortunate case study of presence foundering in the absence of push and persistence in a server platform. It must be supplemented by connection to general purpose user networks in order to build a large enough player base to usable as a platform to grow the hobby and form real time games more consistently than the ad hoc means now deployed. This requires a server with a web presence to provide persistence and findability along with bridges to general purpose chat protocols where bots can collect presence information and notify potential players of forming games. At this time, there's a persistent DAIDE server running on port 16713 on all asciiking.com addresses and a chat server at psyc.asciiking.com that will accept connections from IRC and Jabber/XMPP clients, like GoogleTalk, with the design of translation software under way. When complete, this project will allow players to access real time games with either a DAIDE client or with a choice of many different desktop chat clients. (Rendering Diplomacy results as maps would be done as a link to a

web page.) This system will allow players to communicate their presence to the game server by logging in with the same chat client that they would normally use when they are on-line.

Meanwhile, Diplomacy sites based on the phpDiplomacy package have made the most of the persistence and visibility available as web applications, but share a common weakness with most other major Diplomacy server packages in that they are weak on presence and push. PlayDiplomacy.com and DPjudge installations like USDP and USPN offer real time modes, but these are dependent on resource intensive polling to notify players of missed deadlines. The servers check every 5 to 20 minutes for turns that are ready to process. The real time mode of these servers only triggers an additional check when players enter orders; They do not perform NMR notifications at a smaller time scale than their polling interval. This kind of site generally has a limited sense of community, especially if forums are used, but players may suffer from feelings of isolation when presence information is not meaningfully available and most Diplomacy websites, even game servers, employ very little push even in the form of email notifications.

The nJudge, which is used on USAK and DEUS among other play-by-email servers, can be updated with wrappers to provide a persistent web presence and is technologically capable of hosting real time games if connected to a suitable user interface. Work is underway to update nJudge internals with robust data storage and Unicode support so that it can continue to perform as a play-by-email server in a changing Internet environment and be worthy of extensions to support a web presence and real time play. It has made the most of push technologies, with email being its native format and with experiments past and pending with chat interfaces for the judge. The DPjudge started out as a web wrapper and Payola variant implementation layer for nJudge (then known as the Ken Lowe judge), while the USAK nJudge wrapper project, the DipPouch, Floc.net and DiploMap provide alternative access to judge data and interfaces. While the last 3 provide general support for the judge as a playing platform, the USAK site is a website integrated with the USAK Diplomacy Judge, providing local access to that judge and order entry without email delays. As the author of this article, the USAK judgekeeper is very interested in completing the hat trick by adding meaningful presence data to the native push of nJudge while polishing the persistent web interface he created earlier this year.

Network effect is the name given to the way that the benefits of a user base grow in proportion to the square of the number of users of the network resource. While this certainly applies to the Diplomacy player community, it should not be taken as an argument against diversity.

By and large, the diversity of the player community in the past has served to protect it from obsolescence and to provide rich experiences for cohesive communities of players. That does not change even though some of the technologies deployed are maturing. Addressing the weaknesses of any specific site should not be seen as an attack on the player community that makes use of it. The same potential for technology to pass player communities by, marginalizing and isolating them, exists whether the modality of the community (how the members choose to interact) is updated to use new technologies or not. The difference is that openness to developing technologies enables the community to continue its core values. This won't always be as obvious as the role of the Electronic Protocol in judge Diplomacy or the way Cat23 has outlived the dial-up bulletin board service that provided its name, but since the value of distinctive features and personal ownership of services in the Diplomacy cannot be overstated, it must be understood that federation, rather than merger, is the model by which we provide the benefits of network effect for the hobby. We will do better by retaining our community identities within the network even as we share technology and data and address the weaknesses in the network models of our respective communities.

The purpose of the definitions and informal case studies above is to help community leaders decide for themselves the technological direction of their communities. Just as an ideal confluence of conditions can lead to awesome meteorological conditions - the perfect storm - so to can the confluence of social technologies create a perfect storm for the hobby, a transformative social experience for us as members of the Diplomacy hobby at this junction in history and the stuff of legend to future generations of players.

Chris Babcock is Prince of Darkness and Lord of Hell... Well, actually, he is Secretary of War for the DipWorld player community (no relation to this 'Zine) and Judgekeeper of the USAK and USPN Diplomacy judges. While he denies any plans for global domination, he continues to actively seek programmers with ability in C/C++, Python, Perl, MySQL, XML, HTML/CSS/JavaScript, LPC, Pike, CRM-114, PostScript, SVG and other technologies with a fervency that belies his demur protestations. He must be stopped, but doing so requires an understanding of his motives and methods that can only be gained by feigning collaboration with him. Anyone interested in participating in this deception by play testing, programming or writing software documentation should contact him using <cbabcock@asciiking.com>.

He is also the new Technology Editor for Diplomacy World.

Building a Better Con, One Brick at a Time

by Conrad Woodring

This article is meant to directly address the Diplomacy World editor's letter in DW #106. I believe that the success stories in the hobby should be discussed, recognized, applauded, and analyzed. If we are to make something greater of ourselves, we must be willing to do this. That being said, let me tell you about HuskyCon (should anyone have a critical comment, please voice it. In the run up to this past HuskyCon, I had some patronizing commentary, so I expect some critical responses).

I am not going to try and pretend anything is what it is not. A large part of our success is because HuskyCon is entirely free. Each year we spend over \$1000 putting this event together. Each year that number grows larger. This is our contribution to the hobby. However, I believe that that is not the only deciding factor that makes us successful.

Mantra of a Tournament Director

As a Tournament Director (TD) your mission should be - without debate, without any kind of discussion - to serve the players. Everyone needs to remember this: as TDs, we are servants to the hobby. Every action you take, every decision that you make, is in the best interests of the hobby and of your patrons. Any other basis for decision-making will ensure the destruction of your event. If you start with that belief, the path forward is very clear. The Tournament Director it is a public servant.



Men of Action: Conrad and Graham Woodring

This is the philosophy with which HuskyCon has always been run. The event began in December of 2002. The initiative was taken by Graham Woodring, HuskyCon's visionary. Graham, my brother, with his sense of public service, began organizing with a small group of 14 people. That following summer we held our first true

HuskyCon. For the next four years, Graham - with the help of the rest of the family - organized one of the most hyped up, fastest growing events in Dipdom. HuskyCon eventually grew too big for any one person. In 2007 I took on the role of the organizer to divide the responsibility. The transition was seamless, and the convention continued to grow. The capital we have built with our patrons made it possible to keep the growing events flexible.

So, what makes Husky successful? For the purposes of this article I have identified several key considerations for use when hosting tournaments. Take these for what they are, and remember that I host a house convention and not a convention in a large city. The challenges we deal with are far different. My key points for tournament of planning are:

1. Advertising
2. Scheduling
3. Venue
 - a. Accommodations
 - b. Transportation
 - c. Post-game activity
 - d. Food accessibility
4. Rules and scoring
5. Help, assistance, division of responsibility
6. Awards
7. Cost and location
8. Post-convention press
9. Contingency plans
10. Balance of expectations, professionalism, etiquette, service

Advertising

Unfortunately our hobby suffers tremendously from advertising inadequacy. There are a countless online players, hobby players, and face-to-face players out there in the world. There are also a tremendous amount of people (an exponentially greater number of people) who are or could be interested in Diplomacy. We do not do a very good job of bringing these people to our events. Attracting new players is an entirely separate article in itself, so I'll ignore that aspect.

If you want to make face-to-face succeed you have to try. We all do. Diplomacy - our hobby, our passion - is unique. When planning for HuskyCon, I consider the following actions:

- Make a website
- Advertise in hobby publications
- Advertise on the known face-to-face mailing lists
- Contact each of your previous patrons, no matter how far back they go

- Troll the forums of online Diplomacy sites. There may be diplomacy players living around the corner from.

Every item on the above list has attracted at least one new person to Husky. If you need help with one of these things, ask other members of the hobby. I made a website for Dan when he hosted the World DipCon. Hell, if you can't get any help, I will do it. Because of the lack of organization within a hobby, there are significantly more "fringe" players than there are mainstream players. Catching these fringe players in your area is important. On a global scale, these players are paramount to the growth of the hobby.



In addition, over the past few years we have built important relationships with various hobby leaders: Melissa Nicholson, Laurent Joly, Jim O'Kelley, Dave Maletsky, Andy Bartalone, Buz Eddy, and many more. Nothing is a better advertiser than word-of-mouth. If you can do your best to serve your patrons, they will discuss the success of your event. If you can make your patrons believe in what you are doing, they will do the advertising for you.

Scheduling

If you want to succeed, you must do so in the context of the greater hobby. There are events all over the world. If you want to attract American players, look at the other American events that you will be competing with. If you want to attract European players, look at the other European events that will be happening around the same time. Your choice of date for your event is very important. Every year that I have organized HuskyCon, I have discussed with the other organizers about optimal timing. Do not, I repeat **do not**, view others' tournaments as your competitors. Everybody's mission within the hobby is the same. Again, I reiterate, if you want to succeed you have to serve the people.

Rules and Scoring

Unfortunately this is important. HuskyCon has had difficulty with the atmosphere around rules and scoring. We have always done it our own way, with little

resistance, but are met with a few critical eyes. At one point the scrutiny became so bad, one of our patrons prepared their own scoring system, laminated it, and spent the weekend trying to drill it into my brother and me. In terms of scoring, if you intend to run an event, you have an obligation to choose a scoring system, and more importantly detail that scoring system as clearly as possible. Any discrepancies in how you score your event will be chastised. Hand-in-hand with your scoring system, the rules of your events must be clearly stated. To gain any kind of respect, scoring and rules must be very clearly stated. I say this with a blush to my own hypocrisy. There are a ton of scoring systems. Just pick one, it doesn't matter that much. Each is a little different and will create a slightly different atmosphere within your event. If you have any questions about scoring systems, Dave Maletsky loves talking about scoring systems; shoot him an e-mail.

As for rules, visit other events and see how they run things. If people are yelling at the TD, it is usually over a ruling issue. Consistency in rulings is the key. See other people do theirs, learn a bit, and go with however you feel. I have never made rulings at Husky, so this is not a topic I can speak to. Ask my brother that one.

Venue

This is a tough issue. Every organizer in the world will agree that the venue is important. If your venue is not good, you will fail. You must consider where you intend to host your event. Location, location, location. I guarantee if you host the World Diplomacy Championships in Iraq and everyone got a free plane ticket, you would not succeed. On the same token, if the venue was the White House, but it cost \$500, you would have no players. Why is this? Because neither location addresses the key issues when hosting a convention. Those issues are:

Accommodations: if you want people to visit your convention, you need a place for them to stay. Husky had always succeeded at providing this. In the beginning my family's home had been large enough to support everyone. In recent years that has changed, and we have reacted appropriately. The increasing number of people has cornered us into an interesting logistic problem. We pride ourselves on hosting a completely free convention, but in recent years have had to deal with an overwhelming number of players. We have done so with an emphasis on camping, and this year stay in a local hotel.

Part of our advertising is talking up our venue. We have quality Diplomacy, in addition to proximity to a very nice boutique town. We encourage people to bring their wives and families, and to stay in nearby Port Jefferson. Other great selling points are: beauty, airport access, train access, and boat access. If you want people to visit your event, you have to determine how they will get there. Nobody will take the initiative to figure out how to

arrive if they are on the fence. Every organizer needs to aggressively chase those sitting on the fence by describing, lobbying, explaining how easy it is to attend the event.

Transportation: Husky is isolated. The event takes place on a peninsula far out on Long Island. It is not easy to get people to come this far. Based on this fact we always consider who our patrons are. We get many people from Washington and from Boston and from New York, so we must always address their travel needs. We help people coordinate carpools, find the train schedules, find the boat schedules, and encourage people to come to the nearby small Long Island airport. Should you try to host an event near an airport, do your best to sell that point.

If you are not near a major airport, your efforts to address the transportation needs of your players become even more important. If that means long drives for you and the other hosting players, you might have to do it. The transportation will always be one of the biggest deterrents for traveling Diplomacy players (it is for me). If you cannot address these issues, I recommend you give up on the greater hobby, and focus 100% on your local hobby.

Post-game Activities: When choosing a location for a tournament, it is helpful to consider what people will do when they are not playing. Personally, I enjoy going to tournaments so that I can have fun with my friends with in the hobby when I am done playing. At Husky there is fun to be had in the water, other gaming, and general relaxing. Chicago hosts their event in an excellent area of Chicago with nightlife to be had. If you can show your guests a good time, they will come back.

Food: We all know that games can last a very long time. The players are going to need to eat. It would be a good idea to at least give this some thought. Although not as important as the other points, it can still be a very important one. At Husky we prepare all the food for the players. Other events will highlight 24-hour diners in the area. I know I personally get very irate when there is no food to be had at 3 AM after my game finishes.

Awards

People recognition, they expect it. You need to have awards to recognize people. The traditional ones are expected: top three spots, and best country awards. You can do more than just those. Be creative. At Husky this year we had a costume contest (see the picture at the top of the next column), and we had awards that were voted on by the players (best tactician, best diplomat, the biggest traitor). I think more awards can only add to the tournament experience.



The Costume Contest

Have Help

A small event can be hosted by one person, but as the event grows you will need help. You need to think about who can help you, and how you want them to help you. This year at Husky we had help from four regular attendees. Adam Sigal and Joe Wheeler helped to seed the boards and organize the starts of each round. Bob Holt "volunteered" to be Tournament Director, and handle all rulings and other items that come up during each round. I stayed in my usual role as organizer. Without this division, I would've been overwhelmed. But I planned ahead, and sought out help ahead of time. A clear plan and clear division of responsibility is needed to run any larger events. To put together anything you need this.

Post Con Press

When everything is said and done, you have to get back on everybody's case. You need press. Get people to write articles about your event, write your own article, circulate pictures, and cross your fingers there's a buzz on one of the mailing lists. Maybe start your own buzz. Tell a funny story from the event, or tell a story of magnificent triumph. If it sounds like you've been was fun, more people will come next year. It is as simple as that. (Tip: get the scores out as soon as possible. If you can, get them out the Sunday after the event. Set up a spreadsheet to track the games throughout the weekend, so that you can post it immediately)

That about sums up everything I have to say. I do want to add that despite all this planning, things can go badly. Have contingency plans for as much stuff as you can, and be ready for anything. If it was easy everybody would be good at it.

If you want advice on how to get an event started, and running well, ask my brother. Husky is his creation.

Conrad Woodring was just announced as the new head of the NADF.

All-Time Finnish Diplomacy Masters Game

By Juho Malin

It was in May of 2008 when I got email from Markku Karhunen. He had an idea to invite the all-time best Diplomacy players from Finland together. Although idea was great, we weren't able to pull it off because of a lack of a suitable date for everybody.



Over a year passed, and then Marko Tainio posted a message to our Diplomacy forum. This year is the 50th anniversary of the Diplomacy and the biggest gaming event in Finland, Ropecon, was just around the corner. Surprisingly, in just a little more than one month's time, we had assembled a true dream team of local players!

The players (and some of their prior achievements) were:

Vesa Virri: Finnish champion in 2003. He has played also in the UK (ManorCon 14 in Birmingham 1996, MasterCon 05 in Bedford), Norway (Arcon XII in Oslo 1996), Sweden (Gothcon XXI in Gothenburg 1997, Borås Spelkonvent in Borås 1999, LinCon 2000 in Linköping 2000, Swedish NDC in Stockholm 2003), France (EuroDipCon VIII in Paris 2000, WorldDipCon XI in Paris 2001) and Ireland (EuroDipCon IX in Dublin 2001).

Juho Malin (your humble reporter): Finnish champion in 2006 and 2007. I have also played in the Netherlands (DomDipCup III in Utrecht 2005), Sweden (Swedish NDC in Stockholm 2005), Italy (MilanCon II in Milan 2005, MilanCon III in Milan 2006) and Germany (BerliCon III in Berlin 2006).

Matti Föhr: Finnish champion in 2001. He has also played in France (Open Telecom in Evry 1996, WorldDipCon XI in Paris 2001) and Sweden (Swedish NDC in Stockholm 2003).

Terjo Linnanen: Finnish champion in 2004.

Markku Karhunen: 2nd in Finnish championships 2003.

He has also played in Sweden (Swedish NDC in Stockholm 2003, Swedish NDC in Stockholm 2005).

Aleksi Karhula: 2nd in Finnish championships 2006.

Marko Tainio: 4th in Finnish championships 2007. He has also played in the Netherlands (DomDipCup III in Utrecht 2005) and Sweden (Swedish NDC in Stockholm 2005).



1906 Orders Are Due: From the left, Aleksi Karhula, Juho Malin, and Vesa Virri

The game was held in Helsinki (Actually in the city of Espoo, but in the capital area of Finland anyway) at the Ropecon 2009 gaming event. Unfortunately we did not have whole night to spend on the game, so we agreed in advance to have rather short game, ending after 1907.

The countries were randomly picked. The full game history can be found at:

<http://www.lautapeliseura.fi/foorumi/viewtopic.php?f=43&t=7066>

The results were:

1. Terjo Linnanen (France) and Marko Tainio (Russia) with 7 SCs
2. Vesa Virri (Germany) and Juho Malin (Austria) with 6 SCs
3. Matti Föhr (Italy) with 5 SCs
4. Aleksi Karhula (England) with 3 SCs
5. Markku Karhunen (Turkey) eliminated in 1906

Overall it was a wonderful time, and a rare experience to put seven distinguished Finnish Diplomacy players of such skill in the same place. I hope we can repeat the event someday in the future.

Conquest 2009 - Santa Clara (San Jose-SF Bay Area)

By Edi Birsan

Conquest 2009 continued the long tradition of having a Diplomacy Tournament in the SF Bay Area over the Labor Day Weekend. There were 5 boards spread over three rounds (2-2-1) and an additional 2 boards during the "Mentor" Friday night round. 33 different people played in the 7 games, which included 18 people who were taught to play at the tournament, or who were playing in their first event. There was another group of about eight individuals who foolishly roamed near enough to the activity to be roped in; these wanderers and had their email information obtained for follow up and hopefully direction to the hobby at large. There were a few returnees from last year's crop of new players, which is always a good sign. And in fact there were more players this year than last, another good sign.

This year's overall winner was Steve Ross. Steve is a local veteran player who finally achieved his first tournament win.



Steve Ross, Caesar Alvarez, Jack Twilley

The scoring system used was similar to the one used at other recruiting events in the Bay Area: each round is treated to a different scoring system, and the best two rankings for each player are selected to determine the final overall tournament ranking. Steve had finished First in Round 2 and Second in Round 1, so his final score was 3 which secured him the best ranking. Second and Third place were nabbed by Sean Bennett (who had two Seconds) and Richard Bliss (who had a First and a Third as his best rankings).

Round 1 was scored using supply centers/C-Diplo style. Round 2 had supply centers plus 6 points divided among the Draw, and the final round came down to supply centers since there was only one table. Games were played with a 13-minute negotiation time limit, which was then reduced to 10 minutes around 1903 or so. Order

writing and adjudication was off the clock. While the game year limits were set (Round 1 and Round 3 had a 1907 limit, and Round 2 had a 1908 limit) two games used the full amount of game years allowed.



Ben Blythe, Dovi Anderson, Sean Bennett

We employed our Bay Area "New-Player-Friendly" rules for order reading: we read the new players' orders first on every board, and made corrections as needed. The classic newbie order writing errors were repeated such as:

F supports ->Bel ((Translation Fleet Holland supports Ruhr to Belgium))

North C ((Translated as North Sea Convoys Yorkshire to Belgium))

Mar S Par ((Translated as Marseilles supports Paris to Burgundy))





Mark Buxton



Siobhan Granvold and Leslie Hawthorn

One of the veteran players got into the habit of writing only the first letter of the province. We had to correct him on this, because it led to some silly order reading as well as making it hard on people to decipher orders quickly, such as:

A P-P ((Army Paris to Picardy))

A B-S ((Army Bulgaria to Serbia-- player only had an Army in Bulgaria not Budapest))

I was very happy with the group in that everyone took the high road of interpreting sloppy order writing with the spirit of the rules that "a poorly written order that allows for only one reasonable interpretation" (excluding intentional miss-ordering) is followed. We had NO order reading disputes or attempts at 'gotcha' order reading. The more I see the veteran tournament players get into arguments over order writing. The more I see the results when we do not try to force a strict protocol on the players, the more I am convinced that it is not good for the hobby to run events with such a serious tone, and that we need to lighten it up on all sides.

Conquest 2009 Table Talk

"How can you trust him, he is playing Italy"

"I did not attack you; I stabbed the shit out of you."

"What do you mean '*What is in it for me?*' What kind of diplomatic question is that?"

"Are you sure we are in the same game?"

"You are not listening to what he is doing."

"Oh this is Fall? I'm so sorry."

"It depends on what you think winning is."

The event featured a lot of new players, but only a few unusual openings, and these were tried generally by the experienced players. Two different Germanys opened with a full press East:

A Munich-Silesia, A Berlin-Prussia, F Kiel-Denmark

In both cases they were working with the English and the Turks (and one even had the Austrians in on the Russian slaughter).

One game saw Russia out in 1902 and the other Russia out in 1903. Both Germanys turned the alliance with England into a long-term and took down the French as well.

In contrast with last year's event which saw Italy dominate the games (coming in first in 3 out of 8 games and averaging a supply center count of 7.4 per game), this year Italy was stuck in the dithering mode, averaging only about 3 and half centers per game. England, on the other hand, romped with game tops of 15 and 11, which were also the highest center counts in the event.

A good time was had by all and it was a very successful recruiting event.

Come on, you know who Edi Birsan is by now, right? You can always look him up on Wikipedia.

History of the “D” World, Part Deux

By Jerry Jones

The other day I looked around to see what Diplomacy looked like after the turn of the century to see how it had changed. I really expected to see a wonderous new hobby that was blessed with e-mail, messengers, quick turnarounds and avenues that we could have only dreamed of 30 years ago. While the web sites are fancy and filled with colorful graphics, for my money they really miss what I fondly recall as the charm and ‘personality’ of the game, as well as the people of those bygone days.

I really think that the type of people that were the backbone and inspiration of Diplomacy in the 70’s and 80’s are around, it’s just that the expectations for ‘entertainment’ (graphics, flash, blood, and quick paced action) have put Diplomacy somewhere between 8-track players and Betamax.



So what was it like playing postal Diplomacy in the 70’s? It was the best of times and it was the worst of times. But above all, it was something that those who were a part of it, will never forget.

In Search of the Lost Chord

Finding a game wasn’t all that easy. There were a ton of postal zines and more coming every day but there really wasn’t an easy way of getting the word out. DW filled a great void in listing zines and announcing new zines but the frequency of the announcements didn’t always fill the hunger for tasting blood. Once you had a list of zines you could then send off for samples and houserules.

And oh boy, was there ever houserules. And you’d better read them. There must have been 40 zines and not one of them could ever agree on the basic houserules. Some were lenient and some strict. Some you could call your moves in, some you couldn’t.

Next was frequency of moves. What a diversity this was as well. Two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, and in the rare case one week. Postal Diplomacy on a one week schedule when dealing with snail mail was nearly impossible, but the notion of a quick game, one that could be finished in the same decade, had its attraction.

As I recall, most games were about 3 weeks per move. Toss in 3 or 4 days for the GM to adjudicate the games and put the zine together. Few more days to get them posted and then a couple of days in the mail (longer if your postman ... yes they were postmen, not post persons... was busy reading your dad’s copy of Playboy before he dropped off your mail) you were looking at a month from the time you sent your moves in until you got the results. And sadly, gamemasters all went through periods of burnout where it would take even longer. So, a good game could easily go on for 18 months or longer.

Now you found a zine with houserules you were comfortable with, a time frame that you could handle. You got a handle on the GM by reading the articles and he seemed like a good guy. Now you’re set. Go to the page for game openings...”There are no game openings at this time.”

Ok, on to the next zine. Finally you find one that meets your needs and has an opening. Speed is of the essence. I’ve called GM’s to make sure I got in the game. Pretty stupid actually, as in many cases this was a new game that had no one signed up for yet, but never let it be said that Diplomacy players rely on common sense when it comes into getting into a game.

Now the above is all a fairy tale. Aren’t you glad you wasted 5 minutes of your life? The above is how players would tell themselves how they got into a game. In reality, it was tearing open the zine (usually ripping it to shreds as some GMs had the uncanny ability to make one staple and a piece of tape a security device that Brinks would later model their armored cars after) and putting together the pieces of the page that had game openings on it. If there was an opening, sign my ass up.

On the Threshold of a Dream

The day finally came that the zine arrived, and the game you were in was announced. The general comment that echoed through the land was “Not Italy AGAIN”. [I once told all the players in a new game that they all were

starting off as Italy. I thought it was funny but it seemed as though I was the only one]. Here is where the fun began. Initial communication was important. No time for mail. Phone calls were the only solution. Calling someone was an experience all in itself. It always seemed as though I got ahold of his mother or worse, wife, neither of which could grasp the importance of England and Germany allying together against France...and they all had that same sigh when you asked to talk to your new best friend.

I went as far as getting three-way on my phone for setting conference calls. This would be like putting in a server in your home today to play Doom. Hell, I'd set up 3-way alliances that made no sense, just to get to use my state-of-the-art phone. There was no "friends list", "inter-network phone calls" there was just something that Ma Bell liked to call "Long Distance Calling". And god bless Ma Bell, she had no issues in charging you for the honor of calling someone out of your area code. And charge she did. But the interactions were fantastic. The

people became real and many times your nefarious scheme would go out the window with a casual, "how's the family?" I later learned that many times this was just a set up for their nefarious scheme, but what the heck, it was good times.

These were wonderful times. They were a blending of anticipation, planning and a lot of swearing. The tight knit foundation of players made the entire ride worthwhile, and while there was the fair share of nitwits and numbskulls, for the most part the players were like family...completely dysfunctional, but family nonetheless. I suppose I can safely say that bigger isn't always better and that progress doesn't make everything a better experience. Diplomacy came about at the right time with the right core players...a time that I am so ever grateful that I was a part of.

[[Jerry Jones is a former Diplomacy zine publisher...and was at one time the Lead Editor and publisher of Diplomacy World!]]

Ask the GM

An Advice Column for Diplomacy World

Dear GM:

What's the deal with President Obama? Is he for real or should I go back to ignoring politicians and just complaining from the sidelines?

Not Believing in the Change...yet

Dear Change,

Politicians are the second best possible players of Diplomacy since they are forced to lie to large numbers of people as part of their jobs. (The best possible Diplomacy players are clergy since they lie at least once a week when they give sermons—never play against more than one at a time or they will kill you.)

I think you should stick to complaining from the sidelines since any change would mean even something more impossible than politicians telling the truth...the American people actually being willing to hear the truth. I don't see that happening in my lifetime.

Your Pal,

The GM

Dear GM,

What's the worst thing a Diplomacy player can do in a game?

Miss Manners

Dear Manners,

Their only two unforgivable sins: quitting (or NMRing) and cheating—beyond that just about anything goes...although losing to any of the DW editorial staff is, from a players stand point, pretty low as you have to get up pretty late in the day to be fooled by any of these losers.

Your Pal,

The GM

Got a question for Game Master? Send it to gamemaster "of" diplomacyworld.net and maybe it will appear in a future issue of Diplomacy World!

HuskyCon VII - Perspective from a Tournament Noob

By Christopher M. Sterbenz

Growing up, the bookshelf in my basement had several stacks of board games and magazines from Avalon Hill and Simulations Publications Incorporated. There was always one game that stood out more than the others. The edges of this box was not frayed, but nearly instead was missing entirely. Inside the box were the relics of previous games played, written on the back of old Fortran programming code. Something was special about this game, Diplomacy.

Unfortunately it was not until the summer before my first year in college that I actually started playing Diplomacy. For years my group of friends and I had played Risk as our game of choice, but by that point Risk and its endless variants had run their course; something different was desired. We unearthed my father's Diplomacy board from my basement, and just two years later I found myself at my first Diplomacy Tournament, HuskyCon VII.

All of the fears, uncertainties and doubts I had in the weeks before the tournament were quickly put to rest on arrival. Conrad, his brother Graham, and parents Donald and Christine did an excellent job organizing the event and making me feel right at home. Diplomacy enthusiasts who have known each other for years were just as friendly and welcoming to me as they were to their long time friends and companions.

No time was wasted in starting the first game, which commenced early in the evening. I was assigned to the only game that was played outside. At the beginning the skies were partly cloudy and there was a light breeze, but as the night wore on it became increasingly overcast and humid. At one point we witnessed a spectacular lightning storm across Long Island Sound, and we were eventually hit with torrential rain and wind ourselves, forcing us to relocate inside. Unfortunately the deterioration of the weather coincided with the deterioration of my standing in the game.

The weather the rest of the tournament was pleasant, and Saturday morning we started our second game of Diplomacy (right after breakfast). I was determined not to make the same mistakes as before, and as a result ended up playing more defensively.

Saturday night we were free to join any of the games people brought with them. I had thought that my tenure as a college student would have primed me well for the combination of sleep deprivation and alcohol, but that

turned out not to be the case. When attempting to play a game of gunboat Diplomacy, I wound up passed out on a chair outside. Sunday morning we played one final game of Diplomacy, and that afternoon the awards ceremony was held, where I earned the accolade for "most drunk."



Thanks to HuskyCon, I returned home with a renewed interest in playing Diplomacy, and am a much better player (to the chagrin of my friends). Of course looking back I see the many mistakes in my strategy and style, but I think that sort of thing happens to most first-time tournament players. Even experienced players constantly experiment with new methods and strategies, and reflect on them afterwards. For anyone considering entering a tournament, I would highly encourage it. Doing so adds a new dimension to the game and gives an incentive to work on becoming a better player. It is also a great opportunity to meet people from around the world, united by their interest and respect for Diplomacy.

It is also worth noting that running HuskyCon VII was no easy task, and that it took the combined efforts of the Woodrings: Donald, Christine, Conrad and Graham, as well as Lori Wheeler, to run the tournament. Their hard work, with their professionalism and grace, ensured a wonderful experience for all concerned. Tournaments like HuskyCon help foster the continued interest Diplomacy enjoys, even at its 50th year.

[[Christopher is now a first-time tournament attendee, AND a first time contributor to Diplomacy World. Hopefully, we'll see his name on another article soon!]]

