

Diplomacy World #151



Fall 2020 Issue

www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the **Fall 2020 issue**. The last three months were filled with some very slow days for me, but the time between issues has still seemed to fly by. One moment there were still nearly two months to the deadline, and the next thing I knew it was time to compile everything I'd received and put this issue to bed.

Before I go any further, I wanted to make it a point to thank Conrad Woodring for his generation donation, which was used to cover most of the costs for the **Diplomacy World** website for the year. Conrad has long been generous with his time, writing some quality articles for the zine. Now that life has made that kind of endeavor less workable, he chose to surprise me with generosity of a different sort. It's greatly appreciated.

I've had discussions with a few hobby friends over the last six months, wondering how John Boardman – publisher of the original Diplomacy zine **Graustark** – was doing. It had been some time since any of us had heard from him, and I know he'd been experiencing some health issues (especially his eyesight). With that in mind, I was very happy to get the latest (and possibly last) issue of his history/sci-fi zine **Dagon** in my mailbox. John confirms his eyesight is still a major issue, as is his being diagnosed with Guillain-Barre Syndrome (an autoimmune disorder). At the moment he is living with his daughter Dierdre in Maryland, and she will type any new issues he chooses to publish. Most of

the issue suggests more pay follow, but it's also numbered as "#706 (final issue)" so there's a lot of contradiction there. At least we know he's still with us.

While this isn't the longest issue of Diplomacy World in history, we do have a nice selection of articles. To begin with, I want to point out a new Diplomacy World Contest, on page 4. The entry rules are simple, and the winner will become the proud owner of a unique piece of hobby history.

One topic that continues to be popular is the debate over scoring systems. We have two impressive articles in that regard. Luiz L.S. Neto checks in with his take on the subject, and then Brandon Fogel updated our readers on the first six months of the Tribute system, and what he's learned during that time (as well as responding to various comments from people who are unhappy with Tribute).

It looks like I've already run out of space, so I'll leave it to you to check the table of contents to see what else is happening this issue. ***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is January 1, 2021.*** 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 winter, and happy stabbing!

Selected Upcoming Conventions

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

Tempest – October 17th, 2020 – Virtual Tournament – <http://www.ptks.org/temptest-2020>

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – October 24th, 2020 – Virtual Tournament – Email: edwardzacha785@gmail.com

Carnage 23 – November 6th – November 8th, 2020 – Virtual Tournament - <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

World Diplomacy Classic – December 18th – December 20th, 2020 – Virtual Tournament - <https://liberty-cup.com/world-diplomacy-classic/>

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

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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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Diplomacy World Contest!

Late in September I received an email from Robert Correll, a mainstay in the Diplomacy hobby during the 1970's, and the co-editor of **Paroxysm**. In his email, Robert described how he acquired a Diplomacy map signed by many hobby luminaries of the day. He wrote:

"Back in the summer of 1975, I attended DIPCON VIII, in Chicago, hosted by Gordy Anderson. I brought an unmounted board map purchased from Games Research Inc. (GRI). I was inspired to do this having been quite involved in PBM and the great time I had at DIPCON VII. I collected numerous autographs. Upon my return to Canada I had the board mounted and framed. Now getting on in years and noting some nostalgia in **Diplomacy World** for this time period, it strikes me there might be a better home for this artifact. Autographs on the board include:

Allan Calhamer
John Moot
Gordy Anderson
Edi Birsan
John Boyer
Walt Buchanan
Douglas Beyerlein
Marie Beyerlein

Larry Doble
Harry Drews
Joel Klein
Lenny "the Lizard" Lakofka
Steve McLindon
Gil Neiger
Lewis Pulsipher
Charles Reinsel

Michael Rocamora
Doug Ronson
Michael Rosen
Scott Rosenberg
Warren Wyman
Nicholas Ulanov
Lou Zocchi

and a number of others which I am embarrassed to say I can't make out (remember). *[[I believe I see Lee Kendter's signature in Wales]]*. Apologies if I have misspelled the name of any of those listed."



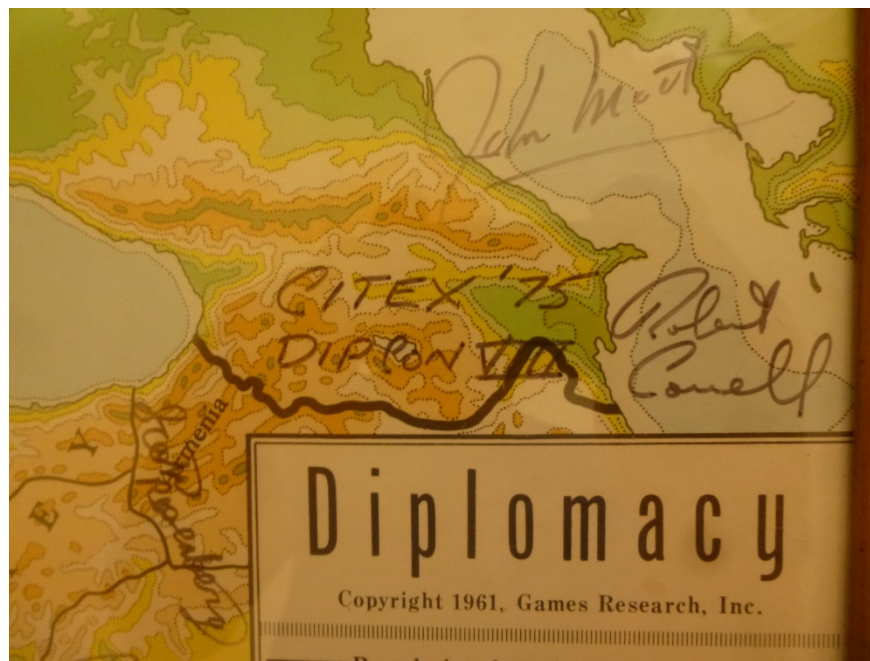
We traded a few emails and discussed ideas for rehousing this treasure. Robert wanted to make sure it would go to someone who would recognize its historic importance to the hobby, and appreciate it the way he has.



With that in mind, I came up with a simple proposal: we would hold a contest for the map. The rules are simple. Send me a letter explaining why you want or deserve (or both) to take ownership of this signed map. Email it to me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com by the deadline of December 1, 2020. Between Robert and myself we will read all the entries and determine who the winner is. It's as simple as that!



Allan Calhamer's signature in the Barents Sea



So get your brain in gear, write up an entry, and send it in. Whether you want to win it for yourself, for your gaming club, or to use as a prize for a future event, that's entirely up to you. Just explain it all in the entry, and may the best diplomat win!

Deadline for the Contest is: December 1, 2020

The Return of the High King

By Eamon Driscoll

About a decade ago, as I was becoming more familiar with Diplomacy and the Windy City Weasels, I was perusing Wikipedia in search of more information about Dip. And there I found the Ard Rí variant. This variant has been lost to time, having seemingly vanished into the aether. The only other information I could find about it came from a single image of the published game board, itself an astonishing thing -- if the game managed to be published, it must surely be a decent variant.



Map with Province Names

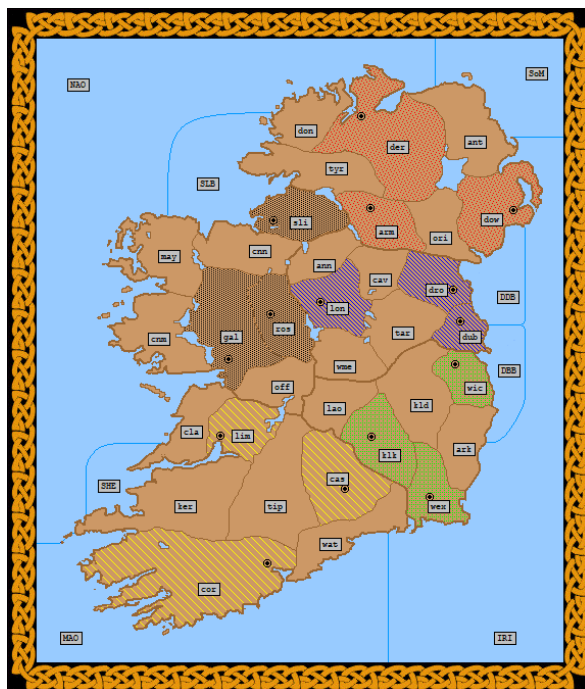
So I endeavoured to bring it back. That was back in 2011. Now, having had the benefit of a global pandemic to make going to the park a less attractive option than staying in, I finally sat down to the arduous task of completing Ard Rí. It is now ready for play, and I am hosting the first run on the play-by-email site diplomaticcorp.com. Full appreciation for creating this variant goes to Stuart John Bernard, who put it together in 1996. I'm just the intermediary.

Because this is a wholly new variant to just about everyone, some explanation is required. The game begins in Winter 379 in an Ireland that has yet to know the pain of English oppression. Nevertheless, all provinces have their English-language names, purely because this makes the game easier to relate to for

those who know or want to know Irish geography. This apparently was before the Irish figured out that naming something means it can be invaded, to extend Edi Birsan's joke. But starting in winter means that players will negotiate before putting units on the board - the tension starts immediately!

The five players are Connaght (black), Leinster (green), Meath (blue), Munster (yellow), and Ulster (red). Some changes were made from the original game to make it more playable: I changed a border that gave Leinster too significant an edge over Munster in the very first turn; building two armies straightaway would guarantee seizure of the dot. I also made a change that made Ard Rí playable at all on the realpolitik adjudication programme: removing the optional Viking power and the off-board SCs that can be earned by raiding.

The sense of the variant that I have from playing a few quick games by moving pieces around is that it puts everyone in the fray immediately. There is nowhere to hide, no stalemate lines, no reason not to negotiate feverishly with every other power from the very beginning. Without neutral centers, Ard Rí is a zero-sum game at the onset and players find themselves in a cutthroat environment where opportunism and deal-breaking are necessary. Compared to standard, where an E/F can work just fine if England only gets one dot in the first year and France gets three, in Ard Rí every dot counts for much more.



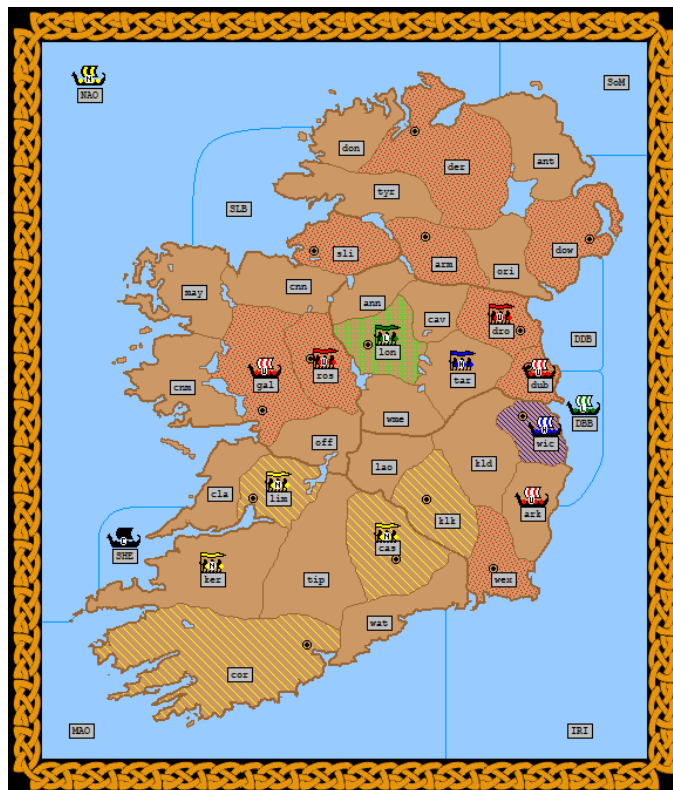
That was on display in the first competitive game played online, the recently completed dc587 on diplomaticcorp.com. The game lasted all of 44 days - very short for PBEM games - and ended after three years with an Ulster solo for Dan Moskovitz. In this game, Ulster began with an alliance with Connaght, which was immediately broken at the end of the first year. Maybe it was due to the position that Ulster finds itself in, with access to the upper-left and lower-right corners, but the Ulster navy was integral to the triumph.

Ulster was never seriously threatened given his control of the seas, all the action happening in the middle, and the other players failing to develop an opposition coalition. Indeed, Ulster was the only power not to lose one of its home centres to another power, though Munster did reclaim his as the game was ending. It is possible that the map being so confined compared to standard Diplomacy that the rapid pace of the game and the victory took some players by surprise.

Meanwhile, Ilya Guzman, playing as Meath, noted the unique difficulties of that spot: "for my nation all 3 centers are at risk of being attacked on the first move. On the one hand it seems I have option of moving in three directions but in reality to me it means I cannot move a unit to create double attack on a specific territory without risking my territory or even block somebody else. Considering that Lon is isolated staying in place is also not really an option." Meath ended the game with a one-centre survival.

Despite being created over two decades ago, Ard Rí is still very much a "new" variant in the eyes of nearly all players. Thus far its reception has been quite positive, and it could also be a fun and challenging game to play with the Gunboat rule applied. But where in standard Diplomacy players (with the exception of Austria) have the opportunity to see how the first year develops before committing to a path forward, in Ard Rí patience can

mean elimination. Quick, decisive action is the key to victory, and alliances can be made and broken within the same year.



Game End Positions

In the future, DiplomaticCorp may decide to host a mini tournament for Ard Rí. The smaller number of players required and the speed with which the games play out makes this variant an ideal candidate for such an event. I am hopeful that this variant will expand and attract more attention, and that Ireland will fit the niche of variants that can reach a quick conclusion.

Diversity That Matters

By David Maletsky

Objective matters are matters where a truth value exists. Normative matters are matters of opinion.

The object of a standard game of Diplomacy is the achievement of solo victory. This is not a matter of opinion, not normative, not open for debate any more than how a support order works in Diplomacy is, how collecting \$200 when passing Go in Monopoly is, or how a knight moves in chess is. It is a non-negotiable truth, an objective fact given to us by the very rulebook that defines and creates our game.

Diplomacy scoring systems exist for one reason only: the need for tiebreakers. If you only score solo victories, the overwhelming majority of players in a league or tournament end up tied.

I have heard for a long time from many people the virtues of diversity among scoring systems lauded. And it can certainly be true, eating apples every day becomes tiresome, stilted... it'd be nice to have some oranges, bananas, and so on.

But criteria can still exist that trump the desirability of diversity. Say you could vary your diet from apples by consuming sand. Metal shavings. Rat poison. I'll stick with the apples, thank you very much.

It is no different with scoring systems. Just because you may consider having a diverse array a strength, it doesn't mean that some systems aren't the equivalent of rat poison. As above, criteria exist that can trump the mild virtue of diversity.

