

Diplomacy World #150



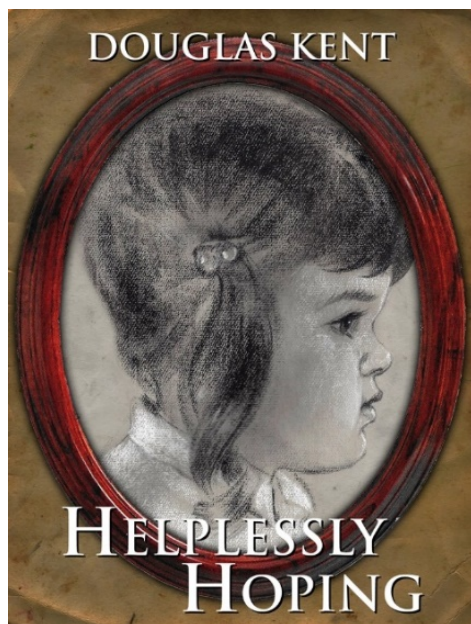
Summer 2020 Issue
www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the **Summer 2020 issue**.

I want to take a moment to talk about a personal subject, and one which is often uncomfortable for many people. But it's an important topic because we have lost and may yet lose members of the hobby, friends, and family. I am talking about depression, and suicide. And Larry Peery's death last year.

In May I published my second memoir, entitled **Helplessly Hoping**. This book details my first marriage, and the struggles with depression, and other physical and mental illnesses, that my wife Mara dealt with. Mara was known through parts of the Diplomacy hobby through the columns and subzines she wrote in my zine **Maniac's Paradise**, although the details of most of her struggles remained private until now. (For those of you interested in reading it, you can find it on Amazon in paperback and Kindle format at <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B088B3R599/> - and if you read it and enjoy it, reviews on Amazon and Goodreads are very much appreciated).



But the point wasn't meant to be plugging my book. Instead, I wanted to refer to those personal experiences and mention the final Larry Peery column, the last one he wrote before he took his own life in 2019. (I'm sure most of you know Larry from his many columns in **Diplomacy World**, if not from his time as publisher and Lead Editor, or his countless other hobby projects over the years) **The Diplomatic Pouch** has just published

that column, in which Larry says some of his goodbyes and also tries to explain why he decided to commit suicide. That column can be found here: <http://uk.diplom.org/pouch/Zine/S2020M/Peery/farewell.html>.

Originally, I think I chose to adopt Larry's preferred terminology: "left our world on his own terms." But I don't feel comfortable saying that any longer. Larry was dealing with numerous medical issues, but more than anything he was depressed and despondent over a series of circumstances which were resulting in him losing his home of thirteen years, and possibly becoming homeless. Larry apparently felt the homelessness issue was unavoidable. Between that and the alternative of being hospitalized for depression – an experience he'd had for 13 days a few years prior, and was not willing to go through again – Larry's choice was to end his own life. There were a lot of intermediate steps that only darkened Larry's mood and outlook, including his attempts to sell personal belongings. Sadly, he eventually realized that possessions he held great value in were of very little value to the rest of the world. In the end, Larry committed suicide. And what's done can't be undone. Some of the reasons he chose to do so may have been avoidable. Perhaps he couldn't have saved his home. But it's likely there were options open to avoid homelessness. If he'd been more willing to open up about his situation, other people could have presented some of those options.

Now nearly a year and a half later, I've read the story of a Nebraska college student who killed himself because he believed he had lost over \$700,000 trading options on Robinhood. Sadly, it appears likely he misunderstood the situation, and if he had lost any money at all, it may have been a much more reasonable amount. Once he made the decision and ended his life, it didn't matter what he'd gotten wrong or what other avenues were available (including legal arbitration against the company). It's too late. He's gone.

I don't know how else to say this: suicide is a final act. There is no way to undo it, and no way to change your mind after the fact. And I'm far too aware that sometimes life can make you feel like there is no other option. But there **are** other options. Before you do something that ends your life, you owe it to yourself to examine those options. Talk to a friend. Talk to your family. Call a mental health or suicide hotline; **the U.S. national suicide prevention hotline is (800) 273-8255**. Speak to a medical professional. Seek counsel from a spiritual advisor. Or shit, email me, I can't solve your

problems but at least I can try to listen, and find you other places to turn for support.

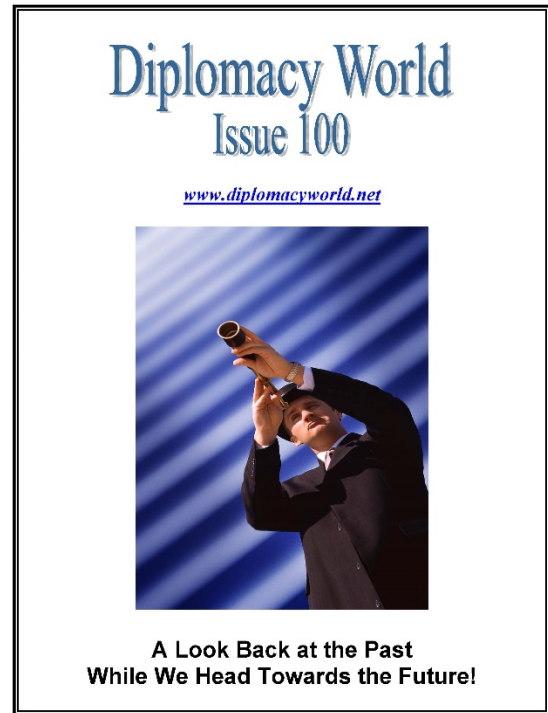
I've struggled with depression most of my life, so I understand how hard it is to believe there's any hope when everything seems lost. If you read **Helplessly Hoping**, you'll see how I fought to give Mara reasons to keep going. I realize you don't read **Diplomacy World** for discussions of depression and suicide. But I can't just walk on without saying Larry's death was tragic and avoidable.

Okay, I've said my piece. Now I will move on to the normal Notes from the Editor column.

Brandon Fogel's article on his new scoring system (from **Diplomacy World** #149) generated a LOT of feedback. In this issue you'll find comments in the Letters column (including some back and forth between Brandon and Edi Birsan). You'll also find a longer article from Lewis Pulsipher, complete with an older article Lewis wrote for **Diplomacy World** #37. It's always rewarding to see an article open up further discussion. Not only can it be stimulating, but it also reminds me that people **are** reading **Diplomacy World** instead of just downloading it and forgetting it.

That isn't to say scoring systems is the only topic covered this issue. There's plenty of other material, including discussion of the new virtual format the major face-to-face Diplomacy tournaments have been forced to adapt to. That's probably the biggest piece of news to hit the hobby this year. And now there's the question of how tournaments may or may not choose to use that technology in the future. Face to face play is far from gone (it will certainly return when the pandemic has run its course), but perhaps this new virtual format will blossom as its own additional tournament category?

This is the 150th issue of **Diplomacy World**, the sesquicentennial if you will. But it doesn't feel like a major occasion for me the way Issue #100 did. In part, that's because I'd only been back in the Lead Editor role for a few issues when #100 rolled around. I was just hitting my stride, getting further acquainted with the hobby I'd mostly left a decade earlier. And, of course, I had Jim Burgess urging me on, catching my mistakes and pointing out every success, no matter how small. He'd convinced me to take over **Diplomacy World** again, but it had taken a few months of badgering. "There's a lot of life in it yet, but you're the only one who can save it." I didn't believe that last part then – and I still don't – but he was right about the first part.



But, damn, the 12 ½ years since #100 have flown by. I took a few hours last week and read through much of that large issue. I think it's worth revisiting for most of the hobby members reading this today. It really painted a picture of how we'd grown from a few typed postal zines to a global phenomenon.

I decided I should choose one article from that issue and reprint it here. It didn't take long to realize the best choice: Bill Coffin's interview with Allan Calhamer, the inventor of Diplomacy. Sadly, Mr. Calhamer has left us in the interim as well. There are too many names in #100 that are gone now. But that's a part of life.

If you'd like to read over that issue, you can find it on the **Diplomacy World** website at www.diplomacyworld.net (as well as every issue ever published). If you want a direct link, here you go:
<https://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw100.pdf>

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is October 1, 2020.

Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So, email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com! See you in the fall, 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.

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Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Erik van Mechelen - Here's a thorough and fair review of my in-progress book by Bob Durf—thank you, Bob!—available in the latest issue, page 7, of Diplomacy World. <http://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw149.pdf>

First, I must begin by saying I am very impressed Bob read through the entire book so carefully and for that I am grateful. What this taught me was to give even more attention to editing and ensuring what I offer is worthy of a good afternoon spent reading. Our time and attention is precious.

I agree with many of Bob's criticisms, and there are many, especially if we consider the previous version of the book. As I make updates every few weeks, some of those shortcomings are luckily already amended.

One in particular was regarding the Modern Borders concept I first heard about from Andrew Goff in his Italian Renaissance article (DW #139) <http://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw139.pdf>, which I've now effectively tried in two separate games, one face-to-face and one online on Backstabbr, wherein Austria gives up Trieste to Italy in 1901, giving both players reduced tension on their 'modern border' and tempo gains in whatever coordinated effort they take on next (whilst maintaining the ability to sell to neighbors that Italy has stabbed Austria, for even faster tempo gains).

My intent with the book is less so to come across as an authority—I prefer not to steal anyone's destiny in learning the game—and more so to share my adventures in Diplomacy. This book is perhaps only 14% the quality of what it could be one day.

As such, when you download a copy (available for Free, although Bob was kind enough to pay for it) from <https://leanpubcom/wind/> and opt-in to the email checkbox, you get my updates & revisions to the book FOREVER. I'm in my early 30s, so with any luck I'll continue to have a passion for Diplomacy for decades to come and continue to improve my writing.

Also, all things being equal, it's been exciting to set up the hybrid online games on backstabbr/slack/livestream, the first of which had 2 boards this past Saturday—thanks especially to Brandon Fogel for jumping in as both a GM and commentary expert, and locals (to MN) Zachary, Jake Langenfeld, Ben Johnson and all the players! We had players from SF to Virginian to Kyiv (yes, Ukraine, just awesome).

The games themselves showcased creative moves (Par-Bel from France in 1901) and anecdotes of chaotic households whilst the diplomats attempted to coordinate (and avoid misordering), but the most enjoyable part was the 30-minute after action discussion which we caught on our livestream as well, in particular commentary from George, Ariel, Ali, and Micah. (I'm a much worse video editor than a writer, so it'll take some time to upload it.)

Sounds like the Chicago group is holding a hybrid online game this weekend as well Great to see! If you haven't heard of the Tribute scoring system, formerly known as Janus, you can also check out page 24 of Diplomacy World by Brandon & co.—
<http://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw149.pdf>. I hope we'll continue to see innovations like Tribute going forward.

Brandon mentioned he thought there was an appetite for a podcast at this moment. In my book I often talk up Kaner & Amby's podcast, and I've done a short one myself, but not sure I have extra time just this minute, although if anyone needs a pointer in terms of which software & equipment to get setup, just message me because it is probably easier than you think.

Take care!



Christopher Brand - "The Diplomacy Jigsaw" by Heathley Baines spoke to me. I first played the game as a teenager back in the '80s When I got an email address, I found that I could play online using the judges. In 1996, I emigrated to Canada. In 2004, I somehow found out about a FTF tournament, and it was there that I learned that there was a lively FTF Diplomacy community in the UK. I missed out on many years of FTF Diplomacy just because I never heard about the games that were happening. Of course, it's easier to "get the word out" now, and we are doing better. Let's make sure that we continue to cross-pollinate the various Diplomacy communities – and I'd also encourage people to try out games elsewhere, too. You don't know what you're missing until you try it!



Edi Birsan - I have studied and toyed with scoring systems for the entire 55 years of my participation in the hobby. As such I want to applaud Brandon Fogel for your approach and charting of different systems. I have been a long advocate that there should never be any single scoring system and that the more the merrier. I

welcome his addition to that kaleidoscope of the systems out there.

In looking at the proposal from a player's perspective it takes on a very classic C-Diplo view of things where it is basically overwhelming for the board topper. Please also note in his analysis that appears to use the classic C-Diplo that there has been a substantial shift towards a more nuanced C-Diplo sometimes called wave or patche (>? not sure of the French spelling and pronunciation) that takes into account more of the flow or trend aspects of the supply chart.

Anyway, I wish Brandon well in developing support for his system and look forward to it becoming added to the various tools of scoring that the hobby has.



Brandon Fogel – (in reponse to Edi Birsan's letter, above) Thanks for your thoughts on Tribute. I agree that having multiple scoring systems in use is a positive for the hobby. I liken it to tennis being played on different surfaces. There are definite differences, and some cater to certain styles of play better than others.

I think there are important differences between Tribute and C-Diplo that highlight what is truly unique about the new system. C-Diplo and its wave variants usually offer significant bonuses for 2nd and 3rd place, whereas in Tribute the scores for 2nd and 3rd are closer to the other surviving players. 2nd and 3rd place are devalued relative to other systems so that survival is made more valuable for the smaller players.

The other consequential difference is that the value of topping the board grows dramatically in Tribute with the board-topper's center count. Topping the board with 7 centers in Tribute is ok, with 10 centers is good, with 13 or more centers is very good, especially if a lot of smaller powers are still around to pay Tribute. The board-topper's score in C-Diplo is largely the same whether they have 7 or 13 centers. So the main incentive in C-Diplo is merely to top the board, whereas in Tribute it is to top the board and grow as big as possible.

I believe the net effect will be more dynamic gameplay under Tribute. All players have direct incentive to keep the board-topper's center count as low as possible, even if their chances of topping the board are small. In C-Diplo there is little such incentive. This is why Tribute incentivizes balance of power play better than C-Diplo (or indeed any other system). And I'm of the opinion that balance of power play is good for the game, since it

keeps everyone's chances more level and thus should provide a more reversals of fortune.

Some may think Tribute gives too many points to those 12- and 13-center board-toppers. A simple solution would be to exempt the first 7 or 8 centers from tribute payments, rather than 6. However, I think it is too early to say that such concerns are warranted. While the response so far has been positive, much more game-testing is needed.



Lewis Pulsipher - Surprises happen. I've just stumbled onto a 1984 article (my printout) of the results of a survey I did, that (in my recent article) I said I thought someone had done but couldn't remember. (Ouch, that was awkward.) Anyway, I'll see how the scan works out. It may have appeared in DW around 1984/85, not sure who else I would have written it for. My DW's are scattered all over the place so can't look for it. My title was "The Peoples' Rating."

[[It was Diplomacy World #37 (Spring 1984) on page 30. Available at www.diplomacyworld.net and also reprinted following Lewis' article in this issue.]



Peter McNamara - I'm writing in response to Brandon's article on the Tribute scoring system.

There is a long tradition in this hobby of coming up with new scoring systems. (I am tempted to throw in another adjective in addition to new but shall restrain myself for the time being). Before we can enter into a discussion of the relative values of centre counts vs board topping vs dominance, there is one property that any sensible scoring system should have - monotonicity.

Monotonicity is the following. If player A takes a supply centre from player B, and no other changes happen, then player A's score should go up, and player B's score should go down. I'd argue that this should be the most fundamental property that any scoring system should have. The new tribute system, as written, fails this. A 16 centre power in a 16/13/4/1 draw scores more points than the 17 centre power in a 17/13/4. Oops.

Dear scoring system designers, can we at least get the basics correct? Only then can we move on and actually have good scoring systems at our tournaments.

Report on Dixiecon 2020

By David Hood

Well, by God, we couldn't let the bloody virus win!

That was the thinking behind changing the Dixiecon format this year to being a one-day, online tournament instead of the usual Thursday night through early Monday morning gamefest that it has been since 1987. Virtual Dixiecon was certainly a blast for me, and I hope for the participants as well.

As Memorial Day weekend approached here in the States, it became very clear that having a normal Dixiecon in Chapel Hill, North Carolina would be out of the question. I first discussed with the venue the idea of moving the date to late August, but ultimately, we jointly decided it just was not to be. Luckily, once I said publicly (kind of impulsively) that we would just have an online Dixiecon, I was able to get the help I needed to actually make such a thing work.

My first thought was to have one round on Saturday morning and then a final board that night, but Brandon Fogel and others convinced me that was kinda stupid. My theory was to keep things modest, not bite off more than I or the hobby at large could chew with the first virtual FTF tournament, but only one round with a subsequent top board was just too weird. I think we ended up striking the right balance by having two rounds on one day, for our first attempt as a hobby, but I also think it is likely that this model for having tournaments will continue post-virus. At that point, I believe having multiple days would be good - for one thing, we did lose some of our Australiasian participants from the ungodly hour of the Rd 1 start. Experimentation with this is needed.

At any rate, as our plans began to coalesce, I got invaluable help from Chris Martin in determining how best to structure the technology involved, and to organize things in general. He did a lot of work, particularly in getting everyone onto the Webex Teams platform that we used for announcements, to organize non-Dip gaming during the event, and which many folk used during the Diplomacy games themselves for negotiation (in addition to the press function on Backstabbr itself, as well as telephone/text/Discord and other things folk used.) He also made some special videos for his otherwise-already-awesome Diplomacy Academy series, specifically designed to help players get ready for vDixiecon. I also had great input from lots of folk, really too many others to mention. Michael Lowrey did my scoring, as usual, with Cori Neslund and Mitch McConeghey helping out as GMs during both rounds (and Chris also GMing in Round 1)

Speaking of Chris, perhaps one of the coolest things that happened at vDixie was the livestream commentary put together by Brandon Fogel and using both Chris and Siobhan Nolen as color commentators to Brandon's play-by-play. If you have not gone to Youtube to watch the full streams, or the individual videos by game name later spliced together by Chris, stop reading this right now and go do that. Totally awesome. These video feeds, I think, are here to stay and they are a great addition to the hobby.



