

# Diplomacy World #161



**Spring 2023 Issue**

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

# Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Spring 2023 issue. This time around it feels like six months since the last issue I put together. I'm not sure why that is? Sometimes it feels like a few weeks between issues, and other times it feels like an eternity. In the end, that doesn't matter. What *does* matter is that **Diplomacy World** maintains its quarterly schedule without fail.



The big news since the last issue was the announcement by Renegade Games that a new Diplomacy set will be released this summer. It will contain wooden pieces (shown above), designed to fit within even the smallest spaces on the map. A new edition of the rulebook, a Quick Start one-page sheet, a new colorful map, and lots of other goodies will also be included. You can read more about the new set, and the process Renegade went through, on page 4 where I have a discussion with three of the people most closely involved: Dan Bojanowski, Matt Holland, and Thomas Haver. And if you'd like to see the set yourself or preorder a copy, you can do that here:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy/>

Back in **Diplomacy World** #156 we took the time to celebrate the long, storied hobby career of Conrad von Metzke. Conrad's declining health had forced him to "retire" from hobby participation for the most part. Sadly, I recently received this message from Conrad's email:

*This is Conrad's wife, Jean. I'm sending this to all of Conrad's email contacts. I know some of you by name, others might only be casual acquaintances, but I wanted to make sure the word*

*got out. Conrad passed away on Tuesday. He'd been battling many things for the past few months and had been in and out of hospitals and rehab centers. The last hospital trip, the doctor said that amputation of his feet would be the only way to stop an infection. He had already had a partial toe amputation and had not fully recovered from that. He also had prostate cancer which had spread, and worsening dementia. I could not see putting him through more misery. Hospice was suggested and we moved him to a loving board and care home, where he received excellent care from the hospice care givers as well as those at the home. He was minutes away from here, so I visited every day. Our son Eric, who lives in San Diego went nearly as frequently as I did and our son Ross made a couple of trips down to see him. His last trip was Monday. He said and emotional goodbye to his dad as did Eric and I. The next day, Conrad let go. I'm convinced he held on until Ross saw him.*

*For anyone who barely knew Conrad, I apologize for such a lengthy back story. For those who knew him well, he would want you to know.*

*If anyone wants to reach out with stories of Conrad, please do so. My email is [jeanvm1016@hotmail.com](mailto:jeanvm1016@hotmail.com). If you want to do something to remember Conrad, we are requesting donations to charities he supported.*

San Diego Humane Society <https://www.sdhumane.org/> .  
ACLU of San Diego - <https://www.aclu-sdic.org/> . UCSD  
Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer's Disease Research Center -  
<https://neurosciences.ucsd.edu/centers-programs/adrc/giving.html>

If any of you would like to honor Conrad's memory, a donation to one of those charities would be a wonderful way to do so.

I also wanted to take a moment to mention how much fun I've had recently watching the live Diplomacy tournament coverage on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network YouTube channel. (They also simulcast on a Twitch stream if you'd rather watch there). If you haven't seen those broadcasts (or any of their other great Diplomacy content), please check it out at:

<https://www.youtube.com/@DiploBN>

***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is July 1, 2023.***

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 summer, and happy stabbing!

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

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# News From the Front: Renegade Speaks on the New Diplomacy Set

By Douglas Kent

***You may have read about the new edition of Diplomacy that is being released by Renegade Games in 2023. Recently, members of the team that brought this edition to completion generously took the time to talk to Diplomacy World and answer some questions about the new set, the design process, the Diplomacy hobby, and their hopes for the future. The three individuals providing details were:***

Dan Bojanowski - Senior Producer of Board and Card Games

Matt Holland - Sales & Marketing Program Manager

Thomas Haver - Expert Consultant

***Why do you think the game of Diplomacy has been able to maintain an audience for so many years?***

**Dan Bojanowski:** I would boil it down to three aspects:

1. Depth to complexity ratio - Overall, the rules for Diplomacy are quite easy to learn. Four possible moves for each piece, each of which can be explained to any type of gamer. That being said, the *strategy* in the game is deep. Within those four moves lies an intriguing puzzle which unfolds throughout the game that keeps fans coming back time and time again. It's cliché, but "easy to learn, a lifetime to master" applies here.
2. The stories - As great as the game is during play, it's great fun to talk about afterwards! Whether it's immediately after, talking about the maneuvers that led to the finale, or years later recounting epic battles with friends. Diplomacy is a game that lends itself to many "remember when" moments.
3. The people - During gameplay, the mechanisms of the game fade into the background, and it becomes more about the people playing. The relationships built, the trust earned, then lost, the shared victories, and the defeats. As much as we hear anecdotes about Diplomacy ruining relationships, I'd wager that it's more responsible over its lifetime for building relationships!

**Thomas Haver:** I think Dan is right-on in his appraisal of the game. Diplomacy players should count themselves fortunate that Dan was the producer of this latest edition. He took great care in learning about the history of the game, the player base, and what aspects work well for the current market.

Diplomacy is in many ways the grandfather of many board games, some of which give direct credit ("Game of Thrones: The Board Game") and others by virtue of their designer crediting the game for inspiration ("Sekigahara: The Unification of Japan"). So there is a certain lineage that traces back to Diplomacy for players exploring the board game hobby. Diplomacy has also found its way to the media with publications in Grantland, Foreign Policy, the Economist, and more. Most importantly, it's a great game. Whether you have 600 or 60,000 games on the market, the best (or most infamous) have a tendency to rise to the top.

***What aspects of prior Diplomacy sets did you want to improve upon? The 2008 set had a decent price point, but the cramped map and the cardboard pieces were not met with the warmest welcome. And which aspects did you think were most important to retain?***

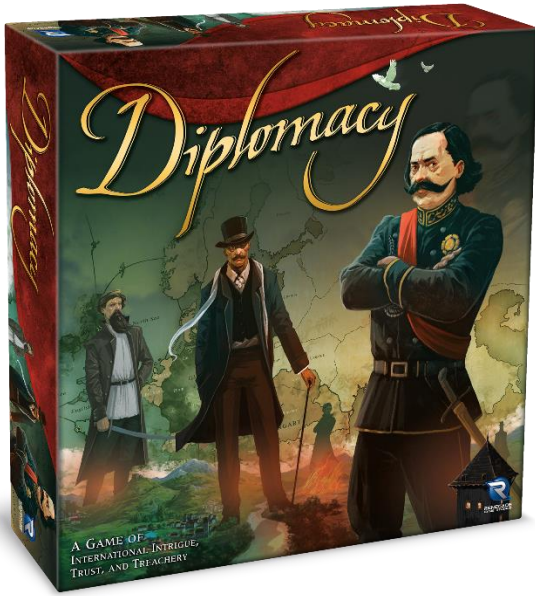
**Dan Bojanowski:** As you noted, one of the most obvious places for us to revamp was the units. These are the components that players interact with most during the game, and the cardboard units were not received well – neither for form nor function. The metal pieces from previous versions looked great, but were not as functional. We wanted to bring wooden pieces back, but shaped them like most modern board gamers expect – to look like artillery and ships. We're pleased with the result, and hope long time fans are, too!

With the help of Thomas Haver, we included a Quick Start Rules sheet in the new version of Diplomacy that explains the rules in a one-page front & back sheet! This should be helpful for new and returning Diplomacy players. Thomas also helped us add in some clarifications to the rulebook that had been missing, or unclear.

As far as the 2008 version goes, I think it got the tone right. The graphic design, the color palette, the look and feel all feel right on for Diplomacy. While we changed the cover illustration (new art by Janos Orban), we kept



some things mostly the same, like the gameboard, the map pad, and the country markers.



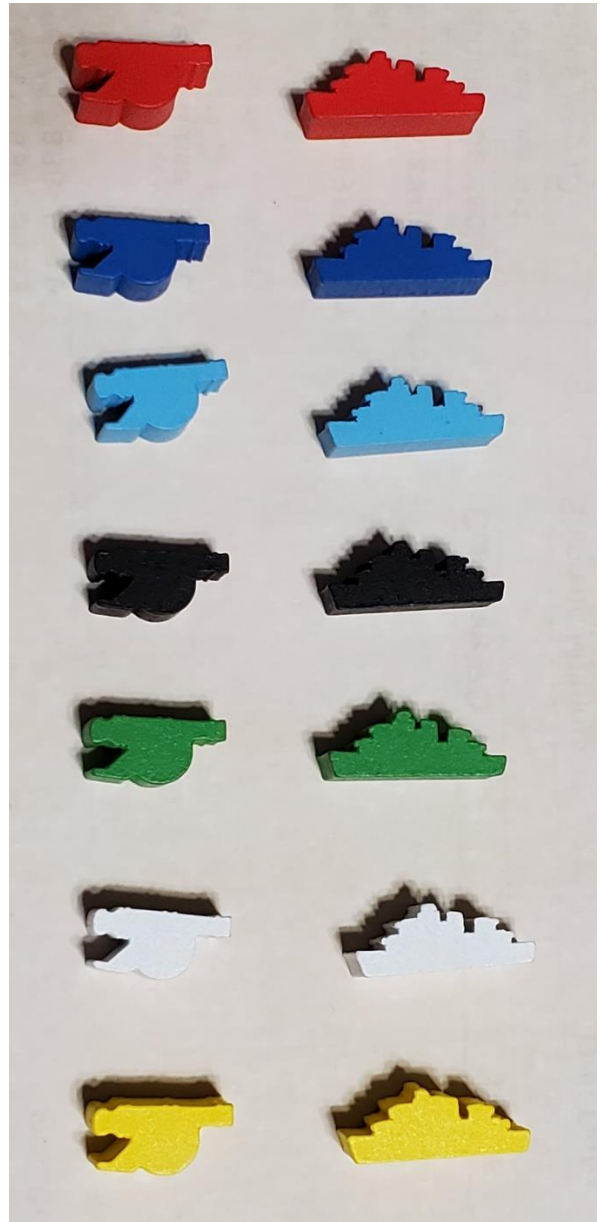
*The new Diplomacy box with new cover design.  
(Image supplied by Thomas Haver)*

**Thomas Haver:** In my first messages to Dan, I had a treatise prepared that unofficially should be titled, "Why Wooden Blocks Are Awesome". I own 26 different editions of the game and more than 50 copies of the game overall. Diplomacy pieces and boards have taken many forms, as is expected for a 60+ year-old game with many different publishers. I went on a tour of all the prior editions, rulebooks, and setups for lessons learned that I could share. This also involved going through reviews published in **Diplomacy World**, **The Diplomatic Pouch**, **BoardGameGeek**, and other zines. A full review probably requires its own article. As Dan mentions above, the pieces should have form and function. Explicitly, the considerations for overall size, shape, and color are:

- (1) Clear differentiation between Fleet and Army types by the piece shape
- (2) Clear color differentiation between the Great Powers
- (3) The pieces stand out against the colors of the board
- (4) The pieces can fit within the smallest provinces (Rome, Tuscany, Albania, Clyde, Yorkshire, Belgium, Holland, Ruhr)
- (5) The pieces can be laid on their side to indicate support
- (6) The pieces can be placed on top of each other to indicate dislodgement

Renegade Games has done an excellent job with the new wooden pieces, which in my opinion are the best to be released in the history of the game. Originally, I would

not have said this as a "rectangular wood block purist". However, upon playing with the pieces on the new board and the boards of prior editions, I feel confident they will be well-received by new & experienced players alike. Wooden armies and fleets haven't been seen in Diplomacy since Avalon Hill's "Deluxe Diplomacy" in 1992; Renegade Games brought them back after 31 years away. As a nod of respect to the fans of the wooden block sets, Renegade used the exact same color palette for the wooden pieces in the new edition as "Deluxe Diplomacy". New meeples to help entice new players coupled with wooden blocks for our experienced players. A great combination!



*The new wooden pieces. (Image supplied by Thomas Haver)*

***Did you encounter any unexpected challenges while developing and designing the new set?***

**Dan Bojanowski:** I think the most challenging part was making sure that everything stayed true to the original. We're very used to putting out new games. With new games, you can tinker with the rules and make changes to the components at your own discretion. Here, we were very careful to make sure that the spirit of Allan Calhamer's design from 60+ years ago is fully here! Any addition or subtraction from the rulebook was met with great scrutiny, and not with the intent of changing anything, but clarifying and making it easier for new fans to learn the game.

**Thomas Haver:** Renegade Games handled Diplomacy, Acquire, Robo Rally, and Axis & Allies (all of them licensed from Hasbro) with the utmost care. They reached out to experts for each game for feedback or direct involvement in development, consulted past editions, poured over reviews, etc. to ensure the latest release would be worth owning. If you have an opportunity, watch the "Just Wait" recordings on YouTube by Renegade Games to get a sense for both their passion about gaming and the thought that went into these classics.

***Over the years there have been some disagreements about how to adjudicate unusual or creative strategies (usually involving supports or convoys). Do you attempt to clear up any of those in this new edition? How did you approach that part of the process?***

**Thomas Haver:** As part of background work, we reviewed all the rules from the published editions dating back to Calhamer's drafts. Over the years there have been many disagreements over the rules, sometimes shouted over the board and sometimes written in publications such as **Diplomacy World**. Since this is a licensed game from Hasbro, all changes were scrutinized for review. Precedence from past editions helped in getting updates approved.

As Dan mentioned earlier in this interview, great care was taken to respect the history of the game, so the focus was on clarifying gaps or missed opportunities from previous editions. Some of the changes were easy to make: fixing diagrams, removing references to media that no longer existed, and clarifying coasts in the abbreviations section. Other changes were long in the making. For example, the update for the Civil Disorder rules for removal of units was something Allan Calhamer & Edi Birsan worked on with Hasbro in 2000, but was not included in the final edition of the rules. This gap has been corrected in the forthcoming 6th edition rules. Another update in the rulebook was: "a unit given an impossible order results in the unit HOLDING so it can

be supported in place". Additionally, the use of "Winter", which is common in Diplomacy circles, was added to the rulebook as an alternative to "Gaining and Losing Units phase".

The rulebook was also restructured so that "Rare Cases and Tricky Situations" was listed after the core phases of the game. Players need to learn about Builds & Disbands before they learn about circumstances they may never encounter in a live game. It's important to get players into a game as soon as possible, which is why the "Quick Start Rules" are also included as a separate game component. These rules are based on my experience teaching the game at conventions, board game stores, game cafes, schools, and corporate events. The 1976 bookshelf edition from Avalon Hill did include basic rules, so there was precedence to including such a document with the 2023 edition of the game. Rather than reading a 24-page rulebook before hitting start on the clock for Spring 1901, players can begin play and refer back to the full rules as questions arise during gameplay.

