

# Diplomacy World #163



**Fall 2023 Issue**

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

# Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Fall 2023 issue. If you're reading this, that means you have survived the long, hot summer. In general, fall is my favorite time of year. That's even true here in Texas where we unofficially only have two seasons: "summer" and "not summer." In Diplomacy, fall is the season where you sneak into three of your ally's supply centers, leading to multiple removals and the collapse of their defensive position. Or....it can be. I won't do that to **you** if we're allied in a game. You can trust me.

I generally post reminders on Facebook and Discord as each **Diplomacy World** deadline approaches, urging people to send in articles and letters and flyers. Along with that I often mention the vacant staff positions, on the off chance someone has an interest in filling one of them. Someone replied to one of my Facebook messages asking about the staff positions, and added the comment "I thought that as Lead Editor you do everything."

My reply was "I do everything myself for **Diplomacy World**...except everything that matters." By that I mean: Diplomacy World is only as good as you all make it. All of you who submit articles. All of you who write letters. All of you who read it, talk about it, promote it, mention it, refer to it. All of you who suggest things. All of you who send in flyers, reports, illustrations, or anything else. Let's face it, in the end my primary job is one of assembling material, making some corrections, keeping track of stuff. But it is all of YOU who do the heavy lifting. And for that, I thank you. If I truly did everything on my own, this would be one very small, insignificant, and sad publication.

This just in from John Boardman's daughter Dee:

*Shameless plug for help, if you have a resource to reach folk, could you maybe throw a "shout-out" for my dad relating to the below? He has been nominated for an Honorary PhD from Florida State University, and hopefully even better, an apology for his expulsion in 1957.*

[https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/326634?bclid=IwAR1cvpyjvw4CKafYcBUf4if2iZ9PnglMU5YnWbaZpCf99M0VEUB\\_6VgnLxg&fbclid=IwAR1Q6NEifsK5IZZnafg2a5DctFdbA1ecRGdJyOqfr5jyJX6bLK4CkPpw1o](https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/326634?bclid=IwAR1cvpyjvw4CKafYcBUf4if2iZ9PnglMU5YnWbaZpCf99M0VEUB_6VgnLxg&fbclid=IwAR1Q6NEifsK5IZZnafg2a5DctFdbA1ecRGdJyOqfr5jyJX6bLK4CkPpw1o)

*By Michael Underwood- It is now official!! John Melton Boardman, 91-year-old former Professor of Physics at Brooklyn College, collaborator with former research*

*assistant to Albert Einstein, Peter Bergmann, publisher of science fiction fanzines Knowable, Graustark and Dagon, prolific writer and occasional subject of "filksongs" has been nominated for an honorary doctorate from Florida State University. Dr. Boardman began his doctoral studies at Florida State where he was a friend and colleague of the late Florida State Physics Professor Hans Plendl. In 1957, however, he was expelled from FSU due to his involvement with the Inter-Civic Council and more specifically for inviting three black Florida A&M exchange students to a Christmas party on FSU campus, which violated a University regulation prohibiting multiracial social events. See Photograph: "Civil rights activists - Tallahassee, Florida" (195?) Image #RC12794 in series: "Reference collection", at Florida Memory, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Division of Library and Information Services, Florida Department of State.*

[https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/326634?bclid=IwAR1cvpyjvw4CKafYcBUf4if2iZ9PnglMU5YnWbaZpCf99M0VEUB\\_6VgnLxg](https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/326634?bclid=IwAR1cvpyjvw4CKafYcBUf4if2iZ9PnglMU5YnWbaZpCf99M0VEUB_6VgnLxg)

*Please send letters and emails of support of Dr. Boardman's nomination to:*

*Professor of Physics Mark Riley  
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314 Westcott Building, Mail Code 1410  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306  
850-644-3501  
[mriley@physics.fsu.edu](mailto:mriley@physics.fsu.edu)*

I also want to mention that the latest World Diplomacy Championship (a.k.a. World DipCon) was held in Bangkok, Thailand last weekend. This was the first time a WDC has been held in Asia and it was an unqualified success. On the top board, Jamal Blakkarly won the tie breaker, seeing his 14-center Austria narrowly best Brandon Fogel's 14-center England. You can watch the Diplomacy Broadcast Network coverage of the tournament on YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/bdzjpzrx>

***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is January 1, 2024.***

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 fall, and happy stabbing!



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

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# Steve Doubleday (1951 – 2023)

by Brian Creese and Pete Birks (with Stephen Agar)



## **Brian Creese**

It was all Steve's fault.

For me, Steve Doubleday was firstly a librarian and secondly a cricketer. And then there was this 'hobby' thing he talked about...

Steve was a librarian when Ken Bain and other graduates joined the Surrey Libraries graduate training scheme in 1974 (or thereabouts). Although slightly further up the ladder Steve quickly became a close friend of the group and part of our collective friendship group. When Phil Jones and Ken Bain started the Library cricket team, Steve was an original member. At some point a group moved into a shared house in Guildford and I was invited round for an evening to play this strange game, Diplomacy. Other strange people were there including Richard and Claire Walkerdine and Richard Bairstow and perhaps others. Shortly after this Steve started **Gallimaufry** and.... Well, Ken and I were sucked in and NMR! Was born.

Steve was a one-off on many levels. He never quite saw the world as others did. Needing to move house while learning to drive, he booked an extended lesson so he

could combine a driving lesson with moving. Avuncular, sensitive yet argumentative, Steve was a constant presence for many years until time pulled us all apart. The libraries group broke up, Steve's engagement with the hobby declined, children arrived for Ken and I and contact became sporadic, and recently really down to Christmas cards and the like.

In hobby terms Steve was a generation ahead of us, a great friend of Walkerdine and Richard Sharp. He suffered poor health - possibly combined with some hypochondria as his range of illnesses over the years was bizarre and included gout at one point. But he was always a gentle soul, always a good friend and his slightly weird take on the world made you look at things afresh.

## **Pete Birks**

I have mentioned my first meeting with Steve Doubleday, a bizarre moment when we both turned up at the wrong house looking for 27 Elm Close - Richard Sharp's home at the time. Not an awfully long time after this I met Steve when we were both en route to a con -- somewhere south-west of London as I recall it being on a train out of Waterloo. Although Steve was still young

and I was younger, Steve had got married. I have no idea how long this lasted, but it was over before he started **Gallimaufry** in 1976.

As the years went by, Steve supplied some classic moments in con history, one of them including our arrival at a pub in Carlisle at opening time (about 5pm) after a long drive up from London and a long drive still to go to get to Helensburgh, north-north-west of Glasgow. This would have been October 1974. Steve asked the barman if they had any food, and our host pointed desultorily to a glass cabinet containing a few pies and what-nots. Steve promptly bought all of them.

After Richard Sharp's father died, Richard inherited not-quite-enough money to achieve his ambition of moving from new Amersham (by the train station) to old Amersham. Steve Doubleday stepped in to fill the finances gap and lived in the "granny annexe".

Richard and Steve for many years shared an office, with both of them producing zines. I fear that the tobacco smoke accumulation must have been frightening. A while later Steve, for reasons best known to himself, decided, as he was heading towards his 40th year, to marry a teenager.

In a lifetime of bizarre decisions, Steve kept managing to trump himself. Although it lasted a few years, it did not turn out for the best, and I think that emotionally Steve was somewhat damaged by this.

As Brian has mentioned, Steve's health was never exactly great -- a sportsman he was not. One was also never quite sure what was real and what was hypochondria. He drifted away from many of his hobby friends -- perhaps he was trying to forget much of his past, perhaps his lack of mobility and restricted financial circumstances embarrassed him a bit; I don't know for sure.

I think I last saw him at Richard Sharp's funeral in Spring 2003. I have a couple of photos of him one the group picture of Eurocon II in 1978, and one of him at a party/con I gave at Handforth Road that was attended by many of the great and good. But I eventually found the image that I think summed him up perfectly. it was at Eurocon II and it was a photo of him lying on a sunbed. He lifts his head to look at the camera and gives a half-wave, as if to acknowledge that he is aware of the photographer's presence, but that he can't be arsed to do anything about it.

That for me, was the wonderful Steve Doubleday, in a nutshell.

#### **Stephen Agar adds:**

Steve Doubleday produced **Gallimaufry** from 1976 to 1979 (issues 1-31) and again from 1984 - 1993 all the way up to issue 143. He had a keen interest in variants and designed quite a few: over the years including Intimate Diplomacy (with Adrien Baird), Beleriand, Crown of Thorns (a Kingmaker variant), Dark Tower, The Sundered Worlds, Time Lords (and 28 others in the Variant Bank catalogue).

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## **Tournament Victors All-in-One - 2023 Edition**

**By David Hood**

About a year ago, I published a list here in Diplomacy World of all the tournament winners starting in the Virtual Era (so 2020 forward) so that folk could see at a glance who all had been winning what in the last few years. My plan is to make this an annual tradition, just adding onto the list from the previous year. Yes, these things can be looked up on the World Diplomacy Database, at least to some extent, but I thought it might be helpful to keep this running total for the DW readership.

Now, as I mentioned in that past article, another great resource you can use to see who's who in tournament diplomacy is to visit our Diplomacy Broadcast Network website. Brandon Fogel and the rest of the DBN team has compiled a wonderful online resource chock full of tournament information, as a by-product of tabulating the current scores in the race for DBN Invitational tournament bids for each season. That race for the

2023 season to qualify for the Feb 2024 DBNI is really heating up, so check out the site at <https://diplobn.com/invitational/>. I should point out that not all events in the world qualify for DBNI inclusion. Also, some organizers really do not want to integrate their players into the wider hobby - a position we respect even if we'd prefer a different reality.

So, here are some recent tournament results, in the same random order as the list I published last year, with location of FTF event or location of virtual tournament organizers. I have left off a few events which either were not classic Dip events, which had single digit participation, or which have not run since 2020. I have also added a few recent winners of extended deadline online tournaments just for completeness. If I missed any, I apologize ahead of time. Note that a few events

have not held their 2023 events at the time of this writing (such as the EDC scheduled for Paris in late November.)

Cascadia - British Columbia/Canada

2023 Riaz Virani (FTF)  
2022 Siobhan Nolen (FTF event in July)  
2022 Tommy Anderson (Virtual event in January)  
2021 Ed Sullivan (Virtual)  
2022 Siobhan Nolen (FTF)

Poppycon - Victoria/Australia

2022 Peter McNamara (FTF)  
2021 Jamal Blakkarly (FTF)  
2020 Peter McNamara (FTF)

Euro Dipcon - Rotating/Europe

2022 Christophe Borgeat (FTF)  
2021 Alex Lebedev (FTF)

Bangkok Diplomacy Open - FTF/Thailand

2023 Jamal Blakkarly (also World Dipcon)  
2022 Sascha Heylmann

Boston Massacre - Massachusetts/USA

2022 Robert Schuppe (FTF)  
2021 Farren Janes (Virtual)  
2020 Tanya Gill (Virtual)

Carnage - Vermont/USA

2022 Dan Lester (FTF, also was World Dipcon)  
2021 Adam Silverman (FTF event in November, also Dipcon)  
2021 Katie Gray (Virtual event in May)  
2020 Bill Hackenbracht (Virtual)

Dixiecon - North Carolina/USA

2023 Mikalis Kamaritis (FTF, also Dipcon)  
2022 Brandon Fogel (FTF)  
2021 Karthik Konath (Virtual)  
2020 Christian Kline (Virtual)

Liberty Cup - Pennsylvania/USA

2020 Tommy Anderson (Virtual)

Regatta - Denver/USA

2023 Ed Sullivan (FTF)

WeaselMoot - Illinois/USA

2022 Seren Kwok (FTF)  
2021 Russ Dennis (Virtual)  
2020 John Anderson (Virtual)

Whipping - California/USA

2023 Matthew Crill (FTF)  
2022 Tanya Gill (FTF, also Dipcon)  
2021 Jason Mastbaum (Virtual)

GenCon - Indiana/USA (FTF)

2023 Dan McNeill  
2022 Erick Zahn

Origins - Ohio/USA (FTF)

2023 Dan McNeill  
2022 Geoff Mize

World Boardgaming Championships (FTF)

2023 Robert Zahn  
2022 Anton Wilsbach

Spirecon - Chesterfield/UK

2022 Bradley Grace (FTF)

French Championship - Paris/France

2022 Cyrille Sevin  
2021 Brieuc Thibault (FTF event in November)  
2021 Cyrille Sevin (Virtual event in March)

Swiss Open (FTF)

2023 Davide Cleopadre

Italian NDC (FTF)

2023 Thomas Haver  
2022 Luca Pazzaglia

Olympus Main Event - Online/Extended Deadline

2023 Bradley Grace

Nexus Main Event - Online/Extended Deadline

Season 8 Koke Animal  
Season 7 Ed Sullivan  
Season 6 Greg Matthews

vWDC Summer Classic - Virtual

2023 Seren Kwok  
2022 Katie Gray  
2021 Seren Kwok

Virtual Diplomacy Championship (VDC)

2022 Riaz Virani  
2021 Nicolas Sahuguet  
2020 Morgante Pell

Online Diplomacy Championship (ODC)

2023 Red Candle (PlayDiplomacy)



# Diplomacy.ñol – A Spanish-Language Diplomacy Community

By Renato E. Alegre

I'm Renato Alegre, writing from Peru, and I've been immersed in Diplomacy since 2012. I discovered this strategic masterpiece during my undergraduate studies in the United States, thanks to some brilliant Ph.D. friends. From the moment I played, I was hooked.

Through the years, engaging in numerous online matches and English-speaking leagues due to their larger player base, I couldn't help but wonder what was I getting out of these communities and what impact they brought on me, and me on them.

We find ourselves in an era where logical discourse often takes a backseat. In my view, Diplomacy serves as the antidote to this trend. It imparts lessons that are difficult to find elsewhere, and I derive immense satisfaction from witnessing my players continuously evolve and grow.

In 2021, I took a bold step and founded the "Diplomacy.ñol" community—a sanctuary for Spanish-speaking Diplomacy enthusiasts. I established a WhatsApp Community for observing games and player recruitment.

Expanding our reach has been an ongoing quest. Initially, it was just close friends who joined, but soon after, I also started promoting our league within the two board game communities to which I belonged. I've also taken to the streets and board game events, distributing printed materials and spreading the word. We've started an Instagram account for chronicling our game stories through posts, with plans for YouTube and TikTok videos. These efforts aim to welcome new members into our fold.

Today, our community boasts 30 members, but we want more. We aim to rival the English-speaking leagues, numbering in the hundreds or even thousands, expanding our reach to the entire Spanish-speaking world.

I've also worked diligently to refine our documentation process, which includes a robust code of conduct, a unique scoring system that promotes participation rather than solo victories, player rankings, and a comprehensive game timeline for everyone to access. My commitment is to keep the community engaged and seek like-minded individuals to expand this hobby.

Establishing and nurturing this community has been challenging, and will continue to be so, but finding worthy rivals amplifies the fun and sense of

achievement. Diplomacy, unlike many games, extends beyond mere friendships. It serves as a tool for honing professional skills and fostering self-reflection. The game unveils true personalities, peeling away the masks we wear in everyday life.

As someone who enjoys being a game master, I get to observe authentic human interactions without any facade. This provides me with valuable insights into the motivations and ego of each player. I'm a big believer that our biggest adversary is not other players, but our own inflated egos. This is something that I try to instill in everyone who joins the hobby.

To achieve our vision and reach new heights, we need everyone's help in growing our community. Our mission is to forge a legacy of Diplomacy that transcends borders and languages.

For more information and to become part of our vibrant community, connect with us on the following platforms:

WhatsApp:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/GGKH3V5JCznH1xCKobVFCU>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/diplomacy.nol>

Documentation @ Notion:

<https://diplomacy-nol.notion.site/Diplomacy-ol-79c223220ee8416b8cc74bf64526de38?pvs=4>

Discord:

<https://discord.gg/yx6QaGJGrM>



# World Boardgame Championships Diplomacy Tournament

By Thomas Haver

*Note: Pictures of the event can be found at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/oTXELWuwqATLu7Z6>*

Diplomacy returned to WBC this year new & improved. Since last year's tournament, Renegade Games Studios announced they had licensed Diplomacy from Hasbro (along with Acquire, Robo Rally, Axis & Allies, and Squad Leader). They intended to bring Diplomacy to print in 2023, the first such printing since the 2008 edition with cardboard chits. I've been a volunteer for years with Hasbro, running Diplomacy, Acquire, and other Avalon Hill games at conventions. It was through the Avalon Hill team at Hasbro that I was brought into contact with Renegade Games. Thus began my involvement in the new edition of Diplomacy.



Knowing that a new edition of Diplomacy was targeted for July 2023, I worked to upgrade the entire experience of the Diplomacy tournament. I had a giant 12' wide map produced with large pieces pushed by plotter rods. I had multiple wargaming mats with different maps produced. I had several large 6' fabric maps produced of the new game board. To take it a step further, I even made a 4'x4' Deluxe Diplomacy (1992) map entirely out of LEGO. I spared no expense for my players this year. In addition to the maps, they also had custom color-coded clipboards produced and color-coded pens. They could use power stickers or pins to indicate who they were playing. And the swag – did we ever lean into the swag. Players had game prizes to win, stickers, patches, fridge magnets, keychains, pens, shirts, mugs, challenge coins, and the *BEST* Best Country awards in the Diplomacy hobby.

Given this was an auspicious year for Diplomacy, we were joined by several special guests. Three players

flew all the way from Italy to play at WBC for the first time. They were joined by Dan McNeill, two-time US champion, who was also making his first appearance at WBC. I made sure the Italians got a solid American meal at Primanti Brothers on our way to the venue. Nothing like a giant sandwich covered in fries to prep you for Round One of the Diplomacy tournament!

Round One Board One was on the giant map. Players were each given a WW1-era officer hat to wear for the occasion. How many times in a person's life will they get an opportunity to push armies across a giant map with plotter rods? The game started off with an early England-France-Germany (EFG) alliance or Western Triple. They unified movement caused the Eastern Powers to react in kind. As is so often the case with Western Triples, Turkey is a big beneficiary, being the farthest from the action and with so many available supply centers to pick up. The board top belonged to Paul Konka's England, as he moved on his erstwhile allies Germany and France late in the game to grow to 13-centers by game's end. Turkey, helmed by past champion Ed Prem, finished second with 7-centers.