Diplomacy World Demo Game

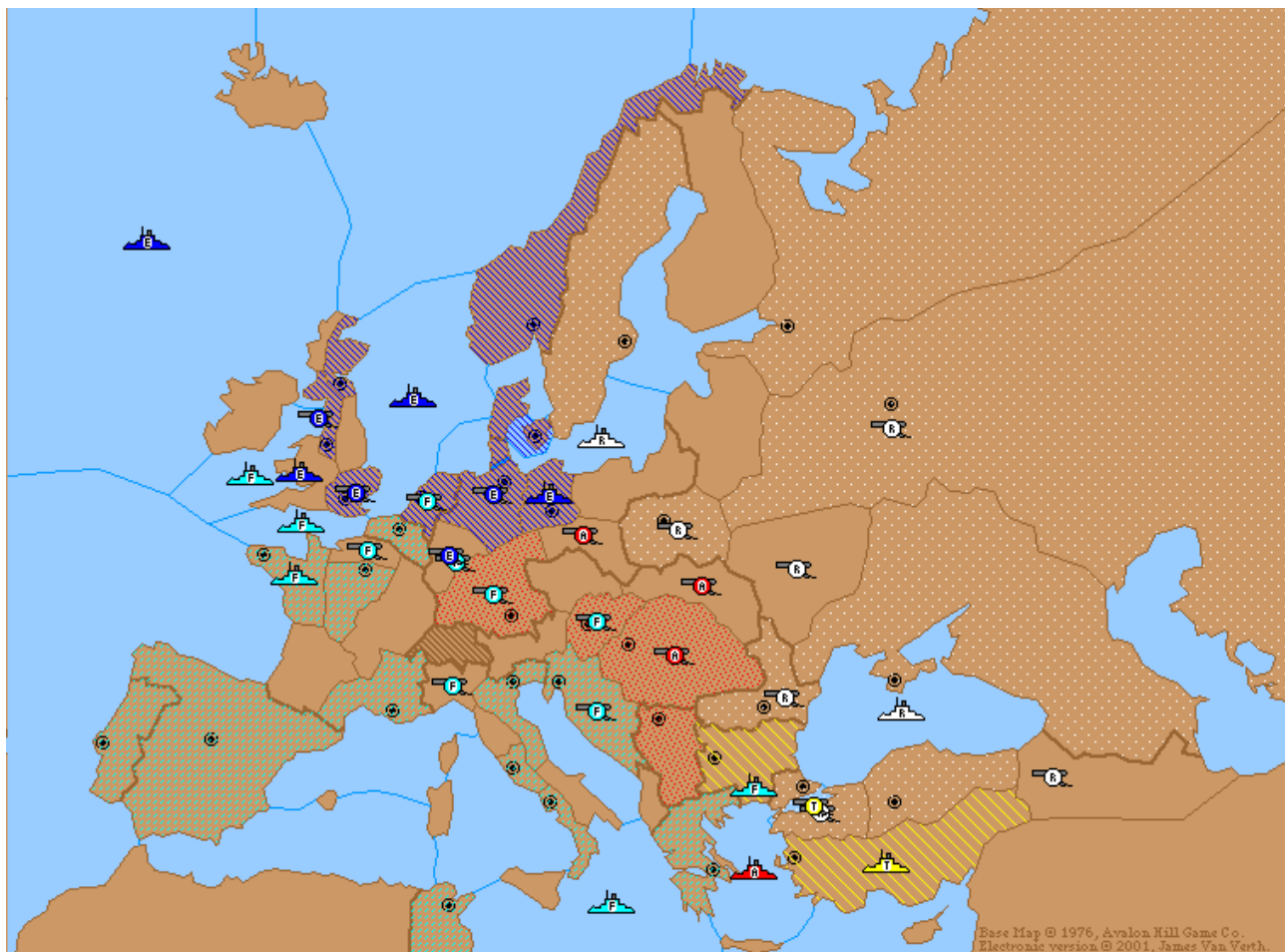
Regular Diplomacy – “After the Rapture”

Cast of Characters:

GM: Rick Desper
Austria: Adam Silverman
England: Dan Lester
France: Jake Mannix
Germany: Mike Hall
Italy: Doug Moore

Russia: Mark Zoffel
Turkey: Andy Marshall

Commentators: **Jim Burgess (Bold)**,
Eric Hunter (Italics)



Spring 1913 Results:

Austria: F Aegean Sea Supports A Bulgaria – Constantinople, A Budapest Supports A Galicia, A Galicia Hold, A Silesia Supports A Galicia

England: F Berlin Supports A Kiel, A Holland – Ruhr, A Kiel Supports A Holland – Ruhr, A London Supports F Wales, F North Sea - English Channel (*Bounce*), F Norwegian Sea - North Atlantic Ocean, F Wales Supports F North Sea - English Channel, A Yorkshire - Liverpool

France: A Belgium – Holland, F Brest - English Channel (*Bounce*), A Burgundy – Munich, F English Channel - North Sea (*Fails*), F Greece - Bulgaria(sc), F Irish Sea Supports F Brest - English Channel, A Marseilles – Piedmont, A Paris – Picardy, A ~~Ruhr – Holland~~ (*Dislodged*), A Trieste - Serbia (*Bounce*), A Tyrolia – Vienna, F Tyrrhenian Sea - Ionian Sea

Russia: F Baltic Sea Hold, F Black Sea Supports A Constantinople – Bulgaria, ~~A Constantinople – Bulgaria~~ (*Dislodged*), A Moscow - Warsaw (*Fails*), A Rumania - Serbia (*Bounce*), A Sevastopol – Armenia, A Ukraine Supports A Warsaw – Galicia, A Warsaw - Galicia (*Fails*)

Turkey: A Bulgaria – Constantinople, F Smyrna Supports A Bulgaria - Constantinople

Spring 1913 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

Austria: Adam works with Andy against Mark. He does not actively support Jake, but at this point fighting Mark amounts to the same thing.

That is clearly true, it does seem like the little guys, Adam and Andy, are working together to keep both of them in a potential draw. As we've discussed, it is still difficult to see where that line is that they can sit on, but they are trying to ensure both of them survive to try. If they want to keep attacking Mark, it is going to be over very fast.

England: Dan trades Holland for Ruhr, but get into NAO. This creates a tactical mess for the Fall. Can Jake hold on to Mun and Hol this Fall? Can Dan afford a disband, if Jake does? Does Jake need to defend MAO and/or Bur?

Yes, Dan did correctly see that France would try for the North Sea, though, so it was worthwhile trying the supported attack on the Channel. Since France was then forced to support the attack on the Channel and leave Mid open. In the Fall, France must go for the MAO, he cannot let England slip in there.

Generally this is true, since Raider Units can tie up half a dozen Units defending Centers and hunting down the Raider, and I'm sure Jake will cover it, but he is so close to the Solo that in his shoes I might order IRI-NAO, ENG-IRI, Bre-Pic, Bur S Pic-Bel, and build F Bre and F Mar.

But this allows England to push forward into the Channel or the Irish Sea. Given what is going on in the south, all France has to do is play safe, that's what I would do. So I would retreat to Burgundy and hold Munich (support Munich in the fall), even if Holland or Belgium can't be held as a result. The tactics are really difficult if he retreats to Belgium.

Which is why I favored the retreat to Bel. ☺ Retreating to Bur gives Dan the freedom to maneuver. Retreating to Bel forces Dan to worry about a likely disband that he really can't afford\$ and that concern would most likely protect Bur as effectively as retreating there.

France: It looks as though Jake expected Dan to try for Belgium as he went after Mun. Ruhr-Hol, Eng-Nth, cuts either support for an attack on Bel, while Bel-Hol was probably intended to cut Hol S Kie-Ruhr. So, guessing

wrong gets Jake Holland.

Note the tactical move that is underused by people who don't see its advantage. France moved A Ruhr-Holland and A Belgium-Holland. He did that with an English army in Holland to cut its support no matter which attack it supported. The alternative (which Dan appeared to expect) is to move with Holland and then the other unit moves into Holland. Dan is trying to make the tactics difficult in hopes that Dan will make a mistake. Over last year, when England made desultory moves, Dan really was thinking here.

In the south Jake picks up Bul and Vie, with a good chance to grab Bud in the Fall. Will Adam react? Will it matter if he does? If my count is right, and Jake holds on to everything he has now, and he takes Bud, that will be 17. I'm not sure I see an 18th this Fall.

I agree that France doesn't have 18 this fall, in fact, with the guesses in Germany, I suspect he'll end up with 16, but 16 with something very close to a forced win. It is time for Austria to turn (e.g. taking Munich back) if he is going to turn.

Russia: Mark focuses on eliminating Andy. How has Jake convinced everyone that he's not interested in the solo? It is either that or everyone is so annoyed with everybody else that they'd rather see Jake Solo, than share a Draw with the others.

Clearly there was a discussion about eliminating Andy, and Adam switched focus slightly to work with Andy to keep both of them on the board. Eric and I agree entirely that Jake isn't really doing anything that convinces us that he's not just coasting to the win. But again, the mark of a good diplomat is getting people to let you win. Jake must be playing it right.

Turkey: Andy gains Con, but loses Bul, I'd say he's fighting the wrong person, though.

Andy is picking up his involvement in the game as it winds toward the endgame. A while back he seemed disengaged, but now he's battling Mark to stay in the game. Of course, that may just let Jake win, but at least he's involved with his own future.

The French army in the Ruhr may retreat to Belgium or

Burgundy.

Probably to Bel.

Interesting, I would go to Burgundy. We'll see who is right.

I think Bel was the more aggressive move, and since that's my natural inclination, it's what I expected. Had I considered Jake's style, as I should have, I'd have predicted Bur, as well.

Summer 1913 Results:

France: A Ruhr - Burgundy

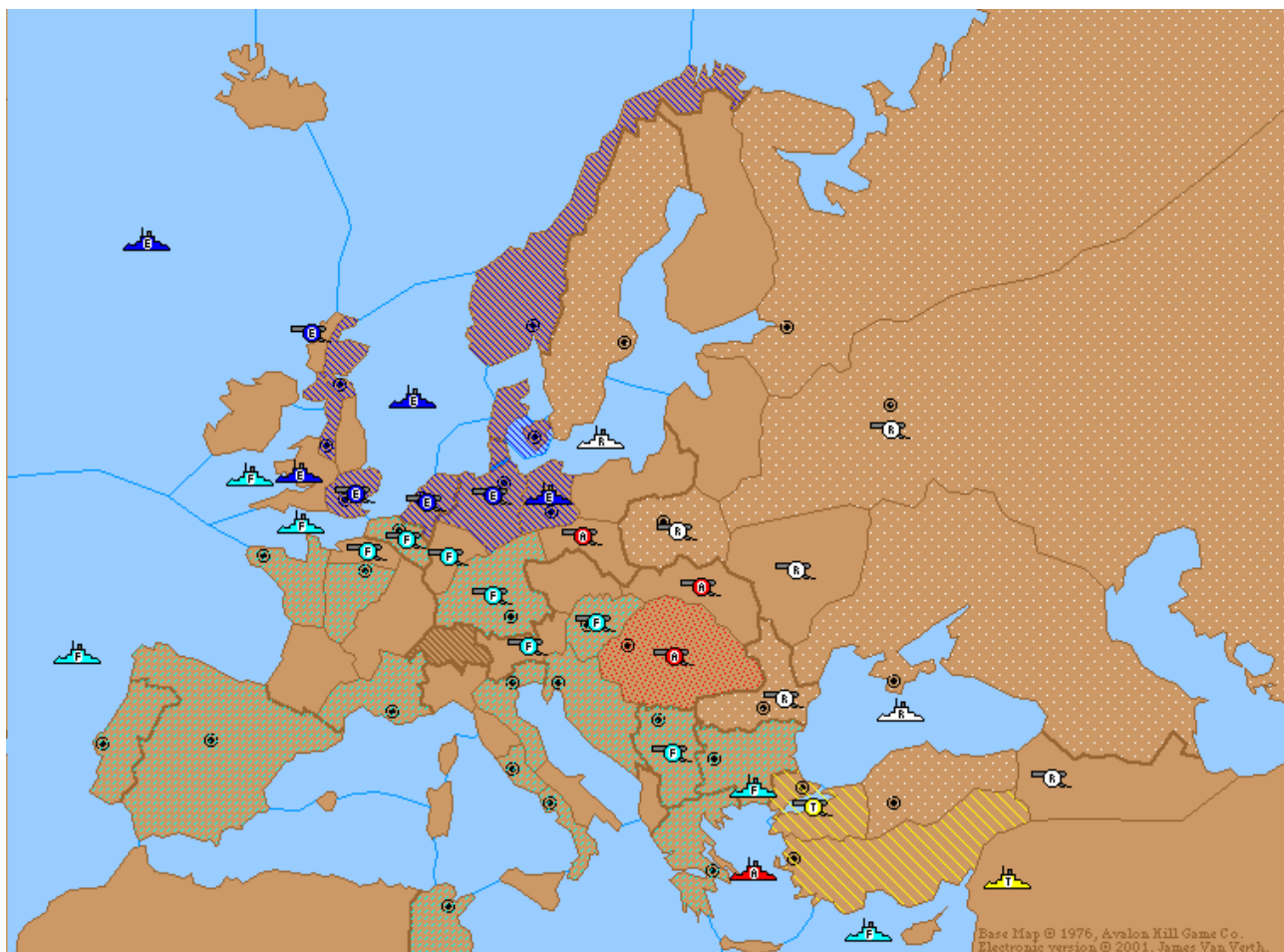
Russia: Disband A Constantinople

Summer 1913 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

Actually, Mark's disband strikes me as quite significant, at least in terms of intent. I think it is too late to stop

Jake, but clearly Mark wants to try.



Fall 1913 Results:

Austria: F Aegean Sea Supports F Bulgaria, A Budapest Supports A Trieste – Serbia, A Galicia Supports A Silesia, A Silesia Supports A Galicia

England: F Berlin Supports A Kiel, A Kiel Supports A Ruhr – Holland, A Liverpool – Clyde, A London Supports F Wales, F North Atlantic Ocean, no move received, F North Sea Supports A Ruhr – Holland, A Ruhr – Holland, F Wales Hold

France: F Brest - Mid-Atlantic Ocean, F Bulgaria(sc) Hold, A Burgundy – Ruhr,

F English Channel Supports F Irish Sea, A Holland – Belgium, F Ionian Sea - Eastern Mediterranean,
F Irish Sea Supports F English Channel, A Munich Supports A Burgundy – Ruhr,
A Picardy Supports A Holland – Belgium, A Piedmont – Tyrolia, A Trieste – Serbia,
A Vienna Supports A Galicia

Russia: A Armenia - Ankara (*Bounce*), F Baltic Sea Supports F Berlin,
F Black Sea Supports A Ukraine - Rumania (*Fails*), A Moscow Supports A Warsaw,
A Rumania - Serbia (*Fails*), A Ukraine - Rumania (*Fails*), A Warsaw Hold

Turkey: A Constantinople - Ankara (*Bounce*), F Smyrna – Syria

Ownership:

Austria: Budapest.
England: Berlin, Denmark, Edinburgh, Holland, Kiel, Liverpool, London, Norway.
France: Belgium, Brest, Bulgaria, Greece, Marseilles, Munich, Naples, Paris, Portugal, Rome,
Serbia, Spain, Trieste, Tunis, Venice, Vienna.
Russia: Ankara, Moscow, Rumania, Sevastopol, St Petersburg, Sweden, Warsaw.
Turkey: Constantinople, Smyrna.

Adjustments:

Austria: Supp 1 Unit 4 Remove 3
England: Supp 8 Unit 8 Build 0
France: Supp 16 Unit 12 Build 3
Germany: Supp 0 Unit 0 Build 0
Italy: Supp 0 Unit 0 Build 0
Russia: Supp 7 Unit 7 Build 0
Turkey: Supp 2 Unit 2 Build 0

Fall 1913 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

GM Rick Desper: Ok, for starters the draw vote failed.
England also submitted "F NWG - Cly", which failed
since his fleet was in NAO, not NWG. Somebody else
can point out to Dan that Clyde was never in danger
from any attacks, other than those coming from the
German underground in the highlands.

*In the grand scheme of things it doesn't matter, since
Jake will Solo in the South, but these sorts of errors can
be deadly when a coalition is trying to stop a solo.*

**Of course, one needs to wonder how much they are
errors vs. resignation. I will just say again, that for a
DW demo game, unless in the endgame statements
we see something else going on in the negotiations,
I am little disappointed by the "fight" in this crew. I
don't always win, but I always fight out every last
move to the end. I like trying to survive at the end of
a draw, I happen to know this sort of thing doesn't
float Dan's boat much, and he enjoys higher level (in
the sense of complexity) games. I like those too, but
sometimes there is just playing out the best moves
and making people work for a win. Dan also clearly
was working a lot through this period and did not
seem to have a great deal of time for the game, but it
really just takes an instant to get your unit locations
right and move forward rather than back.**

Astonishing that there are no retreats.

**Well, not really given that no one is really opposing
anything anyone else is doing.**

*Austria: I thought the Russian disband might shift AT but
I guess they are determined to see Jake solo, since
Adam is now actually supporting Jake into Adam's open
Centers.*

**Agreed, remember that this could be what Mark is
TRYING to accomplish, but in my opinion he waited
too long. He needed to get Adam's trust long, long
ago. This is playing out like a cat fight where people
just can't forget what "he did" way back when.
Adam has been entirely consistent through here, no
surprises, but I agree that belatedly Mark seems to
be trying to get SOMEONE to stop France.**

*My guess would be that Adam will keep the Fleet or A Sil
to help Jake.*

**I don't think he needs the Fleet any more, so I expect
the army will be kept.**

England: Clearly Dan wasn't paying attention, but these

moves are way too passive.

He basically is allowing France to move back to Belgium and see what he can do to hold that line. Not much, I expect, as France will be winning in the south anyway. But, as I said above, Dan could have fought a bit harder here, in particular, you would want to stick France in Brest port, so another fleet can't be built there.

France: I don't see any problem for Jake to pick up two of Bud, Rum, Con, and Smy, next year.

He probably will get all of them if he retains the help of Austria and Turkey. The wind seems to be blowing against the negotiation strategies of Mark and Dan from Adam and Andy.

The French builds really don't matter, since Jake will Solo before they can get to the front.

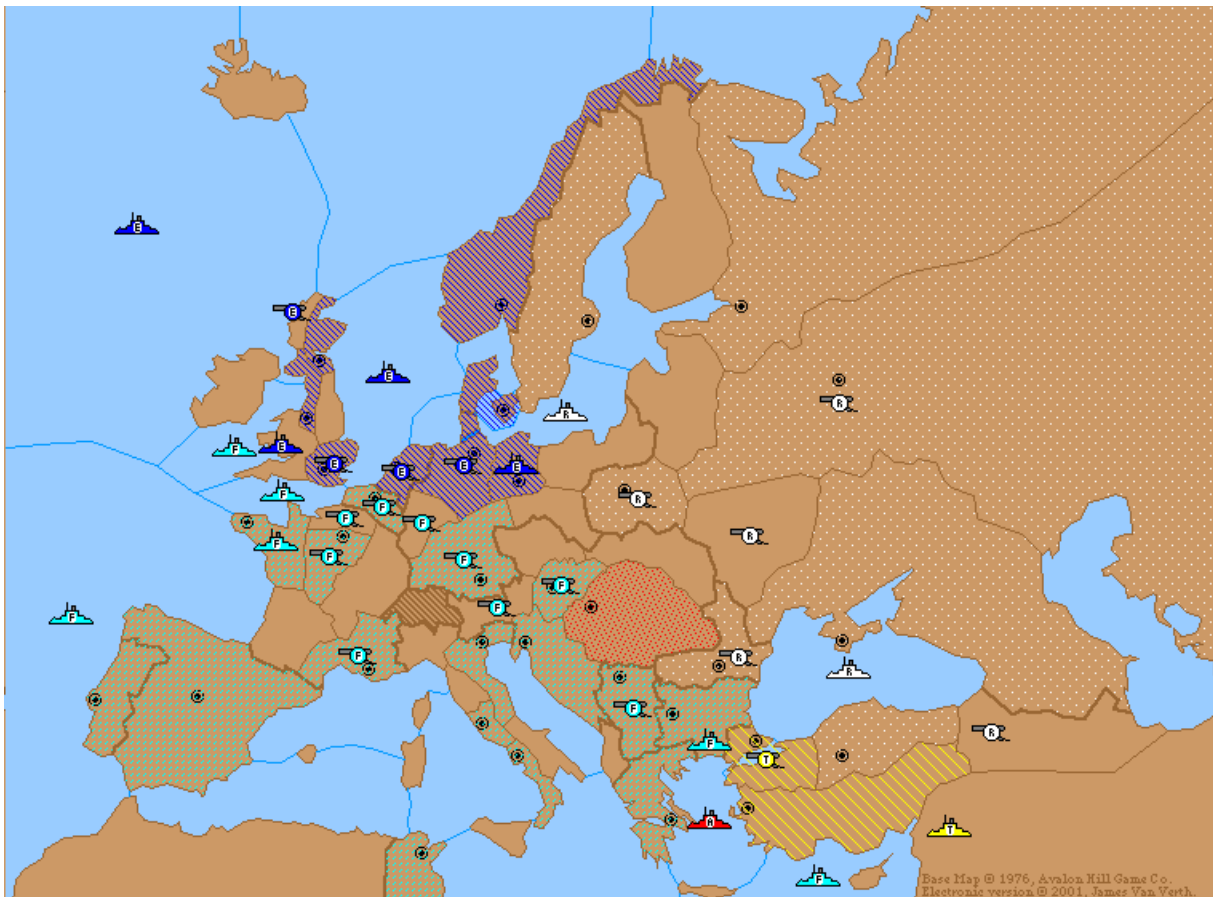
True, although he can build F Brest and see if he can push the English back, just for fun.

Russia: I'm guessing that Mark tried to form a "Stop Jake" coalition with his disband, but obviously it failed.

Obviously, still the right thing to do, holds position, correctly determines that AT are still attacking him (for what that's worth), but continues to lose the diplomatic war. At least, in contrast to Dan, Mark is making his best tactical moves.

Turkey: At first glance, I thought Andy was opening Smy for Con to retreat to if it was attacked, but F Syr is so useless that I suspect he will support EMed-Smy next year.

I think there is no question that is what Andy intends to do.



Winter 1913 Results:

Austria: Remove A Budapest, Remove A Galicia, Remove A Silesia

France: Build A Paris, Build A Marseilles, Build F Brest

Winter 1913 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

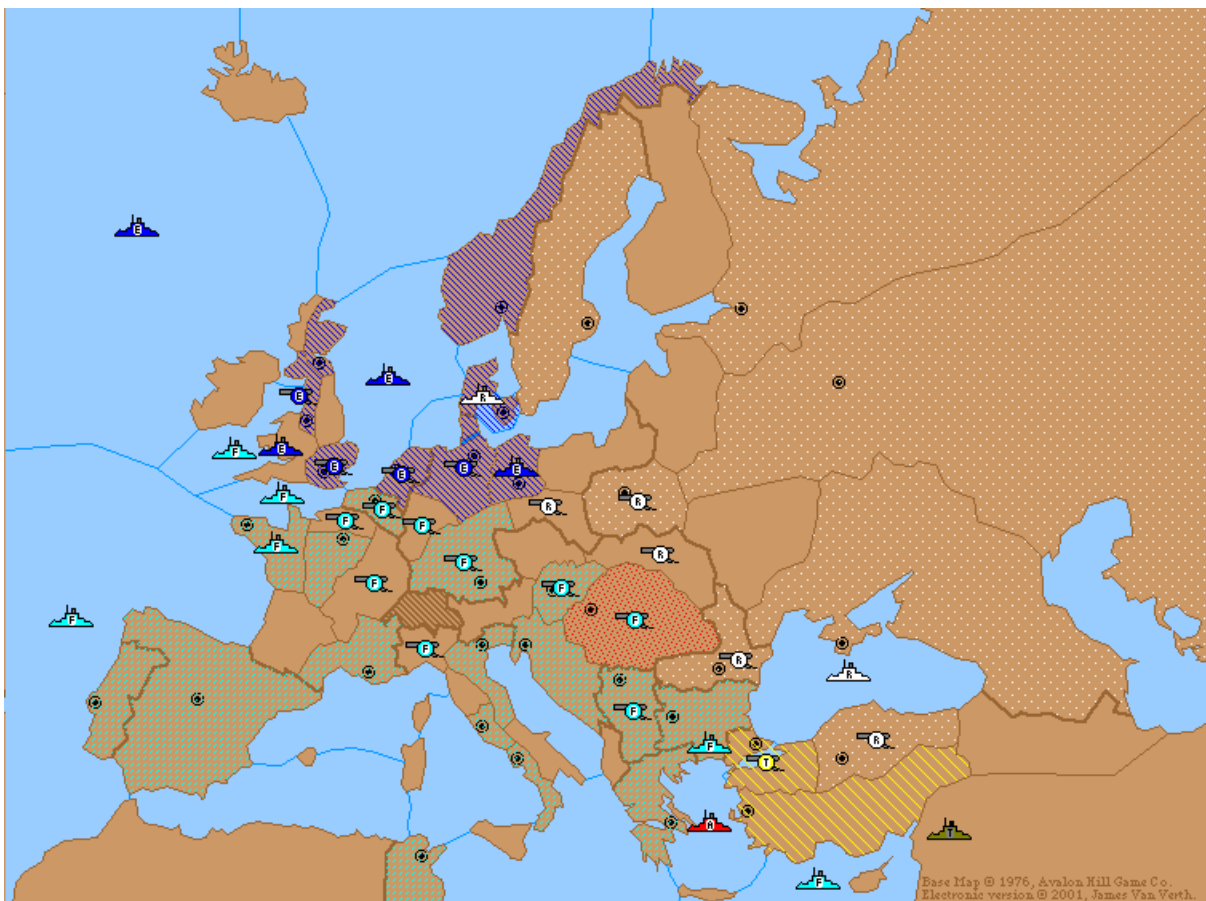
Austria: Color me slightly surprised by that one. Adam can actually try to create a rogue fleet now, if they try to stop France, they could at least make his life miserable for awhile. I don't think there is a guaranteed win at this point for this year with combined ERAT defense. But since the English line cannot hold against the French fleets, the long term capability of forming a line does not seem to be present. If Austria is trying to help France, along with the Turks, it seems like over kill there. But we'll see what the plan is. Perhaps Austrisajust wants to

allow Russia to now try to stop France himself.

My thought was that Adam's Fleet will help Jake advance into Turkey.

France: As I said previously, the F Brest is about the only one that could be involved in a push against the English line, which is incompletely supported.

Yup.



Spring 1914 Results:

Austria: F Aegean Sea Supports F Bulgaria

England: F Berlin Supports A Holland - Kiel (*Fails*), A Clyde – Liverpool, A Holland - Kiel (*Fails*), A Kiel - Ruhr (*Fails*), A London Supports F Wales, F North Atlantic Ocean, no move received, F North Sea - Belgium (*Fails*), F Wales Hold

France: A Belgium, no move received, F Brest Supports F English Channel, F Bulgaria(sc) Hold, F Eastern Mediterranean, no move received, F English Channel, no move received, F Irish Sea Supports F English Channel, A Marseilles – Piedmont, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean Supports F Irish Sea, A Munich Supports A Ruhr, A Paris – Burgundy, A Picardy Supports A Belgium, A Ruhr Supports A Belgium (*Cut*), A Serbia Supports A Vienna – Budapest, A Tyrolia – Vienna, A Vienna - Budapest

Russia: A Armenia – Ankara, F Baltic Sea – Denmark, F Black Sea Supports A Armenia – Ankara, A Moscow – Warsaw, A Rumania Supports A Ukraine – Galicia, A Ukraine – Galicia,

Turkey: A Constantinople - Ankara (*Fails*), F Syria Supports F Eastern Mediterranean - Smyrna (*Void*)

Spring 1914 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

GM Rick Desper: A couple notes: both Jake and Dan submitted erroneous orders. Jake submitted an order for F Aeg and left F Eas unordered. Dan submitted an order for F NWG, and even gave it a support from Wales. The latter order managed to find a bug in Realpolitik and crash it! There is a proposal to concede to France. Please submit votes with the Fall orders. No Vote Received = No. And yes, it's pretty sad when you support somebody into your own home SCs, and the guy misorders.

Austria: Clearly the job of the Austrian fleet is to make sure Bulgaria holds, while Turkey supports France into his home center of Smyrna.

England: Again, too bad Dan is traveling/working/otherwise disengaged, so he really hasn't read or at least noted Rick's adjudication from last time. It also is possible that he submitted advance orders while he was away and directed that they be used (most likely the latter). Just goes to show you, writing advance orders is very risky, since mistakes multiply. Not that it matters all that much, since France decided not to press his

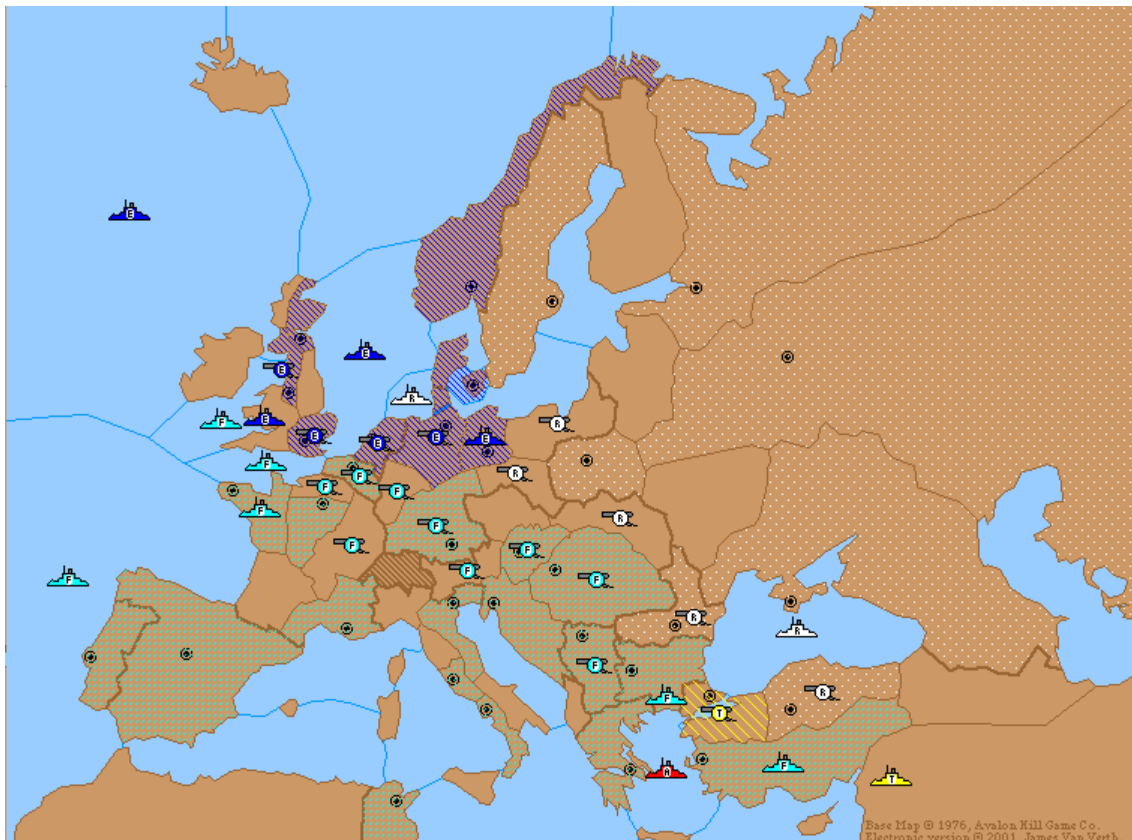
numerical fleet advantage.

France: But, Jake **ALSO** seems to be catching the "lost fleet bug". As a result, he passes up the support into Smyrna. But (as is usual in these sorts of obvious mistakes), Mark did what he had previously intended and didn't take the undefended Smyrna himself. Since Russia didn't have another army to move in behind into Armenia, he still doesn't have the firepower to stop Andy from supporting France to the win.

My only comment is to wonder if Jake's misorders were deliberate. Perhaps he is following the Birsan philosophy that a concession is better than a forced win.

Russia: A whole host of too little, too late moves here. It is hard to see how Jake doesn't win in the fall now (though, again, it is not guaranteed if Austria and Turkey decide to defend against it rather than assist it.

Turkey: Well, he tried. He gets to try again in the Fall.