The most significant change, which will be welcomed by both new & experienced Diplomacy players, is in *game ending conditions*. A Diplomacy game ends if one player controls 18 or more Supply Centers at the end of a Fall turn. It's a very nice feeling when winning via "solo" but one that rarely happens in face-to-face play. In many past edition rulebooks, another commonly listed end game condition was "Draw Includes/Involving All Survivors" or DIAS, in which all players with supply centers share equally in a draw. The two new explicit end game conditions are "Turn Limit" and "Time Limit". The Turn Limit ends the game after a number of predetermined turns (e.g., after Fall 1907). The Time Limit ends the game after a predetermined number of hours (e.g., 4 hours, 8 hours). The winner in each condition is the player with the most Supply Centers, with tied players sharing in victory. I found reference to the "Time Limit" ending condition in the 1962 edition published by "Intellectual Diversions" in the UK. Even in the early days of Diplomacy, players were looking for other formal ways to end the game than just a solo victory.

As for the remaining undisclosed changes, I think it's best for Diplomacy players to read for themselves in the new rulebook. Perhaps even post your thoughts about them in a future **Diplomacy World** article (note: the editor did not pay me to write that sentence but I also won't turn down free support into Belgium the next time we play). I want to also credit Diplomacy luminaries Edi Birsan, David Hood, and Steve Cooley for the background information on the contentious rules discussions in the hobby, some of which started before I was born. Anytime you see Edinburgh or "Edi" as an example in the rules, that's an Easter Egg "thank you" to

Edi for all he's done for Diplomacy over many decades. I hope all Diplomacy players will be happy with the 6th edition rulebook.

***I'd love to hear about how Renegade will support face-to-face play, whether friendly club games or the more organized, competitive tournament play. Do you have any plans in that regard?***

**Matt Holland:** We are working to help support the Rogue Judges group at GenCon, who have been running Diplomacy there for decades. They will have a full slate of events and tournaments during the convention! We're also very open to partnering with other venues and organizers. We're always happy to help promote your events and can even potentially provide product support. If there's demand for a prize kit or something similar for groups running in-person play, that's something we could consider creating as well.

**Thomas Haver:** Our group, Rogue Judges, is delighted to partner with Renegade Games Studios at GenCon on the new editions of Diplomacy, Acquire, and Robo Rally. All three games were given new life by Renegade in 2023. A few years before Renegade had the licensing agreement with Hasbro to publish these classics, we established a volunteer agreement with Hasbro/WotC on the use of IP in promotion of events, support for events, and the establishment of two recognized tournaments: GenCon as the US Diplomacy Championship and a yet-to-be-named event we'll be scouting this year.

As part of the lead-up to the new release, I've been upgrading all aspects of the face-to-face play experience for both casual and competitive play. Learn about some of the upgrades players can see at events [HERE](https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3026084/three-face-face-diplomacy-events-coming-soon-amazi) (<https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3026084/three-face-face-diplomacy-events-coming-soon-amazi>). One of the grand experiences is a giant Diplomacy map with large pieces, plotter rods, and WWI officer hats; read about it [HERE](https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3035941/giant-diplomacy-12-36m-x-12-36m-map) (<https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3035941/giant-diplomacy-12-36m-x-12-36m-map>). These upgrades are not just for my own events, but something I'm making available to a wider audience. I've shipped off or hand-delivered a few upgrade kits already.

We plan to have Diplomacy represented at Circle DC in March, at BGF in April, at BGG Spring in May, at Origins Game Fair in June, at the World Boardgaming Championships (WBC) in July, and the US Diplomacy Championship at GenCon in August. We're also hoping to solidify events at PAX Unplugged in December and a yet-to-be-announced event later this year. I would recommend that interested organizers reach out to me (tjhaver) on the Renegade Games discord ([discord.gg/reneadegames](https://discord.gg/reneadegames)). This is a great opportunity

for organizers of Diplomacy events to build participation in the game!



***The giant Diplomacy map with large pieces in action. (Image supplied by Thomas Haver)***



***One of the officer hats used with the giant map. (Image supplied by Thomas Haver)***

***As a hobby, Diplomacy players love to spread the word and introduce the game to new players. How can the existing hobby partner with Renegade to promote this new edition, and the game in general?***

**Matt Holland:** I would point folks towards our Discord community, [discord.gg/reneadegames](https://discord.gg/reneadegames), and of course let any communities you may be a part of know that



there's a new edition available! Also be ready for an influx of new players, who I'm sure will have plenty of questions about rules, strategy, and more!

**Thomas Haver:** I've been teaching the game at multiple conventions going on 15 years now, and generally players fall into three categories: (1) those who played earlier in life looking to return for a game; (2) those who heard about the reputation of the game and wanted to finally try in person; and, (3) those who were roped into playing by one of the first two groups. My approach over time has changed based on the experience of teaching so many players in different locales. One shouldn't go into a teaching game with the goal of converting a new player to the tournament scene; the goal should be providing new Diplomacy players a fun experience. Be the reason the new players had a good time with their friends, whatever the circumstances you find yourself in.



**Thomas Haver teaching Diplomacy at Origins**  
(Image supplied by Thomas Haver)

Diplomacy players looking to spread the word should offer support to those new players where they're already playing: local game stores, board game cafes, local libraries, game conventions, and high schools. The following are my recommendations for engaging each:

- (1) Local Game Stores and Board Game Cafes:  
Both venues are typically looking for live events in their stores. They want volunteers to teach games – especially games they have in stock.

Offer to run "Introduction to Diplomacy" or "Learn to Play Diplomacy" events at their store with enough advanced notice to fill out a board. Use the Diplomacy "Quick Start Rules" in the new edition to get players into a game quickly. Be there as a backfill possibility but ideally as the non-playing GM to help facilitate the game.

- (2) Local Libraries: Most local libraries have a collection of games to check out. Donate a copy of Diplomacy to the local library with contact information included so anyone looking at the game can find you for face-to-face play. Additionally, most libraries also hold events open to the community. Either join an existing gaming event or propose your own to teach classic games like Diplomacy.
- (3) Game Conventions: If you see a local convention within driving distance, consider submitting events as a volunteer to teach Diplomacy. You don't need to run a tournament at these events, but instead focus on teaching the game. Consider the example from BGG Spring in Dallas this May (<https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgg.spring-2022/schedule/49>). I've been teaching "Introduction to Diplomacy" concurrently with the Diplomacy tournament at GenCon for years now, and the Intro events always outsell the Tournament events. Not every player who learns Diplomacy wants to compete, so align their expectations with the positive experience you're providing.
- (4) High Schools: Diplomacy can be used in either an after-school Board Game Club or part of a History / Government class. I'm working with three high school teachers in my area to create a "Diplomacy in the Classroom" document that can be shared with fellow teachers, so they know how to integrate the game in class. I will make that document available on the Renegade Discord and BGG for distribution. Donate a copy to your local school in need so we build the next generation of Diplomacy players!

***Deception has been a part of Diplomacy for as long as I can remember. There was a great deal of interest in deception-based games like Among Us over the last few years. Are those players an untapped resource for the Diplomacy hobby? Does Renegade have any ideas on how to attract them?***



**Dan Bojanowski:** Matt Holland might have something to say about this as well, but I'll chime in to say that one of the benefits of having Renegade Game Studios involved in this is that our game catalog is so diverse! We have games that cover so many different audiences – strategy board games, light card games, expandable card games, RPGs, solo games, family games. Then you look at the different worlds that our games touch: Transformers, G.I. JOE, Power Rangers, My Little Pony, Vampire: The Masquerade, Scott Pilgrim, and more! Then there are the other classic strategy games we have the privilege of working on like Robo Rally, Acquire, and Axis & Allies. So many ways to reach new people! We're very excited to add Diplomacy to this list!

**Matt Holland:** Yeah, I think that one thing that Renegade has gotten a lot of experience with is finding audiences and promoting our games to them. We did this first really with Power Rangers a few years back, but since then we've made games for a number of big IPs and had to find the places that fans congregate and really immerse ourselves in the communities. We expect to do the same for Diplomacy to try and broaden its appeal beyond just longtime fans!

**Avalon Hill released Colonial Diplomacy many years ago. (There were differences of opinion about the strength of the variant, but the set itself was regarded positively). Are there any plans to possibly release Diplomacy variants in the future?**

**Dan Bojanowski:** Good question! Unfortunately, I cannot say anything specific about future plans. I would note that Renegade does like to support game lines with additional content, so it's not out of the question.

**Thomas Haver:** <insert staring eyes emoji here>

**Finally, a more general question. Renegade has licensed a lot of exciting products over the last year. Any chance we might see some other out-of-print games from the old Avalon Hill line find their way into retail stores through Renegade in the future?**

**Dan Bojanowski:** For those that might not have heard already, in addition to Diplomacy, Renegade will be releasing games in these lines in 2023: Robo Rally, Acquire, Axis & Allies. For Robo Rally, at GenCon, we'll be releasing a new core set and shortly after will come a couple board expansions (still in 2024!). Around the same time, a new version of Sid Sackson's classic Acquire will release, featuring a return to the 9x12 grid board, and plastic tiles and buildings. We have lots of

plans for Axis & Allies, and we'll have 5 re-releases in 2024. These are mostly reprints, to either keep them in stock, or bring them back in stock. These include: 1941, 1942 Second Edition, 1940 Europe Second Edition, 1940 Pacific Second Edition, and WWI: 1914. We just concluded a community vote from the fans to decide what the next brand-new A&A game theme will be, and the fans decided on North Africa! This all-new game is expected to release in late 2024.

As far as other Avalon Hill titles, we did announce that we have rights to Squad Leader as well, but haven't announced any specific details on that.



**Likely box art for the new Acquire set from Renegade Games**

**Thomas Haver:** My two favorite games of all time are Diplomacy and Acquire. On a call last year with Renegade to discuss Diplomacy, they revealed that Acquire was coming but not announced to the public. Instant best friends with Renegade. They have done an excellent job with the titles licensed from Hasbro. I'm thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with so many great people at Renegade, and to see those games brought back so masterfully. Avalon Hill fans should be excited for what's to come this Summer and beyond!

**[[Those of you who want to preorder a copy of the new set, or to take a closer look, can find information about it at <https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy/> ]].**

# The High Road

By David Maletsky

At the conclusion of WDC 2018, I was excited at the prospect of putting together WDC 2020. Chris Martin, soon to be followed by Tanya Gill, had succeeded in beginning to conjoin the online and FTF communities into one broad community. I had traveled to Vermont to speak with the powers that be at Mount Snow alongside Carnage staff, and those conversations were glowing with promise. I envisioned 200+ attendees, a disco ball and dry ice machine, professional wrestling style commentary on boards... and much more. Perhaps most of all, introducing a broader player base to the unique and innovative structure at Carnage.

I started running events at Carnage a long time ago... and once I did, the event began to grow. Then I moved from New England, and passed the reins of Carnage... and that event began to shrink. I took over the DC area's annual event, Tempest... and that event began to grow. Then I got screamed at for in excess of twenty minutes (no exaggeration), decided it was best for my own well-being to step down from the position I had just been re-elected to... and that event went on to shrink, eventually into nonexistence. Upon learning I had stepped down, Robert Rousse asked me if I would take up the reins of Carnage again, so I did... and that event once again began to grow.

So when Peter McNamara tells you in the most recent **Diplomacy World** that when Bob Holt switched Carnage to a central clock there was "much rejoicing"... well, if there was, it had to have been extremely fervent rejoicing by an extremely small sample size of hobby members. Because there were 19 players there that year. The empirical evidence has demonstrated that players have enjoyed the events I've run, so much so that the population steadily grows over time when I run them... and I have never once used a central clock.

That said, one of the primary reasons my events have performed well is that I believe ideas stand or fall on their merits, and I believe in human error. If you believe in both of these things, I find it falls out of said belief that you end up believing strongly in a dialectic process, where ideas are posited, challenged, the responses are then challenged, and so forth... challenged as strenuously as possible, until whatever remains of the original coal, though perhaps far diminished in scope, has become a diamond of broad consensus. Hence, I have always attempted to crowdsource ideas, models, and so forth, and expose them to the harshest critiques available, so as to yield something grand in the end.

Anyway, connecting back to the first paragraph: then the pandemic struck. The pandemic changed everything.

WDC Carnage had to be pushed back. And pushed back again.

The Mount Snow ownership we had interacted with sold the resort to Vail Resorts... who promptly voided the initial contracts, and also relocated all relevant authority from onsite in Vermont to their home offices in Colorado. Out of this, not only was much lost, but all sorts of logistical snafus started to pop up. The worst of which was a complete inability for anyone to find how to get their call center to recognize the group code for our room block. This didn't end up getting resolved until July 2022.

Another reason for the success of my events, which I learned from Nathan Barnes long ago, has been preparing a year or more in advance. In particular, marketing, cajoling, pleading... whatever it took to put butts in seats at Diplomacy tables. So when you can't get anyone a room until a few months out from the event? Just a really extreme amount of stress.

Some good occurred over the pandemic. The Carnage Diplomacy Discord was rife with social activity for a few years. Sadly, when the VWDC Discord appeared, I tried to encourage relocation of some of the activity to there, in the hopes that more people would be encouraged to participate... and now, with the exception of #sports-arena on VWDC, both Discords are now largely devoid of socializing.

Also, over the pandemic, I discovered that the dialectic approach I described above rubs the majority of people the wrong way in colder media, such as Discord. I managed to detach from some flame wars, with good success, and to try to adjust my manner of speaking, with mixed results. In the end, though, the damage was done: where the #tournament-structure area used to be highly populated with Socratic discourse, today I am sad to say tumbleweed metaphorically drifts across the space.

So, to tie all the above ramblings to the article's title: fist pounding assertions is decidedly the lowest of roads. Using media ranging from **Diplomacy World** to Discord to DBN to fire off salvos without argument, without reason, without civility, is actively harmful to the hobby. When you don't speak on the merits, approach all matters with doubt and a critical eye, divorce one's ego from one's conversations... it ends up in feuds where the hobby loses hundreds, historically.

Speaking of which, for a variety of reasons, many of my closest friends have taken steps back, or completely out of, the hobby in recent years. I would prefer to not follow, but as above, I will do what I must in the interest of my emotional well-being.

So if you want to flame my efforts... in the face of the empirical burden of proof of the historical success of my events. In the face of the countless hours spent, the tens of thousands of dollars spent, the omnipresent stress. Don't pop off on DBN interviews. Don't write **Diplomacy**

**World** articles. Don't make bold-faced assertions and fail to engage in dialogue thereafter.

Come talk with me and others. Participate in a dialectic process. Sure, it's scary... you can always end up being wrong. So can I. So can anyone. But there's no shame in being wrong... the shame lies in not being willing to doubt oneself. Because doubt is the algorithm that leads to truth.

Please... take the high road.