It's true that hobby event organizers put in a lot of time, energy and resources. And I have long heard the adage that those that do the work have earned the dessert to make the decisions for their events, which is fair.

But.

It also remains true that these events are held not for the benefit of the organizers, or their egos. Events are held for the players. For the players to have fun, to enjoy themselves, to be able to play the game they love.

A number of core principles fall out of this; not merely for scoring system design, but for event organization. One is that the game that players love should be altered or skewed as minimally as possible, because the more unrecognizable the game becomes to players, the more polarized opinions of the newly created entity will become. In other words, we all recognize and share a love of Diplomacy. Rulebook Diplomacy. Once the meaning of the term "Diplomacy" starts to equivocate or vary, normativity, conflict and division roll in. We all love Diplomacy; we don't all love DSS. Drop dead timing. Colonial Diplomacy. And so on.

A second principle easily derived from the above is that players' enjoyment is paramount when designing the structural elements of an event. Undesirable elements for players morally overwhelm organizer preferences. Positive outcomes for players trump ego driven, theory driven, really any other considerations.

One such positive element in the game of Diplomacy is the existence of a diverse set of avenues along which players of different predilections and styles can successfully pursue the achievement of solo victory. You want to grab an ally, race across stalemate lines with tempo, and try to stab them in the late game to win? Great! You want to suck the entire board into a cloying

dystopian nightmare where no one is growing and everyone is getting increasingly angry with each other until everyone wants nothing more than to give you their centers to punish all the other players they have become upset with? Fantastic! All sorts of paths to success exist in our elegant game.

Until, that is, player motivations start getting pigeonholed by artificial structures they didn't ask for and had no hand in creating. Our organizer didn't prefer your strengths as a player, so they created a system where you can no longer succeed using said strengths... enjoy! You're a square peg... we would like to cram you into this cylindrical hole... best wishes!

It should be obvious that THIS is the diversity that matters. In-game player freedom of choice overwhelmingly trumps having a diverse array of event structures... particularly if some are rat poison

One final moral to this story: one doesn't find out what players actually, truly want by blithely assuming welp, they showed up, they must be as happy as clams. I showed up for years of playing experiences I didn't particularly enjoy simply because there were no other options available.

You find out what players want by involving them in the process. By crowdsourcing event structures over years. By keeping an open mind and always keeping a sharp eye on the dividing line between objectivity and normativity, because as pointed out above, this is not a purely relativistic continuum devoid of good and bad criteria.

You won't learn what players want by theorizing. Nor by fist pounding. Nor by fiat. Nor by listening to a small sample size of gladhanding locals. You need to consider a broad array of hobby experiences and perspectives to be able to distill out the tiny bit of commonality... because whatever droplets the process ultimately yields against the most stringent examination have proven themselves to be of worth.

It can be fascinating to read or write design theories employing everything from game theory to statistical analysis to higher math. But at the end of the day, what matters are not design precepts; what matters are the outcomes to the players. Full stop. End of story.

Why I Still Publish a Zine

by Douglas Kent

I'm old school. I know that, and I readily admit it. I don't use iTunes or Spotify; I buy CDs (and the occasional LP). While I do watch movies on Shudder and Netflix, I also buy DVDs, and own too many of them to begin with. I don't have a Kindle; I like to read a physical book, and to keep one in the car for when I have the opportunity to read while waiting for appointments, an oil change, or whatever else is going on. I don't watch Marvel superhero movies. I don't know any of the recent popular music. I'm still not quite sure how to navigate Discord.

With all of that in mind, it should come as no surprise to anyone that I still play in monthly Diplomacy zines. And I still subscribe to some, including a few which are solely distributed by post (even if you can send your orders in through email). And, as the title of this article suggests, I still publish one of my own (Eternal Sunshine). Granted, I did go on hiatus for a little over two years (between 2017 and 2019), but as 2020 started I resumed my monthly publishing schedule. And I've been thinking about why I publish one, and why I ever did in the first place.

In all honesty, the reason I started publishing a Dipzine was stupidity. A story I've told many times before, I started getting involved in postal Diplomacy in the late 1980's. I think I found an ad in the Opponent's Wanted section of Avalon Hill's **The General** magazine. That led me to Shawn Erikson and his zine **Victim's Wanted**. And within a few months I was discovering there was a whole world of Dipzines out there. So many places to play, and so many variants I'd never heard of. Gunboat, Woolworth, Colonia, Youngstown, Cline 9-Man...the list went on and on.

And the zines themselves were so different. They all looked different. Some were typed, some were done on a computer. Some were photocopies, some were still using ditto machines. Some were full-page, and some were side-stapled digest zines. Some were "warehouse" zines, with nothing but the game results. Others were the opposite, with pages of letters and polls and photos and drawings, finishing up with a few pages of game results somewhere in the back. Some had maps, some didn't. Some were six pages long, and some were fifty pages. Each one seemed to take on its own personality, based on three main variables (in order of importance):

1. Each zine was a reflection of the publisher's personality.

2. Each zine was a reflection of the type of player it seemed to attract (or particular groups of friends that congregated within the pages).
3. And each zine was a reflection of the resources the publisher had access to, as well as the technical skill of the publisher to make use of those resources.

All I knew was I liked a lot of them, and I wanted to subscribe. But the subscription fees would add up quickly if I subscribed to ten or more zines, and we were kind of tight with money. There had to be a better, cheaper way to subscribe to a bunch of these zines. I've got it! I'll start my own zine, and instead of paying to subscribe to these other zines, I'll offer to trade subscriptions with them (a popular thing back then, where two publishers send their respective zines to each other for no charge). As it turns out, I hadn't bothered to compute how much I'd lose every month doing my own zine (not to mention the copies I was sending to my trading partners didn't even have the modest subscription fee coming in to offset part of my expenses). Oh well, nobody ever accused me of having common sense.



Despite my initial stupidity, my first zine **Maniac's Paradise** slowly grew and thrived. And as it did, I discovered things I loved about doing the zine. These things still hold true today when I publish my current zine **Eternal Sunshine**:

I enjoy GMin' the games – As the GM, I am often privy to some of the negotiations going on between the players (depending on what the players tell me when

they send in their movies). That can be enjoyable and provide a front-row seat to the action. I also enjoy the physical adjudication process, because I seem to find a beautiful symmetry in the way supports and convoys work (or are cut). Seeing the board as a whole instead of focusing just on the area around my own units (as a player might) improves my abilities as a player, as it reminds me not to be myopic when I'm involved in a game. In order to include decent maps in **Eternal Sunshine** I use Realpolitik as an adjudication program, but I prefer to do it by hand first so I know exactly what's happening, and how it's happening.

I also really enjoy GMing some non-Diplomacy games, such as Acquire, Kremlin, Civilization (although that was a bit of a monster to deal with), and participation games like By Popular Demand and Where in the World is Kendo Nagasaki? I prefer to have a mix of Diplomacy and non-Diplomacy games running at the same time.

I enjoy the slower "postal" pace of my zine – I play some Diplomacy online, and usually those games have a one-day deadlines (although some extend up to a week). That's nothing new for me; back in the CompuServe days, games had one week or two-week deadlines (and the results zines **The Armchair Diplomat** for Diplomacy and **The Eccentric Diplomat** for variants were published weekly). But when it comes to GMing, I much prefer the relaxed "postal" one-month deadline pace. It gives me time to think about the games, to consider moves as they are submitted, and to make note of revisions and changes along the way (those can be some of the more interesting insights for a GM). Clearly there are many Diplomacy players who would never consider playing a game that could take a few years to complete, and I have no quarrel with them. But long deadlines give you time to play when you're actively busy with real life. It also allows you to communicate in the form of longer emails, which leads to learning about the other players beyond the game. Which leads me to my next point...

I enjoy the community of people my zine attracts – With a few exceptions, I've truly enjoyed getting to know so many people in the hobby, especially those that played in Maniac's Paradise and Eternal Sunshine. In general, they have terrific senses of humor, are articulate, intelligent, caring, and have a vast wealth of knowledge about many subjects I know nothing about. Over the years I've grown to call many of them close friends, including numerous people I've still never met in person. And I have fond memories of the players I've lost touch with (and those that are sadly no longer with us). Having published **Maniac's Paradise** for over ten

years, a lot of names and addresses were eventually burned into my memory. In fact, when I returned to zine published and started up **Eternal Sunshine**, I made it a point to search for many of the players who had once played in my zine. A few of them even decided to dip their toes in the water and give Diplomacy another try.

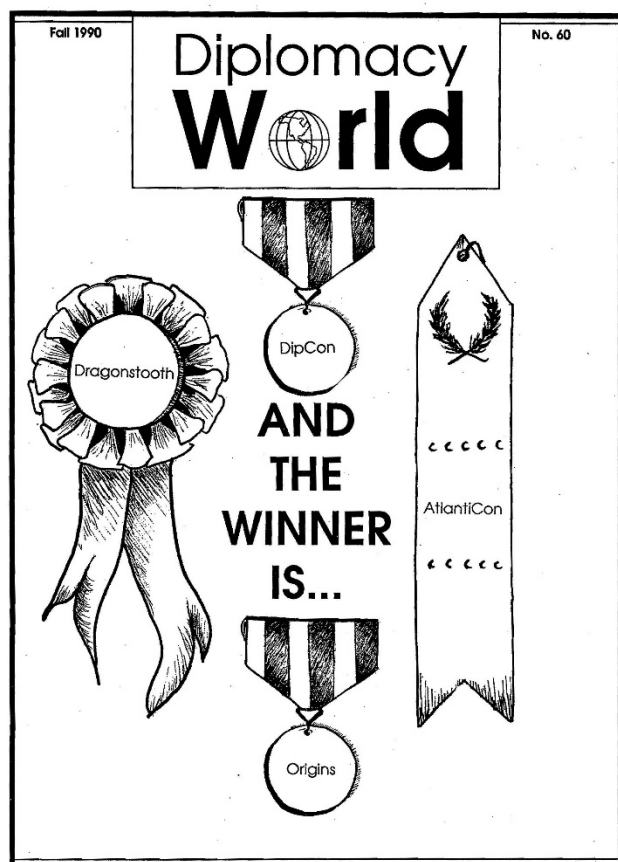
By publishing a zine, I also get to read plenty of other people's material – In both my zines, I've often had a number of columns or subzines written by other hobby members included. Back in the pre-email days those contributions would arrive by postal mail (or even by fax if necessary), but these days it's a simple matter for someone like W. Andrew York to email me a Word document of his subzine the night before the zine deadline. Subzines serve a wonderful purpose in the zine world, allowing more varied material to be included in a zine, and without the subzine author needing to worry about building distribution lists, maintaining pdf or html versions, etc. The subzine has a ready-made audience in the readers of the zine proper, and is distributed along with the zine by the zine publisher. There's also the freedom for a subzine or column to miss an issue or two with no problem, as the main zine itself chugs along in the meantime, ready to receive the subzine when real life allows the author time to put it together. I've been very fortunate through the years to have a wide range of subzines and columns, usually covering games and material I wouldn't have done on my own, and often would never have even thought of. As a matter of fact, when I started **Eternal Sunshine**, it was a subzine of Jim Burgess' great zine **The Abyssinian Prince**. It wasn't until later that I also distributed it on its own...and even later than Jim switched roles and TAP became a subzine of **Eternal Sunshine**. But the point is, those subzines have added a lot of personality to the zine. Politics (on both sides), more letter columns, recipes, stories about life, regional and local news, humor, sports...even a detailed list of the most minor crew members on Star Trek Voyager. Admittedly I'm not a big fan of my own writing, so I've always felt the subzines and columns contain the best material in my zines.

I could probably list another three or four reasons why I continue to publish a zine, but I think a little me goes a long way. Too far, perhaps? If you're interested in giving the zine experience a try, you can find all the issues of Eternal Sunshine at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/kent/index.HTM> or I will happily direct you to some of the other zines floating around the universe. Who knows, maybe you'll decide to start your own zine some day?

Ask the Hobby Historian: Diplomacy World Thirty Years Ago This Month

By David Hood

For my Hobby History article this issue, I hope y'all will indulge me a little. I was cleaning out some stuff in my garage the other day and came across my trove of past issues of Diplomacy World, mostly from the time during which I was Editor and Publisher. I published my first issue of DW just about exactly thirty years ago, the Fall 1990 issue number 60. Finding several copies of the zine in my garage brought back a lot of memories surrounding my attempt to salvage the otherwise sinking DW – I spent a bunch of time on it during that third and last year of law school. My long-suffering wife Sandi even did the cover illustration!



My friend Larry Peery convinced me to take the thing over, right after I finished running the 1990 World Dipcon in Chapel Hill, under the theory that perhaps all the hobby relationships fostered by that event (the largest in years for North America) could help grow DW's readership and contributor base. Coincidentally, my brother and I had published a political magazine on the UNC campus a couple of years before that, so I still had the software, layout, and connections with a local

newspaper printing company to take a shot at reviving Diplomacy's flagship publication.

So, my plan was to publish a 24-page magazine on newsprint, printed where a local newspaper was published, and then I would send it out free by bulk mail to everyone in the hobby I could find. Leave it to me to take on such a project without realizing just how bloody difficult that would be! I believe I published 1000 copies of the thing, then sent out 500+ of the them to every hobby address I could find both domestic and international (yes, children, we used to use the mails to run this hobby.) The remaining copies were distributed free at face to face events for the next two years or so.

Did it work? Yes. Was it work? YES. Indeed, I was only able to keep it up through issue 71 in Summer 1993 before turning it over to Doug Kent as Publisher and Jack McHugh as Editor. Shortly before that my awesome son Wilson had been born and my career was taking more time, so I had to call it quits. I'm proud of the issues my team produced, though, and encourage folk to check out these and other back issues on the Diplomacy World website at www.diplomacyworld.net – sure, some of the material is dated at this point, but other material is totally still relevant and fun to read as a window to history.

Back to the point, Hood! What was in this issue from thirty years ago? The big focus was on winners – who did well at the 1990 summer Cons, and who was winning/placing in the postal game ratings system called Dragonstooth and the International Diplomacy Tournament Rankings (IDTR). Are there any names from back then that y'all would recognize now? How about Steve Cooley (2019 Dipcon winner), Toby Harris (former World champ who participate in the 2014 Dixiecon game featured on This American Life and the Alpha Nerds Grantland article), IDTR promoter Don Del Grande (still active hobbyist who often attends World Dipcons) and Melinda Holley (interview guest on the August 2020 edition of DBN's Deadline News.)

Compare this focus to our current hobby. What are the big stories in 2020? Virtual Face to Face tournaments, including the development of what I call Diplomacy's Big Dance – the Feb 2021 Diplomacy Broadcast Network Invitational, which will be comprised of winners of automatic bids from league and tournament champs as well as at-large bids based on overall record using a meta-scoring system like we used to do with

Dragonstooth for postal play. The hobbyist of 1990 would have totally been on board with the focus here, unlike at other times in the hobby when an emphasis on standings, rankings and all that was seen in a more negative light.

