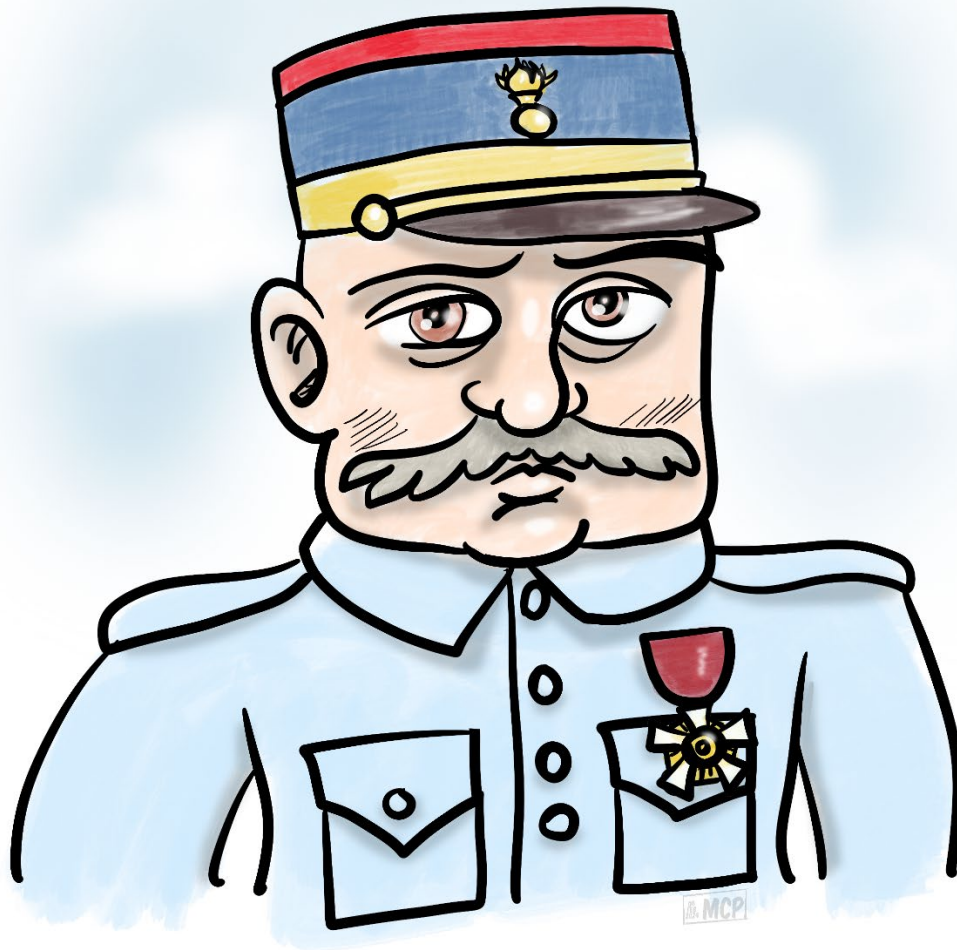


Diplomacy World #170

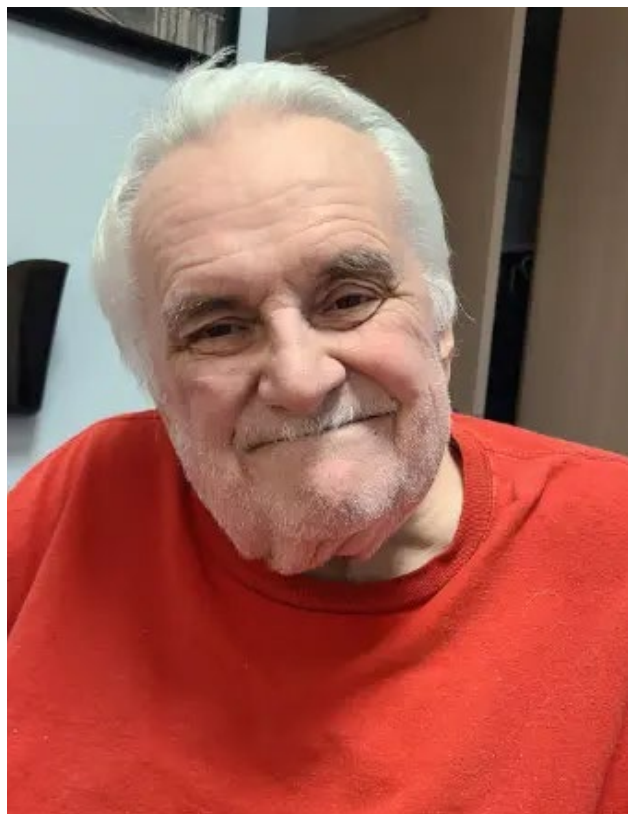


Summer 2025 Issue
www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Summer 2025 issue. I hope you are all staying cool! (regardless of what the weather is like where YOU live). Actually, there has been a massive heat wave that hit most of the U.S., to the point that temperatures down in Texas where I currently live were milder than in much of the nation. It's all relative of course..."milder" in this case still means 98 degrees (36 degrees Celsius). I guess it all depends on your basis of comparison!

Unfortunately, I need to pass on some sad news, which many of you may have already heard. John Boardman, who effectively is the "father" of the entire Play-By-Mail Diplomacy hobby (from which the Play-By-Email - and later the Play-By-Website - hobbies were formed), passed away on May 29th at the age of 92.



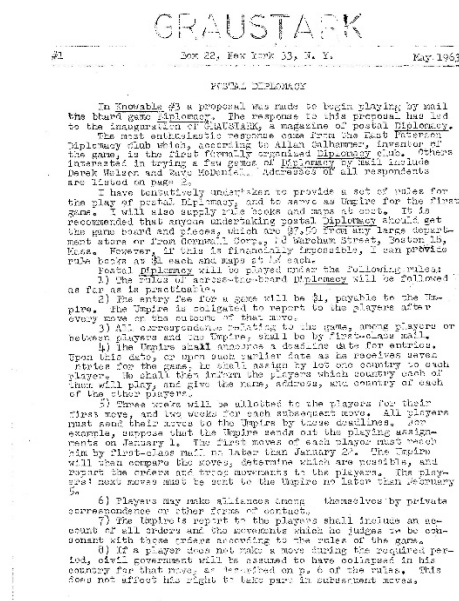
John is credited with running the first successful Diplomacy game by mail, back in 1963. He also created the first Diplomacy zine: Graustark. Graustark became workhorse of the hobby, a fixture for players new and old alike. And for over 50 years, John continued to put issues out, some large and some small, with around 800 issues released.

Along the way he also conducted the first hobby census, and published a number of other zines (Dagon and Fredonia come to mind). If you'd like to see many of the

Graustark issues, you can find them in the Postal Diplomacy Zine Archive here:

<https://whiningkentpigs.com/DW/kent/g.htm>

In 2013 John organized as GM what was intended to be his final Diplomacy game, the Allan Calhamer Memorial Game (following the death of the inventor of Diplomacy). Unfortunately, his deteriorating eyesight (and recurring printer issues) made things derail somewhat. But it was a valiant attempt at winding down his hobby activities.



Of course, John Boardman accomplished a lot more than just publishing Diplomacy zines. This goes back as far as 1957, when he was expelled from his doctoral Physics program at Florida State University for inviting three black students to a segregated Christmas party. Anyone who read John's zines through the years was sure to get a heavy dose of his political beliefs, but even those who might be on the other side of the aisle had to respect his convictions.

John Boardman will be missed. **Diplomacy World** – and the hobby itself – would not be here had he not gotten things started.

That's enough from me this time around. ***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is October 1, 2025.*** Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So, email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com! See you in the Fall, and happy stabbing!

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

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World DipCon 2025 – Tournament Director’s Report

by Adam Silverman

On Monday, March 31, I messaged Siobhan Nolen and Alex Amann in our group chat – *is this actually happening?* After the many months of lead up work, countless emails, Discord messages, phone calls, spreadsheets, and on and on, it was a bit surreal to recognize that the big event was only a few days away.

I think I can speak for the entire organizing team to say how much we all love the Bay Area and San Francisco, and we really wanted to show our travelers what a great place this is. For folks who arrived early, we had two organized trips on Thursday – a group of around 8 led by local player Darin Leviloff and Siobhan drove to the Sonoma wine area, about an hour north of SF and enjoyed tasting some fine wines.



After a quick drive back to SF, had some time to relax before our welcome dinner. We were really fortunate to find a venue willing to accommodate around 50 of us who had arrived early. It was a really nice evening with many folks meeting for the first time or catching up with old friends. It turns out Diplomacy players sure can talk – the happy buzz in our semi-private room was probably about 60 decibels louder than the rest of the restaurant.



A second group of 16 organized by Alex and me were heading to Muir Woods. Until we hit the first snag in our plans when we found out a redwood tree had fallen in the roadway and was blocking the entrance to the park. Fortunately for us, there are tons of beautiful places to explore, and we ended up instead taking a hike in the Marin Headlands in Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Local Nicolas Schoichet guided us on a beautiful 5 mile (or as most of our travelers call it, 8 km) walk while pointing out some of the interesting old WWII military installations in the area.





Of course, the night didn't end there, as Randy Lawrence-Hurt reserved a private karaoke room for us a few blocks away. There were some impressive performances (yes, the Australians are good at this too), and some less than impressive ones (not going to name names, but... me?). I turned in a little after midnight, but I understand folks were singing till 1am and then back at the hotel hanging out much later. With no morning round to wake up early for on Friday, why not?



Despite the late night, Riaz Virani, Emmet Wainwright, Ben Kellman, and I managed to get up relatively early and take morning run together around the Embarcadero. Thankfully I didn't capture any photos of that event, but meanwhile Siobhan led a group to get Irish Coffee to ensure the day would start off right.



A bunch of folks headed over to Alcatraz later in the morning, while Siobhan, Alex, and I stayed back to get the rooms set up and greet folks who were getting in during the day on Friday. Before things kicked off, we were treated to the unveiling of amazing project that led by Justin Loar – Diplomacy trading cards, with graphics by Matt Pickard. This was such a creative and cool project, that set an amazing tone for event.



Following the panel, we kicked off the games. I've gone into more details about the structure of the tournament in past articles, but to briefly summarize: the best 2 of 3 scores in rounds 1-3 counted toward qualifying for a "championship pool" in round 4. The Championship Pool seeded the top 21 players together over 3 boards, and these folks competed for the World Championship title, receiving a 50% scoring bonus in their round 4 game. Players who didn't qualify played in the Team Tournament in round 4. Everyone's final score was computed as the sum of their top two scores in rounds 1-3 plus their round 4 score. Games in rounds 1-3 were time-unlimited, while games in round 4 had a 2-hour window within which the games would time out.



I won't go into details of the games here though I hope some of the players will provide write-ups, and you can watch coverage of many of the games on Diplomacy Broadcast Network. Friday night featured 14 boards. The games were hard fought, and several went late into the night. While some folks got off early, with the first games ending well before midnight, the latest board finally called a draw at around 4am. Did I mention that round 2 would be starting only around 5 hours later, at 9am?

Round 2 featured 13 boards, and the one and only solo of the tournament by Adam Sigal's Turkey. Most of the games ended in time for the 4:30pm hobby meeting, the focus of which was to select the location for World DipCon in 2027. There were two bids presented: Brandon Fogel presented a bid for Chicago on behalf of the Windy City Weasels, and Ryan Feathers presented a bid for Las Vegas on behalf of Thomas Haver, who was not in attendance. The vote was strongly in favor of Chicago. Broken down by region, Las Vegas had 1 vote from Europe, 0 from Australia, and 4 from North America, while Chicago had 9 votes from Europe, 7 from Australia, and 42 from North America. The World DipCon charter stipulates that if there are more than 10 votes in a region, those votes get normalized to 10, so the normalized vote tally worked out to 24.9 for Chicago and 1.9 for Las Vegas. Congrats to the Chicago Windy



The main activities kicked off at 4pm local time with a hobby panel featuring Edi Birsan, Nicholas Sahuguet, and Dan Lester, hosted by David Hood. The panel talked about a range of topics with a focus on the history and importance of World DipCon as a hobby institution, as well as how far the international hobby has come in the past decade plus in building a welcoming inclusive community of players.



City Weasels. I believe they've hosted WDC twice before, most recently in 2016, and always do a phenomenal job.

After the vote, tournament directors for upcoming events shared details of their tournaments. Most notably, Spyros and Georgina Dovas shared a ton of information about next year's World DipCon, which will be held in Athens, Greece in May 2026.

Round 3, which featured 12 boards, was the last of the qualifying rounds, so folks who needed a good score would have to go all out. I expected this round to go even later than round 1, but all of the boards actually drew by around 3am – still very late by my standards. Of course, even with the games over, the I didn't get to bed for another hour or two, as I had to enter and double check all of the scores going into round 4. It turned out that 21st place was a tie, and we had to go two tiebreakers deep to settle it (Jake Mannix eking out Johnny Gillam for the final spot).



On Sunday morning, started the Championship Pool boards, featuring the 21 players who would be playing for the WDC crown, while the remaining players formed teams for the Team Tournament. Each team had 7 players, and the teams assigned each player one of the great powers to play. We had 9 teams, and seeded boards so teammates were separated. In addition to

scoring individual points, team scores were the sum of the individual scores of the teammates. The Championship Pool boards were intense; check out the DBN stream if you would like to see the details. I'll just say that the intensity of 21 folks all playing with the World Championship on the line certainly lived up to expectations. Remarkably, while I'm not sure if it was a feature or bug of the system, I think most people went into the awards ceremony not sure who had won. Adam Sigal had the huge score from the only solo in the tournament and also had another big score from his round 1 game but was targeted and ultimately eliminated in his Championship Pool game. Noam Brown overtook Adam to become the 2025 World Champion based on his 16 center England in round 2, 14 center Turkey in round 3, and 8 center Italy in round 4. Congratulations Noam, our 2025 Whipping and World DipCon Champion!



Following the tournament, many players were staying in town for a few days and went off on some individual and group exploring. Edi organized a trip to see the SF Giants baseball game Monday night, which was well attended, particularly by our Australian and European visitors.



Any event this large requires a village to make it happen, so I want to conclude with a lot of thank yous. Our Bay Area, California local players came out, helped host and show the travelers a great time, and were so incredibly supportive of the event. The Hotel Spero staff was incredible in working with us and meeting all our needs throughout the weekend. Liam Stokes maintained our website. Hal Schild designed the WDC 2025 logo and T shirts for us; we were sad that he ultimately couldn't attend, but he still got a shirt! Chris Brand's diplomacytv software is a life saver for tournament directors the world over, and he went above and beyond putting in work to adjust the software specifically to accommodate for the needs of this event. The Diplomacy Broadcast Network put on amazing coverage of WDC, providing their always incredible insights and play-by-plays for the games. And that coverage wouldn't have been possible without all the games getting sandboxed (recorded on Backstabbr), an effort which was coordinated by Patrick Jacobson. Of course, what makes these events successful is the people who attend, and I am so incredibly grateful that people took time out of their busy lives to attend, coming from all over the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. We had 105 players, which I believe makes it the largest World DipCon since Berlin in 2006!

Finally, my co-organizers Siobhan Nolan, Alex Amann, and Edi Birsan are absolutely the best in the business. Putting this event together was such an incredibly collaborative experience of many, many hours of work that happened before the event, not to mention all of the logistical and tournament directing support over the course of the weekend.



It was a pleasure and privilege to host World DipCon 2025, and this event is in phenomenal hands with Spyros Dovas in 2026 and Brandon Fogel in 2027. Hope I'll see you all in Athens next year! See the full results at [World-diplomacy-reference](https://www.world-diplomacy-reference.com/)

Top 7:

- 1 Noam Brown
- 2 Adam Sigal
- 3 David Hood
- 4 Brandon Fogel
- 5 Katie Gray
- 6 Yann Clouet
- 7 Jamal Blakkarly

Best countries:

- Austria: Dan Lester 12 SCs
England: Brandon Fogel 17 SCs
France: Maaïke Blom 12 SCs
German: Jordan Conners 17 SCs
Italy: Nicolas Sahuguet 17 SCs
Russia: Yann Clouet 16 SCs
Turkey: Adam Sigal 18 SCs

Team tournament winners:

Team Stabbing Westward: Steven Hogue, Cody Greene,
Mike Moore, Emmett Wainright, Yuri Niyazov,
Heymchen Vandergriff, Edwin Lopez

Special awards:

- Grizzly Bear: Isaac Juckes
Hibernating Bear: Riaz Virani
Player's Choice: Zoe Cameron
TD's Choice: Liam Healey
Nostradamus: Tim Crosby
Best Pirate: Pete Gaughan
Russian flask: Ruben Sanchez
Cannon: Randy Lawrence-Hurt
49er: Zac Davis
Best Shane Cubis: Brandon Austin
Whipped: Karthik Konath
Handcuffs: Joey Beckman
Ball gag: Tim Crosby
Hobby Service Award: Spyros Dovas
Globetrotter: Dominick Stephens
Best Rookie: Heymchen Vandergriff

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Christian Kelly - I've just reconnected with the hobby after an absence of two decades and enjoyed DQ 169.

A game I am currently playing sees an Austrian fleet in Armenia (as of Winter 1908), something I have never come across before. You might like to run a story on unusual places that units (fleets mainly I guess) have ended up in. And/or invite reader submissions on the topic.

<https://www.backstabbr.com/game/NQ-World-Series-I-Final/5200853611708416>

[[Amazingly, when I mentioned this situation to Edi Birsan, he said he'd seen it very recently in a tournament. But I imagine it is still quite uncommon. And Edi was inspired to write an article about it, which you can find elsewhere in this issue.]]



