

# Diplomacy World #152



**Winter 2020 Issue**  
**[www.diplomacyworld.net](http://www.diplomacyworld.net)**

# Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World, the Winter 2020 issue**. It has certainly been a very strange year, and one most people are perfectly happy to be done with. I was very happy to see all the ways the Diplomacy hobby adapted and adjusted along the way. Obviously nearly every face-to-face event had to be cancelled, but in their place more players than ever embraced virtual events. With some luck, we can maintain that enthusiasm will also enjoying a resurgence in traditional events in 2021.

It's probably the right time for me to thank each and every one of you for supporting **Diplomacy World** through another year. Whether you wrote articles, letters, sent feedback, or simply downloaded and read an issue or two, you are an important part of the community that keeps **Diplomacy World** alive and vibrant. My thanks to each and every one of you, from staff members down to everyone who has never seen the zine until this moment.

With that in mind, I'm always looking for new ways to get people more involved. Each issue of **Diplomacy World** is still downloaded thousands of times before the next issue is released, but the number of people who read the zine and then actively participate remains relatively small. That's nothing new; it's been that way for as long as I can remember. It's similar to how only a small percentage of people who listen to talk radio have ever even *tried* to call in and speak. But I'd love to hear ideas about how to increase feedback and participation.

One method I've tried many times, to little or no success, is the inclusion of contests in the zine. Take the contest included in the last issue, where readers were invited to write in to explain why they should be given the large Diplomacy map, signed by many hobby luminaries of days gone by. By the time the deadline for the contest

rolled around, only two entries had been received. Granted, this was a bit of a specialized contest, but I did expect to receive five or so entries. Fortunately, two is better than none, and I'm currently working with the gentleman who has the map and looking to coordinate a future hand-off with whichever entry is deemed the winner. The issues with bringing a large item like that across the U.S.-Canada border during the pandemic have put a pause on finalizing the results, but I'm happy to report the item will hopefully make its way to a new home in 2021.

Before I forget, I wanted to point out that David Hood's article on the new NADF website is one everyone should make note of. Whether or not you generally participate in tournaments, the website ([www.thenadf.org](http://www.thenadf.org)) will be a useful centralized entry point for anyone who wants to broaden their Diplomacy horizons a bit. Be sure to check out the article and the website.

While I also encourage you to read and enjoy all the other articles that are included in this issue, there is one caveat: there simply aren't *enough* of them. Submissions for this issue were down noticeably from prior ones. All I can hope is that people were just exhausted after a long, dreary year...too exhausted to produce and submit the material this zine cannot survive without. I suppose time will tell.

It's been a long year, and I'm a bit worn out, so I guess I'll just wrap this up and let you go explore the issue. ***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is April 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](mailto:diplomacyworld@yahoo.com)! See you in the spring, and happy stabbing!

---

## Selected Upcoming Conventions

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

Cascadia Open – January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – Virtual Tournament – Email: [Cascadia.open@gmail.com](mailto:Cascadia.open@gmail.com)

Euro DipCon XXIX at SanMarino Con – April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 – San Marino - <http://www.sanmarinogame.com/>

DixieCon 35 – May 28<sup>th</sup> – May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – Chapel Hill, North Carolina - <http://www.dixiecon.com/>

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

## Diplomacy World Staff:

Managing Lead Editor:	Douglas Kent, Email: diplomacyworld of yahoo.com or dougray30 of yahoo.com
Co-Editor:	<b>Vacant!!</b>
Strategy & Tactics Editor:	Fang Zhang, Email: truballer59 of yahoo.com
Variants Editor:	Bob Durf, Email: playdiplomacymoderator of gmail.com
Interview Editor:	Randy Lawrence-Hurt, Email: randy.lawrencehurt of gmail.com
Club and Tournament Editor:	Will J. Abbott, Email: wabbott9 of gmail.com
Demo Game Editor:	Rick Desper, Email: rick_desper of yahoo.com
Technology Editor:	Markus Zijlstra, Email: captainmeme1 of gmail.com
Original Artwork	New Original Artwork in This Issue by Matt Pickard a.k.a. "Lady Razor"

***Contributors in 2020: Heathley Baines, Edi Birsan, Christopher Brand, Bill Coffin, David Cohen, Robert Correll, Don Del Grande, Rick Desper, Eamon Driscoll, Bob Durf, Brandon Fogel, Bill Hackenbracht, Andy Harris, Jon Hills, David Hood, Simon Langley-Evans, Tanya Gill, Randy Lawrence-Hurt, George Linkert, David Maletsky, Jack McHugh, Peter McNamara, Zachary Moore, M.F. Morrison, Luiz L.S. Neto, Matt Pickard, Lewis Pulsipher, Dr. Sigmund Schadenfreud, umbletheheep, Erik van Mechelen, Zander, Fang Zhang. Add your name to the 2021 list by submitting something for the next issue!***

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.

---

## **In This Issue:**

<b>Editorial:</b> <i>Notes from the Editor</i> by Douglas Kent	Page 2
<b>Convention News:</b> Selected Upcoming Conventions	Page 2
<b>Letters:</b> <i>Knives and Daggers – The Diplomacy World Letter Column</i>	Page 4
<b>Feature:</b> <i>New NADF Website Launched</i> by David Hood	Page 5
<b>Feature:</b> <i>A Minor Rule: Voting for When the Game Ends</i> by Lewis Pulsipher	Page 6
<b>Feature:</b> <i>The Story of International Diplomacy Tournament Ratings</i> by Don Del Grande	Page 7
<b>Feature:</b> <i>Riding the Corona-Coaster in Airstrip One</i> by Jon Hills	Page 8
<b>Feature:</b> <i>Ask the Hobby Historian – Diplomacy Organizations and Services</i> by David Hood	Page 9
<b>Interview:</b> <i>An Interview with Zachary Moore</i> by Randy Lawrence-Hurt	Page 11
<b>Variants:</b> <i>New Year — So Bring Some New Ideas!</i> by Bob Durf and "Zander"	Page 13
<b>Feature:</b> <i>Virtual Diplomacy League Awards Ceremony</i> by Zachary Moore	Page 15
<b>Tournaments:</b> <i>Tempest in a Teapot 2020: A Virtual Diplomacy Tournament</i> by Rick Desper	Page 16
<b>Demo Game:</b> <i>"Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" 1905 Results and Commentary</i>	Page 19



# Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



**Lewis Pulsipher** - That's certainly my handwriting in the North Sea on the map that's the subject of your excellent contest; I just don't remember signing it! Happens as time passes . . .

I like to say that in my game Britannia, "The Invisible Hand" helps balance the game (and tournament results show that it IS balanced). That is, the players know that one side or another may be weaker, or especially vulnerable at some juncture, but play accordingly so that it all "evens out". (Keep in mind, there is no player elimination.)

But the Invisible Hand isn't strong enough in Diplomacy, evidently. So, I agree with Dave Maletsky: if some Diplomacy nations are significantly more successful than others, how can a rating system not take into account which nation the player is playing? Why go to the trouble of elaborate ratings when which country you play matters so much, but isn't accounted for?

Maybe I'm belaboring the obvious, but a strong defect of the Tribute rating system is the concentration on how many centers you have. That's just not the real focus of the game, not at all. If you focus on number of centers, you're playing it wrong! Why encourage/reward poor play?

Lew Pulsipher (happy that there's a re-issue of Britannia with plastic armies, including a new Duel Britannia game)



**David Cohen:** The Academy of Creative Destruction (the "ACD") is looking for new members!

In conjunction with our move from Yahoogroups to a new board, we realize that in order to continue as a community, we want to bring in new, active members and reach out to old members who have drifted away over the years. The ACD has been an invitation-only organization for almost its entire existence, so this is a big step for us.

The ACD is over 30 years old (it began as a friendly "back room" of the old Cat23 forum). Games are old-

school, play by email and human-adjudicated, although GMs are welcome to use software to assist them. We have had both FTF and online world champions as ACD members and the overall level of play is very good. The stronger your level of play the better, but what is much more important to us your reliability and dedication to the game. Some more specifics:

1. Almost all games are full press and not anonymous.
2. No scoring or rating systems. Members acquire reputations (see point 1), but each game stands on its own.
3. Deadlines are usually on the longer side, typically in the 3-7-day range for movement turns and somewhat shorter for retreats and adjustments.
4. We are serious about reliability and dedication. Multiple failures to submit orders or an abandonment, without cause, and the offending player will be booted from the ACD.
5. Many games are interesting variants, including playtests of new variants.

If membership in the ACD interests you or if you have any questions, email me at zendip18AToptonlineDOTnet.



**Chris Brand:** Some details for Cascadia in January, of which I am the Tournament Director (no fancy flyer this time, I'm afraid).

Two rounds on January 30th, at 8am and 4pm Pacific time. Best total score over the two rounds wins. Virtual Face-to-face format using discord voice for negotiations and Backstabbr for order entry and adjudication.