Round One Board Two was on the 6' fabric map. In the game, Mattero Anfossi of Italy piloted Austria and Dan McNeill of Florida led Turkey. They formed an inseparable pair from the game start that rolled into Russia and Italy. The disorganization from the powers in the West meant we saw Austrian armies in Naples, Munich, and Berlin to go with Turkish fleets in the Ionian. It was through this chaos though that England prevailed as the board top. With Germany and France locked in struggle, England gobbled up enough centers to squeeze out a board top with 9-centers, one ahead of Turkey at 8-centers and two ahead of Austria at 7-centers. Sometimes the strongest alliance wins the day, other times the most opportunistic player wins the day. Remember that when we get to the final board of the tournament!

Round One Board Three was played on the Deluxe Diplomacy LEGO map. Right out of the gate, Turkey was jumped by Austria-Italy (AI) and Russia & Turkey bounced in Rumania. Jack Wilsbach's Austria picked up easy gains in Russia and Turkey by coordinating with Nic Benedict in Italy. Meanwhile, Ric Manns in France, had multiple back-and-forth offensives with England and Germany. Turkey was eliminated in 1904 and Russia held on strong with 4-centers despite the attack. At game's end, it was Jack Wilsbach with 8-centers board topping, and Nic Benedict in second place with 7-



centers. Ric Mann's came in third with 6-centers in a close game.

Round One Board Four was played on the custom wargaming mat with 3D printed pieces. Similar to Board Three, the players first started by jumping Turkey. Only this time, Turkey had also committed to attacking Russia. In a wonderful frenzy in the east, Turkey controlled Sevastopol at the same time an Italian army was in Ankara. Meanwhile in the West, Harald Henning's Germany started strong with 6-centers in 1901 and continued his climb via Diplomacy and superior tactics. Aided by Evan Walter's France, together they made a successful attack on England, landing a French army in Liverpool. Eventually the dust settled in the East with Austria pushing to 10-centers next to an eliminated Turkey and Russia. In the West, it was Harald Henning's 11-centers as Germany that won the day.

The next round continued the following morning. As has become tradition, David Rynkowski brought doughnuts for the players. Many thanks to David for his support of the event year after year.



Round Two Board One was played on a *different* giant 12' map, this one a custom piece by UX designer John Fairley. We had early alliances form on this board, with

France and Germany going after Matteo Anfossi's England. Perhaps the guest rights for the Italians were limited to one game. In the East, it was an Italy-Russia-Turkey (IRT) triple on Austria. Ever Austrian players worst nightmare is getting tripled out of the gate, and that's what happened here. It ended in a 1903 elimination for Austria and a 1904 elimination for England. Alliances aren't forever in Diplomacy. They can shift as quickly as the mountain breeze at Seven Springs Mountain Resort. So as those two players were being eliminated, it was Jeff Hayman's France that turned on Geoff Mize's Germany and Brady Detwiler's Italy that turned on Francesco Cleopadre's Turkey. The resulting push by the stronger powers meant that Jeff Hayman board topped with 13-centers, followed by Italy with 9-centers and Russia with 8-centers. Two Italian tourists on this board, but just one center to show between them. The tournament was on for real.

Round Two Board Two featured a *different* 6' fabric map. I have so many maps, my goal was to rotate them every round so someone playing all three rounds would have a different experience every game. Just like the giant map, Austria was jumped from the gate by all three neighbors. Nothing to do but smile and take the consolation prize as first eliminated. The game was a masterclass by Davide Cleopadre as Turkey (one of the Italian tourists) and Dan McNeill as Germany. After Austria was eliminated, Turkey and Germany coordinated on Russia, which also led to an elimination. As Russia was knocked down, Turkey took the opportunity to push into Italy while Germany engineered a dual stab of France & England. There were so many nearby centers it was almost criminal not to stab and go for broke. Both moves paid off, as Germany topped with 14-centers and Turkey was second with 12-centers.

In between the second and third round a large group of players had dinner together at the resort. These sort of get-togethers around the "action" are typical at Diplomacy gatherings. It gives a chance for players to connect off the board, learn about their fellow competitors, and rehash what happened in the earlier rounds. I also placed an order for pizza before the evening round, so we could have our annual pizza party for the final.

The final round of the event is always a gladiator's arena as players vie for the championship and other awards. The tournament is determined by best two rounds out of three, so those in the "clubhouse" were looking to maintain their position and those with a bad finish were looking for something big to propel them to glory. This year I created an added incentive to join the ranks of champions: a large wooden annual plaque with the Diplomacy map laser-etched on one side.

Round Three Board One was played on an all-wooden laser-etched board. The players used the pieces from the new release to play. In the game, Dan McNeill's England started strong with a two build in Norway and Belgium, while Russia was locked out of builds completely. France and Germany deadlocked in the Rhine, while Jeff Hayman's Austria made a play for the championship. In his way was Matteo Anfossi in Turkey, familiar with the European style game being played in round three. Matteo could not win the event himself without a solo, but he knew how to hold the line. This allowed Dan's England to capture Scandinavia and eventually multiple Germany dots. France and Italy were deadlocked in the western med. Without any viable options for Austria to win, Jeff Hayman's Austria took the draw and a solid finish. The result, a board top at 10-centers for England, would put Dan McNeill in the lead for the tournament.

Round Three Board Two was played on a 6' fabric map. The game was unique in that a Turkey army made its way to Silesia. In the scrum of units at the center of the board, it was Ed Prem's Russia that showed the most promise. With Germany and France unwilling to attack each other in an alliance, the board reached a deadlocked state with all seven Powers still alive. It was in this deadlocked state that a draw vote passed, with Russia topping at 7-centers, followed by France with 6-centers and Turkey with 6-centers. The quickest game of the tournament and most evenly matched.

Round Three Board Three was played on the giant map. This board was reserved for all the first-timers joining for the final round as well as some experienced players to help guide them. It's always great to see our veteran players help new players enter the game. Special thanks go to Kevin Youells and John Stevens for playing on this board. They were so generous with their time they also donated a number of their centers. It was Jay Schoenen's France that stood out amongst the pack, driving up to 8-centers at England's expense. Brian Scilzo's Russia also had some solid play, taking Sweden and Norway. Austria and Turkey ganged up on Italy with France's help from the West. The end-state was Jay Schoene with a board top as France, followed by Russia with 7-centers. Two other new players, Elizabeth Shea (Austria) and Alex Nesenjuk (Germany), tied for third. It was a great board to witness as players were seeing the finer strategic points unfold as the game went on.

Round Three Board Four ended up being the deciding board of the tournament. With all other boards finished, this one was still going. It had the most eliminations of

any board in the tournament as well. Right from the start, Austria was attacked on all sides and received no builds. It was a quick elimination for Austria, saving him the terror that was to follow. England was also attacked from the start, but England is not so easily torn apart. That meant England lived one more year than Austria. The barreling attack of Russia and Italy forced Turkey back quickly and eventually into elimination. Suddenly there were only four powers left: France, Germany, Italy, and Russia. A draw offer was initially made but then turned down, as one player was hoping to press for a solo. The players continued. Russia and Italy pushed their center counts higher and high, eventually eliminating Germany in the process. Sometimes in Diplomacy a player leads a Power to a strong result. The alliances fall just right in your favor and you roll the board. Along the way, it's easy to get lost in what will happen on the board if you press too far too soon. This was one of those situations. In the final, fateful year, Robert Zahn's Italy pushed from 14 centers to 18 centers, taking two off France and two off Russia to get the solo. All the points on the board went to the victor, and the tournament along with it. For the third time in 10 years, a solo has won the day at the WBC Diplomacy Tournament.

#### WBC Diplomacy Tournament Results

Total: 36 players, 10 boards

1st Robert Zahn

2nd Dan McNeill

3rd Jeff Hayman

4th Edward Prem

5th Jack Wilsbach

6th Harald Henning

7th Paul Konka

Best Austria - Jack Wilsbach

Best England - Paul Konka

Best France - Jeff Hayman

Best Germany - Dan McNeill

Best Italy - Robert Zahn

Best Russia - Ed Prem

Best Turkey - Davide Cleopadre

Two other regulars were recognized at WBC. One is Kevin Youells, who has helped run the PBEM Diplomacy event and been a constant supporter of the event to WBC board members. He received a wargaming mat & 3D printed pieces. The other is Dave Rynkowski, whose contributions every year were highlighted in the History of WBC posts. This year he again volunteered to sit out a round -- the very round he provided breakfast to the players! Always a gentleman.

# The World Cup of Diplomacy

By Mal Arky

It's been a while since there's been an international team competition. Perhaps there's a good reason for that but, well, I'm optimistic that this is something that we could well get moving.

I'm going to launch the World Cup of Diplomacy in 2024. I'm expecting it to take two years to complete, with Qualifying rounds throughout 2024 and the Finals in 2025.

In his article in [The Briefing 8 September 2023](#), new World Champion Jamal Blakkarly stated that he felt the Australian hobby could well be the strongest. Well, this is your chance to prove him wrong... or right?

## Organization

The whole tournament will take a league format. I guess this makes it a league rather than a tournament but, well, for this kind of Diplomacy arena event, 'tournament' just *sounds* better. The WCoD will be hosted by [Playdiplomacy](#).

There will be two stages. Throughout 2024 will be the Qualifying stage, which I'm planning to last 10 rounds, January to October. Players can register throughout Qualifying, with registration closing when the last round closes (when the final game has started).

2025 will feature the Finals, which will have seven rounds or four games, and feature the seven highest scoring teams from Qualifying. This will be based on the top seven individual scores for each team at the end of Qualifying; if a team has less than seven representatives, the total of these players will be used. The Finals will start in January 2025 (or February, if Qualifying games overrun), with the final round of games starting in July (or August).

In Qualifying, players can usually play in one game per round. However, if I have a game forming at the end of the round, I'll invite any players already eliminated to join, if that's possible (this might include anyone likely to be eliminated if necessary).

In Qualifying, players will be assigned to powers randomly. In the Finals, teams will be assigned to powers so that, throughout the finals, they play the same power an equal number of times - with 28 games in total, that's four times for each power.

Games will end when:

- a solo is achieved, or
- when a DIAS draw is agreed, or

- when the game reaches the Winter 1912 phase, ending in a DIAS draw.

## Teams

As you'd expect, probably, the teams will be based on countries (or nation-states, if you want to be pedantic). There'll be only one team from each country, so no splitting of the USA into regions, for instance.

Having said that, the UK *could* be split into England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, if this is viable. These nations, while not separate states, are often recognized independently in sporting competitions. Also, with players from Northern Ireland, who could represent the UK or Northern Ireland, there will be the opportunity to represent an all-Ireland team if that's their choice.

There are no limits to the number of players who can represent a team. However, to be viable in the Finals, a team should have a minimum of four players, allowing one player in each game. It could be difficult to play in more than one game in a round!

If a team, then, has less than four players, it may be amalgamated with another team from a common region. For instance, given that the Netherlands hobby is strong, I'd hope we could get a Netherlands team; however, it may be that a Low Countries team or a Benelux team could be formed.

Each team in the finals will have a Captain, nominated - selected or elected - by each team. The Captain's role is to select players to play in each game in each round in the Finals.

Qualifying games may feature more than one player from a team. To try to prevent team-play in Qualifying, as Qualifying games are about individuals, games will therefore be anonymous and anonymity will be strictly enforced. In the Finals, when team-play is not possible in games, while games will still be anonymous, this won't be as big a deal.

## Scoring

The scoring system I'm going to use is the **DC(C) v.2** system, in which a game is worth 700 points.

- **Solo** = 700 points.
- **2- to 6-way draw** =  $600/n$  points each (where  $n$  = number of players in the draw) + 100 points shared using the [Tribute scoring system](#).
- **7-way draw** = 100 points each.
- **Defeated/Eliminated** = 0 points



- **Leaving the game while active** = -100 points (for the individual *and* the team in Qualifying, *only* for the individual in the Finals).

For teams, ties will be broken by number of solos (the higher the number, the higher the ranking) and then by number of 0 points games (the higher the number, the lower the ranking). For individuals, ties will be broken by number of solos, then SC average per game.

I'm keeping individual scores for two reasons. First, in Qualifying, the seven highest scoring individual scores for each team is used to calculate which teams get to play in the Finals. Second, because individual scores are used for the post-season games.

In Qualifying, total team scores will be divided by the total number of games played by the seven players (or however number of players a team has if less than seven). This means that the quality of results is compared, rather than just the raw score.

## Winning the WCoD

To win the tournament, total points scored by teams in the Finals will be used; scores in Qualifying are solely for the Qualifying stage. Therefore, the winners of the World Cup will be the team that scores most points in the Finals.

## Post-Season Games

Finally, there will be two games played at the end of the event for individuals. Both will be invitational and based on different criteria.

There will be an **Excellencies** game. This will feature the seven highest scoring players throughout the tournament. For this, each players' raw score will be divided by the number of games in which they played. Tie-breaking is as described above.

There will also be a **Summit** game, featuring the seven best power players throughout the tournament, i.e., the players who earned the best result while playing a given power. Where players have equally good results, then the average number of SCs owned at the end of all games in which they played that power will be used to break ties and, if further differentiation is needed, a comparison of second-best performance, third best performance, etc.

These two games will be played simultaneously. If a player qualifies for both, they can choose which game they wish to play in (if either!) or choose to play in both. If a player declines to play in either game, I'll drop down the list of candidates... but I won't try to flog a dead horse to get these games going!

## Why on Playdiploacy?

Frankly, because this is the site I know best. I went backwards and forwards between Playdip and Backstabbr. I know a lot of players who don't play a lot of online Dip may be more familiar with Backstabbr but I'm more confident in using Playdip to run games on.

If you're concerned with having to pay to play on Playdip, you don't need to be. You can play up to three standard Dip games simultaneously on the site without it costing anything. It's highly unlikely that you'll need to play in more than this number given that games will be ended in 1912 anyway.

There is, occasionally, a hitch in registering to the site. You need to verify registration by responding to an email. Always check your Spam folder (or its equivalent) for 'missing' emails. If you're struggling let me know and I'll ask a Mod to sort it out.

Playdip uses point and click. Beyond this it's pretty simple. If you're used to webDip's interface, where I believe conveying involves ordering TO/FROM, on Playdip convoy orders are FROM/TO, e.g., to convoy from London to Norway, the fleet order involves clicking on London, then Norway. Convoy and Support orders must match perfectly with the Move order or they'll fail.

Additionally, Playdip features a system whereby you can check your order – it appears as a written order below the map (albeit in very small script). And, if you're color blind, or simply for further clarity, in your account you can activate a process whereby hovering over a space provides information about which power owns it and the nationality of any units in the space.

## Finally...

The World Cup of Diplomacy will be run primarily through my forum, [ARENA DIPLOMACY](#). You'll need to register on that site. (It might be better to register on Playdip first, so that you have a better chance of ensuring your usernames on both sites match.) Currently, because it's new and this type of forum tends to get a lot of spam posts, registration needs to be approved. This will be removed when I begin to get a lot of interest.

There'll also be info on the Playdip forum, in the Tournaments section, simply because games are hosted there. Games will also be advertised on the webDip forum and on the Diplomacy Reddit.

And what Diplomacy arena event wouldn't be complete without a Discord channel? So come find the ARENA DIPLOMACY channel for more information. I'm not a *huge* fan of Discord, however – most of the info there will refer to [ARENA DIPLOMACY](#).

And that's about it. More info is on [ARENA DIPLOMACY](#), as you'd expect, and that will feature updates as we go along.

Come on and register. There's just me and one other (seemingly authentic but I'm waiting to see) member on [ARENA DIPLOMACY](#) currently and it might seem as if nothing much is happening but, if you don't register

because of this, then it will *always* seem as if nothing much is happening! Once you're on the site, you can go to the WCoD section and register in the main thread and I'll start creating team sections.

Come on, then. Represent. Let's see if your Diplomacy nation has what it takes to win the inaugural **Doug Kent Trophy**.

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## Top Five Diplomacy Question Answers

By David Hood

Back in the July 2023 edition of Deadline, the monthly news program I anchor on YouTube's Diplomacy Broadcast Network, we debuted a new segment on the show called Top Five. To each of the three guests I posed the same five questions related to Diplomacy, and they would provide their "top" answer to each question. Adam Sigel, Katie Gray, and Andrei Gribakov provided some great answers, and I think it was a lot of fun for the viewers to watch.

If you've seen the episode then you know that I asked for audience participation at the end. Folks were either to post their own answers in the comments section below the video, or to email me those comments directly. I received a lot of responses to this request, which I thought was pretty fun. As promised, here are the responses from viewers who agreed for me to share their answers to the Top Five questions:

### Question 1: Favorite Spring 1901 Opening Move

*From Mikalis Kamaritis of the UK, 2023 Dixiecon winner:*  
Favorite S01 move: A-Smy -> Armenia. Creates such a different game if Turkey can get one of A/I on side.

*From another British resident, Markus Zijlstra, creator of Diplostrats YouTube Channel:*  
For opening move, A Ven-Tri (yes Katie!). It just leads to so many fun alliance options.

*From Johnny Gillam, one of the organizers of the Diplostrats club in New York City:*  
Opening move: Mos-StP. My percentage opening North is much higher than it should be, but it's just too much fun. *And, same answer from longtime face-to-face Maryland player Jonathan Frank:* Spring 190 1move - A Mos-StP is a nice way to spice things up early.

Other answers: F London - English Channel (*Chris Martin, past World Dipcon champ and noted CHANNEL FANATIC*) and A Marseilles - Burgundy, as an arranged

bounce with Germany (*Jamie Lennard, recent Summer Classic player*)

### Question 2: Best Player Ever Faced

*Kamaritis:* Torn between Dejan0707 on Extended Deadline webDiplomacy; just an absolute monster who never has a bad game. Or Nicolas Taillet in virtual... Likewise, never a bad game, and so hard to stop from running away with everything. Plus, he scarily seems to be getting better and better all the time, too. Both incredible players.

*Gillam:* Since Andrei took Goffy, I'll go outside the box and nominate Seren Kwok as the game's greatest theorist.