Alright, enough about all that. What actually happened in the tournament? Well, we had 11 boards of Dip in Round 1 and 9 in Round 2. We had folk participate from all over North America plus countries in Europe and Asia, along with several Australians. (We had a rep from South Africa who had to cancel at the last minute, unfortunately.) We had only one solo, from member of the Chicago Weasels Christian Kline as Turkey in Game 1K, the game called King's Mountain. So yeah, he won the tournament. Andrew Goff of Australia took second place with two strong three-way draw results, with the rest of the top seven finishers being, in order, Jonathan Saul (Colorado), Russ Dennis (Michigan), Jason Mastbaum (California), Dan Pollock and Randy Lawrence-Hurt (both Massachusetts.) Doug Moore and Nicolas Sahuguet, both former world champs, missed the top board by just 1.2 points each, so less than one-center of points in our scoring system.

As for "Kings Mountain" I should explain that each game was named for a person, group, place or event that is important in the history of North Carolina. Yes, I am that kind of geek.

Best Countries were taken by Mike Walsh and Jonathan Saul (Austria), Russ Dennis (England), Randy Lawrence-Hurt and Melinda Holley (France), Doug Moore and Andrew Goff (Germany), Greg Fairbanks (Italy), Maxim Popov (Russia) and Christian Kline (Turkey.) We had other awards at Dixiecon of which you can find the winners of online, but I did want to point out the winner of the Players Choice award, for the person folk enjoyed playing with the most, went to our only entrant from Portugal, Andre Janeco.

One quick aside about Andrew Goff - I have not really talked much about this publicly until now, but one of the players at vDixie was actually playing with us because he is writing a story for Popular Mechanics about the game of Diplomacy, with a focus on Goff as an exemplar for what makes a terrific Dip player tick. Be on the lookout for that article!

As far as things other than the Diplomacy itself, Dixiecon always has a cadre of attendees who come to play games other than Dip, so that occurred for vDixie also. In addition, we had three Webex Meetings events for the attendees as well - an Opening Ceremony, the Virtual

BBQ between Rounds 1 and 2, and the Awards Ceremony broadcast the next afternoon. The video recording of the Awards Ceremony is another thing you can find online, but let me just say that I think everyone enjoyed those events as well. It was a wonderful chance for us to "see" each other and share some experiences which were memorable and hopefully will build relationships between the many experienced players who participated but did not know each other before, and importantly, relationships between the many new faces at vDixie and those who have been around before.

This leads me to my final paragraph before I shut up about all this. I think we all realized even before the event occurred that we had somehow struck paydirt with this virtual FTF tournament business. There will certainly be improvements going forward, but I think this format is here to stay. It will not replace the sheer fun and insanity of a real face to face event, but such an online event can scratch an itch we did not even know we had - facilitating real-time Diplomacy play for folk who cannot go to FTF events, and/or between folk who cannot be at the same events with each other. The short answer is, the thing rocked - and I believe will help inspire (along with the preexisting live online games already being done in the Chicago and Minnesota clubs) a whole new way for folk to enjoy playing Diplomacy in the future. And that's really exciting!

Selected Upcoming Conventions

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://petermc.net/diplomacy/>

2020 Liberty Cup (formerly Philadelphia Massacre) – August 1, 2020 – to be held virtually through Discord and Backstabbr - <https://liberty-cup.com/>

Weasel Moot – August 29th, September 5th, and September 6th, 2020 (two different weekends) – Virtual Tournament - <http://moot.windycityweasels.org/>

Tour of Britain at York by Macclesfield Diplomacy – September 26th – September 27th, 2020 – Priory Street Centre, York, UK - <https://maccdiplomacy.org.uk/>

World DipCon at Carnage 23 – November 6th – November 8th, 2020 – Mount Snow, Vermont - <http://carnagecon.com/>

Midcon XLII – November 13th – November 15th, 2020 – Derby, UK - <http://www.fbgames.co.uk/Midcon/default.htm>

Melbourne Open – December 4th – December 5th, 2020 – Melbourne, Australia – Email: acgoff@hotmail.com

A lot of upcoming events have been cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic; be sure to contact organizers for the latest updates

Ruminations on Tournament Scoring Systems (inspired by the Tribute system article in DW#149)

Overall question: does the scoring system reflect the objectives of the game?

By Lewis Pulsipher

I attend PrezCon (Charlottesville Va) and WBC (World Boardgaming Championships, Seven Springs PA) every year. Both are heavily tournament-oriented tabletop game conventions, unique to my knowledge. Special scoring systems are rarely needed even though there are dozens (at WBC, more than a hundred) tournaments. Many tabletop games (especially those for more than two sides) use point systems nowadays, making draws rare. Many wargames are for two players only, and can be played to a conclusion in a tournament, so no scoring system is needed. Most games can be played to a conclusion in each round at these conventions, even if it takes four or five hours or more (*History of the World* is given six hours).

A major function of a *Diplomacy* scoring system is to score unfinished games, because the game sometimes takes longer to play than the time available in a tournament. I'll get to that, but first I want to talk about scoring in general.

There are two overall methods to use when creating a tournament system for a game. One is to try to model the intentions of the designer(s) of the game, the other is to try to model the actual preferences of players.

I think it's clear that in Allan Calhamer's mind, a solo victory was the objective in *Diplomacy*. It's been a very long time since I spoke with him or read his articles, so I'm not sure what he thought was the objective if a solo could not be achieved, as was obviously going to happen the majority of the time in the game. But I suspect he would've regarded a draw as at least showing that you'd not been beaten by anybody, not lost the game to someone else. This leads to a simple tournament model where each game is worth a point, and when there's a draw the point is divided amongst those who are in the draw (for example 1/4 point each for a four-way draw).

Because my view is also as above, I've never worried about the sometimes-convoluted scoring systems that have been devised for *Diplomacy*. But what about games that haven't finished? The simplest thing would be to say if the players cannot unanimously agree on a draw that might leave someone out, all are regarded as being in a draw. Five survivors, five-way draw.

Yet clearly there are many players who value a high place as better than some kinds of draws. I personally

don't understand why you'd prefer to lose (placing) instead of not losing (a draw), but that's clearly the way it is. How many players, and to what extent, think this way is unclear. It seems to me that a very long time ago someone (possibly me?) conducted a hobby survey asking people to evaluate/formalize their points of view, but I have no specific recollection. Yet a survey is the best way we have to find out what people think.

[[Lewis and I determined it was him who conducted the survey, as note din the Letter column. The article of those results – which appeared in DW #37 - is reprinted following this article.]]

At the beginning of a tournament you could survey the players who are playing in the tournament and then use the results as a scoring system for that tournament. With computers this would be quickly achievable, provided enough players took the survey online sometime before the tournament actually started.

If you don't care about the designer's intention, yet you don't use the actual preferences of the players, don't you descend into conjecture and mental gymnastics? Whether the Tribute system is superior or inferior to the common scoring systems doesn't really matter: it's entirely artificial.

Unfinished Games

Of course, as a practical matter many *Diplomacy* games in tournaments are not played to a conclusion (win or draw) because of a time limit, and many players would object to the "all survivors draw" idea. What then might have been the designer's intention? I don't know. Much of the convolutions in scoring systems come from trying to evaluate these unfinished games, and I think this is where considerations of how many supply centers someone possesses come in.

You could also make the case that in an unfinished game all the surviving players should be regarded as having played to a draw. That would certainly simplify things.

You can make a case that if someone wins the game, it doesn't matter how many centers anybody else had, they all lost and should receive no credit at all. But you can also see how someone with 15 or 16 centers in second place to a solo win might feel that he or she should get more credit than someone who was wiped

out in 1903. Moreover, we need as much differentiation as practical in the scoring in order to avoid ties when the tournament is completed. (The reason why we don't just give one point for a solo win, and no points for anything else, is that we'd likely have a tie for the tournament.)

Further, presumably 15 centers in an unfinished game is worth more than 15 centers in a game that you lost. Though I can conceive that some people might not have that point of view. At this juncture we go back to the notion of polling players to find out what their preferences are.

A focus on actual supply center/unit counts?

Some scoring systems seem to focus on supply center/unit counts. I think this is getting away from the point of *Diplomacy*. It's a game of personal/political relationships (the psychological part) and of maneuver, geospatial relationships, and economics (the system part). One of the glories of the game, the big reason why it's been popular for so long, is that the psychological is so prominent, so much more important than the system.

Supply center/unit counts do not adequately reflect the situation in an incomplete or in-progress game. Positions on the board and positions in the minds of the players count for a lot more. This brings to mind Albert Einstein's dictum: "*Many of the things you can count, don't count. Many of the things you can't count, really count.*" Supply centers are easy to count, but don't count for much. It's just as easy and far more practical to use the counts only to reflect the relative evaluation among the players in a game that has not finished - the placing - rather than focus on supply center/unit counts. Yes, we have to base the score on something (we can't evaluate what's in the players' thoughts), and that's the relative "worth" of each player in comparison with each other player. We have to use supply center/unit counts for the relative worth but we don't have to reflect the actual number (14 or 16) in the scoring system itself. It's enough to know that a player with 14 is in first place, not whether he's ahead by 4 or by 1. The position on the board and in the players' heads is much more important than the center count, though we can't measure (count) it.

One of the things that bothers me about a scoring system that relies heavily on supply center/unit counts is that, as the time limit of a tournament game approaches, players may play so as to grab centers in order to increase their counts in a way that they would not do if they knew the game would be played to conclusion. In other words, supply center counts can encourage "artificial" play, playing to the scoring system instead of to the goals of the game when you know the game will be completed. I don't think any scoring system should encourage artificial play, do you?

So: if I were going to devise a scoring system, I'd give

one point for the entire game, winner take all, divide the point among those who draw, treating an unfinished game as a draw amongst the survivors. If you lose, you get nothing. Period.

Or: I'd rely on a survey of players to determine the values of the various outcomes. Though this would take a lot more effort on my part!

The survey would list the following 20 outcomes:

- solo win
- two-way draw
- three-way draw
- four-way draw
- five-way draw
- six-way draw
- seven-way draw
- second place to a solo win
- third place to a solo win
- fourth place to a solo win
- fifth place to a solo win
- sixth place to a solo win
- seventh place to a solo win
- first place in an unfinished game
- second place in an unfinished game
- third place in an unfinished game
- fourth place in unfinished game
- fifth place in an unfinished game
- sixth place in an unfinished game
- seventh place in an unfinished game

This is far too many to rank (from 1 to 20). Though I would like to know the relative value players place on these outcomes, this is a lot more than people can typically differentiate, and doesn't actually show absolute value, only relative value. As I understand it, five or seven possibilities is about as far as humans can significantly go (which tends to make nonsense of 10-point scoring systems . . .).

Since ranking won't work, what can we do? You could ask people to divide 100 points amongst those outcomes, but that would be even more complicated and time-consuming than ranking (and there would be many arithmetic errors).

Practically speaking, the only method I can think of is to ask players to assign points, from 0 to 100, to each outcome, with the solo being 100 and any other outcome being something no more than 100. Yes, it would be odd if someone gave 75 points for a two way draw instead of 50 points, but if that's what they wanted to do then that's what it would be. I can even see some people assigning 100 points to a two way (keep in mind, there are people who play games to help other people win, so there are

lots of varied opinions . . .). Or to any draw! It would be interesting.

And then those numbers could be used for the actual scoring system. If a win (100) is 100 points, then if a 3-way draw gets 35 points on average, it would be worth 35 points. As I said, with computerization, participants

could be asked to do the survey before the tournament started, and then those results could be given to each player and used as a scoring system.

If you're going to rely on the preferences of the players rather than preferences of the designer, what could work better than this?

THE PEOPLE'S RATING

USING A HOBBY POLL TO DETERMINE RATING VALUES

Lewis E. Pulsipher

With one exception, every Diplomacy rating system I know of, past and present, is a reflection of the opinion of 1 or 2 individuals about how the game ought to be played. And not surprisingly, those opinions vary considerably. Some ratingsmasters present their evaluations as principles derived from the rules, while others frankly admit that their values are personal preferences; but no one has yet devised a set of criteria that nearly everyone can agree to.

The only exception to values-as-individual-opinion is a rating system based directly on the opinions of the hobby as a whole as to what outcomes are most important, and how one outcome is related to another, as determined by a hobby-wide survey. Such a rating has never been applied to individual players, but the values that could be applied have been determined in 2 cases.

These values are derived from the results of 2 hobby-wide surveys I conducted in 1974 and 1975, the "North American Diplomacy Players' Surveys" #s 1 and 2. Some 140 players responded to the relevant part of #1, and about 160 to #2.

In #1 I asked players to rank the following 13 outcomes from 1 (most important) on down to 13: win, 2-way through 7-way draw, 2nd through 7th places. In NADPS #2, using the same outcomes, I asked players to "assign #s indicating relative value to you of the following outcomes from 0 = no importance to 100 = highest importance (assign 100 to at least one outcome)." In both cases, I didn't differentiate between placing with survival and placing with elimination.

The results are summarized in Table 1. Column A is the total value given to an outcome in NADPS #2. (Since not everyone valued a win at 100, column A is not a multiple of 100.) Column B is a percentage conversion, with the value for win taken as 100. Column C lists the sum of rankings from NADPS #1, and column D

is a percentage conversion. Because #1 asked for a ranking rather than a relative value (and thus, for example, a 2nd preferred outcome could not be more than half as important as the 1st), I believe it is less suitable for determining rating values, but the outcome is nonetheless interesting.

TABLE 1

Outcome	A #1	B	C #2	D
Win	15809	100	140	100
2-way draw	12550	79	295	47
3-way draw	9918	63	502	28
2nd place	9489	60	612	23
4-way draw	7498	47	708	20
3rd place	6823	43	941	15
5-way draw	5563	35	930	15
4th place	4422	27	1147	12
6-way draw	3904	25	1122	12
7-way draw	2691	17	1318	11
5th place	2613	17	1345	10
6th place	1638	10	1521	9
7th place	628	4	(1750)	8

For a rating system, the values in column B or column D would be added together for a player's games, then divided by the number of games to give a single rating number. These values could be modified according to the success of different countries, much as Dave Ezzio suggested in his article in D.W. #36. Table 2 shows how the countries rank according to the 2 survey evaluations, using the same country figures Ezzio used (but including non-win/draws, of course).

TABLE 2

Country	#2 avg.	Rank	#1 scale	Rank
AUSTRIA	31.5	7th	12.0	7th
ENGLAND	41.1	1st	14.5	2nd
FRANCE	40.7	2nd	14.6	1st
GERMANY	34.8	5th	12.9	6th
ITALY	34.2	6th	13.0	5th
RUSSIA	37.6	4th	13.6	4th
TURKEY	39.0	3rd	13.7	3rd

(These figures are based on actual score for an outcome (columns A and C) rather than the rounded score (columns B and D). The average score is much lower for #1 scale than #2 because it is derived from a ranked rather than relative value question.)

Table 3, with results from NADPS #1, shows the variety (and frequency) of ways in which players judged outcomes. It lists the preferences following win ("pure win-only" is a 2-way through 7-way draw in descending order before any place is ranked). As you can see, opinions varied as much in 1974 as they do now.

TABLE 3

This table includes results from British surveys, which weren't included in the original compilation. The British responses are in column 2.)

Outcome Sequence	1	2
"Pure win-only"	28	3
at lst. 5-w preferred to 2nd pl.	37	3
2-way, 3-way, 4-way, 2nd	12	2
2-way, 3-way, 2nd, 4-way	14	3
2-way, 3-way, 2nd, 3rd	9	2
2-w, tie 2nd & 3-w, 4-way	2	0
2-way, 2nd, 3-way, 4-way	10	4
2-way, 2nd, 3-way, 3rd	24	6
2-way, 2nd, 3rd, 3-way	4	0
2-way, 2nd, tie 3rd & 3-way	1	0
Tie 2-way & 2nd, 3rd, 3-way	1	0
2-way, 2nd, 3rd, 4th	1	0
2nd, 2-way, 3-way, 4-way	2	1
2nd, 2-way, 3-way, 3rd	3	0
2nd, 2-way, 3rd, 3-way	5	0
2nd, 2-way, 3rd, 4th	1	0
2nd, 3rd, 2-way, 3-way	3	1
2nd, 3rd, 2-way, 4th	1	0
2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th	1	0

Hobby opinion may have changed considerably since 1974-75. I am presently trying to decide whether to undertake a NADPS #3, which would include the question from #2 for comparison, perhaps differentiating between survival and elimination in placement.

Given the prevalence of personal computers nowadays, sooner or later someone will computerize the outcomes of postal Diplomacy games so that the different values used by a variety of ratings can be entered and results

will be printed out without further effort. Certainly the results of an annual player poll could be used to modify a "Peoples' Rating" to bring it up to date with the latest opinion about the objectives people play for. Hence the rating would reflect the "true objectives" of the game; that is, what people actually play to accomplish, not some academic or ego-centric evaluation of 1 or 2 persons.

((Comments may be sent to us or directly to Lew at 5102 Catalpa Rd., Fayetteville NC 28304.))



"Yeah, these will be great for the Third Reich tournament. Now, for DipCon, I'd like to see something in spikes...."

Ask the Hobby Historian - The Gamers Guides

By David Hood

In my hobby history submission in the last issue of Diplomacy World, I talked about how certain concepts on Diplomacy and play based on those concepts have been influenced over the years by the original Gamers Guide to Diplomacy, published by Avalon Hill Game Company in 1979. I thought in this issue I might expand on that story a little bit.

Back in the day, many Diplomacy players entered the hobby through playing wargames and other strategic board games. Avalon Hill was the leading game company of the age in North America, and included Diplomacy as one of its primary and best sellers for many years. There was a publication by AH to support its games and surrounding hobby, which was called The General. When I joined the hobby in the mid 80s, Rex Martin was the editor of The General. He was also an avid Dip hobbyist (last time I saw him, at the 2015 WBC, there he was playing in yet another Diplomacy tournament!) The General included many articles in its pages about Dip, often including some of the most active members of our hobby at the time.

The original Gamers Guide to Diplomacy was another project used by Avalon Hill to promote sales of The Game. Written by longtime Dip hobbyist Rod Walker, it was very influential in the teaching and development of new players (like me and the rest of my North Carolina based group.) Years before the Internet, there was little publicly available information on how to play. I did see a chapter about Dip in a book I found in our high school library about board games in general, but that was about it. When our group first started to play, in June 1984, none of us had ever played before, so, with the help of the Gamers Guide, we stumbled along and taught ourselves. Unlike many folk, I actually soloed my first game of Diplomacy ever - but that doesn't say too much since my buddy Morgan Gurley did not realize that St Pete and Norway touched, so my Italian army slipped into Norway for dot 18 without a fight. An Italian army. From St Pete. How it got there to begin with, hell if I remember at this point.