Thomas Haver - We've done quite a few videos since the last issue of Diplomacy World. The topics have ranged from the upcoming Era of Empire game to the Renegade Heroes community program to plain old classical Diplomacy strategy. In case any of your loyal readers missed, here are the links. My personal favorite is the Era of Empire video from Renegade where Dan, my wife, and I dress up as the box art characters from the game.

Renegade Game Studios

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

Diplomacy: Era of Empire Diplomatic Discussions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VT73XFCfFI>

Renegade Heroes interview (Organized Play)

<https://youtu.be/Q86XKUmbwPg?si=X5R2cbwBvumvOnS4&t=892>

Board Game Nation

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

How to Play Diplomacy: Era of Empire

<https://youtu.be/n973VRl0qoQ>

Legendary Tactics

<http://www.youtube.com/@LegendaryTactics>

Diplomacy ERA of EMPIRE: How to Play

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-W8T0qXKyKE>

STRATEGY and Overview for Diplomacy: ERA of EMPIRE Board Game

<https://youtu.be/4vyWdr2JrRM?si=NCD5igkxNnHhY2wp>

Diplomacy STRATEGY with a WORLD CHAMPION

<https://youtu.be/OhFQabaBVHs?si=DNqcZKdK1FMiEEL6>

Cutting Through the Crap

by Steven Hogue

Some of y'all care way too much about solo victories. Just imagine...a game we all come together to play, having a winner at the end? Perish the thought.

We're pushing blocks around, people. Nothing about it is sacred.



I'll die on this hill - nineteen is better than eighteen. Twenty is better than nineteen. etc. Not hearing any of that "well, eighteen is just a proxy so after that it's all the same" argument.

Here's why: it's possible for someone to slip into eighteen but be in a position where they can't hold it if you keep playing. Unlikely? Sure. But solos in general are rather unlikely, no?

Nineteen is simply better than eighteen, period. And it always will be.

I have a strong distaste for keeping "tricks of the trade" close to the chest. Once the game is over I will always be more than happy to unpack every choice I made in broad daylight.

Why? A rising tide raises all ships. That's why.

I keep encountering this notion that it's totally bizarre to help someone who just stabbed me. It's been strongly insinuated that there's something wrong with my thinking, like there's some higher-level Diplomacy concept I just "don't get".

When the clock starts in Spring 1901, I have six

opponents. Hopefully one or more of them become allies. But here's the thing - "ally" does not replace "opponent". It sits beside it. You are my opponent and my ally at the same time, which is preferable to being my opponent and my enemy at the same time.

With each passing season you cooperate with me as allies, you improve your chances of becoming the person I'd like to see win if it can't be me. Similarly, with each passing season you directly, actively work against me - diplomatically or otherwise - you improve your chances of becoming the person I wish to spite. Spend two years convincing my ally to stab me, and then they do it? Why on earth would I move my pieces in a way that will benefit you after that? You've built up zero good favor with me - in fact you're well into the red after that. Sorry? You won't be getting congratulations and a bouquet of roses from me for pulling off that particular feat. I'm going to do what I can to see my erstwhile ally win over you.

I will not pretend the narratives that play out on DBN broadcasts have no impact on how players and styles of play are perceived by the community at large. With a platform comes privilege and power. With power comes responsibility. That's brass tacks.

Don't get it twisted - I adore DBN and I will sing their praises for as long as they keep kicking butt. But here's the rub: oftentimes what gets said on those streams is (unintentionally) flat out wrong, and like, not just "wrong" but WAY off base. Not even in the same ballpark as what truly happened. And yes, I will be the first to admit, and it's no secret, that when I see my name tossed out in a completely false narrative, it lights a fire in me to go share the truth.

You put in the work to build a platform, you get to say what you want. And I get to hold you accountable. I get to challenge you to do better. To be fairer. More grounded in what you can actually see and less pontificating within your ideal version of what could've happened.

This game is great and it seems to draw great people. Seeing that play out gives me hope. Let's stay after it.

KublaCon 2025 – The Two Giants

by Thomas Haver

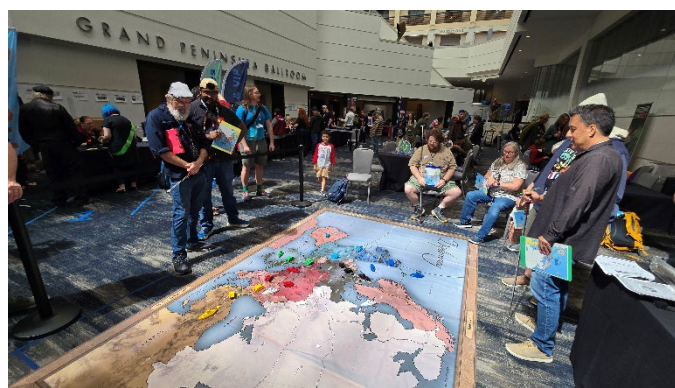
Giant Diplomacy returned to KublaCon for a second year. This time, we brought along a giant map for the upcoming "Diplomacy: Era of Empire". KublaCon is an annual convention hosted in the Bay Area that draws thousands of attendees from all over the country. The organizing committee is professional, having run this convention for decades and expanded into Fall events and cruises.



This year was extra special because my wife and kids were joining me for the convention and a holiday in the Bay Area. I appreciated the extra luggage capacity from my family since two giant games plus pieces plus swag is too much for one person. Our Diplo-family has grown used to these trips, having completed a number of

conventions the prior two years. We teach games and then explore the surrounding city for family fun. This trip was no different, with sightseeing at the Golden Gate Bridge, the San Francisco Zoo, the Cable Car Museum, Pier 39, and more. We also visited the two Jollibee restaurants to enjoy that Filipino classic that brings the Filipino diaspora from all over a little taste of home.

Back to the convention, our events were located in the "Large Games" area that had other behemoths for players to get a unique experience during the convention. Each game was rules taught for new players, with plenty of swag for all attendees. Everyone who participated received a Diplomacy shirt in addition to branded pens, pins, stickers, magnets, and more. The Diplomacy game had several returning players from last year with several newbies. Just like last year, the game was extremely close. Despite the experience gap, the supply center count was close from start to finish. Turkey and Germany tied for first place at seven centers each, with the pair splitting the prize (Diplomacy game for Turkey and Diplomacy mug for Germany). No power was eliminated, with the smallest power on the board being England at two centers. Overall, it was a real fun game. Everyone got to flex their tactical muscles a bit through some interesting map configurations, which I always enjoy watching as the GM. I know I've got some long-term players when they start asking me more complex questions about supports and convoys, defending by attacking, and situations that lead to beleaguered garrisons.



In the Era of Empire game, it was evenly matched between the players, which is to be expected for a brand new game. Everyone was starting off on the same level. We also had two young kids playing, with one helped by a parent and another helped by an experienced player willing to foster young talent. Per the norm for these demo games, the players are often timid in their first year. They're reticent to event bounce one another because they don't want to "screw up" and "get jumped".

That lead to almost every playing doubling up the first year. Once those neutrals were captured, it was time to make tough decisions about allies and enemies. Japan and Turkey stabbed Russia, while England & the Netherlands stabbed France. The end game was a race to board top for prizes. Congratulations go to Alex Baker who finished with 12 as Turkey. The game ended in a 12-11-10 finish with Turkey-GB-Netherlands. The final turn tactical game between Turkey and GB determined the victor.



We're also looking for new volunteer organizers in the Bay Area. We provide our volunteers with free games, swag, promotion, and 1:1 support on how to run events. If you're interested, please consider joining the community outreach program for Renegade Game Studios and become a Hero:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/introducing-the-renegade-heroes-community-program/>



The winners of each Giant Intro game received a copy of Diplomacy and "Era of Empire". For the latter, our winner must wait until the release in August. We look forward to returning next year with even more cool experiences (and swag) for our players.



Final Note: If you're interested in playing a F2F game on our giant maps, I recommend joining the official Discord for Renegade Game Studios:

<https://discord.gg/TFPfdDKF>



Austria's Big Day in VDL

by Chris Kelly

Part of the beauty of Diplomacy that it's a seven-player game with no formal element of chance, but anyone can win depending on the strategic and tactical choices made. That said, it's also known that some powers often face a more challenging path to victory than others, and one power with that reputation is Austria.

In the World Diplomacy Championship in San Francisco in April, 51 games were played. Austria topped only 4 of those boards by itself, shared a board top twice... and was eliminated in 28 games, substantially more often than any other power (Turkey was closest, with 17). Among the victims were several well-known, first-tier players--including the 2nd, 4th, and 8th-place finishers among the 100-plus participants in the WDC (due to their success in other rounds), as well as other competitors with past tournament victories to their credit. All told, it was a grim weekend for playing Austria.

But in the batch of online games played in the Virtual Diplomacy League (VDL) just a month later, things were very different. In five time-limited games (typically going no longer than 1910) played on May 17, players in Austria scored three double-digit sole board tops. Even more impressively, each featured different early alliance choices -- demonstrating that not only can Austria win in

Diplomacy, it has a variety of possible routes to achieve it.

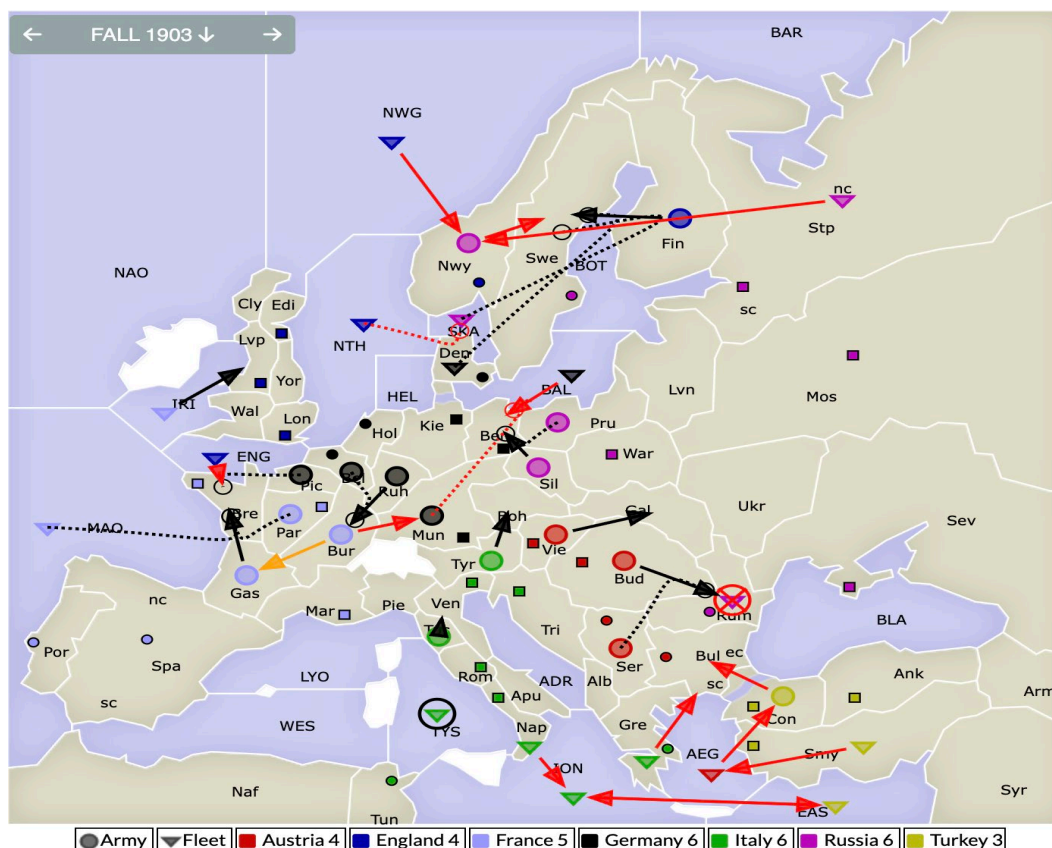
A summary of each game follows, with the name of the Austrian player and the primary alliance strategy, along with a Backstabbr link for anyone who wants to follow the moves in more detail.

VDL 224 (Christian Brown, 13 centers, A/I)

<https://www.backstabbr.com/game/5166833986306048>

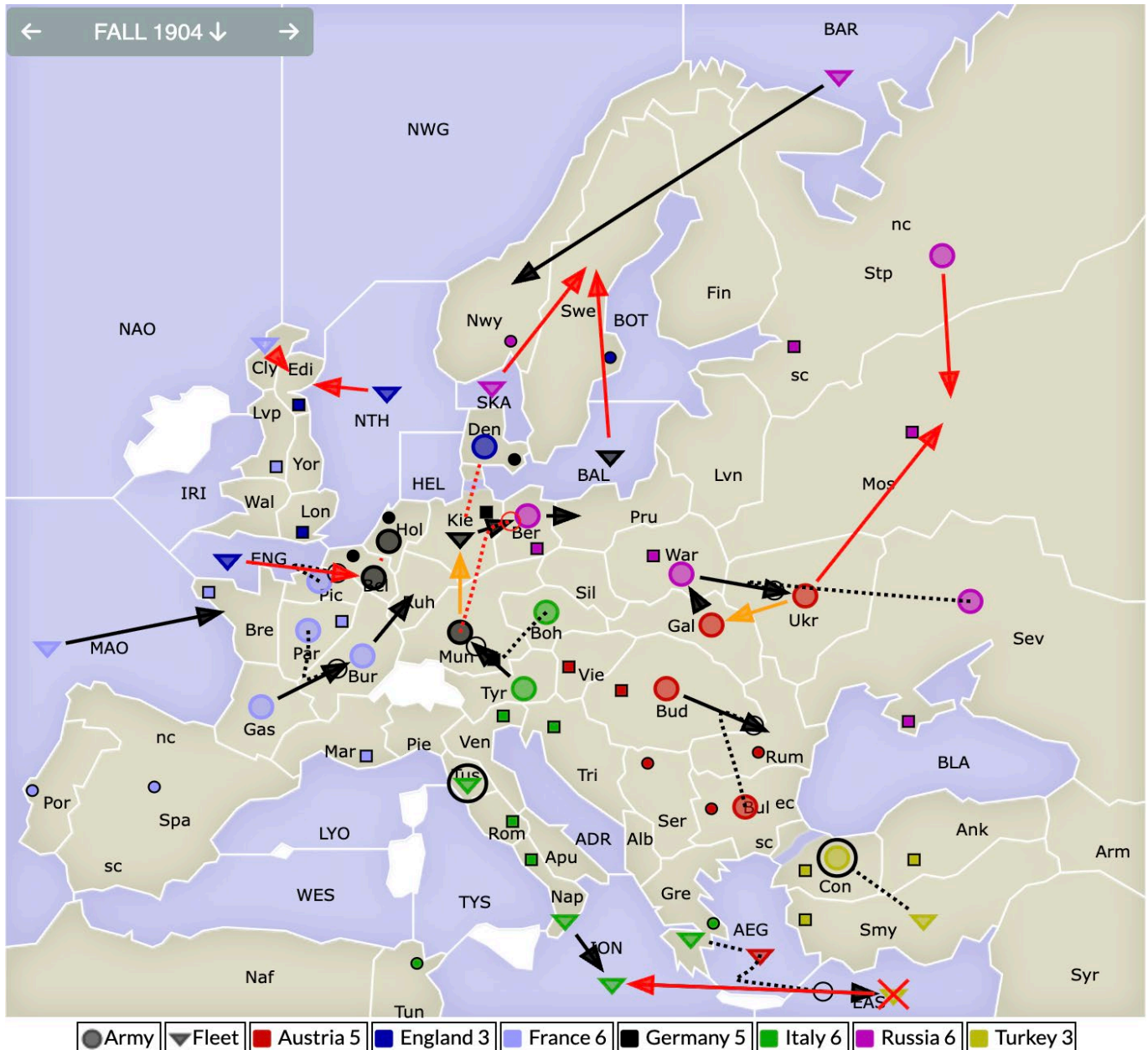
This game started out looking like a Russia/Turkey alliance versus Austria and Italy... except that Italy didn't seem very friendly to Austria either, swiping Trieste in 1901 with no reciprocal move to the Aegean instead of Tunis (a common deal in recent years). 1902 showed more alignment, with Italy cutting Turkish support so Austria could seize Bulgaria, then being given Greece in return.