Scoring system is still being decided.

Register at <https://forms.gle/4wyzG82ezuJmDPWR6>

Questions can be sent to [Cascadia.open@gmail.com](mailto:Cascadia.open@gmail.com) or the Cascadia-open channel on the NADF discord.

# New NADF Website Launched

By David Hood

The North American Diplomacy Federation (NADF) was started more than twenty years ago by Seattle's Buz Eddy, as a vehicle for the promotion of the game and the hobby surrounding it. Over the years it has helped to select Dipcon locations, run a Grand Prix points-based rating system for North American tournament play, and more recently took the lead in establishing a Code of Conduct to promote a safe and welcoming environment for all aspiring Diplomacy hobbyists. During the 2020 pandemic period, current President Siobhan Nolen and the other Board members established a Discord server as well as played an important role in facilitating and promoting the move to virtual face-to-face play, as in-person gaming became impossible.



Now the NADF has revamped and relaunched its web presence by putting up its new website as [www.thenadf.org](http://www.thenadf.org). Designed to be the hobby's "front door", the site provides the basics of the game to the public, links to hobby media and resources, and when the pandemic ends, will provide a means for hobbyists to find each other geographically in order to promote house games, clubs and tournaments. The site will include new content every week, in the form of news items, and will be regularly edited and expanded pursuant to feedback from NADF members and others.

This website is not intended to be the be-all, end-all for the world of Diplomacy. Instead, when someone asks "what is Diplomacy" or "I like the game, how can I play more" we now have a good first place to send someone

for some answers which is accessible to everyone, without an invite and without much ado. Once the newbie enters the front door, that person is directed by the site to dive deeper by joining the NADF Discord Server (and other servers on Discord), playing online through the available websites and Android apps, and improving play by consuming Diplomacy media and reading the vast amount of written material available online about the game - including this very publication, Diplomacy World!

Speaking as a relative old-timer, I can tell you that this service to the hobby has been needed for a long time. We have had websites, bulletin boards and Facebook pages before, but nothing that would truly help a hobbyist learn the ropes and then connect further with our hobby infrastructure. My deepest thanks to Peter Yeargin for initiating this project, and to Bryan Pravel for making this thing take off, technologically.

Now, what can you, the Dipfan in North America or beyond, do to help support hobby growth and outreach? First, use the site as a way to introduce your friends and/or fellow gamers to the game of Diplomacy. Second, contact me or the NADF directly about changes or additions you think should be made to the website's coverage or content. Third, once the pandemic begins to wane, use the Connections page of the site (still being finalized as this article is written) to connect with other Dipsters in your local area to enable face to face play - maybe you can even form your own local Diplomacy Club. The January 2021 edition of the Diplomacy Broadcast Network's Deadline news program will feature a panel discussion with three club organizers on how to develop and energize a local Diplomacy organization, so check that out when it drops on Youtube or Twitch.

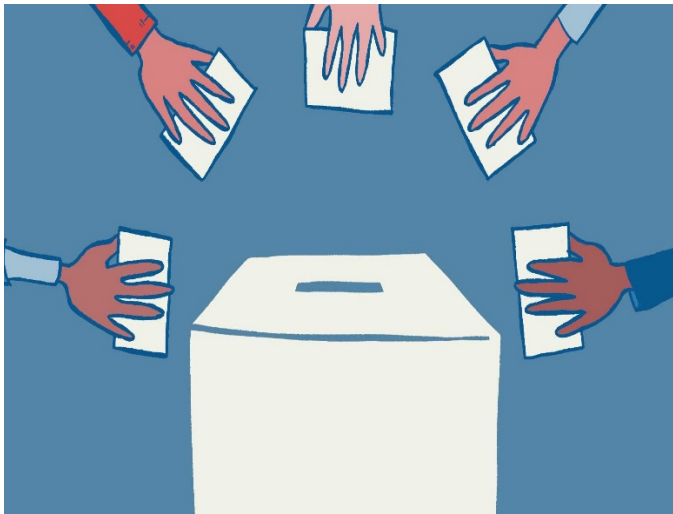
My final pitch is for you to become an NADF Ambassador. One reason we have not finalized the face-to-face connections part of the website is that we want to have a network of hobbyists ready to assist players accessing this site to connect with other local Dipfans. If you are interested in being an Ambassador for your local community (in some places this will be a city, in others more of a regional or state/province designation) please contact me at [davidhood@dixiecon.com](mailto:davidhood@dixiecon.com).

# A Minor Rule: Voting for When the Game Ends

By Lewis Pulsipher

A problem in running most *Diplomacy* in-person tournaments is the interminable game, the game that seems destined to go on forever. I'm sure that most tournaments have some rule for ending a game before the players have agreed on a draw or someone has achieved a solo victory.

Typically, in *Diplomacy* when the players see that there will be no solo victory, they work to reduce the number of players who will be in the draw. But sometimes they can't or won't remove all the "smaller players" who might vote against a draw that does not include them. This can go on forever, yet no one wants to make a rule that excludes small nations from a draw without consent of the player. My method allows the game to reach a conclusion without a hard time limit, and tournament rules then specify what happens in scoring.



My method's purpose is to end the game in a timely manner without having an absolute time limit, not to force the game to a conclusion (draw or victory). Avoiding an absolute time limit, such as "game ends at the end of 1910" is desirable, because otherwise you can get various shenanigans occurring near the game end because the players know there's a time limit. (For example, "I'll stab him now because I know we're about to end.") My method provides a variable time limit, although if the game lasts long enough it **will** end.

I devised this method for games that have no obvious end-state but do not have draws, it ought to be suitable for draw-ish games as well.

The essence of my method is that players vote whether to end the game. But as time passes there are additional non-player votes to end the game, so sooner or later there will be a majority vote to end the game.

The organizer chooses a game year at which voting begins (say 1907), to occur at the end of each year. The first time the players vote it's just a matter of majority wins (one vote per player). Draws mean the game continues. If the vote is not in favor of ending then the next vote a game year later includes one non-player vote for the game to end. The number of non-player votes to end the game increases by one each year. Sooner or later there will be enough votes for majority to end the game.

Of course, you could start with a vote (or more) for continuing the game, instead of for ending it. So, the next year there would be no non-player vote, then the next year the votes for ending would start their progression.

At the ending (we're assuming no draw has been agreed unanimously), the tournament rating method will have to determine what happens when there's neither a draw nor a win.

If players are using this method it's likely that several can end the game rather than play on interminably (which is rarely enjoyable), but the big players won't get credit for a draw. Does this mean players will be more willing to eliminate small powers who are preventing a unanimous vote for a draw? Only experience will tell.

This method enables larger powers who think they can eliminate small ones, or think they can get a solo victory, continue playing (by voting against game end) for a while longer.

I like this method because it gives agency to the players rather than to a mere time limit. And the players will be uncertain when the game is going to end, so it may eliminate some shenanigans.

# The Story of International Diplomacy Tournament Ratings

by Don Del Grande

In issue 151, David Hood's "Diplomacy World 30 Years Ago This Month" mentioned International Diplomacy Tournament Ratings (IDTR). Here is a brief history.

IDTR was not meant to rate postal play. Instead, it was to rate the play of FTF tournaments worldwide, in order to find a "World Tournament Diplomacy Champion." My original plan was to limit it to North American tournaments, but somebody (whose name is long lost to time) suggested that, since there was going to be a World Championship tournament in 1988, I open it to all tournaments worldwide.

At first, any "large" tournament qualified, provided it was limited to regular (non-variant) Diplomacy. The intent was to promote tournament play, so rankings were based on the sum of each player's points rather than an average; however, the tournaments were limited to "large" events to prevent a small group of people from having weekly "tournaments" in an attempt to run up their ratings. The original system awarded points to the top 20% of the finishers based on the size of the tournament; however, it turned out that the first few winners also just happened to be the winners of the largest tournaments, and a number of people complained, so the system was changed so that every tournament with at least 40 (later 30, when tournament play died down) players gave 100 points to the winner; a 39-player tournament was worth 95, 38 was worth 80, and so on down to 5 for the winner of a 21-player tournament.

Another problem I had was with getting results. While most tournament directors sent in their results quickly, MidCon (the UK national championship at the time) was notorious for not releasing the overall results until just before the following year's tournament. This resulted in the first few IDTR champions not being named until the following summer! As a result, I changed the "calendar" so that MidCon was counted in the following year's results.

There is a pewter cup with the first three winners' names engraved on it, which I bought at Harrod's in London in 1987, although it has made only one "public" appearance, at World DipCon II in Chapel Hill in 1990. The first few champions also got smaller cups to keep, which I bought at a local Macy's. In fact, I still have not only the original cup and its Harrod's box, but one of the individual cups as well - and here is a photo of them:



Note that the one on the left is the "perpetual" IDTR cup, and the one on the right is what a winner would have been sent (after being engraved with their name) in its earlier years. The cup says "INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY TOURNAMENT RATINGS - WORLD TOURNAMENT DIPLOMACY CHAMPION" on the front, and the first three years, winners, and countries on the back.