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## How Not to Be a Turkey

By Stephen Agar

Turkey always used to be a safe country to play. You have a nice corner position, so your back is protected. You have a guaranteed extra center in Spring 1901. It may be a slow starter and sometimes a little dull to play, but Turkey always used to be relatively safe. Admittedly, you are up against Russia, Austria and Italy – but Italy starts miles away, Austria often self-destructs in 1901 and Russia has the north to worry about. Provided you can find an ally somewhere, that should all be manageable. If you look at the statistics from games played from the postal hobby, Turkey was always mid-field – not the best, but certainly not the worst country to play. So why is it we often see Turkey struggling in games these days? I have a theory about this – Turkey struggles if the other players are too cautious. It really isn't a good country to play wait and see – you need an ally from the off. The more the various Powers sit on the fence in 1901, the worse Turkey's prospects become. The problem is, the longer the others don't commit against each other, the easier it is for them to just attack Turkey instead.

So, if you don't want to be a Turkey at Christmas (or Thanksgiving), I have three bits of advice, one short term, one medium term and one long term. You can only truly flourish with Turkey if you have a clear strategy for all of them.

### 1. Don't wait and See – Cause Trouble!

Who doesn't order A(Con)-Bul in Spring 1901? Only an idiot, that's who. But where to next? There really aren't that many options. Either you go west (attack Italy - which means Greece leading to Tunis and Naples), you go northwest (attack Austria - which means Serbia, Budapest, Trieste) or you go north (attach Russia - which means Rumania, Sevastopol). You really must make a decision quite early on. That boils down to ally with Russia against Austria, or with Austria against Russia. Or hope that Austria and Russia will leave you

alone while you attack Italy (which really means some sort of alliance with Austria anyway). So be proactive – try to cause trouble - the best start for Turkey is to get someone to move to Galicia in 1901 and/or for Italy and Austria to fall out over Tri/Ven. You really do want Austria to be at war with someone, then you can pick your side based on which offers you the best long-term position.

**RUSSIA:** Black Sea problems. It is nerve-wracking for either Turkey or Russia to allow the other to take the Black Sea. Once taken by one side, the other needs two fleets to take it back. If Russia takes it, it allows supported attacks on Bulgaria or a pot-shot at Constantinople or Ankara. Similarly, if Turkey takes the Black Sea it opens up the possibility of a supported attack on Rumania or a grab for Sevastopol. The easy way out of all this is to agree a stand-off in the Black Sea in Spring 1901. But beware! If you have a stand-off in Spring 1901 and Russia takes Rumania with his fleet in Autumn 1901, it only takes him to build F(Sev) and Turkey is in real trouble. Russia won't do this if he is at war with Austria, as he will need armies – but if you see Galicia being left vacant, Austria heading for two builds and the possibility of F(Sev)-Rum S by (say) A(Ukr), then you are in big trouble. It follows that a key piece for Turkey is the Russian A(War). If it moves to Galicia, then happy days. If it moves to Ukraine, then oh dear. If that's accompanied by A(Mos)-Sev, then you really are in trouble.

**AUSTRIA:** If Austria isn't besieged from the beginning (either by Russia and/or Italy) then Austria often ends up with two builds in 1901 – often A(Bud) and A(Vie). If you can get a solid alliance with Austria, then it can be very attractive as Austria finds it harder to attack Turkey than Russia or Italy and you can have compatible routes of expansion. Those Austrian builds can be used to take Galicia – which opens up supported attacks on Rumania and a route into Russia. It's not easy for Austria to use



those armies against Turkey, as they face the bottleneck of Bulgaria. But if Austria has both Greece and Serbia and Russia is in Rumania, there is a real risk that you will see an attack on Bulgaria in Spring 1902 which will succeed unless you can get Italy to help. Or you may face an Austrian F(Gre)-AEG. Yet often Italy will be being bought off by Austria with promises of Smyrna and talk of a Lepanto. You cannot allow this to happen. You really want Italy and Austria to be at war, almost as much as you want Austria and Russia to be at war.



ITALY: Italy also finds it difficult to get that 2<sup>nd</sup> build. If he is attacking Austria, then happy days. But if he isn't, then the Lepanto must be guarded against. But how do you manage that without fleets in the Mediterranean? A build of F(Amy) in 1901 gives you some protection – but you can't guard against a simultaneous Italian F(ION)-EMS and Austrian F(Gre)-AEG. That would be a horrible situation. So, you have to get Italy to turn on Austria and put every ounce of your diplomatic ability into destroying their relationship.

## 2. Fleets first.

Turkey's geographic position makes the decision to build armies or fleets a difficult one. When you look at the Balkans and see all those nearby supply centers, the temptation is to build armies. However, armies tend to get bogged down into standing in a long queue to get over the Bosphorus bottleneck. On the other hand, Fleets can move across the Mediterranean at speed and can deter a Lepanto, though once in the Mediterranean they are only really any use against Italy and possibly Greece. And as soon as you build a F(Smy) or a F(Ank) you are telegraphing your strategic intent for all to see. That is why I would always recommend that Turkey arranges things so it can make an Autumn 1901 build of F(Con), as this leaves your options open and gives you leverage either way. Turkey can go out quickly if they fail to build the fleets that they need to protect their home centers from attack.

## 3. Portugal or Moscow!

Do you want to win? If so, you will need to get past Gibraltar or Moscow. There's no getting away from it. If you take the Mediterranean (Spa, Tun, Mar), Italy (3 centers), Austria (3 centers), the Balkans (4 centers) and Sevastopol, that will only give you 17 centers. The 18<sup>th</sup> would be Portugal, Moscow, Warsaw or Munich. That is how far you have to get. To do this you have to kick the Italians and the French out of the Mediterranean, annihilate the Italians and Austrians, and take a big chunk out of Russia. There is no easy way to 18 centers without controlling the Mediterranean and to do that you need fleets. Remember that Mid-Atlantic Ocean and Moscow are key spaces when it comes to stalemate lines. If you are doing really well and face orchestrated resistance, these spaces are crucial. Make sure you get there first.

I used to think that Austria was the hardest country to play in 1901. On the face of it you have to put immense diplomatic effort into stopping others from attacking you. However, I now think that Turkey has a similar set of risks that mirror Austria's position. The more successful Austria is at stabilizing its borders and avoiding conflict with Italy or Russia, the worse the outlook for Turkey. So, the next time you draw the yellow pieces out of the box, sow distrust and apprehension and get your neighbors fighting amongst themselves or they will surely come for you.

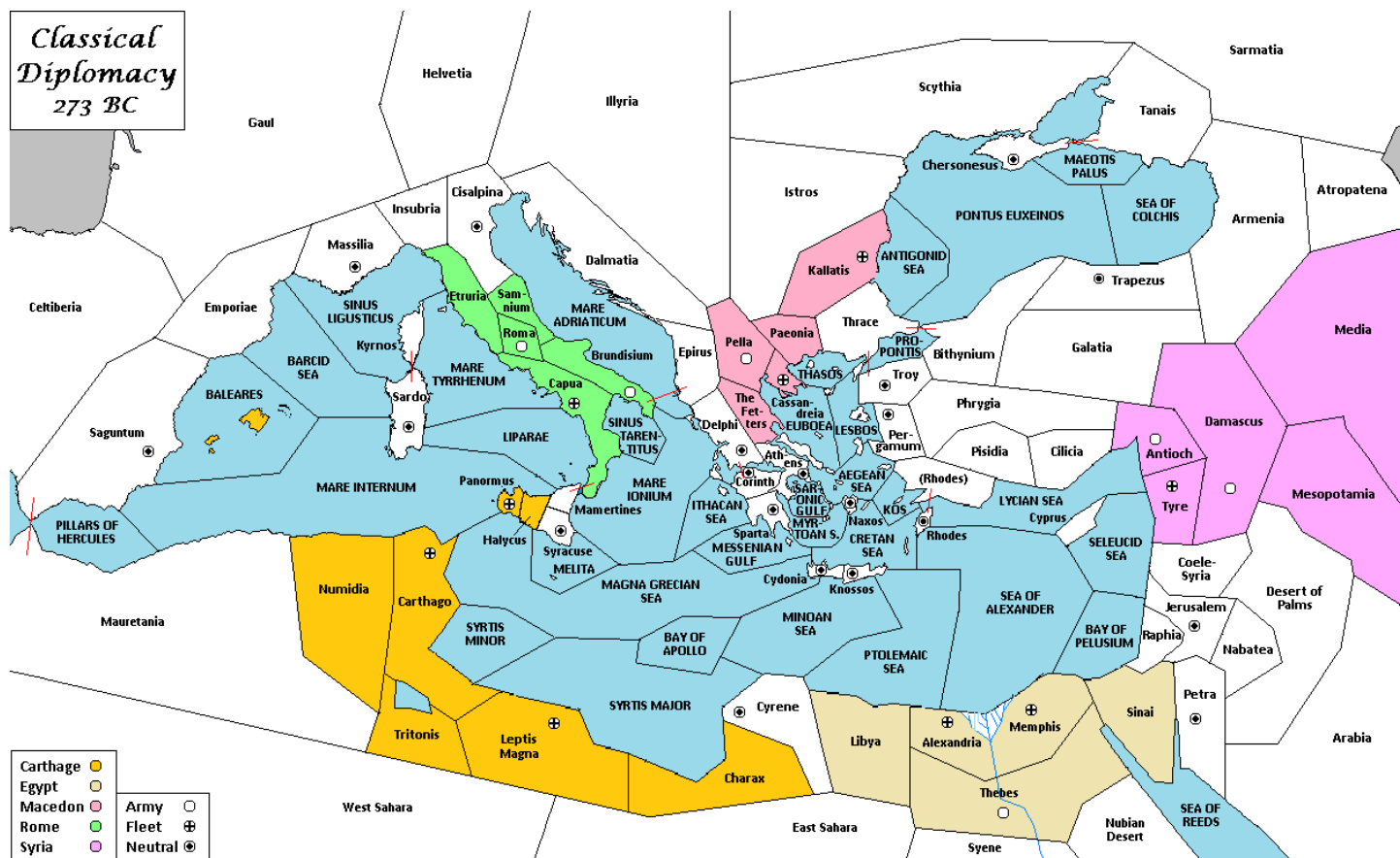
# Zama Variant: Exploring the Ancient Mediterranean

By Paul Webb

The Mediterranean world of antiquity has inspired several Diplomacy variants over the years. Variant designers have been drawn to its historical significance and mixture of land and sea areas, perfect components for a Diplomacy venue. Probably the two best-known Mediterranean variants are the Classical and Ancient Mediterranean variations. This article will examine the gameplay and balance of these variants, with the assistance of Diplomacy AI, and using lessons learned from this analysis, I created a new Mediterranean variant.

## Classical Variant:

Andy Schwartz and Vincent Mous created the Classical variant in 1996 and Stupendous Games published a physical board set of this variant in 2000 for commercial purpose. Classical is a five-player variant set in 273 BC, fifty years after the death of Alexander the Great, and nine years before the First Punic War between Rome and Carthage. According to the designers, "the game was designed to allow a balanced, yet asymmetric five-player variant for the same level of intrigue and interaction as standard Diplomacy when 7 players aren't available."



Seeing the Classical map, one notices a labyrinth of playing spaces. Classical has 35 supply centers, one more than Standard, but a staggering 117 land and sea spaces, compared to 75 spaces in Standard. This equates to space/center ratio of 3.34, far greater than the 2.21 ratio in Standard. I believe the principle of Chekov's Gun in literature should apply to Diplomacy variant design. A narrative should have no extraneous elements and in Diplomacy, every space should have a

purpose. In Classical, several pairs of land and sea provinces could have been combined into one province.

Allan Calhmer wrote that Diplomacy's scope is similar to chess. Chess has 32 pieces and 64 squares, compared to 34 pieces and 75 squares in Diplomacy. When creating a board game, the range of playable spaces is probably between 40 and 100. Classic games like Monopoly and Risk have 40 and 42 spaces, respectively. Shogi, the Asian version of chess, has 81

spaces and Stratego is playable with 92 spaces. But anything over 100 may be unwieldy and result in unnecessary complex gameplay.

Also, Classical has 20 neutral supply centers, but five are not accessible until the second year of game play. In Standard, and in most variants, there is a struggle for all neutral supply centers in the first year of play. Another evident and problematic feature of Classical is distance between powers. In Standard, neighboring countries have one space between home centers (Austria and Italy have zero spaces between home centers!). In Classical, there are at least three spaces between most

powers and there is insufficient interaction between players. Negotiations is the name of the game in Diplomacy and players should have strategic options in Year One. In Standard, Italy, on the first move, can attack Austria, threaten France or Germany, or play a neutral opening that harasses nobody.

To test power balance, I used Jason van Hal's Albert (v 6.0.1) to play 500 no-press games of Classical. Below are the results. A power received 12 points for a solo win, 6 points for participation in a 2-way draw, 4 points for a 3-way draw, 3 points for a 4-way draw, and 2.4 points for a 5-way draw:

	Solo	2-Way	3-Way	4-Way	5-Way	Points	Average
<b>Carthage</b>	109	0	7	0	0	1333	2.67
<b>Egypt</b>	36	0	1	2	0	446	0.89
<b>Macedon</b>	75	0	2	2	0	914	1.83
<b>Rome</b>	138	0	6	2	0	1681	3.36
<b>Syria</b>	133	0	8	2	0	1626	3.25

Below is the most-played opening by Albert for each power in Classical, to include total number of unique openings for each power:

	Most Common Opening	Frequency	%	Total
<b>Carthage</b>	F(Car) - MIN, F(Lep) - SMA, F(Pan) - MGS	314/500	62.8	2
<b>Egypt</b>	F(Ale) - PTS, F(Mem) - BOP, A(The) - Sin	500/500	100.0	1
<b>Macedon</b>	F(Cas) - EUB, F(Kal) - Thr, A(Pel) - Epi	298/500	59.6	2
<b>Rome</b>	A(Rom) - Sam, A(Bru) - Epi, F(Cap) - MIO	500/500	100.0	1
<b>Syria</b>	A(Dam) - Dop, A(Ant) - Phr, F(Tyr) - LYS	500/500	100.0	1

To compare these results to a baseline, below is the distribution of openings when Albert played 500 no-press games of Standard:

	Most Common Opening	Frequency	%	Total
<b>Austria</b>	A(Bud) - Ser, A(Vie) - Tri, F(Tri) - Alb	233/500	46.6	11
<b>England</b>	F(Edi) - NWG, F(Lon) - NTH, A(Lvp) - Cly	133/500	26.6	6
<b>France</b>	A(Par) - Gas, F(Bre) - MAO, A(Mar) - Spa	73/500	14.6	24
<b>Germany</b>	A(Mun) - Ruh, A(Ber) - Kie, F(Kie) - Den	235/500	47.0	5
<b>Italy</b>	F(Nap) - ION, A(Rom) - Apu, A(Ven) - Hold	157/500	31.4	11
<b>Russia</b>	A(Mos) - Stp, A(War) - Ukr, F(Sev) - BLA, F(Stp/wc) - GOB	132/500	26.4	13
<b>Turkey</b>	F(Ank) - BLA, A(Con) - Bul, A(Smy) - Con	397/500	79.4	4