Austria's first key maneuver came in 1903, as it negotiated a three-way alliance with Italy and Russia -- but only the latter two moved to challenge Germany along the stalemate line, while Austria captured not just the Aegean, but Rumania and Galicia:



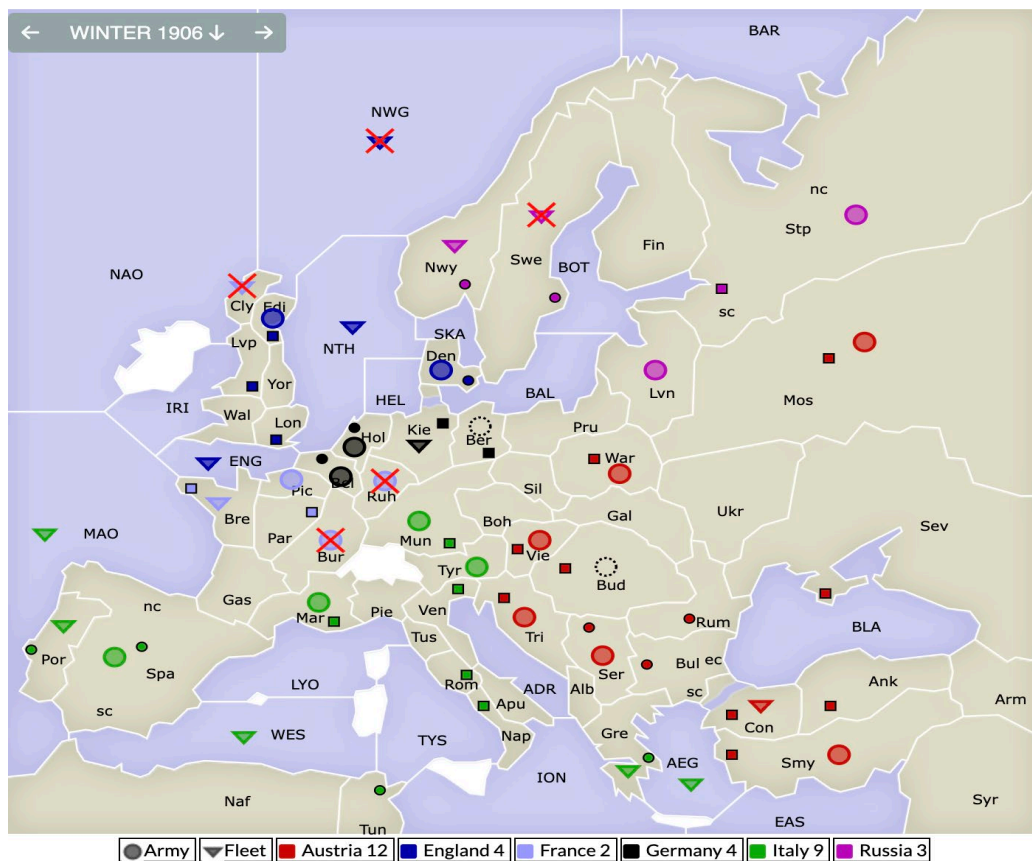
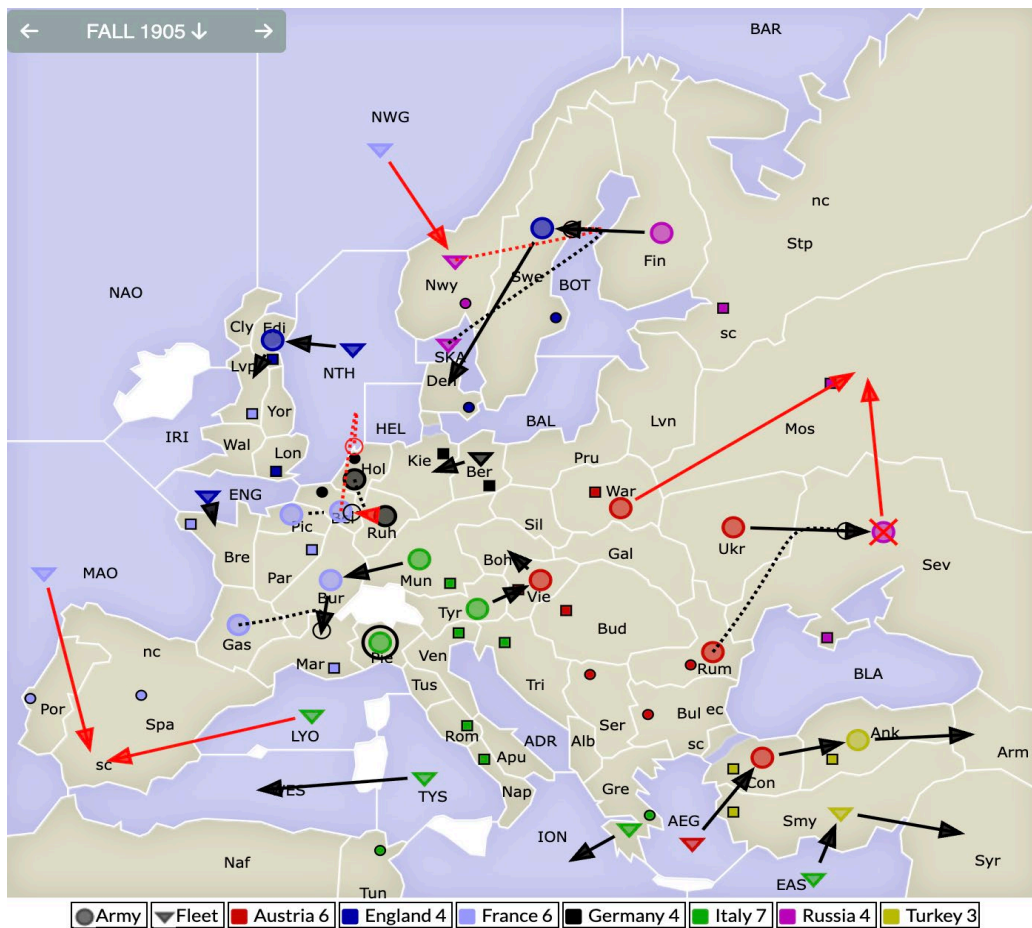
Russia taking Berlin enabled it to rebuild an army in Sevastopol, but Austria's malign intent became more obvious in 1904 as it advanced to Ukraine, then smartly

outguessed Russia's attempted counterattack by slipping into Warsaw:



These advances snowballed into a dominant position in 1905 and 1906, as Austria aggressively exploited the opportunities it was given by other players' choices. Russia chose to focus on Scandinavia rather than attempt to salvage its weak southern position, and after losing an S1905 guess in defending Constantinople, Turkey walked out of its last two supply centers.

By agreement or not, Italy took Vienna from Austria, which in combination with Smyrna enabled it to keep the numerical upper hand in the alliance. But several centers were in easy reach for Austria, and in 1906 it decided to seize nearly all of them -- walking back into Vienna in the spring, and then forcing its way into Smyrna, Trieste, and Moscow in the fall:

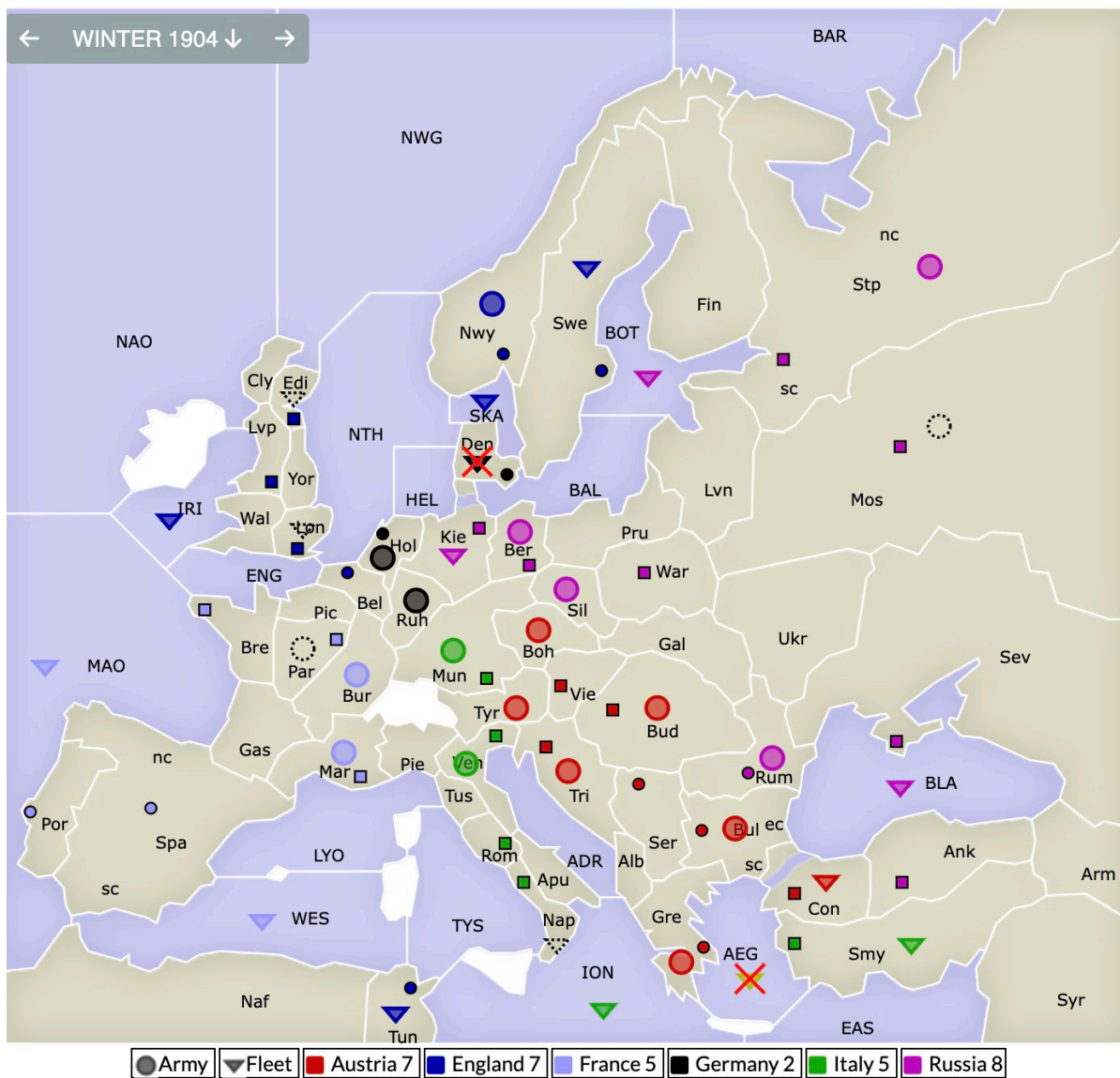


With a build already in pocket from 1905, Austria was in the awkward, if still enviable position of being eligible to add 5 units, but only having 1 home center to build in. For some reason, the game dragged on for another four years -- perhaps Christian was stubbornly trying to see if there was a solo opportunity, or just wanted enough time to build all of his available units -- but it ended in 1910 with Austria only having gained one more supply center to end with 13. Either way, it was an impressive showing.

VDL 225 (Darcy Morris, 11 centers, A/R)

<https://www.backstabbr.com/game/6318077018767360>

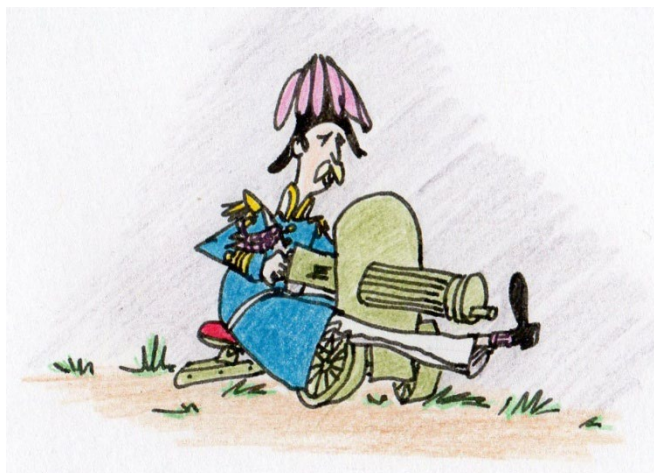
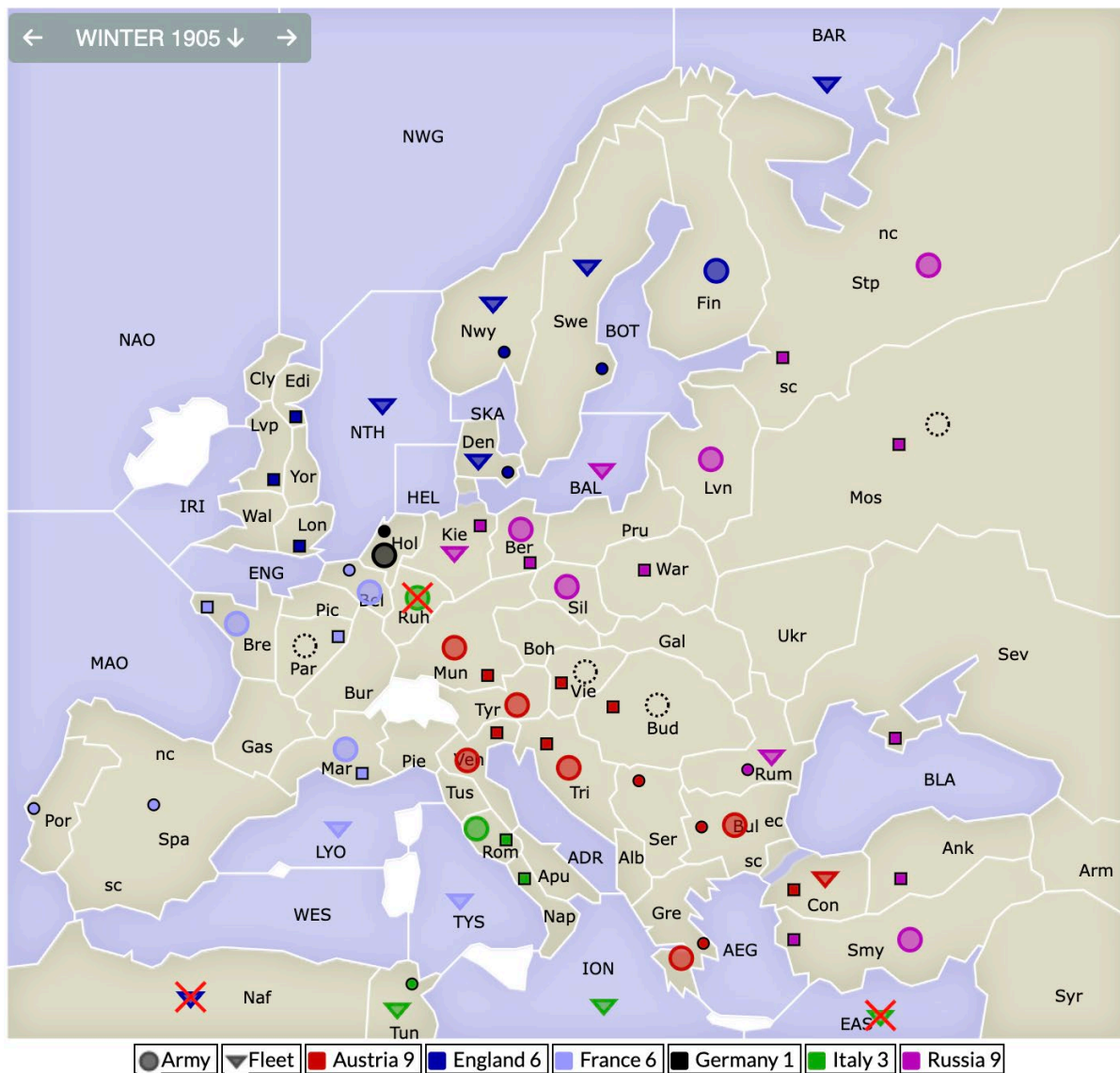
A set of fairly unremarkable opening moves for all of the eastern powers here became a surprisingly fast-moving A/I/R alliance in 1902 and 1903, catching both Turkey and Germany leaning too far in the wrong directions. By the end of 1904, the Turks had been eliminated, and all three German home centers had been captured:



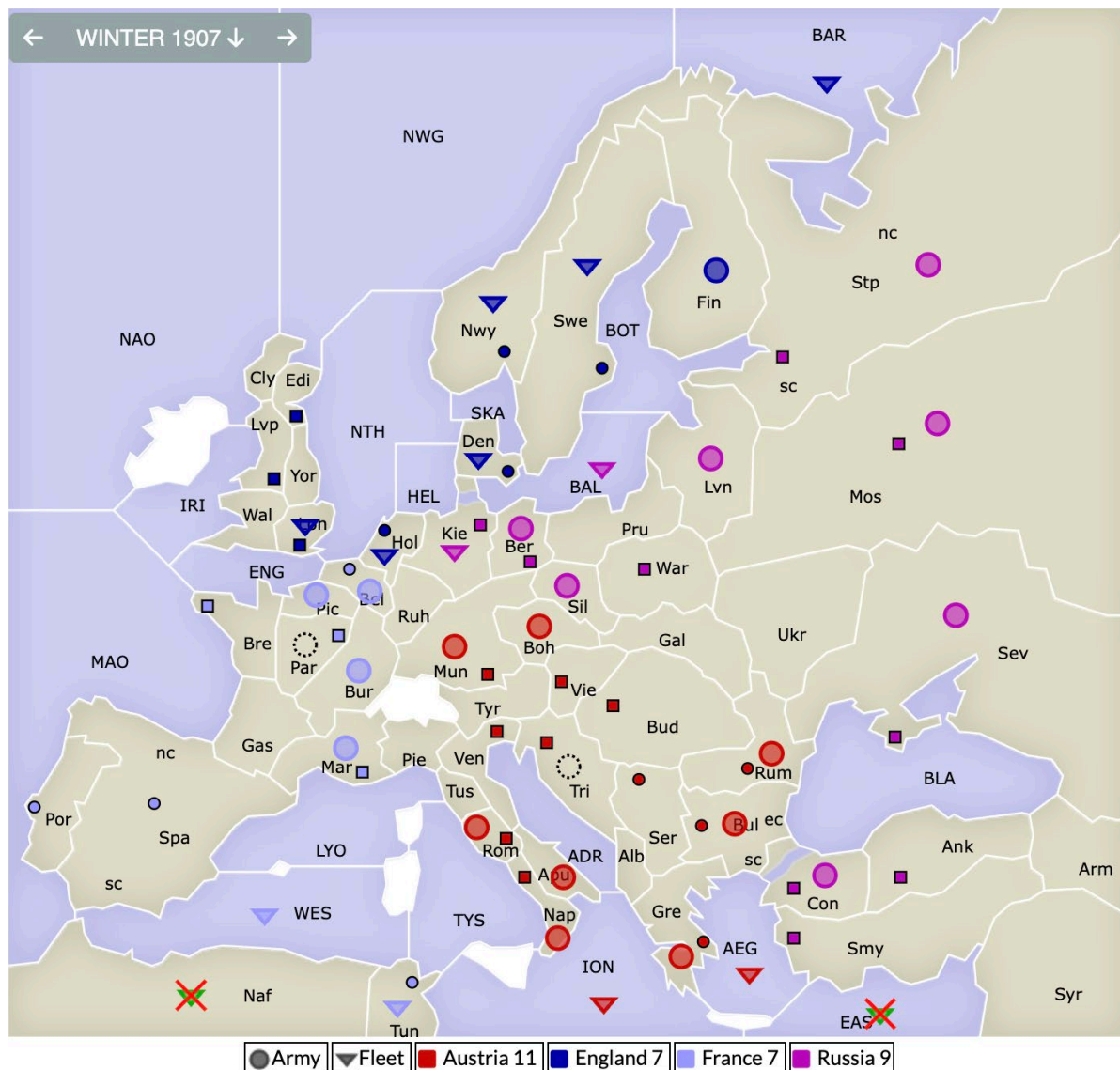
There were warning signs for Austria's partners, though - the focus on blitzing those initial victims had caused Russia to lose Sweden, and Italy to give up Tunis (both to England!). The risk for Austria in an A/I/R triple alliance is getting squeezed its erstwhile collaborators when they believe it's an easier choice than pushing against the west... but the flipside is finding opportunities if both Italy and Russia encounter aggressive opposition

on the far edges of the board, and that's what happened here.