Here is the complete list of IDTR champions:

**1987 - Dave Race (UK)**  
**1988 - Phil Day (UK)**  
**1989 - Paul Oakes (UK)**  
**1990 - Harry Kolotas (Australia)**  
**1991 - Toby Harris (UK)**  
**1992 - Samy Malki (France)**  
**1993 - Samy Malki (France)**  
**1994 - Stephane Gentric (France)**

Whatever happened to IDTR? Well, the primary reason I started it was to generate interest in getting players to participate in overseas tournaments. However, by the late 1990s, I noticed that this just wasn't the case. I should have seen it coming when I noticed that I was the only North American at World DipCon III. Since there were already separate continental rating systems (NADF, European Order of Merit, Bismarck Cup), and there wasn't enough crossover to compare them against each other, I didn't see a need to continue. I considered bringing back a North American version at one point, but if the results are extended out to the top 50% of the players instead of 20%, it was too close to the NADF system to make it worth bothering.



Maybe one of these days, I'll make a "retroactive" ratings list from the tournament listings in the World Diplomacy Database. For example, here are the results for 2019:

**1. Bill Hackenbracht (second, Dixiecon; third, European Open; third, Tempest; fourth, WDC; fifth, DipCon)**

**2. Andrew Katcher (won European Open and Carnage; third, Boston Massacre; eighth, WDC)**

**3. Jake Trotta (Windy City Weasels League winner; second, Weasel Moot)**

**4. Steve Cooley (DipCon winner; fourth, Carnage)**

---

## Riding the Corona-Coaster in Airstrip One

By Jon Hills

I'm writing this piece, rather hurriedly, in that curious time between Christmas and New Year.

Some people call this time Christmas-Limbo – or should that be Chlimbo? – but it does already have a name: Christmas! Many forget that the Festival of Christmas only *starts* on Christmas Day and does not end until 6 January. Mind you, that's easily overlooked when our modern consumer culture tells most people that the season of Advent – the period looking forward to Christmas – begins in September instead of on the fourth Sunday before December 25<sup>th</sup>.

Pedantic rants on consumerism aside, though, it is perhaps customary at this time of year to reflect and look back on the highs and lows of the preceding twelve months. And what a God-awful year it has been. Not for nothing has the term "emotional corona-coaster" been coined, reflecting the various changes in mood that we have experienced across the pandemic. There cannot be anyone reading this who has not had their life turned upside down by "the 'Rona". Some of us will have lost friends and loved ones to this disease, some of us will have been put out of work by its impact of the World's Economies and some of us will be living with the after-effects of infection; the 'Long-Covid' legacy.

Even now, the UK is facing a resurgent second wave with daily infection rates at record levels and a death rate standing above 1% of the total population. After the relaxation of rules in September, we have had further and harsher restrictions applied to our daily lives such that Christmas was itself nearly cancelled; a twelve-day celebration reduced to just one.

It's all rather bleak

But we should not despair. There have been some positives throughout the year and we would probably do better to dwell on some of those.

Mass vaccinations have begun both here and in Europe and just this morning I woke to news that the Oxford-Zeneca vaccine – one that can be stored pretty much at room temperature (that is, one here on Earth rather than on Titan) – has been approved for use. The fightback starts here, even if a new variant of the virus seems to have got its retaliation in first!

My personal highlight for 2020 was a flying visit (literally) to Amsterdam in March. Regular readers may recall that I wrote about this in DW#149 – *28 Days Later in Airstrip One*. It may only have been a fairly trivial – and very short - business trip but I enjoyed it as something out of the ordinary. Following some subsequent reorganisation in our business, it's also a journey that I'm unlikely to repeat – even without pandemic travel restrictions.

However, I also want to celebrate another great success this year, and that has been the Virtual Dip Cons. Only in March 2020 did we first begin tentatively '*dipping*' our collective toes in that particular pond. Now, barely 9 months later, it is no exaggeration to say that I have lost count of the number of successful tournaments that have been held.

Now, I tend to be a late adopter in these things and my home and work schedules make it difficult for me to commit more than a couple of hours to anything at one sitting, let alone an entire weekend. I have therefore been unable to join these events myself. However, I have heard nothing but good things from those who have. They have been a fantastic hobby response to a difficult and challenging situation.

Of course, some credit must go to the technology firms that have provided the underlying infrastructure - the Backstabbr & Discord combo seems to be coming through as the mechanism of choice - but these are only tools. The real plaudits must go to the craftsmen using them; the tournament directors and promoters bringing these events into being and the mad fools/willing victims/brave pioneers taking part.



God bless you each and every one – as Tiny Tim would say.



This is also an apt moment to flag up Garry Sturley's Tour of Britain 2021. Delayed but not forgotten, this is also being taken online with Games 1 & 2 taking place on 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021. (Those dates also mean that it probably won't be possible to file a report for DW#153 but I'll try and procure one for the Summer edition.)

You'll find full details at:

<https://maccdiplomacy.org.uk/#events>

Returning to my theme, though, these events also seem to have had an unexpected (and positive) outcome.

I don't have the numbers to confirm it - perhaps you do and, if so, feel free to let me know at [jon.airstrip1@gmail.com](mailto:jon.airstrip1@gmail.com) - but the impression I get is that more people have been attending these events virtually than were in person. Maybe I'm wrong. Perhaps it is the mix of players that has changed. Either way, these vDipCons seem to have broken down some of the walls that had built up between the online and F2F *Dip* communities – something that has been agonized over in the pages of *Diplomacy World* for some time.

Interestingly, I've noted a similar effect in online Church services.

I have a number of friends and relations who are Ministers of Religion, in a variety of flavours. All of them have been obliged to move their usual services online. Happily, they have all also reported good numbers of people either picking up these live-streams or watching pre-recorded services on YouTube.

However, they have all also urged the same caution in that, although they are happy with their viewing numbers, they do not know how will these translate into bums on pews or - more sincerely - into spiritual growth and changed lives, post-lockdown?

Although that question is out of scope for this particular column, arguably the F2F world faces a similar challenge.

When we enter our brave new post-Covid world, will there still be a place for a traditional DipCon? Will people be able and willing to travel to meet their new-found digital friends in person?

Or is this boom merely the reflection of a sterile and isolated internet society, in which the art of lying to someone's face has been lost forever?

I hope not. And at the moment - aboard the corona-coaster - hope is what we cling to.

Time is against me so I must end there.

All that remains is to wish all of you a very Stabby New Year.

Stay safe and keep your knives sharp.

Jon

---

## Ask the Hobby Historian: Diplomacy Organizations and Services

By David Hood

With the North American Diplomacy Federation flexing its muscles in 2020 by creating its own Discord server and launching a revamped website, I think it might be a good time to have a short history lesson about organizations and services that have existed during the life of the Diplomacy Hobby. While I was not around to witness the growth and first twenty plus years (that's Edi Birsan territory,) I did join at the tail end of the Great Feud and thus saw a lot of the sturm and drang related to the leadership of hobby services at that time. This is not intended to be an exhaustive history of the subject, but instead just to give the broad-brush strokes.

When the Hobby as an institution began to take form in the early 60s, it was based primarily around play by mail through published magazines ("zines") which were largely published by folk who crossed over from the SF/fantasy hobby. They were used to amateur-published fanzines involving a lot of written content and expression of personality from the both the publisher and outside contributors. Since zine publishers traded copies with each other, building a network of hobbyists in regular communication with each other, this formed the basic framework for coordination and cooperation in

the promotion of the game and the nascent Hobby surrounding it.

From early on, hobbyists realized that some standardization could be helpful in the way postal games were organized, filled, run and concluded. Gathering information on all the games starting and concluding would help folk understand how the hobby was functioning, while statistical analysis of game finishes could help Diplomacy theorists determine strategies and spot player trends for the purpose of communicating that information to the hobby at large. The office of Boardman Number Custodian (BNC) was created, named after the publisher of the first postal zine in 1962, John Boardman. The BNC kept records of all game starts for non-variant games, gave each game a "Boardman number" (like the way current Gunboat games at the NADF server and on Webex Teams get an ID number), and published a zine called Everything to publish game starts and game finishes. The variant sub-hobby was also active from the earliest days, so a Miller Number Custodian (MNC) was appointed to do the same function for the variant games, named after early variant enthusiast Don Miller.

A very common issue during the postal days was the disappearance of zines due to the publisher dropping out of the hobby, with or without notice. Players who had invested months or years of real time into a game of Diplomacy (consider how long a postal game could last) were understandably frustrated when a game become so orphaned. This led to the creation of another hobby service, the US Orphan Service, which placed orphan games with willing zine publisher adoptive parents. There were other orphan services and individual helpers, but more about that later (yes, we call that foreshadowing.)