Another fascinating blast from the past - Pete Clark did a study of 300 postal games, using the supply center charts from each, to examine the issue of relative power strength in Diplomacy. Which power had the most solos? Russia. How about participating in either a win or a draw? England/Turkey virtually tied. Which had the fewest solos but also did reasonably well in the survival category? Italy. Just to show you how much things stay the same, in this issue of DW thirty years later I do an analysis of power performance at our 2020 Summer vCons based on which opening was used.

What's the most interesting piece of history here? Frankly I would go with the Eric Klien interview. At the time, he was a 24-year old computer programmer in New England who was taking the lead on integrating the traditional hobby with the burgeoning group of play-by-email Dippers. Let me give you some fun quotes. In discussing whether email play would eventually supplant postal play, he pointed out the advantages for international games in particular, where the slow air mail compared poorly to "the two hours that international

Email currently takes...one day the delays will drop to less than one second for Email worldwide." Or how about this gem "To get involved in Email Diplomacy, the person should find out if they can get a free Usenet account...Usenet is also called Internet and Bitnet."

Can y'all imagine? Of course, the idea of playing Dip via a website was still many years off. And the concept of our current vCons playing live, worldwide, with real-time audio and/or video, would have caused our heads to spin around back in 1990!

Let me leave you with just one more interesting nugget from Diplomacy World issue 60. Mark Berch was the unquestioned Strategy and Tactics guru of that age. Indeed, my homage to him is the title of this very series, "Ask the Hobby Historian" because he once had a similar series back in the 80s. In this edition of DW, Mark proposed a novel French opening idea called the Lisbon Leapfrog – using F MAO to convoy a Gascony to Portugal in Fall 1901. It was almost unheard of in 1990 – but has become a somewhat popular concept in the hobby of today. Just when you thought there was something new in this world...

[[If you would like to read Diplomacy World #60 in its entirety, you can find it here:

<https://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw60.pdf>]]

The Weasel in Seven Couplets

By M.F. Morrison

The Weasel is a beast,
And seven makes a feast.

If you have too few
You can make a stew

But nothing tastes as sweet
As bloody Weasel meat

No Weasel shall we spare
Every piece part of the fare

Some prefer the horse,
Mr Ed, of course

But if you eat the horse,
The Weasel wins by force.

So sit and eat your meal,
An eaten Weasel cannot steal.

To the Victor Goes the Spoils: The Challenge of Scoring in the Game of Diplomacy

By Luiz L.S. Neto

"This isn't a game, sir. This is the Hobby."

Diplomacy, being a board game, has entertainment as its foremost objective. Seven players meet around a map of 1914 Europe (set in 1901, but that's another story) and try, through tactical genius and diplomatic cunning, gain the upper hand over each other as they battle over 34 "supply centers" scattered around the map. It is a simple enough premise that has guaranteed countless hours of fun and forged numerous friendships, both real and virtual.

Naturally, most of us already know all that. So what I would like to discuss is more related to the inherent mental gymnastics - and inevitable conjecture - of figuring out how, when and if we can assign a "victor" to the game under its most varied forms and contexts. In other words, we are talking about two things: when *Diplomacy* ends, and how to score results after it.

The *Diplomacy* rulebooks - from Allan Calhamer's original draft in 1958 to the most recent Avalon Hill release - have already been very clear on the matter of *victory*. Whoever grabs a majority of the 34 supply centers (18) is considered the winner, with the minor caveat that earlier versions of the rulebook considered a majority of *units* (also 18), not SCs, as the criteria for success. The question, however, is what we are supposed to do when nobody actually achieves that feat. Enter, the draw.

Back when the game was called *Realpolitik* (c. 1958), Calhamer had the following alternative in mind in case nobody won: **"If no one has such a victory [i.e. 18 units], all Powers still in the game share the victory equally."** As a soloist, it was a surprise that the concept of a "shared victory", so reviled by large swathes of the community (due to its propensity of inducing dull, unbreakable and quite boring alliances) actually came first from the game's inventor himself.

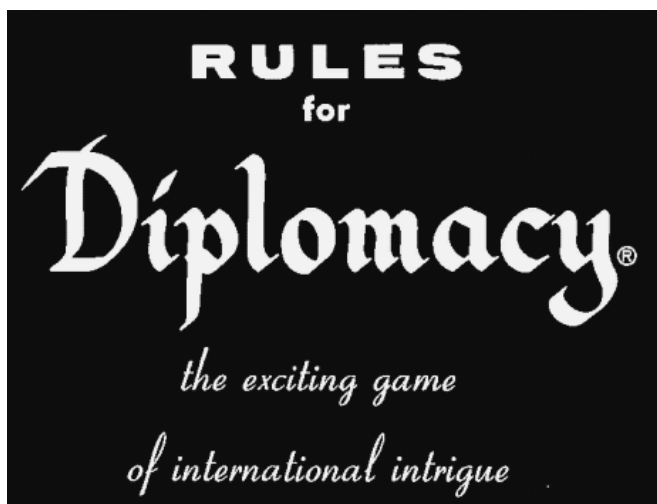


No further edition of the rulebooks - including the one Calhamer commercially (self-)published one year later in 1959 - would ever join "share" with "victory" again. In fact, the consensus slowly built from then on was that the "solo victory" (in contrast to a "shared" one) was the only kind of victory, to the point "solo" and "soloist" became synonyms with "win" and "those who play for a win". Another consensus is that whoever wins gets to claim the full measure of the scoring pool for themselves.

Without question, the really divisive issue in scoring systems is how a *draw* has to be evaluated. In the game's first ever commercial rulebook (1959), Calhamer wrote that **"If no player gets a majority during the time set aside for play, all the players who still have pieces on the board draw."** The very spartan description (which boils down to "the players [...] draw") was eventually replaced in 1961 by the idea that all surviving players "share *equally* in a draw" (emphasis added). It is safe to say that neither Allan Calhamer nor Games Research (which re-published the game in 1961

after getting the rights from Calhamer) ever had competitive or tournament play in mind when describing what draws are supposed to be worth. Any kind of

"points" assigned to what is ultimately a niche 1960s board game for casual strategy lovers is obviously artificial, well outside its original design parameters.



Still: competitive *Diplomacy* exists, is one hell of a blast, and people need to elaborate a system to score results from it. Oh, and elaborate they did. Thaddeus Black's and Brandon Fogel's seminal articles in *Diplomacy World* #133 and #149 (respectively) already covers much of the recent history and logic behind the most popular ones (among hundreds in existence). A notable example from their analysis is how Draw-Size Scoring (aka "Calhamer Scoring") paradoxically leads to smaller players losing more often due to bigger players hunting them down to avoid "sharing equally in a draw" with them, in spite of it theoretically seeking to reward the smaller ones for surviving that far with a considerable share of the points in play; another issue is how it rewards "drawmongery", or the pursuit of a draw alongside a stable ally in order to rank up a considerable percentage of the total points awarded (up to half) rather than bothering about the risks of a push for victory.

If a game ends with two players in deadlock at 17 SCs each, it is quite logical to argue that both deserve 50% of the points in dispute (although there are systems that score otherwise). Things get more complex when you have one player with 17 SCs, a second player with 12 SCs, and a third player with 2 SCs. They are equal in the sense that all three survived to that point, but that's about the extent of it: one player has a vast host of armies and fleets, another is in the middle of the pack, and the last one is a weakling barely alive. When scoring those three players, you must consider not only what is theoretically *fair* (vis-a-vis what they did on the field of battle), but also what kind of encouragement you want to give players who do care about scores and points. If a full-blown victory is to be encouraged, some systems are clearly more efficient than others in pushing diplomats

towards Calhamer's ultimate prize: "to gain control of Europe" (i.e. 18 centers).

Yet everything discussed above relies on the premise that the game managed to evolve through its natural ending - a victory - or to a deadlock-like situation that necessitates a game-ending draw. In real life - i.e. casual and tournament play - time is a precious currency, and games of *Diplomacy* can go on for long hours, and even online players might not want to commit to a months-long campaign. A proposed solution to this issue was made in 1961, in the very first Games Research rulebook (and with minor changes continued along every rulebook until being cut out in the latest one, by the year 2000): "[...] **it is generally advisable to set a time limit for the game. The player with most pieces on the board at that time is the winner.**"

Named "the Short Game", this introduced a new mode of play to the game of *Diplomacy* - one well-suited to both friendly showdowns in living rooms and world championships in convention centers. While that rule (which lasted for 39 years) is gone from Avalon Hill's latest release, its concept has been perpetuated and modified to fit the community's beliefs on what exactly each result is worth (for example, the "winner" in the Short Game rarely gets the same score as if they had achieved a normal 18 SC victory).

In shorter games the end the year ends is also of paramount importance. After all, as Josh Burton tells us in the 2007 Fall Retreats issue of the *Diplomatic Pouch Zine*, not all powers win at the same time. Some take longer than others, and the extra time taken to conquer eighteen centers may make all the difference when the end turn comes.

Median Game Length, in Game-Years, By Press Type and Winning Power

		All Games	Games ending in a solo victory for...							
			Anyone	Austria	England	France	Germany	Italy	Russia	Turkey
All Press Types		13	12	12	13	12	12	13	11	12
Press Type	None	14	14	13	15	13	14	13	12	14
	Incomplete	12	12.5	13	13	12	12	13	11	12
	Full	11	11	11	12	11	11	11	10	11

So it is perfectly possible to affirm that in a short game ending after, say, 10 in-game years, Russia is more likely to claim an outright victory - or, failing that, a leading position - than Turkey. Add to this the balance of the game itself: one of the most important charms of *Diplomacy* is the asymmetry of its playable countries. Playing as Italy is a completely different experience than playing as Germany, in a way that e.g. Risk's green and black armies don't come even remotely close.

This asymmetry gives each power different chances at winning - or even just being powerful enough to be in a position to avoid an elimination and enter a draw - and have much of an influence in the course of short and long games alike. Burton shows the considerable asymmetry of *Diplomacy* with clarity in the 2006 Fall Movement issue of the DP Zine:

Full-press games (at least White, Partial) (4516 in database)

Power	Wins	Wins/Draws	Calhamer Points
Austria	5.92%	27.28%	12.43%
England	6.46%	35.09%	15.18%
France	7.48%	39.30%	17.09%
Germany	6.39%	30.42%	13.59%
Italy	4.56%	28.35%	11.57%
Russia	8.17%	31.75%	15.27%
Turkey	6.32%	34.31%	14.88%
Total:	45.31%	226.50%	100%
Ranking:	RFEGTAI	FETRGAIA	FRETGAI
Imbalance:	17.44%	13.03%	13.22%

If the choice of countries (or lack thereof, as every single rulebook has always been unanimous that power allocation is "**the only element of chance in the game**") can influence the ultimate outcome of the game so much, could that be left outside of any sort of scoring system? If so, how can one accurately represent the fact that nobody really knows if e.g. France or Russia are the best performer, when depending on the sample size chosen they may even switch positions? Is winning as Turkey an achievement worthy of the same praise (and score!) as sweeping the board as Italy?

The answer to these questions, I suspect, is that scoring a seven-player game where everyone starts out in quite unequal footing and that never had global-scale competitive scoring in mind when being created is both an impossible errand and a very fascinating effort that has lasted for decades and will continue for many more. From the elegant simplicity of Draw-Disvaluated Scoring to the brilliant reasoning built behind Tribute, our continued fascination with how *Diplomacy* is played and evaluated shall last for a long time.

Openings: Who Does What and How Does it Go?

By David Hood

Due to the 2020 Coronavirus, the Diplomacy hobby had to cancel its face-to-face events from mid-March forward. We could not let the virus win, though, because we are competitive folk who like to win at stuff. Starting with Dixiecon in May, the tournaments all went virtual, using the Backstabbr website for the moves and some combination of chat, audio and video methods for communication as far as negotiations and opening/closing ceremonies were concerned. At the time of this writing, four such vCons have been held, very successfully in my opinion.

In addition to tournaments, both pickup FTF games and league play had to be cancelled due to social distancing requirements. Of course, being the stubborn and crafty folk we are, those hobbies has transformed into virtual play as well. A totally new method of playing, the Virtual Diplomacy League, began play in the summer and has completed, as of this writing, a total of 14 games itself. When combined with the recorded tournament games from the 4 vCons, we have a dataset of 82 games now from virtual play.

This is a resource I don't want to go to waste. As part of the next edition of the Diplomacy Broadcast Network's Deadline News, which should drop in mid-October, I as

With the important proviso that even 82 games is not a very large dataset from which to derive firm conclusions, particularly where the frequency of a particular opening is really small, let me give you some thoughts for each Power:

AUSTRIA – YAWN

The top three openings for Austria should surprise no one. Although I in particular love to try innovative plays for Rumania as Austria, out of 82 games there were only four openings which took that kind of shot. Take a look, though, at which of the three Vienna destinations actually scored best per time it was used: the oft-criticized and "boring" move to Budapest. Perhaps early conflict with Russia slows Austrian progress, or perhaps the data pool is simply not large enough, but I suspect most hobbyists would have predicted the move to Budapest to be the weakest start for Austria. Take note also of Austria scoring 8.1 in Total Tops versus its usual alliance partner Italy scoring a measly 4.3. More about this later when we get to the Italians.

ENGLAND – SORRY CHRIS MARTIN

My long-time friend and superstar Dip player Chris Martin is fond of arguing that should open to the Channel way more often. Ain't nobody listening to him,

host will facilitate a round table discussion about lessons and insights we can glean from the openings and finishes of those 82 games. To prime the pump for that discussion, the following represents some thoughts of my own arising from a portion of this data – the three most popular openings for each power, combined with the results from each opening and overall results for each Great Power. These comments only scratch the surface of what we can learn here, so by all means please look out for the next Deadline News episode.

Let me give a couple of explanatory notes regarding the chart which accompanies this article. As you can see, I have listed each of the openings, along with a "Top Scores" result which represents the number of times that opening led its user to score highest on the board under whichever scoring system was being used. The fractions represent ties. "Score Per" simply divides the number of Top Scores by the number of times that opening was used, to give a very rough estimate of how successful each opening was. The "Total Tops" number for each power means the number of times that power had the Top Score, or share thereof, including the times this occurred when using an opening other than the three most popular.

apparently. The third most popular opening goes to the Channel, yes, but even that's the Yorkshire Channel opening instead of the Whole Hog Channel move with Liverpool going to Wales, seen in only seven out of 82 games. The "Score Per" number is pretty bad also, one shared top in nine tries, although again that data is somewhat limited. On the other hand, look at the dominance of England overall at 16.3, as well as the Score Per figures for each of the Yor or Edi variations of the Churchill opening. This is particularly fascinating given how poorly England has been doing in recent Gunboat tournaments, as discussed recently online and in the August edition of Deadline News. Will England continue to dominate in future vCons and VDL – I guess time will tell.