Fall 1914 Results:

Austria: F Aegean Sea Supports A Constantinople

England: F Berlin Supports A Kiel, A Holland Hold, A Kiel Supports A Holland, A Liverpool Hold,
A London Supports F Wales, F North Atlantic Ocean - Irish Sea (*Fails*),
F North Sea Supports A Holland, F Wales Supports F North Atlantic Ocean - Irish Sea

France: A Belgium, no move received, F Brest Supports F English Channel,
A Budapest Supports A Vienna, F Bulgaria(sc), no move received,
A Burgundy Supports A Munich, F Eastern Mediterranean – Smyrna,
F English Channel Supports F Irish Sea, F Irish Sea Supports F English Channel (*Cut*),
F Mid-Atlantic Ocean Supports F Irish Sea, A Munich Supports A Ruhr (*Cut*),
A Picardy Supports A Belgium, A Piedmont – Tyrolia, A Ruhr Supports A Belgium,
A Serbia Supports F Bulgaria, A Vienna Supports A Budapest

Russia: A Ankara - Constantinople (*Fails*), F Black Sea Supports A Ankara – Constantinople,
F Denmark - Helgoland Bight, A Galicia - Rumania (*Fails*), A Rumania - Bulgaria (*Fails*),
A Silesia - Munich (*Fails*), A Warsaw - Prussia

Turkey: A Constantinople Supports F Eastern Mediterranean - Smyrna (*Cut*),
F Syria Supports F Eastern Mediterranean - Smyrna

Ownership:

England: Berlin, Denmark, Edinburgh, Holland, Kiel, Liverpool, London, Norway.
France: Belgium, Brest, Budapest, Bulgaria, Greece, Marseilles, Munich, Naples, Paris, Portugal,
Rome, Serbia, Smyrna, Spain, Trieste, Tunis, Venice, Vienna.
Russia: Ankara, Moscow, Rumania, Sevastopol, St Petersburg, Sweden, Warsaw.
Turkey: Constantinople.

Adjustments:

Austria: Supp 0 Unit 1 Remove 1
England: Supp 8 Unit 8 Build 0
France: **Supp 18 Unit 15 Build 2 ← Wins!!!**
Germany: Supp 0 Unit 0 Build 0
Italy: Supp 0 Unit 0 Build 0
Russia: Supp 7 Unit 7 Build 0
Turkey: Supp 1 Unit 2 Remove 1

Congratulations to Jake Mannix for winning.

Fall 1914 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

GM Rick Desper: Writing this from Jim-Bob's cabin near Portland, Maine. The weekend was a debacle, unless you didn't care at all about the obvious machinations a certain person was using to "win" DipCon. I'm sure there will be many discussions about this at a future point.

This game is over. Jake wins.

I'm looking for End of Game Statements from all seven players. In fact, I will remind you that this kind of report was expected at the point invitations were issued. With many of you, I don't think much encouragement will be needed. ☺

Although I am at Jim-Bob's, he wants you to all know that, even though he's been providing commentary with the 'Zine, he's still a few turns behind, so please don't discuss the game with him quite yet.
He's also asked me to tell you that the main purpose of the commentary was to talk about what might be going on in the game, as opposed to what was actually going on. In other words, the goal was to keep the game as interesting as possible for potential readers, rather than simply state what might be an obvious conclusion.

Another way to put this is: he doesn't care all that much

if many of his speculative guesses about your motivations were dead wrong. ☺

Austria: Austria switches to supporting Turkey to keep Constantinople, so Turkey survives while Austria doesn't. In a way, that does not reflect apparent effort put into the game, but clearly Adam was very, very committed to giving ALL of his centers to France. Andy may have preferred survival.

England: At least Dan figured out where his units were this time, though it had no real effect.

France: Jake makes the minimum set of moves, accepting the support properly this time, to get the full 18 center win.

Russia: Mark goes out fighting, but clearly realizing that it was hopeless, he worked at the end also to try to eliminate Andy. But, as noted above, Adam defended against that.

Turkey: Andy hung on all the way to the end, that in itself was an accomplishment. It still seems he could have done more though.

End-Game Statements

Austria (Adam Silverman):

The last few game years excepted, this was a pretty interesting game for me. I tend to write fairly long detailed end game comments, and I'll do my best to do so here, bearing in mind that the readership is both the players and the community at large who have been following this game on Dip World. Because the end of the game is what's freshest in everyone's mind, I'll start with some comments on it, but I think to understand why I did what I did at the end of the game a little bit of history is in order. The result of the game was, obviously, not what I had in mind or wanted. But moreover it's important to realize that "throwing" a solo is something I NEVER want to do, and I certainly didn't in this game, except for the fact that I was boxed in with only two real choices at the end: lose my centers to Jake or lose my centers to Mark. Not wanting to promote bad behavior, I followed through with my promise to Mark to defend against him till the end.

Most of the comments are written just by my memory and looking through maps from each turn - I haven't gone back to specific conversations so my apologies if I'm not spot on about specific details.

Enjoy.

1901

Going back to the beginning, Austria was a very exciting position to be in on this board. Aside from the fact that I'm one of the hobby masochists who loves playing Austria, being surrounded by the likes of Doug, Andy, and Mark was going to keep everyone on their toes. Having played with Andy many times and Mark and Doug several (not to mention my many previous games with Jake, Dan, and Mike), there wasn't going to be a lot of feeling out personalities here - everyone knew each other really well. Consequently, my initial diplomatic approach was not to spread seeds of discontent, since I didn't really think that would be possible with this crew, but rather to try to understand everyone's gut

motivations and inclinations going in and try to make myself as benign as possible. I figured if I could avoid a pile-on very early on, I'd have a chance to make an ally and see what could happen, but this was one case where I was content to be patient and not make any aggressive moves. Which turned out not to be necessary anyway, because it was apparent from the onset that Mark and Andy were going for each other's jugulars. Which ostensibly seems like a good thing, but it made me nervous as hell about Doug, since Italy doesn't have a lot to lose in jumping on Austria if Turkey is going to be fighting north.

1902

Decision time came quickly - Spring 1902 I had pleas from both Turkey and Russia to move on the other. This was a very tough choice, as I had very good history of working well with Andy while I hadn't exactly worked that well with Mark in past games. Nonetheless, the strategic situation, to me, called for an AR because I felt a campaign against Russia was likely to get stalled by Italy attacking Turkey or me, leaving me with Rum and not much else, and because I worried that a shift north might leave me overly vulnerable to a future IT. Both of those opposite possibilities didn't look good, and one or the other seemed likely if things didn't move very quickly against Russia. Moreover, although I figured I couldn't get much past Bulgaria, by boxing in Turkey but not pushing further I hoped to keep Mark locked in, freeing me to make a move on Italy (who was fairly non-communicative at this point in the game, and making me increasingly nervous in the occasional press that did pass hands).

So I moved on Bulgaria with Russia's support, but simultaneously moved into Galicia *just in case*. I took both, and unfortunately made the weak albeit alliance move of withdrawing from Gal in the fall, only to see Mark walk in. This was the first (and most minor) example of Mark's bad behavior, but sine he withdrew in

Spring 1903, I couldn't complain much.

1903-1904

Negotiations with Italy began breaking apart. I told Andy at this point that I wouldn't move against him further at this point, but I wouldn't return Bulgaria either. Not exactly what he wanted to hear, but I didn't see any reason to bullshit with him either. My attention turned west, and none too soon, as Italy began pulling his units back towards me. Setting up to take Venice in the fall, I was surprised to see France in Piedmont. When it became apparent that he was going to support Italy, I withdrew a bit to ensure no loses in the Balkans.

At this point, I just didn't play aggressively enough. Intent on solidifying my position instead of pushing further against Italy, I missed an opportunity in the spring to walk into the Ionian Sea, and instead got to see Italy stab Turkey for Smyrna and build in 1904. Meanwhile Russia began moving into Germany, leaving me the small man in the AIR triangle... not where I wanted to be. Though Russia had not shown any inclination to move on me, I was well aware of the potential for an IR, and was watching for it carefully. I thought my chance of Russia sticking it out with me were pretty good though because (a) he was making gains in the north and (b) Doug was pretty lax in communicating at this point in the game and I got the impression Mark was frustrated by that.

By the end of 1904, I was in the Ionian, but not well positioned to pull dots off of Italy because France (!) had taken Vienna from me with Italian help (not to mention plucking Tunis off Italy at the same time). The Italian fleet build in Naples ruined my chances of an easy dot, but I thought I'd have better negotiating space with France if I kept my fleet. Meanwhile I also had to watch Russia put down two armies, a VERY bad sign for me. At the end of 1904, I figured I was fighting for survival and got into hard diploming.

1905-1906

France recognized the fact that he couldn't keep Vienna, so he didn't bother trying. Our negotiations went favorably, so things were looking up. I was told that Italy had invited him in his backyard so it was just an issue of when he would get to stab. So I helped by pulling my fleet back, while getting my armies positioned to invade Italy and retake Vienna. This is about when the shit started to hit the fan. Russia, in violation of all the hard negotiation we had done over the course of the turn, moved two armies south into Galicia and Ukraine (the latter presumably to fill in Rumania in the fall). I saw but one explanation for this - a Russia-Italy agreement to take me down. So come fall, I made an attack on Rumania that I didn't expect to work, but I figured would hopefully send a message to Russia that if he wasn't going to play nice, neither was I.

Come 1906, negotiations with Russia resumed but I

didn't get a sense that Mark really wanted to pull back - nor did he plan to attack me immediately - but I figured rather than sit back, I needed to move aggressively. So I tried to make a temporary peace with Italy and went all out against Rumania, figuring Italy would HAVE to pull back to defend against the French fleets.

Of course, I took Rumania but Italy kept pushing on me, taking Trieste while leaving all of Italy for France to walk in.

1907-1909

The next few turns things became relatively more normal - my relations with Russia had deteriorated, partly my own doing, but I felt that I might be able to get the upper hand in the conflict. Meanwhile with France more or less tied down against England, I didn't have too much to worry about regarding French fleets (though I was hoping for an opportunity to build a second Austrian fleet at first chance).

Finally a key moment came in Fall 1909. I had taken Warsaw in the spring and then been kicked out by Russia in the fall. Mark diplomed me hard to remove the army instead of retreating it to Livonia. Promises of rolling the board with me till one of us was in position to solo then going for it. Promises that the game would be much more fun if I actually had someone to actively negotiate with (did I mention that Dan was silent all game, and by this point my conversations with Jake were fairly routine since we didnt interact in any sphere).

Well, I took the bait and disbanded the army, and I'll maintain that it was a reasonably good strategic move regardless. Even with the army in Livonia, it would take me a minimum of 2 years to get position where I could guarantee any gains. And a lot could change in that time in terms of my relationship with France and so forth. On the other hand, working with Russia made sense - I had a good shot at plowing some armies into the middle, and once solidified there I could make inroads into Italy while France was actually pulling units back west!

1910-1911

In the spring, Russia shifts south. Again, his diplomacy to me prior to the turn indicated that we would push the middle with me... his credibility was going down the tubes fast. Finally, we reach an agreement going into fall. I get Munich, he forces Smyrna and next year I begin my push into Italy while he builds north. Not trusting, I defend Bulgaria, figuring if he's going to stab me for Rum I can't hold it anyway. He stabs and does one better - supports Turkey against me, giving Turkey a build.

We're getting close to the last straw here. I'm fine with getting stabbed repeatedly, but I'm bothered when I have a 20 email conversation with someone over the course of a turn that ends up being entirely baloney. And when it has happened 3-4 turns in the game, two turns

consecutively, it becomes nearly impossible for me to work with said individual at points past this. As it was here for Russia.

As 1911 arrives, it's become clear that France is way past any stalemate lines and well in position to solo if he's not at the very least held from further gains. I point this out to Mark and kindly request that it would help the situation if my units were defending the Balkans and Austria from France rather than having to hold a line against him. Mark's response is that I should pull back. My response is that as long as he sits with all his armies in the south pushing on me, I'm going to keep up a defensive position against him at the expense of defending against France. Were I to shift my units to defend against a French attack at this point, all I'd be doing is giving up my dots to Russia instead of France. My preferred scenario is for Russia to push his armies to the middle and north, freeing me up to do what I have to do to hold Jake back.

No dice from Mark, so I continue putting my armies in position so that he can't take anything from me. Jake offers to put an army into Albania to help me fill the hole. I figure it will just further get across the point to Mark that I need to pull armies back so I tell him sure. Fall 1911 a draw is proposed. I'm tied in 2nd with Russia, and I vote for it. Jake seems genuinely tired of the game, and I believe him when he tells me he voted for it. I've never seen a draw vote that Mark has voted for, so I figure he's voted it down and hopes to convince me that it was Jake so I pull back with no give on his part. Not happening.

England (Daniel Lester):

Unlike in the real WDC top board of 2007, where I was also England ... this time I never had a chance!

Right from the word go I felt under the cosh. I'm pretty good friends with everyone around this board I'd like to think, I'd say I know Zoffel and Mannix best of all of them, shortly followed by Marshall and Silverman.

But none of that seemed to make much difference.

My main problem with this game is that I am RUBBISH at email Diplomacy. Seriously. I am a dreadful, dreadful written player, because my attention fades in and out and I can't afford the time to write on a consistent basis to allies, let alone enemies. Fatal, as anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the game will attest.

The start seemed to go fine, but for reasons utterly unknowable Mikey seemed to be out for my BLOOD right from the get-go. I couldn't get through to him at all on any level I don't think, with him being inexplicably convinced of my profound badness. I know I lie sometimes folks, but this new Dan Lester - HEART OF DARKNESS reputation is a bit alarming.

1912-1914

Now Turkey is involved in trying to get Russia to do something useful instead of pressing on me, the one player who could actually try to hinder France's advance. No dice. By this point I'm getting daily messages from Mark continuing to insist I defend from France but never offering anything credible. Fall 1912, Jake stabs. I'm not upset. Mark continues to send infuriating messages, so I agree with France and Turkey that the best course to punish Russia's bad behavior is to help France solo (the inevitable result at this point) as quickly as possible to put the game behind us.

It didn't have to happen. The first last straw was when I removed my retreat out of Warsaw in a good-will gesture and then followed through with our agreement to push the middle, only to get stabbed the very next turn. But even after that, Russia was given ample opportunity to work with me (and Turkey) by just pulling units away from my front, but there was never any give, only take, take take. So this is where greedy play ends up.

It was well played and well timed by Jake, who took advantage of the deteriorating relations in the east to remarkably solo without taking a single English center.

Thanks to Rick for the hard work GMing and to Doug, Jim, and Eric for their entertaining commentary. I'd be happy to comment on particulars in more detail if there is interest.

Not even an empty NTS in Summer 01 helped me, although perhaps it was catnip for the German tiger. Well, tiger cub as it turned out ☺ Mikey seemed determined to chuck things at me even as his home centers fell to the false friends of west and east, and my slow progress in the early rounds made it impossible to stake a claim even to bleedin' NORWAY. I was absolutely certain that I was next on the chopping board, that Jake and Zoffel would eat me up and that would be that.

Why that didn't happen, I don't understand. Perhaps Jake and Mark couldn't get it together diplomatically. Wouldn't surprise me.

I forged my way back into this game by exploiting Mark's overgenerous offer of material to back off, and I was well set to chase him back to StP. However, the evaporation of opposition in the south left Jake set too fair. Of course I would have preferred to stick with our alliance, which was very NICE by the way, and would love to have done as he suggested - get over the stalemate lines and race to Constantinople! Except that the Mannix was already

so far ahead of me, and likely to be even more so in short order, that I felt any race would only have once conceivable result. Not a good one for me!

So despite all going well in tactical terms, I stabbed Jake at what was probably my last acceptable moment to do so. The PROBLEM was that my heart wasn't really in it and it was a rubbish stab. That'll teach me to do a half-stab... won't it? WONT'T IT? No perhaps it won't. Oh well. Perhaps it will teach OTHER PEOPLE to stab when they stab and not *hedge bets*.

Either way my stab on Jake would have probably prevented the solo despite its ineffectiveness, if only Mark had let it flow. But he had ambitions of his own and nipped Kiel off me. I couldn't sit there and let that

happen so tried another flip-flop. But I had underestimated Jake, and he escaped the box for one final time, spelling the END for me. And everyone else.

I'm sure a lot of these EOGs focus on what an a--hole Mr Zoffel is and how it is ALL HIS FAULT that Jake soloed. While there is a grain of truth in the idea that his desire to grow made it impossible to resist Jake in the final analysis -- I would rather focus on the more important aspect of the game result. Jake played a super game, patient, diplomatic and stylish and I think the credit for the win must go entirely to him. Bravo! Learn from his play, and from my mistakes.

Ciao.

France (Jake Mannix):

The negotiations in this game started even before countries were picked - even before Doug said that he would pick his country "second" of all things, Mark and I were discussing where we would want to be on the map to best work to each of our advantages. Note that I didn't say "ally", because I think we all knew that this game would rarely have any true "alliances" in it, not with this rogue's gallery. We decided that being near each other would certainly not be a good idea (heh), but few cross-board alliances are able to actually able to actively interact:

The central powers can do so - with Germany and either Italy or Austria, but even then, the early game you end up mostly just staying out of each other's way, and the mid game you can't avoid it. I/E can work but if France survives with much strength at all, you never do much other than pass notes to each other. I/R can be fun, but on a board with a competent Austria, who would want Italy out of that duo? E/R can actually do really nicely if you can get past the beginning, but even then you have to worry about the weak med presence later on. Long story short, Mark and I thought that F/R would be the best way for us to have a really strong mutual position, unless Doug picked one of those, in which case I/R would work well too. Mark wanted France, because he says he plays poorly as Russia, but I think this game shows that he most certainly does not.

Myself? Well, I'm not locked into any particular country choice as my favorite, but the day I had to send in my choice, my wife, who's from Marseilles, gave birth to our daughter Liya, so France it was to be, with Mark promising to pick Russia if Doug did not.

The game, you say? Enough of idle pre-game thoughts? Ok.

Initial Negotiations:

with Mike (Germany) : Let's be pals, go kill England! [No real discussion of Burgundy ('tis a French province, no need to discuss it, right?)]

with Doug (Italy) : I'm planning to *play* this game [Doug, not want to be passive? Really?], I'm either going to Piedmont or Tyrolia. [Prefer latter, thxmuch]

with Dan (England) : Dan, I love you, we will totally be the best buds ever, huh? You always go to the Channel, so let's bounce so we can still be friends after you order Lon->Eng?

with Mark (Russia) : There's so going to be movement toward Bla and Arm, so we've got no need to talk about the possibility of going North, huh? Yep.

with Adam (Austria) : Yes Adam, I do think Doug will come after you. But yes, he will also probably be in Piedmont. No, that's not strange, that's Doug.

with Andy (Turkey) : You're attacking Mark? *smmmmoosches*

So everyone wanted to be my friend, and I was having none of that, so I made sure that Doug would be in Piedmont, Dan would go to the Channel, and aimed to stab Mikey in the fall, because I wanted to make things fair for everyone else - it's just not fair if I solo in 1904 because everyone wanted me to, you see...

But seriously, my initial feeling was that in my pretty extensive play with everyone on that board, shows of strength give you the best chance to make allies with this crew. Even if the strength happens to be in their direction. Doug is the exception to this, actually - a show of either strength or weakness in any direction near him means that he'll eat you soon, he's omnivorous like that.

The spring moves were pretty much exactly as

expected, except Mark *did* move north, pretty much to my surprise (I underestimated how well Adam and Mark could work together - for a time), and left me in the annoying position of still having F Bre, and having to think about guessing games with Mar unless I just gave up on northern motion and sent Bur down to cover Mar. Fat chance I'd play that slow, you crazy? I thought about just ignoring Mar, and taking a risk, but the risk was that I don't build at all if Doug takes it and Bur bounces with wherever it goes. I felt completely comfortable with Dan, as he was completely hosed for the time being, and I had no position to cause him any harm either - our desire to work together had led us to choose to hobble ourselves, which in turn meant that we had to work together. Not exactly what we had in mind, but that's the way it goes, you see...

It was pretty much at this point in the game where I had my prescient vision: Mark was going to absolutely clobber the board: Dan was going to be weak up until someone purposefully helped him get un-weak, and knowing Mikey's sense of smell for when blood is in the water, Dan was going to need even more than just a little help, even with a strong defensive position and his own tactics and willingness to take risks. Adam was going to play nice with Mark, because he had a wily Doug at his back, and Doug would be forced to kill Andy (who was the only one thinking about being aggressive with Russia). All in all, after the S01 moves were read, it was clear that Mark was going to choose one or more of E, G or T to nibble centers from while working to make sure that I/A were of roughly equal size to keep Adam from getting too tempted (or else just watch them fight).

But what could I do? I like it when all of my neighbors are having trouble with Mark, it gives them another direction to look. But still, I thought about slowing him down, but to do that, I need E/G working together, which is pretty scary to a slow growing France with Doug Moore in Italy. Instead, I chose to speed things up: weaken Germany to indirectly help out England. Taking Munich was assumed to be temporary, but it left me with some options - if Trl/Boh were both open, I could discuss with Mike just walking out of his way and heading east. If not, I could use it as a "poppable" unit so I can rebuild as a fleet on the same year I'm building another fleet if I'm going to turn on Dan. Or else I can just use it as a stopping place for the time, just to entice Mark in that direction (I would far rather have Mark's Russian units in Germany than on the island - that's just asking for a 1906 Zoffel solo).

After talking briefly with Mike after the moves were read, I realized that he was not terribly interested in playing "fun", so I assumed he'd be gunning for a little revenge. I also assumed that with things being the way they were in the east and north, Doug and Dan might think that using Mike's animosity to their advantage would be a good idea. Unfortunately, the position I had with the upcoming loss of Munich on the very near horizon meant

that I didn't have very many options, so I aimed for defense, ignoring all the kind words being blown in my direction. I didn't expect Munich to be taken by Doug, actually, and as soon as I saw it, I felt that Mike's game was shot - had he retaken it himself (knowing Doug would have no reason to support me there), he had lots of options, but with Italy there (even temporarily), and no shot at Bur (since I covered Ruh) meant that while England and Italy could move on me, he could not (quickly, at least), and his options were limited. But I understood why - he wanted to tempt Doug into attacking me, reasonably enough.

The fall position left me feeling pretty good that I'd covered, and kept talking nicely to both Doug and Dan: "Hey, Belgium's open, cool huh?" "No prob with Munich - it's yours! Want to still work together?" "Of course Jake - I only sent one fleet your way, I'm not *attacking* you!"

The W02 negotiations were tense: Doug had conveniently misordered his pull-back away from Iberia, and Mike "stabbed" him by taking Munich back, Dan had tried to land an army in Belgium for a build and still had control of Eng, and Burgundy was open for an Italian retreat. If Dan had actually gotten Bel, I'm pretty sure I would have been torn apart by an EGI dog pile. But Mike had somehow decided to take back Munich from Italy without negotiation (I think), and kept Dan out of Bel (Mark was behind the latter action, as it turned out - he certainly wanted E/G war, and would be willing to work to get it). But I was building, and so Doug moved back east, to cover from the spidey-sense that Adam was coming after him (Doug is good about sensing these things).

In the east, Mark and Adam had been playing this little game: dance at each other while letting Andy not even order and still do ok. I didn't really understand what was up with all that, but I my only concern with that was what it meant about Austro-Italian relations. Adam was looking pretty strong relative to Doug, even with the eastbound Munich retreat, so I believed Doug when he said he was moving completely defensive in 03. Dan was still in the Channel, but I was totally cool with that - Dan is the kind of guy who you sometimes need to not worry about, or else you waste your time bouncing with him when he's not really planning on stabbing you. When he is planning on stabbing you, you won't know it.

So the plan was simple: after the usual paranoid negotiations with Adam (he never trusts me!), we agreed to attack Doug, and I moved expecting Doug to be specifically defending against Adam, not me, and this worked out better than I had any reason to expect - walked Piedmont while rearranging my ill-placed fleets, Adam forced Trl, and bounced Doug from getting back to Ion. Of course, in the meantime, Mikey was coming at me full-bore, and not really negotiating about it, Mark was reorienting for a typically Zoffellian position where

he chooses which of E or G to nibble at first, and the witches both NMR'ed! Thankfully that was the end of allowing NMRs.

Doug was *livid* with Adam, and not terribly pissed at me, even to the point of asking if I'd be willing to support Venice to hold against Adam! Adam was pressing me *hard* for giving him Venice, but I was really concerned that if he got into Venice now, without my fleets in position to get anything from Doug, that Doug's anger and spite at Adam would just turn toward me, and I'd get nowhere. I had to go slower, but at the same time, not give up on this pickle we had Doug in. I chose to play nice with Doug, and told Adam we'd have to wait. Adam doesn't take kindly to being put in the position of Bad Guy to Doug, so he backed off a bit there, while I tried to maneuver into a better position vis a vis Doug, which is harder than it seems, when Dan is still sitting in the Channel and Mike is keeping two units on Burgundy!

Luckily for me, Mark came to the rescue, walking into Nth and taking Den off Mike. In my mind, I felt I could afford to throw everything at Doug if I wanted, because *clearly* Dan and Mike would ally to push Mark back, right? Hmmm.. *wrong*. Dan let me know that he was expecting that Mike would probably keep coming at him, so I should not expect much pressure on Mark for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, Doug convinced me that I should take his support from Piedmont to Tyrolia, and since what French General would turn down an offer to hang out in Tyrolia, I took it, not sure exactly what I'd do with it. To do something more sensible, I also move further into the med with one fleet, because, well, what else is a F Wes supposed to do? Certainly not head toward MAO while MAO goes to Iri, I'll tell you that, not when by BFF Dan is playing England (and still hanging out in the channel, damn you, BFF)!

The next few seasons amounted to me trying to play "friendly big brother" to Dan and Doug - take only what they were ok with me taking while keeping good position (Dan could afford to lose nothing to me, as Mike kept messing with him while Mark ate them both), and since I could only take one from Doug at a time, I did whatever he suggested with my loose cannon army in the middle (he aimed it at Vie, so I did as suggested, *MUCH* to Adam's annoyance). Damn Doug had to go and take two Turkish dots right when I had him ready to get eaten, and so the defensive F Nap build stymied my thoughts of a quick end to our little working relationship.

Fall 05 was another huge turning point for me: Dan had somehow negotiated his way into 2 builds from Mark (predicated on the fact that I was losing one from Adam's Vienna, and he would turn on me. I knew nothing of this at the time). Dan was happy with the builds, but he told me he was unhappy with his negotiations with Mark: Big Man on the Board was being a little too bossy, and besides, he told me he was my BFF, so I believed him: disband F Nwg, hang onto

eastern position, go after Doug now, even with the extra defensive build! Dan dove right at Mark, I dug into the med, stabbing Doug poorly: I was going to be forced to give up Tunis, and the only thing giving me a chance was that Mark and Adam were having another marital spat. Luckily for me, the stab didn't go as poorly as it could have, because Doug misordered F Smy-lon, leaving me able to defend Tunis in time while holding Nap and Rome. Seeing how the next few seasons went, it's clear that had Doug made it to lon in time, I would have been soundly punished for my dumb stab.

It was ARI vs EF for the time being - Adam and Mark had gotten back together again, and Doug would push me back with Adam's help. [Note that 1907 is also the first year that the English Channel remained unoccupied. I *heart* Dan]. I lost Rome, but has 4 fleets in the med (one in Apulia!), and A Trl. I was basically stopped down there, and Doug felt pretty good about that. Unfortunately for him, Adam was getting nothing out of it anymore, and still being friends with Mark meant a lack of gains in the short term for Adam, so even lacking trust in me, Adam moved on Doug while Andy took one of his own dots back, and Doug's position was shot. Doug was already willing to help me in any way possible at that point, and offered advice and help even in the direction of a solo for me, as long as Adam was punished, so from that point forward, our units could be considered as the same color.

Of course, Dan is no dummy, and BFF or not, he checked carefully that I wasn't planning on covering, and then promptly stomped on my with a brutal positional stab. He had F Eng, A Lon, and Mark's friendship, and I had only one fleet within *two* moves of Mao. *Ouch*. But Dan played slowly, unwilling to completely cede position to Mark while he moved on me, and didn't lock me out of Mao or convoy to Bre, deciding instead to solidify his position slowly, while taking Bre with the fleet. Not that he left me alone, mind you! Dan kept negotiating with me while trying to support himself into Mao, and I offered him anything he'd take to lay off a bit: support into Mark's Munich (he'd sensibly sided with Dan against me in this little war), while convoying armies to Germany for central position (against me too!). I disengaged from the Med, now that Doug was dead, and thankfully Adam chose to turn on Mark instead of me (why? I wasn't a very prime target in the east, and Mark had nobody else to fight, since he had made friends with Dan, so Adam expected a battle, and so took some "prevenge" on Mark just in case).

At the end of 1909, Dan had a build again from Munich, and had armies in Mun, Ruh, and Bel, and enough fleets to push harder into MAO in a few seasons, and I was pretty worried. All my units were back at home trying to turtle-up, and I was in big danger of becoming overexposed to Adam in the east, with whom my only negotiation with any weight was, "I'll throw a solo to Dan if you stab me, and we've got enough fleets that you

can't stop us!". Dan must have talked with Adam, because he flat out told me that he was giving up the attack on me - I was too turtled-up, and things were looking like on-again-off-again AR was going to start moving again, so he wanted some Russian dots. He didn't tell me his moves, but I know Dan - when he wants to turn, he's really going to turn. The question is - what do I do? Go back into the med? And get what? Force my way into Greece? Take Turkish dots? Now, I was done dinking around with Adam - we arranged some careful bounces and DMZs, so that he could work with Mark to fight against Dan, and I thrust every other unit I had available at my BFF, taking Belgium and convoying to Wales. I had a 50:50 chance at taking Dan down, and it had to be right then: if I failed on the first guess, he had more defenses coming, and while I was moving for good position in the east, I was still not attacking Adam at all - he was pissed at Mark, and so I was helping him - which meant I was getting no builds. Dan, meanwhile, was getting fed dots by Mark, and did guess correctly, ending my chance at really making progress in the English direction.

Here's where it may surprise you to know that when Dan made his eloquently worded draw proposal, I voted *for it*. I could possibly gain, I felt, but the game had gone so well, and was so much fun, and I was on good terms with both Adam and Dan at that point (who were the only ones I could gain from, but even then not easily), so I was ready to be done. But anyone who's played face to face with Mark until 4am at a Con knows that he's not one to give up. Ever. Dan, Adam, and Andy (still alive!) were pretty annoyed that the game wasn't over, and so we started a 4-way discussion on how to punish Mark without me getting bored enough to start nibbling on them. Well, actually, Andy had wanted to punish Adam and Mark however it could be done, and the easiest way was to get me a solo if possible. Adam didn't really want that (yet), but really wanted to punish Mark.

Germany (Mike Hall):

I was Germany in this game... Boy I love being Germany, reminds me of being in a Con run by Buzz or Maletsky! I tried to do my best, and opened normal in '01. France opened with two to Burgundy and England opened to the Channel. What Fun! LOL France was not talkative at all to me early. I figured I was being played. In the Fall I lost Munich and at the same time tried for the North Sea. In '02 Italy took Munich with my help! Then I took it from him in the fall, yes I know blind dumbest! I was not paying attention to Russia too much

Italy (Doug Moore):

I picked first and I picked Italy. Am I crazy? No. I actually like playing Italy -- it's a lot of fun. And when you're successful, you tend to be *really* successful.