So, yeah, that was not a real win.

Back to my point - the Guide had chapters on communications, treachery, cheating, stalemate lines, playing out small positions, really all sorts of cool subjects. It also included detailed thoughts about how to play each country, with helpful maps showing your possible lines of expansion. (Spoiler alert, each map showed arrows going in every single direction!) I mentioned in my last article that this strategic analysis

had some real influence on how folk played in those days - overemphasizing the RT as an alliance to be feared, building up the strengths of England and Turkey as the "Wicked Witches" of the West and East and downplaying the strength of, say, Germany in its ability to solo, that sort of thing.

So while the Guide was really good, and due to the fact that it was being distributed in the same channels as the game itself, it was able to reach folk who did not know about the (frankly better) articles available in Diplomacy World and other publications of the time. However, we all recognized its flaws as did Avalon Hill itself. At the 1992 Dipcon in Kansas City, Rex Martin convened a meeting of the players there and pitched a new project - AH would published a new Gamers Guide which would include content not just from one writer, as Rod's 1979 version had done, but would instead be a group effort spearheaded by the Diplomacy Hobby itself.

Naturally, those of us there in Kansas City that day jumped at the chance to produce something that we hoped would not only help new players get better, but hopefully aid in recruitment to begin with. A Triumvirate of Gary Behnen (local to the KC area and prolific player of the time) Cal White (tremendous player from Ontario who also published a popular zine) and myself agreed to organize the hobby's response to this effort. We recruited some of the most well-known players of the day to write how-to articles for each country, and submitted other pieces on other topics. Rex also included material that had already appeared in The General, including a very thorough introduction to the game by longtime hobbyist Lew Pulsipher (who attended two Dixiecons in 2018 and 2019 before he moved to Florida from North Carolina.)

Importantly, we also produced a new game box flyer with hobby contact information, with said flyers going into the gamebox for the new Deluxe Diplomacy being produced by AH. (Yes, that one, with the map that misspelled both "Burgandy" and the Eastern "Mediterranean." Don't mention that to Rex, he's still touchy about it.) The flyers were actually pretty successful in the 90s in connecting new folk to our hobby, before the internet really exploded towards the end of the decade, changing forever how folk got into the game of Diplomacy and its wider hobby.

Do we need a Gamers Guide today? Well, for one thing, both the 1979 and the 1993 versions are available online - here's one place: <http://petermc.net/diplomacy/> But frankly I would say no, we don't need something like that now. The world has changed. There are a multitude of

resources available to the newish player, from the videos of Chris Martin's Diplomacy Academy to the newsletter published by Russ Dennis, to the online articles available out the Wazoo. I think in the next few weeks you will also hear that the North American Diplomacy Federation is in a strategic planning process which I think will lead to great things for our hobby and its promotion

to new Dip players, gamers in general, and the wider world.

We are on the threshold of an exciting chapter of hobby history that I believe is about to unfold. Just like with the 1993 Gamers Guide, folk are seeing opportunities to change things for the betterment of our hobby, and they are going to do something about it. Won't you join us?

A Conversation with Allan Calhamer

Interview by Bill Coffin
From Diplomacy World #100

For those of you new to the hobby (and believe me, Diplomacy is less a game than it is a way of life), Allan B. Calhamer is who you owe all of this madness to. Calhamer invented Diplomacy in 1954, after taking a course in 19th century European history under Harvard historian Sidney B. Fay. Fay's book Origins of the World War shaped the basic premise and design of the game. Calhamer extensively playtested Diplomacy over the next few years, and self-published it in 1959. The game was originally published by Games Research, Inc. and then later by Avalon Hill. Avalon Hill, in turn, was acquired by Wizards of the Coast, makers of Dungeons and Dragons and various collectible card games such as Magic; the Gathering and Pokémon. Wizards was then acquired by Hasbro, which currently owns the whole shebang.

Calhamer himself has written a multitude of articles on Diplomacy for gaming magazine and Diplomacy fanzines. His largest effort is "Calhamer on Diplomacy," a book published in 1999 on the historical contexts of European diplomacy prior to World War I and how that is reflected in the game. Calhamer currently lives in retirement with Hilda Morales, his wife of 31 years, in La Grange Park, Illinois. In 2005, he graciously took some time to speak with me on the game's enduring popularity, evolutions in styles of play, and what has to be one of the greatest dirty tricks ever played in the hobby's history.

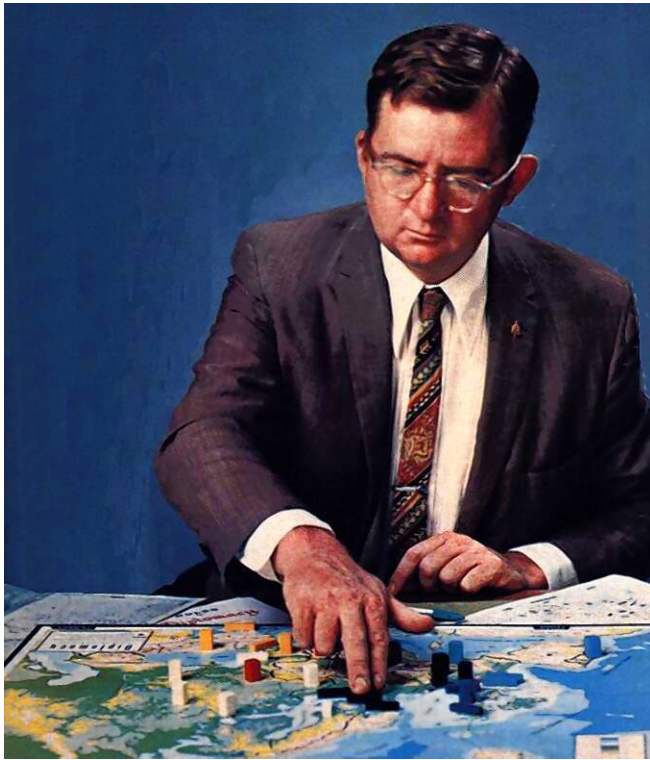
Diplomacy World: The publication of Diplomacy is nearing its 50th anniversary. From having sent the game from its invention through its various changes, what is your general impression of the game's success? I've read that people have attributed its success to the fact that it was the first adult board game where players could conduct no-holds-barred negotiations with each other and carry out dirty tricks. Is it really as simple as this?

Allan Calhamer: No, there's more to it. That's a big side of the game, to have open negotiations, where you can say whatever you want and nothing is binding. And there are a whole lot of tricks to learn, and so on, ways to phrase things and ways to guess whether somebody is kidding or not, that kind of thing. One thing in mind is the proposal just isn't a good proposal; it's probably just something the guy thought up to keep you busy. If it's not a good quality, you're going to turn it down anyway. But in fact, you find that after a while there's not as much trickery as you might think. And you're more concerned with whether you're getting a solid proposal or not. Has the thing been thought out and is it really good or is it just a poor plan? This is really more important because most of the people are not playing too many tricks. The tricks do not always work that well. There's a right time when they just work beautifully, but you don't use them at other times because it makes people suspicious of you. Players call these things "stabs." You generally don't want to use a stab unless you expect to do an awful lot with it, unless you think you can knock the guy out. Otherwise, he comes back and he's awfully angry about the stab, and you've just got another enemy. So you tend to play it straight unless there is just a beautiful stab.

DW: Hasbro has published the official rules for Diplomacy for free online, and various methods of Internet Diplomacy have made it possible to play the game for free. One might speculate this is a big reason for the game's flourishing as an online pastime. On the other hand, the game is becoming less private property and more public property, since there are ways of playing it without buying a set. Does this bother you at all as the creator, or are you glad to see the game reaching a new audience?

Calhamer: I don't know how many people are playing Diplomacy without a set. If you're playing on the Internet, you might want the set anyway. So that's why I don't

worry about that much. I figure if...it's hard to tell what the amount of this is. Even though it's free, it serves as advertising for the set. If that actually helps to sell sets, it'd be a real smart idea. But it would be hard to get figures on how many people were just dead-heading. I don't think it's that serious a matter.



DW: Some players insist that certain countries, such as Italy or Austria, are inherently weak, whereas others players insist that there are no weak Powers, only weak players. What are your thoughts on this?

Calhamer: First of all, you'd like to know how strong your country is and how strong the other countries are, so you play a few games. One thing the weaker countries can do is to ally with each other. Germany and AH do this very frequently. If you ally the two of them together, they're a pretty good bloc. They don't have to descend against each other. Each one gets a secure border and there's some cooperation with each other. The attack on Warsaw goes a lot faster if you can get those countries together, for example; that kind of thing. There's a fine attack on Venice where Germany sends an army down there and helps Austria because it's hard for Austria to get all that stuff in there.

I think you bring the game back into balance when you play it that way, but of course, you don't have to play it that way.

DW: Indeed. I've seen it played where it's more like a knife fight in the dark, a real free-for-all.

Calhamer: If it's a wild free-swinging everybody-versus-everybody battle, the middle countries will go out first and the further you are the corner countries, England and Turkey, will survive the longest. But once you know this, you start allying against them.

Germany/Austria/Russia is a fine alliance that comes up frequently. Germany lays off Austria and Russia and AH go after Turkey. That can be quite tough. Turkey really has to run around to get protection somewhere. He has to get England into Saint Petersburg or Italy to attack Greece.

DW: I've seen certain players comment that those who enter into unconditional alliances are in some way violating the true spirit of Diplomacy, that by not even going for a solo victory, they bring the game down. To what extent do you share or reject that sentiment?

Calhamer: I agree. They're starting out playing for a draw. That's not good for the game. They should be playing for a win, however they play. Even if they start out that way (in an alliance) they should still play for a win. But of course, you can keep trying to break those kinds of players apart. You can work all game to tempt them into taking a stab or something.

DW: There have been a great many board variants invented for Diplomacy, but a common criticism is that they are unbalanced as the standard game. I have heard this leveled most often at Colonial Diplomacy, but also at variant boards in general. From a design perspective, what is the key to maintaining an even keel across the board, and what advice would you give to Diplomacy enthusiasts who wish to design their own board and maintain the kind of game balance seen in the standard game?

Calhamer: We worked a long, long time on balancing the Diplomacy board. I had a very good group of people playing. The first bunch of players were mostly operations research people or they were familiar with operations research, who were workers in a scientific research laboratory. We'd play a game and we'd talk and send memos back and forth to each other and so on, and we'd have another game with more conversation, and so on. Somebody would suddenly come in during the middle of the day and say "I think you should make Tunis a supply center" or something with a long list of reasons why, and the rules were changed during this period. I had a one-man company with a seven-man research team. Board balance was, of course, an overwhelming consideration. Now, these guys make up variants and they don't have anything like that behind it, they jump into variants and the result is the variants just don't have all that effort behind them, all that revision. So they're not as good as the main game.

DW: Less commonly than variant boards, we see variant rules. Three that come to mind all involve Italy: starting off with a fleet in Rome rather than an army, establishing North Africa as a supply center, or allowing armies to cross from North Africa into Spain. All of these rules have a major impact on the game, requiring major changes in strategy, tactics and diplomacy. Are there any rules that you have come across that you have invented but never officially implemented that you find especially intriguing or interesting to play?

Calhamer: That's a good question. I never encouraged variants much but I did have a few of my own. But it's been a long time back and I'm not sure I can bring them all up. There were some variants which seemed to work and I don't remember them now, I think. One of them was if you had fewer than seven players, to have one player play two countries that are so far apart that they almost can't work together, having one player play France and Turkey or something. That way you have all seven Powers in the game that does a relatively small amount of damage to the game. People seem to like that better than playing with some of the countries left out of the game.

DW: In an article of yours that you wrote some years ago, you tell a great story about how your fellow players once stole a set of your orders and threw them in a padlocked trash bin to prevent you from moving. Now, while understanding that base trickery is going to win you the game in every instance, and that good diplomacy and strategy are the keystones of a winning game, that said, the trash bin trick really was a good one. Are there any others to share with us?

Calhamer: Those trash bins were for classified waste and could only be opened by properly secured people. It might be two weeks before one was opened by somebody with some special position in the CIA or something. That was kind of funny.

DW: I once read a story about how the British Diplomacy enthusiast wrote a story about how he had been involved in a game with a friend of his who he happened to know was having an illicit liaison with the significant other of another player. Sharp never actually threatened to blow the whistle on it, he knew that his friend knew that he knew, and he took advantage of the fact that the guy would bend over backwards for him in the game for fear of getting Sharp angry and the whole situation blown wide open. Despite something like this or the trash bin trick, have you come across any especially interesting bits of skullduggery?

Calhamer: There must have been over the years, but it's been some time. As you seem to have grasped, the skullduggery is really not key to the game. I always saw it, in spite of all the hilarity, I saw Diplomacy as a serious

strategic game. So I never paid that much attention to it, but there are all sorts of little tricks that keep coming up.

DW: Almost invariably, the games I fare best in are when I lie the least. Talking straight with other players seems to work the best for me.

Calhamer: One thing that happens a lot is you notice that somebody is slipping something over and you stop to think whether this is advantageous to yourself or not. It might be. You notice that Italy has one extra piece, but you're Germany and you're allied with him so you figure what the heck, you just shut up.

DW: Diplomacy players have, over the years, scrutinized opening moves in the game to a degree not seen in most other pastimes outside of chess. Such scrutiny often considers the tactics of opening moves but seldom mentions the diplomacy that goes along with them. Obviously, one should consider both, but generally speaking and as a player, how much consideration do you pay to the tactical side of your openings versus the diplomatic side of them?

Calhamer: There is a period of two or three or four moves when most of the effort is to pick up most of the undefended small powers. In general, it makes more sense to go after whatever of those you can get before you square off against a power that is defended. So as everybody is going after the small powers, the "easy eats,"...that being the case, you may not solidify your major alliances for a couple of moves. You want to see how that kind of thing goes. Interestingly enough, you don't always need the major alliances solidified right away. You can wait and see who's positioned where and how many pieces they have before you decide to ally with one. Once you start something like that, you want it to go as fast as possible before anybody can react to it. Because if two of you are attacking one person, somebody will try to attack one of you from behind. This is one of the things that keeps balancing the game. So if you are going to make a 2 on 1 attack, you want to advance as fast as possible. So you try the attacks you think will go the fastest.

DW: Having read older Diplomacy articles, I've come across the notion that certain countries, such as Italy and Austria, can only be enemies, as their initial positions demand it. But then with the invention of the Lepanto opening, you suddenly start seeing Italy and Austria form lasting alliances. Nothing in the game really changed in terms of rules to make this shift possible. The change happened in the minds of the players themselves.

Calhamer: It's just like inventing a new opening in chess. It's the same idea entirely.

DW: In the decades since Diplomacy's invention, have you seen many changes like this; changes in perception of what Powers are well suited for certain kinds of alliances?

Calhamer: Yeah, I would say so. For a while, Austria and Italy were referred to as the Austro-Italian superpower because they played so well together. There was a time when people didn't realize how strong Turkey was. That changed quite a bit, and people began blocking in Turkey very early to keep him from overrunning that end of the board. A lot of these changes have taken place. I haven't played in a little while, so I don't know what people are doing now, though. At one time people thought Russia was awfully strong, which I didn't agree with. In fact, I felt satisfied giving Russia an extra piece at the start because I thought it wasn't very strong.

DW: I play mostly online, and most of the folks I play with tend to refer to Russia as playing two different countries, and that presents a set of different challenges. Many players feel they have to give away one front so they can focus on the other. Or you can be jack of all trades and split evenly, but either way, you have double the challenge.

Calhamer: They tend to lose the north or the south, then?

DW: A lot of the games I play in, Russia opens strongly to the south and leaves a lone fleet in St. Petersburg to either bounce with Germany in Sweden or just stay there as a troublemaker unit. Northern openings tend to be more of a maverick thing that take people off-guard, and as a result, the situation in the Balkans gets more unstable because Russia isn't there to help sort things out. So a wild scrum develops among Italy, Turkey and Austria.

Calhamer: Or for a long time, you see it go both ways, of course; strictly a northern Russia that's captured England or something. Or you see a strictly southern Russia that's taken Turkey and Austria. And you will see more a more balanced Russia that is successful. That depends on a lot of things. It's a good game that way. I remember one fellow who had just seen the first couple of games and he noticed how differently the two boards were going. On one board Russia was big and the other countries were getting beaten up and on the other board, France was big. And he was quite enthusiastic. He said he was quite surprised at how differently the two games would go. And that is very true. It stays that way. And you will get all three of those Russian results. You'll get among the successful results, a strong north, south or center.

DW: Diplomacy is reported to have been a favorite of both John F. Kennedy and Henry Kissinger. As the game's inventor, did you ever get the chance to rub elbows meet famous figures who were also Diplomacy enthusiasts?

Calhamer: I did not meet any of those people. I did exchange a letter or two...the one letter I got that came from the inside, so to speak, came about when I read that David Eisenhower, who was hanging around the White House because his grandfather was president, was a fan of Diplomacy and he was always grabbing Secret Service agents to play Diplomacy with at the White House. So I sent him a letter with some advice, and I got what you'd expect: a brief letter of thanks, I enjoy the game, blah, blah, blah. But that's about the only contact I had from deep inside the White House. People in the Pentagon played it and I did talk with some people there, and there was intelligence back and forth but nothing very big was ever made of it.



DW: Could you offer some words of advice or encouragement to novice players who might be intimidated by the presence of so many veterans in the hobby and the volume of articles written on how to play the game?

Calhamer: That's a good question. You get the same thing in chess and you get it in spades because there's far, far more literature. It always helps to read and play some more and to sit down and analyze a little. Grab anybody you can and just play a little.

DW: I notice that neophyte players often play not to win, but simply not to be eliminated right away. This seems to be a way to develop bad habits in the long-term of the play of the game, playing not to die but also not to win.