FRANCE – CORNUCOPIA

One fact should jump out immediately upon review of this date – the most popular French opening was used only 15 out of 82 times, which is way less than any other Great Power. There were no fewer than 18 different openings used by French players this summer! (No one used my pet opening of F Bre-Eng, A Par-Pic, A Mar-Bur but that's probably because no one but me is hair-brained enough to do that.) England had a total of five different openings used, with Turkey at only seven.

Diplomacy players know the flexibility of France both offensively and defensively, so perhaps this is no surprise. It's also probably no surprise that France's overall score of 13.7 is very strong, second only to England. The question is: will we in our future games "meta" this correctly, when playing with/against France on future boards? Also, take a gander at the success enjoyed by French players opening at least one guy to Burgundy, in the "Score Per" column, versus going to Picardy with that third piece. I will discuss Burgundy again in the Germany section.

GERMANY – SCARED OF SUCCESS

When I first joined the hobby, it was relatively common to see Germany "go for three" in 1901 by opening to Holland and to Ruhr. Look what the stats reveal now – only three out of 82 Germans opened in that bold fashion, and those three did not get their board top scores. On the other hand, look at the relative success of moving to Burgundy instead of Ruhr, with six top finishes out of 19 attempts. Almost all of those moves to Burgundy were bounces with the French, as opposed to Germany actually getting in there, but the numbers here are hard to ignore. Another thing that is hard to ignore – the overall scores for Western powers are 16.3, 13.7 and 11.3 versus the much lower scores for the Eastern powers. Could this tell us something, perhaps, regarding how much impact Italian prospects have had on this imbalance? Does Italy spending more time in the East than West account for this relative discrepancy?

ITALY – AI AMITY

It has become a thing, at least in the FTF hobby, for there to be little to any war between Italy and Austria in the opening moves of a Diplomacy game. Apparently, the practice is a little different in the online community. The theory is that the RT alliance can be so dangerous to both A and I, that AI warfare must be avoided at least until one sees if an RT is forming. I will discuss this whole issue later when we get to Russia, but this ethic seems to hold for the dataset accompanying this article. None of the three most popular Italian openings can be described as anti-Austrian (like the armies to Tyl/Tri and armies to Tri/Ven plays could be described.) The sole army to Trieste play is typically done with the consent of Austria, either to begin a Key or to loan Trieste to Italy for anti-Turk reasons. Of course, look at the 2020 results for Italy. 4.3 board tops in 82 games is awful. Nathan Barnes of the DiplomacyCast podcast series used to argue that Italy often needed to be more aggressive in its dealings with Austria, because where are the bulk of centers near Italy located? In the

Balkans. Perish the thought, but could Nathan have been right? AI friendship seems to have benefitted Austria way more than Italy, although again, more data would be helpful as the vFTF tournaments and VDL games continue to be played.

RUSSIA – LITTLE STP SUCCESS

I like going north with Russia, though of course no move should be one's "usual" move because it always depends on the situation. Nevertheless, I was pleasantly surprised to see that War-Ukr,Mos-Stp was used 10 times out of 82 – but look at the paltry result, just one shared board top. By contrast, the "usual" Russian move netted seven top finishes out of 48. Another interesting factoid – none of the top three openings utilized Sev-Rum, which was done in the less popular openings a total of five times out of 82. At the very least, RT fans are trying to hide their intentions early, to avoid the anti-RT hysteria you often see these days. I agree that RT can be really strong, but honestly how many times have you seen that play out recently versus a strong AI beating up on both R and T separately because they spent so much time fighting over the Black Sea? Decades ago, Russia was seen as one of the stronger Powers on the Diplomacy board. How the mighty have fallen, given the 2020 score of 8.8 overall. Might as well be Austria, at 8.1!

TURKEY – CHICAGO STANDS ALONE

Last but not least we come to Turkey, the home of the Sundstrom Opening of Bul/Bla/Arm, extremely popular in Chicago and, well, actually just in Chicago. That one only gets 12 out of 82, whereas the "usual" opening is the single most popular opening in this whole analysis, at 56 out of 82. The results seem to be pretty good, too, with Turkey achieving 12.3 best finish scores to become easily the most powerful Eastern power. In some ways this is totally understandable, because if the Western three are overpowered, that would benefit the Eastern power furthest away from them on the map. Another way to look at Turkish success is to analyze it versus the Eastern power most difficult to work with as the Turk, Italy. Italy is low, so perhaps accordingly Turkey is high.

As I said in the beginning, this is only the beginning of what I hope will be helpful analysis of this data by others. Tune in to our Deadline News discussion on DBN in mid-October. Crunch some numbers yourself, and submit an article for the next issue of Diplomacy World if you wish. At the very least, look at this data and see if you should alter the way you play each Power based on our summer 2020 experience.

OPENING (Times Used out of 82 games)	TOP SCORES	TOTAL TOPS	SCORE PER
Vie-Gal, Tri-Alb, Bud-Ser (51)	4.8		0.094
Vie-Tri, Tri-Alb, Bud-Ser (12)	0.8		0.067
Vie-Bud, Tri-Alb, Bud-Ser (10)	1.5		0.15
Austria		8.1	
Edi-Nwg, Lon-Nth, Lvp-Yor (49)	9.5		0.194
Edi-Nwg, Lon-Nth, Lvp-Edi (15)	4.8		0.32
Edi-Nth, Lon-Eng, Lvp-Yor (9)	0.5		0.056
England		16.3	
Bre-MAO, Par-Bur, Mar S Par-Bur (15)	4.8		0.32
Bre-MAO, Par-Pic, Mar-Spa (14)	0.8		0.057
Bre-MAO, Par-Bur, Mar-Spa (11)	2.3		0.209
France		13.7	
Ber-Kie, Kie-Den, Mun-Ruh (50)	4.8		0.096
Ber-Kie, Kie-Den, Mun-Bur (19)	6		0.316
Ber-Kie, Kie-Hol, Mun-Ruh (3)	TIE		
Ber-Kie, Kie-Den, Mun-Tyl (3)	TIE		0.1
Germany		11.3	
Ven H, Nap-Ion, Rom-Apu (26)	1		0.038
Ven-Tyl, Nap-Ion, Rom-Apu (15)	0.5		0.033
Ven-Tri, Nap-Ion, Rom-Apu (13)	1.5		0.115
Italy		4.3	
Stp-Bot, War-Gal, Mos-Ukr, Sev-Bla (48)	7		0.146
Stp-Bot, War-Ukr, Mos-Stp, Sev-Bla (10)	0.5		0.05
Stp-Bot, War H, Mos-Ukr, Sev-Bla (6)	1		0.167
Russia		8.8	
Con-Bul, Ank-Bla, Smy-Con (56)	9.3		0.166
Con-Bul, Ank-Bla, Smy-Arm (12)	1.5		0.125
Con-Bul, Ank-Con, Smy-Arm (4)	1		0.25
Turkey		12.3	

DMZ in Airstrip One

By Jon Hills

It's official: Face-to-Face *Diplomacy* is now illegal in the UK! With effect from Monday, 14 September 2020, gatherings of more than six people in England - whether meeting indoors or outside – have been banned.

Part of the regulations to try and prevent a resurgence of the Coronavirus pandemic, this is commonly referred to as the 'Rule of Six' and means that - with its seven starting powers - it is now technically illegal to play a face-to-face (F2F) game of Classic *Diplomacy*.

Of course, as with any rule, there are exceptions. Immediate families of more than six persons are exempt – so if you are lucky enough to have seven ardent *Dippers* in your home then you're still good to go.

Likewise, existing 'Support Bubbles' of more than six persons are also exempt so, if Grandma or Cousin Joe also enjoy a game, there's no trouble there. (In the UK, a Support Bubble is where a single person living alone is allowed to join with another family unit. They can only join one existing bubble but more than one single person can also join the same group.)

Also, these rules do not apply to workplaces, so if you're lucky enough to have formed a *Diplomacy* club at your workplace, your games can continue unmolested. However, normal social-distancing rules would still need to be followed – which could make discrete negotiations quite interesting.

I should probably also mention that, from Thursday, 24 September, home working is again being enforced wherever possible.

Organised team sports are another exemption. However, as *Diplomacy* can rarely be described as a team event (or a sport, come to that), I don't think that helps much.

That is the situation in England. Inevitably, though, the situation changes in Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland. Although the devolved governments in those countries have also introduced their own 'Rules of Six', they are each slightly different.

Let's start with meeting indoors. In Scotland, children under 12 do not count as part of 'the six'. However, all six need to come from no more than two households.

In Wales, though, it's still only those aged 12+ that count but they must all be from one 'Extended Household' – whatever that is?

In both those areas, then, there is a better chance of getting a game together if younger family members can be drafted in to make up numbers. Maybe get them to play Austria and Italy so that they can be eliminated early!

Northern Ireland, on the other hand, has arrived at perhaps the most restrictive arrangements of all, saying that everyone counts towards the six regardless of age AND that groups meeting indoors must be from no more than two households.

Move outdoors, though, and the situation changes again. In England and Scotland, gatherings of more than six are still banned but we can have up to fifteen meeting together in Northern Ireland, with no restrictions on the number of households they can be from.

In Wales, that number increases to thirty – just about enough to have a small tournament! Perhaps, then, the 2021 Tour of Britain should become an *al fresco* foray through Belfast, Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham?

There is, though, one setting where *Diplomacy* can still legally be played throughout the UK and that is, in schools, colleges and other educational establishments. Groups meeting for educational purposes are universally exempt from the six-person rule.

Whilst it may be something of a stretch to argue that your local *Diplomacy* club is an educational endeavour (so it won't probably help Marvin Fried at LDC), it is widely recognised that the game is a great way to teach and engage young people on subjects as broad as History, Geography, Politics, English and Critical Thinking. So if you do work with young people in a school or college you can still introduce them to our wonderful game. However, you will probably still need to wear a mask and to maintain social distance.

Although a second spike of Coronavirus is no laughing matter, I do find it quietly amusing that this 'Rule of Six' was introduced to simplify and clarify the UK rules on social distancing. As you can appreciate from the above, it hasn't really succeeded. The inherent danger, therefore, is that the rules will be generally ignored.

Therefore, although I love the idea of 'speak-easy *Dip-joints*' popping up left, right and center, a more likely outcome will be countless minor infringements of the rules as people go about their daily lives which will do little to stem what seems to be the inexorable rise of the

'R-Rate' – this being the typical number of people that any one COVID-sufferer infects.

At the time of writing the UK's R-rate is hovering just over 1 (actually between 1.1 - 1.4); if it gets to 3 then we will be back in full lockdown for a second time – as is happening now in Israel and doubtless will be elsewhere. Boris Johnson, the UK Prime Minister, has just announced some further tightening of other restrictions, trying to keep a lid on things. We shall just have to wait and see what happens.

Despite the click-bait opening line, though, my topic for this column is not COVID, the lockdown or even the 'banning' of F2F play. Instead I want to talk about variants. One of the best ways for a *Dipper* to circumvent these new limitations would be to play a version of the game designed for less than seven players. Besides, with all the variations around the new lockdown rules, the link seemed appropriate.

Now, I know that some of you are seriously into your variants and play these before anything else. Personally, I'm strictly vanilla. I love Classic *Dip* and don't typically venture into the myriad worlds of Youngstown, Ancient Mediterranean or the like. I was briefly on a waiting list a few months ago to join a game of 'Five Italies' and have sometimes been known to play Gunboat – but that's really about as far as I go.

Imagine my shock and surprise, then, when the idea for a new variant popped into my head: Governments in Exile. I'll set out the features in a moment but first I want to explain the thinking behind it.

In early August I saw a *WebDiplomacy* forum post from DougJoe. He noticed that in one game a Power that controlled no centers was still active in the Global Chat, trying to influence other players. It's unclear whether this Power had actually been eliminated or whether they were in that brief window between losing their last dot and actually being forced to disband.

Anyhow, DougJoe wanted to know if this continued correspondence was acceptable or should be frowned upon? It's an interesting question and is perhaps deserving of a discussion of its own.

I know that the situation can be different in F2F play – often eliminated players will hang around being a nuisance or making suggestions to the remaining Powers – but there does seem to be a convention in the hobby that once someone has been eliminated, they no longer have any input in the game.

If you think differently then please let me know or maybe write to our esteemed editor in time for next quarter's edition.

I suggested to DougJoe that this convention might be a hangover from the postal hobby. I mean, if continued correspondence actually cost you time, effort and money, why would you keep writing letters if you're no longer in the game?

With the dawn of PBEM and Internet play, though, that restriction effectively fell away, yet - some thirty years on - we rarely hear any (typically Austrian) voices from beyond the grave. And that's what got me thinking about my variant.

After their territories were overrun in World War 2, the Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian, Polish & Greek governments didn't shuffle off to read a magazine or to get drunk and throw peanuts at the Germans – well, they may have done but it's not recorded anywhere. Instead, what they formed Governments in Exile – based in London (Cairo for Greece) – and joined forces with the Allies against their oppressors. They may not have been able to do much – although the contribution by the Polish Air Force (& Dutch, Czech & Belgian pilots) in the Battle of Britain should never be underestimated – but they continued to fight, often with arms provided by the British and Americans.

I know that Allan Calhamer was keen for his game to reflect reality as closely as possible. That's part of the reason why it is set when it is – no need to worry about Air Power in 1901 – and why we have simultaneous movement. But, if that is so, why do we have player eliminations?

Without wishing to state the obvious, elimination is a major barrier to player participation. God knows, it can be hard enough to get seven players together in one place for several hours – even without lockdown rules – without one of them being eliminated after only a few rounds. It's not conducive to repeat plays.

In my variant, therefore, no one gets eliminated unless this is unavoidable. Instead, a Power that is about to lose its last unit can be loaned a supply center by one another Power that is due a build. In other words, they can form a Government in Exile (GIE), 'hosted' by the loaning power.

Provided the unit has not been destroyed (i.e. forcibly disbanded through lack of valid retreats) the 'GIE' can keep their unit in play where it stands.

If the unit has been destroyed, then it can be rebuilt one of their host's home centers (although the type of unit cannot be changed and ownership of that center would remain with the Host).

Once revived, the GIE can then order their unit as normal, as well as conducting diplomacy independent of their Host. This is not a puppet arrangement and the GIE might be expected to follow the lead of the Host but this is by no means guaranteed.

This is very much the situation that Churchill & Roosevelt faced with General de Gaulle and the Free French. They could never be completely sure what the Free French were going to do but still had to supply them with equipment!

Of course, in WW2, any gains made by these 'exiles' were all tied to the Allied cause. So it is in my variant; any dots captured by the GIE unit count towards the Host's tally and can be used to build new units for the Host in the usual way or even to meet the threshold for a solo!