I'm not sure what negotiations when on between Adam and Mark at this point, but whatever they were, these were what determined the game's outcome: I played the only game I could - slow and steady - hold Dan in position, move deeper east whenever Adam approved, and wait to see what happened. Adam kept getting more and more pissed at Mark, and at some point felt that his position was such that the end game was going to no longer contain him, and that was where finally he agreed with Andy that the end-game of choice was a solo by me (Dan was no longer in these negotiations, because I knew he did not have enough ill will toward Mark to want my solo, and I didn't want him letting Mark realize how precarious the situation was).

Andy and Adam wanted the game to be over as fast as possible, and so moved as efficiently as possible to get me to 18, which as it turned out, meant that I get all of Adam's dots and all but one of Andy's. That kind of solo throw is really no different than one where you support someone into another person's dots, because the end result is the same. There was really no tactics at that point, not even Mark's disorder really made much difference - the direction was already decided by now, it was only a matter of time, even though Mark didn't realize it.

All in all, the game had a fantastic series of twists and turns, and while yes, we had a few early NMRs, they didn't have anywhere near the effect that some of the later disorders did. And yes, Mark, I owe it all to you: solos aren't won, they are given, and people only give solos when they've been messed with for long enough, and then finally made to feel like after all that, they won't get a favorable result. Spite, in the end, when there is enough of it, trumps all. And with this crew, and this game, there was enough of it. ☺

and he took Denmark from me. By this time the French finally got really going and the English got Belgium..and I was being squeezed by Russia to the East. In less than a year and a half I was out of the game.

I am not too good at these EGOs but I was not in the game long enough to have much to say, except I should have spent more time in the email area. But I did monitor the game after I was out, and it was entertaining.

I wanted to work with Andy Marshall (Turkey). First, I felt we should eliminate Adam Silverman (Austria) first, and then move on to take down Mark Zoffel (Russia) together. Marshall decided that he wanted to attack

Zoffel and wasn't particularly interested in shifting gears. Well, last time I checked, there's no way to attack Russia as Italy without going through Austria.

I tried to persuade Silverman to attack Zoffel, but his play style is fairly cautious, particularly with Austria. In short, I failed miserably to persuade him to do much of anything. I tried hard, though. On the other hand, Zoffel and Silverman were interested in getting me to attack Marshall, but the deal was never really there or interesting enough to persuade me. They failed miserably to persuade me.

So, instead, I went West. I negotiated a deal with Mikey Hall (Germany) and Dan Lester (England) to get Jake Mannix (France). It even looked really good to start the game. Lester was a little iffy (mostly because he never wrote me more than once). Hall and I, on the other hand, should have rolled. We had a picture-perfect Rocky Lepanto -- and it was taking back a dot Mannix had taken!! No cost to Germany! However, rather than following through, Hall decided it was more important to re-take Munich than advance into Ruhr, push me into Burgundy, and re-take Munich when I had Marseilles in one game year. It should have netted a solid GI alliance Belgium and Marseilles, and simultaneously, liberated the host of Oktoberfest for an appreciative crowd of Italian tourists and Germans. That turn would have been +2 G, but Hall didn't have the patience. He knocked me out of Munich and that was that.

At that point, I was pretty much done. I had no real ally since Hall spurned me. Mannix was annoyed and

Silverman was not particularly inclined towards me since I'd done nothing he'd asked, and Marshall was locked up with Zoffel/Silverman and thus no use to me (nor I to him).

Frankly, it was no surprise that Mannix and Silverman started dotting me. I probably would have done the same thing in those circumstances. What *was* surprising was the length of my survival. I was able to play the two of them off each other for some time. For a while, I thought I might be able to get back into the mix when I grabbed some dots from Marshall, but it wasn't to be.

Because of my annoyance at the play of other powers, (I'm looking at you Hall) I wanted to throw the game to Mannix early on. They continually proposed what I felt were plans and ideas that offered me little to no incentive to attack Marshall. When asked about rewards, I'd invariably get some nonsense about one dot in Smyrna. For Greece and Smyrna? I'd have thought about it. Mannix, on the other hand, I'd attacked. I failed and he got me. So I rolled over to him and mostly did his bidding. Eventually, that more or less wasn't enough and he killed me. :)

Despite my early and evident demise, it was pretty fun. The negotiations with Jake and Adam were a lot of entertainment on all sides. Marshall and I generally mocked the game, our relative positions, and the fact that I stabbed him for some dots, and then stabbed him again by dying first. Hey, Satan, I promised I wouldn't eliminate you!!

Russia (Mark Zoffel):

As we picked countries I chose where I felt I had the best chance to win. Russia, though my own personal weakest country, set me up as well as could be expected...I thought...

Looking at the board, my pre-discussion gut feeling told me there would be a EF off the bat, and that IT may work together for the short term. After speaking with everyone a few times, my feeling hadn't changed. What that meant to me was to ally with Germany off the bat, sending two to the north. Risky with the southern sharks, but felt that I could make the case to go after Austria right away with Turkey, or at least have a somewhat neutral opening with him, that would give me time and position to defend in O2 or O3. I spoke with Mikey in Germany the most and felt that we saw eye to eye on the risks involved in the west. I then spoke with Adam in Austria, and hoped that we could work together should IT be working together, and we agreed to bounce in Gal. I spoke with Marshall, and felt that his wanting to go after Adam was real, and that he would work with me and open accordingly. (Mistake #1 in the game) I now felt comfortable opening 2 to the north as I

felt Austria was the early target of Turkey, and though it wasn't mine, as I was going north, felt that I could pick an ally in O2, and just play neutral until then. Opening comes and Marshall opens anti-Russia. I don't know if he expected Adam to be more aggressive against me but glad that Adam and I had bounced. I was still screwed, mind you, but felt that Adam would be less likely to ally with Marshall, and be stuck between Moore and Marshall than go after me. This helped in my fall moves, as I trusted Adam not to help Marshall. Being out of position in the south I had to play to Marshall's need to grow big immediately. The only shot I had was to convince him that he had position on me, and that now I would work with him to go after Adam, as it was my only good move. I offered Andy the following moves:

Sev-Rum with his support, and he moves arm-sev and ank-bla sea. Next year I would allow him to pop my fleet in Rum, and we would then have a RT. In theory it looked ok, except, this is a game of people who know other people. I felt that Andy would continue to go after me no matter what, and that maybe with someone else that plan would work perfectly, but not with Satan. In the

North I told Lester that I was fucked in the south and that I needed Nor, and that I was moving there. I also told Mikey that I needed swe, which I felt he would give me as we were working together. Lester told me to go stuff myself, the first through third times we discussed it. Each time I kept telling him that I had to and that my need was greater than his, as I thought Mike might not give me swe and that Adam and Marshall were out to get me. Did he want to see Russia fall quickly? I promised him help against Germany in 02 -r 03 and eventually he agreed to the move.

Fall of 01, was 1 of the 3 most important moves for me in the game, as it slammed the door on Turkey, for which he would never recover, and gave me options and allies over the rest of the board. Feeling that Andy bought my idea, where he would get to 5 units, and have great position on me, I moved in such a way that would bounce all of his units, that being sev-Bla. It worked, and by doing so showed Adam that I wanted to work with him against Turkey if he was willing. He was and I had an ally.

After Fall 1901 my options, of which I am a big fan in having, were endless. I preferred to work with Adam to dig Andy out, but also would have worked with Andy if he showed that he was for it. What Moore in Italy wanted to do would help make up my mind in the south. In the north I preferred to work with Mikey, as I felt EF were working together from the start. The problem for me came when Mikey's moves seemed to me very erratic and off point for what we were looking to do, that being, take out England first, then see where we are and maybe go after France. Jake seemed to want to head south, and all Mikey needed to do was attack Eng with me, and we would be fine. For 2-3 turns, Mikey went Eng-Fra-Eng in his attacks, thereby solidifying the EF and making any chance of an early elimination of England a long shot. My plan was to lock down the north, while the south was in disarray, then re-focus on the south. The longer it took me to take out Eng, the longer Andy and Moore would have time to turn Adam against me. I discussed this with Mikey and he still felt good about our alliance, but didn't see a problem with his moves. This worried me to the point where I had to change my plans in the north, and thereby change them in the south.

Kill Mikey. That became my plan from here, and though I knew it would turn into a short period of stop the leader after that, I felt it was worth the risk. I was wrong, mind you, but at that point I felt I didn't have any great options. After my stab of Germany, and my invasion of the fatherland was close to successful, the second turning point in the game, came into play. Growing to 9-10 centers in this game was dangerous, as these players would bitch slap me into my place sooner than later. I needed allies. Adam and I had worked well together, though made little progress. I felt he was getting ready to stab me, as I was the one growing and

not him. In hindsight, I should have worked with him as more of an ally, and had our unit count at 9-7 instead of 10-6, as it would worry just about anyone, especially someone on a main border. My fear in not doing so was knowing Adam's propensity to pick at the edges of allies and enemies. I take one off you. Sorry it was needed. No worries right? Oops. There is another one, not cause to fight, right? The balancing act is always in play in these games, and sometimes you choose wrong, and others, you choose right. Either way you can lose. In the North I felt that Jake wouldn't ally with me to take over Eng as I would be too powerful. Without him, killing off Lester was impossible. I then chose to ally with Lester in the hopes that he would go after Jake once he built back up from three units, which he was down to. I also hoped that he would show me some love for giving him a few dots in Germany. Wrong again. If my plan would have worked, I would have had a DMZ with Eng and no worries for now in the north, and then could focus on Turkey with Austria's help or Austria with Turkey help. Or maybe just clamp down on defense with the units I had.

Once Lester stabbed me, and then kept coming, I had to throw out any ideas related to my last plan and formulate a "fingers in the dike strategy", as this shit was hitting the fan fast. Knowing Lester's game somewhat, I hoped that there would be a point where he would stop his northern push, as he would see his ally Jake having an easier time in the south, and would stab him. We got to that point, and he turned around, but by my taking Den back, to stay at 7, a needed number for defense, I turned Lester back around to me. Stupid Zoffel, Stupid. It was all the time Jake needed to defend and get to a defensible position. In the south while this was going on, Adam was starting to try and one dot me. Every turn. He tried for War, and Sev, after taking Rum, and got to the point where I knew he was going back to his old ways, and thereby could not be trusted. Eventually after I had stopped all of his advances, formed a line that he couldn't penetrate, he came to me and said we should work together. At that point, even though we all saw the French building up to a solo chance, I had had enough, and decided to continue to defend against him, and even try and push him out of Rum, which as Russia I viewed as my own. (He didn't of course) After that turn, I had solidified two enemies who were only playing to watch me die and could care less about giving the solo to France. When enemies despise you that much, often it is your own fault. In this case some of the fault WAS mine, but.....

Turkey had been down to one unit and I had the opportunity to kill him off, but felt I needed an ally, so I propped him up and hoped that I could work with him, as Austria was my new target. In one turn, after he was at 2 centers, I came to him with a plan, that if it worked he would grow and I as well. If it didn't only I would grow. I was at 7 and him at 2. Greedy? Maybe. I thought he said he was for it, but there may have been a

miscommunication as he didn't move as discussed. After that, I felt we had lost any cohesion that we had formed and played defense against him the next turn. I was right as Turkey and Austria attack me that year, even with French units flowing into the Med and Italy.

Then came the third turning point. My mid-order. Desper had it right when he said he had never seen a mis-order matter so much in a high level game such as this. He was right. I wrote the orders, looked over them 5 times, as my gut said something was wrong, and after not seeing anything wrong, sent them in. When they were announced, I felt sick, as I realized I had just thrown the game away, not just for myself, but for everyone. I apologize to all in the game, as that should not have happened. After the move I thought we could stop Jakes solo with everyone's help, but didn't think that Andy AND Adam would both throw the solo to Jake to spite me. Both of them. I was wrong. What are you guys playing for? Really? Bitter table for one? No excuse me, bitter table for two? I don't attack Adam all game, except to "take" Rum, while he attacks most of my home centers, and allies with Andy late in the game, and you are mad at me? Sure I played good defense

Turkey (Andy Marshall):

It certainly would've been fine had my last game of Dip been a little less graphically nonsensical. I entered the game with an entirely self-generated sense of playing under duress, and the whole thing was burdened with some interpersonal stuff that I have no intention of rehashing here with any specificity. Psychology and sociology color every game we play—any Pitkisser will tell you without hesitation that all games are Diplomacy. But this game was crippled with psychosis and sociopathy in a variety of forms. I had misgivings about this game's status as a demo game for much of the early going, but I have to concede that it turned out to be a fair demonstration of what can happen when friends let friends play Diplomacy.

I should first thank those involved: Doug Kent for initiating it as a DW demo game, and my good friend Rick Desper for patiently and quite nearly competently GMing this tawdry affair. That last isn't an insult. As a GM, I've screwed up many a non-FTF game far, far worse than Rick did with his Lennonesque 1912 proclamation that war was over, when in fact, one player had vetoed the draw (and it is to be hoped that that player—known to all of us in the game—comes to Jesus in his EOG and admits that he did it). And Rick's error did give us chance to affirm the theme of these proceedings: Punish Bad Behavior.

I'd also like to thank Adam Silverman for coming to his senses, even though it was too late for it to have any positive effect for an alliance that should've won this thing in about 1907, and Doug Moore for dying early

against you and out guessed you a few times to stop your attacks on me, but what did I do to deserve this? The final time you came to me and said we have to ally now, and I lied to you and attacked, is that it? To throw a solo? To support Jake into your centers. In Andy's case I can see it. We battled all game, lying to one another, etc., but all I did was lie to you once in the beginning of the game, then defend the rest, except in the end when I came around into Ank. Isn't that part of the game?

I want to congratulate Jake on playing the best of all of us, and thanks to all who were involved. I think in the future if everyone could send all e-mail messages to the judge to keep, everyone would have gotten a better sense of this game. Also, many people didn't put the time into this game, myself included, and it showed. From mis-orders, to late orders, to no orders, and a lack of communication amongst all of us, I think that we wasted each other's time somewhat in not bringing this game up to the level it should have been with the talent assembled. I suppose real life had something to do with that, but still a waste.

enough so that his continued presence in the game did not give us any reason to spray spittle in each others' faces at a range of two feet while simultaneously proclaiming that we didn't care about the game's outcome. Doug and I have an odd idea of fun, you see.

Finally, I'd like to thank Eric Hunter and Jim-Bob Burgess for bravely attempting to make sense of this hash. As I write this, their published commentary lags far behind the course of events, and I say without rancor that it's laughable. But they can't help that; no one outside the circle of those who played this game could've made sense of its personality and underpinnings, and Eric and Jim-Bob are to be commended for stepping in and trying to be erudite. And polite.

Strategically and tactically, my game turned on my absolute conviction that Mark Zoffel Must Die. Zoffel and I don't play well together, and that's about all we need to say about that. Mark has a wife and children and friends who love him, and he doesn't need my approval.

We all say that every board is a separate entity, and we're all lying through our teeth. If you play regularly, whether locally or regionally or nationally or ethereally, you come into contact with some—perhaps many—of the same folk. There are people we just can't play with, and we know it when board assignments are revealed and it colors our choices in permanent ink. The trouble in the east was this: I can't play with Zoffel, Silverman

couldn't (until a certain point in this game when love was inevitable) play with me (I will be the first to admit that Adam's historical reasons for this are understandable), and while I say this with all the love in the world, very few people can play with Doug Moore. Unfortunately for sanity and stability in this board's east, I'm one of them, at least until I decide Doug's being more greedy than I am. Wait. Doug's always more greedy than I am. Okay, until I decide it's important that Doug is being more greedy than I am.

It was no surprise that Zoffel and I didn't speak a word of truth to each other—in fact, the surprise of a nugget of truth came fairly late in the game, when Mark let me back in to claw back from one dot to dizzying heights like...uhm...let me check my records here...yeah, TWO dots. While it's truly unfortunate for Mark that I used the extra dot to make sure Jake soloed, he really should've seen that one coming.

I don't have much more than that to say about the strategy and tactics of this game. After Adam stabbed me for Bulgaria in 1902, I had nothing to do other than turtle up. Everything I did thereafter involved trying to get someone to do something to someone else. Did I do a good job of playing the Small Time? I'd like to think I did. I hung around in the Small Time for 12 game years. I sowed mistrust between Silverman and Zoffel with relentless success—had they not spent years squabbling over who got my last dot, I'd have been toast in 1907 or so. I had a hand in the outcome. Yeah, I did what I was supposed to do.

There are no doubt those who are disturbed that a solo was thrown in this game. Some of them are writing EOG statements. One player's behavior in the game was stompdown awful—bluster, threats, whining, self-victimization, passive aggression, 180-degree turns over the course of a single game year and, in the end, vetoing a game conclusion that would've left him as a survivor. Those of us on the bleeding edge of that behavior had an absolute right to punish that behavior.

Jim Burgess (Commentator):

I said this in a couple of places in my commentary, but it will be useful to reiterate some background here. The reason for commentary in an on-going game is not to show off my predictive brilliance (even if I might have tried to do that occasionally) nor is it to show how I can recreate the actual negotiations that are going on in the game that the readers cannot see (on the Judges, they frequently have games where you can read all of the press and negotiations as they are going on, that's a different animal -- continuing this annoying digression, presently the Dipsters Full Press Tournament Championship game is being run that way {Alan Mennel is the GM} and the fact that only about five people in the

Throwing the solo is the ultimate power in Diplomacy. Do you want to do it every time you're going to be eliminated? Of course not. For one thing, elimination is frequently a function of factors other than the aggressor's bad behavior. And let's be clear here: trying to win the game isn't bad behavior. Being a twisted-panty, whiny, lying, crybaby bully? That's bad behavior. Getting to a game-threatening position in alliance with another player, then stabbing while someone else is close enough to the top to be able to leverage your perfidy? That's STUPID bad behavior, and it's appallingly common, especially in games played under a draw-first mentality (i.e., most U.S. tournament Diplomacy). Screw someone who has the power to hurt you, and you get what you deserve. And sometimes? The margins are remarkably thin, as they were here. Remember kids, it doesn't take long for a competent player to let someone else into all of his dots. In other words, competence doesn't have to be used for good.

Heh. So, behave better. Actions have consequences. Besides, it's just a game, right? And that's the rub. It's just a game. I announced my retirement from playing the game just before I agreed to undertake this one. I played my last FTF game with many of the same people who played this board, and in the same positions (someone else with whom I have grave difficulty playing occupied the Russian space in the FTF version, so it was different in flavor, but not in tone or outcome). The biggest reason I'm done with playing the game is that I'm frustrated by irrationally bad behavior. A miscalculation is one thing; the stupid is another entirely. The competitive fire just doesn't burn like it used to, when it comes to Diplomacy (watch Chris Martin and I play any other game, from fantasy football to tiddlywinks to Princes of Florence to betting on cockroach races to a simple freakin' conversation among our peers, and you'll see that it's only died for Dip).

So have fun, be kind to each other, and thanks for all the fish. I'll see you around—it's not like I'd want to deprive you of the benefit of my wisdom, whether or not I'll be handing you my dots.

world are taking advantage of this opportunity to see EVERYTHING going on in a game as it progresses is a damned shame). The main point for the Commentator in a game like this one is to say things and discuss things that draw readers into the game, so that they follow it and use it to think about their own strategies and their own approaches as they might play this game were they in it. I hope I have done that, at least to some extent.

In that same sense, let me now provide some contextual commentary on each of the players in the game, and then something on the end of the game and how that played out. In doing that I will try to convey what I learn

from the endgame statements of the individual players above.

Austria (Adam Silverman): Adam really played a pretty good game, events conspired to put him in a really difficult position, and he finished the game "looking to the future" by showing Mark Zoffel that he MEANT it when he said, that he was going to oppose him to his last center at the end. I thought it was interesting that Adam did understand that things got away from him in 1904, when he was not aggressive enough and note how even great players sometimes waste tempo time "consolidating positions" when it usually is much more important where your reach is. Note how aggressive Mark Zoffel is in negotiations and how Adam laments when you have major 20 E-Mail + negotiations in a turn, that is all completely blowing smoke. Most players do not have the patience to engage in such negotiation and the imbalances in communication that such depths can create can be quite difficult to overcome. Mark engaged Adam so much that Adam couldn't work out something else with someone else, and Adam was convinced in those turns that he was working something out, which affected his strategic vision. This is what makes this game so fascinating and why we like FTF for evening out these negotiation imbalances.

England (Dan Lester): And Dan is one of the great FTF players ever, he doesn't really SUCK at E-Mail games, but the time/effort imbalance really was the story of the game here in some ways. This does not hinder him FTF so much. Mark Zoffel and Dan Lester are really good at playing good cop/bad cop on other players, especially when Mark is overwhelming people with E-Mails on E-Mails on E-Mails and Dan is just this quiet teddy bear.... oh yeah, that is a bit of an over-generalization, but Mark needed Dan in this game, and he needed yet a bit more from Dan in engagement. And that frustration with Dan and Mark's own ambition led to that key stab that led Dan's stab of Jake to be so ineffective -- Dan had to turn his attention back to Mark. And the game really was over at that point.

France (Jake Mannix): So BIG apology up front. I underestimated Jake BIG TIME and he played the brilliant game that led to the win, a perfect strategy for a set of players that mostly knew each other pretty well and had lots of grudges and were stab happy. Jake's endgame statement shows how he kept nimble and out of the way of any concerted effort to take him out early, and then later, moved aggressively (when Adam was mistakenly "consolidating"). And then Jake let the petty concerns of the other players free him up to keep gaining and gaining and gaining. You cannot underestimate how difficult it is to play the game that Jake played; his breezy endgame statement covers up some of that complexity.

Germany (Mike Hall): I think that Mike never really engaged or had a style that reflected the game this

game became. This is a point that cannot be underemphasized either. A game evolves in a particular style, sometimes that style meshes for you and you succeed and gain from it or it does not and you get knocked out. There are at least four theories I know of about how the style/outcome thing in a game works, none of them are completely mutually exclusive. One is the "force of personality" play where some players are able to put their imprint on the style of a game directly. They cannot always control the outcome, but they have enough force of will to overwhelm most others. When two forces of personality players go up against each other, the sparks can be tremendous. In this game, there were a number of players who pushed the game in particular directions and Mike got left behind. But generally force of personality play is pretty risky since if it does fail it tends to fail spectacularly. Second, in some sense the complete opposite is chameleon play, where you try to blend into the background and shift and adjust to whatever styles others are placing on a game. The challenge here is how to avoid being road kill eventually since it is very rare that a pure chameleon will be handed a game in the end. Jake played this way partly, but only partly. A third way is the technocrat approach where you try to take the personality out of the game. This is mostly an illusion, but since perception is reality, if people believe the personality is out, it can be out. Then lastly, there is the "fun" personality, which usually gets overwhelmed in a game of aggression, but where you just play for fun and do whatever is fun. And I brought this up in discussing Mike's play why? Well, this was a complex personality game and Mike just was never able to spend the time and effort to bring himself up to it. So he was taken out. And so it is, just that fast when you don't mesh with the personality of a game.

Italy (Doug Moore): First off, like Doug, I love playing Italy and it was obvious to me from the beginning that an Italy lover was playing Italy. In that sense I was seduced into thinking Doug was going to be more successful than he in fact ended up being. Nuff said, Doug stated how and why it actually happened.

Russia (Mark Zoffel): Most of the endgame statements seemed to be pretty straightforward and honest, but Mark's left some questions in my mind. Did he SERIOUSLY believe the misorder decided the game? I do not think it actually did, though it surely hastened the end. If he is being honest about "studying the orders" so closely, then he really is saying that his subconscious had given up. Do not underestimate this, Diplomacy is a very deep, very complex game and I think MOST misorders are psychological intentional, at least among experienced players. I know mine are, even when I want to KICK myself for doing it. You know about pride goeth before a fall and hubris? Well, that's the deal. I should still say that I have the utmost respect for Mark's diplomacy skills. I think he was at least as engaged (in the sense of quantity of diplomacy) as anyone in the game and so if Mark seriously thinks he wasn't engaged,

that just shows how much Mark (and any serious Diplomacy players) thinks an ideal amount of communication is.

Turkey (Andy Marshall): I'm very sorry that Andy has said that he is done with playing Diplomacy. Andy is one of my favorite people and favorite Diplomacy players of all the hundreds and hundreds of people I've ever played with. So it bothers me when these people stop playing though it is of course up to them, I would not presume to judge anyone's reasons. I am personally something of a psych voyeur about this game, it fascinates me to kibitz and watch games. I direct my first comment above especially to Andy, who commented directly on how "off" we were in the accuracy of our assessments of what was happening. I am presuming some of that was the "I don't like Mark and he doesn't like me, we were at each other lying from the beginning" where I kept asking why Mark and Andy couldn't get off this merry-go-round. In some

sense, this decided the WHOLE game. RT were the exact opposite of automatic allies, and Jake took advantage, the game was both that simple and not.

The end of this game, with the context of everyone's endgame statements was completely logical, let me repeat, completely logical. The key in endgame communication is getting everyone to see the status of the board the same way, the endgame statements show that people had different views of what the situation was (especially regarding the centrality of Mark Zoffel's disorder). In the end, that was a breakdown of communication, one that really was part of the milieu of the whole game. So, that was it. But the kudos go to Jake for pulling it off and not allowing the view of the game to shift against him.

Thanks to Eric Hunter for our fun debates, Rick and Doug for their efforts, and all seven players. It is not easy to put yourself out like this. We enjoyed it, and they deserve our deepest thanks.

Eric Hunter (Commentator):

I've taken part in at least nine of these 'commentary-enhanced' games, most often as a player, but several times as an observer/commentator. This was the first one in which the commentators only had access to the Results with none of the negotiations, or player perspective notes, available. As a result, Jim and I were often wrong in our predictions, but on the whole I think we did pretty well, in spite of some of the comments from

the players.

Our mistakes do demonstrate an important lesson, though. Diplomacy is a game of imperfect information. No matter how much press you send, or how much you receive, or how carefully you analyze the position, you can't predict the results with 100% certainty, so it is dangerous to get locked into a single course of action.

DAANZ Sponsorship Announcement

(This announcement came in from Grant Steel on September 8th)

I am very pleased to announce a generous expansion of support to Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy by Seropeco Australia Pty Ltd.

To build momentum for the 2011 World Diplomacy Championship in Sydney, Seropeco will sponsor five (5) players to attend the 2010 WDC event in The Hague, Netherlands. These five trips (flights and accommodation) will be offered as first prize in the next five DAANZ affiliated Diplomacy Tournaments:

- * Sydney Diplomacy Challenge, Oct 3-4th 2009
- * The DON Challenge (Melbourne), Dec 5-6th 2009
- * The Australian Diplomacy Championship (Sydney), Jan 23-25th 2010
- * The New Zealand Diplomacy Championship (Auckland), Feb 2010
- * The Queensland Diplomacy Championship (Brisbane), TBC in March [Alternative - Victorian Diplomacy Championship in March]

The prizes are open to all players who are or become DAANZ members by the start of the event (subject to the conditions set forth in the initial announcement, such as eligibility requirements, limitations, etc.).

This is a great opportunity for the ANZ hobby to send a strong contingent of players to a world-class Diplomacy event. By supporting WDC 2010, we're sure to attract more international visitors Down Under in 2011.

Looking forward to seeing you at a future Diplomacy Tournament.

Diplomacy World Demo Game – *Known World* Variant – (Also Known As “DC229”)

The Current Players:

Arabia - Matt Kremer,
Byzantium - Gregory Alexopoulos.
China - Lynn Mercer.
Denmark - Former Trout (aka Sanford O'Donnell).
Egypt - Ian Moes.
France - Nigel Phillips or Nigs as he likes to be known.
Germany – Russ Manning, the replacement Germany.
India - Andy Jameson or the White Wolf.
Khazaria - the game designer, David Cohen.
Russia - Darren Sharma.
Spain - Nathan Deily.
The Samanids - played by John Reside,

Srivijaya - played by Mike Morris.
Wagadu - Mikael Johansson,
Axum - Benjamin Hester.

The GM:

Nick Higgins (*Verdanda Italics*)

The Commentators:

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

Spring 903

Before the adjudication, we have 3 sets of press. The quality is remarkably high this week, including a set of limericks, a sonnet, and a classic verse from the Russian poet Lomonosov. Thanks to all players who sent in press, and keep it coming!

Press #1 (Umayyid / Spain):

A scheming young chieftain from Wagadu
in a hasty display of his derring-do
concocted some schemes
involving triremes
a nothing about which there's much ado

Said he, "there's no reason to fear
a naval attack on your rear
why, i've much greater interest
in African business
than Mediterranean cheer"

But alas as it often turns out
there's plenty of reason to doubt
the words of a chieftain
who's never believed in
taking the civilized route

my landing that army in Mau
has provoked quite a terrible row
and now he's intending
beginning the ending
of Ummayyad's emirate - now!

But take some small comfort my friends,
he hasn't the means to those ends
and building those ships
will mean that he skips
the armies he needs to defends

So heed this poor Umayyad verse
as we fit that chief for his hearse

picking a fight
when you haven't the might
to win it - is awfully perverse.

Press #2 (French):

Says Oliver: "Pagans in force abound,
While of us Franks but very few I count;
Comrade Rollanz, your horn I pray you sound!
If Charles hear, he'll turn his armies round."
Answers Rollanz: "A fool I should be found;
In France the Douce would perish my renown.
With Durendal I'll lay on thick and stout,
In blood the blade, to its golden hilt, I'll drown.
Felon pagans to th' pass shall not come down;
I pledge you now, to death they all are bound

Press #3:

Is it not he, who razed the fortress
That threatened Rus' beside the flowing Don?
Is it not he who struck the Persians down
Amidst the thirsting reaches of the steppe?
Just such a gaze he cast upon his foes
When he debarked on Gothic shores,
Just such a mighty hand he raised,
And his steed galloped just as swift
When now his legions trampled the plains
That lie before the dawning day.