*Martin:* Yann Clouet. Complete package and a really fun person to boot.

*Zijlstra:* Going to go a bit against the grain of this video and select an exclusively extended deadline player, but I'd say my 2020 World Cup teammate and ODC runner up Teccles. Being able to see how his mind works in our team chat was just incredible, both on France v Austria and in the standard Diplomacy games

Other answers: Karthik Konath (*Lennard*) and David Miller (*Frank*)

### Question 3: Most Enjoyable Tournament Experience

*From hobby veteran Mark Murray of Maryland:*  
Long ago, I drove from my then-home in Rhode Island to play Diplomacy at John Boardman's home in Brooklyn, NY. It was awesome to meet John and some of the greats of Diplomacy there. It was just a one-day party, but very enjoyable. I don't remember anything about the game except that I played with some legends. And got to go to Brooklyn.

Like you, my first Diplomacy tournament was Marycon at Mary Washington College. That was a fun time. I remember playing a special Gunboat match where the map was projected onto the big screen and the players sat separately in a dark auditorium making their moves in private. I don't remember the result, but the experience was the thing. (*Hood - I also totally remember that rather surreal Diplomacy scene!*)

Of course, I have also loved Dixiecon and have attended about three or four times. I even won some "best country" awards. One Dixiecon I attended was the World Diplomacy Championship. You had so many boards going at one time! I met people from France, England, and Australia. Great stuff. I may have been the only one consuming a lot of beer though. Also, there was one poor lass there that had terrible vision problems with very thick glasses. She had to look very closely at her paper when writing her moves down. I noticed other players taking advantage of that by looking over her shoulder to see the moves she was making. I did not like that but kept my thoughts to myself.

*Kamaritis:* Dixie 2023, but not (just) because I won... The constant background games create such an amazing atmosphere, and I loved meeting so many interesting people that don't play with in the wider hobby. Truly outstanding.

*Martin:* Prezcon 1999/2000 - drunken gunboat w/ Mark Franceschini. (*Hood - not sure you can really narrow that just to 99/00*)

Other Answers: DBNI 2021, to play and DBNI 2023, to watch (*Zijlstra*) WDC 2022 at Carnegie, all credit to Dave Maletsky (*Gillam*) Tempest (*Frank*)

#### **Question 4: Favorite Alliance**

*From Bryan Pravel, co-founder of the Diplomacy Broadcast Network:*

My favorite alliance is the A/I. When I started playing seriously in the early 2000s Italy was seen as an extremely weak power so I made a mission for myself to become an expert at playing this power. I read an article (probably on the Diplomatic Pouch) where I heard Yann Clouet from the French hobby propose an absurd strategy where Italy would borrow Trieste for an extra build. Suddenly the number of Italian openings became exponentially larger. I promoted this idea with the Weasels in 2015 and found a bunch of other players at tournaments and extended deadline events who were experimenting with the same idea. Over time this grew in popularity and once the exchange of this center for moving to Adriatic early to gain tempo on Turkey was added, this became the most common Italian opening in

some metas. It was very exciting to watch an opening I love go from obscure to commonplace

*Zijlstra:* EG above all (yes again Katie!). I think EG is worse than some of the other options but the speed with which it can move if you get the diplomacy right is just unmatched. And AI is my eastern choice because there are so many fun openings you can do with them. Ftr, I agree with Katie once again that Germany should have 2 fleets in that alliance. 1 is too few, 3 is too many.

*Lennard:* Western Triple (sorry!) I've only played it once and may never do so again to avoid being disappointed by it.

*Kamaritis:* Easy and expected answer for me here would be the IT. And it's definitely up there. But everyone knows that from me, so I'll go with my other favorite underutilized alliance and say Germany-Russia. Love having a northern fleet build in 01 from Russia that's working with Germany, with the pair of you storming into North Sea and Norwegian Sea. Such a fun dynamic between them, and if EF are fighting there's very little they can do to stop it.

*Gilliam:* GR, I love cross-theater alliances that break the meta. EGR is great, too.

*Frank:* Conceptually I like the AR best. Anything to not waste an army on Gal... although practically I'm not bold enough to risk it most of the time. Also mention my triangle theory for the West, where I prefer the EF as England, the FG as France, and the EG as Germany!

#### **Question 5: Most Treasured Diplomacy Memory or Experience**

*Lennard:* Western Triple Game (12-11-11 draw in 1908 where I controlled Greece and Smyrna as France)

*Gillam:* My first "successful" game of competitive diplomacy, running an AI two-way draw with Ed Sullivan in the final round of the second e-Dixie. I eliminated both Andrei and Mikalis in that game, although I didn't recognize the significance of that feat until later. I really credit Ed with reinforcing my interest in continuing to play Diplomacy with how much fun we had that game.

*Kamaritis:* The fact people came together to get me to Whipping and again to Dixie really tower above everything else - Diplomacy isn't usually a game that creates warm fuzzy feelings after all! But finally winning the tournament at Dixie and getting that monkey off my back after 13 years of playing Diplomacy was really quite something. Capped a perfect weekend for me.



*Zijlstra:* God, there are so many. If I can give something vaguely related to Diplomacy, I'd go with joining a discord server with Tanya, Mikalis and a bunch of other webdippers back in 2016ish. That one thing has led to so much more in my life, including starting to play another game where I met the guy who is now my partner. If I'm giving something specific from a Diplomacy game itself, probably playing vDip's version of the Bourse variant (feat. the guys from the Diplomacy Games Podcast). Bourse attaches a stock exchange to the board which is typically played by spectators, but on vDip they had the players themselves playing the stock exchange as well, which led to a frankly ridiculous amount of market manipulation. It was fascinating. ...and playing against CICERO was pretty cool too. Honestly, I could list stuff forever for this question.

*Frank:* I'll pick two, like the panel. My first (and I think still only non-gunboat) solo where I took Munich off a

Russia who thought he had a two-way draw agreed with my France! Second moment was WDC 2018, in my final game I got stabbed and then my ally came back to me with "what do you actually want out of this game" - I asked for Sev back and I guess that amused him enough he actually gave it back before we called the draw. Don't even remember who it was though.

*Martin:* Filming/Editing the WDC videos. That was fun. (*Hood - and has been an invaluable recruiting and teaching tool for our Hobby ever since.*)

And there we go, gentle DW readers. If you missed the episode on DBN, you should go watch using this link: <https://youtu.be/WCgoeP0kGBo?si=ap5prEtzoeBwlzt6> And if you want, please do submit your picks to me using [davidhood@dixiecon.com](mailto:davidhood@dixiecon.com), and I will compile them for another article in the future.

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## 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>

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

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

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)

Virtual Diplomacy League Event – November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - <https://diplobn.com/vdl/>

Euro DipCon - Carnage – November 24<sup>th</sup> – November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Hôtel La Louisiane, Paris, France - <https://diplomania-gen.fr/temp/edc2023/fr/Presentation.html> (French), <https://diplomania-gen.fr/temp/edc2023/en/Presentation.html> (English)

DipCon at Cascadia Open – February 3<sup>rd</sup> – February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada – Email - [cascadia.open@gmail.com](mailto:cascadia.open@gmail.com)

Whipping – March 23<sup>rd</sup> – March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – San Francisco, California - <https://windycityweasels.org/>

World Dipcon 2024 – May 31<sup>st</sup> – June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 - Croce Rossa Italiana - Comitato di Varedo, Italy - <https://www.facebook.com/events/2407467882765459> or <http://agiletechideas.com/event/world-diplomacy-convention-2024/>

World Dipcon 2025 – Probably March 2025 – San Francisco, California

# DALLAS-FT. WORTH DIPLOMACY

## FALL/WINTER LEAGUE

HOSTED BY COMMON GROUND GAMES - DALLAS, TX

1314 Inwood Rd, Dallas, TX 75247 (214) 631-4263 [www.boardgamesdallas.com](http://www.boardgamesdallas.com)



Players in the Diplomacy League will play in one or more games over the course of the League as one of the in-game powers never playing the same country twice. The Diplomacy League format allows for players to play in one or more games to score League points. Players will be ranked according to the points earned in each game. The more games played, the greater the potential to earn points. A player may do well in some games and poorly in another game or consistently average in all the games played and still achieve a good overall score. Just showing up and completing a game awards points to a player in the League. All Materials are provided for the game League. You do not need to bring your own.

Each game will continue from the Spring 1901 turn until the end of Fall 1907 turn or until 4 hours has passed, whichever happens first. All games will end at the end of the Fall 1907 turn regardless of time remaining. If the game time limit of 4 hours is reached, then the last Fall turn completed will be used to count for player game scoring.

There will be awesome swag and product support for participants as well as prizes for the League.

### DIPLOMACY LEAGUE GAME DATES

**September 30, 2023 from 1 pm to 6 pm**

**October 14, 2023 from 1 pm to 6 pm**

**October 28, 2023 from 1 pm to 6 pm**

**November 11, 2023 from 1 pm to 6 pm**

**December 3, 2023 from 1 pm to 6 pm**

# Double Eagle Diplomacy

By David Smith

*[[A slightly different version of this article originally appeared in Diplomacy World #72. It has always been a favorite of mine from that era. So, when David Smith told me how disappointed he was that the original version had too many typos and mistakes – which I assume are the fault of myself and Jack McHugh – and asked if I would print this clean, slightly changed version, I happily agreed. Besides, I have a much greater appreciation for the source material now than I did in my early 20's.]]*

It had drizzled rain for two days now. I heard the roll of thunder, and our prospects for a new job were the color of the clouds I saw in the distance. Miles had just come in from a stakeout. He was leaning back, legs stretched out, rolling a cigarette.

He had just opened his mouth to speak, looked like he had an idea about something, which would be a change, when Effie opened the door.

"Sam, you've got a client in the office," Effie announced.  
"Said she needs action fast."

"Uh, huh. What d'ya think?"

"Oh you'll like her," then she eyed Miles, whose ears had perked up by now.

"Her threads have some mileage, but they cost a bundle."

"And....?"

"And she has lots of these and a lot of those."

"Well, send her in, sweetheart, time is money."

She went out and came back in with our prospective client and Effie wasn't kidding.

"This is Miss Ruth Wonderly. Miss Wonderly, Mr. Sam Spade and his partner, Miles Archer."

Jesse Owens couldn't have grabbed a chair for her as fast as Miles. She was just his type, when his wife wasn't looking. Young, slim and sophisticated. Effie eased out. The only sound was the patter of rain and Miles's heart.

"What can we do for you Miss Wonderly?"

"I do hate to bother you gentleman so late in the day, but I'm so terribly worried."

Miles was lapping this up like Effie's terrier.

"Go right ahead Miss Wonderly. It's our job."

"Well, it's my sister. I'm afraid she's in over her head. You see, she's supposed to play in the Diplomacy tournament at Daddy's club tomorrow night, and, well, you don't know Helen. She's so trusting and innocent. Daddy always said her mind was like a feather pillow, that bore the impression of the last person to have sat upon it. I can't bear to think what would happen to her in a game with ruthless grognards."

"Groan what?"

"Old veterans, Miles. Now, Miss Wonderly, just what is it you want us to do"

"Oh, please, could one of you arrange to enter the first-round game with her. I'm afraid to think what would happen if she went into the game without a friend—flying dutchmans, miswritten orders ignored, lies and backstabs. I just couldn't let that happen to my sister."

Miles glanced at me and grinned.

"Sure," I said, "if it'll make you rest any easier, one of us will sit in and play, just to keep things on the up and up."

"About the money...."

"We charge \$100 a day, plus expenses," I said. She hesitated at that. Then pulled out two crisp C notes.

"Here you are...and I thought, perhaps, you could find out something about the other players in the game. They are a despicable lot, and it might help if I...uh, if Helen knew how they played...opening moves, their strengths..."

"Sure, sure we'll find out. Just who is in the game?"

"Well, the best player, I believe, is a Mr. Gutman, a quite large and abusive fellow. Wears white suits. I don't like him. I understand he particularly wants to win this tournament because of the trophy."

"The trophy?"



"Yes, a double eagle coin struck in obsidian—quite rare and priceless—donated by a Diplomacy-playing numismatist."

"Yeah, sort of a black bird, huh?"

"There is also a little man...Joel Cairo. He has an accent, eastern Europe I think. One look at him, Mr. Spade, and you just know you can't trust him. There is also a weasel-looking character named Wilma. It is well known that he makes his moves just as Mr. Gutman says. He scarcely has a mind of his own---I believe the word for his is 'toady.' There are two others, a man from Greece, D. Ventouras, whose favorite country is Turkey, and a Texan, Victor G. Clark, known for his unpredictable and bizarre openings, and for his foul press in postal games."

I reached for her dough, but Miles beat me to it, and blurted out that he would be so very honored to be in the game himself.

We rose and escorted Miss Wonderly to the door.

"Thank you ever so much, gentlemen, I feel so relieved."

Then giving Miles the eye, she added, in a voice that purred, "I don't know how I will ever be able to repay you."

When she left, Miles held the bills up to the light and whistled. "Crisp as a starched collar. And did you see their brothers in her purse? This is one gig I'm gonna enjoy."



The ringing wouldn't stop. I shook my head, but it kept on ringing. Eyes open now, I sat up in bed and fumbled for the phone. It was two o'clock in the morning.

"Hello. Yeah, this is Spade. What is it? You don't say? Uh, huh. Yeah, I can't say...it's confidential. Yeah, all right. I'll be there in twenty minutes."

I pulled up in front of the building where the Diplomacy tournament was being held. Detective Tom Polhaus, the pick of a bad lot, met me at the door and scurrying along beside him was Sgt. Dundy. Dundy and I had tangled once before. It stuck in his craw—I could see he hadn't forgotten.

"Hello, Sam. Tough break about Miles."

"Yeah, Tom, tough. Show me where it happened."

"Ain't you even going to ask how he got it, Spade? Or don't you already know" growled Dundy.

A short right cross would have put Dundy on his back, but Tom grabbed me first.

"Come on, Sam, let it go."

"Al right, but keep him away from me, you hear, keep him away if he knows what's good for him."

We went up a flight of stairs, through heavy oak doors and into a well-lit room. Old look...19<sup>th</sup> century...large leather-covered easy chairs, but only one caught my eye. The photographer was still at work, others were dusting for prints around the table—the Diplomacy game still set up where it was interrupted.

I walked over to the chair, but I knew what I was going to see. There was Miles, head slumped slightly forward. Just as I figured it. He had been stabbed...a crimson stain on his white suit encircled the ivory-handled stiletto in his back.

They took the body out and we got down to business. There wasn't much to go on...except one thing. No one had come in or out of that room while the Diplomacy game was in progress—no one had seen the murder committed. That narrowed the suspects down to the six surviving players, unless Miles had committed suicide by stabbing himself in the back. He would have though it was a great gag.

Well, Sam, what d'ya think? Miles have any enemies in this game? Revenge, maybe?"

"You got me, Tom."

"All right, Sam, let me have it. I know Miles was on a case. Who's the client?"

"All right. For what it's worth, a dame named Ruth Wonderly—her sister, Helen was one of the players."

"Who are you trying to fool? Ruth Wonderly was one of the players. And she doesn't have any sister. We started the questioning with her. The others are all in an adjoining room now. They all claim the same thing. No one saw anything. They all say someone must have sneaked in and stabbed him while everyone else was over at the board. But one of the tournament directors was out in the hallway the whole time. He said no one came in or out. That's not all. The Double Eagle coin that was to be the first place prize is missing. It was in a case over the fireplace and we've searched the players already. It can't be found and we don't have a clue."

I asked Tom to let me question the suspects and he agreed. Dundy didn't like it—said the force didn't need the likes of any gumshoe in their investigation, but Tom had the suspects all brought in anyway. I've been around a lot of Diplomacy players in my time, long before Miles ever thought about playing, but this was a seedy and untrustworthy bunch as I've ever seen.

Tom introduced everyone, then we all sat around the table with the game board still set up just as the game was interrupted after the Winte of 1904. Most of them kept darting their eyes over to the chair off to the side where Miles got it. They all looked guilty to me. Before I could say anything, the rotund one, Gutman, started in.

"I'll have you know, sir, that I am unaccustomed to being treated in such a manner. I demand that I be charged immediately or released."

Then they all started in. Everyone shouting at once. All demanding their rights. Dundy got them quieted down. Then I looked at the board, and an idea came to me.

"Mr. Clark, could you tell me who was playing each country?"

That was a mistake. You would have thought the redhead had a spotlight on him as he pontificated. I finally shut him up after coming up with the players: Gutman—England; Wilma—France; D. Ventouras—Turkey; Joel Cairo—Italy; V. G. Clark—Austria; Miss Wonderly—Germany; and Miles played Russia.

I had seen the recording of the moves in the game. I believed I had it now. I knew who killed Miles, how it was done, and the location of the missing Double Eagle. But I never could resist to wind up a case with a flourish.

Mr. Gutman. I notice that you began the game with the Churchill Opening: F Edi-Nwg, F Lon-Nth, A Lvp-Edi. Why that opening rather than the Channel attack?"

"Hrumph, there was no profit in the Channel, sir, no profit at all."

I needed to pin him down. "You no doubt knew that France would not dare open there. Yes, we know that France kowtows to you so don't deny it. But I know you would give your right arm for that Double Eagle, so Wilma here was your target, but something lured you to Scandinavia."

Wilma was standing now, glaring at Gutman and looking like he could jump over the table and grab his flabby throat.

"Yes, sir, I don't deny it. I had good information that Russia would not only move A Mos southward, but that he would not receive a build for Sweden."

"Not good enough, Gutman. You know that St. Pete is a dead end for England. You're a better player than that. You know you had a firm alliance with France, so no worries there. It was Germany and Russia you had to deal with. Germany passed along information that F Kie-Den would allow Russia to be stood off in Sweden. Germany promised you something more, didn't she? A classic Anglo-German alliance that would take out the threat of Russian fleets building StP(nc) and later your good ally France would be your next victim."

"Sit down, Wilma," Dundy rasped as he closed in on him.

"Yeah, you knew that England always is better positioned in such an alliance to stab Germany after France falls."