This situation apparently caused Austria and Russia to ask, "What if there was no 'I' in A/I/R?", and they accordingly cut Italy out of the alliance, pushing their way into Smyrna, Venice, and Munich:



Once again, the midgame stab largely settled matters. Over 1906 and 1907, there was little movement aside from Italy being eliminated as Austria bulldozed its way into Rome/Naples and France took Tunis. This is how the contest ended, with Austria topping the board at 11 centers:



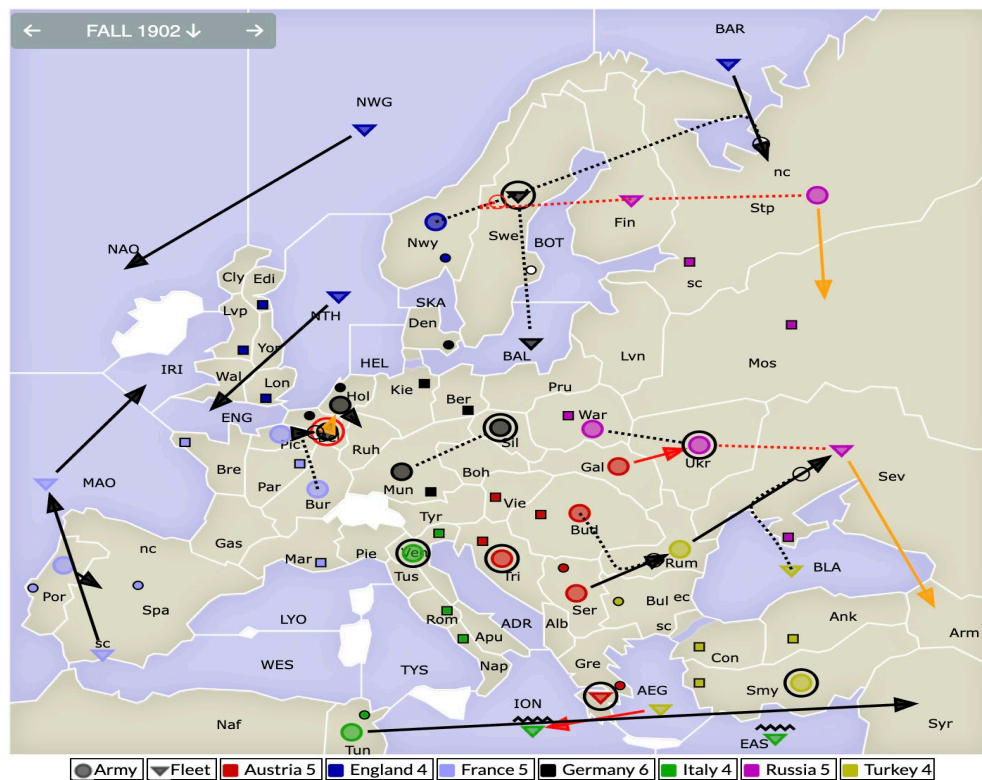
VDL 227 (Marcus Loane, 16 centers, A/T)

<https://www.backstabbr.com/game/4814641030889472>

So, an A/I/R where Austria cuts out Russia, and another one where it stabs Italy... is that all there is? Why, no! How about an Austria that burns through serial, short-term alliances until it clears out an entire half of the

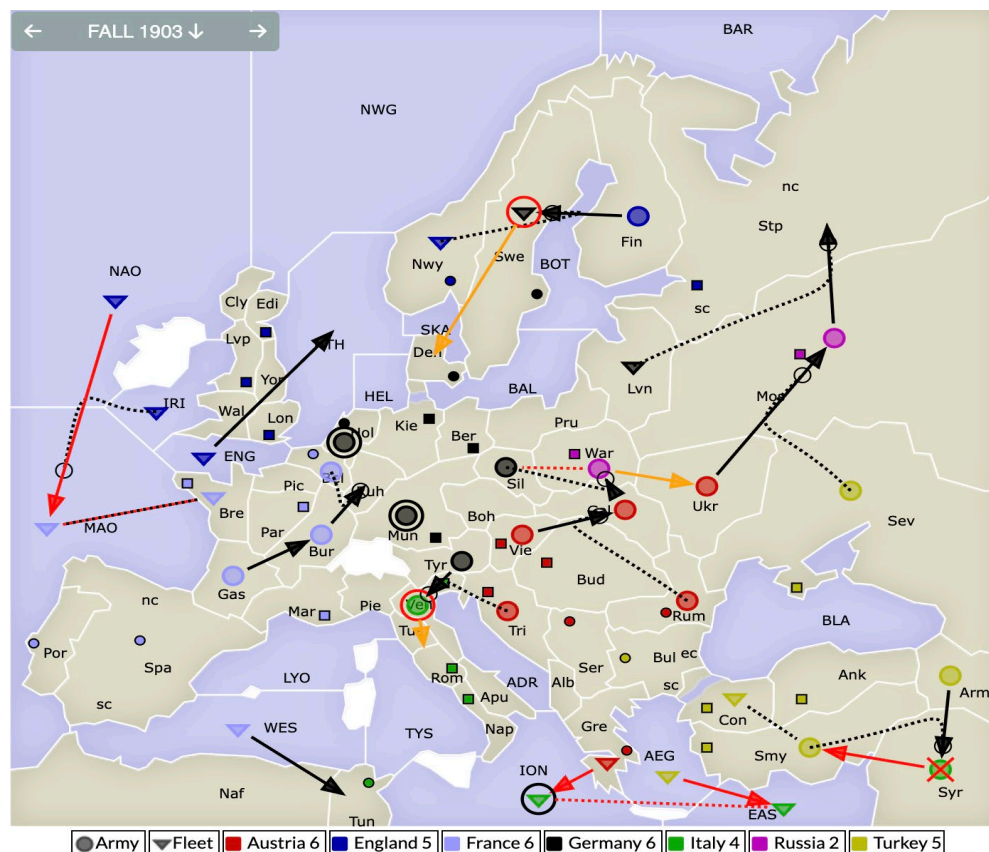
board?

This game began very tentatively in the east, with no clear alliances until two simultaneous attacks occurred in 1902, which I assume were cleverly orchestrated by Austria -- a joint assault with Turkey versus Russia, even as Italy was executing a classic Lepanto against Turkey:



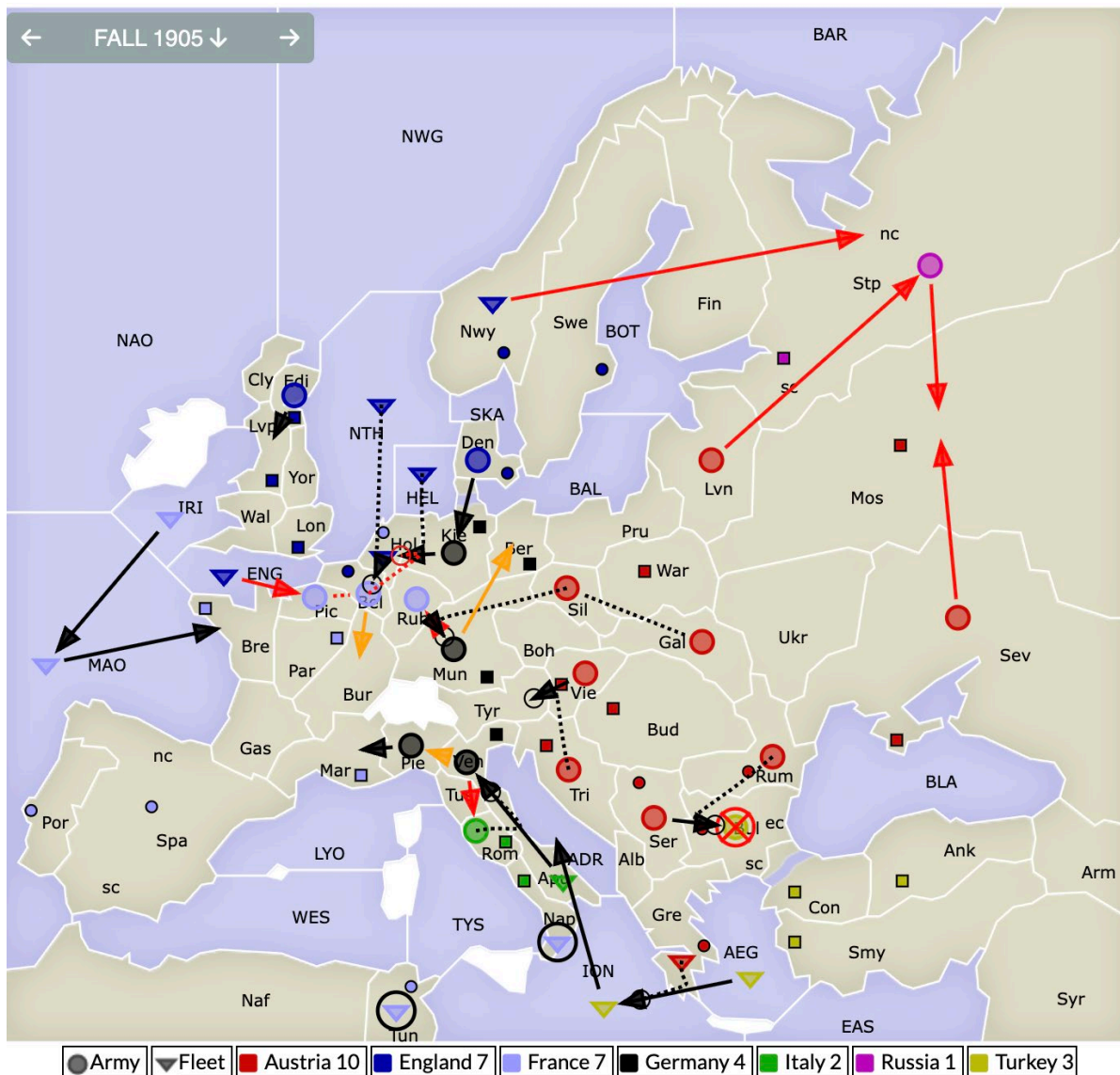
Not satisfied by allying with Turkey against Russia, and with Italy against Turkey, Austria went a step further by looping in Germany in 1903 to help attack both Italy and

Russia, while easing up on Turkey long enough for it to fight off the Lepanto invasion:



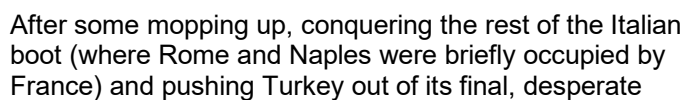
Which isn't to say that Austria showed much gratitude or mercy toward anyone, as it took Sevastopol from Turkey in 1904, and then Bulgaria in 1905 while supporting

France into Munich and watching as Italy recaptured Venice:

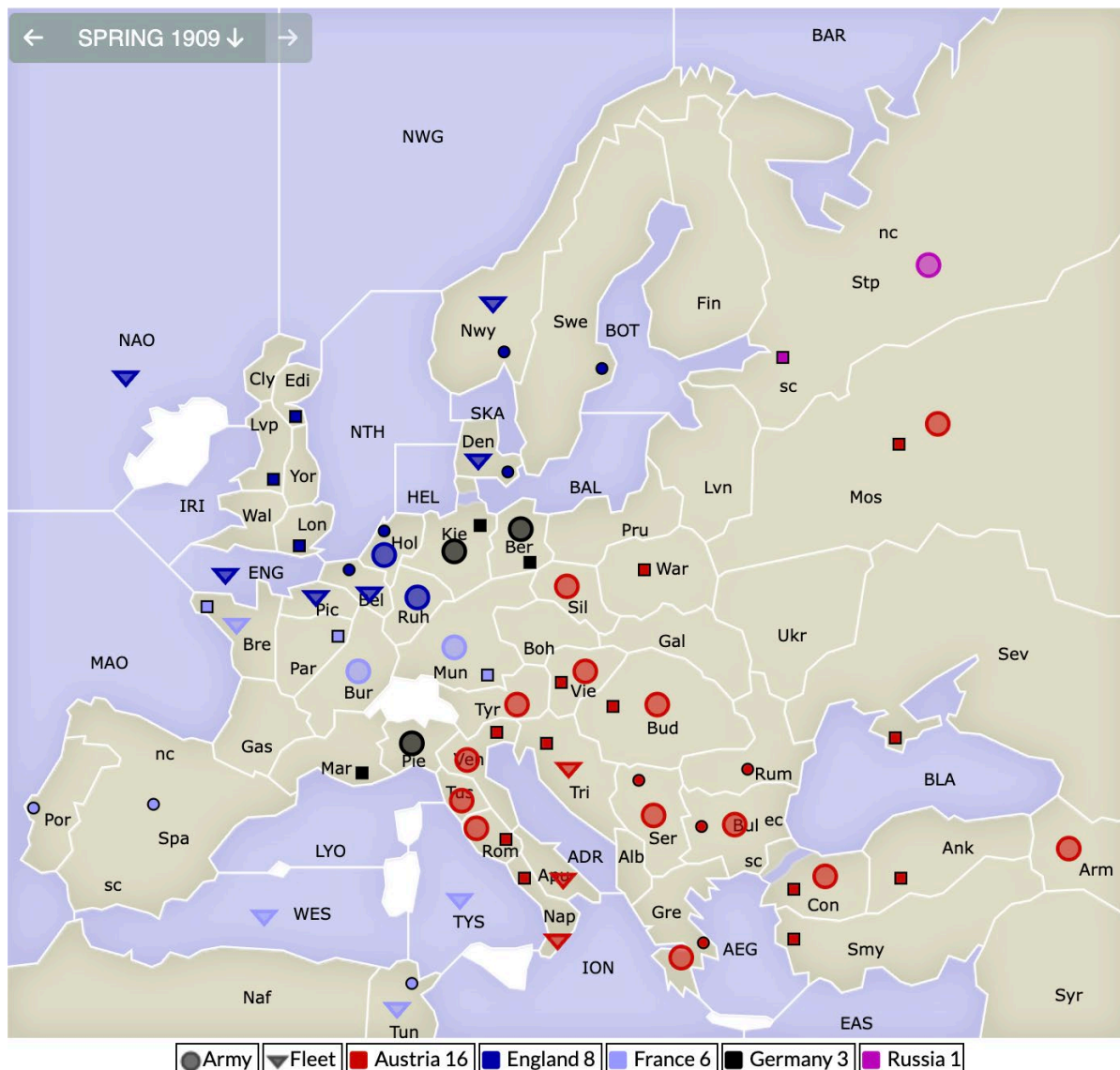


At this point, Turkey switched from being Austria's closest thing to a long-term ally to essentially a janissary role. Austria repaid this favor in classically unsentimental

Diplomacy fashion, marching into all of Turkey's home centers by spring 1907:



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So, if you draw Austria the next time you play Diplomacy, don't lose hope! As these examples show,

victory is possible... perhaps not as easily or reliably as you might wish, but that's just part of the game.

From the DW Archive – Walt Buchanan's Secret

by Mal Arky

[Diplomacy World #7](#) wasn't the easiest issue to pick a piece to revisit for this series. Or, rather, it probably was. What I should probably write is that there isn't very much in the issue that warrants covering in this series.

One article - or series of mini-articles, perhaps - on the end of a game, and another on a 'Demonstration Game'. Some articles on variants. Two articles on ratings systems (that I might've chosen except I write too much about scoring Dip already). Of the rest, only this called out to me.

The title caught my attention, as a good title should, making me wonder what dark, dirty skeleton the then-

publisher of *DW* was hiding. As it turned out, Larry Moran's article was very much tongue-in-cheek. But it still gives me something to write about (and it's very much worth a read).

The article follows on from the one I chose last time, which was from Walt himself: "The Two-way Game-Long Alliance". Larry's article playfully purports to explain Buchanan's great success: "*Seven victories in seven games! It's impossible! He must be playing against mental midgets or gamemastering his own games!*"

The key to Larry's specious summary of Buchanan's success is knowing a little about Walt Buchanan himself.

Walt was a lawyer; Diplomacy is a game that attracts lawyers, it seems. Whether it's the wizardry of the wordsmith that makes salient Dip players of solicitors, or some other aspect, I don't know.