MIKHAIL LOMONOSOV

[illegible]

Arabian A Arm - Cap
 Arabian A Aze - Kak
 Arabian A Bag - Mos
 Arabian A Man - Sha
 Arabian A Sjs - Man
 Arabian A Ujj S A Man - Sha
 Arabian A Yem H
 Arabian F Ars - Mas
 Arabian F Bsr S A Sjs - Man

Byzantine A Mac - Con
 Byzantine A Slr - Tar
 Byzantine A Thr - Vla
 Byzantine F Aes S F Cre - Cis
 Byzantine F Con - Att
 Byzantine F Cre - Cis *Bounce*

Chinese A Cha - Tib
 Chinese A Chn S A Uyg
 Chinese A Nan - Ann
 Chinese A Tib - Nep
 Chinese A Uyg S A Cha - Tib
 Chinese A Yan - Cha
 Chinese F Eas - Jas *Invalid*

Danish A Jln H
 Danish A Pom - Bor *Bounce*
 Danish F Abs S A Pom - Bor
 Danish F Ngs - Sgs
 Danish F Wsx S F Ngs - Sgs

Egyptian A Aqa - Zaw
 Egyptian A Zaw - Kan
 Egyptian F Egs S F Sty - Cis
 Egyptian F los - Cre *Bounce*
 Egyptian F Lis - los *Bounce*
 Egyptian F Sty - Cis *Bounce*

French A Hel - Swa
 French A Lot - Fra
 French A Nar - Lbu
 French A Par - Lot
 French A Tou - Pam *Bounce*
 French A Ubu S A Hel - Swa

French F Brc S F Ngs - Sgs

German A Bav S A Swa - Sax
 German A Pol S A Bor
 German A Sla - Dal *Bounce*
 German A Swa - Sax
 German A Vis S A Ono
 German F Sgs H *Dislodged*

Indian A Blk - Kas
 Indian A Ind S A Blk - Kas
 Indian A Knj S A Ind
 Indian F Mas - Ras

Khazar A Bas - Udm *Bounce*
 Khazar A Kak - Bal
 Khazar A Mrd - Sev *Bounce*
 Khazar A Srk S A Mrd - Sev
 Khazar A Tam S A Mrd - Sev
 Khazar A Udm - Mrd *Bounce*

Russian A Bja - Kom
 Russian A Che S A Bul
 Russian A Kie S A Sev
 Russian A Sev H
 Russian A Vya S A Sev
 Russian F Liv S F Bor

Spanish A Ifr - Kut
 Spanish A Spm H
 Spanish F Cad S F Sjt - Sta
 Spanish F Sar - Bls
 Spanish F Sjt - Sta *Bounce*
 Spanish F Tys S F Lis - los

Samanid A Buk - Blk
 Samanid A Ghu - Kip
 Samanid A Her S A Buk - Blk
 Samanid A Kas S A Man - Sha
 Cut *Dislodged*
 Samanid A Kyk - Kyr
 Samanid A Orb H
 Samanid A Sam S A Orb

Srivijayan A Ser - Chl
 Srivijayan F But H
 Srivijayan F Cob C A Ser - Chl
 Srivijayan F Jam - Mis
 Srivijayan F Jas - Sus
 Srivijayan F Mis - Ser
 Srivijayan F Plm - Krs

Wagadu A Aga - Sij
 Wagadu A Kan - Tah
 Wagadu A Mau S A Kan - Tah
 Wagadu F Awl - Tas
 Wagadu F Sta S F Brc - Nos
 Void
 Wagadu F Swo S F Sta

Axum A Mah H
 Axum A Mal - Lub
 Axum A Roh - Sud
 Axum A Zei - Roh
 Axum F Gad S F Ars - Mas
 Axum F Soc S F Ars - Mas
 Axum F Zim - Gos

Neutral A Bor H
 Neutral A Bul H
 Neutral A Crs H
 Neutral A Dal H
 Neutral A Dub H
 Neutral A Ono H
 Neutral A Pam H
 Neutral A Pec H
 Neutral A Rom H
 Neutral A Scl H
 Neutral A Tka H

Retreat Possibilities

Samanid A Kas can retreat to Sog
 or disband

German F SGS can retreat to Bre,
 Fri, Vel (wc) or disband

Spring 903 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

Denmark taking Borussia? Not anytime soon. Both the Russians and the Germans are supporting this neutral. I'm really not feeling that Denmark is making much in the way of diplomatic headway. Three years into the game and he's finally taken SGS. So when he brings an army forward he should take Bremen at just about the time that the Franks take all of the other German SCs.

I still don't have the impression that he originally intended going after Germany, until the latter so rudely bounced him, or he would have taken SGS much earlier. If he's not getting Borussia, he could use the Pom army against Germany, say to take Saxony while Jelling descends. But he needs French support for that. He really should have negotiated French support in exchange for his participation,

before jumping in the fight.

Yeah, Denmark has an excellent defensive position that makes them hard to take out, so there is no immediate risk of attack, but if France takes most of Germany, it is hard to see how Denmark will avoid eventually getting pincered. There is no reason for Kiev or Germany to let Denmark get a foothold in Borussia, so now there are very few choices, which is not a great place to be in.

And the French are clobbering the Germans. The only move that failed was the unsupported attack on Pamplona. Had Spain promised support? Or was this just wishful thinking. This is the kind of move that indicates something less than alliance play. If France actually had allies, he could support the Danes into Dublin or the Spanish into Pamplona. But hey! He's getting a lot of dots, so it must be ok. Right?

;) Nothing to add to that.

I'm not going to either, go Nigs.

Awful. Just awful. Germany supports A Ono and moves without support into Dalmatia? Was he thinking that Byzantium would support him into Dalmatia? I'm guessing he tried to arrange a double-cross of Byzantium, where they would split the two SCs. Apparently Byz wasn't interested in that nonsense, and just walked away. So now Germany, who is getting his ass handed to him on the Western front, has two of his six forces doing nothing of use in the Austrian areas. The only good that comes out of this is that he can take Hungary in the Fall. Of course he's already thrown away Swabia and won't get an actual build out of these shenanigans.

All true. And he can take Hungary only if Byzantine doesn't decide to support it. ;) Not much diplomacy going on in the western European front.

I think this was Nigs' brilliance that faked the German out. That's the only explanation I can think of. I slightly disagree with Suzanne on that point. I think Nigs is negotiating just fine, just outnegotiating all his neighbors.

Spain understands the map well enough so the Wagadu fleets are not a serious threat. Maybe he'll support the French into Pamplona? Or France will support him? Nah...just leave the SC unused. Spain can take Corsica and hold on to everything else.

When Egypt supported Spain into Tunis, that was a signal for an alliance with Spain; and Spain had the intelligence to jump on the occasion/ It's good for both of them, and it looks like a going thing.

So much for the pan-African alliance. (Hindsight is 20-20, of course.)

So true. Eventually Spain can take out Wagadu, there is no one to save Wagadu.

And the wishful thinking alliance fails to materialize. France ignores him and, worse, Egypt poaches a dot. Wagadu as a fleet power? Not working. At least he can still force the Canary Islands. And, if he's lucky, Spain will dislodge the fleet in Sea of Tangiers and he can replace it with an army. The waived build was a disaster.

It will be interesting to hear who Wagadu thought would be working with him. I don't see why he would have even thought about France, and he already saw that Egypt wasn't playing ball. I suppose that his only logical ally, at this point, is Byzantine.

I suppose, but the Byzantines would not gain by aiding the Wagadu, they want Egypt going that way so Byzantium can take most of Italy. The Egyptian fleets are still a threat.

Egypt has four fleets going nowhere. Take Sicily! The frontal attack on Byzantium is not working. But he can take Sicily and a dot from Wagadu to make up for a loss of Makuran, if it happens.

Yep, he can take Scicily easily enough and, next year, take Taranio on the bottom of the Italian boot, if Spain gives him a hand. He'll get further by incremental bites.

And Egypt can gain Wagadu centers working with Spain too. I thought Egypt was in great trouble, but there are some glimmers of hope now. But it remains unclear how real headway can be made against Byzantium.

But actually, I don't think Axum will take Makuran. The armies are moving West. If he gets into Jeliba, then Wagadu is pretty much toast. And there goes the African alliance.

Well, whether Axum takes Makuan or moves to Jeliba, any African agreement, even just to each go their own way, is now dead and buried.

But I found it odd that he supported the Arabian Sea into Malibar, instead of moving there himself, with Arabian support. He's gotten some neutrals out of his fleets, but altogether, he doesn't seem to be getting much out of his eastern adventure. Maybe he's decided that he'll gain more in Africa, after all.

I think Axum gets some of Wagadu, perhaps more than Jeliba. The rest of the Axum goal is to oppose the Juggernaut from the East. There is a risk here that Srivijayans can turn the southern corner and roll up B's flank. We'll see on both ends.

Byzantine continues to outguess the Egyptian menace. I

suspect he's not worried by Russia or Arabia.

True, Egypt isn't troubling Byzantine, but Egypt and Spain together could be a different story. Byzantine isn't advancing, either. Another power that could really use an ally. There is a limit of what you can do with tactics.

Byzantium eventually should hook up with France, they gain a lot from the Kievian/Khazarian head butting. Will that also go on forever? At some point, France will make a mutually useful ally, but what to do until then? Get some of Italy.

Russia turns the corner, and gets the position to force Bulgar. The support of Borussia can be read as a leading indicator of his desires. If Russia gets a build and Denmark doesn't (a reasonably likely development), I would not be surprised if Russia placed a Northern fleet and went after Scandinavia. Will he support Byz into Pechenegs? I think it'd be worth doing. Russia should have no desire to see Byz fall to Egypt.

Yes, Russia is finally in a position not to be totally obsessed with the war against Khazaria -- unlike Khazaria, who has nowhere else to go.

I agree with all of this. Kiev actually has choices, some good choices. I would go with the Danish attack, but we know that's just me. Kiev could also focus on taking out the pesky Khazarians.

The only successful Khazar order was a retreat from the Arabian front, which was rewarded by advancing Arabian armies. David appears to have no allies, and no prospects. His game-long focus of denying Russian control of Bulgar is now officially a failure.

I'm sure that David must have thought that he had an ally originally. (Germany? Denmark?) but once that didn't pan out, the better part of wisdom would have been to drop, make his peace with Russia, and find another, more fruitful endeavor. He could have worked with China to take on Iran (Samadia), for example. But no, nothing would do but Russia. He's reaping the rewards of his stubbornness, unfortunately for him.

Right, I just don't get it. I'm willing to believe the Khazarians will make some kind of comeback, but what form can it take? Maybe once he lets Kiev have Bulgar, they will finally stop attacking each other.

India will turn into a giant stalemate shortly. Arabia looks like he'll be picking up Georgia. If he does that, he can build a fleet on the Caspian Sea and carve up Khazaria with Russian help. His fleet in Basra should be in the Arabian Sea. He's about to be ejected from that advanced position by Indonesia.

Arabia still has lots of possibilities, Khazaria being the best in the immediate future. But he is going to have to devote some of his considerable forces to holding back Indonesia, and perhaps helping Samadia hold the fort against China.

I like Arabia's position in the middle of the board for the long term still.

Unfortunately for The Horde, his core set of SCs has become the stalemate zone. Luckily for him, China did not take Ordu-Balyk. But still, the loss of Kashmir will mean The Horde will be losing an army this year. While he'll be able to hold off China for a while, this does not bode well for the long term. He badly needs a change in the alliance structure. Otherwise he'll be locked up by China until Russia hits him from the West or Arabia sells him out.

Samadia started off with a bang, but didn't follow up with a clear direction, and he's suffering from it (and from China's success) now.

It is hard to see how China doesn't eventually get the upper hand on Samanid. The only thing I can see to do it a desperate attempt to break the Juggernaut.

Hmm...China is back in Annam. Not that I expect much from that. I guess he couldn't talk India into cutting a support for him. But now what? Do he and Indonesia hide behind India, or try to divvy the dots? Probably the latter. At least in the long run. I bet he walks into Varanasi here.

I agree, there is no reason for China and Indonesia not to take what they can from India. And afterwards? Do China and Indonesia stay together? As long as China has practically no fleets, stabbing Indonesia makes no sense.

Right, but Indonesia can stab him.

India retakes Kashmir, which he can hold if China supports him. Probably will see two SCs poached by China and Indonesia. Does he care?

Nothing much to add to that.

Indonesia pulls off the convoy and sets up the fleets to take Malabar Sea. What does he do after that? Presuming he takes Chola. If Axum is indeed picking a fight with Wagadu, that would probably be his next target. It's hard to see him blasting into Arabia. The map just doesn't favor that.

As somebody already said, there is a limit how far you can go with only fleets. Luckily, the "chaos-style" builds allow a lot of flexibility; Indonesia can start building armies whenever and wherever he wants, while keeping his fleet power.

The big loser this turn is Wagadu, who looks like he's being fatally stabbed.

Wagadu needs an ally -- and so does Byzantium. But neither of them see the interest in working together.

I still hate the Danish and Khazaria positions, even though the bell is not tolling yet. I like France, Russia,

Arabia, and the Eastern alliance.

Denmark still has possibilities, but he's lost a lot of time. India is dead, Germany is going fast, and Khazaria is not far behind. France has started out fine, not clear where he can take it from there. From here on out, you really need allies, temporary or permanent, to advance.

Summer and Fall 903

Summer Retreats

German F South German Sea retreats to Bremen

Samanid A Kashmir retreats to Sogdia

Nick Higgins, GM: I'm not sure whether to interpret this as a sloppy season or a season full of stabs, as there were a lot of invalid supports and general confusion all over the board. My sense is that there was a mix of the two. Looking to Asia first, India was dismembered this fall, and is reduced to only 1 SC following a well-executed Chinese stab. Srivijaya has established a strong naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and Arabia has an interesting retreat option as a result - retreat to Axum's SC in Mahilaka, or retreat off the board? Turning to Africa, there appears to be a shifting of alliances, judging by the Axum army in formerly Egyptian Makuran and the accompanying press. Moving north, Tkarenen has finally been captured (by Wagadu), and the Atlantic is quite a crowded battlefield. Germany had a nice season given the circumstances, managing to offset the loss of Swabia with a gain in Onoguria while appearing to appease the Danes with support into Borussia. Finally ending in western Asia, Khazar faces a tough situation with a lot of armies swarming around their position, including a Russian army in fiercely contested Bulgar, which finally fell. Looking at the big picture, Arabia and France have moved to the lead with 11 (or 12) SCs and 9 SCs respectively following multiple SC gains this year for each.

Before the Fall adjudication, we have three press submissions.

Press #1 (anonymous)

All red with blood the whirling river flows,
The wide plain rings, the dazed air throbs with
blows.

Upon us are the chivalry of Rome --
Their spears are down, their steeds are bathed
in foam.

"Up, brothers, up, the watchman cries,
Foul fiends ride forth heralded by lies.
--Above the din a voice is in my ears;
I see death's form glide through the crossing
spears.--
Khazaria!

Press #2 (Umayyid)

A valiant young Umayyad sailor
With uniform fresh from the tailor
embarked on a trip
to sink Wagadu's ship
and hasten their chief to his jailor

The aforementioned chief finds his role
is to beg and to plead and cajole
the threats that he faces
from neighboring races
have him (tactically) deep in the hole

And though it now seems preordained
That african soil will be stained
with blood and with sweat
I'm willing to bet
his defeat will be quickly attained

Meanwhile, away 'cross the sea
the Corsican military
in its infinite wisdom
dismantles its system
and defers to our hegemony

Last but not least, back in Spain
(where rain mainly falls on the plain)
Pamplona's steers
are fighting back tears
while munching on West Frankish grain

Press #3 (Axum)

"The boasting press was premature
for my loyalty was not assured
when planning a stab
one might want to consider
if your ally's real target is you"

Fall 903 Adjudications

Arabian A Cap - Geo
Arabian A Kak S A Cap - Geo
Arabian A Man S F Mas - Ujj
Arabian A Mos - Aze
Arabian A Sha S A Ujj - Ind
Arabian A Ujj - Ind
Arabian A Yem H
Arabian F Bsr - Ars
Arabian F Mas - Ujj *Bounce*
Dislodged

Byzantine A Con H
Byzantine A Tar - Slr
Byzantine A Vla - Chs
Byzantine F Aes S F Cre *Invalid*
Byzantine F Att S F Sty - Cap
Void

Byzantine F Cre S F Tys - Ios
Void

Chinese A Ann - Nnz
Chinese A Cha S A Uyg
Chinese A Chn S A Uyg
Chinese A Nep - Var
Chinese A Tib S A Man - Kas
Void

Chinese A Uyg S A Tib
Chinese F Eas - Kai

Danish A Jln H
Danish A Pom - Bor
Danish F Abs S A Pom - Bor
Danish F Sgs - Ngs
Danish F Wsx - Wss

Egyptian A Kan - Jel
Egyptian A Zaw S A Sud - Kan
Void

Egyptian F Egs S F Sty - Cis
Egyptian F Ios - Scl
Egyptian F Lis S F Ios - Scl
Egyptian F Sty - Cis

French A Fra S A Swa
French A Lbu - Nar
French A Lot S A Swa
French A Swa H
French A Tou - Pam
French A Ubu - Hel
French F Brc - Nos

German A Bav S A Sax
German A Pol S A Pom - Bor
German A Sax S F Bre

German A Sla S A Vis - Ono
German A Vis - Ono
German F Bre H

Indian A Ind - Sha *Bounce*
Dislodged

Indian A Kas S A Ind - Sha *Cut*
Dislodged

Indian A Knj S F Ras - Ujj
Indian F Ras - Ujj *Bounce*

Khazar A Bal - Geo *Bounce*
Khazar A Bas - Ati *Bounce*
Khazar A Mrd - Srk *Bounce*
Khazar A Srk - Bal *Bounce*
Khazar A Tam S A Pec
Khazar A Udm - Ati *Bounce*

Russian A Che S A Vya - Bul
Russian A Kie S A Vla - Pec
Russian A Kom - Udm *Bounce*
Russian A Sev - Mrd *Bounce*
Russian A Vya - Bul
Russian F Liv S A Bor

Spanish A Kut H
Spanish A Spm S A Tou - Pam
Spanish F Bls S F Tys - Crs
Spanish F Cad - Sta
Spanish F Sjt S F Cad - Sta
Spanish F Tys - Crs

Samanid A Blk - Kas
Samanid A Her - Blk
Samanid A Kip - Ati *Bounce*
Samanid A Kyr - Yug
Samanid A Orb H
Samanid A Sam S A Orb
Samanid A Sog S A Blk - Kas

Srivijayan A Chl - Cho
Srivijayan F But - Jas
Srivijayan F Cob S A Chl - Cho
Srivijayan F Krs - Kam
Srivijayan F Mis S F Sus
Srivijayan F Ser - Mas
Srivijayan F Sus S F Ser - Mas

Wagadu A Mau H
Wagadu A Sij - Wal
Wagadu A Tah - Aga
Wagadu F Sta - Tka
Wagadu F Swo S F Sta - Tka
Wagadu F Tas - Sos

Axum A Lub - Sud

Axum A Mah - Adu
Axum A Roh - Mro
Axum A Sud - Mak
Axum F Gad C A Mah - Adu
Axum F Gos - Phe
Axum F Soc S F Mas

Neutral A Bor H *Dislodged*
Disbanded

Neutral A Bul H *Dislodged*
Disbanded

Neutral A Crs H *Dislodged*
Disbanded

Neutral A Dal H
Neutral A Dub H
Neutral A Ono H *Dislodged*
Disbanded

Neutral A Pam H *Dislodged*
Disbanded

Neutral A Pec H
Neutral A Rom H
Neutral A Scl H *Dislodged*
Disbanded

Neutral A Tka H *Dislodged*
Disbanded

Retreat Possibilities

Arabian F MaS can retreat to Mah or disband

Indian A Ind can retreat to Nep or disband

Indian A Kas can retreat to Nep or disband

Neutral A Bor is destroyed (neutral)

Neutral A Bul is destroyed (neutral)

Neutral A Crs is destroyed (neutral)

Neutral A Ono is destroyed (neutral)

Neutral A Pam is destroyed (neutral)

Neutral A Scl is destroyed (neutral)

Neutral A Tka is destroyed (neutral)

Position	Power	Abb	902	903	Change	SCs changing possession
1	Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia)	A	9	11	+2*	+Geo, +Ind
2	West Frankish Kingdom (France)	F	7	9	+2	+Pam, +Swa
3	Tang Empire (China)	C	7	8	+1	+Var
4	Kingdom of Sri Vijaya	V	7	8	+1	+Cho
5	Kingdom of Wagadu	W	7	8	+1	+Tka
6	Kingdom of Axum	X	7	8	+1*	+Mak
7	Principality of Kiev (Russia)	R	6	7	+1	+Bul
8	Umayyad Emirate (Spain)	S	6	7	+1	+Crs
9	Samanid Emirate (Turan)	T	7	7	0	
10	Byzantine Empire	B	6	6	0	
11	Kingdom of Denmark	D	5	6	+1	+Bor
12	Tulunid Emirate (Egypt)	E	6	6	0	-Mak, +Scl
13	East Frankish Kingdom (German)	G	6	6	0	+Ono, -Swa
14	Khaganate of Khazaria	K	6	5	-1	-Geo
15	Neutral	N	11	4	-7	-Bor, -Bul, -Crs, -Ono, -Pam, -Scl, -Tka
16	Pratihara Kingdom (India)	I	4	1	-3	-Cho, -Ind, -Var

* Please note that Arabia may still gain Mahilaka at Axum's expense

Summer and Fall 903 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

The challenges for the Arabians are multifaceted, on one hand, they lead by a good margin at 11, but smack in the middle of the board virtually all the other major powers on the board (except Spain/Wagadu/France) have a shot at taking him down. So that two center margin prevents France from being branded as the leader and at least calls everyone else's attention to the long term risks of letting Arabia grow unabated. On the other hand, the easy gains are pretty well gone, the next tasks are considerably tougher. So, here is a what is by no means a complete laundry list of those challenges. First, what we've named the Chinese/Srivijayan Juggernaut, for its similarity to Russia/Turkey in the regular game. This, like all challenges, also represents the opportunity, so Arabia MUST convince everyone else that he is the anchor to stop that Juggernaut. But even if he succeeds at that comes the next challenge, locking up the middle of the board in a stalemate line is going to block further growth, and possibly lead to getting crushed between pincers eventually. Arabia seems like an active negotiator, so perhaps he can tread that line well. Then there are the challenges on the other sides ineptly negotiating Byzantines do? The direction of their attacks, and ability to garner support, to date have been ineffective, but past performance is not necessarily representative of future performance and would Arabia be better off with a clearer negotiated agreement with Byzantium. Let's see.

It looks as though China and Arabia agreed to take

out India. China tried to get Arabia to try to help kill off Iran (Samadia) as well, but Arabia wasn't buying that, at least not for now. Now, which of them get the last Indian center? It looks like Arabia (next year), doesn't it?

Arabia is also getting into position to take a bit of the Khazarian spoils.

Sure, he ought to be a target. But whose target, other than China? He's been helping both Samadia and Axum; and neither are in any position to stab him. Egypt is touchy, hard to make a deal with Egypt and keep Axum's friendship. But Egypt is weak. So is Byzantium, and Arabia has an easy game of keeping them at odds. Khazaria is a source of gains for him. For now, there are still gains to be made, and no danger ahead for a long while.

The Arabian position looks very solid indeed.

I still like the Arabian position, even if there is an Eastern steamroller. The stalemate line in India is easy to hold, so Arabia only has to worry about Indonesia outflanking Axum and seeing progress made that way somehow. It'll take a while.

Arabia appears to have a strong, trusting relationship with the Samanid horde. Look at all those empty spaces! I don't know how this will translate into long-

term success, but I do like this position.

Will he retreat his fleet off the board? I'm going to guess that he will.

The Byzantines appear slightly lost and stalled. The three stuck at six center powers (also includes Egypt and Germany) likely have at most one more game year to turn their negotiating stances around and garner some assistance. There are three crucial points of conflict/cooperation for Byzantium that will determine their fate in my view. First, is the relationship amongst the other six center stalled powers.

Egypt/Germany/Byzantium would be a very interesting strong alliance right now, to help each of them in their quests not to be whittled into oblivion. The negotiating volume and effectiveness do not appear to be there thus far, but now is the time for a big push. Second, is this issue with Arabia. If the decision is a "big anti-Arabia coalition" then Byzantium COULD be left out of this, but if they are left out that could be the beginning of the end. A clear stance regarding Arabia with good smooth blends of strategy and tactics is required for Byzantium this upcoming game year. Let's watch for that. Finally, there are the fleets, Byzantium is split three-three, while Egypt has four-two. From Point 1, it should be clear that I believe now is the time for Byzantium and Egypt to mend the fence clearly, but if not, Byzantium needs a strategy to deal with its fleet disadvantage. Key game year for this power, if we're still asking these questions in a year, they likely will be down one or two and in trouble.

Yes, Byzantium is another good example of the limits of tactics when the problems are political. They have fended off Egypt's attacks successfully so far, but they need an ally and a direction to go if they are to advance.

I don't know why Gregory thought that Spain would want to move into the Ionian (against Egypt? doesn't make much sense) not why they thought Egypt would be moving into Cap. Neither worked. Russia did try to support Byzantium into Penchenga, but Gregory ignored that. Actually, working with Russia against Khazaria might be a good way for Byzantium to advance -- as long as the Spanish-Egyptian alliance doesn't make too much headway.

It would be good for Byzantium to make a deal with Egypt, if Egypt were ready to agree.

I think we can safely infer that Byz is not dominating the diplomatic channels. His tactics have been sound, but this kind of play is not going to do him any favors in the long run. He needs to make up with Egypt and burn the channels with Russia and Germany trying to get something going. He cannot be pleased with the unfettered growth of Arabia, but what can he do?

China's advance remains very consistent and balanced

with its Srivijayan Juggernaut counterparts. The question for China right now is whether to keep trying to curry favor with the Arabians (A Tib S a Man-Kas) and whether help can be solicited against the Samanid, two issues that are quite related. I'm presuming that the Juggernaut itself is fine, it really is important to break them up early if you're going to, the incentives to break them up in the midgame are limited. China has a lot of open steppes space to try to maneuver in, but does need to find an ally to the west somewhere to avoid getting locked up. We'll see how that goes, this turn four units were just supporting without assisting the advance, not a good ratio.

Agreed. His logical source of gains is now Samadia, but Arabia will limit the damage, until/unless the two agree to split up Samadia.

And Arabia has little incentive to turn on his meat shield.

We've been kind of assuming there will be a shooting war between Samanid and China at some point but all we've gotten so far is a lot of maneuvering and sitting around. Perhaps these players are clever enough to realize that they don't really want to fall into the trap that is killing Egypt/Byzantium. Well, with the fall of India, China is going to face the most pressure to find a new target. Indonesia can hope to outflank Axum, Arabia has plenty of targets, and even the Horde has something to do.

The Danes got Borussia and a foothold on the continent, with assistance from a Germany who is threatened by the number two power on the board, France. This rapprochement between the Danes and Germany could be temporary, but as a corner power, the Danes should be able to last to the endgame now. It doesn't look like they will be a major player in that endgame, but they should be there. Time to start figuring out how to influence it.

The Danes and the Germans have come to an agreement; high time for both of them. The Germans allowed, even supported, the taking of Borussia, and the Danes moved out of the South German Sea. The Danes have also negotiated with France to have the French move out of the channel, so that they can move out of Wessex and move towards the taking of Dublin. There must have been a colossal amount of mistrust between France and Denmark for this not to have happened earlier. However, the Danes didn't use the support the French offered into Bremen, because they had made an agreement with the Germans. Is this going to interfere with the Dane's taking Dublin next year?

A good move for Denmark - the first! I had been saying that Denmark was liable to bang his head against a wall if he simply tried to take German dots by brute force. He's also (finally!) made a move towards Dublin. I

definitely approve of this diplomatic development.

OK, so the pundit has been pretty well wrong here, there is now REALLY no Pan-African alliance, as Axum whittles Egypt's hard won gain away, and Axum refused Zaw's support for Sudan-Kan. We visited the challenges for Egypt above in relations with Byzantium. Egypt does have more fleets, but needs some clear allies. Egypt is on the cusp this game year.

Agreed. There is still a working Spanish-Egyptian alliance, apparently, but that's not enough at this point, the game has become more interconnected.

Dude. Don't walk out of SCs during a Fall move.

When I looked at this position after the Spring move, I figured Egypt could risk losing Makuran since he would pick up Kaniem (sp?) to compensate. So he goes and walks out of the pick-up SC and is in atrocious position.

And he's still yet to pick up any SCs from his year 1 attack on Byzantium.

If he wants to turn his game around, Egypt must make peace with Byzantium now. It's a stupid war. He's going to lose Al-Qatta'i and he'll have to scramble to come up with some plan soon.

The French gain two to go to nine centers and a clear second place, but have two support orders rejected. This represents the danger, but Nigs is good and will be deeply engaged to come up with a new plan. The new plan needs to reflect the German/Danish rapprochement and the fact that the Danes may not assist them any more. Still, the French don't look threatened by the neighbors and still have Italian neutrals to try to pick up. Laying low could work for a patient France this game year.

The French seem to have overreached here. They have finally supported the Danes, but the Danes left them in the lurch. They still have the upper hand against the Germans, but it's not sure that they will make further gains on their own.

I am not sure that I understand the French moves along the Spanish border, but they are supported by Spain, so I guess they are in agreement.

As far as the Italian neutrals, France will probably need a couple of Med fleets to pick them up, or help from the Spanish fleets.

France is strong, but he needs to do a little better diplomatically.

I disagree a bit here. France has a strong tactical advantage on Germany. And I don't think the Danes want an out-and-out war here.

France can force Saxony in the Spring. If he gets an army into Lombardy, he'll be in good position to start rolling in a big way. He's still got a good deal going with Spain. I would presume he'll be talking to Russia, too.

As for Denmark, he may be able to get him interested again, once he has two more forces to use.

If the Germans want it, they could form a clean four way swath alliance of all of the six center powers on the board. They have made up with the Danes, and I like the power of that slice of alliances. We'll see if it can happen. The Germans are still at risk, make no mistake about it.

Which powers do you see being in that alliance, Jim? Are all of their interests compatible? An AGI alliance in standard can be very powerful, but here, there are so many central powers that some have to be eliminated, and I don't think that there is any way such a large alliance can work out for long; there are too many incompatible interests.

It certainly made sense for Germany to have made the arrangement with the Danes; it is good for both of them, and gives Germany a breather relative to France. And as long as Russia is occupied with Khazaria, the Germans can now turn and face France, finally. After a very bad start, they are beginning to pull their game together. Still a way to go before they are sure to make it into mid-game.

Well, Germany has dodged a bullet, but I'm still not optimistic about this position. France could kick his butt all by himself. Yes, he can take Dalmatia, but that would then leave two armies disconnected from his other four forces.

The end is near for India, I've seen this scene a hundred million times... cry me a river....

It was already written. Still, needed some implicit Arabian-Chinese understanding to bring it about.

India was not fated to be a self-governing country. Historically accurate to see the sub-continent overrun by foreign invaders.

One support and a set of bounces, game designer David Cohen seems to be getting zero respect. India will of course be the first one out, but can the Khazarians avoid being next? Just not that much exciting to say.

I agree with Jim. Note that David is supporting Pechenga. If Russia wants to support Byzantine into Pech successfully, he will also have to cut support from Tam.

One thing that is fun for computer scientists and

*mathematicians to do is to find statistics that are easy to calculate and are not necessarily meaningful by themselves, but are indicative of deeper truths. An example from Diplomacy would be the number of *bounce* orders. When a player is getting this many bounces, he's in deep trouble.*

David needs for his enemies to get other enemies. It will happen, but not quickly enough to save him.

The Russians now need to face the Danish army in Borussia, but other than that, Khazaria is in trouble and Russia stands to gain the lion's share of the benefit. If I were the Russian, I'd be negotiating my build against the build for the Danish to try to avoid a war across the Baltic.

I agree with Jim here. Russia seems to be flexible enough to take into account the change in Denmark, though.

I noticed that Russia also supported Byzantine into Pechenga, perhaps to get Byzantine help against Khazaria. That makes sense, but either they got their signals crossed or Byzantine doesn't trust the Russians. Kiev has the upper hand over Khazaria, but they will need another power to join the fight. Arabia will probably grab a piece, maybe Byzantium will get into the act. Samadia probably can't spare the forces to advance on this front.

Khazaria is losing a force and will be squeezed between Russia and Arabia next year, with the Samanid Horde possibly joining in for a dot or two. Russia doesn't have to worry about that front too much. He might worry a bit about the German/Danish cooperation. I suspect that's why he wants to make nice with Byz. And he should be following the historical precedent of coordinating with France.

I had thought the Spanish were in trouble, but they keep gaining. Given the new Germany/Danish alliance, do the Spanish join up to start trying to bloody France's nose? It is possible, but I think not. Can the Wagadu be overwhelmed? If they can, that would be great, but I'm not sure the tactics support it. Spain is playing a good game so far.