Puffing himself up, and looking at the rest of us with contempt, Gutman went on. "I tell you, sir, I did not want to trust that woman. She has a certain reputation on the Diplomacy circuit. But confound it, the Russian would not look me in the eye. I never trust a man who will not look me in the eye. He kept leering at her all night. Yes, sir, I took her up on the offer."

I eased up out of my chair and sidled over by the Italian player, Cairo. A sweet scent from his oiled ringlets, combined with the perfume from his pocket handkerchief, made me a little nauseous.

"What's your story, Cairo? No, let me guess. Germany persuaded your that she was opening A Mun-Bur, so you decided to head westward, knowing that the only time a western attack by Italy is not hopeless is when Germany expects to make it to Burgundy. What did she promise you? Marseilles, Spain, Portugal?"

Cairo whimpered and bolted for the door. I grabbed him and slammed him against the wall.

"Let me go! I know nothing. She sounded convincing. I thought I could trust Austria and Russia to be busy against Turkey. I will not answer any more questions! I will not, you hear!"

I took a fist full of shirt and slapped him a few times.



"You'll answer questions and like it, Cairo."

"She probably said she had a firm Anschluss in place, didn't she?"

Cairo whimpered and nodded.

"Just as I thought. The grand German-Austrian alliance was in place, with Italy sufficiently warned not to enter Tyrolia, and encouraged to head westward. You folded like a cheap paper bag, Cairo. You make me sick."

Cairo sunk down on the floor. He looked like a frightened rabbit.

The redhead, Clark, was next. I took a deep breath. His kind always gets on my nerves. Before I ever said a word he was on his feet. He thrust his pipe toward me and began a monologue.

"I tell you, the Anschluss was only for convenience and defense. And besides, I convinced her of its potential. True, she mentioned it first, but I was going to ride to victory anyway. After all, Russia was doing everything I asked. Russia, your late partner, seemed distracted about something. He opened A Mos-Sev, F Sev-Rum, and A War-Ukr. So that tells you something right there about his lack of ability. He actually thought that was an anti-Turkish opening. With Germany backing me, I opened F Tri-Alb, A Vie-Bud, and A Bud-Ser. Of course, I am aware that opening is inferior to the Southern

Hedgehog, but after all, my neighbors Italy and Russia could be trusted to toe the line."

He would have rambled all night like that if I had let him.

"All right," I said, "let's take a look at the Supply Center Chart."

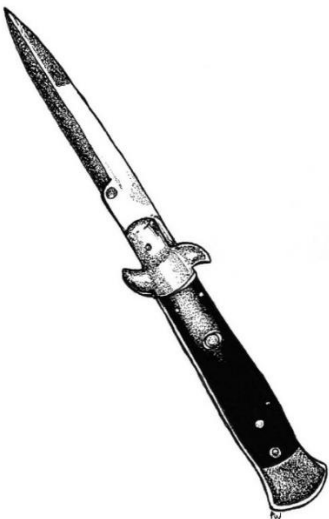
	01	02	03	04
England	5	6	7	8
France	4	5	5	6
Germany	5	5	5	5
Italy	4	4	4	1
Austria	5	5	6	7
Russia	5	4	2	0
Turkey	4	5	5	7

I told them the solution to the case was right before their eyes. Dundy snorted, but everyone leaned over the board and shifted their eyes from the chart to the board and back again. At least one of them knew what it meant.

"Oh, Mr. Spade," cooed Miss Wonderly, "could I please have a word with you...in private?"

She took me by the arm and eased me to a far corner of the room, while the players, the detective, and Dundy, all shook their heads and muttered as they studied the board.

"Mr. Spade...Sam...I have something to say. I don't know why I didn't mention this before. I suppose I was afraid of him. Of Wilma, I mean. I know I saw a knife blade in his coat pocket. He saw me watching him. Oh, Sam, you've never seen such a vicious look as he kept giving me."



I couldn't help but grin.

"You're good, Angel...Ruth...real good, but I don't doubt if you've ever told the truth in your life. No, Angel, it won't work. You killed Miles and you're going over for it."

"Sam, don't joke about things like that. You almost sound as if you mean it."

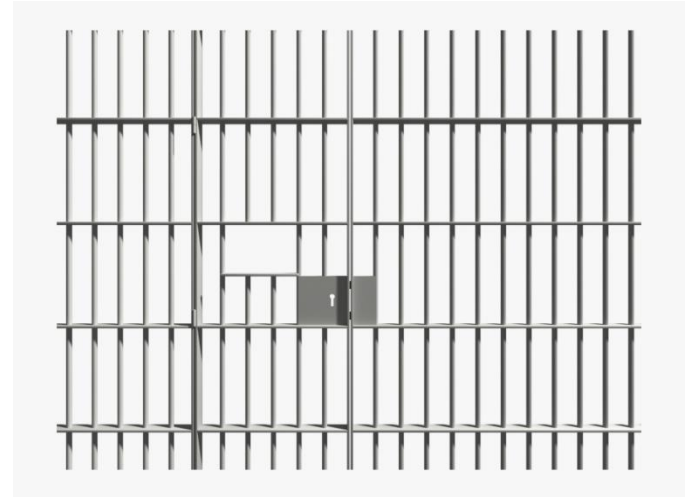
"I do. You made it easy. Look at the last turn. Russia, Miles, was out of the game. He probably didn't mind at all; he could get a better look at you as a spectator. And you were the only player that winter turn who didn't have a build or removal to make—just the way you planned it. Who would have a better story? After all, you hired the poor chump, so it would be one of the other players who would take the rap. And besides, it gave you the perfect chance to take the Double Eagle and dispose of it. No, while everyone else was at the game board, you were beside Miles—it was your knife, your murder, and now you're going to pay for it."

"Sam, please, you don't have to say anything. Wilma can take the fall. Gutman and Cairo will be glad to hand him over. It'll take everyone off the hook. Besides, you didn't care for your partner. We'll go away together, Sam, please!"



"Miles wasn't worth much in a lot of ways but he was my partner. And when a guy's partner is iced someone has to pay. If not, it's bad for business---bad all around. Oh, I doubt if they'll stretch your pretty neck, Angel, but they'll put you away for a long time. With good behavior you'll be out in twenty years or so, and I'll think about you a lot. Goodbye, kid."

I laid it out for the detective. They had enough to get her on circumstantial evidence, but her confession was icing in the cake.



"It seems easy, the way you explained it, Sam," Tom said as he rubbed his chin and slowly shook his head, "but something else still has me stumped. The Double Eagle. Where is it? We've made a thorough search of everyone in the room. No one got out of this room, so where is it?"

You're wrong, Tom, someone did make it out....Miles. I'll bet if you check his clothes at the Coroner's office, you'll find the Double Eagle somewhere on him. Right where she put it, just after she stabbed him, but before she eased back to the game before being missed. You better hurry, though. She must have a partner on the inside—at the Coroner's office. Better get there quick."

Tom left in a hurry. As the rest of us headed out of the building I could still hear snatches of conversation about the game from the players. They had already forgotten the murder...only the game was important now. Sgt. Dundy, more subdued than he was earlier, shook his head as they walked by, all five of them planning to resume the tournament—making their alliances and opening move proposals.

"Can you beat that? It's just kid stuff, pushing wooden blocks around. What kind of game is that anyway?"

"Game, Dundy? It's not a game. It's the stuff dreams are made of."



# Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



**Don Del Grande** – In the article on Dipcon, David Hood mentioned, "Bids from the other two regions could only be considered if there were no bids from the scheduled regions." That's not quite how it worked; bids from outside of the scheduled regions could receive votes, but votes for those events only counted half. The only reference to "only if there are no other bids" in the charter was a prohibition on the same state/province hosting in consecutive years.

I can think of only one time when the bid that got the most votes did not get selected as a result of this rule; 1981, when the two western regions were eligible, and a bid from somewhere in the east - I want to say Atlanticon in Baltimore (which was meant as an "east coast alternative to Origins" which was in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1981), but I'm pretty sure Atlanticon 1981 was canceled, and it could have been Gen Con East - got the most votes, but because they only counted half, Origins/Pacificon won.

Here is a link to the Dipcon (styled DipCon) Charter as of 2001:

<http://diplomaticcorps.org/ReferenceLinks/DipConCharter.txt>

Also, while World DipCon had "regions" - if I remember correctly, they are North America, Europe, and Rest Of The World - I don't think there was a rotation specified in the WDC Charter. It was pretty much, "North America and Europe will alternate, and if someone else wants to host one in the meantime, we'll consider it." This made it easier to vote on sites, as, since WDC sites are selected two years in advance, each European WDC would vote on the site of the next one in Europe, and each North American WDC would vote on the site of the next one in North America.

David was right about Dipcon not always following Origins, even when both were in the same region; Origins 1989 was in Los Angeles, but Larry Peery hosted Dipcon that year at his house in San Diego.



**Peter Sullivan** - Excellent article by David Hood in the latest DW. He mentions World Dip Con in passing. People may not be aware that the idea for WDC arose out of an idea for a British bid for Dipcon. Richard J. Walkerdine, the Chair of Manorcon, then the largest Diplomacy tournament in the UK, came up with the idea of Manorcon bidding for the US Dipcon as a one off. As Birmingham, England was not in any of the 4 regions(!), the only way that this could happen would be for the Dipcon Society to vote down all/any in-region bids, and then vote for Manorcon under the "What

happens if there are no successful bids?" rule (i.e. the Dipcon Society could vote for any bid regardless of the rotation).

Given the amount of feuding and discord that there was in the US (postal) Diplomacy hobby at the time, it soon became obvious that this was likely to be just be the trigger for an even bigger amount of feuding and discord, with a transatlantic dimension added in.

I \*think\* (although I'm not sure) that the first person to come up with the World Dip Con idea instead was Fred C. Davis Jr. The first WDC was at Manorcon, Birmingham, England in 1998, then Dixiecon/Dipcon in North Carolina in 1990, then in Australia in 1992 and back to Manorcon in 1994. From that point on, WDC has rotated around the world, to counties that its founders would probably never have thought of!



**David Wang** - Paul Milewski and I played in several postal Diplomacy games together, and we traded zines, his Yellow Pajamas and my Metamorphosis. Paul and I met in person when I was passing through Cincinnati. We talked over tea, Earl Grey and oolong for both of us. When Fred Hyatt, publisher of The Home Office, was flying to Dipcon/Dixiecon through Cincinnati, I helped Fred and Paul get in touch so they could meet. (I think this was in 1994 before Paul started publishing. David Hood, would you remember when Fred went to Dipcon/Dixiecon?)

Although I haven't played Diplomacy in a long time, Paul and I kept in contact. Paul would send me greeting cards throughout the years: birthday and Christmas, plus Lunar New Year, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and more. Paul told me he sent a Lunar New Year card to Doug Kent who said this was the first one he ever received.

Paul named his zine Yellow Pajamas because he was a fan of Nero Wolfe, the armchair detective created by Rex Stout. I sent Paul the Nero Wolfe television series (on DVD, so this was a while ago). Paul's wife told me they still have the DVDs and watched them many times.

Finally, Paul was married to Sandee. Paul Kenny, publisher of Absolute!, is married to Sandy. I joked about this with both couples. I am still trying to figure out if this is a Diplomacy thing, a zine publisher thing, or something else.

***[[Paul sent more greeting cards than anyone I know. He sent me cards for any conceivable holiday, and of course he was one of the people who wrote me***

**regularly in 2003-2006 while I was a guest of the Feds. He never seem to run out of cards; he sent even more than the great Andy York does!]]**



**Thomas Haver** - I wrote an article for Game Trade Magazine on Diplomacy. It was published in the August edition of the magazine. Here is a PDF version of it. The article is on page 20.

<https://alliance-games.com/downloads/282.pdf>



**Conrad Woodring** – I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation for your outstanding work on Diplomacy World. Your dedication and commitment to the Hobby community have not gone unnoticed, and I felt compelled to share my gratitude.

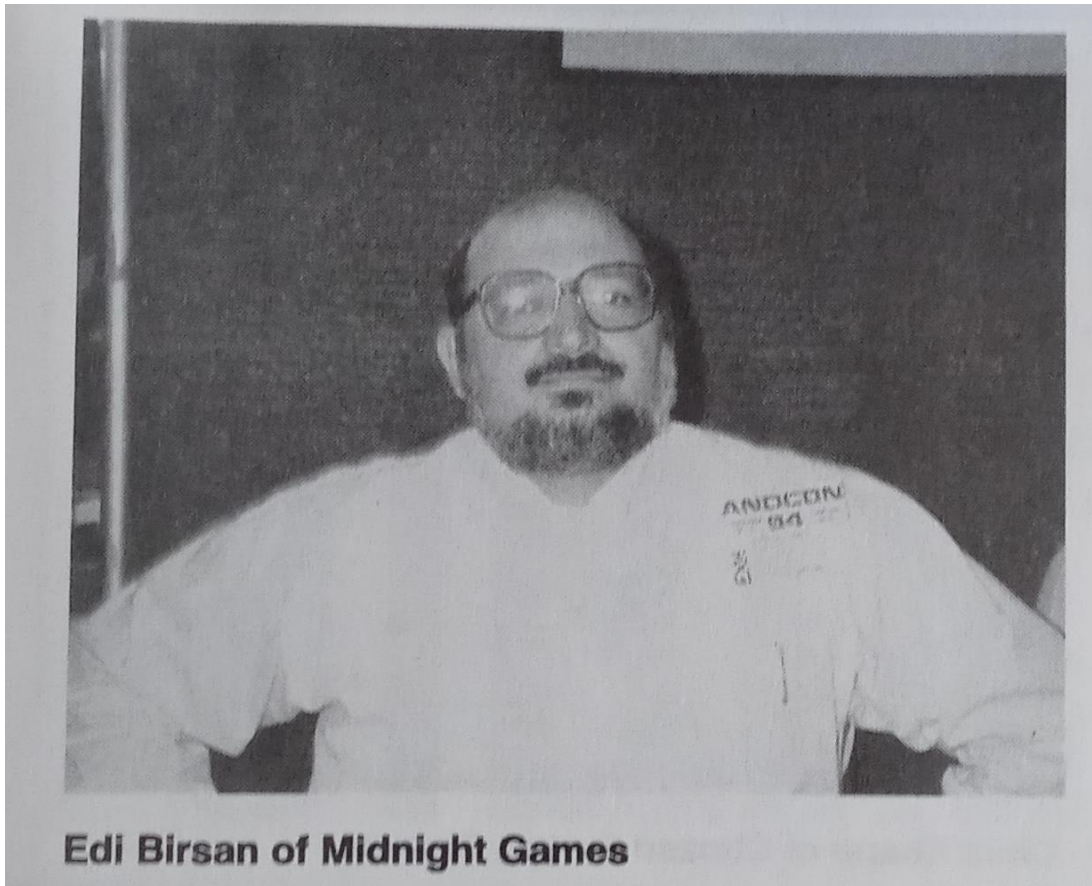
While I may not be an active contributor to the magazine, I am a regular reader for many years. Each issue of DW brings a wealth of knowledge, strategic insights, and a sense of camaraderie to our community, and it's largely thanks to your tireless efforts as the

Editor-in-Chief. Your unwavering commitment to providing a platform for our Hobby, whether they are seasoned veterans or newcomers like me, is truly commendable.

I wish I could contribute more actively to DW, but circumstances have limited my ability to do so in recent years. Nevertheless, please know that your efforts do not go unappreciated. You have created a space that fosters learning, strategic thinking, and a sense of belonging for Hobby enthusiasts across the globe.

Thank you, once again, for your remarkable work on Diplomacy World. Please consider this letter as a small token of gratitude from one of the many who quietly admire your contributions. I eagerly anticipate each new issue.

***[[Thank you, Conrad. That's nice to hear. It isn't that I think nobody read it, or nobody cares. But my personality type is such that I am constantly questioning the value of my efforts. So despite my instinctive reaction to reject anything positive, I will accept your kind words.]]***



**Edi Birsan of Midnight Games**

Charles Mosteller sent this pic (from Paper Mayhem #71) of Edi Birsan back in the day!

# Ask the Hobby Historian: Demonstration Games

By David Hood

For folk like me, the fact that we have in-depth videos on YouTube analyzing both Diplomacy games and entire tournaments is just basically insane. Whether live on DBN or recorded for release on Diplostrats or The Diplomats, this media content is absolutely invaluable to those learning the game, or trying to get better at the game. It's also a lot of fun even for us old-timers, to watch and learn how other Dippers play the game. This aspect of our hobby really took off during the pandemic, and that was a very good thing.

Those who have joined the hobby in the last few years may not realize just how revolutionary these video products are for our hobby. It's not true, however, that expert analysis of individual games to be used as a teaching tool started on YouTube. Indeed, having well-known players serve as commentators for each move of a featured game, with their comments being delayed by several turns to avoid influencing the game, goes all the way back to the early days of the Diplomacy hobby.

They were called Demonstration Games. If you go back to the very first issue of Diplomacy World, released in early 1974, publisher Walt Buchanan included in the zine a report of 1908 and 1909 moves from a game called "The Old and New Lions", Boardman number 1973BI, with commentary by famous player Doug Beyerlein. (Doug and I are Facebook friends to this day, interestingly.) Walt had reprinted the Demo Game moves from his other zine Hoosier Archives, and that was the source of Demo Game material for his early editions of DW. Later, though, the Diplomacy World publishers began to run their own Demo Games, showing the moves from beginning to end in the pages of the magazine. Here's a link to that issue: <https://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw1.pdf>

When you go back now and look at these games you will of course not recognize the player names because of the passage of time...but there are a few exceptions. Take, for example, the Demo Game which you all might find amusing is from Diplomacy World issue 60, the first issue I published back in Fall 1990. Game 1989AM was by then in Spring 1905, featuring an EG flooding into the east, with a German fleet in Western Med and allied armies swarming over Russia. The mastermind of this devastating invasion by the EG? None other than Edi Birsan, the guy whose play was crucial in the outcome of this year's World Dipcon Top Board in Bangkok. Who's playing that big Italy at 10 centers trying his best to hold back the western tide? How about Steve Cooley, the 2019 Dipcon winner who just finished third at this year's Dixiecon? And the hapless four center Turkey trying to

get back into relevance after Cooley smacked him around for several game years? Um, me. <https://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw60.pdf>

While early Demonstration Games often had just one commentator, as the years progressed it was much more common for there to be a team of 2-4 analysts to promote a little back-and-forth as well as to avoid groupthink. Yes, just like we do on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network now! One example of this would be the 1991AH game reported in DW #75, with some guy named Doug Kent as the publisher of Diplomacy World. I was the GM for the game, with Doug serving as commentator along with popular zine publisher (and frequent political foil for me in the hobby's letter columns of the day) Garret Schenck and well-regarded player and Russia expert Fred Townsend. Interestingly, that game ended that issue with Baltimore phenom Kevin Kozlowski's Russia stopped at 17 centers with a voted draw. <https://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw75.pdf>

By the way, notice that the Boardman number 1991AH meant that the game had started in 1991...and finished in 1995! Postal games took a long time. On the other hand, we were playing in a bunch of games at the same time, so one still felt pretty busy on a daily basis. I raced to the mailbox every day back then, wondering what game report I might find, or what diplomatic correspondence I had received. I know how goofy that sounds now, but it was loads of fun.