Larry describes four apocryphal letters he received from Buchanan. In the first, he tells us, Walt wrote: *"I notice on your tax return that you claimed a large deduction for medical expenses in 1972. Did you have an accident?"* In the second: *"I believe we have a mutual acquaintance named Virginia in Atlantic City. Does your wife know her, too?"* The third contained an enquiry about *"Eskimo carvings I bought in Canada last year"* and whether Larry was aware of *"how easy it was for a lawyer to alter credit ratings."* And, in the fourth letter Larry mentions, Buchanan is purported to say: *"Dear Larry, Due to unforeseen expenses the price of DIPLOMACY WORLD has risen to \$25 an issue. However, if you were to support me into Belgium..."*

What Larry doesn't say is which powers the two were playing. He mentions, however, France being helped by other players (Italy, Austria and Turkey), including Turkey and Italy conveying a French army from Marseilles to Smyrna; that he (Moran) helped Buchanan (France, presumably) into Holland and Munich; and that Russia was the only player who: *"... continued to fight and I secretly admired him for his courage."* (He does state: *"It seemed to me that Walt had been unable to dig up any information on the Russian player but later on I learned that he committed suicide in prison after his wife left him. Russia went into CD."*) This suggests that England, the only power not mentioned, was the power Larry controlled.

Whether this was a genuine game or not, I'm not sure. As everything else in the letter is fictitious, perhaps not. Only the two actors themselves can say. But it illustrates a couple of things that were present in Diplomacy at the time: metagaming and blackmail.

Metagaming is bringing something from outside the game into the game. It is still common in Diplomacy, although perhaps more prevalent in remote forms of Dip. In the online game, for instance, it might be two or more players allying consistently simply because they know each other; making cross-game alliances, e.g. *"You do this for me in this game, and I'll do that for you in the other game"*; it could even be threatening to involve moderators in the game e.g. threatening someone you know to be cheating with reporting the cheating unless they act in your favor.

Blackmail is, itself, a form of metagaming. In the examples above, Buchanan maliciously menace Moran with financial and marital consequences of non-compliance. None of these has anything to do with the

game itself! It is something that might happen outside of the game, in Larry's private life.

There are other tales out there of blackmail in Diplomacy from this Paper Age of Diplomacy. Take a look at Richard Sharp's singular masterpiece on Diplomacy, "The Game of Diplomacy". If you can find it online, it will cost you something in the region of a liver. Assuming you have something better to spend your money on, you can read it on the [UK Diplomacy Archive](#). Take a look at [Chapter 12: "Vive La Difference!"](#) for some examples.

Perhaps I need to be clear: nobody, least of all Larry Moran, is suggesting Walt Buchanan was **really** involved in any of this. If you read my 'Archive' article in [DW #169](#), the explanation behind Buchanan's astonishing accomplishments had nothing underhanded involved.

Metagaming, then and now, is a problem in Diplomacy, especially online. It once had an impact on FTF Dip, too, with conventions and tournaments being impacted by alliances between players from the same area of Dip club. There was also once a movement known as the '[Karma League](#)', whose members agreed not to attack each other and ally together. Astoundingly, some people defended this!

Of course, there's nothing that can be done about the 'human factor'. If you find yourself in a game with someone whom you've successfully allied with previously, an alliance with that person is going to be much more attractive than not. If it works... And if you're in a game with someone you like as a person, you're more likely to work with them than not. Alternatively, if you're in the same game with someone who is a stabby, SC stealing player, you're going to be acutely aware of them; and, of course, if you **don't** like someone, how long are you going to want them around?

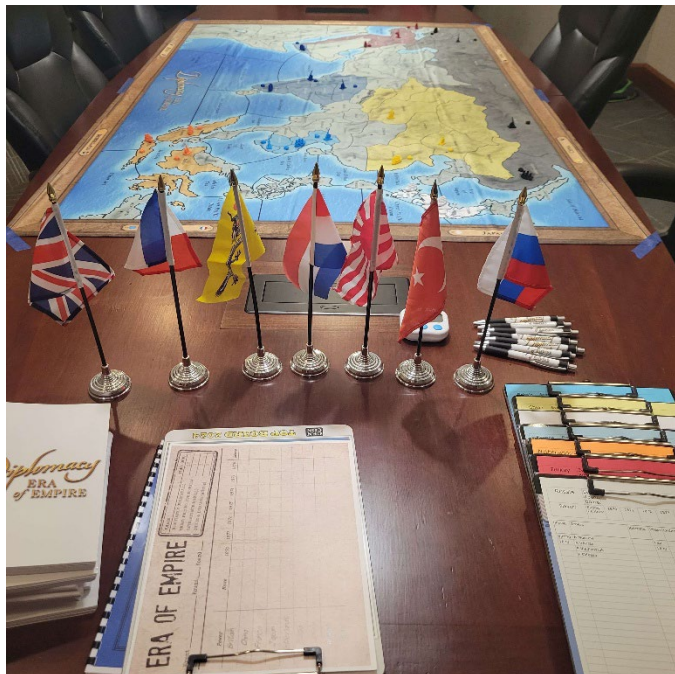
The idea, though, is that what happens in a game should relate to what's happening in the game. Each game should stand alone. This is further challenged in an arena game (in a tournament or league), of course, simply **because** it's part of that arena event; that's the nature of the beast. In a regular game, however, a stand-alone game, even one that might count towards some form of ongoing ratings system, players are expected to treat every other player as equally as possible.

What I enjoyed about this article is the pure, preposterous pretense about what made Buchanan's success possible. If you were in any doubt, the note at the end of Larry's article should seal the deal: *"In order to preserve his secret, sneaky Buchanan is even going so far as to lose his current game, although losing to Calhamer looks very suspicious to me."*

Era of Empires Demo at BGG Spring 2025

by Robert Lacy

For the Diplomacy Era of Empires demo at BGG Spring 2025 we had two people who had played Diplomacy many years ago in their college days, so the playing field was more or less even.



The age group was from college age to recent retirement, including one woman. Personally, I always like seeing women join in and play Diplomacy. I always feel we need more diversity in any game. Our female player was also doing very well in her position as Turkey and had some very good and carefully planned moves. She was one of the two players who had played diplomacy some 30+ years ago in college. By the end of the Fall 1870 moves I could tell that "It was all coming back" to the two who had played before. In the teaching events that I run I always check the players orders the first couple of moves to make sure no one made a horrible mistake in their opening moves. I check the orders to see if the moves are 1) written correctly and 2) legal moves. I do not tell the players if the moves are a good idea or not.

These were all good players, especially for five of the seven being completely new to the game. Each turn the players all had correctly written and legal orders each time that I checked. Of especial note was the players getting the support orders and convoy order correct on their first try on their own with no corrections needed and quickly mastering these orders. No corrections needed on any orders sheet was a first for me in a teaching game, as usually I have to make a few corrections.

In the new Era of Empire rules, the players really liked the ability to swap units to change their units on the board. My last comment is that in most of the teaching events I have run in the past, I usually am able to identify one or two people each time who might be good players to play in a tournament, especially with some more practice. This was the first time that I felt that every player in the teaching event had the skill sets and ability to play in a tournament and do well their first time out. I strongly encouraged each player to do so.



We were able to get through 4 game years. Russia was allied to Turkey in the west and Japan in the east. France and Netherlands had a solid alliance all game. Russia and Japan worked out the Korean area and started carving up China. China had a tough game, playing defense all game and never being able to really grow. France and Netherlands moved north in a solid looking alliance taking advantage of Russia and Japan being busy with China and China busy defending against Russia and Japan. After consolidating areas nearby, they both began pushing Japan back in the Philippines area and into southern China. Britain was mostly left alone at first managing to work with everyone on the board and keeping Britain in a good position diplomatically but started seeing Dutch ships deploy to the Indian Ocean areas towards the end and Turkey eyeing Russia for its path of expansion.

The top spot went to the Russian player ending at 12 supply centers followed by Britain and Turkey at 10 and France and Netherlands not far behind at 9 each.



Each of the participants got Diplomacy Era of Empires T-shirts, pens and notebooks. For top position the Russian player got a copy of the original Diplomacy game. Other participants got Era of Empires hats, tumblers and coffee mugs all provided graciously by Renegade Games.

A verbatim comment shared by the Turkey player: "The night after playing my mind kept thinking about it. I am convinced that if we'd played the game out to the end Turkey and England would have had a shared victory. If

we'd made a Western Alliance, only two of my troops would have been needed for defense. I could have spawned three on the northwest to eliminate Russia there, and England could have used my remaining three to get more supply centers.



Another player told me the next day "The fact that my mind obsessed over the game that night is a sign it is an excellent game."

Join Us at Battlefront: Dayton 2025!

By Thomas Haver

A Celebration of Axis & Allies, Diplomacy, and Historical Gaming

Prepare for an unforgettable weekend at Battlefront: Dayton, a premier gathering for fans of historical and war games. The convention will feature the first ever "Diplomacy Triathlon", a Diplomacy event with three different Diplomacy games played over three rounds. This will be an opportunity to challenge yourself as a jack-of-all-trades. The third and final game on Sunday is completely new and will be a world first for those competing. We have a special prize for every competitor to commemorate the occasion. We also plan to make an excursion to National Museum of the United States Air Force, which is free of charge. Here's why you shouldn't miss this exciting event:

Event Highlights

- Engage in Diplomacy events hosted by Thomas Haver, featuring the original classic, Diplomacy Era of Empire, and the world premiere of a brand-new Diplomacy game.
- Organized Events: Dive into Axis & Allies tournaments hosted by Gary Blevins, including World Championship Qualifiers guaranteeing winners entry to Gen Con 2026.
- Open Gaming and Demos: Learn and play a wide variety of games, including Stalingrad, North Africa, War Room, Imperial Borders, and Axis & Allies variants including Axis & Allies Miniatures. Explore other unique games such as Kings & Kaisers (WWI Global variant) and Historical Board Gaming's Global War 1936.
- Trip to the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

- Special Guests: Meet legendary game designers and experts, including Axis & Allies designer Larry Harris and Rosco Schock.
- Thousands of dollars in prizes to giveaway

Dates and Location

Dates:

- Friday, November 7, 2025 | 12:00pm – 12:00am
- Saturday, November 8, 2025 | 8:00am – 12:00am
- Sunday, November 9, 2025 | 8:00am – 7:00pm

Location: Hope Hotel & Richard C. Holbrooke Conference Center, 10823 Chidlaw Rd #A, Dayton, OH 45433, USA.

Accommodations

Enjoy the Board Game Nation room rate of \$95 per night, which includes a breakfast buffet. Located within the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, this historic venue is close to the National Museum of the United States Air Force and the National Aviation Hall of Fame. Call +1.937.879.2696, ask for Reservations, and mention Board Game Nation to book your stay.

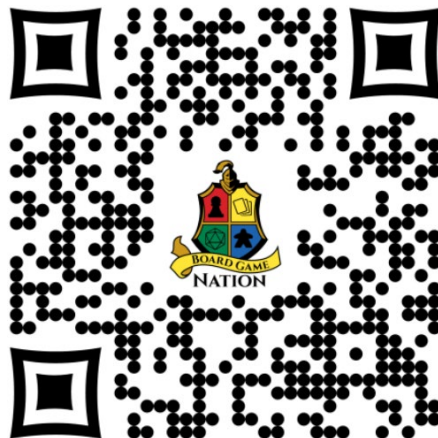
Why Attend?

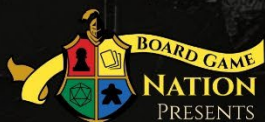
- Experience world-class tournaments and the premiere of innovative new games.
- Plenty of prize support and swag for participants in the event.
- Explore the historic backdrop of Wright Patterson Air Force Base and the incredible venue with a rich history tied to diplomacy and aviation.

Additional Information

- Badge sales: Open now!
- Hotel room block: Open now!
- Event ticket registration: Opening soon!

Mark your calendars and join us at Battlefront: Dayton 2025 on November 7, 8, and 9 for three days of strategic brilliance and unforgettable experiences. Holders of 2 & 3 Day badges will also get a lunch buffet on Saturday & Sunday and a souvenir cup they can use over the course of this event for free soft drinks. Scan the QR code or visit: bit.ly.com/BGN-BFD to get your badges today! See you at the Battlefront!





NOVEMBER 7 - 9, 2025



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BATTLEFRONT: DAYTON

COMPETE

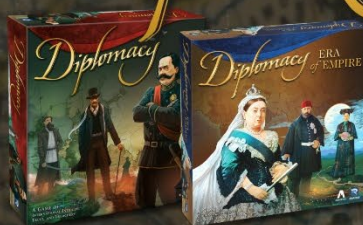
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I Finished Where, Again? - World Dipcon 2025

by David Hood

The 2025 World Dipcon in San Francisco was truly one of the most successful events I have ever attended. And that's saying something. I started attending Dip tournaments, well, a long time ago. The numbers and experiences were awesome - 105 players, 51 total boards of Diplomacy, informative hobby meeting with a wonderful promo for the 2026 in Athens, the first batch of Diplomacy trading cards released, and much more. Adam Silverman led a great team of organizers and other volunteers in putting on what was just a tremendously enjoyable weekend of gaming, socializing, and meeting new folk.

Importantly, we also had a very deserving WDC winner: Noam Brown, about whom much no doubt will be written concerning his domination of two boards in the qualifying rounds, and how these scores propelled him to a whisker above second place finisher Adam Sigal. The tournament had its last round structured as a "Champions Pool" featuring the top 21 players after the first three rounds, with one's score in that last round being multiplied by 150% to advantage those 21 for achieving overall tournament victory. Adam had scored a solo victory on one of his qualifying boards, and thus was in a strong position going into the Champions Pool game as part of Round 4.

Enough about Noam winning though. Or even about Adam coming in second. Who cares? The only topic anyone should want to discuss is how and why I ended up taking third. It's by far the biggest news Facing the Book of Twittering Instaverts under the Discordant Blue Sky of our Social Media Planet X. Or at least that's how I Redd-it. So, let's discuss.

As a longtime Dip tournament organizer, I can tell you that the bane of our existence is the fact that we cannot just handle any random number of interested players for a tournament round. The bloody numbers have to be in bloody multiples of seven, otherwise you gots problems. Sure, you can recruit one or more people to play two boards at the same time, but that affects one or both games in a negative way, for sure, and it certainly affects those two-boarded players themselves. Not ideal. You can force the extras to drop even if they traveled long and hard to get to your tournament. Not ideal.

No, the real solution is to have folk who are genuinely willing to add or drop to your numbers in order to get to those neat sets of seven. So, for many decades, I have volunteered to do that because it's really helpful to the TDs. Plus, I very much enjoy playing other board games so there is almost always something useful for me to do when sitting out a round. Just like I did in Round One of this event. I had a spectacularly fun time Friday night

playing the party game Just One with several of Adam's family members and others.

Would have been fine with me to play other games all day on Saturday too, but that was not to be. Adam needed me, turns out, for both rounds that day so I got to work. In my Round 2 game I had a gamelong alliance with Katie Benn where we each finished on 10. Solid result but not great given the shared board top. Then in Round 3 I had a gamelong alliance with Spyros Dovas, which I can honestly say was one of the best experiences I have had playing the game, no disrespect to Kat who was also a great partner. Spyros and I ran AI from the beginning, with my Austria ending up at 11 centers on top of that board at the end.

Given that I had only played two rounds, I assumed that many others would have had better scores on the best 2 of 3 rounds that made up the qualifying rules for the Champions Pool. So, I went Sunday morning to Adam to confirm that he did not need me to play, assuming that I would finally have a chance to play some Ark Nova or something. The boy wouldn't even let me get a word out, shutting me down with a hand wave and: "No, Hood, you're playing. You made the top 21."

So, I sat down on that final board with an absolutely stellar cast of players. It was my Germany facing Riaz Virani in England, Ben Kellman in France, Brandon Fogel as the Italian, Adam Sigal in Austria, Mikalis Kamaritis as the Turk, and Jake Mannix playing Russia. I did not know this, of course, but three of us would end up taking 2nd, 3rd and 4th overall just from this one board. These are all great guys whom I knew reasonably well prior to this game, whether from past playing them or from past analysis of their play on DBN.

One advantage I may have had here was that I knew Jake, from many years ago when he was more active, whereas the others probably did not (other than perhaps Adam.) That would turn out to matter later.

Out of the gate I was interested in a strong alliance with either Ben or Riaz, and both were receptive. When Riaz committed strongly by ordering to the Channel and Wales, that was going to seal it for me because I love early commitment in an alliance partner. I was EG all the way until two things happened. 1) Brandon showed no interest whatsoever in going to Piedmont because he wanted to participate with all his units, and come out ahead in if he could, the dismemberment of tournament leader Adam. 2) Jake built in St Pete even after we made a deal where he would not do that if I left him alone in Sweden. So, France would be a slower take

down with England distracted about Norway and no pressure at all from Italy.

So, I decided to pivot into an FG with Ben, which was always an option anyway because I thought he was mainly a strong alliance player like I am. We proceeded to cooperate on everything, completely, from that point forward... up to the very last move of the game. Hush, we'll get to that.

So, Ben and I had a discussion in 1902 about what happens once England is gone. I answered, totally truthfully, that I would then turn against Jake and he would go into the Med. I was not expecting to do it right then, of course, but then Riaz made a proposal I could not say no to for Fall 02. He supported me out of the North Sea into Norway and wanted a junior partner type relationship after that. It worked, and allowed me to build two and then convoy into Livonia in early 1903. Awesomeness.

Unfortunately for Ben, Brandon had started sending stuff west in 1903 as well, so there was a war between them while I tried my best to take out Russian dots as quickly as I could. Brandon got the jump by taking Marseilles, and was really looking good in the east as well because he and Jake had dropped the hammer on Mikalis right after Adam was basically destroyed in the Balkans (he retreated into Tyl and then took my Mun, which he would own until the very last move of the game as a janissary for me.) Hush, we'll get to that.

So, the turning point of the game came when I got a build from something in Russia and idiotically tried to build an army in Munich when it was, of course, owned instead by Austria. As Brandon told me later, I kinda went on tilt for a few minutes. I immediately called for a draw vote, with Brandon ahead of me 10 to 9, to end the game before I made any other dumb mistakes. I actually thought everyone would likely agree to it and I would, if I had the time, finally go play my game of Ark Nova.