Opening move deviation is neglected or ignored by most Diplomacy variant creators, but it is an essential element of game design. Too many powers in too many variants, like here in Classical, have only one reasonable opening move. In Chess, the character of a game is determined by white's first move and black's response, and Calhamer, when he conceived the original map, understood that opening move variance meant different strategic options for each power. According to the bot simulation, opening move variance in Standard is good, except for Turkey. (I attempted to address this issue, along with power balance, when I revised the Standard map in Diplomacy World #157). Opening move variance,

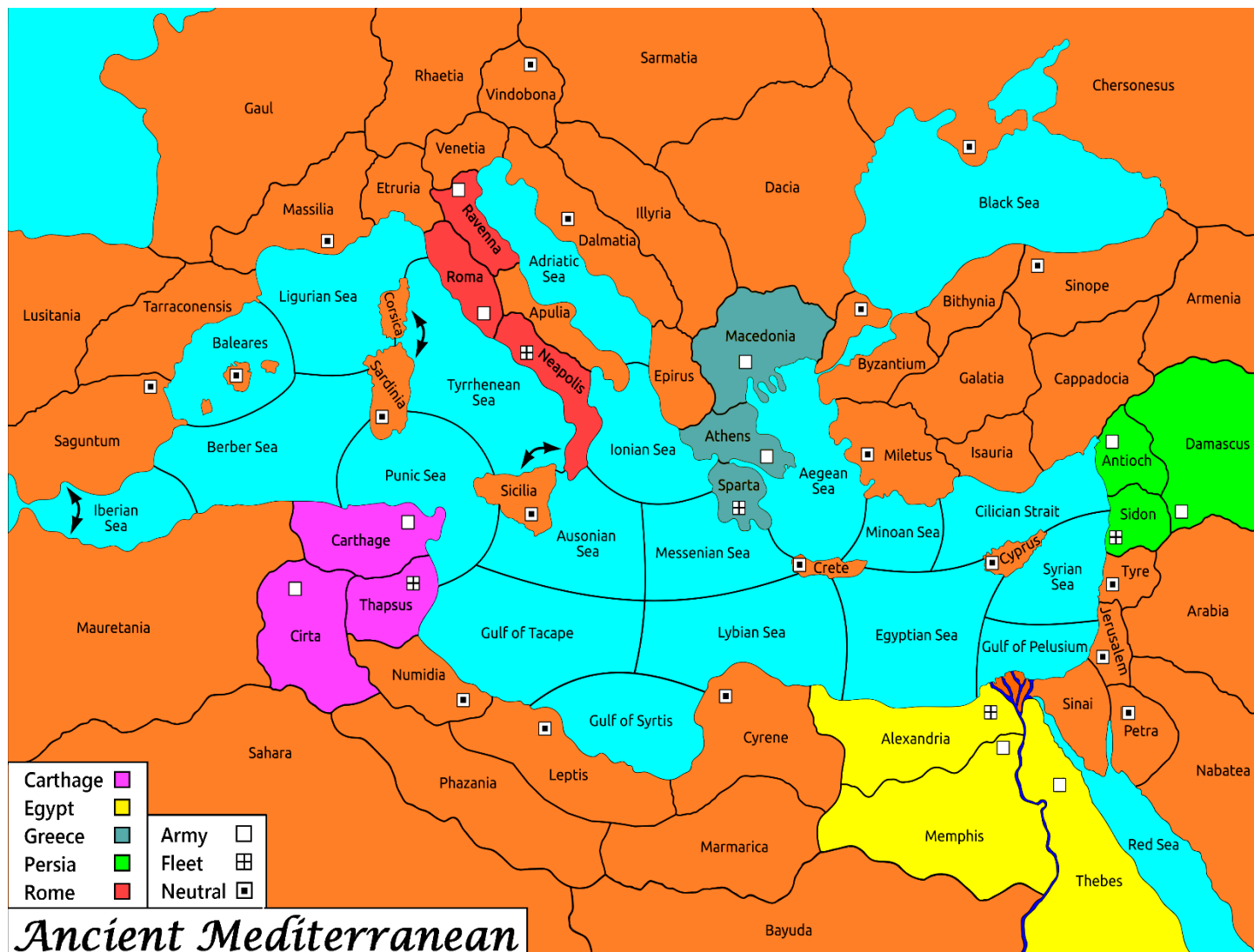
combined with power balance, is the needle a variant game designer has to thread.

#### Ancient Mediterranean Variant:

Don Hessong created the Ancient Mediterranean variant in 2000 and today, this five-power variant is more popular than Classical. Ancient Mediterranean is available for online play on the PlayDiplomacy, WebDiplomacy, and vDiplomacy sites. Hessong describes, "the game does not depict a historical setting at a single point in time," but rather Mediterranean history as "collaged." The designer admits to similarities



with the Classical map, and one can see numerous resemblances.



My impression of the map is that this is an effort to clean and tidy up the Classical variant. There are 34 total supply centers distributed over a manageable 79 squares, for a healthy 2.32 square/center ratio. Also, every land and sea province borders a supply center, something I always advocate. But there still isn't enough interaction between players. Greece and Rome are the only two powers within two spaces of each other. Also, there may not be enough neutral supply centers in vicinity of Greece, the game's central power. One tenant of variant design is the central power(s) should have access to more supply centers, either their own home centers or neutral centers, than edge powers. In Standard, Austria achieves respectable results because it's near the resource-rich Balkans.

Classical and Ancient Mediterranean have specific map rules that I will not cover in this analysis. These rules can be found online. Albert played its games according to the variant's map rules, with one exception. The original rules of Ancient Mediterranean states that Balears is an island that army can occupy, but it is also a sea space where a fleet can execute a convoy. However, in the WebDiplomacy and vDiplomacy versions of the game, a fleet occupying Balears cannot perform a convoy. I tested the variant using the WebDiplomacy and vDiplomacy rule. It makes sense that a fleet cannot convoy while occupying a supply center, like when it occupies a land supply center from the shore. Albert played 500 no-press games of Ancient Mediterranean with the following results:

	Solo	2-Way	3-Way	4-Way	5-Way	Points	Average
Carthage	80	0	19	9	4	1072.6	2.15
Egypt	50	1	20	12	4	731.6	1.46
Greece	25	0	6	10	4	363.6	0.73
Persia	146	0	39	14	4	1959.6	3.92
Rome	139	1	39	11	4	1872.6	3.75

	Most Common Opening	Frequency	%	Total
Carthage	A(Cir) - Pha, A(Car) - Mau, F(Tha) - GOT	316/500	63.2	3
Egypt	A(Mem) - Mar, F(Ale) - EGY, A(The) - Sin	414/500	82.8	2
Greece	A(Ath) - Epi, A(Mac) - Dac, F(Spa) - AEG	149/500	29.8	4
Persia	A(Dam) - Ara, A(Ant) - Cap, F(Sid) - SYR	500/500	100.0	1
Rome	F(Nea) - Sic, A(Rav) - Ven, A(Rom) - Etr	299/500	59.8	2

Opening move variance in Ancient Mediterranean is a little better than Classical, but still not adequate. However, according to Albert, Classical is more balanced than Ancient Mediterranean. In Ancient Mediterranean, Persia, the strongest power, scores 5.39 times Greece, the weakest power. In Classical, the ratio is 3.78 (Rome vs. Egypt). Hessong describes the game as "circular," and "each power has a neighbor on two sides." But in playtesting, Greece acts like a traditional central power. On the east-west lateral, four powers move in one direction, but Greece, caught in the middle,

moves in both directions. In Classical, Macedon has access to a greater percentage of supply centers than Greece in Ancient Mediterranean. In Ancient Mediterranean, all five powers have access to exactly six neutral supply centers within two spaces of one of their home centers. These seems more like a design feature than coincidence, but neutral supply centers should have been distributed across the board relative to a power's geographic position to create better overall power balance.

#### Zama Variant:



The Zama variant is another attempt at Diplomacy in the ancient Mediterranean. The variant starts in 219 BC, when the Mediterranean Sea was controlled by roughly five equal powers: Carthage, Rome, and the remnants of Alexander's great empire, Macedonia, Ptolemy Egypt, and the Seleucid Empire. 219 BC was also the start date of the Fourth Syrian War between Ptolemaic Egypt and the Seleucid Empire (commonly known as "Seleucia" in old Rome) and two years before the start of the Second Punic War between Rome and Carthage. The Zama variant is named after the Battle of Zama in 202 BC, the final and decisive battle of the Second Punic War between Scipio Africanus and Hannibal, when Rome began its 500-year dominance of the Mediterranean. (Carthage should have won the Second Punic War, but Hannibal failed to convert his military triumphs in Italy to a political victory).

A map titled "Europe - 220 B.C.," created by Cyowari in 2018 at deviantart.com, served as the primary map source of this variant. I also consulted *The Atlas of Ancient and Classical Geography* by Samuel Butler, originally published in 1821, to assist with province names and locations. The Zama map uses a mix of Latin

and English names. I applied Latin to more unfamiliar and exotic locales and English to more recognizable cities and places, opting for Carthage and Tyrrhenian Sea, instead of Carthago and Mare Tyrrhenum. (Okay, quick Latin class: the 'c' in Latin is hard, so Seleucia is pronounced "Se-loo-kee-a" and Dacia is pronounced "Da-kee-a").

In his article "The Roots of Diplomacy," published in *Europa Express* #10 (publication date unknown), Calhamer wrote, "I think that the game should be as simple as possible, so long as the game is indeterminate and reasonably rich in strategic choices." This one sentence could be the best single piece of advice for Diplomacy variant designers. Zama is the Classical and Ancient Mediterranean variants pared to its essentials, while maintaining historical adherence, resulting in a game of 24 centers and 52 squares (2.17 ratio). Fifty-two seems like an ideal number, like a standard deck of cards. I also kept the ratio of sea provinces to total provinces about the same as Standard, hopefully resulting in a variant with good balance between land and naval power. Albert played 500 no-press games of the final version of Zama:

	<b>Solo</b>	<b>2-Way</b>	<b>3-Way</b>	<b>4-Way</b>	<b>5-Way</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Carthage</b>	71	0	41	40	9	1157.6	2.32
<b>Egypt</b>	78	1	48	43	9	1284.6	2.57
<b>Macedonia</b>	62	0	45	44	9	1077.6	2.16
<b>Rome</b>	75	0	34	44	9	1189.6	2.38
<b>Seleucia</b>	92	1	21	25	9	1290.6	2.58

	<b>Most Common Opening</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Carthage</b>	A(Zam) - Lib, F(Car) - CEN, F(Nwc) - ATL	128/500	25.6	10
<b>Egypt</b>	F(Ale) - Dam, A(Cyr) - Ale, A(Dam) - Nab	125/500	25.0	20
<b>Macedonia</b>	A(Pel) - Dac, F(Ath) - AEG, A(The) - Thr	131/500	26.2	12
<b>Rome</b>	F(Nea) - Sic, A(Rom) - Gal, F(Tar) - ION	107/500	21.4	7
<b>Seleucia</b>	A(Ede) - Ant, F(Ant) - PSE, F(Sar) - AEG	78/500	15.6	22

There are a few key takeaways from playtesting. These results show that Seleucia, the strongest power, outscores Macedonia, the weakest power, by 1.2 times. According to Albert, this is excellent balance (compared to 3.8 in Classical and 5.4 in Ancient Mediterranean). In Zama, there are generally four types of games: (1) Carthage and Rome are enemies, Egypt and Seleucia are enemies, (2) Carthage and Rome are enemies, Egypt and Seleucia are allies, (3) Carthage and Rome are allies, Egypt and Seleucia are enemies, and (4) Carthage and Rome are allies, Egypt and Seleucia are allies. Macedonia, as the central power, makes arrangements based on one these four situations. Macedonia fares best under the first scenario and copes worst under the fourth one.

Seleucia behaves differently, in contrast to the other powers. Seleucia achieves the most solo victories, but

participates in about half of the total draws compared to the others. Seleucia experiences the most eliminations and sometimes has trouble out the gate, depending on what Egypt and Macedonia do. Seleucia is sort of an "all or nothing" power. Seleucia also shares a tense boundary with Egypt, as Antioch and Damascus border each other and both powers can attack each other via Syria and the Egyptian Sea. But this friction is historically appropriate, as Egypt and Seleucia fought six Syrian Wars from 274 BC to 168 BC and Antioch and Damascus changed hands multiple times during these conflicts.

Because of Zama's reduced span, Zama games are shorter (19 median game years) compared to Classical (31 years) and Ancient Mediterranean (24 years). Also, because the game has fewer spaces and more stalemate lines, Zama games ended in more draws



(24.4%) than Classical (2.0%) and Ancient Mediterranean (12.0%). The most important stalemate line in Zama runs through the center of the board along Ger-III-ADR-ION-CEN-Lib, where Carthage or Rome can use 10 units to block westward passage (while controlling 10 supply centers). The presence of stalemate lines and a Diplomacy variant's tendency toward draws has been debated for years. Standard is indeed, highly conducive to draws. In 500 Standard no-press games, Albert played to 33.6% draws. The one

advantage of a draw-inclined map is that it alleviates Diplomacy's biggest competitiveness problem: keeping the interest of players in a middlegame or endgame who have been reduced to one or a few units.

In summary, the Zama variant is smaller in scale, more balanced, and has more opening move variation than its Classical and Ancient Mediterranean predecessors. If the Classical variant was Diplomacy's first stab at the ancient Mediterranean, perhaps Zama is its final word.

## An Interview with Johnny Gillam

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

Diplomacy has been exploding in popularity over the last couple years, with new clubs, tournaments, events, and news appearing all the time. Our Interview Editor sat down with the new organizer of the New York City Diplomacy club to pick his brain on starting a club from scratch, organizing, and (hopefully) running a tournament in the near future!

### Randy

Thanks for agreeing to the interview! Want to introduce yourself to our readership?

### Johnny Gillam

Sure thing. I'm Johnny Gillam, originally from Seattle but living these days in New York City. I've been playing Diplomacy casually since college, where all of us who worked in the history department played on occasion, but have been playing competitively in virtual face-to-face since the early days of the pandemic. Recently I've been leading the charge to get a NYC Diplomacy club up and running - if you're in the area, join the Diplorats!

### Randy

Did you find much of an organization or club in NYC when you moved there?

### JG

No, none, which is why I took it upon myself to start one. There were remnants of a pre-Covid club and some recent casual get-togethers to build on, though, which were helpful.

### Randy

So how's it been going? Have you had your first game yet?

### JG

Yes! We've played two games, both in Grand Central Station (which is quite a romantic setting, but we're working on finding a more permanent home). We've got a great range of experience, so games have been

dynamic and fun without being too intimidating for newer players

### Randy

Sounds like a good start! How did you go about finding players and organizing the first couple games?