Also notice that issue features another Demonstration Game...for the popular game of the day Railway Rivals. Back in the 90s, rail games were quite the rage within the Dip community. Those of you who have seen me at conventions know that I play a lot of other boardgames, particularly AT Dip conventions. That was also true of players in the Diplomacy zines of the day. Many ran other kinds of games in addition to Dip and variants. Just for old time's sake, I recently started a new game of Railway Rivals in Tom Howell's currently running zine called Back of the Envelope.

Now that we have the long-form Dip commentary videos on YouTube, there is now not the same reason to host Demo Games in DW. That is why Doug did not start a new one after the last one was completed in issue #156, released in Winter 2021. You might want to take a look at how the endgame was reported in that issue though - it's a pretty good example of the in-depth written analysis that Demo Games provided to our hobby back in the day. <https://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw156.pdf>

# **DIPLOMACY CASCADIA OPEN**

**And DipCon 53**

**WHEN**

**February 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>  
2024**

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**REGISTRATION**

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Round 1: 9am on Sat 3<sup>rd</sup>

Round 2: 5pm on Sat 3<sup>rd</sup>

Round 3: 8:30am on Sun 4<sup>th</sup>

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# Revenge (or “You Made Your Bed, Now Lie in It”)

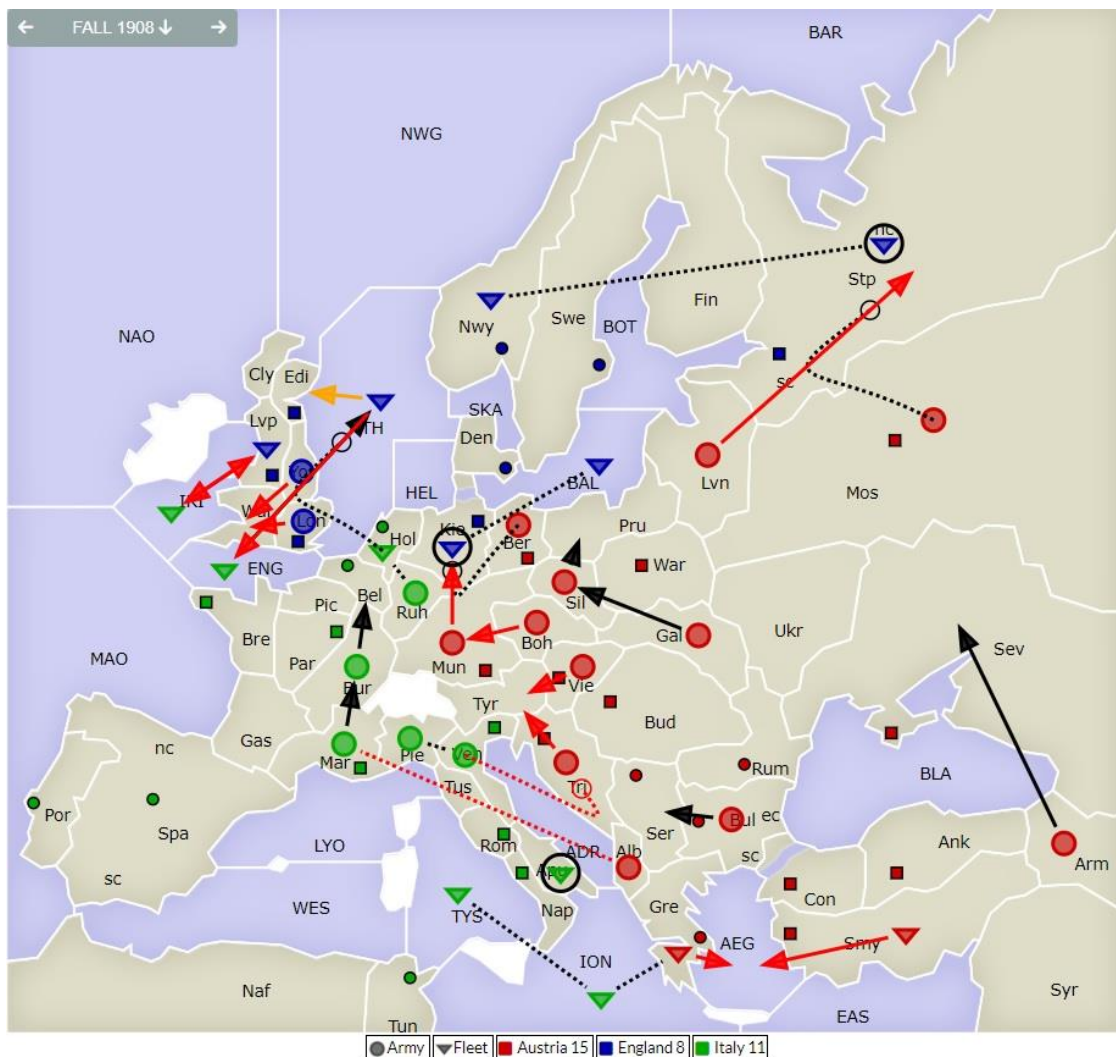
By Douglas Kent

Someone I've known for my entire time in this hobby recently played a No-Press Gunboat game on the backstabbr website. When the game was over, some debating and arguing in the post-game press room caused him to make a few screen shots of the board. I thought they might make a good lesson of the idea that in order to succeed in Diplomacy, you need to be able to understand what your opponent is thinking and what they want to achieve. Even in a no-press Gunboat game, this remains true.

We join the game in Fall 1908. The board was down to three powers. Austria held a commanding presence across Europe, but a lack of fleets meant there was no

way to break through the Ionian Sea. Meanwhile, positions were such that Austria also couldn't take Kie or StP. There was no real way to be pushed back, but any possible offensive had stalled.

Meanwhile, Italy and England were the other two remaining powers. England (my friend) was doing his part, holding Kiel and St. Pete. But Italy kept creeping up. In Fall 1908, Italy supported themselves into the North Sea. My friend was getting a bit perturbed; he was in no position to push on Italy or be a threat to them, but Italy continued to attack. Still, he was committed to stopping Austria as long as he could.

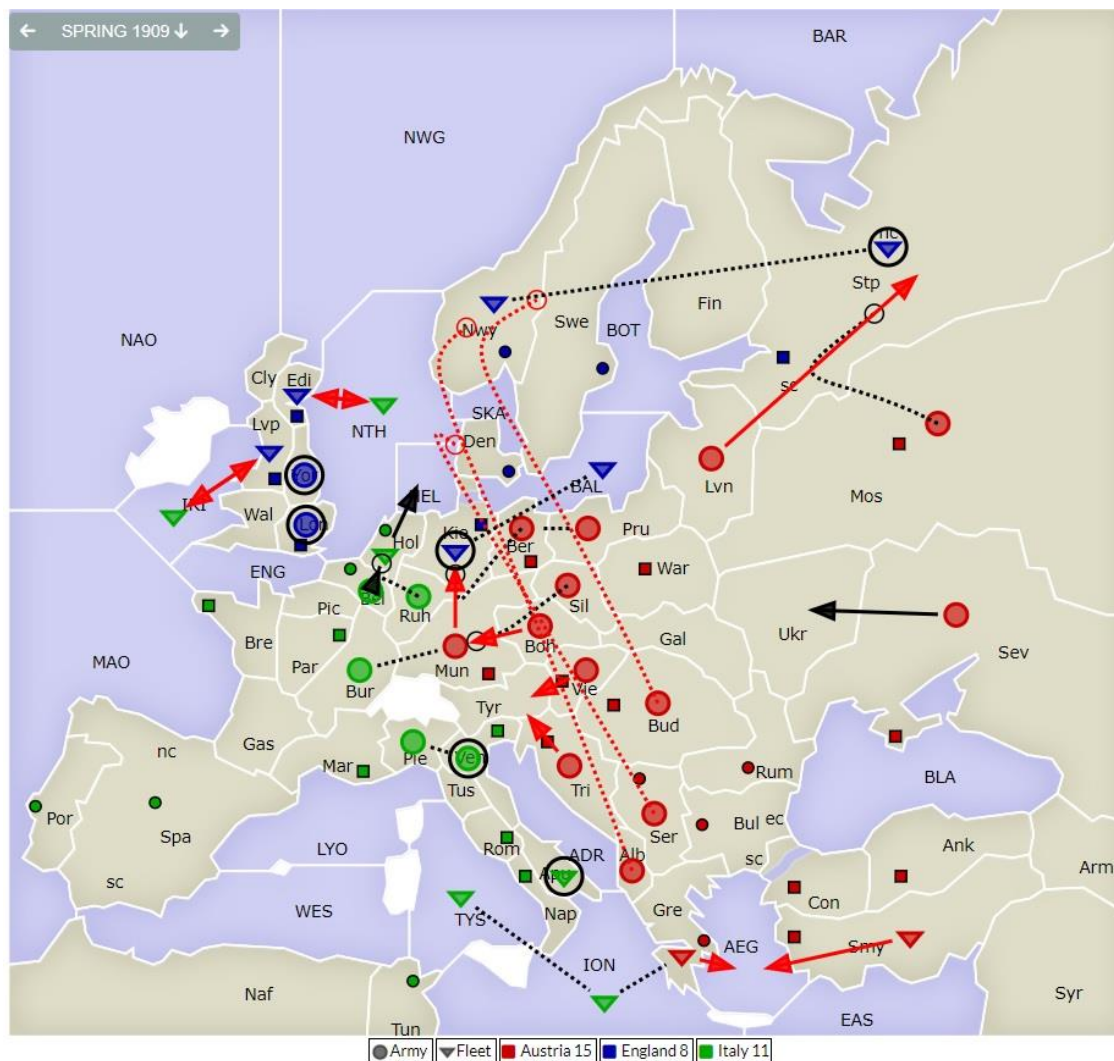


Spring 1909 arrived, and Italy wasn't letting up. But this time, my friend saw only one possible result: Italy was planning to attack Kiel with two supports, and in all

likelihood would tap Denmark to either grab both centers or at the very least keep the fleet from retreating. There simply was no other reasonable explanation for rolling F

Hol-Hel and A Bel-Hol. Whether Italy was going for a solo, or just positioning for a two-way with Austria, it was

clear that England had no place at the table if Italy was the one planning the party.



With that in mind, my friend decided that – like the Camp North Star basketball team in **Meatballs** – if he was going to lose, he was going to lose with dignity. “I saw Italy had positioned for an obvious Fall attack: hit Kiel with two supports, and hit Den to either take that dot too, or at least destroy my retreating fleet.” He wasn’t willing to let Italy chip at his position little by little until it collapsed. Instead, it was time to play Kingmaker.

“Why should I keep holding Austria back, just so Italy could try to win or split the draw?” Instead, in the Fall he willingly walked out of St. Pete, ceding it to the Austrians. And at the same time, he took back the North Sea, leaving Norway empty. “My plan was simple: Austria only needed three centers to win. All I had to do was give them St. Pete and Norway, and then help them into Sweden. Game over.”

As for Kiel, he recognized it was a lot cause. But maintaining at least one unit in the area was going to be necessary to ensure Austria was able to capitalize on the opportunity. So, he ordered F Kiel-Den with support from the Baltic. This would keep Italy out of Denmark and eliminate the need to retreat from Kiel.

“I was happy to give Austria the win. My only concern was: what if I’d misread Italy? What if they’d suddenly seen the folly of their actions, and had decided not to attack after all? I’d be giving Austria the win needlessly. What if I was wrong?”

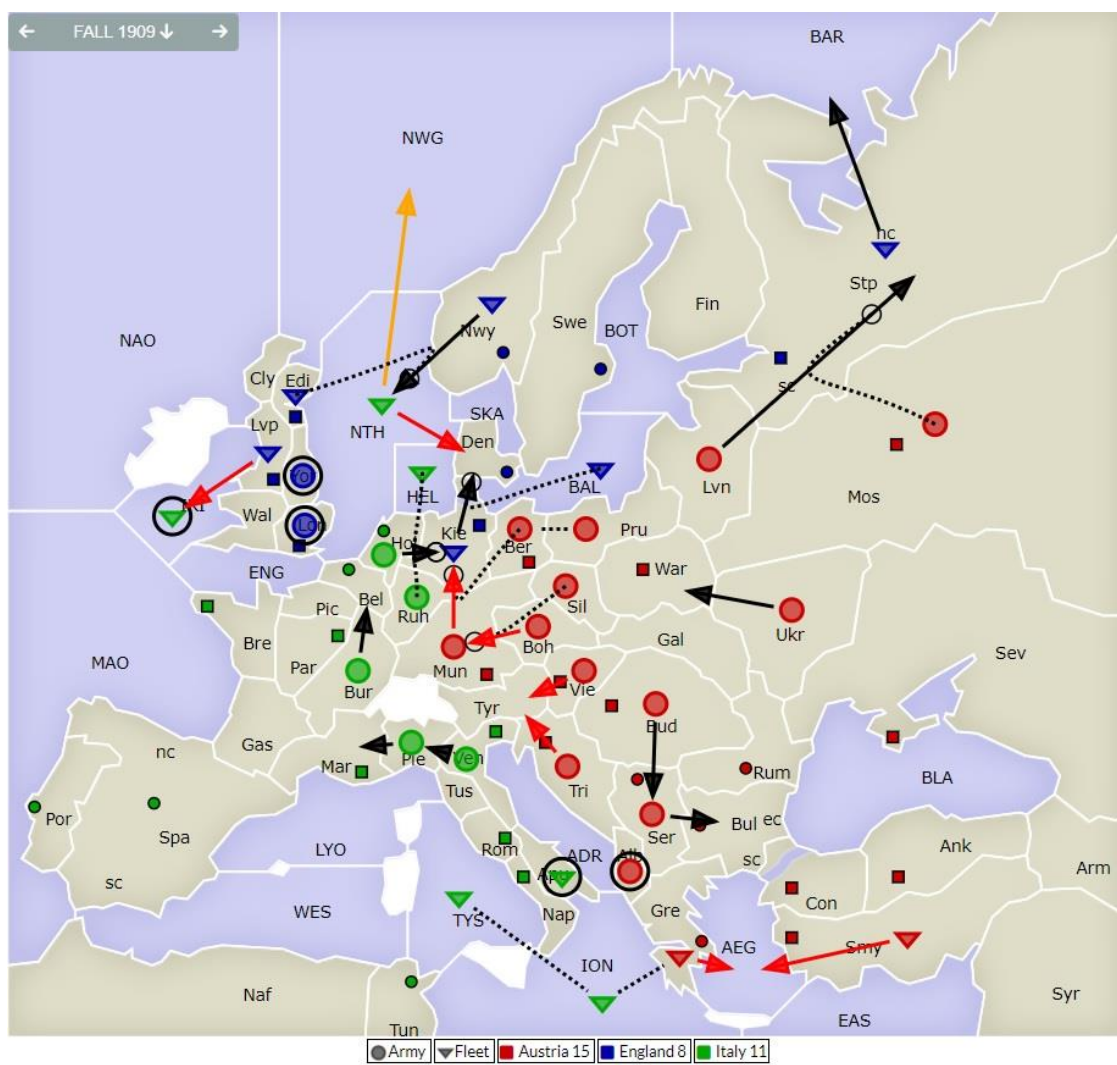
Looking at the map, I think he was left with only two options. One, he could follow the plan he’d already devised. Or two, he could try and maintain the status quo by supporting himself in Kiel and St. Pete. Preserve the 3-way, or surrender to Austria...nothing else he could do. As for Italy, I couldn’t quite see what their goal

was. The only way they could triumph here was if England continued to defend against Austria despite the Italian attack. Could it really be that Italy didn't consider throwing the game to Austria as a legitimate option for England to consider?

At times, Diplomacy can be a game of "stop the leader," especially when you're playing a balance of power strategy. And there are many other games that have the same sort of flavor. The boardgame Civilization (which I first bought when Avalon Hill released it) is one that comes to mind. You may go ahead and try to trade calamities to any possible player, but on the board itself you can see who is progressing, and there's only one way you can win: by not letting anyone else win.

Through cooperation, most Civilization victories can be delayed for a time, while the rest of the board hopes a few well-timed calamities might tilt things more in their favor.

But in Diplomacy, balance of power only goes so far. In this game, in 1909, they were down to three nations. There are only three possible outcomes: a win, a two-way draw, or a three-way draw. Granted, there are three two-way draws possible, but realistically England was never going to be part of a two-way draw. Of the four available outcomes – Italian win, Austrian win, A/I draw, or A/E/I draw – he was only included in one option. And Italy was doing their darnedest to see that option was off-the-table. Unless my friend was wrong...



...but he wasn't.

Italy did exactly what he expected. They even went so far as to vacate Venice so they could build there. Perhaps – had they also taken Denmark – they planned to build F Naples and, in the Spring, start a southern

naval campaign. Clearly Italy was looking to win the game. But they'd forgotten that their actions would probably change my friend's goals. If he couldn't have part of the draw, the best he could hope to do was survive. If all he could fight for was survival, it seems



only natural that his primary goal should be to deny Italy any taste of victory.

Apparently, that's about what happened. By the end of 1911 Austria had Norway and Sweden too, and the game was over. Italy's lust for victory had cost them a piece of a three-way draw.