Archivists have always existed in the Diplomacy hobby, as in the wider population: folk who just cannot bear for the past to be buried and forgotten. Walt Buchanan, the founder of Diplomacy World, was such an archivist, with his collection eventually becoming housed at a university as well as in private hands. Other hobby services which existed for decades were the Census (trying to list all known Dip hobbyists annually), the creation of Novice Packets to send to newbies, the annual Runestone Poll to rank zines by popularity and other metrics, a hobby Ombudsman to resolve disputes between GMs and players, and the publication of a zine called Pontevedria listing all known game openings so that aspiring players could find those opportunities.

That last sentence is a play on words, but only old-timers would get it. There were always feuds in the hobby, sometimes over Diplomacy games and sometimes over outside things like politics or just sheer personality conflict. The Great Feud of the mid 80s is an example,

although a pretty terrible one since (from what I can tell as a very sidelines-participant at the end of the Feud) was essentially about nothing at all except strange personal behavior and personality cults. Let's leave that distasteful subject, but I brought it up because it eventually led to competing service providers and essentially "shadow" leadership positions. So, a publication called Known Game Openings, which had existed pre-Feud, eventually became a fierce competitor of Pontevedria, with the two hobbyists involved being in two different sides of the Feud. There was an Orphan Games Project to rival the USOS, etc. This existed throughout the length and breadth of the Hobby, until it burned itself out in the early to mid-90s – along with most of the organizations and positions I just mentioned above!

So, let's talk about that. Why don't we have any of this anymore? Technology. It changed everything, as it always does. Once the postal hobby began to disappear, so did almost all hobby infrastructure. This did not mean that Diplomacy itself died – quite the contrary, more and more folk were playing online – but it did mean that the network of traditions and community spaces vanished almost overnight. There were lots of games being played, lots of new people learning the game and so forth, but there was now almost no communication between these various Diplomacy sub-groupings. Besides hobby flagship publication Diplomacy World, really the only thing that still existed from the old days was the network of face-to-face tournaments, and the fact that one of them every year was denominated as Dipcon, the North American Championships. The Dipcon Society, which really just meant everyone in attendance at that year's Dipcon and operating under what was called the Dipcon Charter, became the only real hobby organization, as it were.

Well, until the foundation of the NADF itself in the late 90s. This was the brainchild of Seattle hobbyist Buz Eddy, an old-school guy with some knowledge of past Diplomacy organizations and a desire to create one which would actually last. See, there were two other attempts at a hobby wide organization which would like be our Chess Federation. In 1971, The Diplomacy Association was formed under the leadership of John Beshara, but it fell apart soon thereafter due to alleged improprieties by Beshara, both financial and otherwise. Many of its movers and shakers then formed the International Diplomacy Administration in 1973, which lasted until 1979 in fits and starts but without lasting influence. Eddy wanted more, so he pretty much single-handedly decided we would have a North American Diplomacy Federation because, well, we needed such a thing. But to do what?

I believe we are still answering that question. Buz used the NADF to establish an All-Star designation, to provide

a ranking system for players, to promote face to face events, etc. After his death, the torch passed to other hobbyists such as Conrad Woodring, Dave Maletsky and Chris Martin, who used it to promote the Grand Prix ratings system for tournament play, to encourage best practices in the running of tournaments, and eventually under Martin's leadership to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all Dipsters.

Now under President Siobhan Nolen, the NADF has refocused its mission more specifically on the rebuilding of a Diplomacy Community itself – a harkening back to the old days of the hobby. We have never been more blessed in terms of technological capacity to reach Diplomacy fans, evangelize about the game, and integrate disparate Diplomacy groups with each other. The pandemic has been horrible – but as a consequence, we have created virtual face-to-face as a method of playing the game, and have spawned the

creation of various Diplomacy media such as DBN on YouTube. These have the potential for jump-starting the growth and development of our hobby for years to come. If you want to be part of this hobby-building project, let Siobhan know through her contact information on the website or through Discord.

***[[I do want to point out that technically we still have the BNC and the MNC, both currently under the stewardship of Tom Howell. However, very few GMs make use of that service any longer. I do in Eternal Sunshine and for the Diplomacy World Demo Game, and Andy Lischett does in his zine Cheesecake, but I'm not sure who else does. I wrote an article back in Diplomacy World #102 (page 21 of the issue, which you can find at <https://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw102.pdf>) explaining why I think those services could still serve a valuable purpose in the hobby at large.]]***

## An Interview with Zachary Moore

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

### Randy

Hi Zach, thanks for agreeing to this interview! So, you run the Virtual Diplomacy League (VDL) - could you describe what exactly that is?

### Zachary Moore

VDL is a year-long Diplomacy competition with monthly events, where every game is scored and the top 7 advance to a top board at the end of the year. You can think of it as a long, drawn out tournament.



### Randy

How did you get the idea for a year-long tournament? And related, how did you go about advertising it?

### Zachary Moore

It started as a continuation of the Minnesota Diplomacy Club, our local league which had to suspend face-to-face play in March. We hosted our first virtual game via text messages on Slack, and a couple non-Minnesotan players found out about it through social media and signed up. That hadn't been our intention, but we figured the more the merrier, so we opened it up to anyone who wanted to play. The next month I put out a message on WebEx Teams inviting the face-to-face community to join us so we could fill two boards, but after that I stopped advertising and everything spread by word of mouth. I think by May 80-90% of our players came from outside Minnesota, so I figured it was time for a rebrand. Hence, the Virtual Diplomacy League.

### Randy

Any idea what the breakdown of primarily-online versus primarily-FTF players (pre-pandemic, of course) has been so far?

### Zachary Moore

We had 96 players in 2020, 59 of them are either primarily online players or new to the hobby entirely, the other 37 are primarily face-to-face players. So, a pretty good balance, slightly favoring online players.

### Randy

Very impressive! Do you see the VDL continuing into 2021 and beyond, or was it more motivated by the FtF restrictions COVID created?



**Zachary Moore**

I am already drawing up plans for a 2021 season to begin in March, and hoping that it hangs around for years to come! My expectation is that as COVID restrictions fade away and face-to-face tournaments come back, we will have fewer virtual tournaments, and VDL can be a place where great players from around the world lock horns even if they can't make it to the same face-to-face tournaments. I also see it as a less intimidating point of entrance into the hobby for an online player who wants to get to know some people before making the leap into face-to-face play.

**Randy**

That's great to hear. Obviously finding a way to attract more online players into the FtF hobby is a frequent topic of conversation in DW.

Have you had a chance (or do you plan) to do any observing of the games themselves? Any idea if there are certain patterns among the favored openings, or are some powers reliably doing better than others?

**Zachary Moore**

Luckily for me, the fine folks at the Diplomacy Broadcast Network provided coverage for every VDL game this year, so it was easy for me to keep up with the action on the board. One peculiarity is that it became commonplace for Austria and Russia to successfully DMZ Galicia, which predictably led to a rough year for Turkey. Turkey had the lowest average points per game, and the most eliminations in 2020. I wouldn't say any one power stood out as dominant, but it is notable that Italy was nearly impossible to kill, only seeing 3 eliminations in 37 games, the best survival rate by far.

**Randy**

Any thoughts on experimenting in the future, whether with different scoring systems, or maybe some kind of rank-based bidding system for power assignments?

**Zachary Moore**

I'm always open to experimentation, and the scoring system is definitely one of the areas where we'll likely be tweaking things every year. Most of the ideas being discussed right now involve tinkering with the league structure, such as how many games will score for points, and what the length of negotiation periods should be. The guiding principle of every decision we make, is that our games should always be able to run on auto-pilot. We want to make life easy on the GMs, who are usually handling multiple games at a time.

**Randy**

And when things return to normal, is it possible we'll see some aspects of the VDL become FtF?

**Zachary Moore**

There definitely will never be a face-to-face component to VDL. I think any games played in person would undermine parity by giving greater access to certain players based on physical location. I'm happy with the work that the DBN Invitational is doing to meaningfully tie face-to-face, virtual, and extended deadline games into the same ecosystem.

That being said, certain aspects of virtual face-to-face play may facilitate the creation of local clubs. Kirk Vaughn has been using virtual games to kick the tires on a club in Nashville, and Marvin Fried has kept the London group active all year with virtual games. In Minnesota, we often find ourselves at the mercy of the weather for games scheduled between October and April. In the past we've had to cancel when a snowstorm hits, but going forward I think we could hop on our computers and play from home.

Finally, I think VDL will have indirect influences on tournament play. Players are getting to know each other better both on and off the board, so reputations may loom larger, and the social aspect of tournaments will benefit from greater familiarity among players.