Instead, Brandon himself publicly vetoed the draw because he thought he needed more centers in order to possibly win the whole enchilada. I frankly, even now, think his decision was a legitimate one. He could not be sure what he would need to score in order to win, and there were potentially a lot more centers to take.

Then in a flash it occurred to me I could use this. I helpfully pointed out to Jake that it was HIS centers that Brandon could most easily take to pad his center count. Had the virtue of being totally true. Now, Brandon has kicked himself for doing his veto publicly, but I will dissent from his self-criticism by saying that he would have been the most likely private veto candidate anyway if Jake thought about it (and I would have helped him think about it.) So, I suspect that Brandon was in a no-win scenario here once I made that proposal and it was vetoed. Jake immediately turned against Brandon, which I thought made sense anyway frankly because he eventually got to 8 centers before losing some back to me later.

Brandon tried to pivot to save his game by withdrawing some from the French front, retreating his MAO fleet to North Africa, for example, thinking that perhaps if he stabilized the Russian front he could come back to contest the board top later. Problem was - who was watching me? Eventually Russia did pivot back against me, which led me (after consultation with Mikalis Kamaritis, whose Diplomacy instincts I deeply trust) to make the consequential decision to just take every center I could at one time and then call for a draw vote to hope that action demoralized everyone into saying yes.

It worked. One from France in Liverpool, one from Russia in Warsaw, and the lonely Austrian center in Munich. I hated killing Adam (I did not know at the time that he would have won the tournament for sure had I kept him alive) but I felt I had only the one chance to get the board top before some combination of Italy, Russia and France made progress against me should the game have kept going.

So, did I really want to play Diplomacy that weekend? Honestly I was fine either way, but I certainly enjoyed myself when I did. That last game was a humdinger, as we say in the country. I would never have thought I played well enough to come in third, but a blind squirrel finds a nut every now and then. And, I get the bonus benefits of being able to claim that I a) screwed over Adam from his victory, one of my closest Dip friends in this hobby, and b) edged Brandon out of third by one-half of a point, ANOTHER of my closest Dip friends in this hobby. So what more could I have asked for?

The ribbing of both shall continue for the foreseeable future.

Face-to-Face Diplomacy Returns to CODCon

by Thomas Haver



This past weekend we brought Diplomacy back to CODCon for the first time since 2018. The annual event is held at the College of DuPage just outside of Chicago (<https://www.codcon.com/>). We held two separate "learn to play" events: Diplomacy and Era of Empire.



In the first game of classical Diplomacy, Robert piloted France to a strong board top. In the second game with Era of Empire, it was Nolan's Great Britain that topped the board at 14, followed closely by Robert's Russia with 13. Play of the game belonged to Russia, who went with a build stab mid-game: F Odessa, A Moscow, A Tabriz, while converting F Vlad and F Corea. For both games, we used a custom printed fabric map and 3D printed pieces. We had plenty of swag on hand for the players and onlookers, including Diplomacy "party bags".



We also added two new Renegade Heroes at CODCon - Tony and Nolan. many thanks for supporting the event. Each was provided Diplomacy swag to give away at future events -- shirts, notebooks, magnets, stickers, pins, and those sought after Diplomints. Welcome aboard! More details about the community outreach program can be found here: <https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/introducing-the-renegade-heroes-community-program/>



We'll be back next year for some Diplomacy events. This year the staff couldn't provide enough space for our giant, walkable maps. Next year with some additional planning we should get some dedicated space and ideally move the games into the foyer area to give all attendees a view of the game. This convention is a great opportunity to spread Diplomacy and we look forward to the 2026 edition!

Photo album Diplomacy at CODCon:
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/vpdZuFnkzRQM6M7r9>

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Ask the Hobby Historian: Were the Good Ole Days All That Good?

by David Hood

For those who have read my quarterly harangue in this space many times, you know that one of the things I do here is reference people, places, and things from our Diplomacy hobby past. I've talked about hobby services, hobby infrastructure, and hobby zines. I've described events in the past, and people who attended those events in the past. I've also tried to express why I think these topics focused on the state of things decades ago might still be relevant for today's hobby. After all, as my fellow Southerner William Faulkner once famously said - "the past is never dead, it's not even past." The way things are now did not spring forth all at once from the head of Zeus. The present relates back in time to some of the very subjects I discuss in this column every three months.

Often, I try to explain how titans of our hobby, such as the recently departed John Boardman, said and did things which affect the way we play the game today. I've delved into the derivation of the term "press" as it relates to Diplomacy negotiations; how the Dipcon, Euro Dipcon and World Dipcon rotation schemes came to pass and evolved over time; and what it was like to play and participate in the Dip hobby prior to the internet. One of my goals, certainly, has been to communicate some of the great memories I have from the many decades I have been active.

But not all the things in the past were great. Sometimes the "good ole days" were not all that good. Some old things are best not made new again. So, let's talk about a few of those old things, shall we, as cautionary tales if nothing else.

Diplomacy zines were once the lifeblood of our hobby. Amateur magazines like this were how we played the game in between face-to-face events and club pickup games. I subscribed to dozens of zines back in the day, making every trip to the mailbox incredibly exciting. Do I find out today whether my stab goes through? Did I get a response from that Russian player I made the big proposal to? I wonder if England built Fleet London like I asked him to?

Zines were not just game reports though. They also included movie and book reviews, original fiction, letter columns, and political diatribes. Sometimes hobby publishers said offensive things within that content. Sometimes a subscriber would write in something abusive, and the publisher would dutifully include it verbatim in the publication. Sometimes these comments were personal attacks, politically charged grenades, or just in poor taste. Because we now have so few zines,

we miss the fun and fannish part of zine-based writing. We also miss the wild and woolly world of character assassination and outright feuding that broke out time and again because of zine-based writing.

There were even a few zines I received that existed solely to engage in personal, political, or hobby-related diatribes and contained nothing BUT that. So yeah, poor us for not having more Dipzines to peruse but yay us for not having more feud waters to navigate.

Let's talk about another subject. I sometimes have older hobbyists complain to me that the hobby's players of today, as a group, are "not what they used to be." Of course, that comment can mean a lot of different things. I believe at times the commenter is saying that the players are not committed enough to playing out games to their correctly-long conclusions, settling instead for shorter games ending way before a solo or stalemate has been achieved. (Because back in the day, many saw the either/or of those two outcomes being the actual point of playing Diplomacy.) At other times I believe the commenter is saying something sort of the opposite, implying that today's players are too serious about the scoring of the game and less inclined to play in an unconventional way just for fun, like "we did in the good ole days."

Although I understand these perspectives, let me quote many a Supreme Court Justice both of today and of the past:

I respectfully dissent.

I believe the players of today are just objectively better than those of yesteryear. I've said this before, but it bears repeating - there are simply way more opportunities today for a newer hobbyist to learn the game effectively, and for middling players to hone their craft to become good players. Of course, there is a tremendous amount of written material about the game available now, not to mention all the YouTube commentary of actual games that is available from the Diplomacy Broadcast Network and many other quality sources. A bigger factor, though, is the sheer number of games one can play now in a month's time, sometimes with very good players from whom to learn. This would astound the players of the 80s, for example, when I started in the hobby. All that opportunity for play is bound to make you better.

Also, I do not think player attitudes towards the game have deteriorated at all, like some senior hobbyists may

think. For one thing, how one approaches the game is and always has been a highly individualized phenomenon. While it is true that there are fewer examples of long-form play in the face-to-face part of the hobby, and such examples are even more sparse outside of North America, the dichotomy between those who want to end in 1907 versus those who want to “play it out” has been around now for decades. Also, there are places online where one can play either style of game. In terms of what we have traditionally in the hobby called “playstyle”, which refers to balance-of-power, alliance play, transactional play, etc., I think all of these categories are very much alive and well in today’s hobby. Just like we had jokesters, unconventional thinkers or primarily psychological players back in the early years of our hobby, who would intentionally order in strange ways for fun or for profit, we certainly have such folk now. For an example, see the most recent episode of my news show Deadline for an interview with one such contrarian, who is also one of the top players in the world right now.

I probably cannot leave this subject without addressing what I think is sometimes at work when folk complain about the makeup of the current hobby. It is absolutely, undeniably true that the demographics of the hobby are quite different from back in 1984 when I started playing the game. (Even more different from 1964, right after the Hobby Big Bang.) We are more diverse, in every way that term can be interpreted. Almost everyone back in the day looked like me, with my wargaming or at least nerd culture background. (They hardly ever sounded like me, but that’s another story.) I cannot stress enough how much better the current makeup is. We’re not there yet, in terms of making the hobby look like surrounding society, but it’s better.

Now, why and how did that happen? No one factor is at play, most likely, but I do have thoughts on what some of those factors probably are. The first one would be the sources for new players. The most successful source is, of course, invitation to a pickup game, club game, or tournament from a current hobbyist. This used to actually reinforce the old-school demographic, but because I believe younger-people friend groups in general have become more diverse, this has moved the needle some towards heterogeneity. Second, back in the 80s, a major source of new blood was the gamebox flyer in Diplomacy sets sold by Avalon Hill in the US. (That is how I myself joined the hobby.) Because those

flyers were placed in wargame boxes, that skewed the population towards fans of wargames, even though Diplomacy is not fundamentally a wargame. And that skewed the hobby’s demographics in a particular direction, whereas the online sources of new blood now come from my tech-heavy populations with a different demographic makeup.

In terms of player retention of more diverse newcomers, though, I think the larger factor might just be that we have greatly improved the environment of our hobby so as not to drive folk out. Back in the “good ole days” it was not all uncommon to hear stupid and/or profane things shouted across the room at Diplomacy tournaments during the game or at other times. I can distinctly remember having to announce, before multiple rounds at Dixiecon, that the play area was not the time for what people my age used to call “locker room talk.” (Indeed, that kind of talk can be inappropriate even for locker rooms, but I digress.) It was not unheard of for there to be long, loud, and vicious yelling tantrums, and even occasionally a shove or two. This sort of behavior used to be sort of laughed off afterwards and chalked up to boys being boys, like some of the fight scenes one might see in old Westerns, where someone punches someone else and then a few minutes later they are drinking together at the saloon.

But yeah, that’s kind of the point. This is not a 1960s western. Our new Codes of Conduct that apply to face to face and virtual events, as well as other initiatives to clean up our hobby’s act, have really made a difference in making our hobby more welcoming and inclusive. Good for us, but yes of course we have a lot of room for additional improvement.

Let me conclude by making it clear that I am not throwing out the baby with the bathwater here. There are wonderful things about our hobby’s past that I want us to remember, to cherish, and sometimes to emulate. One unifying hobby function we used to have before which we have not been consistently doing lately is the giving of Hobby Awards, which I hope we will get back to. But to shine our light on the past for the purpose of highlighting pretty things is not to ignore the shadowy things that light also sometimes touches. Let’s study the past to learn important lessons, positive and negative, and then let’s use those lessons to improve the world of Diplomacy today and tomorrow. You in?

BGG Spring 2025 Diplomacy Teaching Event

by Robert Lacy

At BGG Spring 2025 - held in Dallas, Texas each May - we ended up with two full teaching games of Diplomacy: one on Friday night and one on Saturday night. These learn-to-play events are run every May and November at BGG Con in Dallas, Texas. Going into the con, I was excited (as always) to teach new players Diplomacy. One week out we had all the spots for each event filled with several on the waiting list for each event.



The Learn to Play events introduce Diplomacy to new players and provide a refresher to the rules and game play for persons that have played once or in the distant past but feel they need a tutorial. The format of the events is designed to introduce and teach Diplomacy to new players. In the Learn to Play events at BGG Spring, the players learn the history of the game Diplomacy, the game mechanics, some strategies, and how to play the game. The format for the Learn-to-Play events is a 1-hour classroom style teaching session of the game history and Diplomacy's importance to board gaming followed by how to play, the game rules and how to write orders. The players then play the game for about 4 hours or till end of 1905 while the GM adjuncts the turns.

As GM in these teaching events I keep time, give time updates, answer questions about writing orders and the rules and then adjudicate the turn. While adjudicating, I carefully go through the moves, explaining why a move worked and what the outcome of the moves were so that players can see and understand the movement mechanics. I generally keep the time flexible when it comes to order writing so that no one is rushed as it can

be overwhelming on new players. For these teaching events I check the orders submitted by the players for the first few turns in order to see if the moves are 1) written correctly and 2) legal moves. I do not tell the players if the moves are a good idea or not. This is so that new players do not make big mistakes the first few moves and also allows them to get comfortable with writing orders correctly.



At start the players draw the country flags from a bag, making it a fun surprise which flag they draw. I have found that drawing the flag from the bag seems more fun than drawing a game piece from the bag. They then have period appropriate hats to wear to help with roleplaying their powers and to keep things light. There are also country leader portraits and country themed drink coasters to add to the fun.

The first event on Friday had some very interesting results with Austria and France teaming up on an aggressive Germany; something not usually seen in a game. At the same time Austria and Turkey battled against Russia in the south. Turkey and Austria had a strong alliance early on, amplified by their neighbors not coming together fast. But eventually Austria backstabbed France in Italy, taking Venice from France. Turkey grew even bigger once Turkey pushed up into Moscow and got overextended, leaving Turkey had no defense at all. Austria came to the conclusion, stating publicly: "why share when I can have it all?" Austria got the Golden Blade award in this game for backstabbing both at the same time. Turkey was actually amused by

the backstab saying with a big smile "well played sir, I salute you!" It is good to take things in the game with good humor. Russia had the roughest time, but bounced back from 3 to 5 centers by the end. He got a large "It's only a flesh wound" button for never giving up! Definitely a fight it out to the last and don't give up attitude. I ran into the player the next day in the hotel hallway, he stated it was the most fun event he participated in at the convention and had told all his friends about it. It is always good to get nice feedback.



The second session on Saturday became very lively quickly with several fun and conniving players with ample personality who got into the game quickly, maneuvering and counter maneuvering against each other in discussions and on the board. Alliances shifted quickly in this game and seemed to be constantly in flux which made a great game for first time players and amusing for me to watch as GM. Germany was the power driving the action on the game board from the start and was in the middle of all the action from turn one. At first Germany was fighting off France and a Russia pushing from Warsaw then both decided to make peace and turn on Austria who was beating up Italy. In the corner Turkey was the silent player at the table when orders were being read, but in constant negotiations with everyone during diplomacy, putting Turkey in a strong position that everyone could see. France was by far the biggest negotiator of the group, consistently all game getting in or interjecting himself into several one-on-one conversations very skillfully. Germany would have won at the end if it wasn't for a big bungle of the end orders discovering that Venice and Vienna are not the same

thing. Germany meant to write Venice but wrote Vienna for the attack and support orders. Also amusing was the German player chose the German Imperial Navy hat and not the Pickelhaube while proclaiming at game start that he wanted to build lots of fleets, and then never built a fleet the whole game. Gotta love people with personality in Diplomacy they keep it fun and memorable.



At the end of each event, I gave out many promotional materials. Everyone who participates gets a Diplomacy T-shirt, pen, notebook, decals, keychains and magnets. Also given out by random draw are hats, coffee mugs, drink tumblers as well as a copy of the game kindly provided by Renegade Games. Thank you to Renegade Games for their strong support of both events and all events at BGG Spring 2025.

There were also special prizes for game play awarded by the GM. The top three finishers in supply center count for each session got medal reproductions of the Pour le Merit (aka Blue Max), The French Legion of Merit and the Iron Cross.

Special and fun game play awards are also given out: The 'Rubber Duck' for most convoys or the most impressive convoy or use of the convoy order, the 'Golden Blade' for best backstab of an ally, 'It's only a Flesh Wound' or 'Help! I'm being Repressed' for being the most attacked and stubbornly surviving and the 'Hungry for Territory Golden Knife Fork and Spoon' for being the most aggressive player moving units and taking or trying to take supply centers.

U.S. Diplomacy Championship

We proudly bring you the annual U.S. Championship at the largest Diplomacy event in the country. Square off in one or more of the four qualifiers. The seven Best Country winners from the qualifiers advance to the Top Board on Saturday night. Our group also hosts "Introduction to Diplomacy" events concurrent with the tournament events.

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Round One: 12pm-4pm Thursday
Round Two: 8pm-12am Thursday
Round Three: 12pm-4pm Friday
Round Four: 8pm-12am Friday
Championship Board: 4pm Saturday

Contact: Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)
Website: <http://www.gencon.com/>



KublaCon 2025 Report

by Alex Amann

KublaCon in Burlingame, CA was a busy convention for Diplomacy this year. In addition to Thomas Haver's Giant Diplomacy and Giant Era of Empire sessions on Saturday (likely detailed elsewhere in this issue), I ran a teaching session on Friday and three sessions spread across Sunday and Monday. I had six players learn the game on Friday night, and two of them returned later in the weekend. Additionally, I saw many familiar faces return from previous KublaCons to play again. As always, I prefer to sit out of games and answer rules/syntax questions to ensure that everyone has an enjoyable time playing Diplomacy. The last thing I want is for someone's game to be ruined because they wrote one incorrect order that compromised their position, so I make sure to look over everyone's orders and have them revisit them if something doesn't quite make sense, or help them with syntax to make sure what they've written down is exactly what they want to do. (I don't advise on strategy or tactics – that's for them to figure out!)

Game 1 (Sunday morning):

Sunday morning's game had three new players (two from the teaching session and one walk-up who got the extremely condensed rules explanation) and four players returning from KublaCon last year. The game started with a fast AI alliance that pushed into Rumania and Munich simultaneously in 1902, while the western side of the board struggled to figure out any coherent alliance structure and RT never quite got on the same page. However, France chose to move a couple fleets into the Mediterranean around this time, and Italy responded by pulling back to the west, giving Austria an opportunity to sneak into an undefended Venice and take German support into Munich against the Italian army there. The east then reshuffled into an AT, which moved on Russia briefly until Turkey had a chance to reshuffle it again into an IT. By this point, Turkey was well out of the box, and Italy and Austria never could see eye-to-eye again, so the end result was a 10 center Turkey board top. Congrats to James for the board top in his first ever game of Diplomacy!