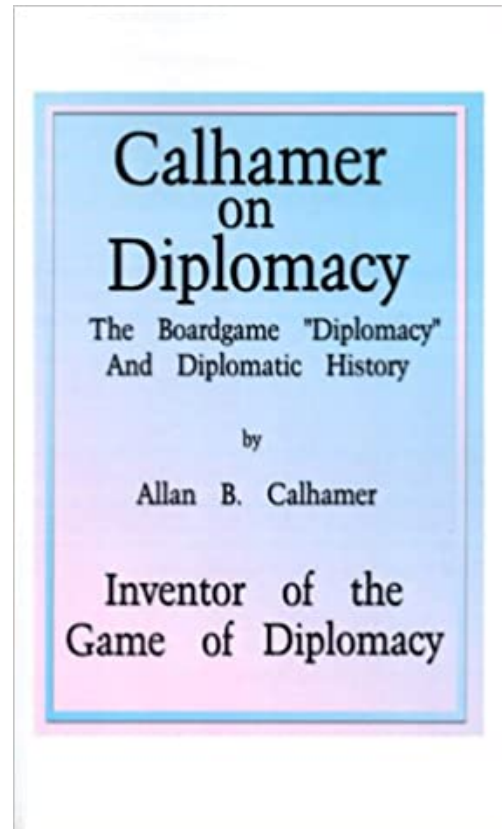
Calhamer: I haven't noticed this especially. But if you're getting knocked down to three or fewer units, not dying is your first order of business. Once you're down to

about three and your early expansion is over, you've got to survive first before you can expand. Theoretically, you're still trying to win the game but immediately, you're trying not to lose any of those three. You are knocked really down, and you end up going around offering your assistance to anybody so you can get a fourth piece and get back to active status. It's possible they're more worried about getting knocked out than winning, but that sort of makes sense because winning is far off in time. Even if you have a quick game going, and not being knocked out is not so far away.

DW: Especially in a face-to-face environment where, if you get knocked out early, you spend the rest of the evening on a couch reading a magazine, whereas in postal or electronic games you can always just go to another game. The stakes are not as high for getting knocked out initially except to your pride, maybe.

Diplomacy has made an interesting transition that few games make from just being a game to a bona fide hobby. There is a culture around the game, a community that really supports it, discussion about various elements of the game that transcends simple appreciation of the game. Were you ever surprised by the intense enthusiasm that Diplomacy's fans have for this game?

Calhamer: Not really. I approached it from chess, for one thing. Chess is far more analyzed than any other game in the world. There are more books about chess than there are about all other games combined. So since I approached it from that direction, I really expected that. I put out articles of my own on how to play France, etc., in the early days. And most of the early players also played chess or Go or some game like that. We had a surprising number of Go players playing Diplomacy, for some reason, actually. I was not surprised by that at all. My idea was that if the game was worth considering in the same breath as chess or Go, that you do approach it that way. That's why [the enthusiasm] did not surprise me at all. I was grateful for it, of course, that it aroused that interest. But I really expected it to be played the way chess or go is played, with the same seriousness. The interesting thing about Diplomacy is because of the lies you can tell and the crossing people up and so on, it's completely hilarious. This is poles apart from the serious side of the game. And yet, it's as good a serious game as chess or Go and it has that different quality about it. It's serious, but it's not just chess with some different moves. Because of the multiple player thing, it is different from all the other strategic games. That keeps it forever different. So you can treat it like chess or like Go, but it's still has a hugely different dimension.



DW: I'm currently reading your book, "Calhamer on Diplomacy," and am really enjoying it. Are you working on another Diplomacy book?

Calhamer: No. You think the world needs another one? The original "Calhamer on Diplomacy" still sells you know, but it never was a great seller.

DW: That's a shame because it's got a lot of valuable insight in it, not necessarily from the tactical side, but in providing a historical backdrop against which the game was created.

Calhamer: Yeah, I think guys were looking more for a tactical book, and I was talking about the game as a whole, as a phenomenon, and so on. And maybe that's why it didn't go so well.

DW: Do you play Diplomacy much anymore?

Calhamer: No, I haven't played in a while. I should, though. I've got a lot of time on my hands now. It used to be the excuse was I was working for a living, you know. But I do have that time. Maybe I should scare up another game.

2020 Boston Massacre Report

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

The 2020 Boston Massacre tournament was held digitally this year, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the first time Massacre had been held in a format other than FtF, and only the second time in North America (to my knowledge) that a traditionally FtF tournament was held in an online format instead (the first being 2020 DixieCon just a few weeks prior). It looks likely this will be the “new normal” for the 2020 Diplomacy tournament scene in North America, so in many ways both Dixie and Massacre can serve as lessons on how it can go right, and what could be done to improve the process for the future.

The tournament was two rounds held in one day (Saturday, June 20th), using the Carnage scoring system. Games were played on Backstabbr, and a Discord server was set up for negotiations, the goal being to simulate a FtF environment as accurately as possible. Virtual Dixie the prior month used Webex Teams for negotiations (as well as the Backstabbr interface itself), which restricted players to text exchanges or video calls; Discord still permitted negotiations via text, but it allowed players additionally to gather in discrete “rooms” for live spoken conversations. It was my hope that this would facilitate both faster play and more communication, and prove a good middle-ground for players accustomed to FtF play, and those more familiar with online play. Based on the feedback I received after the tournament, I believe this was successful, and expect Discord to become the negotiation tool of choice for future virtual tournaments.

Speaking of FtF and online players, 2020 Virtual Boston Massacre had its fair share of both, with seven boards in both rounds and 59 unique players (making it by far the best attended Boston Massacre yet). The vast majority of the players were new to Boston Massacre, and a significant number had previously been online-only players, or had played their first semi-FtF event at Dixie the prior month. It’s common knowledge that the online community of players dwarfs the FtF community in terms of active participants, and if the FtF hobby wants to not just survive, but thrive and grow, a huge component of that will require drawing in online players and convincing them that FtF play is just as, if not more, rewarding. Hybrid events like Dixie and Massacre will, I hope, prove to be an influential first step in that process.

As I mentioned earlier, games were played on Backstabbr, and this posed some logistical problems as well. Traditionally, FtF games employ much shorter turns than online games (15 minutes or so is standard, compared to the days or even weeks used in online

games), and Backstabbr, of course, was designed to facilitate online play, not FtF simulations. While 15 minutes per turn is an option when setting up games on Backstabbr, there is natural delay between the timer hitting zero and the website processing the submitted moves; this both necessitates the use of a grace period to submit retreats, builds, and disbands (which of course makes it impossible to effectively prevent negotiation during these periods, in contravention of most FtF tournament rules and the written rules of the game), and results in any extra time from the previous turn being added to the subsequent turn, forcing GMs to monitor every board and manually reset the timer after each phase. This is a rather enormous hassle, but hopefully will be eased or even resolved in the near future, as the Backstabbr devs have proven very willing to work with FtF tournament organizers to modify their UI in response to our specific needs.



The tournament itself, from my perspective as TD, went about as smoothly as could be expected. I was very fortunate to have the assistance of two world-class GMs in Cori Neslund and David Maletsky, without whom the event would not have been possible, and an additional player (David Hood) who graciously stepped into a vacated position and saw the game through to the end, so no powers were forced to go into Civil Disorder. The games themselves were live-streamed (on a tape delay) by the newly-formed Diplomacy Broadcast Network, which posts videos on its YouTube channel, and I think has potential to be a revolutionary new phase in how Diplomacy, and the North American FtF hobby in particular, reaches audiences, attracts attention, and eventually even becomes a recognized and respected gaming hobby the way games like Chess and Magic: The Gathering are.

After two rounds over a grueling 14-hour day were completed, Boston Massacre crowned a new champion in Tanya Gill, whose solo in the first round propelled her

to a dominant first-place finish (you can read my interview with Tanya in these pages as well). The full results are available at www.DiplomacyTV.com, and the Top 3 and Best Countries are below. Thank you to everyone who participated and made this event a success, and I hope to see you all at Massacre (and in-person) next year!

First Place: Tanya Gill
Second Place: Maxim Popov

Third Place: Benjy Aarons-Richardson

Best Austria: Tanya Gill
Best England: Russ Dennis
Best France: Christian Kline
Best Germany: Lea Letourneau
Best Italy: Ben Durfee
Best Russia: Maxim Popov
Best Turkey: John Anderson

A New Diplomacy Paradigm

by umbletheep, publisher of the [Diplomacy Briefing](#)

I still remember when I got my first camera in 4th grade. It was a 110 Kodak camera that used a film cartridge. I loved it. It was an amazing feeling to be able to record memories even though most of those pictures had bad lighting and a thumb over the lens.

Of course, you wouldn't know that at the time. You'd have to bring the cartridge to a photo center and pay them to develop the film. Compared to the ease of digital cameras, it was a pain. The only people who loved that process would be the shareholders of Kodak who made money when people purchased the film and when they developed it.



At its height in 1997, Kodak had a valuation of \$30 billion dollars. By 2012, that had dropped to \$145 million. A shocking plummet but one that was precipitated by their unwillingness to innovate. This was especially seen in the area of digital photography. Kodak had actually invented the first digital camera in 1975, but when executives found out no film was needed, they shut down the division.

A Look to the Past

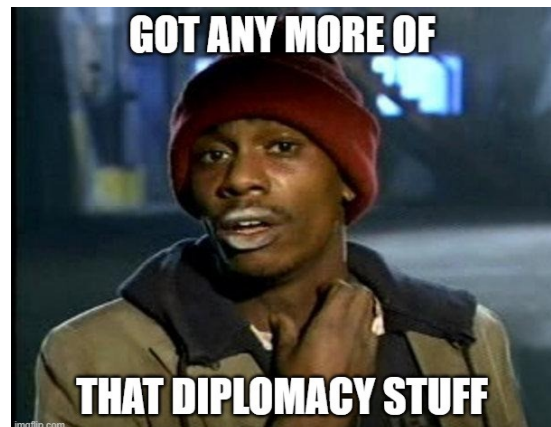
Unlike Kodak, Diplomacy players have been a very innovative bunch. Diplomacy was the second game to

be played by mail (chess was first). This led to the explosion of postal zines in the 1970's that dramatically increased the player base.

When the internet came, a paradigm shift happened in the hobby. It began with CompuServe and was followed by the sophisticated (for its time) judge system. Next came websites, Android platforms, and now even research with artificial intelligence. Will our robot overlords finally decide who deserves Belgium? Only time will tell.

The point is that people who love Diplomacy take advantage of the technology available. And regardless of what postal aficionados may think, we live in a time where the hobby has more players, more options, and more richness than ever before...it's just many people don't know what all is going on.

I believe we are currently witnessing the development of a new paradigm in Diplomacy. The coronavirus pandemic has forced many of our institutions to have to rethink how they operate. Businesses, churches, and governments have all had to innovate. The face to face community was no exception. No club games or tournaments have occurred for 3 months, and they needed to get their Dip fix.



A Surprising Solution

This has birthed a time of amazing experimentation. One of the first was when the [London Diplomacy Club](#) hosted the CoronaCon. It was played completely through [Backstabbr](#) with 15-minute deadlines. While it didn't really approximate face to face, it was still enjoyable.

The real advancement came through the combined efforts of the [Minnesota](#) and [Chicago](#) clubs. Both the DixieCon and Boston Massacre tournaments went virtual and took advantage of new technologies. Each time, there was great participation with many of the best players taking part.

While a lot of different platforms have been tested, the consensus seems to be that Backstabbr will be used for actual game adjudication and Discord will be used for negotiation. The benefit of Discord is that direct messages and audio chat are easy to use and each board can have its own subchannels for easy communication. Discord also is a great choice because the online community is already there with each of the major platforms having a presence. By my count, there are currently over 3,000 Diplomacy players on all the different servers with the [Nexus Diplomacy Server](#) being the largest at over 1,000.

Another successful addition during this time has been the [Diplomacy Broadcasting Network](#) that Brandon Fogel, Zach Moore, and Bryan Pravel have launched. The livestreams of these virtual games with special guest commentators has made Diplomacy "Must See TV." Adding to the excitement, they plan to expand their content in the months ahead.

The Far-Reaching Benefits

People have already noticed how beneficial this can be to the Diplomacy community. For too long, the online and face to face scene have operated in their own spheres. These virtual tournaments have already connected many online players with the f2f (face-to-face) community. I will also add that many first time or primarily online players have had great finishes in the recent tournaments.

On a practical level, this opens up a whole new avenue for people to enjoy Diplomacy. As someone who has been a part with starting face to face clubs, I know how difficult it is to get one off the ground. It requires a great deal of time and tenacity. To go to tournaments regularly is generally the domain for those without a family and a decent amount of expendable income and free weekends. Personally, I've gone to 2 in the 12 years I've been playing. I loved every minute of it but know that it could never be a regular occurrence.

These virtual tournaments can increase the attendance of both clubs and tournaments if they continue. There's even the opportunity to use this technology to organize virtual house games for different cities and begin to bring people together to eventually start their own face to face club. For many online players, their biggest fear is their skill not translating with the shorter deadlines of face to face play. Going virtual creates a "safe space" to get used to the excitement of in-person Diplomacy, and certainly friendships will form and give another reason for people to go to tournaments.

For virtual tournaments to become sustainable, I believe it will require leadership from both the face to face and online community. It would be a shame for all this work and creativity to cease once f2f tournaments can resume. I believe a few steps should be taken so this doesn't happen:

1. A centralized place for running these tournaments as well as a schedule for when they will take place. The f2f tournaments will go back to how they've been, but a new set of tournaments will need to rise up in their place. I personally think there should be at the very least a quarterly tournament with regular games organized into league play.
2. This will require organizers who see the value of this format and are willing to be part of a leadership structure to make sure the load doesn't become too much for any one person.
3. Both the admins for the online sites and the club and tournament directors need to get behind this and promote it ([The Briefing](#) will do its part). The different clubs and online platforms could even lead up one of these tournaments.

I know how impactful and fun this new medium of Diplomacy has been because I participated in both virtual DixieCon and the Boston Massacre. As such, I believe regular virtual tournaments and league play can greatly advance the Diplomacy hobby. It will create a strong web presence for the f2f community while continuing to build bridges for a more unified and cohesive community.

[[Yes, this is a purposeful and shameless plug for umbletheheep's weekly zine [Diplomacy Briefing](#). Subscribe so you can keep up to date on everything that is happening in the hobby.]]

Charter Flights from Airstrip One

By Jon Hills

Hello, and welcome back to Airstrip One.

June is possibly one of the nicest months of the year weather-wise here in the UK. We have the long days associated with the Summer Solstice and it is often warm and dry. Occasionally, as they are at the moment, temperatures can sometimes border on uncomfortably hot but this doesn't usually last for long.

Although this year will probably be the exception, during the long school summer break we often look back fondly at June and wish that we could have had our holidays then, as by July and August the nights are starting to close in and can get quite chilly. Although July and August are warmer months, they are also often wetter. It is for good reason – and not simply tradition – that June is usually the peak month for weddings.

However, despite being British, I'm not here to talk about the weather, glorious though it has been recently. Instead, I want to focus on some significant events that have happened in Junes gone by and perhaps draw out some points of interest that might help us along our *Diplomacy* journey.

To begin, I'd like to take us back to the year 1215 AD and, specifically, the 15th June.

Although you may not have realized it, this was a significant date in the history of the English speaking peoples - and I use that term deliberately, not just to satisfy my mild infatuation with Sir Winston Churchill!

1215 was the penultimate year in the reign of the Angevin King John, who ruled over England and large parts of what is now France.

Generally, John gets a pretty bad press – contemporary accounts of both his personality and military prowess are mixed, and his cause is not helped by some heavy revisionism in later generations. Amongst all the rulers of England, it's a toss-up between him and Richard III as to who has been most ill-served in that regard. However, for the sake of balance, I'll simply describe his reign as tumultuous.

But it's not John that I want to talk about, rather what he did on that date - and that was to affix his seal to the Magna Carta.

A quick Google will tell you everything that you could ever want to know about the Magna Carta (and possibly much more) but it is generally regarded as one of the

defining works in the development of the Rights of Man. For the first time, it recorded some of the ancient rights that existed under the English Common Law – primarily for nobleman but also with passing references to the serfs that worked the land. In doing so, it placed a limit on the authority of the Crown and formed the basis for what eventually became the UK's Constitutional Monarchy.

What I had not appreciated until recently, though, was that the Magna Carta was also influential on the minds of the Founding Fathers of the United States, such that it became a pillar of the US Constitution. As well as the Constitution itself being to some degree modelled on it, the influence of the Magna Carta, can be directly seen in the Fifth, Sixth & Ninth Amendments (or so I'm told).

Fascinating though that is, it is of possibly little relevance to *Diplomacy*, except that it is a marvelous example of how NOT to build bridges.

At heart, it was a Peace Treaty, intended to end a feud between John and some rebellious Barons. However, in this it failed quite magnificently.

The reason for that failure was because the treaty was fundamentally flawed and unbalanced. The punishments imposed on John for any breach (i.e. temporary forfeiture of lands and castles) were too harsh. John, who tended to rule through force and will, was never going to avoid breaching and the Barons stood to gain too much from John falling foul of its terms. There was, therefore, no real incentive for either side to work together.

Is that a situation that you recognise in your *Diplomacy* games? The key to a good strong alliance is to ensure that each ally's interests are served as equally and evenly as possible. If they aren't, then that alliance will either tear itself or be reduced to a master/puppet arrangement.

The path to success in *Diplomacy* does not lie in letting others dictate your actions.

The second June is rather more recent and, coincidentally, concerns the same date; 15 June. The year was 1920 when an Italian inventor, Guglielmo Marconi, invited an Australian opera singer, Dame Nellie Melba, to take part in a live radio broadcast from a packing shed at his factory in Chelmsford, Essex. The site is literally a stone's throw – if you have a decent arm – from my usual place of work.

Marconi is credited as the inventor of radio; a dubious epithet as he neither discovered electro-magnetic waves nor invented radio telegraphy (the transmission of signals between two points using radio waves). However, it is fair to say that he was a radio pioneer – especially with regards long-distance transmissions – and in 1909 he did receive a shared Nobel Prize for Physics for his contribution to radio telegraphy research.

It is Marconi's discoveries – and those by the likes of Tesla, Braun, Bose, and Hertz, for example - that we have all been relying on to take part in our Zoom calls and virtual tournaments during lockdown.