**Randy**

Awesome, one last question: if any of our readers want to join the VDL, how would they go about doing that?

**Zachary Moore**

You can find an invite link to join the VDL Discord server by going to <http://www.diplobn.com/vdl> .

# New Year — So Bring Some New Ideas!

By Bob Durf and “Zander”

There are hundreds of variants for Diplomacy out there by this point. Some are very good. Some provide a unique experience. Many, like 2020, drag on too long and cause a lot of pain and suffering. With so many variants out there already, don't spend this new year slapping together a map on MS paint and calling it good. Think outside the box! The best variant designers know how to *think* and spend *time* on where in their designs to break the mold and where to stick within the standard Diplomacy constraints. Myself, along with my good friend Zander, worked through some of the separate elements of the Diplomacy design to consider when creating a new variant. Think of this article as a springboard to your own fresh designs!

The game design of Diplomacy may seem simple. In fact, the game design of Diplomacy is elegant. When you break down all the different elements of a game of Diplomacy, you realize how much actually goes into its design. Next time you sit down to design a variant in 2021, think about how to change or leave some of the elements of Diplomacy outside its map.

**Map:** We'll skip over the map element of a Diplomacy variant, because usually, this is what designers think to change right off the bat! A word of warning—even if changing the Diplomacy map may be the easiest start to your variant, you still need to invest a *lot* of thought into how you design this element. You don't get to design a crappy map and call it good just because Colonial Diplomacy managed to get published professionally.

**Movement:** Movement is kept very simple in Diplomacy. Units generally move one territory a turn. It is a system that is very core to the game and changing it may not create a more interesting experience on its own. Certainly, one must be careful when thinking of changing movement rules—because they will impact how you must design the map as well. However, don't shy away! Remember, on the seas, the Convoy is already a rule that changes the basic movement of units in Diplomacy.

Making it so that a ship convoying also counts as a support might encourage more water play and may be useful on a map with a large amount of water play (for example, a Pacific WWII variant). A "railroad rule" where players could move through their own territory very rapidly (or maybe just their held SC's?) is one example of a way to change the movement rules of Diplomacy. This could allow central powers some added strength in early conflicts where they may be insufficiently powerful initially. It also may allow end game play to speed up slightly. From a diplomatic perspective, it could allow

players to set up some insane stabs because everyone is just a day away from shifting half their forces. There are counter arguments to implementing such a rule—it could make every stab really lame because you would get one turn before the railroad brigade appeared. It may help sloppy players and not reward those who spend all game ensuring their forces are in proper positions for end game stalemate lines.

**Units:** In base Diplomacy, there are two types of units. There is, of course, many variants with unique units. Consider changing how units work with a sparing eye. It can be very easy (I speak with experience from playing some of these variants run by enthusiastic GMs) to overwhelm your players with unique units. I think often, when unique units are put in variants, they are overused.

But making unique units or changes to how they work can be a great way to give your variant flavor. Should an army in a medieval variant act just like an army in the WWI themed vanilla game? You can have knights that can move two spaces and peasants which can only move one or some other nonsense, provided your map is appropriately designed. Or militia/regulars in an early modern game. One type of unit that could make thematic sense even in base Diplomacy is an artillery unit that can't attack but can support up to two spaces away or something like that. It would certainly fix stalemate lines, if you dislike stalemate lines. When putting in unique units, try to make sure of the following: 1) make sure each unique unit has a niche, a time where it is the *best* choice. 2) Try to make sure each unique unit has a place in each phase of a game. Don't design a unit that just acts as a band aid for your end game or early game games.

**Support:** Remember that the concept of support is an integral, genius component of the Diplomacy design. So why not modify how support works in your variant? Maybe cheer up new players and let armies support fleets.

**Supply:** Here we have a part of the design which can be expanded in various interesting ways. For example, you can get supply every winter according to your SC count in the form of chits. Then you can either spend it to build/maintain units, hold on to it, or (more interestingly) trade it for favors. The last could be particularly interesting if giving supply was an order like move or support that had to be written down and revealed like a regular move. "Support me into Moscow and I will send you supply this turn so you can build in Constantinople this winter to stop the Italian fleet" <- Haha,

no. Machiavelli, while having some issues, takes a form of this unique approach with income that can be used to purchase and maintain units. Machiavelli, of course, pulls income from more than supply centers, and when you introduce fungibility to such a key part of the game, you introduce a whole host of potentially interesting decisions.

**Victory Condition:** Any major change to the victory condition is gonna change the nature of the game drastically. But changing these conditions can give your variant a lot more flexibility regarding how you design player Powers. For example, consider a variant where there are several "key SCs" and you need to hold a certain number for victory? Like, you need 3 out of 4 of: Belgium, Tunis, Greece, and Sweden or something like that. It might make for a brutal fast-paced scramble for a few key diplomatic areas.

What about balancing different factions by giving different victory conditions for each? For example, Imperial II, an old worldwide variant, features vastly differing powers. Giving each different win conditions may have helped improved play-ability in that game. I've wondered the same about Ambition and Empire. An offshoot of this idea would be bidding victory conditions for each power. In Empires in Arms, a Napoleonic board game, each player bids points for each power. Those points are then added onto however many points that player will need to gain to win. This results in the stronger powers being saddled with more points needed to win. The same principle could be applied to a large variant, almost self-balancing it for a designer unable to extensively play-test on his or her own.

You could also turn or time limit the game. Whoever has the most SCs at the end of a predetermined time wins. Both a good chunk of casual face-to-face games are playing under an unofficial time limit already, as the game is usually called after 3-4 hours when people start having to go, and some tournaments are played under explicit time limits. Introducing such to a variant may encourage more players to play your new design—it gives them a guaranteed out!

**Negotiation:** I mean there is gunboat but everyone knows about that.

I don't know if it has a name, but I think I have seen the idea of an "honest" diplomacy game memed before. (And I think one may have been scrummed up on Playdip? Actually, I might be thinking of an honest mafia NVM). That is: a diplomacy game where the players

can't lie. Watch as everyone desperately tries to mislead with the truth. Behold the emergence of an Olympic level of double speak competition. Bask in the glory of three layers of fine print in every agreement. You would have to ban draws, however, or it would get reallly boring because people will just agree to do that.

**Phase:** Another thing I don't see changed much. Diplomacy game phases go Spring -> Fall-> Winter, with respective diplomacy and retreat phases. This system is a really fascinating design choice: it forms the beating heart of the game's pacing. It lays out "safer" turns where negotiations and actions have comparably fewer consequences and "less safe" turns where the knives come out and there is no recovery of loses.

What if, say, there was a summer phase identical to spring/fall? It probably doesn't add anything on its own, but in, say, a game that takes place in a historic setting I don't see why the marching season is exactly the same length.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, I think the reason that we see variants opt for map changes is that the map is the most mutable part of the diplomacy experience. If you change almost any other aspect it drastically changes how the game plays and you might lose that "diplomacy" feeling. If you have a million different sorts of units you might accidentally make a combat system with considerable depth. Which would be bad because then people might win 3 v 1 wars just because they understand the combat system better. If you change the victory conditions significantly, you are at risk of removing the cutthroat winner-take-all goals of vanilla. If you change supply around too much you might divorce a player's ability to field units from his actual political state on the map, hampering diplomatic consequences. So, while you should look to make some unique changes to make your variant interesting and stand out, you must be thoughtful with how you make such changes.

In conclusion, to reiterate what was said at the start of this article--you can play around with a good chunk of these aspects in a variant and still keep that "diplomacy" feeling. But it takes a lot more work than just slapping down SCs and HCs on a historical map of X region. Let's make 2021 the year of carefully designed variants. Goodness knows we've seen enough crap in 2020.

P.S.: We are looking to do an article on "Worst Variants Ever." Send in your personal choices and we'll decide which is truly the worst of all submitted!



# Virtual Diplomacy League Awards Ceremony

By Zachary Moore

The Virtual Diplomacy League's debut regular season is in the books, and all that remains is our top board, set to be played on January 16th. It was tremendous fun to watch all the chaos unfold live on DBN, month after month, culminating with a hectic final push in December where players jockeyed furiously for that last spot on the topboard.

Year two of VDL will begin in March, and between now and then there are many details to hammer out. Our league's founding document is comically brief, setting almost nothing in stone aside from a general format and a guarantee that much of the rules would be ironed out as the year went along. I'm excited to spend the months of January and February discussing with players and GMs what our second year will look like.

But before we get into all that, I want to recognize the contributions that made the league possible this year, and there were many. Players who sat out or played twice in the same day to help make numbers, GMs from all around the world who allowed us to play games round-the-clock, spectators who enlivened the experience with banter in the YouTube chat, and broadcasters who turned certain players into household names. If you're hearing about the Virtual Diplomacy League for the first time, head on over to YouTube and check out some game commentary on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network. You'll be hooked!