### JG

It was a combination of Bill Hackenbracht's FTF registry and good old-fashioned word of mouth, although we've now got a Meetup page (<https://www.meetup.com/new-york-diplorats-diplomacy-club/>) which is starting to take off as well.

### Randy

So how long did it take you to get a game together? And did you get seven on the first try?

### JG

We did get 7 on the first try, after only a couple weeks of organizing. Our next will be March 19!

Living in the biggest city in the US does have its advantages when it comes to finding seven for a board.



(Photo courtesy of TripAdvisor)

**Randy**

I'm not super familiar with train stations these days - why use Grand Central Station for the games?

**JG**

It's big and free, and has food and drink options. Also its architecture is iconic and beautiful, so it makes for a fun space to play in. It's where the old pre-Covid group used to play. That said, I'm working on moving us into a cozier permanent home.

**Randy**

Makes sense - a good venue can be key, when I organized for the Boston group we always played at a local brewery, and I definitely think the good beer helped draw people in. Have you found any particular resources, online or elsewhere, that have helped you organize and plan (other than Hackenbracht's registry)?

**JG**

Actually, the key has been asking friends and acquaintances with experience organizing clubs - I didn't realize you used to organize for the Boston club! I see Maslow is following our lead, that should be exciting. I may want to pick your brain about tips for organizing when this is over, if that's alright?

**Randy**

Alex Maslow actually took over right after I left, he's been organizing and running the Massacre and TotalCon tournaments for a couple years now! Happy to let you pick my brain, but honestly you might be better off picking Maslow's.

So what would you say are the three biggest things you've learned trying to organize a local hobby from scratch?

**JG**

Ah, I thought it was a recent takeover - in any event he's getting active on Discord as of late and we've actually been in contact about cross-club events, so watch out for that!

It may be too early to say, really. One thing certainly is that demand is out there (and is also easily manufactured, because we play the world's best board game), so if you live somewhere without a local hobby, all you really have to do is put it out there on the web that you'd like to play and people will come. I really hope to see more cities represented on the lists of active clubs.

I'm also rediscovering the pleasure of playing diplomacy purely for fun. I've been playing nothing but high-stakes tournament play for years, which I love, but it's been great to just sit around a table again and play for the love of playing. It's a much happier and less stressful experience.

**Randy**

Completely agree, the chill house or bar games are always my favorite ones to play.

Do you envision hosting a NYC tournament in the not-distant future?

**JG**

Yes!!!! Absolutely. 2024 is the target, I doubt we see it by this year. But yes, there will be a Diplorats tournament.

**Randy**

Then I'll look forward to attending!

I think that's all I've got for questions - any final thoughts?

**JG**

Well, the most important thought is to join the Diplorats! Or, if you're somewhere without a club, start one up! Feel free to get in touch with me, I'm happy to help out.

**Randy**

Great, thanks for your time, and look forward to seeing the club grow!





# Third Time's the Charm – Cascadia 2023

By Chris Brand

The first weekend of February this year saw a total of 23 players travelling to Surrey, near Vancouver, BC, Canada, for the first face-to-face tournament of the year, the Cascadia Open. Roughly a third of those players were locals, with most of the rest from the USA and one all the way from South Korea.

Friday evening the knives were kept sheathed as most of the group gathered for an excellent meal at a local Indian restaurant, followed by drinks at a nearby bar.



**LtoR, near side – Kyra Olson and daughter Abigail, Andrei Gribakov, Dave Roberts?  
LtoR, far side – Matt Shields, Bryan Pravel, Farren Jane, David Miller, Adam Silverman, Colin Weidmer**

For the first time this year, games were all played with a fixed endpoint – all games would end after 1909 adjustments. In past years, the Sunday round games were limited in this way but the Saturday round games were unlimited. In practice, though, only one previous game at Cascadia has ever run beyond 1909.

Three games of Diplomacy were played in each of three rounds – two on Saturday and one on Sunday. I filled a spot in rounds 1 and 3.

On Saturday morning, local and second place finished for the previous two years, Riaz Virani took a slender lead with a 9-centre England. Very closely behind were Dave Roberts, Andrei Gribakov, and Bryan Pravel who

shared a 3-way board top all with 9 centers as Austria, France, and England, respectively. I managed to come out ahead on my board with 8 centers as France.

The second round saw much more varied results with Farren Jane taking the tournament lead by half a point by finishing with 12 centers as Russia. Riaz, Dave Roberts, and Andrei Gribakov finished with a 3-way shared board top with 7 centers as Italy, Germany, and Austria, respectively. There was also a 3-way tie for top on the third board, with Edi Birsan's France, Adam Silverman's Russia and Matt Crill's Turkey all at 7 centers.



**LtoR Sabi Ahuja, the back of Nicolas Adamski, Jason Mastbaum, Bryan Pravel, me, Adam Silverman**

Come Sunday morning, the four front-runners were Farren, with 47.88, Riaz with 47.38, Andrei with 46.25, and Dave with 46.35 with a number of other players not far behind. It was going to be an exciting day!

The board call happened to put three of the top four - Riaz, Andrei, and Farren - on the same board, and the other players decided to target them. That gave the advantage to the defensive position enjoyed by Turkey, played by Riaz. Meanwhile, Dave was hanging in as England but falling behind Matt Crill's Germany and Harjot Guram's Turkey. The other board saw David Miller with a rapidly-growing Russia that was a clear solo threat.

At Cascadia, the current tournament standings are always on display (with "if all games ended now" scores) and it was clear that this had become a two-horse race between Riaz and David Miller, who had ended round 2 with a total of 32.28 points. David reached 15 centers in 1907 but then saw both Norway and Sweden occupied

by England. The players kindly agreed to a draw before the fall moves were adjudicated, giving David 52.44 points and a total tournament score of 84.72. Riaz's board finished 1908 with him on 13 centers and scoring 38.35 points, giving him a lead of 1 point, and they voted to end the game there.



**LtoR Riaz Virani, David Miller, Bryan Pravel, Matt Crill, Andrei Gribakov, Dave Roberts**

The final awards were as follows:

- **1<sup>st</sup> place** – Riaz Virani, 85.72
- **2<sup>nd</sup> place** – David Miller, 84.72
- **3<sup>rd</sup> place** – Dave Roberts, 63.44
- **Best Austria** – Dave Roberts, 25.68 points (9 centers) in round 1
- **Best England** – Riaz Virani, 26.71 points (9 centers) in round 1
- **Best France** – Andrei Gribakov, 25.68 points (9 centers) in round 1
- **Best Germany** – Matt Crill, 33.27 points (11 centers) in round 3
- **Best Italy** – Riaz Virani, 20.67 points (7 centers) in round 2
- **Best Russia** – David Miller, 52.44 points (15 centers) in round 3
- **Best Turkey** – Riaz Virani, 38.35 points (13 centers) in round 3
- **Ninja Award** – Bryan Pravel for his play of England in round 1

The full details can be found at <https://diplomacytv.com/tournaments/57/>

I couldn't run the event without the help and support of Riaz, Liam Stokes, Mike Moore, and Sabi Ahuja. Next year's event will be around the same time of year, most likely the first weekend of February. Email [Cascadia.open@gmail.com](mailto:Cascadia.open@gmail.com) for information.



# Ask the Hobby Historian: Where Do Baby Diplomacy Players Come From?

By David Hood

Alright, boys and girls. For this issue's hobby historian piece, I'd like to answer a riff on the old childhood question of "where do babies come from?" by answering the more important question of: Where do Baby Diplomacy Players Come From? This has always been a legitimate question, not just for understanding how your fellow players might think or play, but also for determining the best ways to bring more folk into the Hobby fold.



The correct answer to this question is - from a lot of different places! For this article I will discuss the various historical sources for players, and then give my spin on each source for the contemporary hobby of 2023.

Let's "start at the very beginning, it's a very good place to start", to quote Julie Andrews from a movie which came out close to the same time period in question. When the Diplomacy hobby first formed in the 1963-1965 time frame, the vast majority of players, organizers and zine publishers came from the world of Science Fiction/Fantasy fandom. These were geeky folk who liked to interact with other geeky folk and play a game which focused on human interaction and negotiation. Hobbyists at this point were not overwhelmingly game players in particular, but were instead focused more on shared interests and the love of being in a fandom together.

Do we still get people into the hobby from this source? Clearly not as much as the old days. Because of the connectivity of the modern world, folk are more siloed in their hobbies than was true before. Whereas in the 60s there were zines which focused a lot on sci/fi content and ALSO ran Diplomacy games on the side, that is obviously not now much of a thing. Also, to be honest, sci/fi has now taken over the culture so much that it is no longer a niche thing, but is instead right down the middle of modern preferences. However, the aspect of players in those days which I think is the most distinctive, the theatricality and role-playing, is still alive in some Dip players today. When you interact with players like this, if you can craft your pitch so as to create a fun "story of the game" in which you both play interesting roles, you will be most successful. We should probably think if there are ways we can market our game at sci/fi conventions or somewhere else in that SF space.

The next new source for players was the wargaming community. Around 1966, there was an influx of this type of player into the postal Diplomacy hobby, as they discovered that this is in fact a game about a war. The wargames of the time were pretty much all two-player affairs, so a recreation of World War I which involved multi-player interaction and the ability to change the cast of characters as between the Allies and Central Powers was very attractive to this group. As Jim Meinel points out in the preface to his 1992 Encyclopedia of Postal Diplomacy Zines, wargamers were responsible for bringing certain competitive features to the hobby such as tournaments and rating systems.

The wargamer connection was strengthened further when the Avalon Hill Game Company, a premier publisher of wargames, bought the rights to Diplomacy in 1976. AH gamers were now more directly exposed to Dip, and some of them liked it. A LOT. Many did not, though, given that wargames became more and more sophisticated in the 70s and 80s - gamers who got into Squad Leader's complexity did not find the relatively simple mechanics of our game to be quite the same tactical challenge.

Can we appeal to the wargaming hobby of today? Honestly, at most major conventions, the wargamers are a small minority and usually isolated from the rest of the attendees there to play Eurogames and card games. There is a lot of crossover with miniatures players, but not as much with our kind of game as was true in the

past. We can still reach old Avalon Hill fans, because Dip was in their family of games, and we should try more often to promote within that community.

Probably a more fruitful ground to plow would be current gamers who are really into the popular multi-player games of today. There is a reason that some online retailers try to call Diplomacy a "cooperative game", because such things are obviously popular currently. Back in the 1980s, when non-wargame board games really started to improve in quality, players who enjoyed such things as 1830, Titan, and Civilization gravitated easily into the world of Diplomacy because they enjoyed the multi-party interaction present in all of the above. When I first started running Dixiecon, we had side tournaments in all three of those games - and others such as Acquire and Empire Builder were also very popular for eliminated players waiting for their next Dip round.



Do we try hard enough to bring other face-to-face board game fans into Diplomacy? Probably not. There are certainly good efforts done by some Dipfans at general gaming conventions in the US (Thomas Haver's efforts at places like Gencon and WBC being the most obvious example), but the organized Diplomacy hobby itself does not attend general games conventions enough to "show the flag." This is partly because many of the more active promoters in the organized Diplomacy hobby these days are not general gamers and thus do not go to these conventions like Dip folk did in the old days. A major North American exception would be the hobby's attendance at the Dip event run by the ever-capable David Maletsky at Carnage in Vermont, site of the 2022 World Dipcon and the 2021 Dipcon. At the 2022 Spirecon in the UK, Diplomacy was on the menu for the first time, and historically there was a large Dip event at

Manorcon, so hopefully the British hobby can build on that. Back in the past, the European Dip hobby appeared at the Essen Games Fair in Germany. So precedents exist. We can and should do a better job of establishing a pipeline for newcomers to enter the organized hobby from this source, via the North American Diplomacy Federation and other infrastructure.

However, a face-to-face convention is not the only way to reach general gamers with news about our game. In the old days, there was a box flyer in all Diplomacy sets which directed the buyer to hobby resources available to support that new game owner's play. (This is how I myself discovered the organized Diplomacy hobby back in 1984.) With modern technology, that function can and should now be achieved through websites which cater to gamers in general. Again, there is some work being done here, but certainly not enough.

All that being said, Diplomacy really is its own category when it comes to board games in general. There are a lot of folk, including likely many who are reading this, for whom Diplomacy is really the only game played, competitively, in a serious fashion. We have always gotten some people who joined the hobby simply because they liked the interpersonal or psychological aspects of the game as opposed to the pushing-the-pieces aspect. Diplomacy appeals to a more extroverted and social crowd that do many other complex games. We need to find more of such people and recruit them, somehow. In the old days, I think we ended up with a lot of folks like this because someone in their social circle invited them. Nowadays, the internet gives us the chance to reach such people through articles in the general media. That Grantland piece about the 2014 World Dipcon, and the This American Life episode created by the same journalist, gave us many new hobbyists. One would hope that the latest media buzz about the artificial intelligence agent Cicero winning an online Dip tournament could also lead some interested folk to find out about our hobby, and joining.

What can we do to help with that? We can make sure that online resources for newcomers are attractive and accessible. We can welcome new players, and give them chances to play which are not just shark tanks. We can talk up the game and hobby in our own social media presences. And, importantly, we can support the new edition coming out in any way we can. We need to provide whatever assistance we can to Renegade Games, and we hobbyists should all plan to buy at least one set when those come out, as a show of esprit de corps. An alliance between Renegade and the organized Diplomacy hobby could push us all right past the stalemate line...or at least get us Belgium.

## Selected Upcoming Events

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://petermc.net/diplomacy/> and <https://www.thenadf.org/play/> and <https://www.diplomacybriefing.com/diplomacytournaments>

Whipping Open – April 15<sup>th</sup> – April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - Hyatt Place San Jose/Downtown, San Jose, California – Email: [badassdiplomacy@gmail.com](mailto:badassdiplomacy@gmail.com)

London Diplomacy Club Game – April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 – Covent Garden, London, United Kingdom - <https://www.facebook.com/events/5694734657302665>

Gaming Hoopla 2023 “*Learn to Play Diplomacy*” Teaching Event – April 28<sup>th</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – DoubleTree by Hilton. 510 East, IL-83, Mundelein, Illinois – <https://tabletop.events/conventions/2023-gaming-hoopla>

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

San Marino Diplomacy Event – May 5<sup>th</sup> – May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – San Marino. Email: [lucapazzaglia@alice.it](mailto:lucapazzaglia@alice.it)

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

DixieCon 37 / DipCon 52 – May 26<sup>th</sup> – May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Chapel Hill, North Carolina - <https://www.dixiecon.com/>

BGG Spring “*Learn to Play Diplomacy*” Teaching Event – May 26<sup>th</sup> – May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Dallas, Texas - <https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgg.spring-2023>

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – June date to be determined, 2023 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

Origins – June 22<sup>nd</sup> – June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Columbus, Ohio - <http://www.originsgamefair.com/>

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

French Championship, July 14<sup>th</sup> – July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - Bellevigne-en-Layon, Maine-et-Loire, France - [https://tdfdiplo.fandom.com/fr/wiki/Anjou\\_Feu\\_XIII](https://tdfdiplo.fandom.com/fr/wiki/Anjou_Feu_XIII) - Email - [diplomatiegabriel@hotmail.com](mailto:diplomatiegabriel@hotmail.com)

ManorCon – July 21<sup>st</sup> – July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Leicester University, Leicester, England - <https://www.facebook.com/events/579302346912218/>

World Boardgame Championships – July 28<sup>th</sup> – July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Pennsylvania - <http://www.boardgamers.org/>

GenCon – August 3<sup>rd</sup> – August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Indianapolis, Indiana - <http://www.gencon.com/>

Boston Massacre – August 2023 – Boston, Massachusetts – Details not yet finalized.