Normally that would be the end of the story. But what caused my friend to suggest this brief article was Italy's position during post-game press. This is what Italy wrote:

*"That should have been a three-way, and it was poor play by England to throw the game at the end. I was voting 3-way from the moment there were three of us left, and I assume England also, hence it was obvious Austria was holding out for the solo and we needed to block any further advance."*

And they followed it up with:

*"Abandoning the absolutely pivotal spot of StP and throwing away your own draw marks out an inexperienced player."*

My friend argues that if a three-way was the goal, there was no need for (and no benefit to) attacking Kie and Den. The only possible benefit to Italy was if they aspired for a victory or a two-way. F Kie had zero ability to threaten Italy, especially when the only support was in the Baltic Sea.

Italy seems to have made the tragic error of thinking everyone on the board was locked into an unchanging mindset. Did they really believe that my friend – as England – would quietly sit by as Italy continued to gain centers? Or even more big-picture, that he'd do the same when Italy began to try to sneak into Eme or Aeg, or land an army in Albania? It seems unlikely, but based on Italy's claims post-game, that's the only explanation.

Now if this had been a press game, or a standard Diplomacy game, there would have been conversations and discussions and debates about these outcomes beforehand. And my friend could have warned Italy that if they pressed him, he'd throw the victory to Austria. But in a no-press Gunboat game, it isn't just a case of "actions speak louder than words." It's "actions are the ONLY words." Italy says (and it seems true) that they had set their draw position to approve a three-way. But that's a secret vote; the only thing my friend had to go on was Italy's moves.

I imagine Italy tried to justify their actions by suggesting that Austria still could have been stopped after the loss of St. Pete (and Kiel, and almost Denmark). And that might be true. But that would be a case of Italy having their cake and eating it too. Reportedly, Italy attacked Den with support for the entirety of 1910, so I don't think there were any legitimate attempts made by them to mend the fence.

What do you think? Is this a case of just desserts? Or should England have played the good soldier and continued to stop Austria despite Italy's stab? Can a seemingly needless and useless stab be forgiven without consequence or repercussion, especially in a one-off Gunboat game where there is no communication?

So let this be a lesson to aspiring Diplomacy experts: you cannot control how someone reacts to what you do. You can only control your own actions. Sometimes your adversaries will decide that denying **you** victory is the only goal worth fighting for.





# Secret Auctions & Duplicitous Neutrals: An Introduction to DP Variants (And a plug for next year's tournament!)

By Alex Ronke (a.k.a. NoPunIn10Did), Diplomacy Variant Designer & GM

In issue 160 of Diplomacy World, you may have seen Baron Powell discuss the development of (and ongoing changes to) a variant he co-developed with Jeff Kase circa 2000: *Ambition & Empire*. While this 10-player variant is notable for many reasons, including its well-researched setting and asymmetric power relationships, its most innovative legacy came in the form of new gameplay mechanics: the Diplomacy Points (DP) system.

In this article, I hope to introduce DP mechanics, relate some of their benefits, and provide several examples of DP-based variants. I hope this introduction will whet your appetite to compete in DP variants as part of the 2024 Tournament Through Time, which I will be running through the course of next year via Discord.

## DP Variant Rules & Mechanics

In a DP variant, there are two interlocking rule systems that add significant depth to the first several turns of play: (1) the minor neutral powers that occupy neutral SCs at a game's start, and (2) the secret DP bidding system used to determine those units' orders.

Put another way, in a DP variant, neutral SCs begin a game filled with non-player characters (NPCs), and you can secretly ask those NPCs to help and harm your opponents and allies.

I personally have both designed and GM'd DP variants frequently enough that I have written up a Common Ruleset for DP-based Variants, originally posted to the PlayDiplomacy forum and now hosted on my own website (<https://nopunin10did.com/common-ruleset-for-dp-based-variants/>). Some excerpts from that ruleset have been adapted to this article.

## Minor Neutral Powers

The first major rules change for a DP variant, as opposed to a typical Diplomacy variant, is that all (or nearly all) neutral supply centers are considered "Minor Powers" of their own. Each SC has its own fleet or army, and that unit does not belong to any specific player.

Typically, these neutral units are stationary, meaning that they will not leave their home SC unless they are destroyed. Each turn, they can perform an order, just like a player unit. They can hold, support another unit to hold, or support another unit's attack.

Counterintuitively, they can also perform move orders. However, because minor powers' units are stationary, their move orders always bounce, even if they bounce with nothing. This is sometimes called a "sortie."

## Examples: Minor Neutral Powers in Action

The following illustrations provide some examples of neutral powers' units in action using actual turns from a variant I designed and am currently administering: *Sub-Saharan*.



Figure 1 Neutrals Supporting Attacks & Attacking

In Figure 1 above, neutral units can be seen in Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Sesheke, and Otjimbingwe. (Note: in my map designs, I tend to color neutral units in shades of tan and brown though the unit decorations may vary). The Mozambique player (white) orders an attack from Maputo to Pretoria, and the neutral army in Sesheke supports that order. Meanwhile, the neutral army in Otjimbingwe moves to Karas; while this move is unopposed, it is still marked in red as a bounce. One must assume that this move was a preventative measure to ensure that the Cape Colony player (navy blue) did not send his army from Cape Town to Karas. Instead, the Cape Colony player makes a supported attack from Durban to Bloemfontein.



**Figure 2 Retreat Phase**

In this second image, we see the results. Otjimbingwe remains in place. Bloemfontein and Pretoria are both dislodged, and because they are stationary units, they are automatically disbanded, as they cannot retreat.

SC captures still operate the same as with regular Diplomacy; they don't occur until the end of autumn. As this was a spring turn, should Mozambique walk out of Pretoria in the autumn, leaving it vacant, the SC there would remain neutral. In a DP variant, it would also rebuild its army during the Adjustments phase.

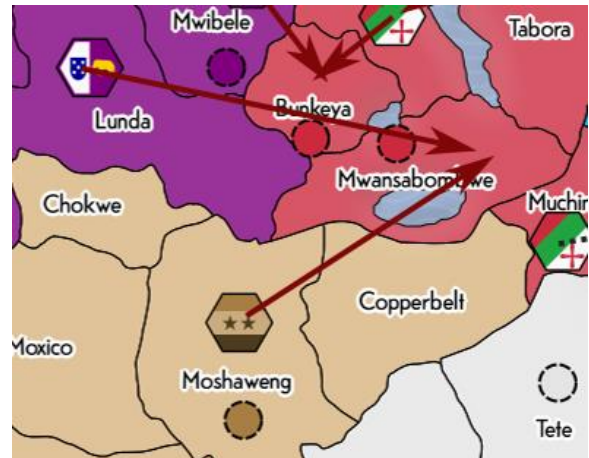


**Figure 3 Neutral Adjustment Phase**

This rebuild was the case for Lagos (Figure 3). Its fleet was dislodged and destroyed by the Ashanti (black) in spring, but by the end of autumn, the Ashanti and nearby Sokoto (green) left Lagos open, allowing the neutral power to rebuild.

In Figure 4, the army in Moshaweng bounces with the Angolan player (purple) over Mwansabombwe. While Otjimbingwe in Figure 1 ended up bouncing with nothing

as a preventative move, here the army in Moshaweng makes contact, preventing the army in Lunda from advancing.



**Figure 4 Neutral Bounce**

### **Secret DP Bidding**

But how do those neutral units decide what to do? This is where the DP bidding system comes in.

Each Orders Phase, every player receives an allotment of DP. The amount per turn varies by variant; in *Sub-Saharan* a player receives one DP per SC they control, up to a max of 3. That DP is use-it-or-lose-it; none can be stored or carried over into the next turn.

### **Allocating & Adjudicating DP**

Along with orders for their own units, players can submit potential orders for one or more neutral units. Each potential order must come with a DP allocation. Allocations must be made in whole-number values (*i.e.*, no half-points), and the total DP allocated by a player must not exceed their total allotment for that phase. The DP expenditures act like "votes" for that order. Other players may vote for that same order and allocate DP to it. A single player with 2 DP, for instance, can potentially spend 2 DP on a single unit's order or allocate 1 DP each to two different units' orders.

At the time of adjudication, the GM analyzes all the submitted DP allocations for a given unit. The order that has the most DP spent is the one that will be given to the unit. If two or more orders tie for DP spent, or if no DP is allocated to that unit, it will be given a default order instead. Except where specified in the specific variant's rules, the default order for any neutral unit is Hold.

All DP allocations are kept secret. Only the "winning" orders will be known publicly but not which players (if any) allocated DP to those orders. For most variants, all DP allocations will remain secret until the entire game has completed.

## The Attacking & Allocating Rule

If a player's own unit is attacking (or supporting an attack on) a minor power, that player may not allocate DP to that minor power during the turn the attack or support is taking place.

This rule lessens some of the inherent "gullibility" of minor powers. Most commonly, it prevents a player from allocating DPs to a minor power for the purpose of having the minor power unit move, thereby making it ineligible to receive support-to-hold during the player's attack on that minor power.

## DP Allocation & Orders Practical Example

As part of the Common Ruleset for DP-Based Variants, I have provided a lengthy example of player bids, adjudication, and results on my website, and I will spare *Diplomacy World* from the need to print the entire thing: <https://nopunin10did.com/common-ruleset-for-dp-based-variants/#dp-allocation-example>

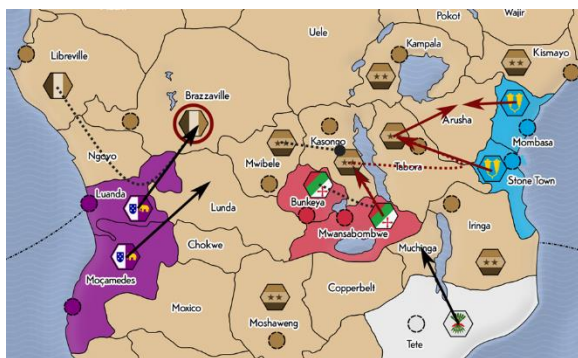


Figure 5 Example Map from the Common Ruleset

## Playing a DP Variant

But is playing a DP variant fun? Here are some of the advantages and disadvantages of the system.

### Blank Spaces No More

Because stationary units occupy all the neutrals in a typical DP variant, players cannot just walk in and claim territory. At the very least, they need another unit (either their own unit, an opponent's unit, or a different neutral) to support their attacks and dislodge the targeted neutrals. With all the extra neutral units on the board, rather than solely player units, the variety of potential orders and turn results is exponentially larger. Supports to hold can be granted, supports can be cut, and what would normally be an unopposed move can be bounced.

### Distant Friends & Enemies

Because DP can be allocated to *any* neutral unit, it means that players nowhere near one another on the map still have reason to talk to one another and collaborate. Deals can be made for one another's DP allocations, though verifying the follow-through of those

deals is another matter. France's bids can secretly help or harm Russia, even though they sit at opposite corners.

## Dastardly Deeds

The secrecy of DP allocations allows for machinations to occur behind-the-scenes that can keep one's opponents on edge for an entire game. For instance, in a 2017 session of *Ambition & Empire*, a peaceful arrangement had been made in the first turn between Great Britain and Spain regarding Gibraltar. Britain was to exit Gibraltar for the Atlantic, and they would assist one another in capturing Morocco and Portugal in turn.

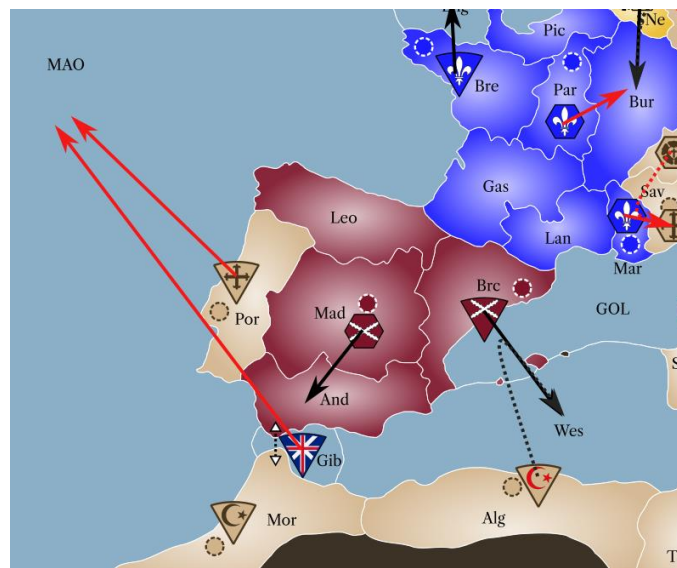


Figure 6 A&E: Portugal's Disruptive Bounce

This was a bit of an icy agreement to start with, but when adjudication completed, Britain found that his fleet had been bounced by the neutral Portugal, and that he remained in Gibraltar, violating his agreement with Spain. Britain and Spain both blamed the other for this failure to launch, and their relationship never fully recovered.

However, unbeknownst to either of them until after the game's completion, it was their mutual neighbor France who had allocated the DP to Portugal that turn. France had succeeded in keeping his nearest opponents angry at one another by quietly screwing up their intended moves.

These sorts of deceptions are possible with a DP system. While the source of some neutral orders might be easily guessed (as with the support order seen in the earlier figure, which was bid on by Spain), many can lead to tactical surprises and sneaky stabs from the dark (provided the bidding players know how to keep a secret).



## Complexity in the Early Years

In most, but not all, DP variants, the system's relevance lasts only until the final neutral unit is destroyed. Occasionally, this may not happen at all; a game of *Ambition & Empire* has ended with one fleet hanging on for dear life in Tunis, for example.

However, in most games, these mechanics are most important in the first several years of play. The first years of a typical variant involve a lot of communication and coordination for a relatively small number of player units; DP systems give players more to do.

As the game continues, players' own unit counts become higher, and minor powers' units are destroyed, the need to focus on DP lessens. As a player's unit complexity rises, DP complexity falls

## GM Required

The DP system was originally created with the Play-by-Email (PBEM) community in mind. As with Play-by-Mail Diplomacy, PBEM requires a central Game Master (GM) to set due dates, receive players' orders, adjudicate their results, and publish the resulting maps. This mode of play still has a following, though it more often occurs via forums or online chat platforms like Slack or Discord.

This differs from play that either (1) occurs in person, where the players can handle their own deadlines and adjudication, or (2) occurs on an online platform programmed to administer Diplomacy games (webDip, Backstabbr, etc.).

However, unlike typical variant games, the DP system **requires** a neutral third party to act as a go-between during adjudication to resolve the orders that result from players' secret DP bids. The bids are not supposed to be known the players, so they cannot just read them out to the table as they normally would their own orders. A modification could be made to DP variants to make such allocations public, but I am unsure of whether the additional adjudication overhead would be worthwhile without the opportunities that secrecy allows.

As for the automated online space, support for DP has yet to be implemented on a major platform. To my knowledge, the only automated form yet completed is on the DPJudge adjudicator, and it is a somewhat buggy (and older) version of *Ambition & Empire*. *Note: I would be happy to consult with any platform that would like to implement these mechanics in a scalable fashion.*

Because of the structure of the secret auctions, DP variants are currently only viable for asynchronous GM-administered play on forums, chat clients, or email.

## Current DP Variants

As I am an avid fan of Diplomacy Points, you may not be surprised to hear that I have incorporated DP rulesets into several variants of my own creation. I am also not the only variant designer to experiment with the system, and designers have created further rules that sit on top of the DP paradigm. The following variants are examples, in rough order from low to high complexity.

### Sub-Saharan

10 players. Designed by W. Alex Ronke.

<https://nopunin10did.com/sub-saharan-diplomacy-variant-rules/>



*Sub-Saharan* is set in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century just prior to the "scramble for Africa." It is intentionally a low-complexity DP variant that has very few rules above-and-beyond the core DP structure and the standard Diplomacy rules.

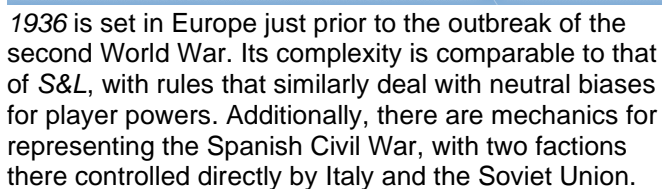
### Succession & Legacy

10 players. Designed by W. Alex Ronke.

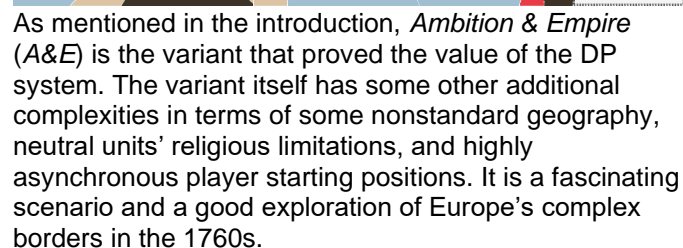
<https://nopunin10did.com/succession-legacy-diplomacy-variant-rules/>

*Succession & Legacy* (S&L) is set in the early 1700s during the War of Spanish Succession and the Great Northern War. In addition to the core DP ruleset, S&L includes rules for "affiliate" powers, which are neutrals that treat DP allocations from a sponsoring player power as being worth double their usual value.

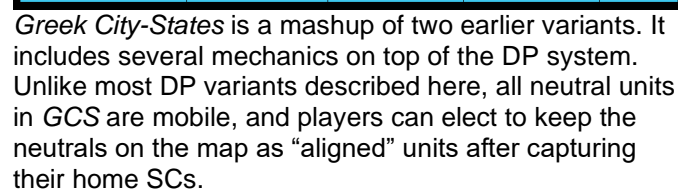




10 players. Designed by Jeffrey S. Kase & B.M. Powell.  
(Contact [VonPowell@aol.com](mailto:VonPowell@aol.com) for the latest rules.)