The exception to this would be when either the GIE or Host recaptures one of the GIE's original home centers. Then the GIE would form a new independent Government based in that center and is effectively 'out of hock' to their Host. Again, this echoes reality. In WW2, Churchill spent Christmas 1944 in Athens, facilitating the creation of a fresh Greek Government after Allied successes in Italy - and some encouragement from Stalin- emboldened local resistance fighters to overthrow the occupying Nazis.

If this resurrected Power then successfully captures a second dot – perhaps with help from their previous Host – then they can build in that home center as normal.

I would also go so far as to say that the GIE need not be formed immediately. If Austria is eliminated in Fall 1904 – it doesn't have to be Austria but that's the most likely candidate - what is to prevent them being resurrected in 1906? The key thing is that to be brought back in this way requires another Power to forego their build to allow it to happen.

At this point, I should possibly add a point of clarification. If the dot in question is actually one of the eliminated Power's original home centers then it would be at the option of the invader as to whether they wished to keep the dot for themselves or use it to bring the deceased back to life. Crucially, if the invader did give up their build in this way then this would not create a GIE as there would be a sovereign nation state occupying its own home center.

Hopefully, that all makes some kind of sense. But what are the advantages of this variant? Well, firstly, no one faces the ignominy of being the first out and the frustration of having given up a day to play, only for your game to only last an hour. Hopefully, this would make it

easier to get seven players together, make the game more accessible to new players and increase the chance of second plays.

I also believe that it promotes good alliance play and communication. Finding a suitable host remains a matter of diplomacy, which is itself dependent on talking to the other players. It also adds an extra dimension of intrigue and helps the mid-game communication flow. There often comes a point in many games where the early fallers have gone, the sides are drawn and communications are restricted to those between Allies. Having GIEs would certainly add an extra element of frisson to the mid-game and would keep all players involved until the conclusion.

Keeping players in the game would also increase the prospects of a solo, both by making it harder to force a draw and allowing players to accrue dots through their supported GIEs.

Although resistance to a board leader can still coalesces around the largest other remaining Power – perhaps through supporting multiple GIEs – the same technique could be used to gain an outright victory. For those familiar with it, this would be not unlike winning a Diplomatic Victory in the C/V computer game series.

Meanwhile, the offer of restoration might easily be enough to tempt a GIE to change sides. Setting up an effective stalemate line in that environment would be much more difficult.

It would also be highly entertaining to see, perhaps, a Turkish Fleet, operating out of London against France, or an Austrian army playing gatekeeper in St Petersburg, working with Russia to forestall a Franco-German attack. Keeping more players in the mix for longer creates new possibilities, and with them new challenges and strategies.

So, what do you think? It would be a nightmare to code for online play but I believe that it would work really well in F2F or PBEM. Feel free to run with it and let me know how you get on.

As ever, comments, suggestions or brickbats can be sent to Jon.airstrip1@gmail.com. Of course, it also may already have been tried and failed, in which case, please let me know when and why. Did something crop up that I've not anticipated or was it just horribly confusing to adjudicate?

Either way, I thought I'd set it out here and let the white heat of public ridicule purge it from my brain.

Happy Stabbing, Jon

The Only Thing We Have to Fear: Tribute's First Six Months

By Brandon Fogel

In "To Whom Tribute Is Due" (Diplomacy World #149, April 2020), I tried to recast Diplomacy scoring system analysis in terms of general incentives rather than specific outcomes. In the last section of the paper, I described a new scoring system borne out of that analysis, Tribute, which was developed collaboratively over 2019 by a cadre of Windy City Weasels, namely Chris Kelly, Bryan Pravel, Jake Trotta, and myself. The Weasels began implementing Tribute in league play in February of 2020, and since the April article, several other competitions have adopted it.

Tribute has produced a wide variety of reactions, some positive, some not. Diplomacy players tend to get attached to certain styles of play, often those promoted by the scoring system they learn first, and they can go further to develop views about what counts as "natural" or "pure" Diplomacy. This can produce strong reactions to scoring innovations, and Tribute has not escaped this fate. Here I will review the system's performance to date, respond to some criticisms, and propose a possible modification.

1. The big picture

1.1. Tribute

In Tribute scoring, every game is worth 100 points. If a player solos, they get all 100 points. In the event of a draw, each surviving player gets 1 point for each supply center plus an equal share of the remaining 66 points, and for each center the board-topper has over 6, the non-toppers pay 1 point in tribute to the board-topper. Shared board-toppers split the tribute paid by the non-toppers equally. 6 was chosen as the tribute threshold because it's the smallest possible lone board-top.

Players sometimes try to understand Tribute as a variation on other scoring systems. "It's Draw-Size with a topping bonus." "It's C-Diplo with a survival bonus." Tribute does have commonalities with both of those systems, but it also represents a radical departure. Because the survival bonus is in competition with the topping bonus, every surviving player has a stake in what happens with the board-topper's center count, regardless of their size. Likewise the board-topper has incentive to grow as big as possible, not just to top the board. Neither is the case in Draw-Size or C-Diplo.

1.2. A note on strategy under Tribute

Tribute is primarily a board-topping system. There are rewards for survival and to a lesser extent merely for accumulating centers, but the way to score big in

Tribute, short of a solo, is to top the board. Players who play to reduce the draw size without aiming to top the board will likely end up with mediocre scores, not terrible but also not good.

Because Tribute incentivizes survival, it also necessarily incentivizes eliminating other players. However, the reward for eliminating another player is relatively small, just 1-3 points for the first few eliminations. The total increase in survival bonus for getting from 7 players to 4 is 7.1 points. Not insignificant, but dwarfed by the benefit of topping the board, which is usually in the range of 20-40 points. Furthermore, focusing on eliminating other players may simply allow the board-topper to grow bigger, reducing the potential reward.

As I've written previously, players should aim to top the board, up to the point that there really is little hope of achieving it. In that case, players should aim to survive and keep the board-topper as small as possible.

1.3. Incentive measures

In the original paper, I provided charts that measure the strength of the chosen incentives as functions of other variables, like center count or rank. That was useful for seeing some of the details about system behavior relative to context. Now I'd like to consolidate those measures into single numbers. Note that I have added the Dixie scoring system to these calculations. Dixie is a variant of Draw-Size scoring that awards some points to eliminated and surrendering players based on order of elimination.

Growth incentive

System	Value
Tribute	4.65
Sum of Squares	4.35
C-Diplo	4.01
Carnage	1.44
Dixie	1.03
Draw-Size	0.53

Average change in score for taking 1 dot, averaged first by center count.

Survival incentive

System	Value
DSS	16.65
Dixie	11.90
Tribute	5.82
C-Diplo	1.01
Sum of Squares	0.26
Carnage	0.00

Average value of surviving as the smallest power with a single dot.

Board-Top incentive

System	Value
Tribute	21.55
C-Diplo	20.49
Sum of Squares	5.97
Carnage	3.53
Dixie	0.68
Draw-Size	0.00

Average change in score for taking the lead, averaged first by center count.

Dominance incentive

System	Value
Sum of Squares	5.65
Tribute	5.42
C-Diplo	1.00
Dixie	0.95
Draw-Size	0.39
Carnage	0.00

Average change in score for growing by 1 dot as the board-topper, averaged first by center count.

Balance of Power incentive

System	Value
Tribute	27%
Sum of Squares	11%
C-Diplo	-2%
Dixie	-9%
Draw-Size	-12%
Carnage	-15%

Degree to which taking a dot from the leader is better than taking one from another player, as a percentage of the theoretical maximum, averaged first by rank.

Tribute scores well on each incentive measure, which is no accident. We chose these incentives because we value them, and then we developed a scoring system specifically to maximize them. Whether these incentives are good ones to focus on is up for debate, as is whether these are good measures of those incentives.

These measures do have a shortcoming that is worth some discussion. They are all calculations of "next dot" changes in score, which means they only measure the short term impact of a particular dot exchange. Of course, long-term strategic thinking is important in Diplomacy, and ideally the incentive measures would take that into account. As of yet I haven't found a way to tame the computational complexity of multiple-dot exchanges.

The measure of balance of power incentive probably suffers most in this regard. I can think of three reasons a player might be motivated to fight the leader rather than another player: a) because board-topping is valuable, b) because the leader growing will hurt them, or c) because taking a dot from the leader is worth a bit more than taking one from someone else. I suspect all are important, meaning a good measure should account for all three, whereas the current measure only looks at c.

2. Results

Along with the current Weasels league season, Tribute has been adopted by the Virtual Diplomacy League (an online face-to-face competition), Nexus Season 5 (an online full press extended-deadline competition), Nexus's inaugural gunboat tournament, and Weasel

Moot XIV (Chicago's annual face-to-face tournament, online this year), as well as a series of private gunboat tournaments that I run. Here are some statistics from those competitions along with some others for comparison.

In the tables below, the "Survival Value" of a game is calculated by taking the smallest score among the

surviving players and subtracting the largest score among the eliminated players. Also, scores for all systems have been normalized so that the total score for each game is 100.

2.1. Time-unlimited face-to-face

We have had three tournaments with time-unlimited games so far this year, all virtual. Here are the compiled statistics from those tournaments:

Competition	System	Games	Avg Years	Avg Draw Size	Shared Tops	Avg Topper Score	Avg Survival Value
DixieCon	Dixie	20	7.9	3.8	20%	26.2	17.8
Massacre	Carnage	14	7.9	5.6	21%	24.6	4.1
Weasel Moot	Tribute	14	9.9	4.1	57%	39.3	19.4

Here Tribute shows marked differences from the other scoring systems. Games went significantly longer—2 game years on average—and resulted in dramatically more shared tops, especially in the first round at Weasel Moot, where 5 of 7 games had shared tops (including a 4-way). Less surprising is that Tribute resulted in more eliminations than in games under Carnage, where there is no survival or elimination incentive. Perhaps a little surprising is that survival was worth a bit more under Tribute than Dixie, which is often mistaken for simple Draw-Size, but this is may just be due to small sample size.

The high number of shared tops is both surprising and fascinating. Discussions with players revealed that the presence of the top board at Weasel Moot had a strong effect on play, especially in the first round, where 5 of 7 games ended in shared tops. Many players said they were content with scores in the 20s, knowing they only

needed to make the top 7 and also wanting to avoid becoming a target in the second round. This logic would likely have been attractive under other scoring systems as well, although Tribute certainly provides bigger temptation than other scoring systems to subvert an agreement to arrange a shared top. Whether sticking to such agreements is a winning strategy under Tribute in the long run is up for debate.

2.2. Time-limited face-to-face

Time-limited games play differently from time-unlimited games, since players don't need to bring the game to a point where everyone agrees the game isn't worth continuing. One would expect fewer eliminations and perhaps lower scores for board toppers in systems like Tribute and Sum of Squares, since there is less time to amass a higher center count.

Competition	System	Games	Avg Years	Avg Draw Size	Shared Tops	Avg Topper Score	Avg Survival Value
Weasels	Tribute	13	6.5	5.5	15%	41.9	10.1
VDL	Tribute	13	7.7	5.3	31%	38.6	11.1
VDL	SoS	7	6.9	5.4	0%	47.7	3.9
Liberty Cup	Carnage	19	6.8	4.9	26%	24.4	4.2

VDL has included both Sum of Squares and Tribute games this season, providing a particularly interesting comparison. Tribute has resulted in somewhat lower

scores for the board-topper but significantly higher average survival value. Interestingly, the number of shared tops is significantly higher, almost certainly due

to 2nd place being devalued in Tribute. The arrangement of shared tops appears to be a response to the devaluing of 2nd place. Alliances that survive to the end of the game are forced to be truly equitable in order to function. It is worth noting that 6 of the 13 VDL games under Tribute occurred after Weasel Moot and 3 of those ended in shared-tops, compared to just 1 of the prior 7. It appears that the shared-topping as an alliance strategy was uncovered at Weasel Moot and appeals to players under Tribute, at least for the moment.

Interestingly, games under Carnage at the Liberty Cup had on average a slightly lower draw size and a higher rate of shared board tops than under Tribute. As

expected, the average topper score and survival value are both higher under Tribute than Carnage.

2.3.Gunboat

I have run three extended-deadline gunboat tournaments this year under Tribute. A fourth is currently underway using "Half-Tribute", where the tribute rate is dropped to half a point per center (see Section 4 for a discussion of this variation). Only 14 out of 22 games have been completed at the moment, so the comparison is incomplete.

Competition	System	Games	Avg Years	Avg Draw Size	Shared Tops	Avg Topper Score	Avg Survival Value
Gunboat 1	Tribute	14	11.3	4.60	7.1%	48.2	11.4
Gunboat 2	Tribute	25	14.6	4.25	8.0%	51.0	13.0
Gunboat 3	Tribute	25	14.2	4.25	8.0%	52.8	12.2
<i>Total 1-3</i>		64	13.7	4.33	7.8%	51.2	12.3
Gunboat 4	Half-Tribute	14	15.0	4.33	0%	41.3	16.1

Without a clean comparison to a similar group playing under different systems, we can only draw rough conclusions from this data. There are big differences with FTF games, particularly much lower rate of shared tops. In games with lone board-tops, the average topper score and survival values are similar.

We can compare the performance under Half-Tribute, with the proviso that this sample size is small. Still, the results are in line with expectations. Half-Tribute lowers the top scores and boosts the survival value. Interestingly, the draw size is not significantly lower, despite the added elimination incentive.

3. Criticisms and responses

3.1."Board-topping is too valuable."

Some players have mentioned to me that board-topping seems so valuable in Tribute that allowing a lone top feels a bit like a "nuclear option", akin to throwing a solo. While it's difficult to quantify "nuclear", there is no doubt that the overall board-top incentive is higher under Tribute than all other systems (see Section 1.3). The score for lone tops is usually similar to that under Sum of

Squares, but because the 2nd place score is lower, the score benefit for taking the lead is much higher.

Interestingly, the worry that the allowing a board top is "nuclear" does not come up with Sum of Squares. This indicates that the perceived value of the board-top is related more to the boost in score one gets for taking the lead than the absolute value, which validates our method of measuring the board-top incentive.

So how much is too much? I think only trial and error can answer this, and it will probably depend on the context and personal preference. My sense is that the board-top incentive should be strong enough to discourage simple alliance play, but not so strong that lone tops seem too much like solos. It is certainly possible that Tribute's board-top incentive is just too strong and the increased rate of shared board-tops is a consequence. On the other hand, perhaps the demand for a shared board-top and the temptation to violate such agreements is an interesting addition to the tension between cooperation and selfishness that characterizes Diplomacy.

In any case, in Section 4 I'll propose some variations on Tribute that lower the board-top incentive.

3.2. “If you don’t top, your score is terrible.”