Speaking of household names, welcome to the first annual VDL awards ceremony! We'll start with what I consider to be the most coveted and contested award in the VDL.

## **Fan of the Year:** Dave Maletsky

Fan of the year goes to the person who most consistently showed up in the YouTube chat during live streams despite not having played that day. Halfway through the season, it was neck-and-neck between Maletsky and Chris Kelly, but Chris decided to go Hollywood on us and start playing games, so can he really be considered a TRUE fan? Maletsky wins in a landslide.

**2020 All-GM Team:** Markus Zijlstra, Hunter Katcher, Tommy Anderson

Picking a favorite GM is a lot like picking a favorite child: not easy to choose just one, but pretty simple to narrow it down to your top three. Every month, the VDL plays three rounds. The first is friendly to Asia-Pacific time

zones, the second to European time zones, and the third to the United States. The first two rounds simply would not exist if not for the contributions of Markus Zijlstra and Hunter Katcher, neither of whom have ever played in a VDL game but both of whom have given tremendous time and effort to making it happen. Tommy Anderson does play, but has been willing to sacrifice rounds to help GM when I ask him, usually on short notice. Huge thanks to all three of them for their contributions.

## **Jason Mastbaum of the Year:** Craig Mayr

Congrats to the big guy from Big Sky for winning the first ever JMOTY award! This honor recognizes the player who was the biggest thorn in NADF president Siobhan Nolen's side during a Diplomacy game. In December, Craig and Siobhan formed a vicious I/T alliance that cleared out the east and headed west. Then they ran into a brick wall. What did they do? Well, Siobhan dug in her heels, fighting valiantly alongside her ally. Craig, on the other hand, plunged his knife into his ally's back in route to a 10/10 split top with Ben Kellman, simultaneously spoiling Siobhan's return to competitive Diplomacy and leaving Ben just one center short of a spot on the top board.

## **Lawyer of the Year:** Tanya Gill

The most coveted award in all of Diplomacy goes to Tanya Gill, who rested her case after three games and typically had her opponents pleading no-contest by 1903. Once her lead in the VDL was secure, Tanya was appointed to the highest court in the land -- that's right, the DBN broadcast crew. Her next test? The VDL championship game, where fellow lawyer and Big Tobacco lobbyist Ed Sullivan is expected to appeal this decision. Stay tuned.

## **Teacher of the Year:** Dave Roberts

Our last award goes to a man who teaches Diplomacy lessons both in the classroom and on the board. Dave is methodical, always in the game and competing for a board top. It shouldn't be surprising to see so many builds coming from a person whose entire profession is about assigning A's and F's, and making sure that nobody near him hangs around for more than 4 years.

This concludes the 2020 VDL awards ceremony! Congratulations to all our winners. If you didn't compete in VDL this year, we hope to see you in 2021. More information can be found on [www.diplobn.com](http://www.diplobn.com).

# Tempest in a Teapot 2020: A Virtual Diplomacy Tournament

By Rick Desper



The Potomac Tea & Knife Society, a club of Diplomacy players located in the Washington DC area, hosted its first virtual version its annual tournament, Tempest in a Teapot, this October 17<sup>th</sup>. Following the lead of other virtual tournaments run this year, we used a variety of online tools and websites to run the games and to provide a way for online players communicate verbally. To adjudicate games, we used the website [backstabbr.com](http://backstabbr.com), which has been used by email Dippers for a few years now. Players submit orders to the backstabber engine, which adjudicates moves, enforces deadlines, and even manages draw proposals. For example, one of the games I GMed can be found [here](#). The history of each game is kept from Spring 1901 through the ending, with maps and orders for each season. Orders are submitted by the clicking interface, which usually works well but can be confusing for more complicated moves involving convoys or fleets moving to coasts.

For communication, we used the Discord interface for communication. [Discord](#) is one of several group communication websites that have flourished in the past year, as quarantined people have sought technological solutions to the problem of keeping in touch with others. Discord is appealing to gamers because it allows for the creation of channels for specialized interests, and has the ability to transmit both video and audio content. For bandwidth reasons, Diplomacy players usually take advantage of the audio possibilities without the video.

Finally, as several virtual tournaments have been played this year, they've been covered by a new channel on YouTube: the [Diplomacy Broadcast Network](#). In particular, coverage of Tempest can be found [here](#). The commentary was structured in real time, with several games progressing simultaneously, but each individual board can be accessed as a separate video on DBN.

As to the gaming itself, David Miller served as Tournament Director, and Dave Maletsky, Graham Woodring, and myself GMed the individual games. (Since the games were adjudicated by the Backstabbr platform, GMing didn't require much from us). We had two rounds of five boards each. In theory the first round was untimed, but anybody who wished to play in the second round needed to see to it that he or she was available for the second board call.

A brief summary of the individual boards:

## Round 1, Board 1:

The players were Karthik Konath in Austria, Dave Roberts in England, Chris McKinney in France, Jason Mastbaum in Germany, John Anderson in Italy, Rafael Da Mata in Russia, and Ben Kellman in Turkey.

The story of this board was explosive growth by the Austrian player, Karthik Konath. Dave Roberts' England also did well. The game ended in 1906 with an Austrian board top, even though England seemed to have a lot of room to grow.

## Round 1, Board 2:

Austria: Craig Mayr, England: Andrei Gribakov, France: Randy Lawrence-Hurt, Germany: Wes Ketchum, Italy: Tommy Anderson, Russia: Advait Arunav, Turkey: Mehmet Alpaslan

Two major alliances: E/G in West, A/I in East. E/G did slightly better and Andrei topped the board.

## Round 1, Board 3:

Austria: Eber Condrell, England JJ Raymond, France: Farren Jane, Germany: Jaxon Roberts, Italy: Ed Sullivan, Russia: Seren Kwok, Turkey Hunter Katcher (from 1902 on)

This game started with an unlikely Austria opening: Army Vienna -> Bohemia. Unfortunately for Eber, the Russians and Italians were in Galicia and Tyrolia,

respectively. The West saw the French in Piedmont while the English were in the Channel and the Germans were in Burgundy. Whoops! Wintergreen Alliance (I/R) dominated early game with rapid growth while France collapsed in West. But I/R broke with Italian stab, so Turkey recovered and eventually topped the board with Russian help.



#### Round 1, Board 4

Austria: Jonathan Frank, England: Christian Brown, France: Morgante Pell, Germany: Jonathan Dingess, Italy: Chris Alumbaugh, Russia: Tim Richardson, Turkey: Bill Hackenbracht

Game featured steady growth by Morgante Pell's France in the West, contrasted by Bill Hackenbracht's Turkey stabbing multiple allies simultaneously. He first got out of the corner when Russia left Rumania and Sevastapol underdefended.

Highlight in 1905: Eastern four set up mini-stalemate line at Lvn/War/Gal/Vie/Tyr/Ven/Rome/Nap/Ion to stop Western alliance. But Turkey took Sevastapol, Serbia and Bulgaria at same time. France stabbed Germany at same time, taking Holland and moving into Ruhr. Looks like a two-horse race. Disbands by Austria and Russia opened the floodgates.

Later highlight in 1911: France at 15 SCs seems to have position that could force three more SCs for a solo. Turkey is playing a game of chicken with third-place Germany, goes back and forth Ukraine and Galicia. Why is Germany not throwing game to France? France has Italy locked down. French tactics in North continue to be sub-optimal. Turkey takes Moscow and Warsaw, Germans take St. Pete from Moscow while English take Norway with support from Germans. Year finishes with France at 14 and Turkey at 13. Game ends in draw.

Sentiment among DBN commentators is that France really did not exploit as much as possible in the North.

Could he have soloed with a more aggressive attack? Perhaps.

#### Round 1, Board 5:

Austria: Matt Lynch, England: Brad Blitstein, France: Melinda Holley, Germany: Evan Swihart, Italy: Nicolas Sahuguet, Russia: Maxim Popov, Turkey: Natty Shafer

This is a curious game. It seems that only Italy bothered to try to grow. Nicolas finished with 10 SCs, well ahead of a cluster of players at 5-6 SCs.

#### Round 2

The Round 2 boards hit a drop-dead end of game limit after roughly 5 hours, and were, on average, shorter than the Round 1 boards.

#### Round 2, Board 1

Austria: Karthik Konath, England: Evan Swihart, France: Jason Mastbaum, Italy: Tim Richardson, Russia: John Anderson, Turkey: Nicolas Sahuguet

Karthik is in Austria again. In this game, he works with John Anderson's Russia to sweep the board. They finish in 1907 with Russia at 11 and Austria at 9.

#### Round 2, Board 2:

Austria: Randy L-H, England: Craig Mayr, France: Hunter Katcher, Germany: Peter McNamara (Aussie), Italy: Chris Brand, Russia: Jaxon Roberts, Turkey: me.