I agree that it seems unlikely that Spain will attack France; he doesn't have anything to gain by it. He is supporting the French moves towards the Franco-Spanish border, I'm not sure why.

Spain can probably re-take Mauritania next year. After that, it will be tough going against Wagadu, which is a strong defensive power. Spain needs the Egyptian help and probably also Axum neutrality to wipe out Wagadu.

I'm not thrilled by the move supporting France into Pamplona. I understand the motivation, as it is the price

for France not joining in with Wagadu.

Yes, Spain can retake Morocco. As for "wiping out" his Southern neighbor, that will depend on what Egypt does. That one army in W's rear could really wreak havoc.

This will be an important game year for the Samanid, especially regarding its stance with respect to Arabia. No builds to assist the next move, if the Samanid don't make a move this year they will be left behind and likely overrun by their larger neighbors. Find a strong ally!

As long as Arabia sticks with Samanidia, they can probably survive, but they won't advance. And, someday, Arabia and China will agree enough to take Samadia out.

I'm still chagrined that the Horde didn't take out China when it would have been easy to do. Now what can he do? Man the ramparts against China and hope Indonesia stabs. If he poaches SCs from Khazaria, he'll then be surrounded by strong powers (China, Russia, Arabia) and have nowhere to go.

Samanid needs to come up with something diplomatically creative here. I'm not seeing it.

I didn't see how quickly a line would form across the Indian Ocean, not sure why I didn't see it, but now, it is a tactical war, I'm not sure whether the units and the board will determine who wins it or not. But this is about to turn into a slog, I think.

It certainly looks as if it will be long, slow going. And Indonesia doesn't have any potential allies to help him, as far as I can see.

I think Axum is one fleet short. Maybe not...it depends on the retreat.

If Arabia retreats to Mah, then Axum gets no build and has to worry about GokS. I'll guess that doesn't happen, and he gets to build F Zim.

There is a stalemate line there...GokS, Madagascar, up through the Arabian Sea. If it gets manned, then Indonesia/China are stopped.

This is a problem with big map variants - they often have easily blocked stalemate lines. The key question for Indonesia is...can he take Madagascar or leak into GokS. You would think that such an obvious threat would be blocked. But we'll see...I suspect at some point the China/Indonesia alliance will probably break.

Another neutral for Wagadu, likely the last one they get. It seems to me like Mikael is on the outs with too many of his neighbors, but no one makes any serious headway against him, and he gets that one more build.

The question is, now what? Is this the highpoint?

I agree. I don't know whose help Wagadu was originally counting on, but it didn't come through. Still, Wagadu is a solid power defensively. He won't get wiped out unless he has more than just Spain actively against him, and Egypt may not be able to be of much use in an anti-Wagadu campaign.

Wagadu has a lot of under-defended SCs facing that rogue Egyptian army. Now it's true Egypt has other things to worry about. But I have to view the one-dot of Morocco as a failure, since he's about to lose it.

I'm not sure, but B. could be in some real trouble here, I noted above that the Indian Ocean is now a tactical slog. I think that's why B. stole an Egyptian center, expect another fleet build, but is it too late? I think we'll be able to see after this game year.

I think that B can hold off Indonesia as long as Arabia is with him; but he may not be able to advance against Egypt as well as he would have liked. And if Egypt were ever strong enough to use a build to open the canal, and bring his Med fleets into the Arabian Sea, B would be hard-put to defend against Egypt and Indonesia. Luckily for him, Egypt

is nowhere near strong enough for that. Perhaps that was another reason for B to want to hit Egypt rather than Wagadu.

Axum finally goes after Egypt, a move I've been predicting since year 1. This is a particularly nasty stab, since he apparently convinced Egypt to walk out of Kan.

If he can get Arabia to put pressure on Jerusalem, or Byzantium to push down from the North, this will be a quick and bloody war.

This stab is what Chris Martin calls a no-brainer: Axum picks up one SC right away, and has great position to pick up a second. At that point, Axum will reset and see what to do next.

Is there a downside here? Well, by opening a second front, Axum is diverting his attention from the Indonesian fleets. Will he build F Zim? If yes, then what does he do about the rogue Egyptian army? And what about that retreating Arabian fleet?

I'm not sure the strategy will be sufficient to deal with the Eastern steamroller. I kind of think he waited too long to go after Egypt. We'll see.

Autumn and Winter 903

DC229: The Fall 903 Retreat Phase has been adjudicated. Before getting to the retreat adjudication, I have to make a correction to the Fall 903 adjudication. I speculated earlier over whether there was sloppiness this season or a surfeit of stabs, and I did not give sufficient consideration to the possibility of GM sloppiness.. I adjudicated using the wrong set of French orders. However, the new set results in no changes to the map. I apologize for the oversight.

Fall 903 Corrections (changed French orders are marked by an asterisk)

*French A Fra S A Swa

*French A Lot S A Swa

*French A Swa H

Retreat Adjudications

Arabian F Mas retreats to Mah

Pratihara Kingdom (India) disbands A Ind

Pratihara Kingdom (India) disbands A Kas

Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) builds 3 units, can build in Ard, Arm, Bag, Bsr, Isf, Ujj

Byzantine Empire makes no adjustments

Tang Empire (China) builds 1 unit, can build in Nan, Sil, Yan

Kingdom of Denmark builds 1 unit, can build in Jor (ec), Jor, Jor (wc), Sca, Vik, Wsx

Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) makes no adjustments

West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 2 units, can

build in Aqt, Bri, Gas, LBU, Par

East Frankish Kingdom (German) makes no adjustments

Pratihara Kingdom (India) disbands 1 unit

Khaganate of Khazaria disbands 1 unit

Principality of Kiev (Russia) builds 1 unit, can build in Bja, Est, Nov, Ros, Smo

Umayyad Emirate (Spain) builds 1 unit, can build in Cad, Cor, Ifr, Sal, Sar, Val

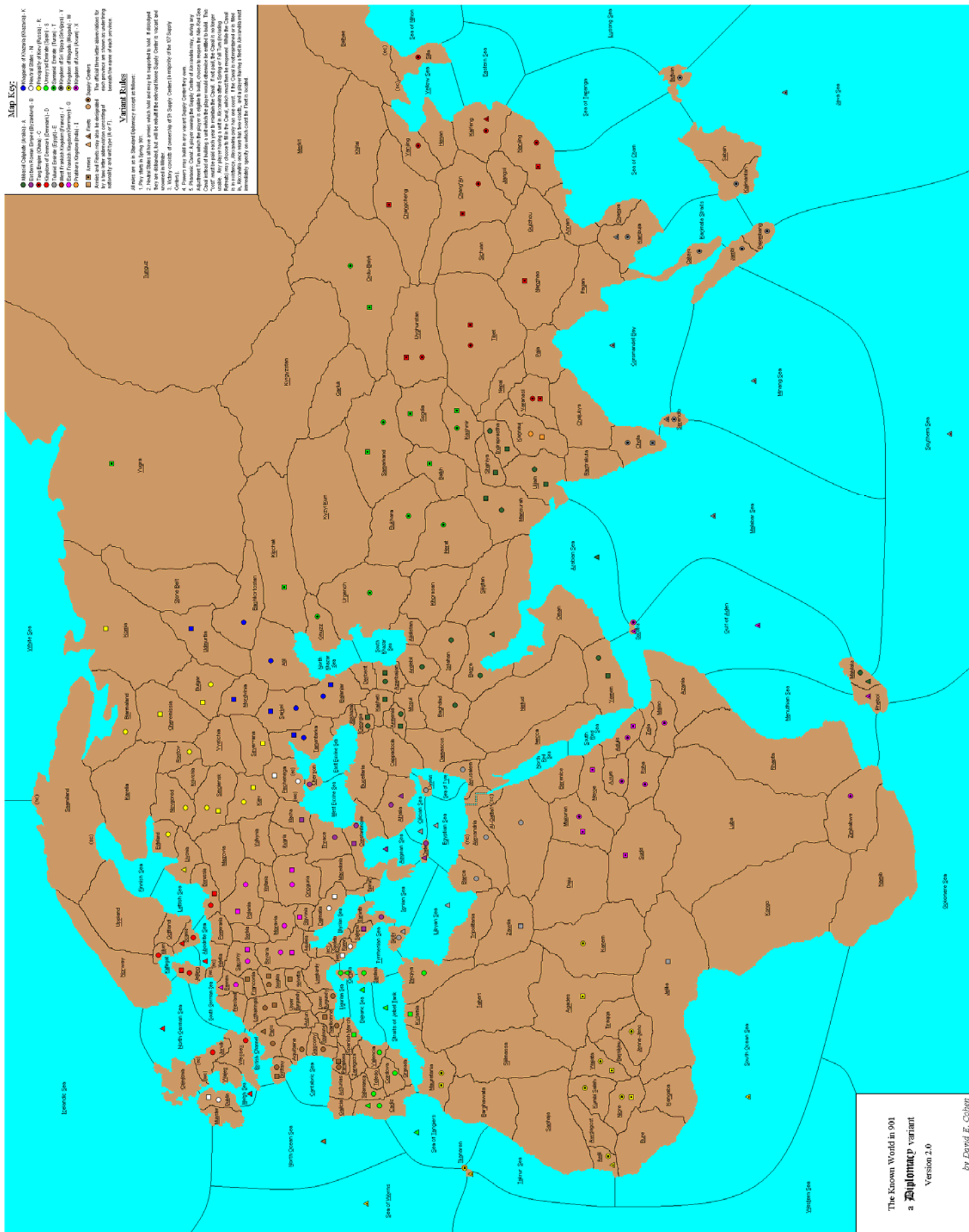
Samanid Emirate (Turan) makes no adjustments

Kingdom of Sri Vijaya builds 1 unit, can build in But, Cah, Jam, Kal, Plm, Ser

Kingdom of Wagadu builds 2 units, can build in Awl, JeJ, Kan, KuS, Nio

Kingdom of Axum makes no adjustments

Neutral makes no adjustments



Position	Power	Abb	902	903	Change	SCs changing possession
1	Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia)	A	9	12	+3	+Geo, +Ind, +Mah
2	West Frankish Kingdom (France)	F	7	9	+2	+Pam, +Swa
3	Tang Empire (China)	C	7	8	+1	+Var
4	Kingdom of Sri Vijaya	V	7	8	+1	+Cho
5	Kingdom of Wagadu	W	7	8	+1	+Tka
6	Principality of Kiev (Russia)	R	6	7	+1	+Bul
7	Umayyad Emirate (Spain)	S	6	7	+1	+Crs
8	Samanid Emirate (Turan)	T	7	7	0	
9	Kingdom of Axum	X	7	7	0	-Mah, +Mak
10	Byzantine Empire	B	6	6	0	
11	Kingdom of Denmark	D	5	6	+1	+Bor
12	Tulunid Emirate (Egypt)	E	6	6	0	-Mak, +Scl
13	East Frankish Kingdom (German)	G	6	6	0	+Ono, -Swa
14	Khaganate of Khazaria	K	6	5	-1	-Geo
15	Neutral	N	11	4	-7	-Bor, -Bul, -Crs, -Ono, -Pam, -Scl, -Tka
16	Pratihara Kingdom (India)	I	4	1	-3	-Cho, -Ind, -Var

DC229: The Winter 903 season has been adjudicated. The good news is that I've heard from Andy, and he is back and ready to take over his position again. While the results may not show it, Jorge went above and beyond the call of duty with his caretaker diplomatic efforts in Andy's stead, and I want to thank him once again for taking over the position.

Adjustment Adjudications

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds F Par
West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Bri

Umayyad Emirate (Spain) Builds F Cad

Kingdom of Sri Vijaya Builds F Ser

Kingdom of Wagadu Builds A Nio
Kingdom of Wagadu Builds F Awl

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Ujj

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Arm
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds F Bsr

Tang Empire (China) Builds A Nan

Pratihara Kingdom (India) Disbands F Ras

Principality of Kiev (Russia) Builds A Smo

Khaganate of Khazaria Disbands A Bas

Kingdom of Denmark Builds F Sca

Autumn and Winter 903 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

Well, a lot to think about here.

For starters, the Fall move did not contain any void French supports for Denmark attacking Germany. That fact should influence our understanding of that situation.

Nick (the GM) said that he had used a wrong set of orders for France. That means that Denmark must have been frank with France during the negotiations that he was not going to move against Germany, at least not for now. Yet they did agree to pull away for the Wessex/Channel situation, which was blocking one unit for each of them unnecessarily.

The main outcome of this to me is that both Denmark and France are now expanding slower than they otherwise might. I cannot see how Germany expands

much at any time in the near future.

Next, we see that Arabia has, indeed, retreated to the Axum SC, which keeps Axum from getting a needed build.

Yes, that's a big surprise. I rather thought that the Arabian player was the sort of diplomat who kept up good relations with his allies, while keeping them in place. Must have had some friction with B in Axum.

I also am surprised by this, though I am sure that Arabia is still hoping to work with B's Axum against Srivijaya. Srivijaya is becoming near unstoppable, more on this below.

As for the builds...

Kingdom of Denmark Builds F Sca - This build indicates that Denmark is targeting Russia. As with many developments in this game, I think this decision is a year too late. I predict Russia holds on for a while. More generally, this continues the pattern of Denmark pursuing awkward tactical paths.

I agree with Rick, hard to see what Denmark can do to Russia now that Khazaria is surrounded and on the way out.

But perhaps this build was purely defensive. Russia is going to be looking for a new direction to go, and he has a couple of forces, including a fleet, on Denmark's border.

I also am on the fence about this. As I said above, it seems to me that both France and Denmark profit most by putting out Germany ASAP, but for whatever diplomatic reason, that is not what they've decided on. Denmark's defensive position remains strong despite the changes from using the current map, which does provide some avenues for attacking Denmark. Denmark theoretically could be joining with Germany to attack Russia, which might work, but that would mean we would have to have French agreement with that (and I don't see that). The one thing that the Danish build does is probably ensure that Russia won't attack Denmark either, and so Suzanne may be right.

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds F Par and A Bir - Interesting choice...he doesn't build A Lower Burgundy, which would have been deadly to Germany. He doesn't build F Bri, but instead builds F Paris, which signals a move North.

And A Brittany? Well, here's what France could do, if he's annoyed with Denmark (and I think he is). The obvious thing would be to support himself into the Channel. But why build an army in Brittany? Well, he can convoy to Munster or Wessex right away. Or perhaps the choice here was simply made to be as inoffensive to both Germany and Spain as possible.

Agreed. Perhaps France and Russia have started negotiating, about the elimination of Denmark as well as Germany. France can take his time with Germany; the German isn't growing or going anywhere. But Denmark is growing, perhaps France feels that it is more urgent to eliminate the Dane.

OK, so that is one assumption, that France and Russia are going to team up against Denmark. It also could be a signal to try to get Germany to help with that attack (this actually might work). I think the Danish build could mean that the British Isles start falling, which is definitely very bad in the long term for Denmark.

Alternatively, the army in Brittany could be

convoyed to Galicia. I don't see France taking on both Denmark and Spain, though. It's an either /or choice.

I think these builds say it is Denmark for sure.

Umayyad Emirate (Spain) Builds F Cad - Well, if France wants to roll him, he can.

See comments on France.

I take a completely alternate view. I think Spain and France have made a bit of peace here, note the signal in the "mistaken" builds. France first put in the two fleets, then backed off and the GM neglected to record the Change of Orders (most likely). Here is another lesson for the Peanut Gallery in reality. Yes, we all hope that GMs do not err. And each of the three of us commentators GM a lot, which means we have made errors. You try to correct them with as little fanfare (and no explanation!) as possible. But still, savvy players will glean information from whatever they can. I would read it that way, and use it if it seemed useful. Some would say this is unethical; however, GMs do make errors, and you can't take things back that have happened. Unlike with juries, you can't declare a mistrial and start the trial over.

Kingdom of Sri Vijaya Builds F Ser - No doubt what's going on here, is there? The Arabian retreat has to be viewed as an opportunity.

OK, so the ONLY thing to worry the Srivijayans is whether their boxed in Chinese ally decides to turn. It is difficult to see how the Chinese gain any other way, so we need to watch for signs of a Chinese stab. This build is forward. The Chinese have only the one fleet, but the alliance against Sri Vijaya could give China Kannauj, China can threaten Kambuja and Butuan and change the nature of the game. Sri Vijaya can be stopped here, but if not here, then it gets very difficult.

Kingdom of Wagadu Builds A Nio and F Awl - Wagadu isn't playing a unit short again! He won't really have to worry about the Egyptian army, given its lack of support. Will he try to counter-attack in North Africa? Or give up on Morocco and seek greener pastures. It might be tempting to take advantage of the chaos in Africa to poach a SC off Axum. Or will he help Axum defend his Southern flank? I don't think it's in Wagadu's interests to let Indonesia into GokS.

The Egyptian army is no longer a real danger to the mass of Wagadu (Nigerian?) armies, but Egypt has two armies on Kanem, Zawila and the rogue army in the south. However, if Wagadu and Axum are playing together, Axum's army in Sudd can support Wagadu into Kanem, and he can cover the rest this year.

Wagadu and Axum have not been consistently together, but Mikael and B. need to come together now. Gokomere Sea cannot be taken by the Sri Vijayans. Why would Wagadu go along with this?? It seems this is the logical way next. BUT, if it is not the way forward, then Axum will fall quickly and much of it will belong to the Srivijayans, and be part of a general board collapse in that direction.

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Uji, F Bsr, and A Arm - I'd forgotten that Arabia can build in Uji. That should lock up his front there, with the help of F Basra. He also has enough armies to do some speculative stuff either to the North or West.

I still think Arabia is in great shape.

Arabia certainly is still in fine shape, with possibilities for expansion, Khazaria first on his sites, as well as the last Indian center.

I still don't know why he moved into the Axum center. Of course, Indonesia doesn't bother him any more, now that he has what he wanted from India. But Axum was a valuable ally, and could continue to be that.

Sooner or later the easy centers will be finished, and he'll have to choose a new field of endeavor, if he wants a chance at winning this. After our discussions about the fall moves, I wondered if Egypt wouldn't be a good directions to head next, once Khazaria is finished. He could have, maybe still could, easily split Egypt with B. If he got Jerusalem and perhaps Alexandria, that gives him a basis as a naval power as well as a land power. Alexandria, with the canal, if a precious asset for an ambitious power based in the middle east region. It allows him to play in both the Arabian seas and the eastern Med region. But maybe he has other regions in his sights.

So, one idea is that Arabia and Sri Vijaya are now allied and this is the prelude to Axum being crushed. I think that is at least somewhat likely, and B. needs some strong diplomacy this season with all his neighbors to assure that will not happen. While I agree that taking Egypt out is possible, this makes sense to me only as part of an Arabian/Sri Vijaya deal. Otherwise, Arabia needs to turn China, work with the Samanid to accomplish this, and of course continue the destruction of Khazaria. I think we'll see this year which way that is falling. Being in the middle of the board gives Arabia the options. Sri Vijaya has little to do but keep driving west, holding China off, until he is ready to invade China

himself (which would not be soon).

Tang Empire (China) Builds A Nan - China is not so trusting here. I guess he's not going to try to blast his way further inland. So what's next?

Hmm, he still may be aiming for some more of the Samidia territories. He certainly can't stab Indonesia, whose power is in Islands and other centers accessible by sea.

If he's limiting himself to the land centers of Asia, he can't hope to conquer the world. That's the difficulty of player an edge power in this variant; it takes forever to get very far from one's original centers. The China-Indonesia Juggernaut is regionally powerful, but from there to world conquest, there's a big step.

Again, China has "blown" this (not necessarily through his own tactics). The Juggernaut is still there, but China isn't prospering under it. Time to consider alternatives.

Last year for India.

Probably so, though China could try to prop India up.

Principality of Kiev (Russia) Builds A Smo - Russia has been playing a tactically sound game, so I expect he'll figure out the obvious moves to keep Denmark at bay.

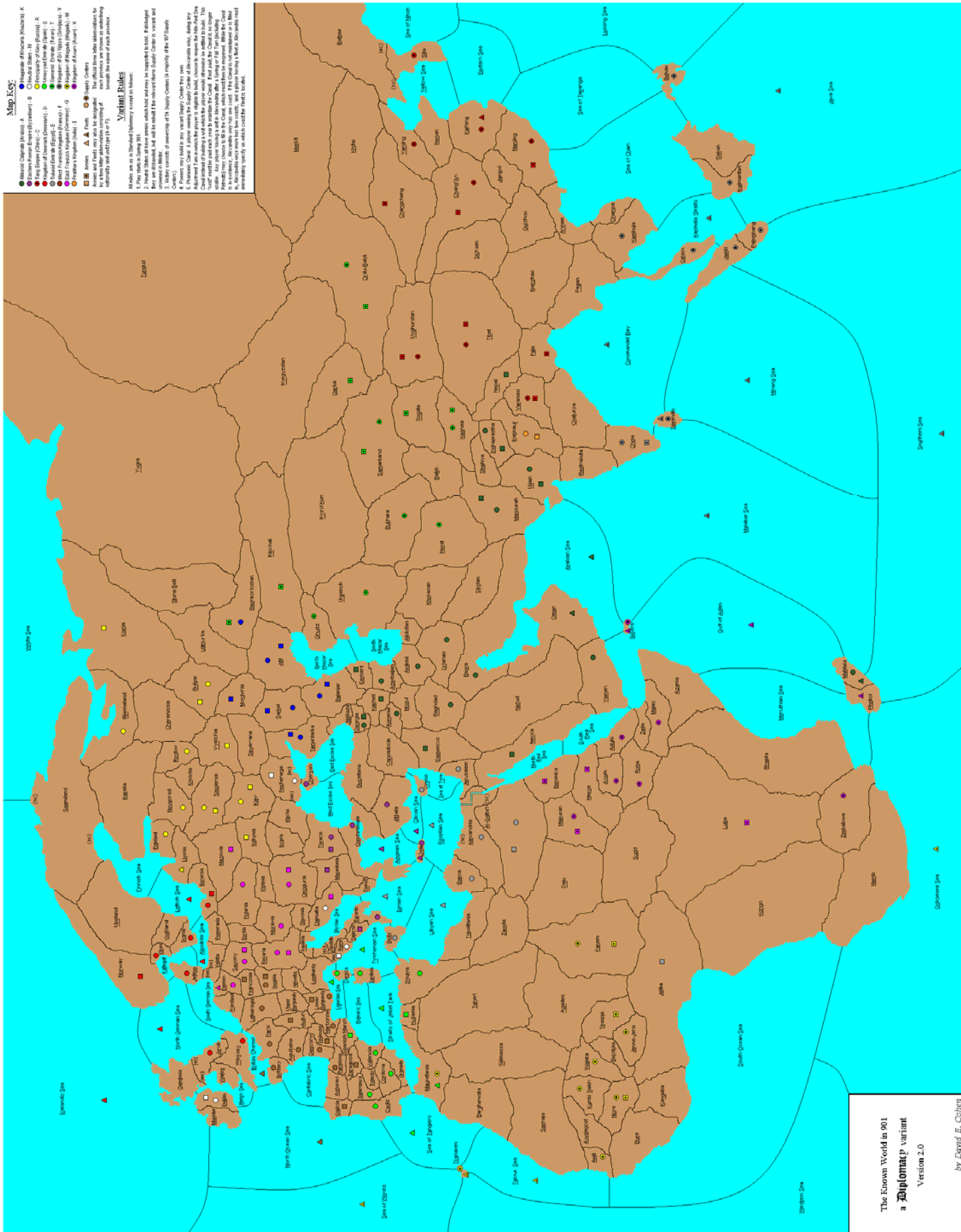
Right. But once Khazaria is finally wiped out, Russia will have to decide where to go. There are powerful leaders who have split up Asia, perhaps hitting Denmark won't be a bad idea.

The more I think about it, the more I think that is the plan. Perhaps even Germany will help.

Khaganate of Khazaria Disbands A Bas - Khazaria keeps manning the front against Russia. I expect to see him gobbled up by Arabia and the Saminid horde.

Right, although Russia should get something out of this, too.

I also agree that Russia will now gain something. The key decisions this turn are to be made by the Samanid (whether to back off China and support China diplomatically in stabbing Sri Vijaya), the Arabians about whether to keep opposing Sri Vijaya or not, and the Wagadu about whether to keep throwing Axum under the bus. These three decisions together should set up the board positions for the next 2-3 game years.



Spring 904

DC229: The Spring 904 season has been adjudicated. A wise man named Vizzini once said that you should never start a land war in Asia, although that presumably does not apply to Asian powers themselves, as a massive battlefront has opened from Central Asia down to the Indian Ocean, with Arabian and Chinese armies now facing each other in the Himalayas. Meanwhile, there's been a paradigm shift in Eastern Europe, with the Danish units following a new course with Russia seemingly in their sights, and the Russian armies have poured into the plains of central Europe to clash with the East Franks. Turning now to the Eastern Med, Egypt's fortunes are looking bleak, as Axum's armies have been joined by two of Arabia's on the Egyptian borders. Finally, the West Frank-Umayyid war has been fierce for a while on the press front, but now is fully engaged in Iberia, with the French sneaking into a good position in Zaragoza.

Now we have three sets of press before the adjudication. The Umayyid press is almost begging to be used by as a motto for a Diplomacy website...

Press #1 (West Frankish)

The king our Emperor Carlemaine,
Hath been for seven full years in Spain.
From highland to sea hath he won the land;
City was none might his arm withstand;
Keep and castle alike went down
Save Saragossa, the mountain town.
The King Marsilius holds the place,
Who loveth not God, nor seeks His grace:
He prays to Apollin, and serves Mahound;
But he saved him not from the fate he found.

II

In Saragossa King Marsil made
His council - seat in the orchard shade,
On a stair of marble of azure hue.
There his courtiers round him drew;
While there stood, the king before,
Twenty thousand men and more.
Thus to his dukes and his counts he said,
"Hear ye, my lords, we are sore bested.
The Emperor Karl of gentle France
Hither hath come for our dire mischance.
Nor host to meet him in battle line,
Nor power to shatter his power, is mine.
Speak, my sages; your counsel lend:
My doom of shame and death forefend."

Press #2 - Umayyid

With rivals like this, who needs friends?
The answer, is "Well, it depends"
it seems that we're cursed
with plans-of-often reversed
by shifting diplomacy trends

plans carefully crafted and made
change course, are derailed or delayed
"forget what's agreed

I'll do what *I* need"
is the way that this tricky game's played

So haggle, confer, wheel and deal
but no matter how good you feel
about strong assurances
the common occurrence is
self-interest is all that is real

Some deals will be kept, to be sure
but never forget that the cure
for vigilance slackened
is a knife in the back-end
a violation most impure

Though ruthless and vicious and vile
it's rare that I won't crack a smile
at giving (or getting)
a nasty bloodletting
enjoying myself all the while

Press #3 (anonymous)

As Pratihara fades to memory...
Song of the Indian guest in Novgorod, singing of his
homeland

(from a Rimsky-Korsakov opera)

Do not count the diamonds in caves of stone
Do not count the pearls in the southern sea
Of distant India so full of wonders.
There is a wondrous stone, a ruby set in the warm sea;
And on that stone there is a Phoenix, a bird with the face
of a maiden
Who keeps singly songs of paradise so sweetly,
Scattering her feathers and covering the sea.
Whoever hears this bird will forget everything.
Do not count the diamonds in caves of stone
Do not count the pearls in the southern sea
Of distant India so full of wonders.

Spring Adjudications

Arabian A Arm - Dam
Arabian A Aze - Der
Arabian A Geo H
Arabian A Ind - Nep
Arabian A Kak S A Aze - Der
Arabian A Man - Ujj *Bounce*
Arabian A Sha - Ind
Arabian A Ujj - Ras *Bounce*
Arabian A Yem - Mec
Arabian F Ars - Mas *Bounce*
Arabian F Bsr - Oma
Arabian F Mah S F Ars - Mas

Axum A Adu - Mro
Axum A Mak - Sud *Bounce*
Axum A Mro - Ber
Axum A Sud - Lub
Axum F Gad S F Mah
Axum F Phe S F Sos - Gos
Axum F Soc S F Ars - Mas

Byzantine A Con - Mac
Byzantine A Slr H
Byzantine A Vla - Thr
Byzantine F Aes S F Cre
Byzantine F Att - Cis
Byzantine F Cre S F Att - Cis

Chinese A Cha S A Uyg
Chinese A Chn S A Uyg
Chinese A Nan H
Chinese A Nnz - Pal
Chinese A Tib S A Var - Nep
Chinese A Uyg S A Tib
Chinese A Var - Nep *Bounce*
Chinese F Kai H

Danish A Bor S A Pol - Maz
Danish A Jln - Nor
Danish F Abs S F Sca - Les
Danish F Ngs C A Jln - Nor
Danish F Sca - Les
Danish F Wss - Ics

Egyptian A Jel - Sud *Bounce*

Egyptian A Zaw - Aqa
Egyptian F Cis - Cre *Bounce*
Dislodged
Egyptian F Egs S F Cis - Cre
Egyptian F Lis S F Scl - Ios
Egyptian F Scl - Ios

French A Bri - Gal
French A Fra S A Swa
French A Hel - Lbu
French A Lot - Aut
French A Nar - Tou
French A Pam - Zar
French A Swa S A Fra
French F Nos C A Bri - Gal
French F Par - Brc

German A Bav S A Sax
German A Ono S A Sla - Dal
German A Pol - Maz
German A Sax S A Bav
German A Sla - Dal
German F Bre H

Indian A Knj cowers in terror (hold)

Khazar A Bal S A Mrd - Ati
Khazar A Mrd - Ati
Khazar A Srk S A Bal
Khazar A Tam S A Pec
Khazar A Udm - Mrd

Neutral A Dal H *Dislodged*
Disbanded
Neutral A Dub H
Neutral A Pec H
Neutral A Rom H

Russian A Bul - Vya
Russian A Che - Bul
Russian A Kie - Vol
Russian A Kom S A Che - Bul
Russian A Sev - Kie
Russian A Smo - Maz *Bounce*
Russian F Liv H

Samanid A Blk - Sam
Samanid A Kas S A Ind - Nep
Samanid A Kip S A Yug - Bas
Samanid A Orb S A Blk - Sam
Samanid A Sam - Qar
Samanid A Sog S A Kas
Samanid A Yug - Bas

Spanish A Kut S F Sta - Mau
Spanish A Spm H
Spanish F Bls - Lgs
Spanish F Cad - Sta
Spanish F Crs - Tys
Spanish F Sjt S F Cad - Sta
Spanish F Sta - Mau

Srivijayan A Cho - Ras *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Cob S F Mas
Srivijayan F Jas S F Sus
Srivijayan F Kam - Krs
Srivijayan F Mas S A Cho - Ras
Cut
Srivijayan F Mis S F Mas
Srivijayan F Ser S F Mas
Srivijayan F Sus S F Mah

Wagadu A Aga - Kan
Wagadu A Mau H *Dislodged*
Wagadu A Nio - Jel *Bounce*
Wagadu A Wal - Tir
Wagadu F Awl - Tas
Wagadu F Sos - Gos
Wagadu F Swo S F Nos
Wagadu F Tka S F Awl - Tas

Retreat Possibilities

*Egyptian F CiS can retreat to Cap,
Cyp, Sty or disband*

*Wagadu A Mau can retreat to Brg,
Sij, Tah or disband*

*Neutral A Dal is destroyed
(neutral)*

Spring 904 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

Interesting. Some of our guesses were right, but some were off, sometimes in surprising ways.