What Marconi did achieve, and perhaps what sets him set apart from some of the other names that I mentioned, was being the first to produce a workable commercial application for radio waves – sending Morse Code messages. These were most famously employed on board *Titanic* in 1912. It was said that everyone who survived that disaster owed their life to Marconi's invention.

Incidentally, Marconi himself had been due to sail on *Titanic* but had changed plans and had travelled to the States on the *Lusitania* a few days earlier.

Returning to our story, though, Dame Nellie's warbling has been described as the first professional music broadcast. Again, that's probably not entirely true. It was certainly not the first public broadcast (that was made by a Canadian, Reginald Fessenden, on Christmas Eve, 1906) and she wasn't the first professional singer to be heard over the airwaves; that honour probably went to Enrico Caruso, working with the American 'Father of Radio', Lee de Forest, in January 1910.

However, Nellie's broadcast struck such a chord with the British public that it convinced the powers that be that radio entertainment was worth pursuing. In turn this led directly to the formation of the British Broadcasting Company Ltd (BBCL) in 1922 and, in 1926, following the granting of a Royal Charter, BBCL was dissolved and replaced by the British Broadcasting Corporation – more commonly known as the BBC.

The BBC is now the oldest national broadcaster in the world, as well as one of the largest, so the significance of that original broadcast shouldn't be underestimated. Take just one element of the BBC's output - the BBC World Service - for example. This news and entertainment outlet was synonymous with the British Empire - indeed, it was originally called the British Empire Service – and did much to promote British interests and language abroad. However, as well as its English-language offerings, the BBC World Service also

now regularly transmits in in 40 other languages as diverse as Afaan Oromoo and Vietnamese.

The inspiration for this column, Alistair Cooke's '*Letter from America*', was also a World Service production.

Again, though, the question has to be, what does this have to do with *Diplomacy*? The answer is, not a lot.

However, as this is the 150th edition of *Diplomacy World*, I'm going to stick my neck out and say that *DW* shares a good many parallels with the BBC. For example, both are flagship organisations in their respective fields. Both have a truly global reach. Both are run 'not for profit', relying on the generosity of others, plus the odd bit of merchandising, to keep going. Although the BBC commands a licence fee – rather like the DW subscription of days gone by - in practice, its collection is largely unenforceable. The UK Licence fee has been described as a tax on entertainment; it's perhaps more accurately a charitable contribution.

I think too that it's fair to say that they share a common motivation – as Lord Reith, the first BBC's General Manager, put it - "to educate, inform and entertain" and long may both continue to perform these functions.

Perhaps where they differ is in the BBC's Motto of "Nation shall speak Peace unto Nation". Insofar as *Dippers* are concerned, it would be as well to add the caveat "but don't believe a word they say!"

There is one final June that I want to mention; that from 1945.

On 26 June 1945, immediately after the end of World War 2, various countries - France, Russia, China Great Britain, the US and others – came together to ratify and sign the San Francisco Charter, thereby bringing into being the United Nations (UN).

Its principal aim was to maintain peace amongst the various heavily armed former combatants and to prevent a third, calamitous global conflict.

Although the UN has its critics and has changed considerably over the years, against that simple yardstick, it can be said to have been successful.

Again, though, that's not the reason for including it here.

I am sure that we are all familiar with the story of how *Diplomacy* came into being. A young Allan B Calhamer found an old atlas and became fascinated by the names of the old countries and empires recorded therein. That seed lay dormant until, at Harvard, he was inspired by a book written by his Political History lecturer to turn that

atlas map into a board game. The rest, as they say, is *Diplomacy*.

However, Allan also credited a *Life* magazine article, that he read when age 13 concerning the Congress of Vienna, as being another source of inspiration. At that time *Life* was a weekly publication and apparently Allan was a regular reader of it, having followed their coverage of World War 2 over the previous five years.

Archive copies of *Life* are available online and I have spent a little time trying to track down that particular article, sadly without success.

Without wishing to denigrate the memory of the great man, it's possible that he was mistaken over either the timing or the content article itself – he was recounting the story some sixty years later! What struck me, though, during my search was just how much of *Life's* output at that time was understandably related to international politics and also how accessible it seemed to be. Allan was privileged to live through a definitive period of history and to have such an able guide. He was at an impressionable age so it is likely that this reading had a formative effect. June 1945 was a time of great hope, before the hostility of the Cold War and the anti-Russian paranoia that, rightly or wrongly, later gripped the US (and seemingly still does).

With that in mind, I do not think that it is a flight of fancy to suggest that it was that San Francisco Charter, and *Life's* reporting of it, which sparked Allan's interest in diplomacy, politics and political history.

That interest ultimately found its best expression in the game of *Diplomacy* for which, personally, I am very grateful, and I hope that you are too.

So, there we have it, three different charters – all unrelated but each having some kind of tenuous connection with our great game.

All that is left is for me to provide a (very) brief round-up of UK *Dip* activity.

Needless to say that there has not been much that has not been online and so not really UK-specific.

I do, however, owe a couple of apologies; one to you dear readers of *Diplomacy World* and the other to Simon Langley-Evans.

My apology to you is that I completely failed to report on the newest UK *Diplomacy* 'zine, 'Last Orders!', the eighth edition of which landed in my Inbox a couple of week ago. *LO* was launched at the turn of the year so should have been included in last quarter's round-up – except that I didn't know it existed at the time.

It has what might be regarded as a traditional blend of PBEM *Diplomacy* games, puzzles, stories and the private musings of the Editor, along with a few other games that might interest the honest *Dipper* – but using the most modern of interfaces. It is well worth a look.

Hopefully you'll become a subscriber and maybe try your hand at PBEM if you haven't done so before or recently. It's a different way of playing - and is possibly my favourite style.

The link to the latest issue, LO8 is here: <https://sway.office.com/1fvLsXo3eEB1P5aT?ref=Link> w here you will also find links to the previous seven.

And my apology to Simon - the editor of Last Orders! - is that I have not yet followed up on my suggestion of an interview for this column, to which he kindly agreed. It's not been forgotten and I will get back to you!

The only other thing to mention is that the London round of the 2020 Tour of Britain has had to be postponed (n.b. not cancelled!) either until later this year or possibly into 2021. The chances are that it will have to be renamed the 20-21 Tour but that's not a bad thing. If I remember rightly, the classical 'Grand Tour' would typically last at least three years!

And that's about it. If you agree or disagree with anything I've said here please let me know or if you want to rebut, refute or correct any perceived injustices, feel free.

The e-mail, as ever, is Jon.airstrip1@gmail.com.

Likewise, if you're in the UK and want to tell me about your *Diplomacy*-related activity, just let me know. The address is the same. You can tell me about your non-*Dip* life too if you want – I just won't be able to print it here!

In the meantime . . . Keep Stabbing!

Jon

A GM Handbook for Virtual Diplomacy

By Zachary Moore

Given the success of both vDixie and Virtual Boston Massacre, and the growing popularity of this mode of Diplomacy which we are calling "virtual face-to-face", I think it will be useful to create a small handbook for GMs that can be quickly referenced as needed. Here is a rundown of the procedures that have been developed by the hobby, with contributions from the Windy City Weasels, the Minnesota Diplomacy Club, Hunter Katcher, London Diplomacy Club, Bryan Pravel, Cori Neslund and many more who have worked behind the scenes. Each club, league and tournament will use slight variations of this format to best suit their needs, and the protocol is constantly evolving. I recommend that club and tournament directors use this guide as a template -- editing it as they see fit -- for training their own GMs.

Ingredients List

--Backstabbr
--Discord
--Zoom, or another application with screen-sharing capabilities.

Creating the Game

Many of the options Backstabbr offers us for game creation are irrelevant for our purposes; however, I would still like to offer some guidelines for creating games to avoid mistakes:

Naming

Each club has its own standards for naming games. In the Minnesota Diplomacy Club, we follow the format "MNDC [Month] [Board #]". For our June 6th game, we had three boards, named like this:

MNDC June Board 1
MNDC June Board 2
MNDC June Board 3

Check in with your league coordinator or tournament manager for their naming preferences.

Settings

Game type: Private

Press type: Default or gunboat (if you want to force players to use Discord voice rooms)

Adjudication period: Daily (absolutely no shorter. We don't want Backstabbr to adjudicate itself)

First adjudication: One day (or longer; see above)

Begin game automatically when it is filled: NO. GM should start the game manually when they are ready

Enable Grace Periods: YES. This further guarantees that we don't have accidental adjudications.

Fast adjudication: NO. In this style of game players need the option to submit provisional orders

Join game as player: NO

Disable game anonymity: YES. Players need to know who is playing which power.

Every other setting can be ignored, they don't matter for our purposes.

Timing

In any virtual face-to-face game, the first year is always the hardest, because players will be acclimating themselves to technology which may be new to them. With that in mind, and with special attention paid to the specific quirks of Backstabbr, here are our recommended negotiation lengths by season:

S01: 25 minutes
F01: 20 minutes
02: 20 minutes
03: 18 minutes
04: 18 minutes
05: 15 minutes

...

Try to check in with the players every year or so about the time limit. At any point, they can unanimously vote to raise or lower the allotted time. If there is no unanimous vote to change the time limit, it will continue to follow our timing guidelines.

Please also note that Backstabbr experiences a small delay between a player clicking "submit" and their server recognizing that set of orders. For this reason, I recommend that the GM waits ~30 seconds after the clock hits zero to force adjudication. During this time, refresh Backstabbr on your screen to double-check that every power has entered orders and ask that players do the same to verify that their orders are entered properly. Check in periodically with players to make sure everything is running smooth on their end.

Avoiding NMRs is a priority, so try to be lenient and rely on social pressure rather than NMR to punish slow players. That being said, the GM has full authority to issue a warning to players who are abusing the clock,

and if the warning is not heeded, GM may adjudicate as they see fit. If you are volunteering as GM for a tournament, check in with your tournament director to find out how strictly they like to enforce timing rules.

Another helpful tip to keep things moving: I like to give the players a 5 minute warning and a 1 minute warning in the Discord chat room for their game, that way if they get distracted and forget to keep an eye on time, they will be alerted.

Retreats/Builds: 2 minutes, but be lenient with players who exceed this. Make sure you call out who has builds and retreats in case the players don't notice. Check in with slower players to find out if they are having technical difficulties or simply abusing the clock. Remember that there will be a small delay between a player clicking "submit" and the Backstabbr recognizing the orders.

Zoom

GMs in our games use Zoom to screen-share the clock, and offer players the opportunity to look each other in the eye as they negotiate if they elect to keep their video on. If players wish to have the video element, they can resize their Zoom window to show everybody's face at all times. All other potential features of Zoom are better handled within Discord. Here are a few things to keep in mind while you are using Zoom:

Start the Zoom call early: I recommend sharing the invite link to your Zoom call at least an hour prior to the start of the game, and require players to join the Zoom call 30 minutes prior to the game. This serves the

function of a "board call" and gives players a little time to chat before the game, plus it is one less thing for you to worry about closer to game time. It may be useful when scheduling your game to announce both the "arrival time" and the "game start time" with the expectation that players will show up by the arrival time.

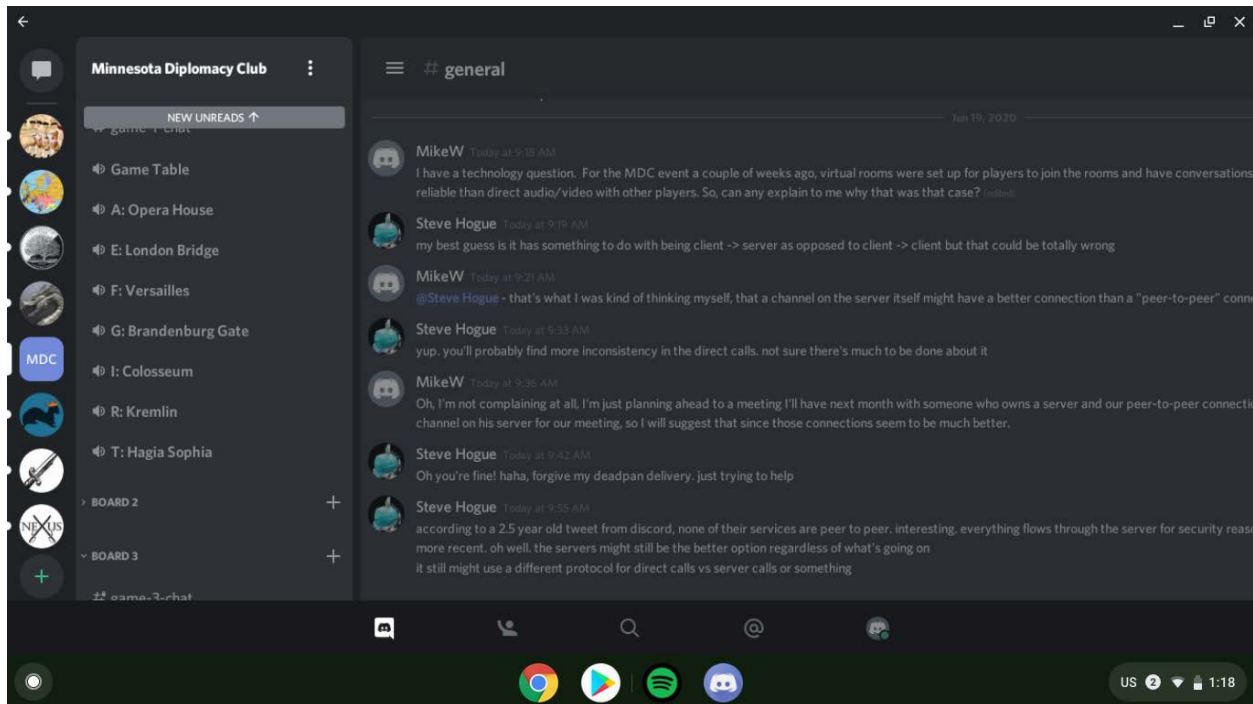
Mute the Players: You will want to utilize the "mute all" button and select the option which disallows players from unmuting themselves. Zoom should never be used for voice. During adjudications, direct every player to enter the "Game Table" where they can collectively gasp at the revealed orders.

Screen-sharing: When you initiate screen-sharing, Zoom will give you the option to share your desktop or an individual application. Make sure to screen-share your *timing application*, **not** your desktop. If you share your desktop, you will not be able to click away from the clock during the game. When screen-sharing, be sure to select the option to share sound so that your timing application's audio is heard by the players.

Discord

Our Discord procedure is constantly evolving, but here are a few battle-tested tips for running the game smoothly on Discord:

Voice Channels: Your Discord setup should include 8 voice rooms -- the Game Table, and seven rooms for negotiation, each one designated as belonging to one of the seven powers, for which it will serve as a home base. For example:



Players should arrange to meet in these rooms for negotiation. For example, Austria can reach out to Turkey saying "Meet me in Opera House" and the two will connect to that room to negotiate.

Game Table: In recent games, clubs have created an additional room in Discord called "Game Table" to replace some of the function of Zoom. This has worked well, and I recommend it for every virtual face-to-face game. Make sure to keep players muted in Zoom permanently and do not allow them to unmute themselves. If anybody has their mic on in both applications, it will cause a horrific echo. GMs should stay connected to the Game Table throughout the duration of the game. This allows them to interact with players, and in the event that your event has a live stream, get some inside info to share with the broadcasters.

Insist that players use the voice channels: If given the option, savvy players will realize that using private phone calls gives them a strategic advantage, since nobody can see who they are talking to. I recommend that GMs disallow this. Players should always be in one of the seven voice channels or at the Game Table so that we know they are not making illegal private calls. Seeing

who is talking with whom is an important feature of face-to-face play.

An easy way to enforce this as GM is to park yourself in the Game Table and keep an eye on the voice channels throughout the game. All seven players should be in one voice room or another at all times.

Be available on Discord: This one is simple, but it goes a long way. Try to be online an hour before the start of the game so you can share invite links for Zoom and Backstabbr, and troubleshoot with players who have questions about the technology. Make sure you are still available on Discord *during* the game, so players can get ahold of you quickly if they are having issues.

Insist that players change their username to identify their power: For this reason, it is advisable to "start" the game on Backstabbr a couple minutes before you start the clock for spring 01, that gives players time to see which power they are controlling and change their username accordingly.

Change YOUR username on Discord to identify yourself as GM: For example, "Zach GM Board 2" or "Bryan GM Board 1" and so on.

Introducing the Diplomacy Broadcast Network

By Brandon Fogel

I'm excited to announce the formation of the Diplomacy Broadcast Network, a home for Diplomacy-related programming of all kinds. We aim to provide live coverage of face-to-face events, both in-person and virtual, as well as regular recorded programming covering all aspects of the diverse Diplomacy hobbies throughout the world. Wherever Diplomacy is played or talked about, we want to be there.

So far we have provided livestream coverage of events in progress, including the Boston Massacre virtual face-to-face tournament and the Nexus online community's first virtual face-to-face games. Soon we will introduce a monthly news program hosted by David Hood that will cover recent headlines and offer in-depth looks at important issues in the world of Diplomacy. More exciting programming is in the works.

In recent months face-to-face Diplomacy has had to go virtual, while at the same time already existing online communities have receive bursts of new players. There is thus a tremendous opportunity for DBN to bridge the gap between the two worlds and generate interest to the benefit of both. Already DixieCon and Boston Massacre have seen dramatic increases in participation, going from 3-5 boards per round in previous in-person

incarnations to 7-11 boards per round virtually. We hope DBN can add to the fun and help maintain the increased participation in both communities once in-person events resume.

We're on the hunt for good programming, so if there is a Diplomacy event or community you'd like us to cover, or if you have a good idea for a regular webseries about Diplomacy, please let us know. We're also looking for experienced video editors willing to lend their expertise to our volunteer project.

Check out our website, www.diplobn.com, for links to our YouTube and Twitch channels, where you can subscribe and view all of our content free of charge. You'll also find links to our partner tournaments, clubs, and communities, which are just waiting for you to make 7. Sign up today!