The DBN commentators called this a "Board of Death", with several highly rated players. As we were one player short, I stepped in as Turkey while simultaneously GMing a different game. To be honest, GMing takes little time so playing was not too onerous. But I made the mistake of saying "I was hoping to not play" and that's an invitation to attacks.

I had hoped to work with Chris Brand's Italy, but he joined with Austria and Russia to systematically take me out. I think my defensive tactics were strong, and I'd hoped to either get Austria to hit Russia or for Italy to help keep A/R at bay, but neither happened. Randy grew to 13 dots by 1907 by stabbing Italy after my position had been reduced. He topped the board easily. I honestly didn't track the West very closely.

#### Round 2, Board 3

Austria: Bill Hackbracht, England: Farren Jane, France: Tommy Anderson, Germany: JJ Raymond, Italy: Mehmet Alpaslan, Russia: Zach Moore, Turkey: Melinda Holley



Alliance game, featuring E/F vs. A/T. G/R worked together, but could not hold up.

Game ends with England at 10, Austria at 9, France at 7, Turkey at 6.

#### Round 2, Board 4:

Austria John Jamieson, England: Ben Kellman, France: Rafael Da Mata, Germany Ed Sullivan, Italy: Jonathan Dingess, Russia: Andrei Gribakov, Turkey: Chris Alumbaugh.

Fascinating game starts with A/I/R vs. Turkey, followed by a large stab of Italy. They blitzed Germany so fast that the incipient E/G could not grow as quickly. John's Austria seemed to be focused on building as many fleets as possible, finishing with 4. In any case, Andrei finished ahead of John, topping the board with 11 SCs. As Andrei was the only player to top boards in both rounds, he won the tournament.

#### Round 2, Board 5:

Austria: Wes Ketchum, England: Jorge Zhang, France: Maxim Popov, Germany: Jonathan Frank, Italy: Natty Shafer, Russia: Morgante Pell, Turkey: Dave Roberts

This game featured an amusing new opening idea, executed by Jorge and Maxim in England and France. France opened to the Channel and Burgundy, while England opened with fleets in the North Sea and Norwegian Seas. The twist was an army move from Liverpool to Wales. The fall move was a coup: the English were convoyed from Wales to Belgium *by the French fleet* while England used his Fleet North Sea to stand the Germans off in Holland.

These moves were followed in Spring 1902 by Fleet North Sea -> Helgoland Bight and a move of the French fleet to the North Sea. In the fall move, the French fleet again served as a ferry for English land troops, bringing them over to Holland.

The game continued along these lines, with the French fleet moving through Denmark to the Baltic Sea and eventually ending up taking St. Pete(SC) in the final year. E/F shared top with 9 SCs.



#### Final Results

Top 7:

1. Andrei Gribakov 14019
2. Karthik Konath 13020
3. Bill Hackenbracht 12022
4. Hunter Katcher 11515
5. Jaxon Roberts 11514
6. Farren Janee 11015
7. Natty Shafer 11012

We used the Carnage scoring system, which gives 7000-1000 points to the 1<sup>st</sup> place through 7<sup>th</sup> place finishers, respectively. Positional ties are scored by averaging the respective positional scores. For example, if two players share first place, each receives 6500 points. Also, each player gets 1 point for each SC controlled at the end of the game. Andrei finished with two board tops, Karthik had a 1<sup>st</sup> place and a 2<sup>nd</sup> place, and Bill had two 2<sup>nd</sup> place finishes.

#### Best countries:

Austria: Randy L-H R2B2  
England: tie Andrei G (R1B2), Farren Jane (R2B3)  
France: Morgante Pell (R1B4)  
Germany: Wes Ketchum (R1B2)  
Italy: Nicolas Sahuguet (R1B5)  
Russia: John Anderson (R2B1)  
Turkey: Hunter K. (R1B3)

We were happy to host the tournament, but we hope to be able to see people in person in 2021. Also, it's worth noting that the Virtual league is bringing a lot of players from around the globe, while local players (esp. long-time PTKSers) may be less likely to play. We've seen players from Australia, Singapore, England in US-based tournaments. I'd like to think that we can continue to see these people in the hobby, and that perhaps these virtual tournaments will cultivate a new generation of Diplomacy players.

# 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 1905



**Austria:** A Moscow Supports A Livonia - Warsaw.

**England:** F Barents Sea Supports A St Petersburg, F Denmark - Baltic Sea, A Edinburgh – Denmark, A Holland – Kiel, F Irish Sea - North Atlantic Ocean, F North Sea Convoys A Edinburgh – Denmark, A St Petersburg Supports A Moscow, F Sweden - Gulf of Bothnia.

**France:** A Belgium Hold, A Burgundy - Marseilles (\*Bounce\*), A Kiel – Berlin, F Marseilles - Gulf of Lyon, F North Africa - Tunis (\*Fails\*), A Ruhr - Munich (\*Bounce\*), F Tunis - Ionian Sea (\*Fails\*), F Tyrrhenian Sea Supports F Tunis - Ionian Sea (\*Dislodged\*, retreat to Western Mediterranean or OTB).

**Germany:** A Livonia – Warsaw, A Prussia Supports A Livonia - Warsaw.

**Italy:** A Galicia – Bohemia, A Greece Hold, A Piedmont - Marseilles (\*Bounce\*),

F Rome Supports F Naples - Tyrrhenian Sea, A Venice - Tuscany.

**Russia:** A Tyrolia - Munich (\*Bounce\*), A Ukraine – Sevastopol,  
A Warsaw – Moscow (\*Dislodged\*, retreat to Ukraine or Silesia or OTB).

**Turkey:** A Albania Hold, A Bulgaria – Rumania, F Ionian Sea Supports F Naples - Tyrrhenian Sea (\*Cut\*),  
F Naples - Tyrrhenian Sea, A Rumania – Galicia, A Serbia – Budapest, F Smyrna - Aegean Sea.

### PRESS

**dateline berlin:** drang nach osten... (though I never played that one. did I mention how much I love monster games? terrible swift sword, war in europe (which I actually played solitaire for about a year!))

**dateline prussia:** for those who are about to die...wait, that's me!

### Summer 1905



**Austria:** Has A Moscow.

**England:** Has F Baltic Sea, F Barents Sea, A Denmark, F Gulf of Bothnia, A Kiel, F North Atlantic Ocean, F North Sea, A St Petersburg.

**France:** Retreat F Tyrrhenian Sea - Western Mediterranean..Has A Belgium, A Berlin, A Burgundy, F Gulf of Lyon, F North Africa, A Ruhr, F Tunis, F Western Mediterranean.

**Germany:** Has A Prussia, A Warsaw.

**Italy:** Has A Bohemia, A Greece, A Piedmont, F Rome, A Tuscany.

**Russia:** Has A Sevastopol, A Tyrolia, A Ukraine.

**Turkey:** Has F Aegean Sea, A Albania, A Budapest, A Galicia, F Ionian Sea, A Rumania, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

### Spring and Summer 1905 Commentary:

David Hood - Rick Desper - Jack McHugh



No dramatic moves this time, in my opinion. The EF is still sticking together, with a one-center Austrian vassal and a soon-to-be-one-center German vassal. Turkey is the counterweight on the other side, with his Italian and Russian vassals. Tactically, the board is stalemated along those lines, with very little if anything left to happen unless or until the alliance structure changes.

So what could such changes look like? Obviously, England or France could stab the other one. England is in better position to do this tactically, although Cooley is a master diplomat and thus could maybe work something out with the Turks. Ideally, he would turn the Italians against the Turks, but that is going to be very tough given the tactical position. The English fleet in NAO is obviously doing something, either coming to help...or coming to hinder. The problem with any EF war will be Turkey getting out of control, which would be an argument for EF stasis to see if Agar just gets impatient and starts taking out his vassal states.

Could the Italians do something here, in conjunction with Nicewarner slipping into Armenia and so forth? Eh, maybe, but it would be tough.

One important consideration that always comes into play – other than getting 18 centers, what are the player motivations here? Draw the game having the most centers possible but not caring all that much how big Turkey, for example, is? Trying to eliminate the smaller players? Revenge, pure and simple? Blowing up the stalemate line to give yourself a chance to go for the solo, whether or not it causes someone else to potentially solo? There are actually no “correct” answers to these questions when one is playing a one-off game with no tournament or league consequences. This whole issue is why we have such serious scoring system debates, and why it can be hard to predict the goals of other players given the lack of an agreed-upon answer to any of the above questions.

I agree with David except that E/F are over the stalemate line and other than internal conflict between Vick and Steve, there is nothing to stop them from a two-way. While I'm sure Turkey can put a good defense, Stephen can't get to the stalemate

line on land and the French should be able to breach it by sea by slipping fleets along the coast.