I have heard this complaint more than once and find it perplexing. It is simply a fact that Tribute awards higher scores to lower placing players than almost all other systems. The lowest score for a surviving player in Tribute is usually at least 10 points. It is almost always much less under Sum of Squares, Carnage, and C-Diplo. Draw-Size always awards higher scores to these players, and Dixie often does, but those are systems that don’t or hardly differentiate between survivors at all.

In Tribute, non-topping survivors typically score 10-20 points. One could argue that scores in this range are “terrible”, but I think they’re better described as “mediocre”. The average score for all players is always 14.3, so I think it’s fair to say that scores around this value are just ok, not awful.

Whether the lower end, roughly 10 points, is substantial enough to motivate players to fight for their survival is an open question. There is anecdotal evidence from Weasels league play, VDL, and Nexus that many players do think 10 points is enough, but I have also heard some players disagree, especially since the board-topper scores so much more. The value of 10 points will depend on the context, of course, and some ways of structuring a multi-game competition will make it more valuable than others. In any case, as I discuss in Section 4 there are possible modifications to Tribute that would provide more survival incentive.

A related complaint I have heard is that 2nd place is not distinguished enough from lower places in Tribute. A player finishing just a center or two behind the board-topper but 6-8 centers above another player will only score 6-8 more points than that player, while the lion’s share goes to the board-topper. This is by design, of course. A main motivation of Tribute’s designers was to eliminate the notion of a “good 2nd place”. We thought 2nd place should do a bit better than the lower places, but not much. We wanted to increase the board-top incentive and reduce the benefits of being a junior partner in an alliance, thereby lowering the incentive for simple alliance play. Doing this required that 2nd place produce mediocre scores along with the lower places, which dovetailed with increasing the survival incentive, another goal.

If you think 2nd place should be worth a lot more than lower places, then Tribute is not for you.

3.3. “It’s weird.”

Tribute’s truly unique innovation is to put the board-topper’s score in direct competition with everyone else’s

score. As the board-topper’s score goes up, everyone else’s score goes down in a direct way that is easy to see. This helps generate the strong balance of power incentive, which gives everyone a reason to fight the board-topper rather than each other (which may not outweigh other reasons, of course). It also means that the board-topper has a different set of incentives from the other players, and some people find this just plain weird.

The main way this shows up is with draw size. Non-toppers always score more with a smaller draw size, meaning they have some incentive to eliminate other players. However, the board-topper’s score will usually be higher with larger draw size, sometimes dramatically so. Thus the board-topper has incentive not to eliminate other players. Of course, this doesn’t mean the board-topper should never aim to eliminate another player; if doing so will help them gain or ensure the board-top, or even solo, then of course they should. Likewise, non-toppers may not gain as much as they think from eliminating other players (see Section 2).

Is it “weird” for a player to have incentive for something at one point in the game and then incentive against that same thing at another point? The answer depends on what you think a good strategy game should be like. If you think games should have static reward structures that don’t depend on a player’s position or the evolution of the game, then you’ll find Tribute to be problematic.

This doesn’t bother me. The only preconceived notion I have of a good strategy game is that it create difficult decisions between competing options and that success makes the decisions harder. Furthermore, as I discuss in Section 1.2, I don’t think focusing on eliminating other players is a winning strategy in Tribute. I think players should focus from the beginning on securing the board-top by whatever means necessary. If eliminating another player will increase your chances of topping the board, then definitely do that. If leaving a player alive will increase your chances of topping the board, then definitely do that. Eliminating another player for the sole purpose of increasing your score should only be pursued if the board-topper is stalemated and you have free units to do it.

It is possible that Tribute has helped us learn that topping the board and getting a high center count is actually harder in general with more survivors. If so, rewarding that is sensible. To be clear, however, this was not an intended incentive of the designers, but rather a byproduct of Tribute’s implementation of the balance of power incentive. It is possible that a strong balance of power incentive can be implemented without this “weirdness”, but it is also possible that it is just novelty by another name.

3.4. “There are situations where you can lower your score by gaining a dot.”

Peter McNamara advanced this objection in a letter to the editor in *Diplomacy World* #150, and I've heard it mentioned by others in casual conversation. Peter identifies a particular formal property—monotonicity—that he thinks every scoring system should have. It's meant to codify the intuition that one's score should increase with increasing center count. He presents an example where a player's score in Tribute goes down by taking a center from another player and argues that this means the system has failed the “basics”.

Of the roughly 79,000 logically possible ways to arrange a player taking a dot from another, 594 result in a small loss for the taker under Tribute. These are cases where the board-topper has gotten to 14 centers or more while there are at least 5 players left and the board-topper eliminates a 1-dot power. Presumably the board-topper is trying to finish the solo at that point, sitting with 60-65 points and losing a point or two for the chance to get to 100. Note the rarity of these situations: in over 99% of dot-takings under Tribute, the dot-taker gains at least a point, often much more.

Compare with Draw-Size scoring, where only 16% of dot-takings produce an increase in score. Does this mean that Draw-Size scoring, the first scoring system, fails a fundamental test? No. Rather this demonstrates that formal requirements are poor ways to go about constructing scoring systems. A system should be evaluated on how it does in aggregate, not merely at the extremities.

As I argued in the original paper, that evaluation is best made in terms of general incentives. A debate over whether scoring systems should include a growth incentive is much more interesting than a debate over whether score should be a strictly increasing function of center count. And on a straightforward measure of a growth incentive—average change in score for taking a dot—Tribute does better than all other major systems (see Section 1.3). Aggregate incentive measures are simply better ways of evaluating systems than strict adherence to formal requirements. Suppose we demanded adherence to a formal requirement like “All dot-takings should be worth at least a point”. A common and well-regarded system like Carnage would fail, because 34% of dot-takings produce an increase of less than 0.01 points (normalized to 100 points per game). Has Carnage failed some fundamental principle of scoring systems? No. Rather, it means that center accumulation is not strongly incentivized on its own in Carnage. Should it be? That is worth discussing.

3.5. “The scores for _____ are bonkers.”

Again, the original paper endeavored to move the discussion from consideration of specific outcomes to discussion of general incentives. Every system will produce results that seem strange to some people, especially with extreme board configurations that are rarely if ever seen in practice.

Here's an example in Tribute. A 17-11-2-1-1-1-1 board results in 83 points for the board-topper and only 11 for the second-place player. The critic pounces: “Was 17 centers really more than 7 times as good as 11 centers? Absurd!”

Of course, under Draw-Size scoring, every player scores exactly the same with these center counts: 14.3. “Was 17 centers really no better than 1 center? Absurd!”

Under Carnage, the same board results in 25.0 points for the board topper and 17.8 for the 2-center power. “Was 17 centers really only 40% better than 2 centers? Absurd!”

Furthermore, suppose the game is part of a tournament, and those two players play another game, this time ending 7-6-5-5-5-5-1, where the 2-center power from the first game (Player B) finishes in 2nd with 6 and the 17-center power from the first game (Player A) ends with 5. Under Carnage, Player B has an aggregate score of 39.3 and player A has an aggregate score of 37.5. “7 centers over two games without even topping is better than 22 centers and a huge board top? Absurd!”

Are these results really absurd? No. Surprise at the results is due to not taking the scoring system seriously. The scoring system is part of the definition of the competition. If the scoring system values rank in a linear fashion and the players don't play with that in mind, then that is their mistake. Likewise, if the scoring system incentivizes board-topping then players should not play in such a way as to ensure someone else tops the board, even if they get a big center count in the process.

Should we prefer systems with a strong board-top incentive? That depends on what we find important or interesting about Diplomacy. If we want to discourage simple alliance play, then yes, a strong board-top incentive is needed.

3.6. “It's very stabby.”

In Tribute, a 1-dot stab that doesn't lead to a board-topping position is worth 1 pt. Only 45% of possible dot-takings produce an immediate score change larger than 1 pt. By contrast, 93% of possible dot-takings in Sum of Squares are worth more than a point. Even Carnage is

more “stabby” in this sense, with 66% of possible dot-takings producing more than a point (normalized to 100); this happens because there are many scenarios where one power is only one dot behind another.

In general, Tribute only provides strong incentive for stabbing if it will lead to a board top or prevent the board-topper from getting big.

Tribute does make simple alliance play riskier. 2nd place generally scores only a little better than other non-toppers, and all of those scores go down as the board-topper grows. Thus, as an alliance grows, the possible score increase from stabbing and topping the board alone gets larger and larger. A player who is not re-evaluating the risks and rewards of an alliance at every turn risks being taken advantage of by an ally who is.

Does this mean that alliances are bad under Tribute? Certainly not. Alliances are necessary to grow large enough to make a play for the board top. But they are not an easy strategy. If you are content to play second fiddle in an alliance, you will score roughly the same as everyone else who survives but doesn't top. Tribute is unique among major scoring systems in providing little benefit to junior partners.

3.7. “It’s not relaxing.” “It will lead to longer games.”

Making Diplomacy more relaxing or more pleasant was not a goal of Tribute's designers. Quite the opposite. We wanted to ratchet up the intensity by providing more viable strategic options at every stage of the game. A good strategy game, in my opinion, is one that forces difficult decisions, and where success increases that difficulty. In Diplomacy, there is an essential tension between cooperation and selfishness. Because in Tribute successful cooperation leads to greater incentive for selfishness, this tension will remain more acute deeper into the game than with other systems.

This will allow for more dynamic games with more shifts of momentum and more chances to recover from early setbacks and top the board. This will undoubtedly lead to longer games than other scoring systems, as evidenced by the recent Weasel Moot.

If you want more relaxing games, Tribute is not for you.

3.8. “There’s too much math.”

I don't have a good response for this. In terms of computational burden, Tribute felt like an improvement over Sum of Squares because I could compute scores without a spreadsheet or calculator. But I like math; not everyone does. I wish the desired incentives could be

implemented in a simpler way, but as of now I don't see how. An adjustment I propose in Section 4 is only slightly easier on the math lobe.

Of the other major systems, Carnage wins the gold medal in terms of computational simplicity. Draw-Size and C-Diplo take silver, conceptually simple but requiring a bit of math. Dixie takes bronze, more complex and requiring more math. Tribute takes last on both counts, although perhaps this will seem less of a problem with greater familiarity.

3.9. “It reduces the importance of the stalemate lines.”

I find this a really interesting complaint because it shows how people can find rather different things to like about the game of Diplomacy. I agree that Tribute diminishes the importance of the stalemate lines, because it diminishes the importance of the solo, at least relative to scoring systems like Draw-Size and Carnage. Scores between 40 and 60 are common in Tribute but rare in Draw-Size and impossible in Carnage. The solo is still quite important in Tribute, but it is truly a nuclear option in the other systems (see 3.1). Stalemate lines are important because they provide a significant barrier to getting a solo, one that can figure heavily in negotiations and strategic thinking in the late game.

I have had many discussions with David Hood (who runs DixieCon and developed its proprietary scoring system) about scoring, and for him the stalemate lines are a central feature of the game of Diplomacy. In his view, the extra barrier they create is a crucial hurdle that requires long-term planning and deep cunning to surmount, characteristic of the challenges unique to Diplomacy.

I think this is a perfectly valid way to view the game. It's just not how I prefer to view it. I see Diplomacy as a competition for power requiring a balance of cooperation and selfishness. So it's natural that I would value board-tops, which identify the player who accumulated the most power. And it's natural that David would not value mere board-tops, which have not overcome what he sees as the central challenge of the game.

Neither David nor I are right or wrong on this. Rather, we are describing different games. The scoring systems, as extensions of the primary Diplomacy ruleset, define those different games.

4. Possible adjustments

4.1. Surrenders

One of the unpleasantnesses of Draw-Size scoring is that games can get dragged out for the sole purpose of

eliminating a player. To combat this, a variant was created in which players can surrender, or agree to be left out of the draw even though they still control supply centers. A player will surrender if they know their position can't be defended against a coordinated attack by the remaining players, and they aren't able to throw a solo to any of them (or those players agree to forgo the solo opportunity). Obviously this leads to shorter games. A system that does not allow surrender votes is known as DIAS ("draw includes all survivors"), and one that does is referred to as non-DIAS.

Some players take a "cold, dead hands" approach to non-DIAS systems and refuse to surrender under any circumstances. I have not yet played at a tournament where surrender votes are allowed, but I suspect I'd fall into this category. If I've gone to the trouble of traveling somewhere to play Diplomacy, then I will hold on to every last unit and force someone to actually pass up a solo, not just say they will. But again, I look to Diplomacy for intense strategic challenges, not relaxing experiences. I recognize not everyone feels this way.

Surrender votes can be incorporated into Tribute in a simple way. Those with centers who don't participate in the draw still receive 1 pt for each center they control but do not get a survival bonus and do not pay tribute. Note that this will lower the board-topper's score under most circumstances.

While this could only be determined by trying, I suspect that allowing surrenders would play out differently in Tribute than in Draw-Size and Dixie. In Tribute, the small powers have a way of hurting the other non-toppers short of throwing a solo, giving them more leverage. In any case, I think you wouldn't see many

instances of a 4-5 center power surrendering, which is not uncommon in Draw-Size and Dixie.

4.2.Changing the tribute rate and/or threshold

If we wish to lower the board-top incentive (see Section 3.1) or raise the survival incentive (see Section 3.2), there are some simple adjustments available to us. The two most straightforward are to raise the threshold for paying tribute or to lower the tribute rate. However, raising the tribute threshold would significantly reduce the value of smaller board tops such as those with 7 and 8 centers. Because these are fairly common in time-limited games, it's best to leave the threshold at 6.

Here are two workable variations:

Half-Tribute: Reduce the rate of Tribute to 1/2 point per supply center. This lowers the board-top incentive considerably while raising the survival incentive, but also damages the balance of power incentive.

Semi-Tribute (or Half-Tribute-Plus): Reduce the rate of Tribute to 1/2 point per supply center and add a 6 point bonus for topping the board. In other words, survivors get 1 point per center + 60/N, where N is the number of survivors. The topper gets 6 points plus, for each center the topper has over 6, 1/2 point from each of the other survivors. This has the added benefit of simplifying the survival bonus calculation, since 60 is divisible by 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Here are the incentive measures for these options, compared with other systems:

Incentive measures for Tribute variants

System	Growth	Survival	Board-Top	Dominance	Balance of Power
Carnage	1.44	0.00	3.53	0.00	-15%
C-Diplo	4.01	1.01	20.49	1.00	-2%
Dixie	1.03	11.90	0.68	0.95	-9%
Draw-Size	0.53	16.65	0.00	0.39	-12%
Sum of Squares	4.35	0.26	5.97	5.65	11%
Tribute	4.65	5.82	21.55	5.42	27%
Half-Tribute	3.06	8.89	11.28	3.42	10%
Semi-Tribute	3.50	7.89	15.81	3.39	12%

Both Half-Tribute and Semi-Tribute boost the survival incentive significantly and drop the board-top incentive.