Interview with Tanya Gill – 2020 Boston Massacre Champion

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

The 2020 Boston Massacre was held virtually this year, with games played on Backstabbr and negotiations done through Discord. After two rounds on Saturday, June 20th, Tanya Gill emerged as the champion, thanks in large part to her solo victory in round one. I sat down with Tanya (again, virtually) to get her perspective on the tournament, online v. FtF play, and the state of the hobby.

Randy

How long have you been playing Diplomacy, and how did you first get into the game?

Tanya

I started playing Diplomacy online in 2015 when a friend of mine organized a game on a popular online diplomacy website. I got instantly hooked, joined several games, and haven't quit playing since then. My introduction to the face to face community was World DipCon at Oxford in 2017, which I decided to check out because a few people I played with online said it would be fun. I pretty much only play at face to face events now!

Randy

What is it about FtF play that converted you from an online player?

Tanya

It's far more fun to play a game with people in person than over a computer screen. Not only that, but I feel as if the quality of play is higher, you don't have to worry about things like someone quitting the game or not entering in moves (usually), and at the end of the day everyone goes to have a drink together. The hobby itself is full of intelligent, welcoming people who make you want to keep coming back to tournaments.

When I played online, games would go on for months, and I find that I can't keep up that pace anymore. Not to mention the competitiveness of attending actual tournaments is exciting. I like the idea of winning things.

Randy

Speaking of winning things, I know you took 3rd place at WDC in Oxford, and won Boston Massacre this year. What's your secret to success? Are there skills you brought over from your online days that you think have helped your FtF play?

Tanya

A lot of my skills from online definitely helped me get a head start when I first started with face to face. I had already figured out the basics of strategy and had a

good idea of what people liked to hear. I thankfully did not have to experience the embarrassing moments of just starting out, ie moving to Prussia in 1901 as Germany and getting yelled at by some guy who started playing before I was born.

There is no real secret to success. You do have to be a relatively social human being (people are going to be working with you for the next few hours so you should probably be pleasant), you have to remember that lying is usually not a good move, and you have to practice knowing where to push the pieces and when.

I've been working on quite a few things since I joined f2f. Namely, understanding broader board dynamics, learning how to control my temper, and attempting to read the motivations of the players on my board. I used to be terrible at paying attention to what was going on on the other side of the board. These are things where the more you play, the better you (hopefully) get.

I don't really read up on strategy but I'm sure that works for a lot of people. What has helped me improve (I think, anyway) has been obsessing over my games after they finish, thinking about all the things I could have done differently or better, and asking people who I know are far more experienced than me for advice. I think the last factor has heavily improved my play. Even watching these live streams that Brandon has been hosting has definitely opened my mind to things I have not considered. *(Interviewer's note: Brandon Fogel is heavily involved in the Chicago hobby, and has been producing livestream commentary videos of the 2020 virtual tournaments; you can check them out at the Diplomacy Broadcast Network on YouTube)*

Randy

All very good advice, and it's clearly paid off for you given your recent performances, including winning Virtual Boston Massacre. Speaking of which, let's talk about that tournament. What do you think of the TD, isn't he great?

Tanya

What would we do without you, Randy? (Seriously thanks for running this awesome tournament and doing a great job at it.)

Randy

You're very welcome! Also, a big part of your win was soloing the first round, could you talk about how that game went and how you won it?

Tanya

Well actually the start felt a bit rough. I thought I did a good job of convincing both Italy and Russia to work with me against Turkey. But both Russia and Italy tried to attack me in 1902 (one in spring, the other in fall) and I got lucky with blocking Italy's attack. When that failed for them, I managed to get them to work with me. With Russia focused in the north and Italy being impressed I thwarted his stab it wasn't too difficult.

After that, I just slowly positioned myself for a monster stab against the two of them. Neither of them questioned me since our focus was on getting the western line to break. When we finally got Germany to move against England and I broke over that stalemate line, I managed to stab for like six dots.

Randy

Pretty impressive! From reviewing your game, patience was definitely a big part of your solo, you waited till you were well over the stalemate line before stabbing your allies. Was there ever a year you were worried they'd figure out what you were doing, or one of your Western opponents would convince them you were a threat?

Tanya

The beauty of the position was that I was pretty unstabable. The best Italy could do was take one dot off me, but all his fleets were of no concern to me. Russia was so tied up with England that it would have been hard for them too.

With the Discord rooms you also know who is talking to who. So I felt pretty okay that it wasn't going to happen. I figured the moment I was called out on my looming armies I'd probably have to stab.

Randy

How did the board react to your stab? Was there any sort of rush to stop you, or did everyone kind of resign themselves to your victory at that point?

Tanya

It was mixed. The Italian player was pretty upset, everyone else was kinda like "yeah, I had a feeling that was going to happen" I think there was some effort to attempt to stop me but the Russian was kind of just over the entire thing. So everyone gave up pretty fast. The next round was starting soon anyway.

Randy

Well congrats again, tournament solos are rare and valuable results.

Now that you've been involved in FtF play for a few years now, what are some things you think the FtF hobby does well, and some things it could improve on?

Tanya

The organization is great. It's a big deal to get a bunch of people to fly into your city, book venues, etc., for tournaments. The fact that we have so many tournaments that are pretty well attended is a sign of success to me.

It would be nice if there was a way we could focus on bringing more diversity to the hobby. I think it would only help strengthen us if we were more diverse. More women, minorities, and younger people are needed to keep tournaments growing. I'm not sure what the best way to recruit is, but it is something worth talking about.

Randy

Definitely good advice. On a related note, there's obviously a ton of online players, and the FtF hobby has slowly been making progress drawing them into events - do you think there's anything specific that could accelerate that process?

Tanya

I think the livestreams are doing a pretty good job so far. That's a great way to get people involved. Other than advertising our events on respective websites I'm not sure what else there is to do.

Randy

And to close this out, any advice for online players who might be interested in trying one of the virtual tournaments or a FtF event in the near future?

Tanya

Just do it. If they have any questions whatsoever practically everyone in the hobby is willing to help out. There's no harm in giving it a try, and even if it doesn't go well it can still be fun. Liberty Cup is coming up on August 1st and it's a great way to check out what we're all about.

Virtual Cons: An Experience Given Back

By Bob Durf

2020 has been a roller coaster year, it is fair to say. I started the year with high hopes.¹ I had found out very early in the year that I was going to become a father in 2020, and I looked forward to sharing the joyful experience of a first pregnancy with my wife and our families. The rest of the year, as you all know, is history.

Quarantines! Boom, I wasn't allowed to attend doctor's visits with my wife to share in the progression of our first child. Boom, we weren't traveling to either of our families, and they certainly weren't coming to us. Boom, my professional career wasn't put in danger (thankfully), but it became a lot duller and monotonous. The high hopes had been left far behind.²

Things, at least down here in Georgia, have recovered a bit at the time of this publication, and even feel almost back to normal, albeit a normal with masks.³ But at the time DixieCon rolled around, life was still pretty small, still closed in and isolated. So, the switch to a virtual event in a way was the quarantines and restrictions giving an event back that I had been looking forward to. This year was supposed to be the first year I could attend. I'm glad I still could (virtually).

The summer has continued to give back--with my ability to (virtually) attend a Diplomacy tournament that, unlike Dixiecon, I had no intention or ability to attend. Boston Massacre was another con that went virtual and I was able to attend a round and enjoy an expertly played Diplomacy game by all involved. Both cons had a lot in common in how they created in me a great energy and enthusiasm in how our Diplomacy hobby can continue to grow and build a community, as well as reminding me how exciting Diplomacy really is.

First, both were run expertly. For Dixiecon, David Hood used WebEx as his communication system of choice. While almost certainly unintended (since he would have no way of knowing I've had to use WebEx for work since the covid emergency), the use of that program gave his tournament a great feeling of professionalism, and being able to use it to voice and video chat with both other players in game as well as the tournament at large throughout the event was seamless and smooth. That of course, varied by game, but in both of mine almost everyone made copious use of the video features.

The use of Backstabbr too, was a great choice for the tournament. There were some complaints about Backstabbr, the most understandable being that players had to continuously refresh the game page to check deadlines, but ultimately I think out of the online sites I've used it was the best choice for such a live event (I'll still plug for PlayDiplomacyOnline for general online games). Dixiecon used some very dedicated gamemasters that kept games running smooth and helped cover any issues with Backstabbr. The opening and closing ceremonies also created a great feeling of an actual face to face tournament, an *event*. David Hood really made a great presentation despite the virtual setting and some *slightly* irritable videobombing in the closing ceremony.

Boston Massacre run by Diplomacy World's own Randy Lawrence-Hunt was also a smashing success, despite Randy's threat that it would be the last virtual event he would ever run. Randy chose to use Discord for the tournament and in the different game rooms set up virtual negotiation rooms. While I liked WebEx a lot in general, I did like this aspect of the Boston Massacre set up, because it gave a real face-to-face feel to see which players were talking to whom in which rooms.⁴ Overall, Discord was a lot easier to negotiate with, using voice and video chat is very quick on Discord. However, Discord, at least on my end, did seem to crash a couple times and had a few technical issues that WebEx did not have. Both systems ultimately worked very well.

But ultimately, the hope for these tournaments is that the increased virtual turnouts will lead to greater attendance in person in the years to come. So, as a new player, was I encouraged to try to attend either of these tournaments in person next year? The answer to that question ultimately comes from how the games actually played out and how enjoyable it was to play with these communities. And that second part is important, because ultimately these long-standing tournaments are communities that can feel just as insular and tightly knit as any group--even if the people in those communities want to welcome as many new players as possible in. After my first game, I did say to myself "wow, I'm glad I didn't pay to drive up to Chapel Hill to get my ass kicked to the curb by players who already knew each other."⁵ It

¹ Cue horrific flashbacks of Pete Buttigieg's high high hopes flashmobs.

² Left behind in New Hampshire, one could say.

³ Perhaps the greatest health benefit masks may provide is a reminder to some people to take a breath mint sometimes.

⁴ It also gave a player the chance to 'accidentally' stumble into a room he might not have been invited into. I don't think this was done intentionally in my game...

⁵ Of course, I was ignoring the fact that one of the winners in that particular game was a first-time player himself. I was a sore loser, sue me!

is very easy for a new participant to feel that way, even if that's really not the case.

Luckily, I had already roped myself into the second evening round, and despite again playing in a group with several players that were experienced and knew each other, I was able to avoid the negative presuppositions I held during the first game of the tournament and had the sort of Diplomacy game one loves to play in--draining, emotional, stressful, exhilarating, and plain enjoyable. The Boston Massacre round I participated in was just as enjoyable in those special ways that a great Diplomacy game causes. Not only was the level of play incredibly high across all three games I played in, but almost every player in each game was a pleasure to meet and play with.⁶ I walked away from both tournaments refreshed and remembering what I love so much about Diplomacy.

Why? Because while email or online or mail is probably the easiest way to play Diplomacy nowadays, there is something about the face to face game that heightens the experience, even if the constrained time limits may prevent 'perfect' play. The Nexus on Discord is a great Diplomacy community. Yet even in a 'virtual' tournament, being able to video chat with different players going by their real names, learning more about who they were and where they were from was a great experience that cannot be replicated by playing online games with those same people. I'd love to see more of those online Discord players in these face-to-face tournaments. Playing with 'gohornsgo' in an online game still leaves a barrier between players in a community--playing a face-to-face game is a step further that really makes the experience that much better.⁷ And by experience, I don't just mean the community building, but the excitement of the game itself. Diplomacy generates such emotion because it creates situations that play on core feelings of humanity--and those situations are heightened the closer a game gets to face-to-face. Each turn, you feel a rush whenever an alliance grows in trust. Each turn you feel paranoia and even jealousy when you see others go off and talk. Each turn you may have a growing euphoria of success as an alliance starts covering the board. These building emotions lead to what is infamously described as 'friendship destroying' feelings of betrayal because those emotions build hour after hour with real people with real names and betrayal is an emotion that is incredibly painful to experience.



I've read those same words extolling the virtues of face-to-face tournaments in Diplomacy World for years, but you need to actually experience it to understand it. So to conclude, yes, I'm looking forward to attending Dixiecon in person next year. And while I probably won't be able to attend the Boston Massacre in person next year, you'd be silly not to make the trip to Boston if you live in the area. So, in conclusion, I'll just give some bullet point moments of enjoyment from each experience I've had during our summer of virtual face-to-face games:

- David Hood bursting into song for each of the Best Country awards was completely unexpected and enjoyable. What a set of pipes!
- The shame of seeing seersucker suits without wearing one myself stung in the Dixiecon opening ceremony.
- Edi Birsan communicating solely by 'Ma Bell,' leading to Ed Sullivan in Austria setting up a video chat with myself while holding his phone up to the screen while Edi talked to us.
- Owning Berlin as Italy during the Boston Massacre despite Berlin being unoccupied and surrounded by other powers' units for, I believe, 4 turns straight. #freeberlin
- The livestreams! What a blast to listen to across both tournaments. High level commentary that relentlessly continued for hours longer than I expected.
- Also, I'm happy to will these events into existence by putting them on the pages of Diplomacy World.

⁶ For the record: Germany from Boston Massacre round 1, I did enjoy meeting you!

⁷ I don't remember many usernames, so I'll use one I can remember.

Diplomacy World Demo Game “Dirty Rotten Scoundrels” – 2019A

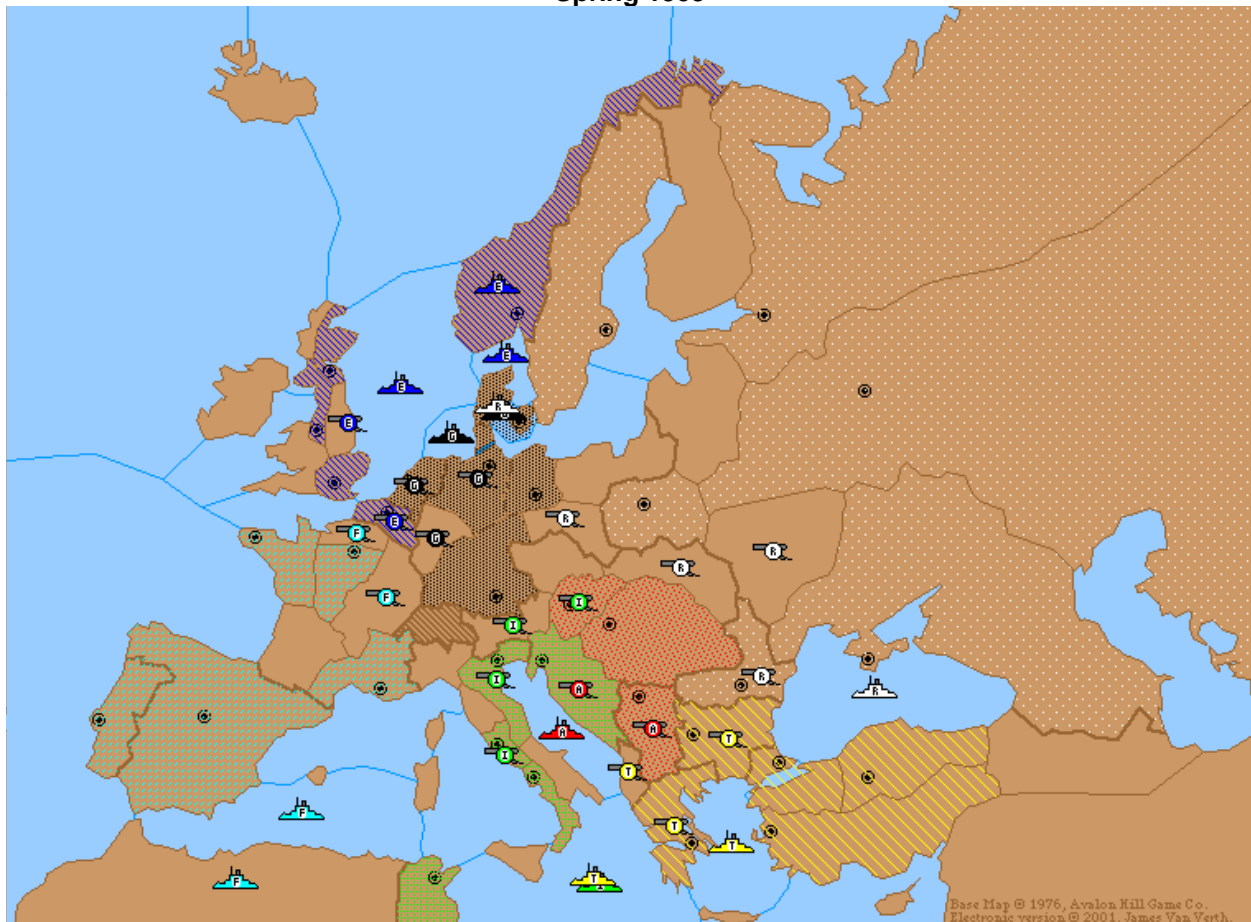
The Players:

Austria: Brad Wilson
England: Vick Hall
France: Steve Cooley
Germany: Dick Martin
Italy: Lance Anderson
Russia: Steve Nicewarner
Turkey: Stephen Agar

The Commentators:

David Hood
Rick Desper
 Jack McHugh

Spring 1903



Austria: F Adriatic Sea Supports A Budapest - Trieste (*Cut*), A Budapest – Trieste, A Serbia Supports A Budapest - Trieste.

England: A Belgium Supports A Ruhr – Holland, A London – Yorkshire, F North Sea - Helgoland Bight (*Fails*), F Norway Supports F Skagerrak, F Skagerrak Supports F Sweden - Denmark.

France: A Gascony – Burgundy, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - North Africa, A Picardy Supports A Gascony – Burgundy, A Ruhr – Holland (*Disbanded*), F Spain(sc) - Western Mediterranean.

Germany: F Denmark Supports F Sweden (*Dislodged*, retreat to Baltic Sea or OTB),

F Helgoland Bight Supports A Holland (*Cut*), A Holland Supports A Munich – Ruhr, A Kiel Supports A Holland, A Munich - Ruhr.

Italy: ~~F Ionian Sea – Adriatic Sea~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Eastern Mediterranean or Apulia or Naples or Tyrrhenian Sea or Tunis or OTB), A Rome - Venice (*Fails*), A Trieste – Vienna, A Tyrolia Supports A Trieste – Vienna, A Venice - Trieste (*Fails*).