7 players. Designed by Chris Helwig.  
<https://www.playdiplomacy.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=761&t=50531&p=840260#p840260>

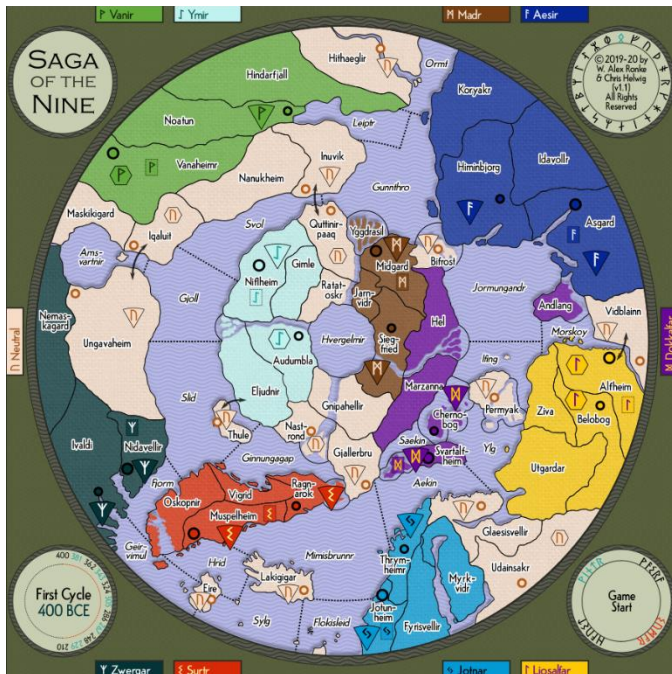




## Saga of the Nine

9 players. Designed by W. Alex Ronke & Chris Helwig.

<https://www.playdiplomacy.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=59917#p981439>



*Saga of the Nine* is a fantasy / alt-history variant set in the Iron Age in the Arctic Circle... or at least, a predicted geography of the Arctic Circle as envisioned by famed cartographer Gerardus Mercator. S9 expands the DP system with mechanics for heirs and marriages. These systems allow for the creation of new micro-powers (vassals) whose control is shared between two opponents who marry their heirs together. But these heirs are also a vulnerability, as a player can be eliminated from the game early if all their heirs are killed and their capital city is taken!

## Order of the Dragon

10 players. Designed by W. Alex Ronke.

<https://nopunin10did.com/order-of-the-dragon-rules-repository/>

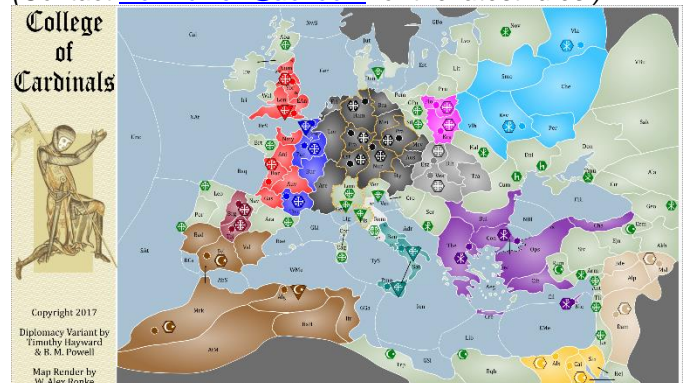
*Order of the Dragon* ports the entirety of the *Saga of the Nine* ruleset (heirs, marriages, vassals, early elimination, etc.) to 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Like S9, it is a medium-to-high complexity DP variant. Of the variants I have personally had a hand in, it is the one that has been most well-received.



## College of Cardinals

12 players. Designed by Timothy Hayward & Baron Powell.

(Contact [VonPowell@aol.com](mailto:VonPowell@aol.com) for the latest rules.)



*College of Cardinals* is a vastly complex variant set in the time of the crusades. It uses the DP system as a foundation, but it goes far beyond those rules with mechanics for papal elections, religious bias, excommunication, and (often risky) crusades that swiftly relocate Catholic units to the levant. It is quite the experience, and its rulebook is not for the faint of heart.

## Распад (Dissolution)

10 players. Designed by W. Alex Ronke.

<https://nopunin10did.com/dissolution-rules/>



*Dissolution* is a high-complexity variant set in the early 1990s, shortly after the breakup of the USSR. It pits small-to-medium powers across three continents against one another as they simultaneously manage their relationships with invulnerable non-player-controlled “Nuclear” powers (Russia, NATO, India, etc.) in addition to the capturable neutrals. The DP system stays relevant for the entirety of the game, as the Nuclear powers hold key positions around the map, and players fight on an abstract secondary map each Winter turn to improve their standing with these pernicious titans. Additionally, there are mechanics for Wing units (airbases) that allow quick convoys of armies across the map.

*(It may be some time before I run Dissolution again, however, as the real-life invasion of Ukraine continues. Russian units supporting invasions of Kharkiv and the Crimea are a bit too close-to-home at the moment.)*

## The 2024 Tournament Through Time

Interested in playing a DP variant? Next year (2024), I will be running a year-long tournament featuring four of these DP variants.

- R1 (Jan 2 – March): *Sub-Saharan*
- R2 (Apr 2 – June): *Succession & Legacy*
- R3 (July 1 – September): *Order of the Dragon*
- R4 (Sep 30 – mid-December): *Saga of the Nine*

This will be my second time running an online year-long variant tournament (the first TTT was in 2018), and I hope to get solid players from the online, Discord, and Face-to-Face communities involved.

## Structure & Top Table

Each round will have a cap of 7 or 8 years of play. Each round will be played via Discord and run at a pace of two major turns (Spring, Fall, Winter) per week. Scoring will use the Fibonacci system, which is a mathematical variant of Carnage.

Rounds 1-3 should field 2-3 tables each, depending on signups. Round 4 will be a “top table”, with nine top-ranked players based on the sum of their top two scores from rounds 1-3. The Paris Method will be used for power selection and endgame tie resolution.

The board-topper (or soloist) from this top table will be crowned the tournament champion!

## Contact

Please join my Diplomacy Variant Discord server for further information and to have access to the signup form when it first becomes available.

**Discord Invite Link:** <https://discord.gg/BtS4jXM>

Official enrollment in the Tournament Through Time should begin in mid-October. If interested in competing, spectating, or providing coverage of the event, please contact me via Discord (**NoPunIn10Did**) or email ([w.alex.ronke@gmail.com](mailto:w.alex.ronke@gmail.com)).

Even if you aren't sure you can commit to two of the three initial rounds, please consider playing! We will need to find proxy players and replacements (as is often the case online). We may even team up pairs of players to cover for one another's scheduling conflicts.





# A Battle Royale of Weasels

By Chris Kelly

In late July, the Windy City Weasels (the local Diplomacy club in Chicago) hosted its league championship, the Weasel Royale. The Royale was played in a virtual face-to-face format, like many of the club's games the past few years, allowing for the participation of non-local competitors who had qualified via previous league contests.

Partly because of this wider scope, the Weasel Royale featured a full roster of Diplomacy veterans, with many who could boast recent successes. Brandon Fogel has graduated from being the indisputably dominant Weasel of the past several years to being known as one of the world's best players, winning Dixiecon and the Virtual Diplomacy League (VDL) championship in 2022 as well as the VDL Invitational in 2023 (and nearly capturing the world championship in Bangkok in August). And he wasn't even the top seed for the Royale -- that was Tim Crosby, winner of the 2022 virtual Tour of Britain, who also finished third in the 2022 VDL standings.

Other contestants included Ben Kellman, Wes Ketchum, and Christian Brown, who at the time of the Royale were ranked 2nd, 7th, and 12th respectively in the 2023 VDL standings. Rounding out the field were myself and fellow Chicago local Kevin O'Kelly, both with decades of Diplomacy experience despite only playing sporadically of late.

The combined skill level across the entire board, along with the winner-take-all format and absence of any time limit for ending the contest, led to a highly dynamic game with some exceptional play, especially by the eventual champion.

## Pregame Considerations

As the fifth seed under the Paris method of selecting powers, I went in fully expecting to have a choice of either Germany, Austria, and Turkey. I concluded that I would take Turkey, and had been imagining different creative alliance scenarios to keep from being eliminated right away. But unexpectedly, folks started ~~overthinking~~ being strategic, and pushed me up all the way to 2nd by choosing to select after me. This suited me just fine -- Ben Kellman, going first, chose France, and I had played with him recently in a game where we had worked well together, so I saw no problem with taking England rather than a power on the other side of the board. The final assignments were as follows:

WCW Royale 2023 Royale 2023		
Order		Country
1	Ben Kellman (2)	France
2	Chris Kelly (5)	England
3	Timothy Crosby (1)	Italy
4	Brandon Fogel (3)	Russia
5	Wes Ketchum (4)	Austria
6	Kevin O'Kelly (6)	Germany
7	Christian Brown (7)	Turkey

With Brandon selecting Russia, it immediately became a priority for me to keep us from falling into conflict in Scandinavia. As longtime Chicago competitors, we had played together many times, and I felt especially in recent years had come into conflict far more often than I would have liked. More to the point for this particular game, I had written for Diplomacy World #161 about the "*France meta*" in the recent Diplomacy Broadcast Network Invitational tournament (where the games, like this one, were winner-take-all matches among experienced players).

A key point of that piece was how France often found a relatively easy path to success because it could count on neutrality from Italy, and on Russia to cause trouble for Germany or England. Brandon had read the article, and we quickly agreed in advance to avoid becoming entangled in a way that would only wind up helping Ben. Our success in making good on this pledge wound up having a large impact on the outcome of the game.

## The Game Itself -- Early Alliances and Opportunities

Things got off to a favorable start from my perspective, as neither France (Ben) nor Russia (Brandon) opted for aggressively anti-English openings. Even better, France and Germany (Kevin O'Kelly) fell into an immediate misunderstanding over whether to bounce in Burgundy. The general inclination that Ben and I had toward cooperating quickly solidified into an alliance to take out Germany. By spring 1902, France was in Belgium and I was in Holland (with French support) and Skagerrak as well.



Our early E/F success gave Russia an incentive to help Germany, though, and the alliance situation in the south complicated matters even further. Russia, Austria, and Turkey had formed an Eastern triple -- which, with me and Germany fighting each other in the north, meant that Russia had no direct threats. This was a classic example of the strategic situation Brandon excels at creating, persuading everyone on the board to attack someone other than him.

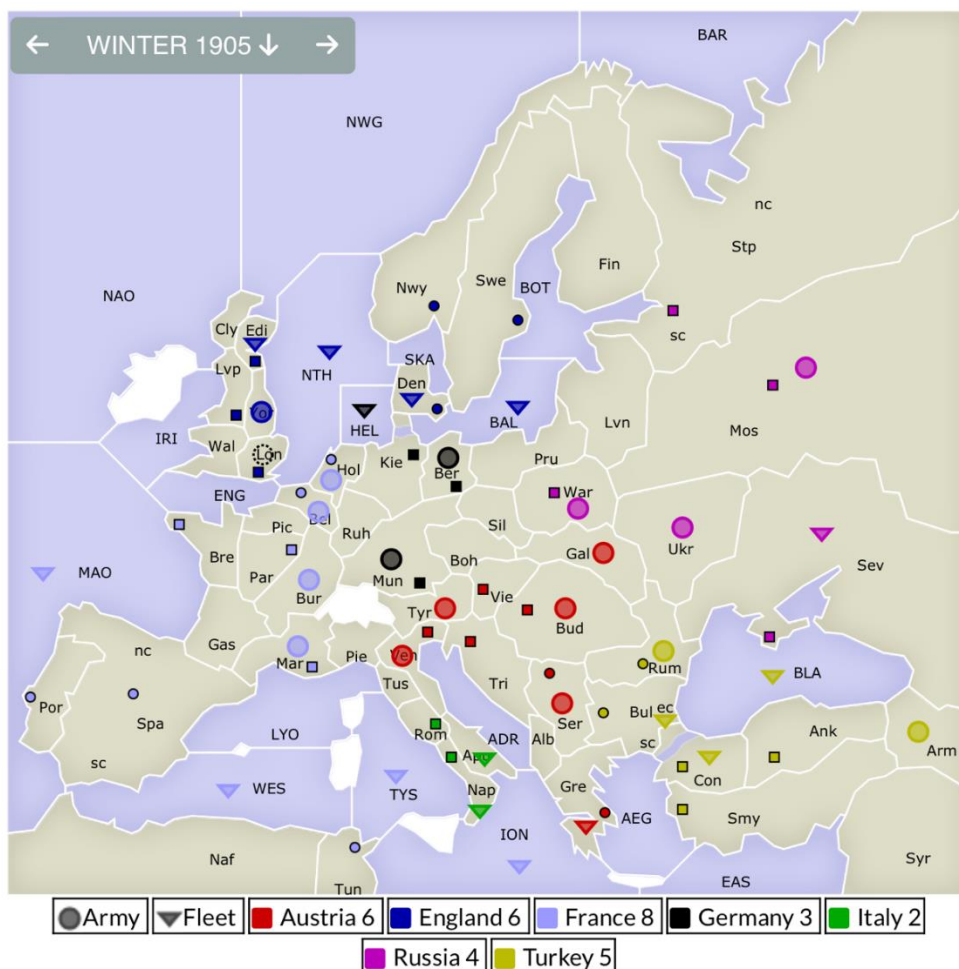
Granted, I had contributed to the problem by expressing my desire to avoid fighting him before the game's first turn, but I didn't want or expect everyone else to make the same decision. In fact, Wes Ketchum (Austria) and I had discussed in the initial negotiations the importance of not letting this precise scenario develop; he agreed, saying, "*We can't let Brandon get too comfortable.*"

But here we were, with me in line to be the first victim as the R/A/T alliance sent Russia north. Brandon moved an army to St. Petersburg in spring 1902, and I immediately foresaw the nightmare scenario of that army moving to Finland in the fall, with a fleet build on the north coast of St. Petersburg in the winter. Russia would have the

upper hand on me, Ben would inevitably stab me from behind, and the dreaded "France meta" would be in full effect.

Tactics couldn't rescue me here; only diplomacy could. It was a time for somewhat desperate, possibly futile negotiations. I dropped into one of Austria's conversations with his neighbors to remind Wes of our pregame chat and note how obviously comfortable Russia's position was. Speaking directly with Brandon, I pleaded for a truce... but how could we pull it off? The best I could do was offer to pull back from Skagerrak to Norway, thereby reducing any potential threat to Sweden, and ask him to reciprocate.

To my surprise and relief, Russia did reciprocate, building a fleet in St. Petersburg in winter 1902 but on the south coast. From there, it could choose to help prop up Germany or seal its doom, but either way it was less of a threat to England. Even better for me, my plea to Wes worked just as well. In spring 1903, Russia was stabbed by its Austrian and Turkish allies, causing Brandon to fully disengage from me in Scandinavia in order to focus on the unexpected southern threat.



By 1905, despite a miscommunication with Ben that caused me to lose Holland to Germany, I had seized Sweden and Denmark and was in position to also capture Berlin and Kiel, thanks to the evaporation of the Russian threat. With France taking Holland on its own, we were on track to control the entire northwestern half of the board within a year.

The southeastern half remained unsettled. Being a 4-center Russia trying to fend off an 11-center Austrian/Turkish alliance seemed like a challenge even a player of Brandon's skill couldn't overcome. On the other side of the A/T, Italy was down to 2 supply centers, and surrounded by 4 French units in Marseilles and the Mediterranean.

Ben, as France, seemed to be in a commanding position for winning the league championship. With Germany and perhaps Italy about to be eliminated, what decisions might change that outcome?

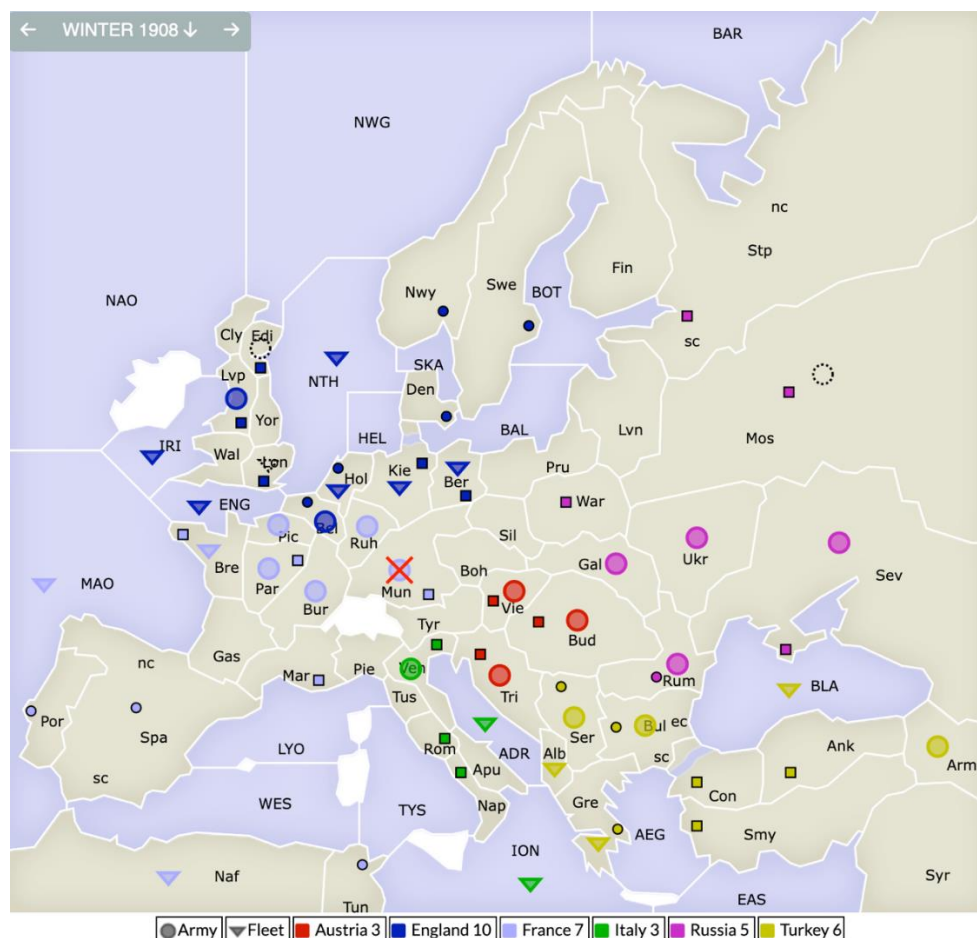
### Midgame Surprises and Stalemates

The first important choice was made by Ben Kellman himself. Rather than seek to remove Italy from the board, France chose to prop it up and give it space to

come back. Perhaps Ben feared that he could have been stymied if Austria had helped Italy to resist, but my arguably biased sense is that a very plausible chance at victory was in his grasp... and he passed it up.