The Danish-German alliance has stuck together, but moved, not against France, but against Russia. Denmark supported a German move east, and convoyed an army in Norway, apparently to continue

eastward to Saamlund, where it will threaten Byarmaland. Also moving his fleets eastward, perhaps aiming eventually for Esteland/Novgorod.

All that's a long way around, but the joint German-Danish moves will pose a problem for Russia, should at least stop Kiev from gaining anything from

Khazaria and could eventually spell real trouble for Kiev -- if France doesn't step in while Denmark and Germany are making their long trek.

Denmark has left himself open to France, but he still can cover Wessex if he feels it necessary. he still looks as if he's moving to take Dublin, but slowly.

Dublin must be a difficult nut to crack. I remember it being slow to fall in the previous game-test.

Yes, I think Dublin is difficult, but I would not view it as a problem. It avoids creating a strong unassailable corner position in the northwest corner of the board and focuses the battles in that area inward. I'm not 100% sure how and why that works, but it does seem to, both in the previous play test and this one.

I'm not especially surprised at the German/Danish choice to attack Russia, since their chances of success there are much better than the chances attacking France, where a stalemate line was about their best outcome. The key will be whether France leaves them alone to pursue the attack while consolidating control of the Italian boot and attacking Spain. I liked the tactical situation on that for France before, and still do.

So Denmark with two armies and four fleets is going to attack Russia, who has seven armies to defend himself and has no coastal SCs that would be easily taken.

Brilliant.

Agreed. ;)

Now, so the question is "how does this attack succeed?" It only succeeds if Russia is also surrounded and attacked from its other sides, most directly by Byzantium. I see this situation a bit differently than the rest of you do, I think it at least has a chance to succeed, let's see how it initially plays out in the fall. Remember, other countries (e.g. Byzantium) sometimes want to see a commitment before they will move themselves.

Especially as France has left it's coast entirely open. But then again, it was not evident that Denmark and Germany knew that would happen. In fact, they were probably simply relieved that France promised to leave them alone. And Russia was looking as though it could pose problems to Denmark. It would have required a leap of faith and confidence for either Denmark alone or the Danish-German alliance to turn against France.

I again disagree. I see a much more fluid diplomatic situation here with everyone talking to everyone quite extensively. In that view of the world, Russia just lost a very important diplomatic exchange and we're seeing how it will play out on the board. All of you observers (depending on how much of this current set of seasons

is in this issue) can look down below and see where that goes, but before you do, think carefully, what do YOU think is happening??

Germany practically ignores the French front, but heads straight east, towards Russia in the north, while taking the neutral Dalmatia in the south.

Germany will pick up Dalmatia but may well lose Hungary.

As I said, this is a total commitment, and if it was done for the right reason it is backed up with good diplomacy with all of Germany's other neighbors.

Russia saw the way the wind was blowing, and moved east. Not, as we thought possible, towards Denmark but mainly for Germany.

Poor Russia didn't have much luck in this game. First the long suicidal attack from Khazaria, and now the Danish-German attack. I remember Russia trying to keep Denmark weak previously, maybe he's reaping what he sowed.

I think you mean West above, not East.

Right. not my fault if I don't know my right from my left. ;)

I'm not worried about Russia. He's shown considerably better tactics than the two who are attacking him. And I think he may have an ally in Byzantium, and also France isn't going to be attacking Spain forever.

Ah, so two points here worth noting. Russia has shown and surely will continue to show exceptional tactical skill. And it has been a slog for him all game. This are interesting times, and he is destined for more of the same. Rick has the key, I think Byzantium is in on this deal, and wanted the German/Danish commitment on the table before he moved. Rick thinks Russia has Byzantium backing him up. Byzantium holds the diplomatic card for this season, and needs to use it to his advantage, but I think he joins the attack on Russia, Rick and Suzanne don't.

France seems to have decided to make his peace with Germany and even Denmark temporarily, while he finds easier pickings in Spain. This was obviously signalled beforehand in the negotiations, since both Germany and Denmark are leaving the French front barely covered, and moving essentially eastwards.

Unlike what Jim and I at least thought likely, France has decided to ignore Germany and Denmark in favor of a Spanish campaign. France made the unlikely convoy to Gal, instead of the more obvious anti-Danish convoys.

I am obviously coming around on this. In the commentary on the commentary, let me add a few notes here. Good Diplomatic options spring from good tactical options. When there is only one thing you can do, everyone knows it, and you have little to negotiate about. The tactical trick is to let your moves set up tactical choices that lead to diplomatic choices that cascade across the board. Nigel is really, really good (from my experience playing with him and in watching him here) at this aspect of the game. Having players do this keeps a game fluid and interesting. Yes, it IS possible to enter a game, establish one or two alliances and just stick them out through an entire game or most of a game. But gosh, aren't those games boring?? Is that really why you want to play Diplomacy? Those of us who enjoy these large variants like the fluidity of the long term setup, and the fact that there are lots of powers so once you resolve one thing, then there's another and another. I'm not sure, but I think Nigel is really thinking about the long term situation with the Eastern Juggernaut and the central dominance of Arabia. France wants to dominate the West, to be sure, but also he wants to come out of it with the right set up to dominate the endgame. The answer to that is not knowing precisely what that looks like right now, with "unbreakable alliances" and boring play, but setting up a series of takedowns and skirmishes to move toward the right set of options to exploit later. This is a key step in that strategy for France. Remember, having the Danish/German attack on Russia go very slowly, even with Byzantine participation, is NOT a bad thing in that scenario, it is factored into the nudges to make it happen.

Yes, the changes with the retreat adjudication made it more clear that France was informed of the rapprochement between Denmark and Germany. He's going to hit Spain. Strong tactical move but I don't like it. Yes, he can take Cadiz, and he may take Salamanca too, but he's got zero fleets in the Med. He's practically begging to have Spanish fleets sitting off his Southern flank making counter-attacks. Meanwhile Spain can pick up Morocco and Rome while convoying an army back to Valencia.

I don't like the thinking here, esp. since he could have mopped up the British Isles easily and dealt with Spain at his leisure. Instead, he's opening up a front he shouldn't be able to make progress through.

One caveat here - if he has the sense to reverse direction in the Fall, I'll be impressed. But he's walked away from two easy targets to go after the hard one.

I don't get it.

And really, how will he ever again get anybody to support him into a SC? Spain gave him Pamplona and look how France is thanking him!

And there is the counterpoint. Gentle readers, which do you think is the case? That's the fun of doing this commentary with smart people like Rick and Eric and Suzanne. We can each look at this and see different things. Nigel is keeping this game interesting, kudos to him.

Spain apparently had wind of the French plan to move south, as evidenced both by the fleet moves in the Med and by the press. Perhaps there were difficult negotiations with France, or perhaps Denmark and/or Germany leaked the information.

Decided to take back Mauritania anyway, but moved some Mediterranean forces north, either to take Rome or to protect his homeland. That won't be enough to stop France, but it limits the damage France can do.

I think the fleet move was to take Rome. If he'd been worried about France, he could have done considerably more effective things with his forces. For starters, he would not have held in Spanish March. (Come to think of it, even if isn't worried about France, holding in Spanish March makes no sense here. All he had to do was move to Salamanca and that would have prevented losing two dots to France.)

To Zaragoza, you mean? Spanish March isn't adjacent to Salamanca. Maybe he was afraid that France would be tempted to move into Spanish March and threaten Valencia. A sort of visceral reaction, since he could cover Valencia if he had to, and in fact, the two armies would have bounced in Zaragoza.

Yes, I meant Zaragoza.

Again, staying with the slightly higher level, the negotiations before this turn clearly were VERY involved. The actual set of choices made is not necessarily where everyone started those negotiations.

Wagadu (or Ghana; if we're using the modern names) is finally engaging in some positive diplomacy. He moved into GOS, supported by Axum, to counter the Indonesian menace, and supported France's North Ocean Fleet while France convoyed to Gal; a French attack on Spain is good for Wagadu.

Mikael countered the rogue Egyptian army without difficulty. Seems to have made a cross on Mauritania, for now. If he retreats to Tahert and if Spain convoys his North African army back home to protect his home centers, Wagadu could recuperate Tunis to replace Mauritania.

I'm guessing that Wagadu has been begging France for years to stab Spain. But I would not get too thrilled

about _how_ it's happening. It is not clear at all that this stab will be to Wagadu's benefit.

The move to GokS is not a surprise. I'd figured that Wag, Axum, and Arabia have enough sense between them to set up the cheap and easy stalemate line. It only requires one Wagadu fleet and is worth the investment in the long term.

Also, he's neutralized the threat of the rogue Egyptian army.

Wagadu is cornered in a bit. I agree with the thrust of what everyone else says here. I think France both helped instigate the deal with B. and Mikael and got Mikael to drop with him on Spain. I also agree that this is not happening to Wagadu's best benefit. Again, this is part of France's plan too. In the long run, I would be very, very worried if I were Spain, it isn't clear what can be done to stop a slow pincer attack, there is no one else to talk to.

Axum apparently has no hard feelings over the Arabian retreat into Mah. Axum is concentrating on the resistance to Indonesia, supporting Arabia and also Wagadu, and moving an army south to cover Zimbabwe. His Egyptian campaign is left in limbo, just when Arania is joining him there. Is Arabia going to reap most of the benefits of Axum's pressure on Egypt?

I wouldn't say the campaign against Egypt is in limbo. Axum is going to pick up the Al-Qatta'i in the Fall. The coastal centers will have to wait.

True, I didn't see that.

We need to recognize the Mah retreat could have been negotiated. That actually is more likely. Even though China is not growing as much, China is not signalling to the board much flexibility. Remember I said above how boring long term alliances can get? Everyone is clearly committed to stopping Indonesia (happy to call it that!) right here. Egypt is still a bit player in all this, with the first priority being the southern line.

Egypt managed to cover his southern province of Al-Quattai. But he is still stubbornly set on hitting Byzantium. Probably didn't expect the Arabian move towards Jerusalem.

No, Egypt is losing Al-Qatta'i with the Fall move. He cannot support it and there are two Axum armies there.

He's also in trouble in Jerusalem. Indeed, does he have any allies other than the crippled Spain?

Glad to see he's still attacking Byzantium. Wouldn't want to see that pointless war abandoned now just because it's futile.

Egypt unfortunately is just road kill with everyone playing it out knowing the centers are there. Egypt is flailing at Byzantium hoping to change his luck. That's how I see it, but it doesn't look good. This fall will not be good for Egypt.

Byzantium managed to fend off the Egyptian attacks, as usual. But he is beginning to be squeezed between Egypt and Germany. The Arabian attack on Egypt is a Godsend to Gregory. Will he get any of the pie?

Well, Russia could try to put him in Hungary. Or, he could definitely put Russia into Hungary.

We're really not seeing any evidence of active diplomacy by Byz here. There's an opportunity, but I'm not very optimistic. He's not playing at anywhere near the level that Arabia is, for example.

That's the trouble with good tacticians, on a map where diplomacy is much more important.

Again, I slightly disagree, I think Byzantium is about to become much more important. And as noted, Gregory's tactical skill is tremendous, he's not being taken out any time soon. Once Russia is taken out, Byzantium can be the middle power in a move across Asia. That is quite possible down the road.

Arabia is in great form. He has deftly surrounded the last Indian center, rendering an eventual Chinese support useless. He has made up with Axum, if there were really any tension between them. He has made a perfect surprise move on Jerusalem, which he will certainly take this fall. He may or not get Balanjar from Khazaria as well.

If he gets Jerusalem and Alexandria (and probably Barca) as well as his gains in India and perhaps southern Khazaria, he has a good option on victory here. Especially as Axum is doing the bulk of the fighting against Indonesia and Samadia the bulk of the resistance to China.

Well, Egypt can manage a defense of Jerusalem, but it would require ignoring Cyprus. So that looks likely.

Although Jim has been pessimistic about Arabia, thinking that people will gang up against him, what I'm seeing is a player who is dominating the diplomacy. He's in very good shape.

I don't quite understand why the Arabians are in Nepal. I'm anticipating a correction of a misadjudication. I only see one support for this move, and I see two Chinese armies opposing it.

Ah, you're right, I didn't notice that. The move to

Nepal shouldn't work.

But Egypt can't defend Jerusalem, he only has one fleet available to do so, against two Arabian armies.

That means that Egypt will be down two at the end of the year. And Axum and Arabia will have two armies on Alexandria. Unless Egypt decides to defend Alexandria at all costs, it will probably fall next year.

In fact, if Arabia is the diplomat that he appears to be, he may well offer Axum Mah again in exchange for support into Alexandria next year. That's worth it for both of them.

I like that option. Arabia continues the controlling dance in the middle of the board. Here's the big picture view of that.

Axum and Arabia (with fringe help) lock up Indonesia. Little powers like Egypt are lined up before the firing squad. Then, since China will not relent, that is the weak point. It will take a VERY long time, but eventually there will be Arabian armies in China. Then, I think Indonesia will just be trapped in the corner behind a line. We'll see about that part, whether they can break him entirely. But if I were China, I might succumb to the diplomatic pressure, since China is not getting out of its corner either.

Egypt has a fleet that can retreat to Sea of Tyre. So in theory he could use two fleets to defend Jerusalem, but doing so would mean that he'd offer no defense of Cyprus.

No comment necessary on India.

Cowering seems appropriate.

Why terror? Resignation seems more appropriate.
Khazaria apparently didn't realize that Russia would have to protect his western front.

He's lost a first center to Samadia (who could really use the build, thank you), may well lose a second center to Samadia or Arabia, depending on what he decides to protect. Blindness gets you nowhere.

Khazaria continues to look like he's playing a Gunboat game. If anybody ever bothers to build a fleet on either the Caspian or Black Seas, the futility of this position will become obvious. But really, I doubt anybody will bother.

I'll be interested to hear from David what he was trying to accomplish with this position. He seemed to have obsessed about Bulgar to the exclusion of everything else. Whatever he was thinking, he hasn't gotten anywhere.

Finally a Samanid victory, with a second one to come, either this fall or next year.

Also in a strong position against Uyg and Tibet. Not strong enough to take either one this year, but that could come.

Grabbing two dots from Khazaria will surely help. If he puts two more armies on the board, China will have too many guesses to make and will eventually lose ground.

Or he could just ignore China and plow into Russia. Wouldn't be my choice.

China's moves were resolutely defensive. He'll keep what he has, but he needs more energy than that to advance.

Sorry, Jim : no stab of Indonesia in sight.

I would have thought the defense of Nepal should have been adequate, seeing as that Samanid didn't cut the support of A Tibet.

Nor is Indonesia about to stab China; their alliance is as solid as ever.

Indonesia cleverly tried to move north to Ras to cut the Arabian forces, but Arabia avoided the trap.

The rest was defensive-while-mobilizing. It does look as if Indoneisian has reached the limit of his expansion, though. Not sure where he'll try to go now.

It's solid, but it's not going anywhere. She he try something else at some point? Yeah, probably.

Will he? I doubt it.

Looking forward to an EOG blaming the stalemate lines.

Hey, Rick, the neutrals aren't doing so badly, after all. ;)

Let's not forget that Dalmatia just fell...I expect Rome to fall. I think the Danes are too scared to go after Dublin. Pech will be with us for a while.

Summer and Fall 904 Results

Summer Retreat Adjudications

Egyptian F Cis retreats to Sty
Wagadu A Mau retreats to Tah

And some press...

Press (French):

The cunning Emir Nathan,
Devised an ambitious plan,
Fleets sailed for Rome,
But meanwhile at home,
French armies dug in, getting over-all tans.

DC229: The Fall 904 season has been adjudicated. The rich got richer, as Arabia and the West Frankish Kingdom gaining multiple SCs yet again. The other big gainer was Turan, while Egypt and Khazar both suffered multiple losses. In Asia, Sri Vijaya had their first setback, losing the Malabar Sea to an Arabia-Axum attack, while Turan and Tang Dynasty forces continued their stalemate in Central Asia. At first glance, it appeared that Pratihara (India) had been eliminated, but Andy's retreating army still has options.

At the other end of the battle spectrum, we have the European wars. In Eastern Europe, Kiev's position is remarkably spread out, and the action is much more free-flowing (this seems to be working for Darren though, as Kiev gained Onoguria). There is an even more unorthodox war between the West Franks and the Umayyids, where now Umayyid has slipped a unit into the West Frankish backlines to match the West Frankish armies already rampaging in Al Andalus. Umayyid also submitted another fantastic entry to their war of words with the West Franks.

And now the press, followed by the adjudications:

Press #1 (anonymous)

I am the cup still full, though the hall drink me dry.
I weave the web no sword can cut, no shield deny.
I am the treasure and tale of its taking.
I am the longest lived of all man's making.

he'll tell you intent was exposed
with flowery poems and prose
about Charlemagne
campaigning in Spain
'gainst historical Moslem foes

Press #2 (Umayyid)

In france they are switching from fries
to devious double-faced lies
"A fair stand-up fight
just doesn't seem right"
their beret-wearing leader cries

now lest you think that I complain
'bout the beating that I will sustain
the fault is all mine
for not drawing a line
'tween plans to expand and my brain

Fall Adjudications

Arabian A Nep - Knj
Arabian A Ind S A Nep - Knj
Arabian A Ujj S A Nep - Knj
Arabian A Man - Sha
Arabian F Ars - Mas
Arabian F Oma - Ars
Arabian F Mah S F Ars - Mas
Arabian A Dam - Jer
Arabian A Mec S A Dam - Jer
Arabian A Kak - Bal *Bounce*
Arabian A Der S A Kak - Bal
Arabian A Geo S A Kak - Bal

Byzantine A Slr S A Rom
Byzantine F Cre H
Byzantine F Cis - Cyp
Byzantine F Aes S F Cre

Byzantine A Mac - Dal
Bounce
Byzantine A Thr S A Vol -
Ono

Chinese A Var - Nep
Chinese A Pal S A Tib
Chinese A Tib S A Var - Nep
Cut
Chinese A Uyg S A Tib *Cut*
Chinese A Chn S A Uyg
Chinese A Cha S A Uyg
Chinese F Kai H
Chinese A Nan H

Danish F Les - Liv
Danish A Bor S F Les - Liv
Danish F Abs - Les
Danish A Nor - Saa

Danish F Ics S F Nos - Dub
Danish F Ngs - Wsx

Egyptian F Ios - Tar
Egyptian F Lis S F Sty - Egs
Egyptian F Egs - Cre
Bounce
Egyptian F Sty - Egs
Bounce
Egyptian A Aqa H
Dislodged
Egyptian A Jel H *Dislodged*

French F Nos - Dub
French F Brc - Nos
French A Gal - Sal
French A Zar - Tol
French A Tou - Pam
French A Lbu S A Aut - Nar

French A Aut - Nar
 French A Fra - Swa
 French A Swa - Hel

German F Bre - Sgs
 German A Sax H
 German A Bav - Mor
 German A Dal S A Ono *Cut*
 German A Ono S A Dal *Cut*
 Dislodged
 German A Maz - Vol

Indian A Knj H *Dislodged*

Khazar A Mrd S A Ati *Cut*
 Khazar A Ati S A Bal *Cut*
 Dislodged
 Khazar A Srk S A Bal
 Khazar A Tam S A Bal
 Khazar A Bal S A Ati *Cut*

Russian F Liv - Fis
 Russian A Vol - Ono
 Russian A Bul - Mrd
 Bounce
 Russian A Kom - Bja
 Russian A Vya - Che
 Russian A Smo - Maz
 Russian A Kie S A Smo - Maz

Spanish F Mau H
 Spanish F Sta - Cad
 Spanish F Lgs S F Tys - Rom
 (wc)
 Spanish F Tys - Rom (wc)
 Bounce
 Spanish A Spm - Tou
 Spanish F Sjt S F Sta - Cad
 Spanish A Kut - Tah
 Bounce

Samanid A Sam - Uyg
 Bounce
 Samanid A Orb S A Sam - Uyg
 Samanid A Qar S A Orb
 Samanid A Kas S A Sog - Tib
 Samanid A Sog - Tib
 Bounce
 Samanid A Kip - Ati
 Samanid A Bas S A Kip - Ati

Srivijayan A Cho - Mah
 Invalid
 Srivijayan F Cob S F Mas
 Srivijayan F Jas S F Sus
 Srivijayan F Krs - Jam
 Srivijayan F Mas C A Cho - Mah
 Mah *Dislodged*

Srivijayan F Mis S F Sus
 Srivijayan F Ser S F Mas
 Srivijayan F Sus S A Cho - Mah

Wagadu A Nio - Jel
 Wagadu A Tir - Jej
 Wagadu A Kan S A Nio - Jel
 Wagadu A Tah - Mau
 Bounce
 Wagadu F Tka - Sta
 Wagadu F Swo S F Tka - Sta
 Wagadu F Tas S F Tka - Sta
 Wagadu F Gos S F Phe - Sus
 Sus *Void*

Axum A Ber - Aqa
 Axum A Mak S A Ber - Aqa
 Axum A Lub S A Mro - Sud
 Axum A Mro - Sud
 Axum F Phe - Sus *Bounce*
 Axum F Gad S F Ars - Mas
 Axum F Soc S F Ars - Mas

Neutral A Dub H *Dislodged*
 Disbanded
 Neutral A Pec H
 Neutral A Rom H

Position	Power	Abb	903	904	Change	SCs changing possession
1	Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia)	A	12	14	+2	+Jer, +Knj
2	West Frankish Kingdom (France)	F	9	11	+2	+Dub, +Sal
3	Samanid Emirate (Turan)	T	7	9	+2	+Ati, +Bas
4	Principality of Kiev (Russia)	R	7	8	+1	+Ono
5	Kingdom of Sri Vijaya	V	8	8	0	
6	Kingdom of Axum	X	7	8	+1	+AQa
7	*Tang Empire (China)	C	8	7	-1	-Var
8	Umayyad Emirate (Spain)	S	7	7	0	+Mau, -Sal
9	Kingdom of Wagadu	W	8	7	-1	-Mau
10	Byzantine Empire	B	6	6	0	+Cyp, -Tar
11	Kingdom of Denmark	D	6	6	0	
12	East Frankish Kingdom (German)	G	6	6	0	+Dal, -Ono
13	Tulunid Emirate (Egypt)	E	6	4	-2	-AQa, -Cyp, -Jer, +Tar
14	Khaganate of Khazaria	K	5	3	-2	-Ati, -Bas
15	Neutral	N	4	2	-2	-Dal, -Dub
16	*Pratihara Kingdom (India)	I	1	1	0	-Knj, +Var

* Assuming India retreats to China's open SC in Varanasi

Note - Adjustments below assume that all retreating units retreat on the board, and that the Indian army retreats to Varanasi. These could change with the Retreat adjudication.

Adjustments (Preliminary)

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) builds 2 units, can build in Ard, Arm, Aze, Bag, Bsr, Isf, Man, Yem
Byzantine Empire makes no adjustments
Tang Empire (China) disbands 1 unit
Kingdom of Denmark makes no adjustments
Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) disbands 2 units
West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 2 units, can build in Aqt, Bri, Gas, Lot, Par
East Frankish Kingdom (German) makes no adjustments
Pratihara Kingdom (India) makes no adjustments
Khaganate of Khazaria disbands 2 units
Principality of Kiev (Russia) builds 1 unit, can build in Est, Nov, Ros, Smo
Umayyad Emirate (Spain) makes no adjustments
Samanid Emirate (Turan) builds 2 units, can build in Buk, Ghu, Her, Urg
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Wagadu disbands 1 unit
Kingdom of Axum builds 1 unit, can build in Adu, Axu, Mal, Roh, Zim
Neutral makes no adjustments

Summer and Fall 904 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

Apparently no one caught the misadjudication in Nepal, so I guess it stays.

The Wagadu retreat may let Wagadu take Ifriqua (Tunis) this fall.

The biggest surprise of this turn : Denmark supported France into Dublin, instead of insisting on France supporting him in. David giving a hand to Goliath. Perhaps, it was negotiated against France moving out (and staying out) of the Channel -- but that seems to have been negotiated already one time and the agreement broken by France, and Denmark moved to cover Wessex anyhow. I really don't see what Denmark had to gain here. But that's what happened.

The attack on Russia is confirmed : Norway moved to Saammand, Lettish Sea was supported into Livonia.

And a useless attack this will turn out to be. Denmark will not be the first eliminated, but this is not impressive. Supporting France to Dublin? Making a futile attack on Russia?

I can picture the emails going back and forth between France, Germany, and Denmark. "We need to stop fighting and work together!" says France, while he gobbles up all the Spanish SCs. Meanwhile Germany and Denmark walk away from the Western front and take positions in the East they won't be able to hold.

I do not think this is a surprise, this is part of an effort by Denmark to woo France that has been on-going for a couple of turns now. This is worth stopping to ponder a bit and then revisit as the next two game years or so play out. So, Denmark has a pretty good corner defensive position, not as good as it was in previous incarnations of this variant (as we've discussed a bit previously), but pretty good. Denmark needs to ensure that Russia/Kiev does not get a host of fleets in the Baltic/North Coast that is the only way they actually can be eliminated. So, Denmark is presently faced with a choice about France. They could fight and France probably won't be able to eliminate him, but will be able to keep Denmark as a "David" to quote Suzanne. Denmark cannot overwhelm France, even with help. So Denmark needs to take out Kiev/Russia and he seems to have decided this about two game years ago, and has been slowly working to see if he can make it happen. I think the approach is good, about the best he could have done with weak cooperation. But France is a tough bargainer who knows Denmark has the good corner position, so this is NOT an alliance, just a convenience of continuing negotiations. In my opinion, it is uncertain how this will play out in the next few game years, but I think Denmark is in trouble, but if they can keep working with Germany (even as Germany fares much worse, more on that below) as a buffer they have a chance to survive to see what comes next. Unfortunately, that's the best course of action I see at present for Denmark, so they need to continue it unless they can make a break somewhere else.

Russia has apparently given up on gaining from Khazaria's difficulties, and has moved to protect his centers against the Germano-Danish invasion. Quite effectively. His north coast is solidly protected, and he took back Mazaria.

Protected yes, poised to advance effectively to take out Denmark, no. Russia turned around just in time and made just the right moves to stop the Germans/Danes. It is possible, if France assists him, to take out Germany eventually. If France backs up Germany it is less clear what happens there. Russia should try to get some cooperation from Khazaria, I think David might be open to that despite their previous troubles, since this new war is not going to end.

He has also negotiated with Byzantine. Byzantine supported him into Onogaria, giving him a build. He will most probably support Byzantine into Damatia next year, which will weaken Germany.

I think I mentioned the importance of working with the Byzantines earlier. They were the key. If the Byzantines teamed up with Germany/Denmark, then Russia would have been in a world of hurt. As Suzanne correctly notes that Onogaria support was the most important move of the turn for Russia. Eventually, Germany can be taken out entirely unless France intervenes strongly.

Still, Russia was really out of luck this game.

Russia has gotten NO breaks this game, but hangs in there. Persistence and patience are virtues.

If Russia puts a fleet in Estonia, Denmark will be stopped cold for at least two years, at which point our greedy Frenchman will be turning again. I don't think war with Germany will be profitable, but it's hardly dangerous.

Not a very good year for Germany.

Onoguria and Dalmatia supported each other. That was enough to ward off a Byzantine attack, but not enough to hold off against Russian-Byzantine cooperation. So no gains for Germany this year, and a probable loss next year.

Right, I don't see how Germany avoids a series of those losses without some other intervention. The Byzantines made a choice and it was the wrong one for Germany. We must presume Germany tried, but the Byzantines need to get set up for the eventual war against France, and this was the choice to make.

A mutual pull-out was apparently negotiated with France, but the result is better for France than for Germany. Germany moved the Bremen fleet into the sea, a good move, although not entirely reassuring

to Denmark. He left an army in Saxony, but there are two French units on an empty Bavaria.

Again, here, France plays everyone brilliantly off against everyone else. Yes, it was better for France, but it was the best deal Germany was offered. France holds the German heart in his hands, if he jumps in, that's it. Nigs, of course, will be thinking of the longer term with Byzantium and Russia, and as such should leave Germany alone for now.

Evidently Germany counted on the build from Dalmatia. At any rate, he is in a difficult position, both against Russia and against France. He has a retreat to make. I think that his best move is to disband that army and rebuild in Polonia or in Bavaria.

I've been saying for a while that Germany's move South wouldn't net him much. He's taken SCs but the SCs are too remote from his main power base to be useful. Right now he's playing a game of Beat the Clock, trying desperately to make gains in the East before he gets smacked by France. It's not going to work.

I agree, though he should try to get some commitments from France, at least not to take anything. This is the time for the "big threat".... you take anything from me and EVERYTHING goes at you and I let Russia and Byzantium in. And follow through.

For France, getting Danish support for his move to Dublin can only be considered a diplomatic victory.

Yes, agreed entirely, but I'm sure there was zero chance he supports the Danes there.

He gained one new Spanish center (Salamanca) and can easily take Cordova next year. He should eventually get Valencia, which will finally allow him to build fleets in the Med. Normally, Cadiz should go to Wagadu, but given France's talent for bullying his allies, perhaps France will get that center, too. He has a Spanish army behind his lines, but with two builds, that shouldn't be a problem.

Slow and steady against Spain wins the race. Spain appears doomed in the long run, almost entirely to the benefit of France. Nigs played this beautifully with his balanced back and forth before striking. Now is the time to be relentless.

On the German front, he retreated from Franconia, but has two armies on Bavaria. France can stab Germany whenever he wishes.

Agreed, as I said above, he needs to look for the heart of the German. If he can get away with nibbling, he will, if he faces the "full Monty", he has to tell Germany to keep their clothes on.

A solid position, although diplomatically, he's been very lucky with his neighbors.

You make your own luck, Nigs made his.

France is playing his neighbors like a well-tuned fiddle. The Spanish army in Toulouse is completely unimportant. He'll take three more SCs from Spain with ease (Cadiz, Cordoba, and Valencia). At that point Spain will be down to 2-3 SCs that France can ignore while he turns back around against his European "allies". I suspect he'll keep Denmark around for a while, since he's been such a useful poodle.

Spain did not convoy his army back home, after all, but left it to defend North Africa. That's a choice : put everything to the defense of the homeland, or spread your forces out to hold on to your gains. I think that he might have been better off concentrating on home defense, but he probably would have both France and Wagadu against him, whatever he did.

Agreed, I tend to make the choice Spain did and then seek allies by saying "hey look, I'm going to keep going, and if you won't help me, France gets the lion's share of the spoils". I'm not sure what Wagadu says to this, but he needs to follow the move with the diplomacy.

He slipped an army behind the French lines. That's cute but not necessarily best tactic; the army could have usefully gone south to Valencia. That would have bounced if France had attacked Valencia. As things happened, he would have an army in Valencia to protect Cordoba next year.

Useless unless it sways Wagadu.

Cadiz is covered for now, but in danger next year.

However, he was probably counting on a build from Rome. Unfortunately, Byzantium remembered that Spain and Egypt had been allies, and decided to support Rome, depriving Spain of his build. Spain either didn't negotiate with Byzantium, or the negotiation didn't succeed.

Agreed.

Spain is getting gutted like a fish. The army in Toulouse is useless. He apparently has decided to blame Wagadu for his fate and is throwing his forces that way while leaving Iberia undefended.

Wagadu finally kicked the rogue Egyptian army out of Jel. It will probably disband. Oof!