Russia: F Black Sea Supports A Sevastopol – Rumania, A Rumania – Galicia, A Sevastopol – Rumania, F Sweden – Denmark, A Ukraine Supports A Rumania – Galicia, A Warsaw - Silesia.

Turkey: F Aegean Sea Supports F Greece - Ionian Sea, A Albania Supports A Bulgaria – Greece, A Bulgaria – Greece, A Constantinople – Bulgaria, F Greece - Ionian Sea.

PRESS

Geneva, Switzerland, Spring 1903: Now it was more than concern. War had broken out in the East, with the surprisingly aggressive Italians invading their neighbor Austria-Hungary. A-H had been making flirty moves towards Venice and it seems the ex-Romans had finally had enough. Germany was facing a French invasion and Russia was starting to press the Northern seas with more force. Was the center of the board going to explode into conflict? The sturdy Swiss shudder at the thought.

Austria: I am so popular, everyone wants to visit my lovely country.

ROME: We might as well call it now and get on with our lives.

Legends to So-called “Fake GM”: Hey, fake off! We happen to think gunboat is exciting!

Germany – GM: Thanks for letting me use pictures. Is there some way all my emails can be pictures only? It's my best form of communication.

Tyrolia to the fleet formerly known as “Trieste”: I told you to take a hike and instead you went for a swim. Bad move, chica! I'm afraid my new gf and I are going to be taking over your old place. I'd say I'm sorry, but we both know that would be a lie.

Adriatic to Tyrolia: I already changed my name. I wish I'd changed the locks—and taken out a restraining order. This is a very abusive relationship.

West Side to East Side: So, you all are taking Italy on your side? Figures.

Ease Side to West Side: It's only fair, isn't it? We'll wind up scooping his dots when he's finished . . . doing whatever it is he's doing.

The Oppressed People of Serbia to the Great Liberator from Constantinople: On second thought, we could use a hand over here!

From the “Poor Little Belgian Dairy” outside of London: Brilliant marketing, eh? You should see the Times! They have spilled so much ink telling my story. I had to stop with the “plucky” line when I found the Londoners were suckers for my refugee story. I'm now employing a lot of school kids—and every thug for about 20 miles. We're going to own the streets of London in no time. Things are still going well back home. I should have all of the UK looped into my criminal empire by the end of next year. I just hope this war goes long enough for me to rule the underworld of Europe. At the rate things are going, that might take upwards of 7 or 8 more years.

Summer 1903

Austria: Has F Adriatic Sea, A Serbia, A Trieste.

England: Has A Belgium, F North Sea, F Norway, F Skagerrak, A Yorkshire.

France: Has A Burgundy, F North Africa, A Picardy, F Western Mediterranean.

Germany: Retreat F Denmark - Baltic Sea.. Has F Baltic Sea, F Helgoland Bight, A Holland, A Kiel, A Ruhr.

Italy: Retreat F Ionian Sea - Naples.. Has F Naples, A Rome, A Tyrolia, A Venice, A Vienna.

Russia: Has F Black Sea, F Denmark, A Galicia, A Rumania, A Silesia, A Ukraine.

Turkey: Has F Aegean Sea, A Albania, A Bulgaria, A Greece, F Ionian Sea.

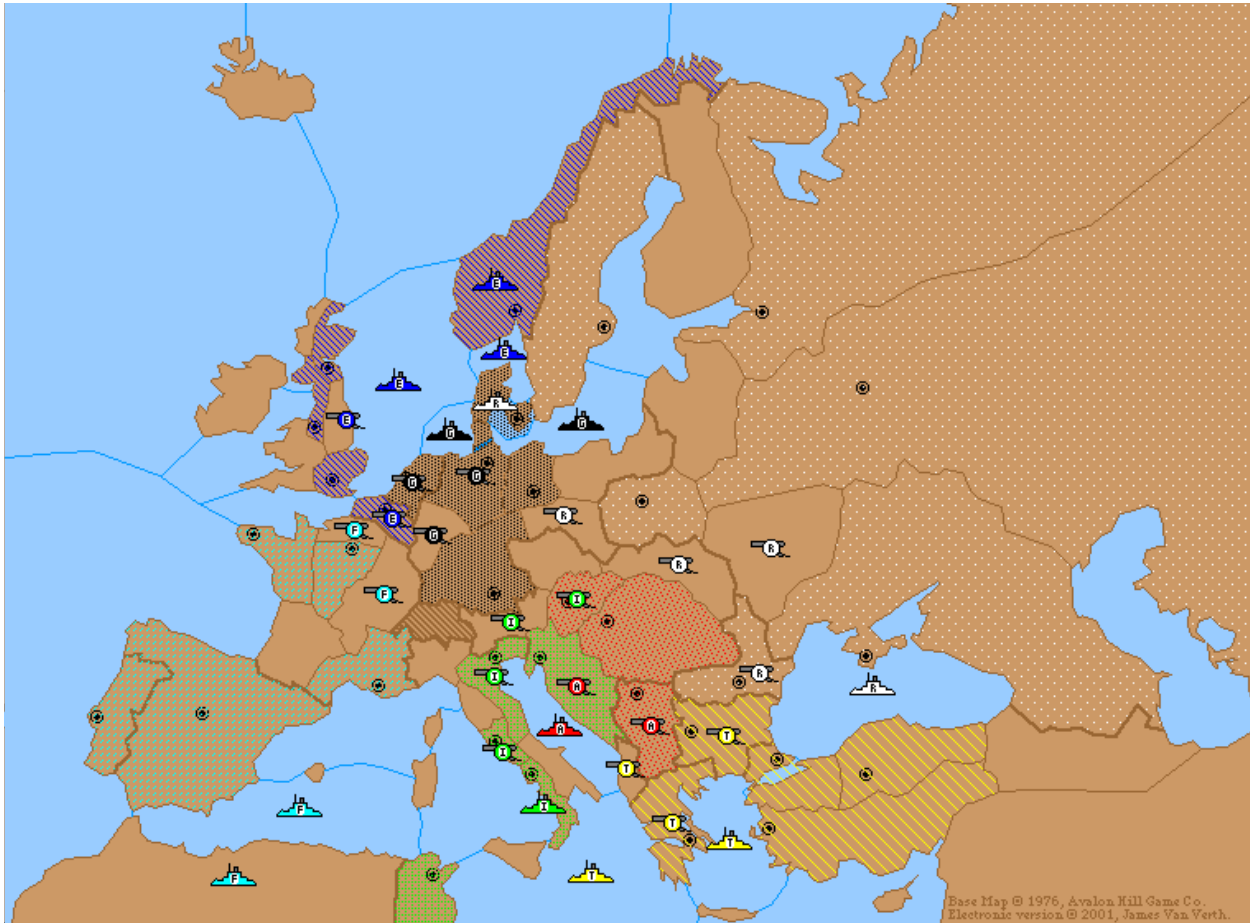
PRESS

dateline berlin: ok, so here's the deal: i'm bored to tears with the non-diplomacy in this game, so to liven it up for the brief time i have left, german units will be madmen. each of you (yes, even you brad) can submit an order

each spring/fall for one german unit, which i will then so order. if your order is used, that unit is "yours" to control in future turns, and you can submit an order for another unit as well. and so on. if more than one of you submit

orders for the same unit, i'll choose who "wins" by who submits first, or the most interesting, or just randomly. i really haven't made up my mind yet. i'll command units that are still under my control, which may or may not

cooperate with the madman units. the controller's identity will remain secret. sure, maybe i'm bluffing, but why would i bother?



Spring and Summer 1903 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

Let's start with the East, which is the easiest to analyze, I believe. RT appear to be cooperating so far, although that F Black Sea could still pose an issue for alliance stability. Indeed, it's possible that Nicewarner will consider stabbing sometime soon depending on how things go in the West for him. Brad's Austria should go out this turn, with the Turks taking Serbia, Russians taking Budapest, and Italians taking Trieste, although it's conceivable that Bud gets spared somehow if the Russians go for positional moves instead. The Turkish invasion of Ionian was also totally expected. The real question in the East, seems to me, is whether France is coming to prop up Italy or to take Italian stuff himself to help him defend against Turkey. I suspect the French are trying like the Dickens to get Russia on board with

cooperating against both England and Turkey when the time comes.

Which brings us to the West, where the Russians have definitely now thrown in with England against the Germans. Could be risky, totally depends on how fast Germany gets taken down. The destruction of the French guy in Ruhr is really good news for Russia, but only of marginal benefit long term to Dick Martin's Germany. Obviously, it depends what Dick does not with his pieces, he can't defend against three opponents, so perhaps we will try to survive as a puppet to someone. Maybe Russia? Unclear. If I were England, I would consider attacking the Russians right now though, and trying to convince Dick to puppet in that

direction. And as I already mentioned above, if I were France, I would be considering my next builds very carefully. Take Tunis, then build two fleets – which by necessity means a Fleet Brest which could potentially pivot north depending on negotiations with both sides of the RT alliance.

Fascinating decisions to come here...except for Austria, who is dying, and Italy, whose only chance would be to convince Russia to stab Turkey. Probably still would not save him versus France, but instead would encourage France to double-down on a Med invasion to take out Italian dots himself.

David has adequately covered the tactics of the East while providing interesting speculation about the motives of the central powers. To these eyes, it looks like Italy is cooperating with Russia and Turkey in the downfall of Austria. If so, A-H is out immediately. But what's up with the fleet movements?

I feel like this will be the typical midgame for an Italy that invades Austria in a game where both France and Turkey are strong. He'll just get stuck in the middle while Turkey and France each ensure the other cannot get past the TyS/IonS mini-statemate line.

If true, this game could get really boring really quickly.

The retreat to Naples is puzzling. Clearly the Turkish move to Ion was planned, but a retreat to TyS could have put up a fight for Tunis. But I guess Italy would prefer to sit in Naples and support the Turkish fleets moving West. Will that prove anything? Hardly. But it leaves him less open to Turkish invasion.

The pigpile on Germany is interesting, but I'm doing a SC count and what appears to be a 3-way alliance cannot really last.

The German retreat to Baltic Sea opens the door to a convoy to Livonia. It would be a fun move, but it's certainly not his best defense. Dick has been playing a very strong tactical defense.

I agree with David and Rick's comments for the most part. Russia is doing the best in the East although I like Agar's positioning with Turkey—he's developed it

about as well and as quickly as one can to get out the restricted corner of the board.

Brad is doing as well as one would expect with such a poor hand—he is trying to make something out of a busted baby straight but there is only so much Brad can do.

Lance is in the same boat except he has a pair of low cards. France's quick breakout into NAF and WMe is bad news for Italy. Turkey's competent deployment is also not much of a help here either. Italy has only one thing going for it that Austria does not have—he is on the stalemate line. This means if Italy can hold out he should be able to either get support from Turkey or France or simply hold out as a beleaguered garrison state. Neither Turkey nor France dares risking Italy's downfall for fear the other side will get Italy's dots or cross the stalemate line.

In the West, I would point out something my distinguished fellow commentators have not; they appear to be making a couple of assumptions, which may or may not, turn out to be true.

The first of these is that Germany is the odd man out in the West and the Western Triple is dead. Not convinced this is the case completely.

This brings us to the second assumption there an Anglo-Russian alliance. Yes, England did help Russia into Den but given the Russian tidal wave swamping Europe, I'm not sure that alliance has any legs.

The last is that France was not in on his destruction of his A Ruh. If Western Triple is still alive, then that army is better off as a fleet in the Med than as an army in the Low Countries.

I'm curious to see how the situations in the Med and Scandinavia play out. I think these will offer us the most insight into what is really happening.

Fall 1903

Austria: F Adriatic Sea Convoys A Trieste – Apulia, A ~~Serbia~~–Budapest (*Dislodged*, retreat to Rumania or OTB), A ~~Trieste~~–Apulia (*Disbanded*).

England: A Belgium – Holland, F North Sea Supports A Belgium – Holland, F Norway - St Petersburg(nc),

F Skagerrak – Sweden, A Yorkshire Hold.

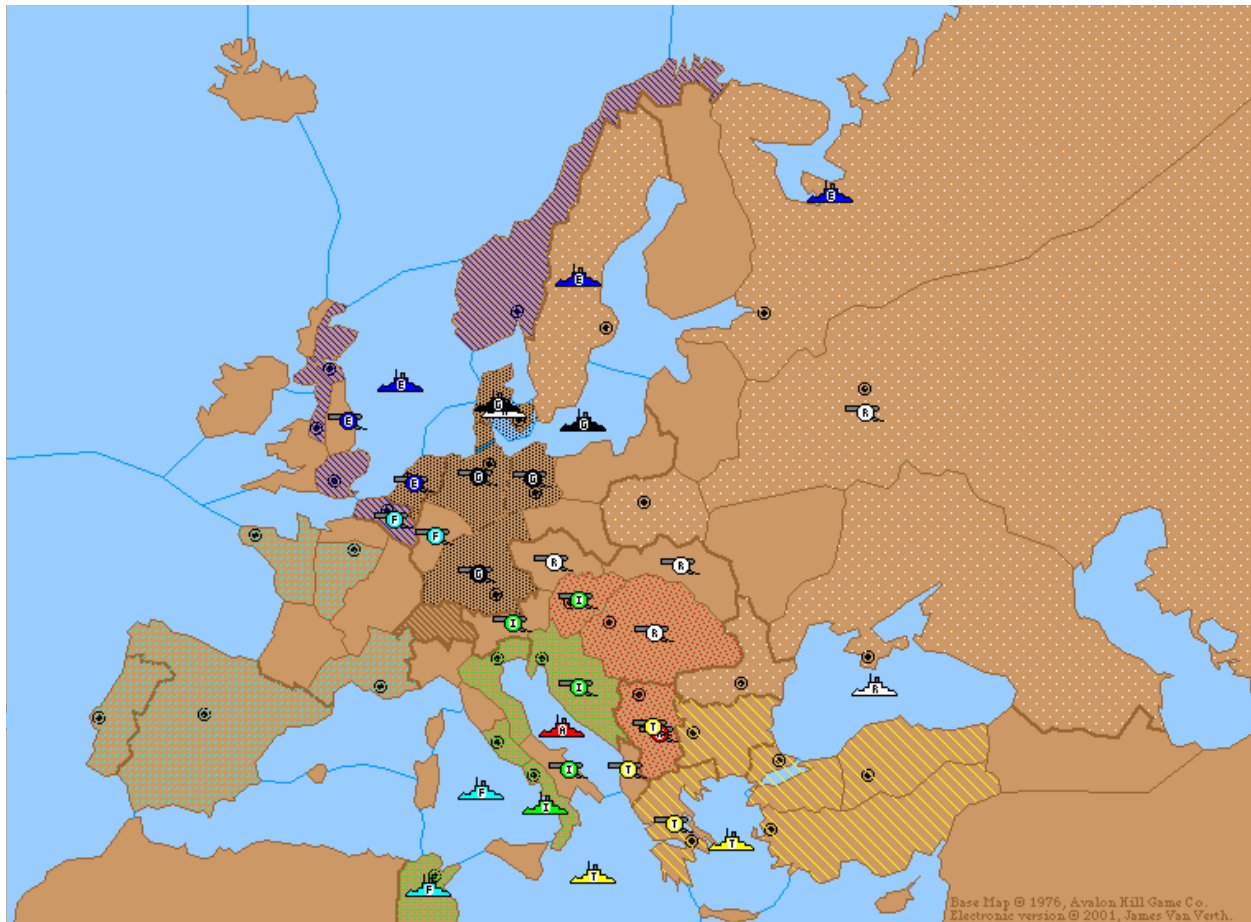
France: A Burgundy – Ruhr, F North Africa – Tunis, A Picardy – Belgium, F Western Mediterranean - Tyrrhenian Sea.

Germany: F Baltic Sea Supports F Helgoland Bight – Denmark, F Helgoland Bight – Denmark, A Holland – Kiel, A Kiel – Berlin, A Ruhr - Munich.

Italy: F Naples Supports A Rome – Apulia, A Rome – Apulia, A Tyrolia Supports A Venice – Trieste, A Venice – Trieste, A Vienna Supports A Venice - Trieste.

Russia: F Black Sea Unordered, F Sevastopol – Rumania (No Such Unit), ~~F Denmark Hold~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Skagerrak or OTB), A Galicia Supports A Rumania – Budapest, A Rumania – Budapest, A Silesia – Bohemia, A Ukraine - Moscow.

Turkey: F Aegean Sea Supports F Ionian Sea, A Albania Supports A Bulgaria – Serbia, A Bulgaria – Serbia, A Greece - Apulia (*Bounce*), F Ionian Sea Convoys A Greece - Apulia.



PRESS

From the “Poor Little Belgian Dairy” outside of London: Nicky was flush with cash. It seemed he could not make a wrong move. His adverts in the Sunday Times had quadrupled sales and now he was ready to launch something he called “Greek Yogurt.” If they felt sorry for a Belgian, they might just bankrupt themselves for some Greeks!

Nicky had spared no expense in stacking up members of the House of Commons either. He had enough chits to not even need to blackmail any of them—yet. Thanks to the English military, he'd managed to expand into Norway and there was talk of further moves into Russia

and Scandinavia. Of course, Nicky knew he couldn't rely on the political animals in Parliament. He would need to move faster than they would want. Was it possible to get across enemy lines and open some markets in German-held territory?

Nicky grinned. The future was as open an Oktoberfest bar tab. Nicky had no idea what that meant, but he laughed anyway.

dateline berlin: well, here we go. what's the worst that could happen? oh...i lose three? that would be good...er...bad!

berlin to what used to be austria:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EH7QMVnSRI> - it's

always the same.

GERMANY to RUSSIA: Do you expect me to talk?

RUSSIA to GERMANY: No mister Kaiser, I expect you to die!

GERMANY STRUGGLES FUTILELY as a laser cuts him in half. (No sharks were harmed in the filming of this scene)

Everyone to Austria: Yeah, "popular," that's the ticket! Maybe it's your excellent Air B&B rating!

Fake GM to So-called "Fake GM": This is getting faking confusing!

So-called "Fake GM" to Legends: Hey now, the point of all of my whining was to get you "great writers" of the hobby's "golden age" to write some press!