Game 2 (Sunday evening):

Sunday evening's game saw three more new players and four players returning from previous KublaCons. The initial story of this game was an unbreakable EG that pushed towards both France and Russia at the same time, and an AIR that boxed in Turkey

immediately. The east quickly turned into an AI with Russia being weakened in the north, but an Austrian stab on Italy at a crucial time led to a final position with Austria coming out just ahead with 9 centers to England and Germany's 7 centers each. Congrats to Joshua for the board top!



Game 3 (Monday morning):

I hadn't scheduled a Monday session at KublaCon before, but was convinced after last year's KublaFall that there would be sufficient interest, as there are often very few scheduled games overall at the on the last day of the convention. The Monday game had a family of four who all were interested in the game, as well as a returning player from KublaFall and a couple others who had some experience with the game previously. By luck of the draw, the family of four ended up with two in the west (EG) and two in the east (AT). The game did start

with those alliances, but EG focused a little too much to Scandinavia at first, allowing France to get a jump on England. With England distracted, Russia mostly retreated from the south and took its own foothold in Scandinavia. Germany took the opportunity to wander south and then worked with Italy to push into Austria, but France had such a lead at that point and was able to get into the Mediterranean before anyone could stop him. The final position saw France topping with 9 centers. Congrats to Jeremy on the board top!



All in all, it was an eventful weekend of Diplomacy. I had a total of 25 players attend at least one of the sessions, including the teaching session. I'm already looking forward to KublaFall this year, which will be held in Burlingame, CA at the same hotel (Hyatt Regency) over Veterans Day weekend, November 14-17. I will be

organizing a small tournament for that weekend – come visit the Bay Area Diplomacy Association Discord server (<https://discord.gg/yeEfVc2dFm>) to let me know if you're interested or want any more information about that!

Dixiecon 2025 Narrative Report

by Tournament Director David Hood

Last year, it was the improbable Sunday round solo that put Karthik Konath over the top, edging out perennial contender David Miller for the Dixiecon 38 win. This year, a different situation - David Miller and Randy Lawrence-Hurt were both riding Austrian solos from the Saturday round into the action on Sunday. And both were playing Turkey on their respective boards. Another thrilling conclusion was in the offing, but which would come out on top!

Before we get there to that dramatic Sunday, let's set the stage by reporting on all Dixiecon 39 goings-on prior to Round Three. For many Dixieconers, including me, the fun started on Thursday afternoon as early arrivals began to trickle down to the Granville South basement to start the open gaming for an event in Chapel Hill that has been running continuously since 1987. We had quite a crowd actually for Thursday gaming this year, including some of the many first-time attendees. Just some of the games I saw hit the tables included Dune Imperium, One Hour WWII, Settlers of Catan, Terraforming Mars, Point Salad, Istanbul, Spondor and, for the first of many times that weekend, Age of Renaissance made a climactic comeback after being a fan favorite of yesteryear.

Lest you Dip-only fans think there was nothing happening for you, au contraire - Keith Worstell's 2-player Dip variant based on the American Civil War also got a playing, as it has before.

Even more folk arrived as the day progressed that Friday. While some went in pairs and groups to Franklin Street for food and other frivolity, gaming also continued in the basement of Granville as usual. I saw Downfall of Empires, 1830, Brew Crafters, Titan, and Space Base played early in the day, with Here I Stand, Railways of the World, and Darwin's Journey taking over as the afternoon dripped close to the 6pm start for Round One of the Diplomacy tournament.

Which came soon enough. It has become a tradition for those who can to wear something made out of seersucker for the Friday night round, so see the picture included with this report for that smashing smattering of southern style. Once the round got going, we had six boards of Diplomacy players battle for position while the Iron Man gamers tried out more Istanbul and Age of Renaissance as well as new titles such as Ark Nova, Barrage, Mahjong and Cascadia, as well as that perennial Dixiecon favorite, Outpost.



Some of those first round Dip games ended early, such as the 3-way David Miller achieved in 1905 with Keith Worstell and Tim Richardson in the Nina Simone game (1A), a result important to Miller's later standings. Other

games took significantly longer, with the Ben Folds game (1C) coming to mind, as Dave Smith, Justin Loar and Karthik Konath finally achieving a 3 way after 3am once Tim Crosby voted his Germany out of the draw

once it became clear the others would grind him out if he didn't. Importantly, Randy Lawrence Hurt played England in that game and was eliminated first, in 1905, achieving zero points and thus becoming his drop game for the tournament by necessity.

Round Two on Saturday morning is where the wheat and chaff are often separated at Dixiecon, as its unlimited duration makes it easier to achieve larger scoring results than the Sunday round (although this effect is overemphasized, as I will discuss later.) Again, we had six boards, and again two games in particular stand out - the two Austrian solos I mentioned earlier, with Randy Lawrence Hurt taking his by concession at 16 in Game 2F (John Coltrane) and David Miller with 19 centers in Game 2E (Avett Brothers). Because at Dixie each center is worth 4 points, this twelve-point differential would loom large. By the way, it should be noted that Austria had a great Rd 2 as well, with Justin Loar in 2A (K-Ci) and Kirk Vaughn in 2B (Clay Aiken) also participating in three way draws.

Have you noticed this year's game naming theme yet? Yes, all musical artists from North Carolina.

Iron Man gaming certainly did not slow down during the Saturday round, as we had 18 non-Dip gamers in boards of Air Baron, Unmatched, St Petersburg, Terraforming Mars, Source of the Nile (blast from the past again), Furnace, Ark Nova and Here I Stand. These numbers were augmented as the afternoon wore out and those out of their Dip games slipped seamlessly into games of something else. When 3pm rolled around though, I knew it was time for me to slip out and get the BBQ stuff organized. This went off without a hitch starting at 5pm (no rain this year thank goodness) after which a couple of the Dip games resumed play while others settled down for... more Iron Man gaming. Games I saw played for the first time on Saturday night included Tzolk'in, Codenames, Thurn and Taxis, Power Grid, 18 India and Can't Stop (nope, they couldn't) along with additional boards of Terraforming and Dune Imperium.

Another thing that has become traditional at Dixie on Saturday night is a group playing Magic, including a few gamers who came to the Con just for that. Awesome time seemed to be had by all.

So, Sunday morning would decide the championship. Would David Miller cash in his already-achieved 3way and solo for his third Dixiecon title, or could Randy L-H replace his crappy Rd 1 score with a better result in Rd 3 than Miller had gotten in Rd 1 to eke out a tournament victory of his own? Or would some other player achieve

the Sunday Solo and challenge them both for First Place?

This is where I should point out that, yes, the Sunday round had a time limit. It starts at 8:30am or thereabouts and finishes sometime between 3:30 and 5:30 pm. Starting in 1904, the negotiation time is also lowered to 12 minutes per turn, to allow for maximum time per game. I don't like time limited games very much, and try to allow the players enough leeway to accomplish something on their boards while still getting us done at a reasonable hour on Sunday. This year, as is often the case, all the games (six this year) were done WELL BEFORE 3:30. In other words, none was ever close to being called for time. My own personal view is that folk should have played longer on some of these boards, as the endtime was way, way later than folk thought.

At any rate, what happened? Both Randy and David ended up as Turkey on their boards. Both had monster games, with Randy in a 3-way with 17 and David in a 3-way at 15. Nailbiter, but David was able to edge Randy by one center to take the championship home with him to Maryland. Another important games in Rd 3 featured Ed Sullivan's 3-way in Russia at 11 in the Thelonious Monk game to nab him a Third Place plaque with Keith Worstell with 11 as England also putting him into a tie for Fourth with Sophie Lewis. Other top seven finishers were Dave Smith at 6th and Justin Loar at 7th, both playing in their first Dixiecons.

Games eligible for scoring in the Iron Man tournament, for non-Dip gaming, were allowed up to 2pm on Sunday. New titles played that morning included First Rat and Castles of Burgundy, to go along with more Terraforming, more Spendor, and more Railroads of NA. After all the games were complete, Tedd Mullally walked away with this year's Iron Man trophy, with Michael Lowrey and Graham Woodring taking 2nd and 3rd. Other awards this year included Barbara Zhang as Player's Choice, Team Tournament winners Brian Ecton, Doc Binder, and Randy Lawrence Hurt, Will Andrews for I Got Hammered, Justin Loar as the Golden Blade, and Todd Craig for the Brick. Best Countries were awarded to Miller and Lawrence-Hurt for Austria, Keith Worsell (E), Karthik Konath (F), Jack Craig (G), Tim Crosby (I), Sophie Lewis as Russia and Randy as Turkey.

As aside - the North Carolina based club Cardiac had to be pleased with their showing here as their players took 2nd, tied for 4th, and won best countries for Austria, England, Germany, Russia and Turkey. And Todd got the Brick. Impressive. Photo of Cardiac Crew included.



After the awards ceremony, some went to eat and then come back to play games. Some just went to play more games without eating. Either way, with no competition at all involved, the gaming was still hot and heavy, including Terraforming, Ark Nova, Titan, Railroads, but

strangely, no Escape from Colditz this year. What we did have, for the first time, was a DBN watch party upstairs in the lounge area. This was an absolute blast (see the photo) and is something we will definitely schedule from now on at Dixiecon.



What a great way to end a great gathering of great people playing great games as part of a, yes, great hobby. For all those who cannot go to Greece next year for World Dipcon, please come to our tournament

instead as we will be celebrating the 40th straight year of Dixie-fun here at the same Dixie-time, same Dixie-channel.

2025 Full Results (no rank=only played 1 round)

1.	David Miller (MD)	536
2.	Randy Lawrence Hurt(NC)	532
3.	Ed Sullivan (TX)	348
4.	Sophie Lewis (NC)	344
4.	Keith Worstell (NC)	344
6.	Dave Smith (CT)	340
7.	Justin Loar (CA)	336
8.	Jack Craig (NC)	328
8.	Karthik Konath (CA)	328
10.	Sabi Ahuja (IL)	300
11.	Timothy Crosby (FL)	300
12.	Riley Boucot (VA)	264
13.	Heymchen Vandergriff(OH)	240
14.	Katie Benn (OK)	236
15.	Brian Ecton (MD)	228
15.	Alex Maslow (MA)	228
17.	Doc Binder (FL)	220
18.	Matt Auchtung (NC)	216
18.	Ben Kellman (MI)	216
20.	Kirk Vaughn (TN)	210
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New Diplomacy Tournaments Coming to Dallas, TX

by Robert Lacy

There will be new Diplomacy Tournaments coming in 2026 to Dallas, TX. These Tournaments will be held at BGG Spring Con and BGG Con which is held in the fall. Both have excellent venue for events, including large attendance, big open spaces and huge boardroom tables with comfortable leather desk chairs. In addition, there are many other scheduled games, a huge gaming flea market, open gaming areas and a vendor's hall.

We will have prize and product support from Renegade Games and several long time Diplomacy players from across the country have expressed that they will attend. The intention is to grow these events over the next few years to be one of the must go to Diplomacy events in the United States.

On a personal note, I remember back many years ago now that there was always Diplomacy events at the gaming events in Texas. I am sure there are a few who might still remember those days. Over time this slowly was eroded away. Since 2018 I have been doing many teaching events and small games at the gaming conventions in Texas and local Dallas game stores trying to build back up the player base here.

Both Tournaments will have awards and prizes for players including Tournament winner, best countries and other prizes. How cool will it be to show up and take home the first winner's trophy?

Be looking in Diplomacy World as well as social media for updates as we get closer to May 2026. Mark your calendars!

BGG SPRING 2026

May 21-25 2026

Venue: Hyatt Regency DFW Airport

Hotel connects to Terminal C at DFW airport.

Registration usually opens mid-September for the following May date and the hotel block opens the following week for badge holders.

BGG CON 2026

Nov 18-22

Venue: Hyatt Regency Dallas (Reunion Tower) in downtown Dallas.

Registration usually opens mid-March for the following November date and the hotel block opens the following week for badge holders.

The hotel blocks for each convention are usually around \$129 -149 a night but do sell out very quickly. The badges always sell out by the last week if not sooner. Of course, all of this can change.

The Amazons or the Minotaur?

by Mal Arky

The Ancient Greeks were great. Of course, there's Alexander, who is at least nominally great in the way any victorious, warmongering leader is great to the people who benefited from their conquering.

To me, though, the Ancient Greeks were great due to their imagination. Their gods were motivated by human emotion and were far from perfect, which was pretty obvious considering the imperfections of the world they'd molded. And, if they had to deal with external challenges that threatened their way of life, they had the exciting solution of sending a strapping male hero on a quest.

Greek myths were full of quests. Heracles went on a dozen of them, something of a working holiday, which one might consider a less than suitable sentence for killing your wife and children. But, well, the guy who imagined this (who might have been Pisinus of Lindus, who I only mention because I enjoy smirking at the thought of his nickname in school) must have had a hard home life.

Then there was Theseus, who was the son of Aegeus, king of Athens, before Athens became a democracy, of course. Here, the problem was overseas in Crete, where a much eviler king, Minos, was forcing the Athenians to send seven young men and women periodically, supposedly to sacrifice to Minos's half-man, half-bull creature known as the Minotaur. Personally, I think Minos was just a bit of a perv.

The Greeks also loved their tragedies. When Theseus returned, he was supposed to use white sails to signal to his dad that he'd survived. Unfortunately, he forgot, and (according to the Latin version of the story, anyway) Aegeus, overcome with grief, killed himself by jumping into what we now call the Aegean Sea and drowning.

There was also Jason, another fine, young male hero, who sailed off in search of a golden fleece on his ship Argos. He ended up sailing the coasts of the Black Sea where, among other things, he came across a society of warrior women: the Amazons. This society was the antithesis of the Ancient Greeks' male-dominated society, and so was, naturally, to be treated as an enemy. Steve Trevor had the better idea, I think.

We know a lot about ancient mythology and legends because these people, not only the Greeks, had a great oral and written tradition preserving them. I, for one, am very grateful for this because, without it, I wouldn't have had such an interesting way to anchor an article on Turkey's dilemma at the start of a game of Diplomacy. Well, when I say "interesting"...

Turkish Delight? Not Quite - In modern times, if you manage to jaw-jaw your way through to the championship game in an arena event as the seventh player, and you're going to be using the Paris Method to be assigned a power in the game, you can pretty much start planning how you're going to play the game with those yellow pieces. Such is the negative perception of Turkey in these games.

At one time, though, Turkey was seen as one of two witches, along with England on the opposite side of the board. Draw Turkey and you've a good chance of survival. Not necessarily winning, of course, but surviving at least. These days, it seems, Turkey is seen as the weakest power in arena Diplomacy, eliciting even deeper sighs among Dippers than Italy or Austria.

When I talk about Turkey's dilemma I could, then, mean one of a myriad of issues Turkey has to deal with. However, in this case, I am referring to the problem of what to do with the Turkish fleet, which is part of a more panoramic view of strategy when playing Turkey. Do you use the fleet to visit the Amazons, keeping it around the Black Sea, or do you sail off in search of an angry, youth-munching man-bull in the Aegean?

If you choose the former, you're focusing on Russia and defending your corner of the board. You're aiming to play the long game, waiting for a solid alliance to come your way, which might allow you to push on in the mid-game. If you choose the latter, you're looking to set yourself up quickly, expanding into the Mediterranean and challenging Italy for maritime mastery, but running the risk of a Peppermint Alliance of Austria and Russia smacking you down.

The Mouth to Hell? - Although there's no conclusive evidence to suggest this, some commentators believe the Ancient Greeks considered the Black Sea to be the mouth of Hell. It was originally known to them as the 'Axeinos', the 'Unkind' or 'Inhospitable Sea', due to the loss of ships sailing it, or relating to the people living on its coasts (nasty Amazons). If this is the case, F Ank-BLA is probably not a good move.

I once read somewhere, or heard it said, and I can't remember by whom (ah, memory, if only I could remember what you were used for), that the position of the Turkish fleet in Ankara demanded that it **had** to move to the Black Sea. I'm not sure this is the case, but the Russian fleet in Sevastopol, on the opposite shore, might well demand F Ank-BLA from Turkey. After all, do you want a Russian fleet in the Black Sea, bordering both Ankara and Constantinople, as well as your natural SC of Bulgaria? Isn't that just too much of a threat?

The Black Sea is the south's version of the English Channel. In the north, England and France have fleets on either side of the Channel, and neither can really trust the other not to occupy it in Spring 1901. If anything, with the Black Sea, the threat is more exaggerated; while the Channel borders Brest, London and Belgium, the Black Sea borders Ankara, Constantinople, Bulgaria, Rumania and Sevastopol, almost doubly dangerous. Additionally, Armenia - which forms a land border for Turkey and Russia - is also part of the Black Sea coastline. If one of the two powers manages to partner a fleet in the Black Sea with an army in Armenia, the other is under serious threat. I'd even go so far as to say that, if F(Ank) demands Turkey open to the Black Sea, it almost demands Turkey order A Smy-Arm in S01, also.

The Russia/Turkey relationship is a complex one. It's unusual for the two players to be comfortable in trusting each other because of the possibility of a fleet occupying the Black Sea. And yet, if they choose to order a bounce there or, indeed, in Armenia, Austria will lead the soothsaying of an impending Juggernaut Alliance that will roll over the board. The only things that Austria will be happy to see from these two powers are Turkey in the Black Sea and Armenia, or Russia's fleet in one or the other. This, in itself, makes the relationship a tough one to manage, as almost anything either player does will have Austria whispering about eighteen-wheeler trucks to other players. This might be a good thing, though, in that, if this is the case, Turkey and Russia may as well just get on with things, as almost nothing they do will prevent it!