Thorn in the side eliminated, this whole turn smacks of Mikael being really a bit annoyed and saying "I'm going

to clear these problems out, NOW!"

He moved a fleet into Sea of Tangiers, with overkill support; Cadiz is in sight next year. He moved the Tahbert army to Mau to cut support for the sea of Tangiers. Too bad, moving into Ifrique would have been better; would in fact have worked.

The Wagadu position is good, could have been even better.

He can take Cadiz next year with French help, unless France pulls another diplomatic coup. His North African gains will depend on the Spanish disbands, but sooner or later he should make them.

Charming that you think that the guy who just took Dublin for himself would support Wagadu into Cadiz when he could take it himself. Cadiz will go to France along with the rest of Iberia. Wagadu can retake Mauretania and eventually push on Tunis. Getting fleets into the Med itself will be a real pain. It's hard to see Wagadu pushing much further North.

Losing Mauretania is an inconvenience, but shouldn't be excessively troublesome unless Egypt keeps his army behind the Wagadu lines

Yes, he worked too hard to insist on what he could have gotten easier and had more tempo to go elsewhere. France may help, but his goals are not in Wagadu long term interest. The best thing for Wagadu this time MIGHT be declaring peace with Spain. At least I would be open to it if I were Mikael. But I do not expect it. Nigs is running everyone on this corner of the board around and around diplomatically and I expect it to continue.

Axxum took Al-Qattai, as planned. He pushed into Sudd pour block the rogue Egyptian army, who has nowhere useful to retreat to.

Axxum solidly supported the Arabian sea - Malabar sea, forming the line against Indonesia. Still, it would have been better for Axxum if he could have persuaded Arabia to use the Mahitaka fleet to take Malabar Sea. That was his best chance to eventually recuperate Mahitaka. It may still be possible to pop the Mah fleet, but it will be difficult, as Indonesia still has fleets to bring into play.

Axxum has played solidly up to now, but where does he go from here? He can't advance against Indonesia, and, since he needs Wagadu cooperation to hold the line against Indonesia, he can't attack Wagadu. Arabia is even more out of the question.

Perhaps it is Axuum who will take Alexandria and then maybe Barca.

B. is in the rock and a hard place situation. The Indonesian advance is stopped, but the way forward is uncertain. Arabia is only out of the question if everyone decides to let Matt just win. B. is the one to organize the opposition at some point, unless the line against Indonesia can be broken somehow.

He shouldn't be able to make gains against Indonesia. He can push up into Alexandria but breaking into the Med itself will likely be impossible, as Byzantium will be blocking that kind of move. I do think an Axum-Wagadu war would be deadly for both of them.

Egypt's retreat into Sea of Tyre allowed him to cover Cyprus or hold on to Jerusalem, but Egypt did neither. Instead he moved an unsupported Egyptian Sea fleet into Crete, and supported a move of Sea of Tyre into Egyptian Sea -- very odd. If Byzantium had made a supported attack on the Egyptian Sea, Egypt could have simply supported his fleet, while Tyre saved one of the two threatened centers. As is, Egypt lost both, as well as Al-Qattai. Luckily, the move into Tar succeeded, against all likelihood, keeping his losses down to two.

Egypt is a good candidate for the second power out.

But not the best candidate. Egypt and Spain can hide on the Italian islands for a while. And yes, the tactics were unimpressive. But people in losing positions often just stop caring.

Egypt either made some deals which people reneged on (OK to take that risk at this point) or has lost interest since no one talks to him anymore. I would be hoping that a "pig pile on Arabia" alliance materializes magically as that is the only hope.

Byzantium worked intelligently with Russia, to help the latter into Ono, and will probably regain Dal next year with Russian help.

Supporting Rome was a foolish leftover from the time Spain and Egypt were allied, although Spain had never moved against Byzantium. He would have been better off negotiating with Spain and covering Tar.

He must be relieved that Egypt (and also Spain) are crumbling, but he isn't gaining anything out of Egypt's fall.

I simply don't fathom why he supported Rome instead of defending his own SC.

I like the coordination with Russia (and had been calling for it for some time). He should get Dalmatia (or perhaps Hungary) next year. If he hadn't lost Taranto, he'd be getting a build and would be in decent position. Had he lost Taranto and failed to get Cyprus, he'd be in

real trouble. As it stands, I think Byz will make it to the midgame but likely won't make any final draw.

Byzantium must be thinking about France and trying to take down Germany and get some German centers. This would make Italy the first battleground. I would move on that this year more aggressively if I were Byzantium, as noted by Suzanne, you're not getting much out of Egypt.

The move to Nepal was never questioned, so Arabia could take the remaining Indian center from there. If India retreats into Var, that's China's problem; Arabia could even support the Indians in Var!

Rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. It really doesn't matter when India goes out.

Logically, Arabia had a 50-50 chance to take Jerusalem, and a better chance of taking Balanjar. The odds don't always work, though. Jerusalem fell without any problem, but Khazaria used everything available to support Balanjar. No problem, Balanjar will fall next year, and Alexandria may well fall to Arabia sooner or later.

Arabia's true worry here is Byzantium, I would think Arabia wants them to move into Germany and start to oppose France. That is what I would expect, but Byzantium is the one who could deal with everyone and organize the pig pile alliance on Arabia. I don't expect the latter, anticipate the former, but that's the thing to watch for now.

In the sea, the line against Indonesia is solidly re-established. As long as the three parties stick to it, Indonesia is blocked on the western front. Good move in *not* asking for support for Mahitaka, but in making sure that the two Indonesiaian fleets that touched Mah were both solidly cut (and the more important one popped).

Arabia looks stronger than ever. Probably the strongest contender for the victory, if there is a solo winner.

Agreed, time for the rest of the board to realize it too, if anyone means to stop Matt. Axum isn't in favor of this, but Arabia wants to focus with the Samanid to turn the Chinese corner and roll up Indonesia from the north. Can it be done? I think so. Will it be done? I'm less sure.

I doubt this game will end in a solo victory. There are just too many mini-stalemate lines all over the place. But definitely, Arabia will be around at the end.

Arabia has been making progress against China/Indonesia that I didn't think would happen. Taking Delhi will either cost China a SC or remove India

completely. He's also made progress against Egypt and can, improbably, support himself into Alexandria. I suspect he'll stick with Axum and the Horde for a while, so future growth would either come by cracking the China/Indonesia lines, or perhaps Byz will be taken down next.

Second big surprise of the turn : India can retreat into Var and save his neck this year. In fact, he might be able to hang on longer, if he manages to use the Arabian - Chinese rivalry well. Who knows, he may even outlast Egypt or Khazaria! But I wouldn't bet on it.

India might well survive for a while if he retreats to Var.

An amusing little side game that unfortunately is of little geopolitical relevance.

Samanid lucked it out in Khazaria this year. With two builds, he may eventually make some headway against China, although that would be a long slog for a modest result.

But this modest result is VERY important to Arabia, so it may happen for that reason while everyone else is tied up elsewhere. The Samanid are to be watched carefully now. Khazaria is in big trouble.

Better, once Khazaria falls, he may be able to make some headway against Russia, as long as Denmark and Germany keep up the pressure on the north and west.

This is possible, and it is the choice the Samanid face, unless the big anti-Arabian alliance forms now. That alliance is most favorable to the Samanid, so if I were them, I might try to organize it.

Samanid is certainly not one of the big contenders, but he will stay in the game for a long time to come.

Agreed. No one threatens their survival.

Is Samanid even talking to Indonesia? We are approaching a point where a chainsaw move would be appropriate.

I'm not fond of move into Russia. Samanid has too many forces tied up in China to really want to open a full-blown Western front. And if he went against Russia, he would have that problem - either with Russia or with Germany.

Not that this means the Horde won't do it.

With the Chinese removal and two Horde builds, Sam will be able to outflank China and sweep in from the North. He can walk into Merkit and bring enough force around to cross The Wall. If he got any cooperation

from Indonesia, it would happen easily. And then they could work together in India?

I wonder what Sam will build here. A Caspian fleet would be very interesting.

Not much Khazaria can do at this point but to decide which attackers to favor, and that's what he did. He let Samaria make the big gains this year, but Arabia will certainly get Balanjar next year.

Russia hasn't gained anything from Khazaria's fall, due largely to the Germano-Danish attack.

I expect Khazaria to continue this course. It would be ironic if India and Egypt hang on and the designer goes out first. This is possible.

Khaz is not going to last more than two years. He might even die before India!

Russia is gaining the lack of a four-army force on his Eastern front causing mischief.

I don't know what the strategy was here, but from this perspective it looked like Khazaria obsessed over Bulgar to the exclusion of everything else, and ended up killing himself because of that.

Oops! For China, moving Var into Nepal was a mistake. (Hindsight is 20-20.) Better to have used Var to support the Indian center.

Very defensive moves, in general. Where is he going from here? If he has no goal, no front for future advances, he can't capitalize on his early advances.

What China really should have done was object to the misadjudication of the Spring order set.

On the whole, this doesn't look good, esp. if he loses Var. He's got a deadlock with The Horde and cannot cover the whole front. And he doesn't trust Indonesia enough to commit more inland.

I actually think China should throw their Indonesian ally under the bus and simultaneously join a large anti-Arabian alliance. That's what I would be proposing, but China shows no such inventive initiative. The Nepal move could be the start of a big collapse if Arabia and the Samanid come at them in a full fledged organized way.

Srivijaya had a gamble to take : would the Western coalition put the packet on taking the Malabar Sea, or would they concentrate on the Southern Sea. He bet on the Southern Sea, and lost.

He still has a solid position and a choice : he can attack the Arabian position in India with China, or he can turn against China, with little fear of reprisal. Or,

of course, he can simply hold where he is.

Attacking the Arabian position in India with China won't do any good. Unless he gets the Horde to turn on Arabia, Indonesia is going to be playing defense for a while. The good news is that he can hold the line for quite a long time. The bad news is that he's not going to grow at all unless the alliance structure changes.

On the whole, the board continues to be dominated by Arabia and France.

I do NOT think the Indonesian Srivijayans can afford to attack their only ally in China, but it does seem to be the only place to gain. I expect status quo for awhile as the pondering goes on.

Autumn and Winter 904

Autumn Retreat Adjudications

Arabian A Sev retreats to Tam

Axum A Ale retreats to Zaw

Looking at the disbands, apparently Arabia did not do enough to sway David in the diplomatic free-for-all for Khazars units.

Winter Adjustment Adjudications

Kingdom of Axum Builds F Zim

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Gas

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Aqt

Tang Empire (China) Disbands A Nan

Kingdom of Wagadu Disbands F Gos

Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) Disbands F Sty

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Arm

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Man

Principality of Kiev (Russia) Builds F Est

Samanid Emirate (Turan) Builds A Buk

Samanid Emirate (Turan) Builds A Ghu

Khaganate of Khazaria Disbands A Udm

Khaganate of Khazaria Disbands A Mrd

Autumn and Winter 904 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

I still think that Germany would have been better off disbanding the unit and rebuilding, either in Polonia or in Bavaria. Of course, this way he can threaten Ono and help hold on to Dalmatia, but it's a weak move.

I think he's really doubling down on the notion of war with Russia. It's a foolish gamble, IMHO.

Kiev made the logical build, blocking Denmark in the northern seas.

Yes, we love that fleet.

France built what he needed to do to keep the stray Spanish unit from doing any harm. If he moves Lower Burgundy into Autun, the blockage is complete, and he is free to press his advantage into Spain. He could also stab Germany, but perhaps for now he is best off concentrating on finishing off his southern neighbor.

I hope the Franks don't waste too many forces on A Tou. It's only one army. It can only take one SC. If he

ignores it, he can take Cordova and Cadiz, and possibly Valencia too.

Wagadu has a disband and Axum has a build. So Wagadu is disbanding the fleet used to hold the line against Indonesia, knowing that Axum can replace him easily, leaving him to concentrate on making gains against Spain.

Axum going to hold the line against Indonesia. Still no obvious advances. More on that in the general commentary.

Exactly.

Egypt is being realistic here, dropping the idle threats to Wagadu and Byzantine, and concentrating on holding what he can of his northern home and the bit of the Italian boot that he holds. But he's fighting against the odds.

Egypt should be making a serious effort to become somebody's lackey.

Arabia is running out of steam, even though he's the biggest power and still has advances to make. Building an army in Armenia makes sense, he's going to take something out of the Khazarian campaign. But why Man, where he has a solid hold on his part of India and little to gain by trying to continue? It would have been more interesting to have built a fleet in Yemen, hoping that the Egyptian campaign would allow him to break into the Med. More on that in the more general commentary.

Looks to me like Arabia is committing to taking down the Eastern powers.

For Samanid, building in Bukhara makes sense; he needs forces to help him break down China's strongholds. But why an army in Ghuzz? Is he seriously thinking of invading Russia?

Sam cannot build where he ought to want to build. So he's picked the two places to build that are the least threatening to Arabia.

Khazaria has finally decided to let Russia alone and concentrate on the Arabian and Samanid attackers. Too little, too late, though.

There's a deeper lesson here.

Amusing that India is hanging on, but, as both Rick and Jim have said, it makes little difference in the great lines of the game.

Indonesia is continuing to hold the line against the west. Apparently no change in alliances in sight.

China prefers to show his trust of Indonesia -- not that he has much choice in the matter.

Exactly

At this point in the game it seems appropriate to do some more extensive commentary on each power, their options for expansion, and their potential alliances going forward. There are a lot of opportunities right now to change the game, as well as hunker down options that will keep things playing out in a more predictable manner. Remember that the role of us commentators is not to predict, since the actual outcomes of which way it goes depends on the Diplomacy, but to let you ponder between now and next issue how this might go and where the missed opportunities are when we see the results. You can also think (for improving your own game) how you would approach each country. Now to the countries in alphabetical order:

ARABIA: Matt Kremer took this game by the throat from the beginning, as one of the only powers with almost no shot at getting to a corner or edge of the board, and took

control. One must assume that he has done that (in the manner of an Austria in the standard game) with lots of Diplomacy across the whole board to keep everything going his way. Perhaps he has not spoke much with China or Srivijaya since they have been in an unbreakable Juggernaut since the beginning of the game, but he's probably been speaking actively with everyone else, and the expansion continues. This season, he again built two, one of only three powers to do so. Yet, as I alluded to above, he still is surrounded, and has no edge or corner control. I believe it is only that lonely fleet in Mahilaka that is even one space from an edge of the board. This means that it is possible for an anti-Arabian alliance to form and to defeat him. The keys to forming one, I think, are two. Were the Eastern Juggernaut to realize (how can they not realize this??) that they are more or less stuck, the way to deal is to have China make a deal with the Samanid and Srivijaya make a deal with Axum. These suggestions must come simultaneously. Second, Axum and the Samanid ARE still growing, the Samanid being one of the other powers gaining two this year and Axum gaining one, and they must weigh what happens to France if they break their respective alliances with Matt.

Not sure what you mean here. I should think that the growth of France would discourage other powers from weakening Frances chief competitor.

You have it exactly right, what might happen to France is then France will be the unstoppable power.

I think Arabia is in a much stronger position than France, since France has burned his allies, while Arabia appears to have had solid alliances since the beginning.

More on each of their choices below, but the diplomatic path for Arabia remains the same, divide and conquer, keep the powers he needs to have close to him (Axum and the Samanid) continuing to grow and keeping the Eastern Juggernaut isolated. I apologize to the extent that this analysis is painfully obvious, but this is the simple choice on the board. By keeping it simple, Matt has grabbed this game and run with it. I said I'm not predicting, and I'm not, but we can expect that Matt will remain the diplomatic leader in the game, he won't stop negotiating with everyone and he can't. Even as strong as he is, he is NOT invincible.

First, I do not really think having a corner position is important. Even in Standard and similarly-sized variants, the importance of a corner is over-rated. In a variant of this size, a corner position is probably a disadvantage, as it simply takes too long to cover a sizable part of the world, tactically and even diplomatically.

The advantage of the corner position is the difficulty in

cracking it. The Arabian SCs are not very vulnerable, unless there is a radical change in alliances. Samanid could move south on him, but I hardly think that would be in the best interests of The Horde. They appear to both realize that, as centers powers, if they fight each other, they'll be easily rolled by China and Indonesia.

I'll leave that to the readers to think about, what do you all think?

Arabia is protected diplomatically much more powerfully than he would be by any position. His two main allies have much more reason to work with him than against them, and so do nearly all the other powers that have any direct contact with him. I don't see how any anti-Arabian alliance could form, either now or in the foreseeable future.

But I do see that his momentum is slowing down. He is currently engaged with two very weak powers : Khazaria (with his ally Samanid) and Egypt (with his ally Axum). Neither of these engagements are likely to last more than a couple of years, at most. And then what? I am sure that he is already looking around for a new direction. From the map, that has to be towards the east or northeast. I still think that his best option is to take advantage of the Egyptian campaign to move into the Med, even in a token way. It would open up more options, allow him to expand his influence.

I see the purpose of the ant-Khaz alliance as somewhat of an afterthought. The main effect here is to get a few builds for Samanid, which should give him the force necessary to crack China. I don't think a lack of targets will be a real problem. Once Egypt is gone, Byzantium would be next.

Rick is right, Byzantium can be reached by land, and that is probably Arabia's next target. In fact, once Khazaria is no longer a problem, Arabia can build a fleet on the East Euxine coast, after which Cherson and Pechenegs fall rapidly. If Axum gets Alexandria and/or Barca, he could build fleets there, too, so he'll have a choice between Wagadu or joining the Byzantine campaign.

It's interesting comparing our judgments with the GM's summary. Arabia and France are first and second, of course. Samanids have moved up to third, but Axum will certainly catch up this year. Russia and Indonesia are at a par with Axum. China, Spain and Wagadu are close behind, but their options for growth are either limited or negative. Same goes for Byzantine, Denmark and German. The other three are terminal.

BYZANTIUM: I have always found Gregory Alexopoulos to be one of the best tacticians our hobby has seen, and he is at his best intuiting out plays in new variants like

this one. I have matched wits with him myself, been bested, and learned. So far in this game, Gregory has been pretty quiet, biding his time, but I think that is about to change. He has himself in a complex tactical situation. I'm not sure what the best tactical and diplomatic possibilities are here, I am perhaps most unsure about his situation of any player on this board. But I know this, something interesting is about to happen in the Eastern Mediterranean. With that being said, knowing what I say is still incomplete, here's my assessment. Let's start with the tactical choice of retaining Pechenegs as a neutral army. This defends the Cherson center very effectively, Khazaria is highly unlikely to build a fleet on the Black Sea any time in this game. This anchors that side of Byzantium (also a power without a side or corner) quite well. This was a tactical choice that was made, I believe, when we saw the bitter battle between David Cohen and Darren Sharma (Khazaria and Russia/Kiev) and Gregory used this to separate himself from it. Working our way around clockwise, Arabia built an army in Armenia, and Gregory also has chosen to leave himself open in Asia Minor, clearly trusting Matt at this point. I believe this trust is warranted, since what I expect to see is Arabia pushing the guessing game against Khazaria to get Balanjar, though with Samanid assistance, Matt does have an army to spare. We'll see on that. As for the difficult Egyptian position, Ian Moes is in severe trouble as we've been saying for many seasons now; however, the challenge for Gregory is "what's in it for me?" Probably not much, Taranto perhaps? The two units in the NW are poised where they could help either Germany or Kiev and the price of that should be that Gregory gets the center. As Egypt goes down, Byzantium's next move will look more important, and part of that needs to be taking the Italian boot.

Certainly, Byzantium should be able to take back Taranto, and hopefully take Sicily, too. Up to now, Byzantium has been excellent tactically, but apparently not very active or flexible diplomatically. If Byzantium wants a piece of the final pie, that is going to have to change. He ought to be helping Spain, for example, rather than hindering him -- so that Spain will have someone to whom he wants to leave his centers if and when he can no longer defend them.

I simply do not fathom the decision to support Rome and let Taranto fall. Byz does not appear to have the diplomatic pull to get through the midgame. For starters, he's been at war with Egypt far too long. Who is his ally? Russia? That's worth something, but it won't be worth enough when the Arabian axis comes knocking.

CHINA: Sorry, Lynn, but you aren't going anywhere in this game continuing with the Eastern Juggernaut. You should be the one at the front of the Diplomatic line trying to organize a pigpile on Arabia. Continuing the war with the Samanid means the immediate fall of Uyghurstan and then a slow slog down the path to

elimination. The story for Lynn and China is simple, do that or try a stab on Srivijaya and one fleet makes that threat pretty impotent.

I don't think that there is much that China can do at this point -- unless he can convince Arabia to stab Samanid. But that would be a very hard sell, and China doesn't seem to be much of a salesman.

I think the diplomatic lines have been drawn. Lynn gave up trying to move inland a while back, but I don't see that approach being rewarded.

You've been talking about the anti-Arabia alliance for quite some time, but I don't see who you think is going to join in. Certainly not Axum or Samanid. And without those two, how would this happen?

DENMARK: Trout is slugging it out here, protecting his corner position and still remaining in the game. But France got Dublin (the fleet Icelandic Sea probably goes to White Sea now), Trout's German ally looks pretty anemic, and while his defensive position is good it is not impregnable. I think he can trust Germany not to pull niggling stabs on him, but it is far from guaranteed. Similar to the far east, Denmark needs to see a change in everyone's attitude toward Nigs in France to take some pressure off him. It is possible for Trout to outmaneuver Darren and close off the Baltic to enemy fleet traffic, but when Kiev has two fleets there and you have two fleets there, the prognosis is not good. One interesting approach would be to allow Russ Manning in Germany to move his fleet through Jelling (putting a LOT of trust in France as well) this Spring/Fall. The third fleet permits Kiev eventually to be beaten back.

Denmark missed his best chance when he let France convince him to move east, rather than attacking France with Germany. He's in a stalemate position with Russia. He should realize that and try to negotiate a non-aggression pact with Russia, then turn on either Germany or, if it's still possible, France. He may still do this; this coming year will be crucial for any major change.

I hate this position. The Russian build shows the uselessness of the Danish position. Just at the moment he was breaking through against Germany, he gave up. He supported France into Dublin - why? If we don't see France giving Dublin to Denmark immediately, then I think Denmark will not be long for this game.

EGYPT: Poor Ian Moes, I've said this before, but he hasn't caught a single break in this game yet. I think Ian is starting to move toward the "randomly lash out" strategy, and then trying to bring down some of his neighbors to get footholds in another place (the Sicily/Taranto outpost). But this is not likely to work and Egypt will not survive in the game very long. Like many of Matt's neighbors, he desperately needs an "everyone

pigpile on Arabia" alliance.

Egypt, like Byzantium, seems to have acted in a diplomatic vacuum. I don't see anything that will keep his neighbors to stop thinking of him as anything other than a source of centers, at this point.

Egypt made some very foolish moves in Africa, and is getting crush by way of thanks. Definitely going to be one of the first ones gone.

If Egypt could motivate a pig pile on Arabia, it would already be happening. Axum and Byzantium are quite content to see to his elimination.

FRANCE: I like Nigel or Nigs' position a great deal. Yes, Spain slipped that army into Toulouse, but the right strategy is to ignore this interloper and take out the rest of the Spanish homeland. That can be done this year. Given that Spain is also in the Ligurian Sea, the guessing games around Autun, Lower Burgundy, and Narbonne are a bit tricky. Autun is the biggest risk, so I think I would do something like Lower Burgundy and Aquitaine self bouncing over Autun, while Gascony moves to Toulouse with support from Narbonne. That last one could be done the other way around, but for a Spring turn, I think I would do it this way. Taking Narbonne would only be temporary. France also has to decide what to do with Germany and Denmark. I think right now I would support them opposing Kiev/Byzantium to completely take out Spain. The long term opportunities against both are strong for Nigs and the Spanish demise lies in his hands.

Much as I can't see any reason why Arabia's neighbors would want to pig pile against him, I see every reason why France's neighbors should want to form that sort of alliance against him. I still don't understand why it hasn't happened. Apparently, he has them all mesmerized -- or, as Rick says, he is playing them all like a well-tuned fiddle.

But as long as this lasts, he has lots of growth possibilities, both in Spain and in Germany. Doesn't look as though he will ever get any of the Italian goodies, though.

France has a position where he can continue to grow simply due to the incompetence of his neighbors. (Am I supposed to not use words like 'incompetence'? Is that too unfriendly for a demo game? Well, I'll run with it for now.)

France can grab all of the Iberian SCs and then set up a line to keep Wagadu at bay while he rolls over Denmark and splits the German SCs with Russia. The difficulty here is seeing how he expands beyond Europe, but I don't see how that problem would be easier to solve if he didn't just take all of those Western European dots.

The alternate route would be to stick with Denmark and Germany, trying to get a useful Western triple. The problem with that idea here is that their collective tactical situation is crappy.

GERMANY: Russ Manning took on a tough position and he's been doing a good job trying to balance it out, but the long term prognosis for the patient is poor. France is hovering, ready to pounce whenever Russ may not be looking useful enough in other directions; Byzantium is not kindly disposed, though Germany has one last chance to see if Byzantium will accept support against Kiev instead. Denmark seems to be a wary ally. Russ should propose and follow through on moving through Jelling to Abodrite Sea, that could help break down Kiev. But still, things don't look good.

Agreed.

Russ inherited things like the decision to pick a fight in the Balkans that he cannot win. I think his only viable option here is to cut a deal with Russia to carve Denmark. Denmark will prove to be a basically useless ally against Russia, and Germany will be ripped to shreds by France fairly soon if he doesn't change the direction of the game.

INDIA: Could survive for a bit toadying to Arabia, but pretty inconsequential in the grand scheme.

Also agreed.

Not much to say here.

KHAZARIA: The Arabian/Samanid attack from one side with Russia still annoying on the other dooms David, our game designer, to a short life here. I don't see any good diplomatic options, though like many of the small powers, David could benefit if everyone else attacks Arabia.

I can't see any good prognosis for Khazaria at this point.

There isn't any.

RUSSIA: Darren Sharma stubbornly held on until he took David Cohen down and now is setting up a good attack to the west. Russia could hang around to be a player in the endgame here, this mostly depends on whether Germany slips that third fleet into the Baltic Sea.

Russia has been holding on well and can continue to do so, but it's hard to see a path of expansion for him, tactically or diplomatically. There are some games that simply break badly, whatever you do.

Neither Germany nor Denmark has a fleet that's within two moves of the Baltic Sea. By the time either of them

got a third fleet in position, they'll be speaking French.

SPAIN: Nathan Deilly has had an up and down time of it in Spain in this game, unfortunately now he is down. I don't see a way out since Wagadu and France must follow through and take him down. When you're stuck depending on stray armies trying to take them behind the lines, you know you're in trouble.

I don't see any good prognosis for Spain -- although heaven knows an anti-French pig pile would do him a world of good. Is he talking to Germany and Denmark?

Spain is not long for this world.

SAMANID: John Reside has played an excellent patient game. As noted above, he defeats China eventually if they just persist in moving forward. Khazaria also goes out soon. Other powers must be pressuring him to attack Arabia, it would change the game, but it is not clear that is in John's best interest. We know though that at some point he will have to determine if he is Arabia's last ally, and if there is any suspicion he is next on Matt's list, he should organize the pig-pile on Arabia now.

Samanid has gained more than anybody by working with Arabia. There was a time when Arabia might have considered him as dispensable, but that no longer seems to be the case.

I want to see Samanid outflank China and try to make serious inroads into that position. That is the first step towards this game having an interesting endgame. If Samanid doesn't do that, We'll be stuck with China + Indonesia in the East, Arabia and Samanid in Central Asia, two Africa powers, France, and perhaps Russia all grinding to a halt.

SRIVIJAYA: Mike Morris is completely stuck. I don't think he can advance unless everyone else attacks Arabia, and he can't productively attack his ally Spain. Quite boring really, I'll be surprised if he spices things up, but Mike could find a way.

His ally China, you mean? He could make an arrangement with Axum and Arabia; and stab China. China is in no position to stab him, but he is in relatively good position to do so if he had a mind to. That doesn't seem to be the case, however.

Sorry, of course that was a typo, I meant China. I see zero chance China stabs Srivijaya, but China WILL fall if the game keeps going as it is, so at some point Srivijaya needs to take its stand, and I assume he wants to do it further north than where he currently is.

His best chances to stab China have passed. If that is what he wanted to do, he shouldn't have committed so

many of his fleets to trying to blast his way past the African/Middle Eastern stalemate lines.

I suspect he'll sit on his own mini-stalemate lines and wait for the game to change. If China starts to get beaten down by Samanid, he might then make a deal with The Horde to deal with Arabia. At such a hypothetical future point of the game, it could make sense for both of them.

WAGADU: Mikael still has his corner position, but his long run possibilities are weak. He must follow through working with France to take out Spain and then TRY to get France to go in another direction. But I think Axum will join with France and attack him.

All this is true. And Wagadu is probably one of the few reasons arguing against a pig pile on France.

Wagadu might very well want a pig pile on France. I think Wagadu will get the North African properties,

eventually, but France has the jump and should be able to set up the line wherever he wishes.

AXUM: Benjamin is playing a strong game trying to slowly gain along with Arabia. I didn't think he was going to succeed, but it is coming along. Egypt is toast and Axum should insist on the centers in Africa proper, and then Mikael can be his next target. Like the other key power, the Samanid, it is not clear why B. should join an attack on Arabia, so he probably won't, though it is what everyone else in the game needs.

Axum has played an excellent game so far, and still has room for growth, as Jim has so well explained.

I wouldn't go so far as to say "excellent", but it's been OK. He's certainly in a position where the game could go in a lot of different directions. If Axum and Wagadu stick together, they should both be around for quite a while.

Knives and Daggers

The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Thomas Anthony – Regarding Chris Brand's article on copyright in Diplomacy World #106, specifically the short notice of copyright I placed on the end. Firstly, whether or not it is possible to copyright it was questioned in your article. As I understand it an algorithm must be copyrightable, since computer programs are, ultimately, collections of algorithms, and even if they have no additional "creative text" they can still be protected by copyright. Copyright of algorithms doesn't sit easily with the US Law you quoted, but still occurs.

My second point, about the reason for putting it there, does render that question ultimately pointless. Essentially, there were a few things I wanted to do. I wanted to be contacted should somebody want to use the system, secondly, I wanted to have the right to ask them to put a little notice of where it came from on an "about" page or similar, and thirdly, I wanted to ensure I would be allowed to ask that it not be used, if there should be any unforeseen reason why I wouldn't want them to. Needless to say, I almost certainly wouldn't start a legal case over it either way.



Bruce Linsey – Hey, I **GREATLY** enjoyed Jerry Jones's letter in the latest DW. **WOW**, what a great view back into Diplomacy history!



Walter Buchanan - Jerry Jones owes me no apology whatsoever. Actually, I am honored that he considered the fact that I asked him to be the third editor as probably the biggest day in his life! Jerry did a great job with DW. His seven issues were more than three subsequent editors produced - combined. And of course you and Jim now have the all time record!



Chris Dziedzic - I wanted to commend Stanley Rench on his article, "The External Powers System: Advancing Beyond the Central Powers System." I would gladly second the nomination of Biloxi to host the next DipCon.

Seriously, I'm glad for the humor. As a general outsider to the FtF hobby, I've followed the discussions of the "the Diplomacy event in Maine." Beyond everything else, this is a game, and we should be involved for fun and enjoyment. If we cannot laugh at ourselves and our hobby, then we are missing something crucial. Thanks, Stanley.