I'd love to see an E/F falling out and real three way free for all but if it is going to happen, it won't happen until the three smaller powers, Germany, Russia and Italy are wiped out to avoid dealing with them.

The other possibility is a three way draw with E/F/T. Not likely yet but it certainly is much more likely than any other power surviving with E/F.

**I think David has done a good job addressing the players' motivations and the possible directions of the game. I'll zoom in on the tactics.**

**E/F are across the stalemate line in the sense that they control more than 18 SCs. They are not across the stalemate line in the sense that they can beat back Turkey, Russia, and Italy and take all their dots.**

**There's a pretty easy line to hold at Sev/Ukr/Gal/Boh/Tyrol/Pie + Italy. The question is whether they can keep the right units on the board. If Russia is forced to remove two armies, that would weaken their position considerably.**

**The Western line in Italy is rock solid: Tus S Pie and Rom, Ion S TyS will hold that front forever. The Austrian front needs just Tyrol S Boh, Rum S Gal and Sev S Ukr.. They can hold 14 dots with 11 units. (In the literature, this is known as a minority stalemate line.)**

**I recall a game in which Jim Burgess was one of two Western powers that had a situation like this. The Eastern powers said “Ha ha, you can't kill us” and so Jim threw the game to his ally. While the Eastern powers can prevent invasion, if E&F coordinate on the idea that one of the two should solo, that would be hard to stop. I don't really see that happening here because, well, Jim Burgess had a fairly unusual style of gaming, and I don't see either Vick or Steve wanting to do the same thing.**

#### Fall 1905

**Austria:** A Moscow Supports A Warsaw.

**England:** F Baltic Sea Convoys A Denmark – Livonia, F Barents Sea Supports A St Petersburg, A Denmark – Livonia, F Gulf of Bothnia Supports A Denmark – Livonia, A Kiel Supports A Ruhr - Holland (\*Void\*), F North Atlantic Ocean Hold, F North Sea Hold, A St Petersburg Supports A Moscow.

**France:** A Belgium – Holland, A Berlin – Silesia, A Burgundy - Marseilles (\*Bounce\*),

F Gulf of Lyon - Tyrrhenian Sea (\*Fails\*), F North Africa Supports F Tunis, A Ruhr – Munich,

F Tunis Supports F Gulf of Lyon - Tyrrhenian Sea, F Western Mediterranean Supports F Gulf of Lyon - Tyrrhenian Sea.

**Germany:** A Prussia Supports A Warsaw, A Warsaw Supports A Berlin - Silesia.

**Italy:** A Bohemia – Tyrolia, A Greece – Serbia, A Piedmont - Marseilles (\*Bounce\*), F Rome Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea, A Tuscany Hold.

**Russia:** A Sevastopol Supports A Ukraine, A Tyrolia – Vienna, A Ukraine Supports A Budapest - Galicia.

**Turkey:** F Aegean Sea Supports F Ionian Sea, A Albania Hold, A Budapest – Galicia, A Galicia – Bohemia, F Ionian Sea Supports F Tyrrhenian Sea, A Rumania Supports A Budapest – Galicia, F Tyrrhenian Sea Hold.



### Supply Center Chart

<b>Austria:</b>	Moscow=1	Even
<b>England:</b>	Denmark, Edinburgh, Kiel, Liverpool, London, Norway, St Petersburg, Sweden=8	Even
<b>France:</b>	Belgium, Brest, Holland, Marseilles, Munich, Paris, Portugal, Spain, Tunis=9	Build 1
<b>Germany:</b>	Berlin, Warsaw=2	Even
<b>Italy:</b>	Greece, Rome, Serbia, Trieste, Venice=5	Even
<b>Russia:</b>	Budapest, Sevastopol, Vienna=3	Even
<b>Turkey:</b>	Ankara, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Naples, Rumania, Smyrna=6	Remove 1

### PRESS

**Real GM to Fake GM:** Terribly sorry that someone “dropp[ed] a dime,” as you say. Were you able to make bail?

**Real GM to Fake GM:** I would apologize, but I never accept collect calls. It’s so 1980’s. I trust it wasn’t too tough for you in the holding tank?

**Fake GM to Real GM:** Like you care! I called you three times and you never even answered the phone.

**Fake GM to Real GM:** That was the good part. I played some poker, won some cash, and get this—one of my cell mates liked me so much, he paid the rest of my bail! But, I learned my lesson.

**Real GM to Fake GM:** No more gambling parties at home?

**Fake GM to Real GM:** No, I just won't tell anyone in the game. Someone is a government stoolie!

**Real GM to Fake GM:** "Stoolie?" What are you, like 90 years old?

**Fake GM to Real GM:** I'm beginning to take a real disliking to you, pal. That might not be healthy for you, if you catch my drift.

**KvK to World:** Well, the Kremlin's not the Schonbrunn, but it's nice enough!

**warsaw to moscow:** let's show these boys how to play hardball, shall we?

**Turkey-England:** Hey, why don't you give me Moscow?

**England-Turkey:** I was about to suggest the same to you! After all, I've worked for it.

**Austria-England and Turkey:** Why don't you laggards bugger off before I knock you both out?

**From a Village outside of Constantinople:** Nicky had been through a tough couple of months. He'd made his way to Moscow, but some local ruffian named "Putin" had rounded up a mob, blamed him for the Austrian presence, and driven him out of the city. He wound up in the custody of the Turks, which turned out to be a very lucky break. He found an attaché whose English was excellent, and explained how influential he was in London. They took him to Constantinople and he met with some emir or someone or other

Anyway, they'd set Nicky up, given him access to wire some cash (after suitable bribes), and he was in business in yet another country! It was a little different in Turkey, but he'd adapt and his "Northern" holdings were doing nicely.

Nicky thought to himself, "Maybe this war has gone on long enough? After all, what's in it for me?" Maybe it was about time for him to bring an end to this mess. "I've got the influence to do it—and the money to force it."

#### Fall 1905 Commentary:

David Hood - Rick Desper - Jack McHugh

**To continue my thinking from the Summer phase, this game is locked down, absent a major change in alliances. If either France or England wants to shake things up, now would be a time to do so. Unless the idea is to grab Moscow and/or Warsaw first.**

**Certainly there is diplomatic room for either France or England to cut a deal with Turkey that would entail a break-up of the Western alliance with the understanding that Turkey would be free to take down Italy and/or Russia. Were that to happen, we could see a race to 18.**

**I don't think that'll happen. Games these days tend to bog down in draws more than I like. The object of the game is to get to 18 SCs, not 9 SCs.**

Not much happening here, to be sure. That does not mean something won't happen in the future though. Vick may just be wanting to take a shot at Moscow first, although that shan't work unless something really goofy happens.

Basically, the Germans and Austrian and still helping the EF and the Russian and Italian remnants are helping Turkey. The only mildly interesting moves were England

trying to support Ruhr to Holland as a security blanket for France when instead the Belgium army went there.

I would expect Vick to slam into France just about any time now. Once that happens, the game can spring back into action.

Not much to add to what my fellow commentators have said. This turn is more of the same--E/F continues to push eastwards with (incidental) help from Germany as Dick seeks to relocate his forces to the East away from the juggernaut of the England and France alliance.

Stephan and Lance, despite not having quite the right mix of forces--could use at least one more fleet instead of army, are putting up stout resistance against Steve's advance in the Mediterranean. The biggest issue here is Steve doesn't really outnumber Italy and Turkey but, being only one player, he has less coordination issues.

The line from Mun to StP has solidified and, as Rick

points out, the lack of movement could bring the E/F alliance to ahead but that remains to be seen. Steve and Vick could try and outwait the rest of the board while shifting forces to the south, England has two

fleets that are not engaged. There is no question Vick will use them to get centers in the south, the only question is who will he be getting them from?



**Austria:** Has A Moscow.

**England:** Has F Baltic Sea, F Barents Sea, F Gulf of Bothnia, A Kiel, A Livonia, F North Atlantic Ocean, F North Sea, A St Petersburg.

**France:** Build A Marseilles..Has A Burgundy, F Gulf of Lyon, A Holland, A Marseilles, A Munich, F North Africa, A Silesia, F Tunis, F Western Mediterranean.

**Germany:** Has A Prussia, A Warsaw.

**Italy:** Has A Piedmont, F Rome, A Serbia, A Tuscany, A Tyrolia.

**Russia:** Has A Sevastopol, A Ukraine, A Vienna.

**Turkey:** Remove A Albania..Has F Aegean Sea, A Bohemia, A Galicia, F Ionian Sea, A Rumania, F Tyrrhenian Sea.

### PRESS

**Hapsburgs to Hohenzollerns:** A move east becomes us!

**Hapsburgs to House of Windsor:** We swear eternal loyalty! Please marry our Princess Big Chin to cement our alliance!

### Winter 1905 Commentary:

David Hood - Rick Desper - Jack McHugh

No commentary needed, since really nothing happened.