Legends to Fake GM and So-called "Fake GM": So, who are we supposed to send it to? We are old, addled, and in need of meds. How do you expect us to sort this out sober?

Fake Legends to "Real Legends": You know what? We fakirs will write the press! It will be more entertaining than you drooling codgers have been!

Drooling Codgers to Fake Legends: Fair point.

GM – Germany: Sure, pictures only for you! I might recommend something with maps in them?

Germany – GM: Maps? Listen up, pally! I don't do maps—got it?

GM: Sure, bub. Whatever. I'm just trying to help.

Italy to GM: You sure take a lot of flak. Why is that?

GM: Professional hazard. It's why they pay me the big bucks. Knowwutimean?

Tyrolia to the Fleet Formerly known as "Trieste": I have to say I am impressed! You went from break up to psycho in no time!

Adriatic to Tyrolia: Hold on there. You're not that guy—he moved to Vie!

Tyrolia to the Fleet Formerly known as "Trieste": Don't worry about it sugar cube. I'm about to turn the lights out for you. Heh.

Adriatic to board: I need some H-E-L-P over here! Hello??? Someone dial 9-1-1!!!!

Autumn 1903

Austria: Retreat A Serbia - Rumania..Has F Adriatic Sea, A Rumania.

England: Has A Holland, F North Sea, F St Petersburg(nc), F Sweden, A Yorkshire.

France: Has A Belgium, A Ruhr, F Tunis, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

Germany: Has F Baltic Sea, A Berlin, F Denmark, A Kiel, A Munich.

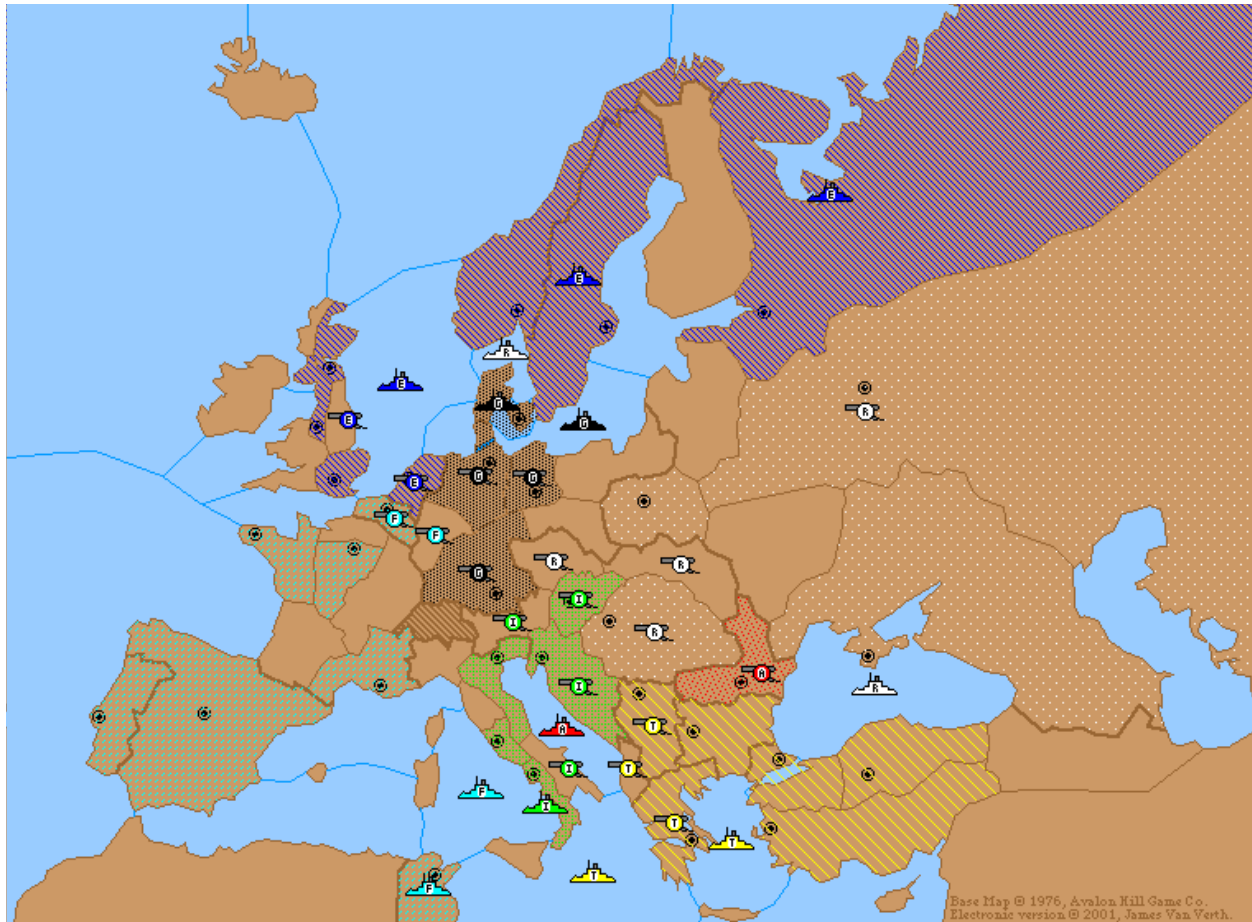
Italy: Has A Apulia, F Naples, A Trieste, A Tyrolia, A Vienna.

Russia: Retreat F Denmark - Skagerrak..Has F Black Sea, A Bohemia, A Budapest, A Galicia, A Moscow, F Skagerrak.

Turkey: Has F Aegean Sea, A Albania, A Greece, F Ionian Sea, A Serbia.

Supply Center Chart

Austria:	Rumania=1	Remove 1
England:	Edinburgh, Holland, Liverpool, London, Norway, St Petersburg, Sweden=7	Build 2
France:	Belgium, Brest, Marseilles, Paris, Portugal, Spain, Tunis=7	Build 3
Germany:	Berlin, Denmark, Kiel, Munich=4	Remove 1
Italy:	Naples, Rome, Trieste, Venice, Vienna=5	Even
Russia:	Budapest, Moscow, Sevastopol, Warsaw=4	Remove 2
Turkey:	Ankara, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Greece, Serbia, Smyrna=6	Build 1



Fall and Autumn 1903 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

Hey, Nicewarner, wake up buddy! Steve, you there? Yeah, that screw up was pretty terrible, misordering the Fleet in Black that really needed to go to Rumania to finish off Brad's Austria. Now that bloody unit is behind RT lines, which is a great shot in the arm to whichever Western power(s) can take advantage of the slower RT progress against Italy. I'll come back to the West in a sec. To finish up in the East, though, Turkey did the right moves, I think, to advance the ball towards his goal line of western movement, but good Italian move to block that convoy to Apulia and put his unit there instead. I assume Italy will try to puppet to the French here, even given the Tunis snag. If I were France, I believe I would take him up on that because the West is about to get more interesting...

So let's go there. England's screw-over of the Russians make sense, as I mentioned in the last commentary. Dick's moves are interesting in Germany, voluntarily retreating to home centers versus trying to hold in Ruhr. It may well be there he is offering things to both E and F

to turn on each other, and both may be considering it, although with each building several units this could get tricky. On balance, I'm thinking France should seriously consider such a stab in a turn where he has been "forced" to build two fleets and thus one in Brest. Or for that matter, to forestall the English attacking France with his two builds at this point.

There are arguments against doing this, certainly. Germany has four armies, so he can bounce back into the low countries if given an opportunity. Frankly, however, I see Dick at this point as a great partner to England, for sure, combining his land forces with English fleets to blunt French progress and still push into Russia to some degree. Also possible for Germany to team up with France here as well, and that may be what was happening with the Ruhr Retreat, setting up two French units against Holland in the Spring should France decide to go that direction.

What are the odds here? Probably still at least 50/50 that the EF sticks together to finish off Germany first. Next likelihood is that the English and Germans start working together, then maybe next would be the French and Germans. If Dick plays this deftly, which he is certainly capable of doing, maybe he can pit each against the other and resurge a little. That would be fun to watch. Also some possibility that Dick heads east now in quasi-agreement with one or both of EF to punish Steve and try to get some Russian dots given the total confusion the Russian Empire has been put into by the Rumanian Refugee unit.

Do we think perhaps Nicewarmer wrote a misorder on purpose? If Austria keeps F Adr, I'll say there's a chance of that. My initial reaction was "ha ha, bad misorder", but maybe it wasn't.

If Brad does keep the army to be a rogue unit behind the lines, Steve is in very deep trouble. Oh, wait. We have three Steve/Stephens. [Note to editor: maybe next time we just play seven people named 'Brian'?] Anyhoo, it's kind of hard to figure out the alliance structure, but for the moment it looks like Italy is helping France while Germany is helping England. We'll be able to see more with the adjustments. If Germany removes a fleet and Austria keeps his fleet, this will become clearer.

Looks certain that Italy will help the French into the Ionian. The only way Turkey could keep it is if the Austrian fleet stays on the board and is friendly. That seems kind of unlikely, but I've seen weirder things happen.

One point I disagree with David about is that France would appear to need an army build, if only to keep the Germans from fantasizing about marching to Paris. And, besides, there's a limit to how many fleets one can use in Italy. They're at the TYS/Ion mini-stalemate line and France really needs to start moving Armies towards the Alps.

I'm intrigued at the idea of a stab breaking the E/F alliance, but I'm not seeing it right now. Vick will want to build some armies and get them over to Scandinavia or "the Continent."

Also gotta wonder how bad things are between Germany and Russia. If they're not bad, then they could reverse the flow of action vs. England.

But I'm really not expecting that. In any case, this is turning into a fun scenario. I dislike games that quickly lock up on the major stalemate lines, and this one appears to be a bit more fluid.

I don't see the Western Triple breaking up anytime soon. France lacks the necessary armies to dispense with Germany's services anytime soon. Actually Germany is in better shape than France at this point—the last move of Dick's successfully reoriented his armies to cover all of his centers while Steve's forces are separated widely in the Low Countries and Italy.

I agree with Rick here—Steve has an issue of both Bur and Mar being open while their armies in Mun and Tyr, the only redeeming feature here for France is Italy's army is not in Pie. In fact, from the deployment of France and Italy I would say it look like France and Italy are working together to get over the stalemate line before the two Steves, Agar and Nicewarmer, can stop them.

This game looks like it is coming down to R/T vs E/F/I/G. This assumes that Italy and Germany don't turn on France or England and Germany don't turn on France or France, Italy and England don't turn on Germany. As you can see, I think the larger Western alliance is much more unstable than the two Steves alliance in R/T.

Curious to see whether Germany and Italy keep going west or if they decide to cross the stalemate line and throw in with England and France—we should know by the end of the upcoming Spring turn.

Winter 1903

Austria: Remove F Adriatic Sea..Has A Rumania.

England: Build F London, F Edinburgh..Has F Edinburgh, A Holland, F London, F North Sea, F St Petersburg(nc), F Sweden, A Yorkshire.

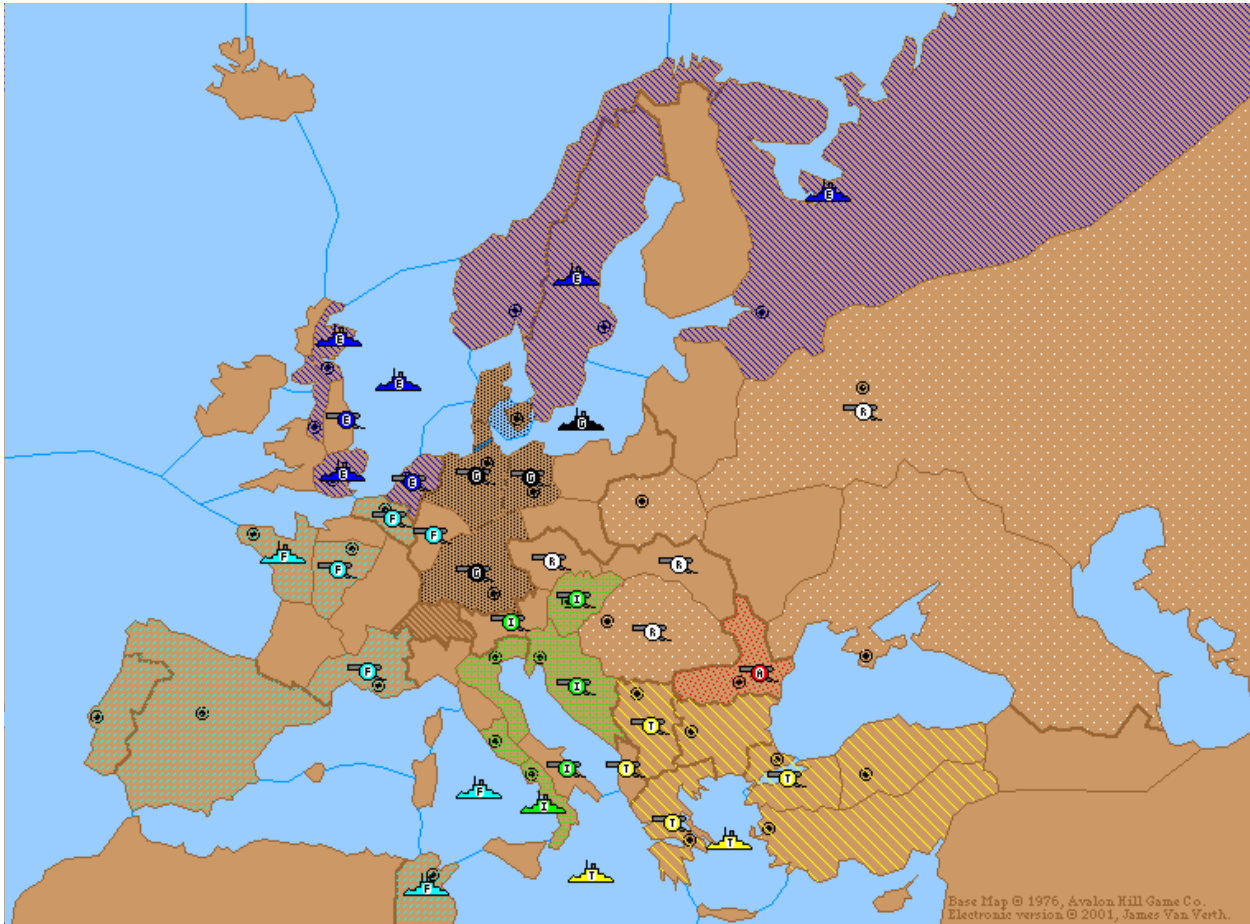
France: Build F Brest, A Paris, A Marseilles..Has A Belgium, F Brest, A Marseilles, A Paris, A Ruhr, F Tunis, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

Germany: Remove F Denmark..Has F Baltic Sea, A Berlin, A Kiel, A Munich.

Italy: Has A Apulia, F Naples, A Trieste, A Tyrolia, A Vienna.

Russia: Remove F Skagerrak, F Black Sea..Has A Bohemia, A Budapest, A Galicia, A Moscow.

Turkey: Build A Constantinople..Has F Aegean Sea, A Albania, A Constantinople, A Greece, F Ionian Sea, A Serbia.



PRESS

BUCHAREST: Mercenary army available. Yours for low cost. Contact Prince Habsburg of Rumania at his email.

dateline berlin: who wants to lay odds that austria keeps the fleet?

England-Russia: Sorry for letting you down after your help. It was a hard call and not a nice one at that. Apologies.

Winter 1903 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

Well, I'm not terribly surprised by anything in the builds except perhaps the A Marseilles. I understand the theory, it can help protect the interior or go to Piedmont, but what this does tell us is that France is probably not planning on fighting England right now. He does not have the fleet strength to do so. Reasonable folk can differ, obviously, but I think another fleet might have

given him more flexibility here given that he already had three armies.

Brad is openly advertising for business with his A Rum, which makes sense although it's hard to see any good reason for RT to respond with anything but an attempt to destroy it. I assume the Turkish army build is intended to help with that project, and then use the build from

Rumania to build the third fleet that Turkey will eventually need. There's an argument that could have built another fleet now, to cover the Eastern Med while his current Fleet in Ionian redeploys to Adriatic, but perhaps he is also trying to signal to France or Italy a willingness to deal should they turn on each other.

This is a very telling set of builds. In particular, England cannot explain away two fleet builds. Or can he? If he'd wanted to stab France, he could have built F Lvp. But the diplomatic advantage of F Edi might outweigh the tactical advantage of F Lvp. I'm not a big fan of England having five fleets if he's just fighting the one fleet of Germany. One thing that's very certain is that England doesn't think there is a Western triple. I thought he'd build at least one army here.

Looks to me like France is trying to stay friendly with both England and Italy, and that necessitates at least one army build. There is, however, a problem with the idea of France blasting through Germany. Namely, Germany is mostly armies at this point and the Italians and Russians are already on Munich. But that brings us back to A Piedmont. Italy has moved his fleets out of the way in the South, and that might mean cooperation near Munich.

I'm saddened by the loss of the Austrian fleet. Now Captain von Trapp has to retreat to the Alps. And that Turkish fleet in the Ionian is looking vulnerable, should Italy and France combine their strength.

I suspect this will be Austria's last year. I would have liked to see Austria live on in the Adriatic, supported by Rumania, but that's the kind of crazy idea that never actually happens in a real game. That army in Rumania is really an annoyance for Russia.

There are a lot of possibilities right now, esp. along the German/Russian front. I'm just hoping this game doesn't lock down in stalemate quickly. The object of the game is to get to 18, not 9.

This is kind of a weird game. It looks like there is a general four-way alliance of your standard Western Triple plus Italy against R/T. You do not see this very

often because it quickly becomes what this game is turning into—a logjam around the stalemate line.

There is only so much maneuvering one can do in the Med, in the center of the Europe and Scandinavia. I'm not convinced that Italy and Germany can remain in this alliance for much longer simply because they are in the way. Although with both France and England both deciding to favor their Navy over their Army the means that Italy and Germany's armies will be needed for the near future.

Of course, looking the other way, this opens possibilities for both of the centrally located powers to perhaps turn on France and England, or at least English centers on the continent. If that doesn't happen this game is going to bog down very quickly.