World Dipcon – August 17<sup>th</sup> – August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Bangkok, Thailand – Check <http://www.wdcbangkok.com> (coming soon) or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/wdc2023>

Weasel Moot – September 29<sup>th</sup> – October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 – Hyatt Place Downtown/The Loop (I believe?), Chicago, IL – <https://windycityweasels.org>

Liberty Cup – October 6<sup>th</sup> – October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - <https://liberty-cup.com/2022-liberty-cup/>

Carnage – October 27<sup>th</sup> – October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Killington Grand Resort, Killington, Vermont – [www.carnagecon.com](http://www.carnagecon.com) - Email: [dmaletsky0@gmail.com](mailto:dmaletsky0@gmail.com)



# An Interview with North American Tournament Directors

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

We all know there are lots of face-to-face Diplomacy tournaments happening in North America. But who runs them? And where are they? And when did they start? To answer these questions, our Interview Editor sat down with as many face-to-face TDs in North America as he could, (online, because our travel budget is... real tight) to ask them Three Questions. First up is...

## **Adam Silverman (Whipping, San Jose, CA)**

### **Randy**

You run Whipping, a Diplomacy tournament in San Jose, CA - could you tell us a little about the origin and history of the tournament?

### **Adam**

Definitely. Back in 2002 I moved to the Bay Area and met up with Edi Birsan who had already amassed some players through local gaming conventions, ConQuest and KublaCon. We decided to try and get a bigger Diplomacy community off the ground, and started recruiting players to fill house games. At the time, the biggest local club was PTKS, the Potomac Tea and Knife Society, or Pitkissers, in the greater Washington DC area. We thought we needed a nifty name like they had, so we came up with the Bay Area Diplomacy Association, or B.A.D.Ass. for short. Anyway, after a couple of years we figured we had enough players to run a stand-alone event, so we had the first Whipping at a games store in 2004. It subsequently became an annual event, at various locations ranging from a different games store in Oakland, to a hotel in Japantown in SF, to its current locale in San Jose. We've hosted DipCon twice, in 2010 and 2022, which has always been a blast. But mainly we just enjoy it because of the opportunity to get together with friends local and around the world to socialize and play this game we all love.

I should also mention that we've had a lot of support along the way, and I would be remiss not to acknowledge all the work Edi and especially Siobhan Nolan have put in over the years to make it such a successful annual event

### **Randy**

What would you say the top 3 experiences or reasons to attend the tournament are?

### **Adam**

1. Connect or re-connect with friends from the hobby. The social time at and around tournaments is what keeps many of us coming back.

2. We typically attract some of the best Diplomacy players from around the world, and this is a great opportunity to play with and learn from them in an environment that is still very friendly to players of all experience levels.

3. I've got to plug the Best Country Bears which have become a staple of the Whipping tournament thanks to Siobhan. Such a cool and coveted award.

### **Randy**

Excellent! Can you tell our readers when Whipping will be this year, and where they can get more info?

### **Adam**

Whipping is in San Jose, CA on April 15-16, including two rounds of Diplomacy on Saturday and one on Sunday. And we'll also be hosting a social event Friday night before the tournament starts, which I always highly recommend people coming to. For more information people can reach out to me by email at [Adam.silverman@gmail.com](mailto:Adam.silverman@gmail.com).

## **David Hood (DixieCon, Chapel Hill, NC)**

### **Randy**

You run DixieCon, the longest running Diplomacy tournament in North America - could you give us a quick summary of Dixie's history, how it came to be and how it's lasted so long?

### **David Hood**

Dixiecon started in 1987 because in 1986 I met Larry Peery at the Dipcon in Fredericksburg, VA. I and four others from the Diplomacy club we founded in 1984 in the Charlotte area, the Carolina Amateur Diplomats, went to the event because we saw an ad for it in Diplomacy World. Larry told me that we should host our own convention the next year in Chapel Hill, where many of us had moved for college and where I had recruited a bunch of other face-to-face players. I had some experience in how debate tournaments were run, so I figured that was transferrable. We jumped in with both feet, publicized the hell out of it (which in those days meant sending out scores of flyers in the mail) and hoped for the best. The reason it is still going now is because it has become an annual tradition, where friends and newcomers alike come together for a fun weekend of gaming.

### **Randy**

What would you say are the top three attractions or reasons to come to Dixie?



**David Hood**

1) Diversity. Because of the history of the event, there are many players against whom you cross swords at Dixiecon whom you are unlikely to see at many other events. If you enjoy playing with different people, and different types of people, then we can certainly provide that to you. While it is fun to play with folk you know, it is in my opinion a very enjoyable challenge to meet new folk and try to figure out what makes them tick.

2) Gaming. As I have pointed out before, Diplomacy hobbyists come to our game from different places and in different ways. One very traditional way is that the hobbyist is a games player in general. At Dixiecon, many of the attendees play lots of other board games, so if you like that yourself then you will have plenty of opportunities when the Dip is over to try out other games in a social setting with other talkative/sociable people - the kind of gamers who tend to go to Diplomacy events.

3) History. Dixiecon really has been around a long time, so much so that it has become an integral part of hobby history. By playing at this event, you can wade into the same waters in which hobby figures of the past and present have been swimming for a long time. You can connect to and enjoy the traditions - the BBQ, the Brick, the giving out of awards from past years, etc. Tradition is not everything - I am a big believer in innovation as well - but there is value in participating and honoring the legacy we all enjoy as members of the Diplomacy community.

**Randy**

Plus, I'll be there, so bonus!

Can you tell our readers when Dixie will be this year, and where they can get more info?

**David Hood**

4) Randy Lawrence will be there to Hurt everyone on his boards. (*Interviewer's note: these are the sort of timeless puns you can expect from David at every tournament.*)

This year's Dixiecon is May 26-28, with other gaming to take place the night of May 27th and the night of May 28th after the Dip is over. More details can be found at [www.dixiecon.com](http://www.dixiecon.com). I want to point out that this year's Dixiecon is also the 52nd Dipcon, the North American Diplomacy Championship, which rotates around the continent among host Diplomacy conventions.

**Eber Condrell (Regatta, Denver, CO)****Randy**

You run the Regatta, a Diplomacy tournament in Denver, CO. Could you tell us a little about the origin and history of the tournament?

**Eber**

Manus Hand founded the ARMADA group in 1998, it started off as a mostly online group with members from around the Rocky Mountain region. Soon afterward it began to transition into a face-to-face group. The first Regatta Tournament was held in 2000, going on to host DipCon in '01 and Worlds in '03. The peak of the club and the tournament ended up being around 2003. After running Worlds, Manus stepped away from Diplomacy for a few years, and others who took over running the club eventually dropped off as well. It wasn't until 2016 that the club really got going again. I joined the club in 2021 after moving to Denver the year before; it was slow going at first with the pandemic, but since June of 2021 we have had at least one board a month, and may have our second month with two boards on the 25th of March. There was no serious attempt to restart the Regatta tournament until 2023, but we are ready to be back and become a regular part of the tournament circuit once again.

**Randy**

What would you say the main attractions or reasons to attend Regatta are?

**Eber**

The Mile High city is always a great midsummer destination. If you stay before or after the Diplomacy there are great hikes and great sites all around. As for the event itself, we are always looking to improve the playing experience for everyone. We have some plans in store to make it a unique experience. We are planning a questionnaire to be taken during the first two seasons of the first-round games asking players what they know about the board before adjudication. We are also likely going to implement a brand-new scoring system, which I am submitting an article about to this edition of Diplomacy World. In addition, we will be playing on beautiful hand-made boards, pictures of which are located on both the NADF and Renegade discord servers.

**Randy**

Great! And can you tell our readers when Regatta will take place, and where they can get more info?

**Eber**

Regatta will take place on July 15-16 (Saturday-Sunday), 2023. We will have an event on the evening of the 14th for players to meet and spend some time together before the stabbing begins. Diplomacy will be happening on Saturday and on Sunday until the midafternoon leaving time for people to make Sunday night flights home. For more info go to: <http://armada-dip.com/> . Or you can visit our Discord server: <https://discord.gg/J53bzASQ> . Alternatively, contact me via Discord or email at [ebercondrell@gmail.com](mailto:ebercondrell@gmail.com)

**Alex Maslow (TotalCon and Boston Massacre, Marlborough and Boston, MA)**

**Randy**

You run both TotalCon and Boston Massacre, the former in Marlborough, MA, and the latter in (or around) Boston. Could you tell us a little of the origin and history of those tournaments?

**Alex**

Boston Massacre was begun in 2003 by Melissa Call. I wasn't an active part of the Boston hobby until 2015 so I can't say too much beyond that. When Melissa left the area, TD responsibility passed to someone else, and on and on until now here it is on me. *(Interviewer's note: prior Massacre TDs include Alex Amann, and the interviewer himself).*

Despite the name, Boston Massacre isn't usually held in Boston, at least recently. Venues are too expensive. Also, the event isn't near when or where the Massacre happened, either. But an iconic name is an iconic name

TotalCon has a more winding history. New England has a large number of winter conventions (including, of course, Carnage). I assume this is because venues in the winter here are cheap. When I started, our winter con was TempleCon, held in Providence, RI. But recently TempleCon changed from February to August and that's too close to Massacre's traditional summer timing. I guess we could have stayed with TempleCon and swapped the timing of each (making Massacre closer to the timing of its namesake), but the decision to change venues was made and we landed on TotalCon. Fun fact, the Con in TotalCon "officially" stands for confusion.

For a brief time, we had a third tournament called the Burroughs run by a guy named Alan Levin who's one of those big supporters of the hobby who most people won't know. He rarely traveled out of New England and since the birth of his son has pulled back to focus on his family, but he still provides important background support to us in New England.

**Randy**

What would you say the biggest attractions or reasons to come to either tournament are?

**Alex**

TotalCon is a wider gaming convention, and a very good time. The vendors have a great selection and some designers will bring their games to demo, too.

Boston Massacre is in a local gaming store. Another good selection of things to buy, and it tends to be bigger and more competitive than TotalCon. Mix in the fantastic selection of restaurants in the area and a great hotel

price and it's hard to go wrong to get a taste of Boston (or the surrounding towns).

**Randy**

Awesome! So can you tell our readers when these tournaments are/will be, and where they can get more info?

**Alex**

Boston Massacre's website is:

<https://sites.google.com/site/bostonmassacrediplomacy/> - which will hopefully be updated by the time DipWorld comes out. The Discord is: <https://discord.gg/DQKUKyEN6t>. It'll be August 11-13th.

As for TotalCon, the Discord is here:

<https://discord.gg/KE7cQxHsuP>. The dates for the wider Con are February 22 - 25, 2024, our tournament will be the 23rd-25th. That discord will have more information after Massacre is finished. TotalCon does have its own website: <https://www.totalcon.com>.

**Bill Hackenbracht (Liberty Cup, Philadelphia, PA)**

**Randy**

Thanks for taking the time! You run the Liberty Cup tournament in Philly; could you tell us a little about the origin and history of the tournament?

**Bill**

Liberty Cup was originally the Boston Massacre, but when the original organizer moved from Boston to Philadelphia, so did the event. Christian Pedone handed off TD responsibilities to me back in 2018 and I've been organizing it ever since! *(Interviewer's note: my recollection differs slightly from Bill's; I believe the Philadelphia tournament was founded after the original Boston organizer moved to Australia, and borrowed the Massacre name as an homage, before cordially returning it when the Boston hobby and tournament resumed a few years later.)*

**Randy**

What would you say the main attractions or reasons to attend Liberty Cup are?

**Bill**

The players! Philadelphia is an amazing city to visit and hold an event in - affordable, lots for family to do, amazing food - but it's the players. The local players and regulars are great people and very welcoming to new players and visitors.

**Randy**

When will the next one be held, and where can our readers get more info?

**Bill**

It will be in mid-to-late October, exact date is TBD. The website is [www.liberty-cup.com](http://www.liberty-cup.com) !

**Dave Maletsky (Carnage, Killington, VT)****Randy**

You run the Diplomacy tournament at Carnage in Vermont; could you tell us a bit about the origin and history of that tournament?

**Dave**

The first Diplomacy event at the Carnage Gaming Convention was held at their first venue in Ascutney, VT in 1998. Since then, it has steadily grown, and transitioned through several venue relocations, to Lake Morey, Killington, Mount Snow, and this year back to Killington!

**Randy**

What would you say the biggest attractions or reasons to attend Carnage are?

**Dave**

It's historically one of the better-attended conventions, so you'll get to play and socialize with many others. It has among the best on-site amenities of any FTF venue, including heated outdoor pool, hot tubs, steam room, sauna, spa, gym, snow sports, hiking, every board game under the sun, and of course, the Diplomacy Suite. And finally, the event culture is among the most genial of all the events I've attended.

**Randy**

Sounds great! When will it be held, and where can our readers get more info?

**Dave**

Carnage 2023 is October 26-29 at the Killington Grand Resort in Killington, VT. Get more information on the Carnage Diplomacy Discord, or email me at [dmaletsky0@gmail.com](mailto:dmaletsky0@gmail.com) . Looking forward to seeing everyone!

**Craig Mayr (SkyCon, Montana)****Randy**

You run SkyCon, in Helena (right?) Montana. Could you tell us a little about the origin and history of that tournament?

**Craig**

Correct, but not in Helena. SkyCon 1 was in Big Sky, MT, at Big Sky Resort. I wanted it to be a beautiful

destination event similar to the Carnage event, but in the Western US rather than out East. A Carnage-West so to speak. We had the first SkyCon in July 2019 and planned to run it every other year, but then something happened later in 2019 that kind of threw the F2F hobby (and the world?) into a holding pattern.

**Randy**

What would you say the biggest attractions or reasons to attend SkyCon are?