In 1906, instead of sticking together to fully defeat Russia, the A/T partnership began to collapse, with Austria (Wes) stabbing Turkey (Christian) for Bulgaria and Rumania in the spring before backing out of both in the fall -- while also losing Greece and Venice. France played a role in this nightmarish turn of events for Austria, apparently luring its army out of Venice in the spring by falsely offering a bounce in Piedmont and then supporting a Turkish fleet from the Aegean Sea into Greece in the fall.

Because of its de facto alliance with Italy, come the spring of 1907, France decided its clearest path for growth was to push its Mediterranean fleets all the way east toward Turkey. But now it was Ben's turn to be unpleasantly surprised, because just as he did this, England (um, that's me) stabbed him for Holland while taking Berlin to finish off Germany -- and if not for a mistaken click in the Backstabbr online interface (*d'oh!*), I would have taken Belgium as well.



Thanks to some good tactical guesses, I did in fact take Belgium in 1908, and by winter was topping the board by a healthy margin with 10 centers (followed by France at 7 and Turkey at 6):

I would have been in the driver's seat for winning the game... except there weren't any willing passengers. Everyone was willing to grind it out indefinitely to see if they (or someone else) could find a way to beat me.

This disappointed me for a moment, but not very much -- as a lower seed who had barely qualified to play, I was ambivalent about how much I wanted to damage the chances of others who'd invested more effort all year long, and in this sense, my position was nearly ideal. I had locked down a solid number of centers in the north, and could comfortably sit back and watch to see if any of the higher seeds in the south could dominate that half of the board to a greater extent. I had no favorites; if anyone succeeded, I'd tip my hat and congratulate them. If not, and especially if someone's desperation opened up a chance for me to grow further, I would ~~reluctantly~~ accept that turn of events.

Of course, what was comfortable for me was frustrating to Ben as France. Having passed up the opportunity to take down Italy in earlier years, he was probably hoping that I would press further against Russia -- either destabilizing the southeastern portion of the board in the process or at least overextending myself, opening up the possibility that he could stab me.

Similarly, my further growth depended on Russia (or better yet, France, which offered more accessible supply centers) being undermined from behind. But my northern détente with Russia had enabled it to hold its own against Austria and Turkey, and France was pursuing a similar strategy with Italy in the Mediterranean. With our defenses stacked against each other, France and I were stalemated and waiting to see who would emerge on top in the four-way cage match in the south.

### **A Skillful, Determined Come-From-Behind Victory**

And that's where things got interesting over the remaining course of the game. Remember how I mentioned that in 1905, Russia was at 4 centers against an 11-center A/T alliance, and then in 1906 an Austrian stab of Turkey backfired? It would be too glib for me to

say, "*How was I to know that Brandon had the poor bastards outnumbered?*" But it wouldn't be entirely wrong, either.

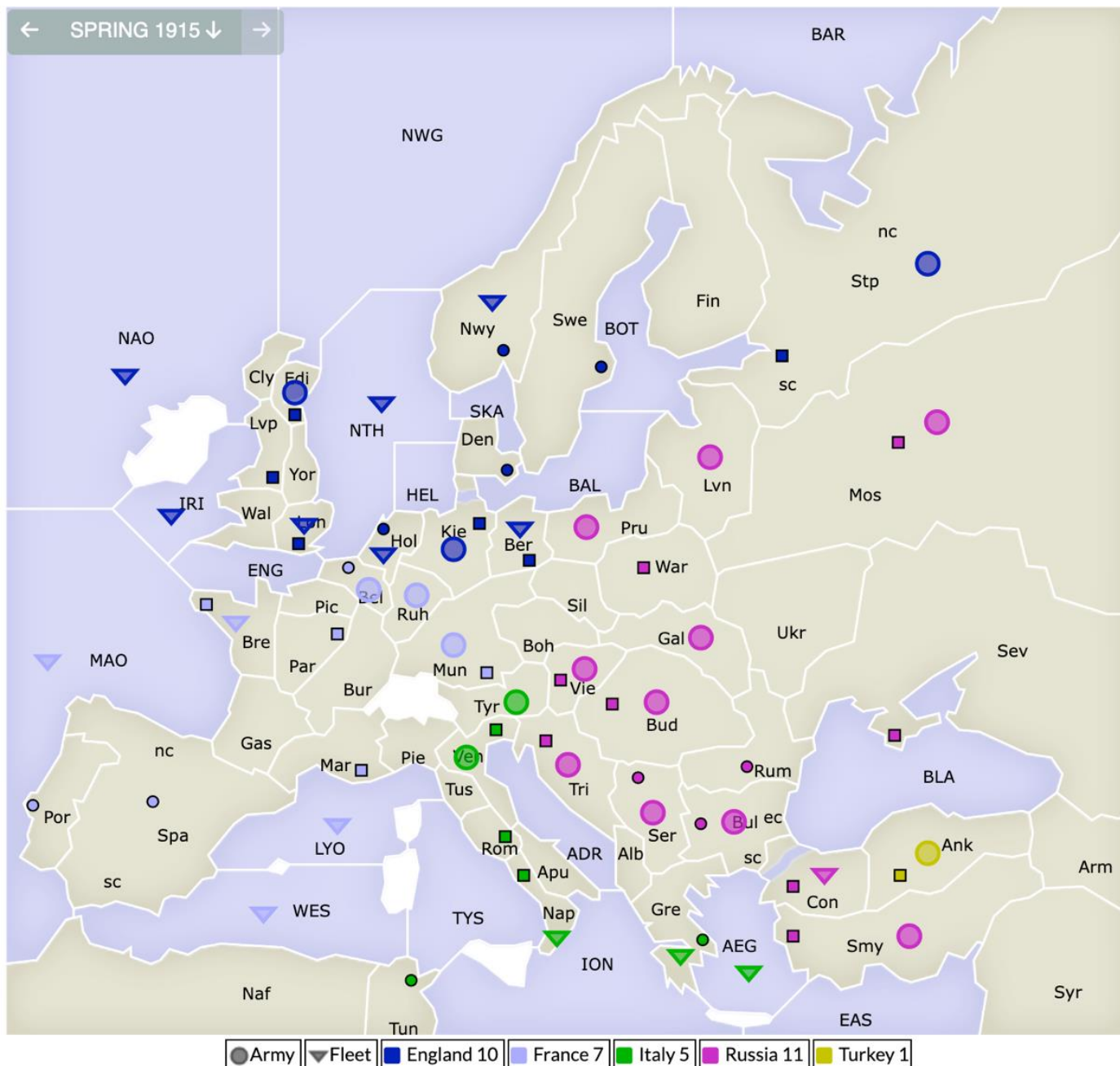
Turkey seemed to be on the rise with 7 centers in 1907, but in 1908 and 1909, Russia apparently coaxed Austria and Italy into teaming up to reverse that situation (just as he may have induced Austria and Turkey to fight with each other in the preceding turns). By winter 1909, Russia had the most centers in the south with 6, followed by Italy/Turkey with 4 and Austria with 3.

This would become a pattern; as the southern alliances continued to shift over the next several years, Russia kept inexorably growing. After more or less bottling Turkey back up in its original home centers, Russia and Italy turned their attention toward eliminating Austria, which they completed in 1911. The belated Wintergreen (with Russia at 8 centers, and Italy at 7) then reversed direction to do the same to Turkey -- at least until Brandon decided he no longer needed Tim's help.

Christian Brown, as Turkey, decided in 1911 to make one last grasp at relevance, attacking Russia and capturing Sevastopol. Italy made him pay for this choice, though, sending in fleets from behind to seize Smyrna and Constantinople. But that left Italy and Russia essentially alone in the south, and when they began fighting each other in 1913, the lone, vengeful Turkish army in Ankara helped tip the scales toward Brandon.

A belated, partial rapprochement between England and France meant Italy had to worry about protecting its home centers from French fleets in the Mediterranean as well. Even though Russia lost St. Petersburg (and Berlin and Munich, which it had briefly owned), Brandon had too many armies in the Balkans for Tim to contain him. The end of 1914 saw Russia leading everyone with 11 centers, and Italy down to only 5.

I was a close second with 10 centers as England, but Brandon had a plausible path to grow further, and I didn't. Ben briefly hoped to gamble on a possible French comeback, but finally gave into reality, and a draw was agreed to. After being in danger of elimination and all but written off, Brandon Fogel had clawed his way back over nine game years from a distant fifth place to an undisputed board top -- and a well-deserved Windy City Weasels league championship title.



It was a victory not based purely on tactics, or diplomatic skill, but a masterful blend of both, combined with unwavering focus and persistence. For anyone who would like to study the game further (which I recommend), here are some links:

<https://www.backstabbr.com/game/2022-WCW-Royale-Top-Board/5068210714574848>

Diplomacy Broadcast Network coverage/commentary (begins at 2:00:05) --

<https://youtu.be/vN1PrvCPT9Q?t=7205>

Backstabbr record of moves –

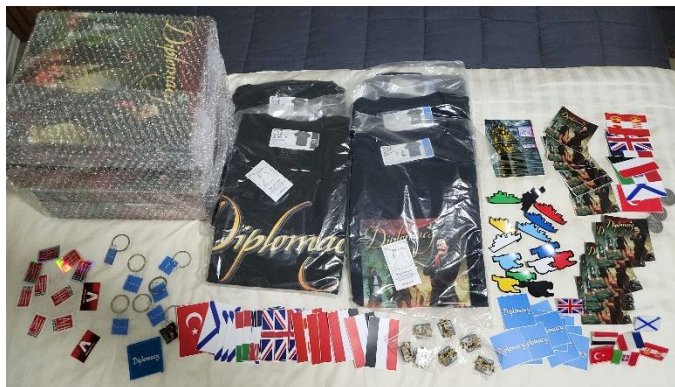


# GenCon 2023 Report

By Thomas Haver

The US Diplomacy Championship at GenCon is an annual event that coincides with the third longest Diplomacy event after DipCon and Origins. Since the 1980's the tournament has been run under a unique format called the Best Country system. In each of the four qualifying rounds of the tournament, the goal is earning a "Best Country" award by playing the assigned Power better than any other result of that Power in the tournament. Those seven competitors meet on the Top Board for the Championship. The Top Board is decided by either concession or solo – there is no time limit. If a player earns more than one Best Country award during the qualifiers, then the second-best Power is selected for the spot.

At the same time as the tournament, we run four rounds of "Introduction to Diplomacy" events at GenCon. These events are well attended, drawing even more participants than the concurrent tournament. Overall, GenCon is the most popular Diplomacy event in the world, with attendance exceeding 100 players in our non-COVID years. The peak of the GenCon Diplomacy coincided with the NPR & Grantland promotion, where we had 78 tournament players and 74 introduction players, for a total of 152. With the COVID protocols behind us, we had a return to glory and some special surprises in store for our participants.



This year's US Championship coincided with the release of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of Diplomacy by Renegade Games Studios. They provided us with additional swag for the event as well as promotional banners to promote the event. We had Diplomacy hats, Power pins, pens, mugs, stickers, shirts, and more! We also upgraded every component of our setup, with a 12'x12' walkable map, a LEGO map, 6'x4' fabric maps, wargaming mats, and of course copies of the new edition. From color-coded clipboards & order sheets to the little flag pins players wore, everything was bigger and better in honor of the new release.

GenCon had some special first-time visitors this year from Italy. Matteo Anfossi, Davide Cleopadre, and Davide's son Francesco traveled all the way from Milan to play at WBC and GenCon. We were also joined by long-time Diplomacy veteran and two-time world champion Doug Moore. Doug runs the NASCRA event concurrently with the Diplomacy tournament, but usually stops by for a round. This year we assigned Doug to a board with a gaming podcaster to help foster them through their first ever game (they insisted on playing in the tournament and not the intro for their first game). He did a great job of introducing new people to the game. John Stacy, the executive director of GAMA, played with us at GenCon. It was an honor to have him support our event; he provided us some primo space at Origins and played in our monthly game earlier this year.



GenCon was also the release of the latest edition of Game Trade Magazine (see <https://store.gametrademagazine.com/> for issue #282). The edition of Game Trade Magazine has an article on Diplomacy's relevance in the modern gaming landscape,

written by yours truly. A special year for Diplomacy. Now I can also formally reveal that even before GenCon kicked off, Diplomacy was greenlit for a 2<sup>nd</sup> print run. Expect to see the new print run in stores by December 2023.

After four qualifying rounds with some intense competition, the Top Board was finally set. Two former champions were joined by five competitors looking for their first title. Two of the challengers -- Davide Cleopadre and Matteo Anfossi -- were our Italian visitors. They're used to C-Diplo style events in Europe, so the turn-limited games at GenCon were easy to adopt. We also had a father-son duo participating: Rob Zahn and his son Brian Zahn. Rob had previously won GenCon in 1998, 2013, and 2021 (wow what a history!) whereas Brian had finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at the US Championship in 2017.

The Top Board is played on Saturday of GenCon on the field at Lucas Oil Stadium. The awards ceremony precedes the championship game because the Top Board can go late into the night and the only award left at that point is the big prize -- the US Diplomacy Championship! For the Top Board, each player randomly draws a power assignment. This is the only time we use the giant wooden board. It was specially made for our group Rogue Judges decades ago and we make it even more special by restricting use to the top board. It draws in onlookers and hobbyists alike.

The Top Board assignment was as follows:

Austria -- Phil Burk  
England -- Robert Zahn  
France -- Dan McNeill  
Germany -- Brian Zahn  
Italy -- Gregory Vaughan  
Russia -- Davide Cleopadre  
Turkey -- Matteo Anfossi

The assignment resulted in a fascinating dynamic. The Italians were neighbors, and the father-son duo were neighbors. This led to opinions about how the board would shake out the became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Since there was such worry about a Juggernaut from the Italians, there was some organized resistance. At the same time, there was concern that England and Germany would work together. Having run events with all three Zahn family members in the past, I knew that wouldn't be the case. Usually it was either son (Erich or Brian) attacking their father (Robert) to show them who's the best. Dan McNeill (France) also knew this from prior games, but neither Davide nor Matteo knew this fact.



For the next section, I will turn it over to Dan McNeill (France) for his play-by-play:

"It was a strange 1901 to say the least. The two Italian players were R/T so the other players were naturally worried about that and England and France (me) historically play very well together so people were worried about that. Throw in that Germany was England's son and R/T was able to semi-convince Austria that we were in a Western Triple and that they were in an Eastern Triple (neither proved to be the case). Italy and I laughed at him when he said this which probably wasn't the most diplomatic course of action, and that combined with the fact that Italy and I planned a [Fall 1901] assault on Munich and I think Austria panicked a bit maybe figuring that Italy was going to work with me against him and so he went for Ven. He also might not have believed that Italy was going for Mun.

The strange thing is that Italy was supposed to follow up with Rom-Ven in order to follow into Tyr and support himself in Mun. He didn't and things started going poorly for him until Russia forced [Galicia] and Turkey [attacked] Austria, and Austria realized he had to work with Italy or else it was over.

Italy and Austria were definitely the two jumpiest players at the table and it didn't help that they were in the middle of the board surrounded by two strong alliances. They had a hard time settling into the game and there came a time where it was just easier to stab Italy than to work with him so I did. It worked out for me because that turn Italy soft stabbed me and Austria semi-stabbed me by not supporting me into [Munich] when he said he would. (I should have had it anyway but messed up communication with my ally)."

The early game years resulted in a four-player fight to the finish: England and France on one side with Russia



and Turkey on the other side. For the Top Board to finish, either one player must solo or all must unanimously agree to concede to one player. Neither side would stab their ally to make a bid for the championship, so the game progressed for a few years past the stalemate line in the Mediterranean. With the game tied 10-10-10-4 (France-England-Turkey-Russia), the players finally agreed to concede the game. France had broken through the Med and was going to start picking up centers from Turkey.

The tournament ended with a unanimous concession: Dan McNeill is your 2023 US Diplomacy Champion! This was Dan's third US Championship at Gen Con. His other two victories came in 2016 and 2017. As tournament director, I think the victory was well-earned. Dan had been on an absolute ridiculous streak of board tops. 15 Austria, 13 Russia, 11 Italy, and 10 France in the qualifying rounds. He was the most locked in player at the event. You could see the relief in Dan's entire body as the concession passed the vote, collapsing his head into his arms at the table. His three-tournament streak during the summer at Origins, WBC, and GenCon was also one for the ages: he finished with board tops in all his games except for one (he finished second on that board). Congratulations on the victory!



**United States Diplomacy Champion**  
Dan McNeill

**Top Board Placement**  
1 Dan McNeill

- 2 Robert Zahn
- 3 Matteo Anfossi
- 4 Davide Cleopadre
- 5 Gregory Vaughan
- 6 Brian Zahn
- 7 Phil Burk

#### **Best Country Awards**

Austria - Dan McNeill  
England - Davide Cleopadre  
France - Phil Burk  
Germany - Brian Zahn  
Italy - Davide Cleopadre  
Russia - Dan McNeill  
Turkey - Matteo Anfossi

#### **Other awards:**

Dan Bojanowski was awarded the "Diplodocus" award for his work on the new edition of Diplomacy. The Diplodocus award was originally created by Alan Calhamer for the purpose of recognizing those players contributing to the Diplomacy Hobby via publication.

David Williams was awarded the "Best Diplomat" award from Avalon Hill for his contributions to Diplomacy. David was the long running co-tournament director of GenCon: first with Adnan Shamoan and then with me. He put significant time and resources behind the event for years. He was responsible for the teaching rounds at GenCon before I took over and stepped in after his retirement numerous times to fill out the boards.

This year we had the Top Board sign copies of the new game to commemorate the occasion. We also had Scott Gaeta and Dan Bojanowski sign the games. Chris Nadeau, Senior Director at Avalon Hill, was also in attendance for our awards ceremony and signed the games. A team effort to publish the game; we all came together for the US Championship today to celebrate the success. A wonderful event for the players and a special year for Diplomacy.

**Additional photos can be found at:**

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/epkhrxdUR3kFWRqB6>

**and**

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/YT9S8Yeqg9Yhvwjv6>