Do they boost the survival incentive enough to convince players that survival is worth fighting for? Was Tribute's value already high enough? Only time and experimentation will tell. Dixie's value of 11.90 is clearly high enough, and Sum of Squares's value of 0.26 is clearly too low. "Good enough" must be somewhere in between, although that may vary somewhat with context.

And what is an optimal value for the board-top incentive? Sum of Squares (5.97) is clearly too low (for my tastes), but is Half-Tribute's 11.28 high enough? And is Tribute's 21.55 really too high? I suspect Semi-Tribute's 15.81 is high enough to discourage simple alliance play.

The balance of power incentive is harder to gauge. Sum of Squares has a higher value (11%) than other major systems, but that is almost entirely due to the 2nd and 3rd place powers. Smaller powers have little to lose and little to gain by getting a dot, regardless of who they take it from. Tribute and its derivatives spread the incentive more evenly over all players. Full Tribute definitely promotes balance of power play in practice, and I wouldn't want to sacrifice that. Experimentation will be required to see if Half-Tribute or Semi-Tribute still have

the same effect. As I discuss in Section 1.3, it's possible that the board-top and dominance incentives together are better measures of balance of power incentive than the next-dot measure I've been using.

For those wanting to drop the board-topper's score a bit while maintaining the unique features of Tribute, I'd recommend trying Semi-Tribute first. I suspect Half-Tribute's board-top incentive is a bit too low, especially for smaller board-tops.

5. Conclusion

Tribute has shaken up the Diplomacy landscape, prompting deep discussion about styles of play as well as new efforts at even more radical system design. This can only be good for the hobby.

Whether Tribute has lasting impact or not remains to be seen. All the theory about incentives won't matter if people don't like to play it more than other systems. The early returns have been largely positive, but there are some vocal curmudgeons. To them I'd offer this: Tribute may indeed be the worst scoring system, except for all the others.

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Luiz L.S. Neto - I never met or ever talked to Larry Peery though I had read his numerous pieces for years, so when he suddenly sent me an email in January 2019 (just to say that he liked my Pouch article on the Canton variant and that he had family links to that city) I was delighted. We had a brief email conversation but in his words I felt the mark of someone who was truly bright, especially as he described his past experiences in my home continent of South America and cared to answer my question about his Peerijavo variant with a massive paragraph detailing the whole story (it involves a WW1 battle and twin Roman Catholic cardinals) and I smiled from start to finish as you can imagine.

Hearing of his death by way of the Diplomatic World cover was a nasty surprise, but the least I can do is to cherish the memory of a man that by all accounts had a big heart.

[[Certainly, Larry was always one to answer letters and questions. He loved to communicate. And there really was no such thing as a short answer to a question when you asked Larry something. He enjoyed sharing his detailed knowledge on any – and every – topic, and tended to drift from the main topic into any connected area which interested him. All of us who knew him learned to appreciate his “Peeriblah” even if we were occasionally frustrated by it.

I'm hopeful that a lot of readers took Larry's final months to heart, and will endeavor to watch for signs in friends and loved ones so proper intervention might be attempted before drastic and irreversible action takes place. We lose too many people as it is to age, violence, or disease.]]

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

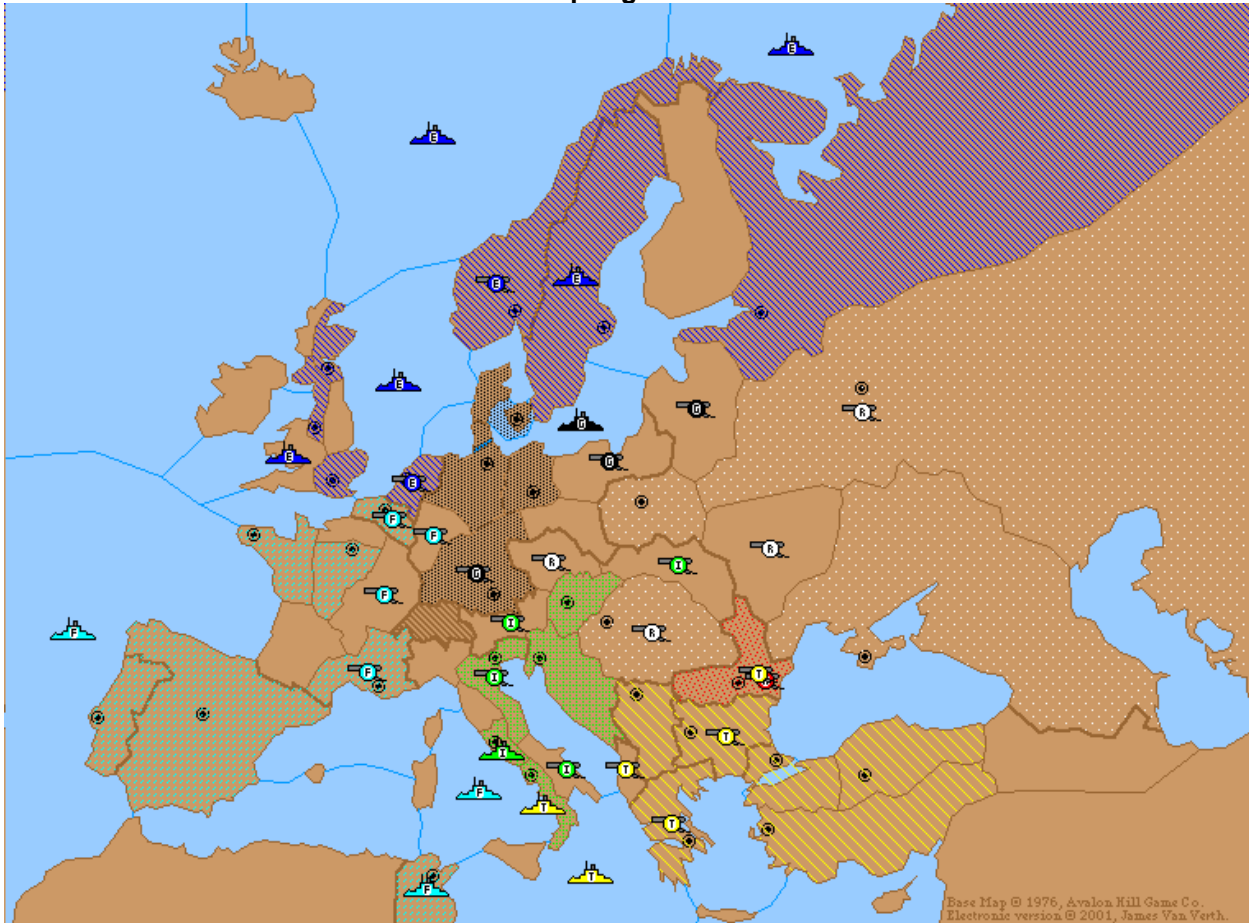
The Commentators:

David Hood

Rick Desper

Jack McHugh

Spring 1904



Austria: A Rumania – Budapest (*Dislodged*, retreat to Sevastopol or OTB).

England: F Edinburgh - Norwegian Sea, A Holland Supports A Belgium, F London – Wales, F North Sea Convoys A Yorkshire – Norway, F St Petersburg(nc) - Barents Sea, F Sweden Hold, A Yorkshire - Norway.

France: A Belgium Supports A Ruhr, F Brest - Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Marseilles - Piedmont (*Bounce*), A Paris – Burgundy, A Ruhr Supports A Paris – Burgundy, F Tunis Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea, F Tyrrhenian Sea Supports F Tunis.

Germany: F Baltic Sea Convoys A Kiel – Livonia, A Berlin – Prussia, A Kiel – Livonia, A Munich - Silesia (*Bounce*).

Italy: A Apulia Supports F Naples – Rome, F Naples – Rome, A Trieste – Venice, A Tyrolia - Piedmont (*Bounce*), A Vienna - Galicia.

Russia: A Bohemia - Silesia (*Bounce*), A Budapest Supports A Serbia – Rumania, A Galicia – Ukraine, A Moscow Supports A Galicia - Ukraine.

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

PRESS

dateline berlin: who knew that austria was part feline?
how many lives does he have left?

berlin to russia: i'm sure you must be expecting this

GERMANY to TURKEY: Is this what you had in mind?

RUMANIA: Lovely weather we're having here. I wonder what it's like in Sevastopol this time of year?

TURKEY to ENGLAND and FRANCE: Yes, I am the mastermind who will thwart your schemes for European domination! See how well it's working already!

dateline berlin: so suppose mon ami en france orders a bel-norway, a ruh s a bel? is the ruhr support valid if england doesn't convoy him over? what if france had f nth but didn't order the convoy? what if no convoy route existed? what if france ordered a bel-pluto or moscow or some other illegal destination? inquiring minds (who haven't read a rulebook since the 1971 version) need to know!

A Tyl to A Rum: You have changed! And, you have become so distant. What happened to us?

A Rum to A Tyl: Your mistake, my dear, was believing there ever was an "us." What we had was a moment in time. Actually, it was not even a moment. Okay, let's be honest: we didn't have doodly-squat.

GM to Italy: That's going to leave a mark!

A Tyl to GM: I can't even! Go pester someone else!

Fake GM to Real GM: You know what? You don't run a bad game.

Real GM to Fake GM: Diplomacy? I just put the orders into a program. It's nothing.

Fake GM to Real GM: No, I meant the illicit craps game at your place on Sunday nights. Btw, I tipped the Feds. Expect a raid real soon, as in "really, really soon."

Serbian Freedom Fighters – EU: Any chance of you guys actually helping here? We kinda liked the red guy. Can we have him back?

EU - Serbian Rebel Scum: Stay where you are! Help is on its way!

SFF – EU: Hey, um, that kinda looks like the Death Star?

EU – Serbian Rebel Scum: You have disappointed us for the last time!

Dateline: "The Poor Little Belgian Dairy" outside of London. Nicky could not believe his luck. "Well, he thought, 'Who dares, wins,' right?" Oh, yes he had. He had moved into Sweden and St. Pete! With the British military backing him, he was unstoppable. Soon, his would be the largest cheese-maker and seller in all of Europe. In fact, there was a chance he might become the largest corporation in all of Europe.

In the meantime, of course, his protection racket was growing by leaps and bounds. There were the occasional resisters, but they became "victims of war." It really was perfect. He could shake people down at will. If they refused, they disappeared, which was not abnormal at all to authorities already overwhelmed by the toll of war.

Nicky was perched to become the greatest Belgian of all-time.

Summer 1904

Austria: Retreat A Rumania - Sevastopol..Has A Sevastopol.

England: Has F Barents Sea, A Holland, F North Sea, A Norway, F Norwegian Sea, F Sweden, F Wales.

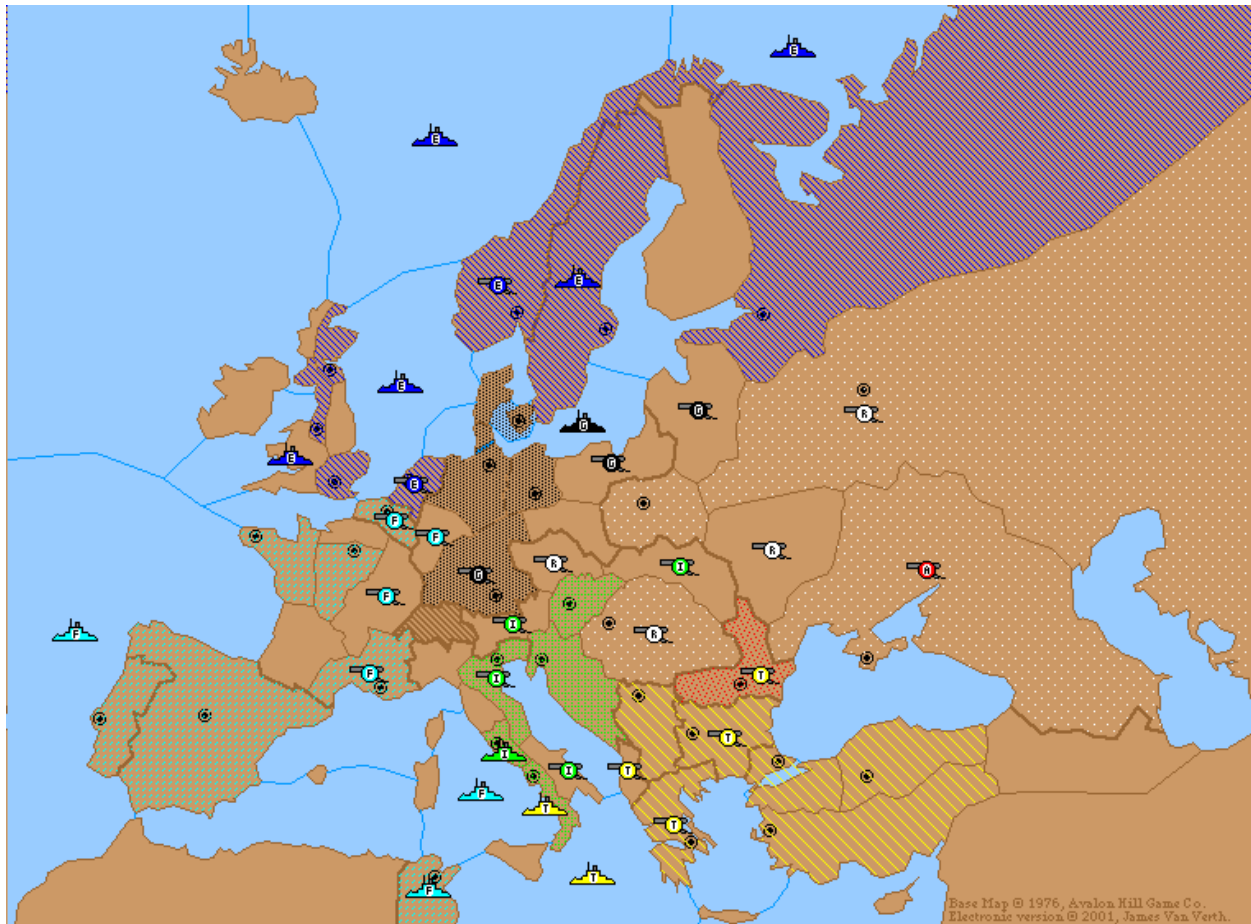
France: Has A Belgium, A Burgundy, A Marseilles, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Ruhr, F Tunis, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

Germany: Has F Baltic Sea, A Livonia, A Munich, A Prussia.

Italy: Has A Apulia, A Galicia, F Rome, A Tyrolia, A Venice.

Russia: Has A Bohemia, A Budapest, A Moscow, A Ukraine.