**Craig**

I would say the biggest reason is to get the chance to hang out with really great people and play some Dip on the side. That you get to do that in one of the most picturesque places in the world just adds to the enjoyment. At SkyCon 1 there was time for people to do activities outside the tournament. Several players made attendance of the tournament part of a larger trip through the mountain west, with additional stops at Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. On one of the days of the tournament, a group of attendees went to the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center and had close encounters with, well, wolves and grizzlies obviously. Other folks went on breathtaking hikes and many went to the top of the ski lift at the resort to take in the most stupendous views in North America. The level of Diplomacy competition was quite impressive as well, with many luminaries in the hobby vying for, arguably, the best trophies ever given out at a Dip tournament. The most interesting ones were hand-made by yours truly and are unmatched in quality and originality. Just ask Zach Moore about his take-home hardware and I think he'll agree. All F2F tournaments are a blast in my opinion; SkyCon is both a blast and an adventure.

**Randy**

Any idea when the next SkyCon will be, and where interested attendees can get more info?

**Craig**

I am very hopeful that I can arrange to restart the event in the summer of 2024. The original plan was to have the event be the weekend after July 4; unless the F2F tournament calendar precludes that, I would like to continue that timing. The original event was held at Big Sky Resort which was beautiful and fun. However, getting there was one of the obstacles to attendance. I think if I manage to successfully get the event back on its feet, it would be held in Bozeman. It's still extremely beautiful and much easier to access by air. Players can keep their eyes on the usual sources of Dip info for news about the tournament, those being discord, NADF, DBN, the tournament calendars, etc.

# Duct Tape Scoring

By Eber Condrell

In this article I will lay out some basic ideas for how a scoring system should function, and maybe even propose an idea of my own. This is an addition to the decades-long conversation, something I feel called to as a hobbyist. I've been avoiding this for a while, focusing instead on trying to enjoy other systems. I've come to the conclusion that I can't hold back any longer. I need to write my own system into existence. It'll be perfect!

Ok, enough hubris, I highly doubt any system I could derive would be better than anyone else's, let alone perfect. It is hard enough to play the game well. I think however that I can expand on ideas that have been brought forward before to create something new and perhaps better. Before I get into nuts and bolts, let's get something clear. Scoring systems are here to differentiate between results in the event that there isn't a solo. We all agree that solos should be significantly more than the best possible non-solo result, how much more depends on several factors I will discuss later.

There are a couple different objectives that developers typically have in mind when they write systems. Rulebook accuracy, player engagement (both from sharks and noobs), rewarding subjectively good or exciting play, and determining who played the best game or games. I propose another, I believe that the core tenant from which every scoring system should be derived is progression toward the goal of gaining 18 centers.



Diplomacy is often compared to games like chess. They are simple yet deep, have extensive competitive hobbies (though diplomacy isn't nearly on the level of chess), and nobody agrees on the best way to play. I contend that one major difference makes diplomacy not at all like chess, it's a seven-player game. Because of this, I believe when making arguments about how it should be scored, we can't look to the example of chess (win, loss, draw). Instead, the oft repeated "it's like risk with no

dice" should be our go-to. Risk is also a game known for being called before the victory condition has been achieved because it is such a long game. How does one determine victory in such cases? "Who has the most territory?"

It's simple, I know. And it's just the bones of a fully formed system. The core structure of a diplomacy scoring system in my opinion should be center count. Objective success as defined by the rulebook is controlling 18 centers, which is assumed to precipitate the eventual capture of all 34 centers on the map. So, it follows that 18 (more on that later) is better than 17, is better than 16, etc.

That's it? You may ask. Simple systems are great, and I intend this to be one, but because we like to play this game semi-competitively, we need more differentiation between results than just solos and centers. The only purpose of scoring systems, in my view, is to make these differentiations, not fulfill any of the other goals listed above. The question then is along what lines, other than centers, should results be differentiated? Well, to win you need to be alive. I think the difference between zero centers and one center, survival in a draw, should be worth significantly more than the difference between one center and 2 centers. Hence the 10 survival points. Note also that these points are awarded as a flat amount no matter the size of the draw. I recognize that this will make the system not zero-sum. I will briefly address this concern in the next paragraph.

The most compelling and concise argument in favor of zero sum comes from David Maletsky, he set out his position several months ago on his discord server, "I don't think zero sum trumps all other considerations, but in a vacuum it's preferable for all the games in a tournament to be worth the same number of points, because the inverse seems to fly in the face of 'level playing field' a bit." I would argue that we are not

measuring boards against each other, but rather individual positions against each other. The sum of the seven positions on a board is irrelevant to scoring discussions. Because all games start the same way with all the possible scores available, no competitive advantage can be gained from being on one board versus another. Because of this the principle of the level playing field remains intact in my opinion, at least in this system.

The final tie-breaking method I would like to introduce is additional points for having more centers than any other



player, otherwise known as topping the board. My rationale for this bonus is that additional tiebreakers are required to differentiate results further, and having the most centers—the assumption being the player has a somewhat dominant position over the rest of the board—is a reasonable standard to use. The basic logic is the closest player to winning at any given time can be judged to have played the best game, at least as a secondary measure.



Now the final piece of the puzzle is how to score solos. My thought has always been that solos should be worth a very large amount to clarify the difference between 17 and 18. My recommendation is multiplying the maximum

non solo score by the number of rounds in the tournament. However, I've heard some people argue that a solo happening in the first round could cause people to stop trying since only a solo could get them a win. I acknowledge that this is sensible taking player enjoyment into account. So instead of stipulating a point total for solos I decided to leave it up to organizers based on the event, with the loose suggestion of 100.

Here is the system I have produced based on this logical progression:

- 1 point per center
- 10 points for making the draw
- 5 points for having the most centers, none if tied
- Solos should be worth X times as much as the maximum non solo result (32) where X is the number of rounds in the tournament. In a typical 3 rounds tournament 97 points for a solo is sufficient though some may prefer rounding up to 100. 100 is the recommended total for a tournament/league with more than 5 rounds of play or if the organizer does not prefer making solos unreachable.

I intend to use this in Denver's Regatta Tournament which will be run on July 15-16th 2023. Please feel free to contact me on Discord with any comments or questions on this. Once again, I want to emphasize that this is intended to be a drop in the bucket of scoring discussions, I come at this subject with all humility.

## DBNI, the Absence of Scoring, and the “France Meta”

By Chris Kelly

Nobody who's sane enjoys talking about Diplomacy scoring systems. But anyone who's played much in leagues or tournaments knows that they affect the game—in particular, how alliances are formed and maintained.

In Diplomacy World #160 a few months ago, I wrote about how the Tribute scoring system (and later Open Tribute) originated with the goal of heightening the “*essential tension between cooperation and selfishness*,” as Brandon Fogel described it. The idea was that emphasizing the importance of an unshared board top would make alliances (while still necessary to succeed) riskier and harder to sustain over multiple game years.

The recent Diplomacy Broadcast Network invitational (DBNI) tournament took this philosophy a step further,

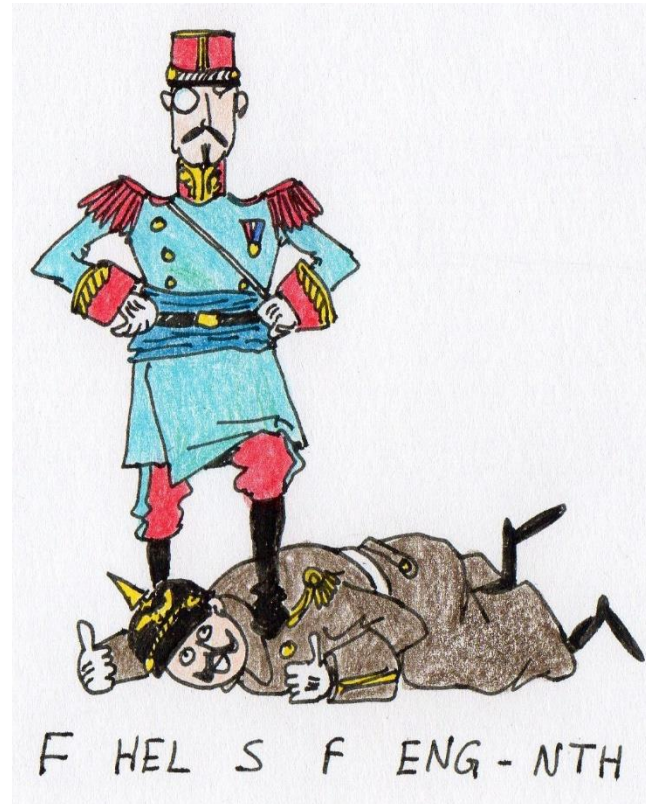
by eliminating the concept of scoring completely: the only way to advance to the final round was to be the top player on a preliminary board. (Because all players were seeded based on their place in the final DBNI standings, there was an automatic way to break ties that everyone knew in advance.)

Another influencing factor was the high skill level of the participants. In a more ordinary settings, expert competitors might target relative novices as potential early victims, or manipulate them easily in the short term to cripple a more-feared rival. Either way, simply knowing who was experienced or not was a way to simplify your diplomatic choices.

But at this level, neither option seemed plausible—everyone on each board would pose a tactical challenge

if attacked, and a strategic threat to stab you as an ally. Even worse, to achieve victory would require surviving a gauntlet to outwit all six of your skilled opponents, not just one or two.

It makes sense that increasing the difficulty of choosing allies versus enemies, along with raising the stakes of those choices by removing any consideration of potential ties or "good enough" 2nd-place finishes, would affect the play of each game as much as any scoring system. But how?



One trend that jumped out at observers during the YouTube broadcasts narrating the games was how successful France was. In eight DBNI games, France topped the board 3 times, finishing second and third twice each, and only being eliminated once. Guest commentator Andrew Goff disparagingly referred to it as the "*France meta*"--other players letting France do whatever it wanted, rather than treating that power as the threat it was.

Looking more closely, a notable contributing factor was the near-total lack of conflict between France and Italy. Because the size of the Mediterranean makes it almost for either to catch the other by surprise, these two powers often choose to stay as far away from each other

as possible in the early part of the game, letting each of them focus on their respective theaters until the latter are more resolved.

In the DBNI games, every Italian player made this choice. But given Russia's typical focus on the south, managing three smart opponents (rather than two) is an inherently greater challenge for Italy than what France faces in the north, and French players routinely exploited this advantage, finding ways to play Germany and England off each other. None of the Italian contestants ever resolved the squabbling among their southern neighbors quickly or thoroughly enough to move west with any substantial force.

But that's not all. Arguably, the most underperforming power in the DBNI was England, which in eight games had 1 near board-top, but was eliminated 5 times(!), with 2 distant also-ran finishes. And it's not as though English players simply let France run roughshod over them... but that's where the real lesson lies.

In four separate games, England had a fleet in the English Channel in 1902. Every single time that happened, it lost Norway to Russia in 1903, crippling its ability to fight France. Ironically, the sole DBNI game where England finished well (losing a tiebreaker for board top to Austria) came when it allied with France, seizing control of Scandinavia and St. Petersburg before turning its attention southward--and only gaining Belgium before the game was drawn.

The problem England faced was the same one Italian players clearly feared: attacking France left its back exposed to neighbors who couldn't resist poaching centers, given the DBNI's hyper-competitive format. Indeed, across all of the DBNI contests, long-term alliances were a rarity. In any part of the map, it was far more common to see powers flipping from one partner to another on an annual or even seasonal basis.

This may be what "true" competitive Diplomacy should be like, in the opinion of some people (and I'm probably one of them). But when all of the players are as capable as those invited to the DBNI, does it create a practical imbalance--in this case, favoring France--that ruins the desired ideal? Or is it just a momentary blip that can be adjusted to by the game's best as they learn over time to develop more patient strategies? This will be an intriguing challenge worth watching if the DBNI and other events re-use this format.

# Love is in the Airstrip One

By Jon Hills

Hello and welcome back to Airstrip One.

In the words of a certain famous donkey – No, not Eddie Murphy, the other one! – I am feeling glum.

Things in the UK are a bit grim at the moment. Industrial relations are currently at their lowest ebb in probably fifty years as each week seems to bring news of yet another sector of the economy being hit by strike action; railway workers, teachers, doctors, paramedics, civil servants and barristers. Oh, and the postal workers.

Meanwhile, soaring inflation and spiking interest rates are taking their toll on household finances. There are queues for food banks and rationing of certain products in supermarkets. The roads are either pot-holed, congested or both.

Frankly, it's all rather depressing.

In an attempt to lift my spirits, therefore, I have been thinking about something altogether more positive - my first ever game of *Diplomacy*.

As I have probably said before in this column, I was introduced to the game at a comparatively early age by my uncle. I'm not exactly sure of the date but I think it was in the summer of 1983. The UK set he had was produced by Avalon Hill and came in an impressively large and flat purple box, with plastic bullets and boats to represent units. The map, itself was identical to the US version, understandably enough, but the style quite different; less 'geographic' and with brighter and bolder colours (as it still is).

The game itself was not a classic. For a start, we only had three players; myself as Italy, my slighter older cousin as Germany and my uncle playing France. Rather than using any of the short-handed variants, we just had the one Power each and, I think, garrisoned the home centres of the remainder.

Although any game involving me and my cousin was always ferociously contested, it was really just a first play-through to get used to the rules and the mechanism for writing and adjudicating orders. In all we probably played for about 2 hours and then - in true Alan Calhamer style – had a debrief to see what had worked well and what less so. I can still remember my uncle admonishing me for not moving against Marseilles via Piedmont, which he had left wide open.

I prefer to believe that I had instinctively recognised the inherent foolishness of Italy moving against France at any point prior to the mid-game.

The real outcome, though, was that I became hooked. I enjoyed every aspect; the tactics, the writing orders in shorthand, the simultaneous adjudication and movement. I even liked the funny little pencil drawings decorating the board that seemed slightly exotic yet very familiar.

Incidentally, those cartoons still grace the current UK board – made by Gibsons Games - and still make me smile. They are similar in style to those in by the celebrated War Artist, Ronald Searle. I would be fascinated to know who actually penned them. If it was not Searle then I am sure it was someone influenced by him. If anyone at either Avalon Hill, Gibson Games or in the hobby generally knows the answer, you can reach me at the usual address: [jon.airstrip1@gmail.com](mailto:jon.airstrip1@gmail.com).

They do say that you never forget your first love and, even now, if I happen to draw Italy as a starting power, I am immediately taken back to being that 11-year-old lad, sitting around a dining room table in Southern England, being introduced to one of the greatest board games ever devised.

Happily, I experienced that exact transport of delight at the most recent gathering of the Colchester Diplomacy People – our local rag, tag and bobtail group who get together roughly every quarter for a face-to-face game. Our last meet was on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> January and the line-up this time out was Josh (England), Dan (France), Claire (Germany), Martin (Russia), Trevor, (Turkey) and Iain (Austria). Yours truly drew Italy with Lee, our organiser, acting as GM.

Now, I don't know about you but I try to approach every game afresh without being unduly influenced by what may have gone before. At this stage of our group's history - when a good portion of our regular players are really still learning the basics - having a fun experience is paramount. It's important that everyone gets a good game – if not necessarily a good dot count – and, as an "old hand", I feel that I bear some responsibility for trying to make that happen.

On this occasion, therefore, I really had only one thought uppermost in my mind, which was to try and avoid allying with Iain. This was in part because we had worked together quite closely in our last game but also

because he is another one of our more experienced players.

However, having drawn Italy and Austria respectively, that high ideal lasted for about 5 minutes!

Much is often said about Italy controlling the pace of the game but very rarely does anyone tell you how to achieve it. I'm not sure that I'm best qualified to advise but, like so much in *Diplomacy*, it starts with good communication – which can be as simple as checking in with every player on a regular basis. Italy has a key advantage in that regard as - Austria aside - it's not generally a direct threat to anyone in the early game. This gives the Italian player licence to speak to everyone without raising suspicions and with that comes the opportunity to suggest, nudge and generally interfere in all areas of the board. It doesn't have to be complicated. Just asking folks how they feel about their position or last set of moves helps to gain their trust for later in the game.

So that's what I tried to do. Iain and I set about what was essentially a Key Lepanto against Trevor, while taking great care not to make it appear that we were working together. Meanwhile, I went round the other Powers telling them how I was playing a long game, just trying to survive etc. Although I didn't quite manage to get to speak to everyone on each turn, I definitely covered more ground than usual, merrily sowing gossip, rumour and miss-direction.

And I have to say, it worked like a charm. Within the space of a few game years, we were in a decent position - largely at the expense of Trevor and Martin - while Claire, Daniel and Josh recreated the Western Front in miniature.

As is usual for our group we had started play at about Noon and it soon became clear to all that this game was moving at a faster pace than usual. The speed with which Iain and I settled on our strategy certainly played a part in that but the general consensus was that this was a sign of the group's increasing confidence and experience. Our order-writing seemed a bit quicker and negotiations a little more purposeful; having one person dealing with deadlines and adjudications definitely helped too.

Despite our good start, though, Iain and I ran into a problem; Iain had been double-booked and so had to leave early, at about two o'clock. Fortunately, Lee had been aware of this and it had been agreed that he would step into Iain's position. Iain, for his part, had been keeping Lee fully updated on our plans to ensure a smooth transfer.

Of course, it's important to always remember that any change in personnel can have an impact on a game. If it doesn't, are we even playing *Diplomacy* at all? I've taken over a good many abandoned positions in my time and on pretty much every occasion have tried to change the in-game dynamics. It's really good fun, even if it doesn't always work.

To my mind though, this situation was different since it was a planned transition and my expectation – perhaps wrongly – was that Lee would continue to play the position just as Iain had. Lee, though, had other ideas and in our first conversation after Iain had left, he indicated that he wanted to put our fairly aggressive campaign on a back-burner for a turn or two, take stock of the board and see what opportunities presented.

In fairness to Lee, this was an entirely reasonable suggestion. In my head, though, it immediately rang alarm bells: The trusted ally with whom I had been working so closely could no longer be relied on. Fearing that our alliance would soon break I felt it better to be master of my own destiny – and promptly stabbed Lee.

This sent a ripple around the board, as might be expected, and may well have prompted what happened next. Daniel (France) was, I think, getting slightly frustrated by the very effective defence that Claire (Germany) was putting up in the Low Countries. Being unwilling to move against his own ally, Josh (England), he instead decided to build a southern fleet. In the following Spring turn he also pivoted a fleet to Spain (south coast) in a decidedly anti-Italian posture.

I invited Daniel to reconsider these most provocative actions but he was unrepentant. Having initially agreed a Franco-Italian non-aggression pact, it was apparent that this treaty had run its course.

From my regular chats with all and sundry I had sensed that this change might be coming and had taken the precaution of moving a fleet to the Tyrrhenian Sea, just in case. However, one fleet was never going to be enough in the face of a determined attack. This forced my hand and in the Fall I simultaneously stabbed both Trevor and Lee (for a second time), netting me two new builds – A (Rom) & F (Nap).

Also, as the only other opposing fleet on the bottom half of the board was a lone Turkish vessel in the Black Sea, I was free to shift most of my boats afloat one space to the left.

As a result, Daniel's two fleets were suddenly facing three of my own and with armies in both Rome and Venice ready to march on Piedmont.



Again, I invited Daniel to back off. This time, he heeded my warning and hastily withdrew.

Although I feel a twinge of regret and treating Lee & Trevor so shoddily – especially Lee - I remain of the view that it was the only reasonable course of action open to me at that time. I was topping the board at this stage and so had to defend my position – especially when the aggressor was the now next-strongest Power. That it cemented my lead was an added bonus.

Meanwhile, Lee was smarting at my treachery but not in a position to do much about it on his own. Being the consummate Diplomat that he is, therefore, he declared a *fatwa* and attempted to rally the board against me.

The problem was this was never going to be an easy task. Daniel, the next strongest Power, had just accepted that he had no means of breaking into the Mediterranean. Josh had no units south of Holland. Claire, locked in mortal combat along the Maginot Line, couldn't turn without exposing her flank to Daniel & Josh, the very people that she had been battling all game. (She also had no beef with Italy. I had been giving her constant assurance that I had no hostile intent towards Germany and no Italian units had gone farther north than Vienna!) Martin's nearest unit was an army in Moscow – a full game year's march from usefulness.

Lee's only glimmer of hope was Trevor. In tandem, Turkey & Austria could take Serbia and maybe, just maybe, begin a slow fight back. We had perhaps two hours of gaming left. A deal there might just buy Lee enough time to pull something together.

Trevor also had good reason to combine against me but was himself in an extremely vulnerable position. By this point he no longer controlled any of his home supply centers, meaning that even if he could take a dot from me, he had no immediate means of realising the benefit.

Again, I took the only logical option available: I offered to support Trevor against Lee in Bulgaria, in exchange for assuring his survival. Acknowledging the weakness of his position, Trevor accepted the invitation to become my puppet and with that final outcome was sealed. We played another turn or two but with no realistic prospect of the result changing in the time left available, we all agreed to call the game at that point and a good hour or two earlier than normal.

I must admit to being rather pleased with the result. Rather than crowing, that's an honest reflection on a game in which I did not make many silly mistakes, unlike in our previous matches. I am also trying to enjoy the moment as my fellow players have made clear that they are not going to allow it to happen again for a very long time.

I *think* they're joking but only time will tell.

And that really is one of the strengths of our little group. There is no real rancour over stabs or thwarted plans – even though there might be much huffing and puffing at the time. What goes on the board stays on the board – although admittedly the board does have a long memory. We are primarily playing for fun, which is how it should be.

Another is having a core of reliable players who are committed to turning out. Happily, that core is supplemented by a similar number of others, either interested newbies or those who can't commit to playing regularly. With a small amount of calendar juggling this gives us a decent chance of getting seven players together and with a slightly different line-up each time. We are in that sweet spot of having both a sense of continuity and an element of variety, which is quite a feat.

The question is, possibly, where do we go from here? Growth is good and we are almost at the point of having the numbers to run to a second board – if we cast our net slightly wider, we could certainly achieve it. However, that's not our main motivation and in the process, we would risk losing what makes our group work. If we were constantly pushing to get more new people in, we would lose the sense of belonging - which I certainly recognise and value and I hop is shared by the others.

As a result, it feels like we're happy with any growth being slow and organic rather than frantic or explosive. Having perhaps one new player join us every quarter is plenty. It's more important that when they join, they feel welcome, get support as they learn the rules and enjoy a good game. That way, they'll want to play again, and again and again.

In a funny way, it's rather like playing *Diplomacy*. When we simply chase dots, go for growth and ignore our in-game relationships we often struggle to achieve our goals.

Instead, if we take our time and build strong relationships that support and align with our long term aims, success is far more likely.

In the same way, when trying to build a club we also have to pay attention to our out-of-game relationships as these really are key to making it sustainable. And that, in a very roundabout way, brings me to the title of this letter.

Don't worry. We're not running some hippy (or should that be *Dippy*?) commune full of peace, free love and cigarettes of dubious origin or content.



Instead, I am happy to report that, in February, Claire & Martin got married!

For avoidance of doubt, this was to each other. It would have been a bit random even for us if they had both married other people.

Although not a relationship born out of *Diplomacy* – which I'm assured do exist – it is one that has survived years of shared play across a huge variety of other board games, and I'm sure is all the stronger for it.

I hope you'll join me in wishing them both many happy years together – regardless of who supports whom (or not) into Belgium.

Also in February – there must have been something in the water – Trevor announced his engagement to his fiancé, Kayleigh.

Again, we wish them both every happiness for the future; may their convoys never be disrupted.

I gather that Kayleigh is also hoping to make her *Diplomacy* debut at our next meet up in April. Sadly, I will be on holiday so shall be disappointed to miss it but I'm confident that she'll be in capable hands.

What I do know is that whoever plays – and there's a rumour that this could include a visiting *Diplomacy* 'A-lister' – they are certain to have a good time.

Happy Stabbing!

***[[If anyone doesn't believe there ARE Diplomacy love stories, I can point to page 74 of Diplomacy World #100 for a perfect example. And I doubt it's the only one:***

***<https://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw100.pdf> ]]***

## Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



**Mark Nelson** – Perhaps Russ Dennis will be interested in my new subzine to *Eternal Sunshine*? In each issue I aim to print the supply center charts for all the games that started in a given year.

***[[For those who would like to see, you can find Mark's first issue of That Wat the Year Which Was in Eternal Sunshine #166. That issue covers 1962. You can find it (and every issue of ES) here:***  
***<http://whiningkentpigs.com/DW/kent/> ]]***

Following up from on your comments on the various "Diplomacy Census" projects that have been produced over the years... I believe that the very first "Diplomacy Census" was written by John Boardman and appeared in *Graustark* 12 (November 6 1963). There are twenty-two names on this list.

It occurs to me to ask, are there as many as twenty-two people active in North American diplomacy fanzines today? When will the number decrease through 22? How many North American diplomacy fanzines are running? (Is it four?).

***[[In a sense, counting the players in zines would be a bit unfair, as there was much more crossover back then between FtF and postal hobbies. These days postal/zine participation is much different, AND with pdf's there is no need to be a paying subscriber, and there are basically no "trades" any longer. Eternal Sunshine has 55 people on its email list, so that alone would count as 55 individuals. As for zines, do we count Everything since it is a service zine? Diplomacy World? Zines like SOB or Back-of-the-Envelope that don't run Diplomacy but are hobby-connected? The Briefing? The Diplomatic Pouch? Or do you scale it back and only count Northern Flame, Cheesecake, and Eternal Sunshine?]]***



# Dipcon at Dixiecon - 52nd North American Diplomacy Championship

*The 37th Annual Dixiecon –Chapel Hill NC– May 26-28, 2023*

**Tournament Director:** David Hood **Assistant TD:** Michael Lowrey

## Overview

Dixiecon is the longest-running Diplomacy tournament location in the world. Just like in 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2002, Dixiecon will serve as host location for the 2023 Dipcon, sponsored by the North American Diplomacy Federation.

## This Year's Details

1. One round each on Friday, Saturday, Sunday – best two scores count, using Dixiecon scoring
2. Unlimited rounds except for Sunday round which has random end time 7 to 9 hours from the start
3. BBQ Dinner on Saturday afternoon
4. Diplomacy variant event (Ancient Med) Saturday night after BBQ
5. Open Gaming, Iron Man Event for non-Dip gaming, and Social Activities start Thursday night
6. \$50 registration, \$50/night double or \$80/night single to stay in dorm, hotel options also available
7. Full tournament coverage on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network YouTube and Twitch channels

**For More Information:** Email [davidhood@dixiecon.com](mailto:davidhood@dixiecon.com) or visit [www.dixiecon.com](http://www.dixiecon.com)



## Dipcon News from Dixie #2

### *52nd North American Diplomacy Championship*

### *The 37th Annual Dixiecon –Chapel Hill NC– May 26-28, 2023*

#### Newsletter #2 - March 31, 2023

1. Roughly two months before the Con, registration and commitments to register are really beginning to pick up. We have four boards fully registered already, with another two boards or so of Dip players saying they're in but not yet registered. Sign up today!
2. Some have asked about airport runs - we provide complimentary rides to and from the Raleigh Durham airport, just give us your flight information.
3. If you want to help make sure all new attendees are integrated fully into the informal social activities during Dixiecon, please contact David Hood about becoming a Dixiecon Ambassador.
4. The Diplomacy tournament starts Friday night at 6 - we will be playing games for the Iron Man event, as well as casual open gaming, throughout the day on Friday. Thursday arrivals can also game at will, on site.
5. If you are staying in the dorm, you give David Hood that info when registering, and pay him directly. If you book hotels, do that directly with them.
6. For purposes of travel on Sunday afternoon, remember that the last round starts at 8:30am and ends sometime between 3:30 and 5:30 pm, with awards shortly thereafter.
7. If you are willing to sandbox your Diplomacy games on Backstabbr while playing, to facilitate coverage on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network, notify David Hood when you register - it's \$5 off the registration fee!

**For More Information:** Email [davidhood@dixiecon.com](mailto:davidhood@dixiecon.com) or visit [www.dixiecon.com](http://www.dixiecon.com)





# PBM Unearthed

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# God Save The Zine

A new Diplomacy zine from Stephen Agar for anyone who wants to live life at a slower pace or who wants to complement their online Diplomacy activity with the occasional dip into the UK Diplomacy Archives.

## So, what's on offer?

A **free** monthly zine distributed as a PDF and/or as an old-fashioned A5 paper booklet (which is how zines should be) for as little as £1 a month to cover the postage.

## Each issue will include:

- A roundup of other related hobby news / reviews
- Letter column
- A variant – new or old and rare out of the Variant Bank.
- A Diplomacy article – new or something from the Archive
- Game reports (assuming I can get any games started), including an all-reader game and a Intimate Diplomacy Tournament.
- Not Just Diplomacy - Other games as well! (if anyone steps forward to run them).

Diplomacy games will be played by email and will be adjudicated by me,

not some website somewhere. That means we can look at playing some unusual variants that might not otherwise be available to play. I was thinking of either a move every month or a move every two weeks, subject to demand.

## Waiting Lists

**Regular Diplomacy** (7 wanted)

**Intimate Diplomacy** Tournament (8 wanted)

**A Diplomacy Variant or Two** – Expanded regular board, historical or silly – state your preference

If you want to receive the first issue of **God Save The Zine**, then email me at [Pigmy1901@gmail.com](mailto:Pigmy1901@gmail.com).

**FIRST ISSUE DUE END OF JANUARY 2023**