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



Spring and Summer 1904 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

Well, the chickens have come home to roost a little this turn. Way more clarity, I think. Dick has decided just to barrel into Russia to punish Nicewarner for past moves, and not to worry about EF forces in his rear. Maybe he has convinced them to leave him alive at least long enough for vengeance against the Russian Bear, maybe not. As for EF relations, as was pointed out earlier, the English builds were not really designed for maximum pressure being applied East and thus should have been worrying to the French. England did indeed go to Wales here, as a defensive move, but overall this position screams Attack on France at some time in the near future, seems to me.

The most interesting move in the East, I would say, was the Italian supported move to Rome. Instead of working something out with the French, to stop Turkish expansion, Lance appears to have gone the other way and thrown in with the RT against whatever the actual Western threat is (a triple, or just independent German

strikes versus R and French vs the Med.) This may well make sense, with RT taking him up on it, at least until what I perceive to be inevitable EF conflict.

Ultimately I come back to those two English fleet builds though – if this were a Western Triple attempting to get a jump on the stalemate line, England just does not contribute much to that beyond the army getting into St. Pete next turn. Given the Turkish progress into Naples, the French probably cannot afford to be the one to start any EF war, so the timing will be in Vick's hands. MAYBE he will decide to stick with France instead, although if so, all his useless fleets need to head somewhere that actually would be useful, like helping out in the Med or just plowing into Dick Martin's German stuff. The latter would probably be my vote.

This game is turning into a tale of two nations facing the same dilemma have taken diametrically opposite approaches.

In the north Dick Martin's Germany has doubled down on his alliance with England's Vick Hall and Steve Cooley's France by moving into the Bal and convoying his army to Liv leaving both Kie and Ber open.

In the south, Lance Anderson's Italy had decided that he no longer trusts France to keep his mitts off of Italy's home centers and has reoriented his units away from taking out Stephen Agar's Turkey and now looks to cover Italy's centers.

England continues to grind on Steve Nicewarner's Russia as he tightens England's grip on Scandinavia. I agree with David though—England is headed for a strategic dead end. Vick will soon have to find something for his fleets to do which suggest a stab—

whether it will be Germany or France remains to be seen.

Even if he retreats to Sevastapol, the Austrian should be dead after the Fall move, presuming that's the goal of the Eastern alliance. If Italy and Turkey are working together, they can set up the stalemate line at Ion fast enough. France isn't putting much pressure on Italy.

As Western Triples go, this one isn't moving fast enough to get it done. Somehow, they're not over the stalemate line yet. If E/F don't stab G, this is going to lock up pretty quickly.

As per the rules question above, I've always said an army ordered to move cannot be supported to hold. Doesn't matter if there's a valid convoy order, or even a valid convoy route. Better to make that clear to players so they don't make joke move orders thinking they'll be interpreted as holds.

Fall 1904



Austria: A Sevastopol - Moscow.

England: F Barents Sea Supports A Norway - St Petersburg, A Holland Supports A Ruhr - Kiel, F North Sea - Denmark, A Norway - St Petersburg, F Norwegian Sea - North Sea, F Sweden Supports F North Sea - Denmark, F Wales - Irish Sea.

France: A Belgium Supports A Burgundy – Ruhr, A Burgundy – Ruhr, A Marseilles – Burgundy, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - North Africa, A Ruhr – Kiel, F Tunis Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea - Ionian Sea, F Tyrrhenian Sea - Ionian Sea (*Fails*).

Germany: F Baltic Sea - Kiel (*Fails*), A Livonia Supports A Sevastopol – Moscow, A Munich Supports A Bohemia – Tyrolia, A Prussia - Warsaw (*Fails*).

Italy: A Apulia – Greece, A Galicia Supports A Ukraine – Warsaw, F Rome - Tyrrhenian Sea (*Fails*), A Tyrolia – Piedmont, A Venice Supports A Tyrolia - Piedmont.

Russia: A Bohemia – Tyrolia, A Budapest - Rumania (*Fails*), ~~A Moscow Supports A Ukraine – Warsaw~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Ukraine or OTB), A Ukraine - Warsaw.

Turkey: A Albania Hold, A Bulgaria Hold, A Greece – Serbia, F Ionian Sea Convoys A Apulia – Greece, F Naples Supports F Ionian Sea, A Rumania Hold.

PRESS

GM- Germany: Regarding your question in the Spring press, if you order Bel-anywhere, legal or not, convoy or not, you can't successfully support it in place. The vision in your head should be if a unit is ordered to hold or support another unit, they're staying in their trenches, foxholes, etc. with communications and supply lines maintained. If they're supporting a unit they're merely supplying flanking fire, skirmish troops, and artillery. But if you order a unit to move – in any way – they receive the order to move and they prepare to move, climbing into vehicles, packing up supplies, folding up tents, putting non-mobile artillery on the back of trucks, etc. They hear the "move out" order first...the "where are we going?" answer comes after they are ready to move, and therefore they're not in position to be supported. If the "where are we going?" is impossible they stand around and make sarcastic comments about the General Staff before unpacking.

dateline berlin: do these orders make sense to anybody?

A Tyl to A Sev: you sure move a lot! It's no wonder our relationship didn't work.

A Sev to A Tyl: Our what? You are way over the stalker line!

Real GM to Fake GM: Dropping a dime on me was not cool. In fact, the feds busted my game up right in the middle of the hottest streak in my life.

Fake GM to Real GM: I didn't tip them. I don't even know where you live.

Real GM to Fake GM: OMG! There's a mole in our game!

Fake GM to Real GM: More like a snitch! Okay, now it's on! Which one of you guys ratted me out?

"The Poor Little Belgian Dairy," outside of London: Nicky was ready to make a bold play. He read the papers. He knew there was a rogue Austrian army making a mad run at Moscow. With British forces now ensconced in St. Petersburg, it struck Nicky that he could move into the very heart of Russia. It was, after all, a nation run on corruption. Like trains need coal, so Russia was powered by graft and greed. Russia produced thugs like bread grew mold.

Nicky had bought off enough of Parliament to get whatever he wanted in the UK. He had agents within the French government. If he could secure a foothold in Moscow, all of Europe would soon fall under his spell. First, they would love his cheese, then they would need his protection.

Autumn 1904

Austria: Has A Moscow.

England: Has F Barents Sea, F Denmark, A Holland, F Irish Sea, F North Sea, A St Petersburg, F Sweden.

France: Has A Belgium, A Burgundy, A Kiel, F North Africa, A Ruhr, F Tunis, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

Germany: Has F Baltic Sea, A Livonia, A Munich, A Prussia.

Italy: Has A Galicia, A Greece, A Piedmont, F Rome, A Venice.

Russia: Retreat A Moscow - Ukraine.. Has A Budapest, A Tyrolia, A Ukraine, A Warsaw.

Turkey: Has A Albania, A Bulgaria, F Ionian Sea, F Naples, A Rumania, A Serbia.



Supply Center Chart

Austria:	Moscow=1	Even
England:	Denmark, Edinburgh, Holland, Liverpool, London, Norway, St Petersburg, Sweden=8	Build 1
France:	Belgium, Brest, Kiel, Marseilles, Paris, Portugal, Spain, Tunis=8	Build 1
Germany:	Berlin, Munich=2	Remove 2
Italy:	Greece, Rome, Trieste, Venice, Vienna=5	Even
Russia:	Budapest, Sevastopol, Warsaw=3	Remove 1
Turkey:	Ankara, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Naples, Rumania, Serbia, Smyrna=7	Build 1

Fall and Autumn 1904 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

Well, this answers the question of whether the EF was going to keep Germany around much longer. They each take a dot off of Dick, even as Dick keeps Brad alive with the support to Moscow. The obvious question now is, though, what do EF do after mopping up the last couple of German centers? The alliance is really not projecting much force over the stalemate line at this point (the French fleet moving to North Africa is almost intentionally weak, versus moving to Western Med, for

example.) The English F Wales to Irish is a source of instability, as is the fact that three French armies now encircle Holland. There are a lot of English fleets to redeploy once their mission in Scandinavia is over, thanks to fleet builds in past years when longer-term alliance theory would have dictated armies.

So I actually think what happens in the West is an open question.

As is the East. Turkey was forced, as it were, to take Naples from Italy to set up a defensive posture against the French, fleet-wise. So the IT evens up the score by convoying the Italian army from Apulia to Greece? Um, OK. Hard to see what the plan is going forward, unless the plan is simply for Turkey to stab the Italians now. I guess the theory could be to dislodge the Italian army now and build it back? If so, where, because only Ven is likely to be open and building a fleet there seems a little silly.

It may just be that Italy was desperately looking to stay close in center count. Hard to imagine that is going to stay true in the near future, particularly when the EF war that I think is inevitable actually breaks out.

The builds will be interesting. With Turkey getting a build here, I think Agar could decide to cut Lance loose at this point and just go after Italian stuff. The England and French each building could mean continued EF cooperation (English army to convoy to continent and French fleet or army in Marseilles) or EF unravelling (competing fleets across the Channel). Could be a true Winter of Discontent.

The war in the West is pretty much over. I don't see how Dick's Germany can stop Vick's France or Steve's England from over running the Reich. Steve's Russia is down to two centers.

Lance's Italy is in a bad way—he has four centers but they aren't easily defensible now that France is over the stalemate line. A Pie is threatening Mar but with France picking up Kie, Vick can easily build F/A Mar to block Italy's A Pie. Once Dick takes off a couple of units the French army can come pouring in and I don't see how Italy can stop that and the French navy in

the Tys/Ion area as well.

Stephen's Turkey is in a good spot—he's snug as a bug in his corner position. He's well set up for a three way with E and F. It will take a lot of trust on Steve and Vick to take out Turkey without one of them being tempted to go for the solo win. Turkey is using Italy's A Gre to help set up a back stop if France decides to try and crash the Ion. I don't know how effective it will be but it is a prudent step on Stephen's part and it gives Lance the possibility of having a surviving unit on a dot France cannot eliminate, at least not alone.

Not seeing much to disagree with in the commentary by the other two. At the risk of sounding sadistic, I'm glad to see the Western Triple fall apart. I don't think Triples should exist just for the sake of having Triples. And didn't we do that in the prior demo game? We no longer need a 'proof' that a Triple can 'work' if the three people involved make it their highest priority. The question is whether it's really a natural idea. (Hint: it isn't.)

Austria can hang around in Moscow for a while. Both Russia and Germany are in deep trouble and neither really has the wherewithal to take over the Russian area.

Hmm...Austria is down to 1, Germany is down to 2, and Russia is down to 3. Italy is at a massive 4. (Yes, I know the Italians are in Greece. I'm not counting it.) The other three powers combine for 24. Looks like this is heading towards a FET draw, though there's still a lot of play left. Will England slam into France after Germany falls? Will France let that happen? Will Turkey keep hiding behind Italy?

This could wrap up quickly, but at least it hasn't stalemated into a blah 6-way draw.

Winter 1904

Austria: Has A Moscow.

England: Build A Edinburgh..Has F Barents Sea, F Denmark, A Edinburgh, A Holland, F Irish Sea, F North Sea, A St Petersburg, F Sweden.

France: Build F Marseilles..Has A Belgium, A Burgundy, A Kiel, F Marseilles, F North Africa, A Ruhr, F Tunis, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

Germany: Remove A Munich, F Baltic Sea..Has A Livonia, A Prussia.

Italy: Has A Galicia, A Greece, A Piedmont, F Rome, A Venice.

Russia: Remove A Budapest..Has A Tyrolia, A Ukraine, A Warsaw.

Turkey: Build F Smyrna..Has A Albania, A Bulgaria, F Ionian Sea, F Naples, A Rumania, A Serbia, F Smyrna.



PRESS

dateline berlin: yes, this is exactly what it looks like

Winter 1904 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

Well, apparently this was “vacate supply centers” adjustment phase, with the Germans leaving its home centers open and Russia removing A Budapest. Oh well. Clearly Dick just wants either to die or to live in Russia. Which is also where the Austrian government-in-exile is. And also where the Russians themselves want to live. So...that’s fun.

With the Germans now out of Germany, the moment of truth has come for the EF alliance. The builds are perfectly EF-y on both sides, but the position sure as heck is not. Unless England just wants to sit around and do nothing with all those fleets, hitting France is the only option. Cooley certainly knows that, so it will be interesting to see what happens in the Spring turn.

In the East, it’s really just All Turkey All The Time. He jettisons the Italians and Russian remnant any time he wants to. This board is Turkey’s for the taking, unless Vick and Steve really do figure out a way to stay together.

Well, Turkey can take a lot of dots anytime he wants to. I suspect, though, that the convoy to Greece signals a continuing relationship with Italy. If that’s the case, they can force the TYS right away. Or is the plan going to be simply to stalemate the Ionian/Italy and push up into Germany?

I’ve lost track of the alliance structures, esp. with regard to Austria. This game could freeze up quickly if that’s what the big powers want. Or, again, Turkey could just grab a lot of dots.

It would be kind of lame for E/F to break up the triple just to end in a three-way with Turkey. I hope better plans are in place.

I am surprised to see Germany remove himself off the stalemate line but I assume Dick is trying to force Steve and Vick to either show that they are faithful to their alliance or trigger a stab by one on the other. Or, more likely he's given up on his position

and wants to end his suffering as Germany has no centers left once it loses Ber and Mun.

I don't have much to add to what Dave and Rick have already said other than Turkey has to be careful about what he takes from Italy as Lance is the proverbial Dutch boy with his finger in the French dike in Italy--take too many Italian centers and France gets all of Italy.

Virtual Tournament Announcement: World Diplomacy Classic

By Bill Hackenbracht

The virtual World Diplomacy Classic will be a live tournament held from December 18-20, 2020, with game play on Backstabbr.com and player interactions conducted on Discord. The organizer, Bill Hackenbracht, will share Tournament Director responsibilities with hobby notables Chris Brand, Peter McNamara, Markus Zijlstra, and Garry Sturley. This international cast of characters, who have each volunteered to TD a round friendly to their respective time zones, will facilitate maximum world participation. Also, by sharing TD responsibilities, each of them will be able to participate in the event itself. (The legendary David Hood has volunteered to serve as a back-up TD, in the event any of them have to drop out.)

The tournament will be held over 5 rounds on Friday and Saturday, with the Classic Championship determined by a Top Board on Sunday, December 20. Players are welcome to participate in as many rounds as they'd like, but only their top two scores will count (we'll be using "Tribute Scoring," by way of the Windy City Weasels and Brandon Fogel).

We will be charging a \$12 entry fee, which will fund awards (and shipping). The remaining proceeds will be used for the following purposes:

- 1) to offset any COVID-19 related financial losses sustained by a Diplomacy tournament organizer (i.e. lost deposit money, etc.).
- 2) to support organizations that provide prenatal support to economically disadvantaged birth parents.

Registration and more information can be found at <https://liberty-cup.com/world-diplomacy-classic/>