If Turkey orders F Ank-BLA in all seriousness, they are passing up on the chance to get involved in the Mediterranean. It means that, at least for now, they are happy to play in their box, their corner of the board. It takes a lot for a fleet in the Black Sea to reach a progressive point in the Med. And they're tying themselves down to a long war with Russia, relying on Austrian, German or even English help.

It may also signal an agreement with Italy as it allows Italy unopposed dominance of Med sea spaces east of the Sicilian Axis (the meeting point of the Ionian and Tyrrhenian Seas, and Tunis and Naples). With no competition from Turkey, Italy doesn't really need to target Turkey as an enemy, allowing them to focus on either Austria or France. Even so, given that a Turkey that is attacking Russia is likely to be relying on Austria's help, they don't want to see Austria having to defend against an Italian attack.

There is, therefore, a huge amount of diplomatic work involved in the easy choice of F Ank-BLA. If you're attacking Russia, you have to keep Italy off your back **and** manage their desire to attack Austria instead, and possibly work towards additional help from Germany and/or England further north. If you're moving there in an

agreed bounce with Russia, you have to work to encourage Russia to move on with the alliance because, in Fall 1901, you'll face the same dilemma again, and you have to keep Austria and Italy at loggerheads, given the delay in using the fleet progressively.

There is also the threat of an Austro-Italian alliance, using the move to the Black Sea as a reason to attack you. It leaves you vulnerable to an attack from these powers and, even worse, if A/I does target you, what is stopping Russia from jumping on board with them to make gains at your expense? While Turkey is possibly the most defensible of the powers, it takes more than defensive tactics to hold off an A/I/R alliance.

Perhaps, then, moving F Ank-BLA is indeed a watery road to Hell.

The Horns of the Dilemma - What of the alternative, then? What if you decide to push on towards the Mediterranean waters rather than the Black Sea? Doesn't this have an equally labyrinthine set of problems to solve?

One of the issues with F Ank-Con, as the prelude to getting that fleet and, probably another, into the Mediterranean, is the time it takes to **get** the fleet into a progressive position. It is, at the earliest, a year to get your fleet into the Aegean. Indeed, it could take longer, with the possibility of Italy ordering F Nap-ION in S01, and following up with F ION-AEG in Fall to bounce with F Con-AEG. And then you have a new problem to solve: you've committed to contending with Italy in the Med, so you have to build a second fleet in Smyrna which, although you would likely have been intending to do this anyway, severely limits your chances of a second SC gain in 1902 with Italy and Turkey in conflict.

It would take a very committed Italy to take this route, however. Why would Italy, with the guaranteed build from Tunis, tie themselves down in a war with you that their one fleet can't win, instead of taking Tunis? Well, actually, there are two good reasons, which I'll come to below, but it's still much more likely that Italy will take Tunis instead. For now, let's lay aside this problem, then, and look at why Turkey would choose this option.

Frankly, neither Turkey nor Russia **wants** to be squabbling over the Black Sea. Turkey has more interesting things to do than bounce there; Russia has more important things to do with regard to Rumania. Sure, a bounce in the Black Sea doesn't prevent Russia from using their fleet to take Rumania, but being able to order F Sev-Rum in S01, with A Mos-Sev at the same time, works the majority of the time, and this probability increases significantly if Turkey has no interest in challenging it. And, given that Austria will only be satisfied with an outright war between Russia and Turkey not to think a Juggernaut is in play, why not go

with it? Perhaps the Black Sea isn't quite as crucial as it's often said to be for Turkey; after all, A Smy-Ank in S01 is a pretty good safety check (and keeps Smyrna open for the second fleet build, too!).

Overall, there is a pretty good chance that Turkey can get their fleet into the Aegean Sea in Fall 1901. With an army in Bulgaria, and a second fleet built in Smyrna in Winter 1901, Turkey is on the way to an advanced position to challenge for the eastern Med spaces. Of course, a sensible Italy will probably build a second fleet themselves, but they'd do that if they thought there was an advantage against you anyway, and, if you've worked hard diplomatically, they could be working in an anti-Austrian triple with you and Russia, making an army a better option.

The R/T/I alliance is probably the best alliance for Turkey. It works more quickly to dismantle Austria than the A/I/R alliance dismantles Turkey, given that Austria is accessible through Venice and Galicia, and vulnerable to combined attacks via the Balkans. Even with interference from the Western powers, Austria is doomed more often than not. And, well, this interference isn't directly against Turkey anyway, so meh.

For Italy, there is the pressure of a successful Turkey at their backs, as well as the threat of the R/T/I degenerating into a Juggernaut, but there's enough of a chance that Turkey can take a different route. After all, Turkey can afford to send Italian fleets west, while focusing on an attack against Russia. Often, two Turkish fleets are all that is needed in this second scenario to persuade Italy that Turkey is a manageable threat.

For Turkey, either option is good, although perhaps moving on to attack Russia is marginally optimal. A stronger Russia will attract the attention of the Western powers if it hasn't already, so they could face a two-front war. And Italy can wait; it allows Turkish fleets to move west to support - **only** support, of course! - Italian fleets against whichever power is strongest in the western Mediterranean seas.

There is also danger involved with the Aegean opening move, however. The most pressing issue is an aggressive Russia backed up by a willing Austria. While I think an agreement over the Black Sea with Russia is eminently achievable, the threat of Russia simply not intending to keep it is real. If Austria can be dragged along with Russia, it means that you could well be back to facing a Peppermint Alliance or even an A/I/R alliance.

Additionally, there's the problem you're facing with Italy, the two horns of the Italian Minotaur I mentioned above (why Italy might **not** take Tunis in 1901 in preference to attacking Turkey).

The most obvious one is an Adriatic Alliance between Italy and Austria, possibly leading to a Key Lepanto opening. With this opening, Italy pushes through Trieste in S01 into Serbia in F01. This will lead to Italy using F(ION) to support an Austrian attack on Greece or attempt to sneak into the Aegean, resulting in the bounce I discussed above.

The other seems to actually favor Turkey, and that is the possibility of a Wintergreen Alliance between Italy and Russia, with Italy gaining a build from Trieste or Vienna and therefore not being reliant on Tunis. With a Russo-Italian alliance in play, this could well be balanced by an Austro-Turkish one, and Italy may order F ION-AEG to prevent you from gaining a more aggressive position.

Speed is Crete-ical - Yeah, you're right - I apologize for that one. If you're not going to be boxed into your corner of the board, as Turkey, you need to move quickly and become a force in the game. This, to me, suggests that, from a theoretical point of view, getting your fleet into the Mediterranean is better than occupying the Black Sea, which in turn is better than defending the Black Sea.

One thing I haven't considered above (and I'm sure there's more than one, but I've rambled on enough here already) is the speed of mobilization a fleet in the Black Sea gives Turkey against Russia. Convoying armies from Constantinople and Ankara to Sevastopol, sliding surreptitiously into Ukraine, then leapfrogging another army across can be devastating, especially to a Russia under pressure in the north. But that is often a more effective tactic later in the game, when there are armies to utilize. You need the economic base to do this, and that means SCs from elsewhere.

There is no right set of moves for Turkey, though, outside of the context of the game. Well, A Con-Bul in S01, yeah, sure. And very often **avoiding** A Smy-Con in the same turn: it would be lovely to have two armies in the Balkans at the end of 1901, and Austria, Russia or Italy may offer to help with that. That should probably raise the red flag, though, because having A(Bul) and A(Con) at the start of F01 does little more than seal the box, so if you're being offered that help, there's probably a reason for it, and it's unlikely to be a favorable one.

And, yes, I'm aware that F Ank-Con potentially has the same effect, especially if it doesn't get into the Aegean after all. But there's always the possibility F Con-Smy in F01, and at least the fleet is on the right coast.

Personally, I would prefer to have my fleet head west, but this isn't always the best choice. Know your neighbors. What will work best for you in **this** situation? There is never an unfailing best option for any power in Diplomacy; it would be a truly boring game if there were!

Play By Mail Email Servers: PlayDip, WebDip and Backstabbr

by Edi Birsan

Playing by email was never a favored way for me to play. I love Face-to-Face (FtF) and playing in their events. However, the classic problem of finding 7 players who can devote 5-7 hours for a great game is daunting. The postal hobby was invented in 1963 by John Boardman and spread worldwide just because of this and typically had 2 week move deadlines with 1 week for adjustments. The decline in mail service gave rise to 3- and 4-week deadlines with a full game (average was 1911) lasted a year. Correspondence early on was, in many cases, intense, with multi-page letters going over possibilities. However, for some, especially those starting in the 1980's, post cards were also used with tiny, tiny print. The postal/play-by-distance hobby was technologically supported by zines produced with a mimeograph or a stencil machine and a typewriter (a mechanical device which had metal keys on struts that were through levers impacted an inked ribbon to put an impression on a piece of paper!). There were problems with No Moves Received (NMR) and drops, to which the response was a hobby wide replacement player registry. Then E-mail came.

The first foray I can recall was on CompuServe, where everyone was a number. The NMR and Drops continued. Eventually, manual adjudication faded out and algorithms/code took over with deadlines getting shorter and shorter. NMR's and drops continued and escalated as the player population became more addicted to instant gratification. The concept of a game as a social event faded; all of this aided by the development of rating systems and the like that enhanced people's shift away from enjoying a losing fight.

Somewhere along the line, the last century's conceptual dynamic of a paragraph was lost, as it did not fit within 144 characters (or 288), and a whole generation lost the use of punctuation and a sense of style. The personal letter was dead.

Throughout the spurts of the technological advancement and social decline I would attempt to play (now maybe called interface) with the email world. I provided player guides and mentor series that still remain around the remnants of the email forays. However, the high extent of the NMR's and drops as well as the cryptic style of the players attracted to it remain discouraging and typically after a year or so I would wind down my involvement with it and return every 7+ years or so to see if things changed.

The nature of my personal time constraints and the 7-year itch coincided this January with another run into the email world. Here are some comments on the 3 systems that appear to be the top end:

PlayDip

<https://www.playdiplomacy.com/>

Size: 200 active games

Map Types: Classic, Milan, Ancient Med, 1900, Versailles, Hundred, War in the Americas

Standard Map Variations: Fleet Rome, Winter 1900, Build Anywhere, Age of Empires, Chaos

Rating System: with games rated and not rated, the system is not detailed see note. Some players value this rating system and will play for the points as the prime motivation in the game going after and being affected by other player's rating.

Deadlines: 12 hours, 1,2,3,5,7 days

Voting: Open Ballot, Secret, DIAS, Solo Only, You can vote yourself out of a draw. All votes must be unanimous with NMR counted as NO.

Best Features:

They are the only server that allows for draw votes to pass with players voting themselves out of the draw. This allows for the truncation of long games and I believe helps to reduce some drops. Allows for draw votes to be open, or secret.

Message system allows for group messages and sorting by Subject headings as well as inbound and outbound.

Worst Features:

The 2nd highest dropout rate at early stages in a game.

In creating a game, you cannot specify low dropout rate.

NMR voters should count as YES in all votes this way an NMR in Spring -1 can have players declare a 6-way draw and start another game rather than having to play 4 or so moves to kill the slacker.

In Gunboat games where you do not have private or public messages you can propose a draw that is public. For example, a recent game saw a Spring 1901 Draw Proposal for England and France, clearly sending a

message that that is exactly what is wanted...(and happened so far).

You can also make an illegal move in game such as Army Marseilles supports London to Berlin which is also a way of getting around the spirit of the Gunboat game.

In all games when there is a vote you cannot change it. Furthermore, even if there is a secret vote you can copy and paste the Status of you position which shows whether you accepted the vote or not.

Feature never used:

Allows for an Escalation Variant start where players put down pieces one by one and then play from that position.

NOTE: Experience: 16 games. Not a single game finished with the same 7 players. No game was free of NMRs. High Percentage of drops and NMRs in 1901+1902.

This server was started in Malta and developed in competition with WebDip and had a business model intent that was controversial. It got involved with other financial gaming models. It was subject to a massive hack that destroyed major sections of the server such as the forum and other features. There is no response from admin on anything such as claims of multi. account cheating (one person playing multiple positions in the game). Uses the pre 2024 rules. Strongly urge do not put any money into buying premium we do not know where it goes nor do they respond.

WebDip

Size: 384 Active Games

Map Types: Classic, World, Ancient, Classic Chaos, Cold War, Classic Germany vs Italy, Empire4, Modern2, Classic France vs Austria

Deadlines: From 5 minutes to 14 days.

Ratings: Games can be rated or not rated at set up. Players have a base number of starting points which they can "bet" to join games with anywhere the entrance cost is fixed from 5 points on up. Victory points are assigned according to two systems: all getting equal points and Sum of the Squares in draws. Some players value this rating system and will play for the points as the prime motivation in the game going after and being affected by other player's rating.

Voting: All votes must be unanimous with NMR counted as NO. Strict Draws Include All Survivors (DIAS) so a civil disorder country must be eliminated.

Best Features

Has a Reliability rating that you can set so that players with less than that number can NOT join. This is an excellent start to trying to reduce drop outs.

Has a function where you can play against 6 A.I. in Gunboat for classic or the 1 on 1 set ups of Austria vs France and Germany vs Italy. Does have 11 limited number of full press games against 6 A.I. countries where the Robots will correspond and negotiate with you. I am in one now and having some fun with it. But there is about 89 people lined up for the next available game and it is a long wait.

The Reliability indexing allows for a reduction in the probability of early drop outs.

In Gunboat you cannot issue an illegal order such as Army Paris supports London to Berlin.

Response by the owner/creator is excellent. Plenty of games to fill.

Worst Feature

The message system does not allow you to send a single message to a collection of players so all you can do is to cut and paste and hope they will believe you are sending the same message. Also, the message system collects all messages to a player in one long thread.

NMR voters count as NO.

Does not use the 2024 rules for Civil Disorder Disbands

NOTE: the system was created as a Master Thesis and has maintained and advanced. The original creator is still in control. Real life economics is crowding in and I hope that there can be some support obtained from the hobby and they ask for a Patron or some sort of contribution system. ((do you hear me Kestas?)). It is my favorite system so far.

Backstabbr

www.backstabbr.com/

Size: Appears to be about 110 games though not easily measured.

Map: Appears only Classic not sure if premium gives more, nothing in their info speaks to this.
Deadlines: 5 minutes to 2 weeks

Rating System: None but you can get a profile of a player that will list Turns Made, Missed, Games total, games completed and Won/Drawn/Lost.

Voting: secret and open

Best Features

Can block communications during retreats and adjustments as per the actual rules for FtF play.
Good formatting of order writing and display in side-by-side windows.

Has a gamesmaster feature that allows the gamemaster to suspend the game to recruit a replacement player if the gamesmaster is not involved in the game. Saw this in action and it was quite impressive. I hope all gamesmasters are so involved.

Worst Features

Players do not know if there is a call for a draw in Gunboat games. As such had a game that was a stalemate from 1908 or so that went to 1931 with no real changes until one player realized they can set the draw designator to what the current number of players were. However, there is a drawback there in that players can abuse this feature as is done in PlayDip.

States that it does not use the civil disorder disband rules in the 2024 rulebook.

NOTES: Has the highest dropout rate I have seen in my games since January with 1901 NMR and drops present. One game had 3 countries in Civil Disorder by end of 1902.

Seems to be popular with private invited games through Discord.

Its entry system is used to record FtF tournament event games that are then featured on the hobby news podcast.

Has a subscription offering that starts at \$6/month up to \$20/month which it appears some 24 people have taken one of those. Not sure of the benefits but when they seem to imply that they will listen to the payee's but generally means that they are not welcoming to others. I have tried to get a hold of those in charge but been unable. Maybe they want my money.

OVERALL SUMMARY

The collective super positive side is that these are three places to meet other players and play our favorite game. Each has individual weaknesses and strengths but here are some universal take aways and suggestions:

NMR/Drops

These are the bane of existence in e-mail games. While Web Dip has a reliability factor in set up there are still fundamental problems. I would suggest the following:

1. No game is adjudicated if there is a missing order in Spring 1901. The player should be removed and the game restarted with new randomly assigned countries and a new player.
2. NMRs in Fall 1901 should have the game delayed and player replaced if the offender does not issue orders.
3. All Grace for missed orders should not be allowed until Spring 1903.
4. Every site should have some sort of reliability factor to be accessed in game set up. This way new players who have little tolerance for poor early positions can be screened out from the veteran players.

Rules

The new 2024 rules that deal with civil disorder removals, supports into designated coastal regions, and the unwanted convoy issues, should all be coded in. This will keep the hobby on the same page.

Messages/Press Release

Messages need to be allowed to be sent simultaneously to a group of players. They should be able to be sorted by Subject line. I like the idea of the OPTION to have messages banned during retreats and adjustments to mirror regular rules.

Voting

I STRONGLY urge everyone to allow for votes to be other than Draws Include All Survivors so that a player can vote themselves out of a draw. This allows for faster games, cleaner social endings and does not subject players to being ground down always. This will also cut down on drop outs as allows a player facing a hopeless position to gracefully recognize the power relationships and end the game WITH the other players.

Communication/Socialization

This is a personal complaint that has nothing to do with the performance of the servers, but is something that all of us players can work on. As the mantra goes: "We play games to have fun and make it fun for others." Always write to every single player every turn. Especially when you are fighting them or even have stabbed them. Think about how would you interact if you were playing at your grandmother's dining room table with your child present. Go over what might change things and do not be afraid, in fact welcome, talking about things that may be non-controversial. My mother used to say do not talk about Politics, Sex or Religion, which is a good guide. But sprinkle in things like 'What other games do you like to play?' Sports can be a minefield. Engage players in different tactical and strategic options that you may see and welcome their comments and suggestions. Above all, have fun.

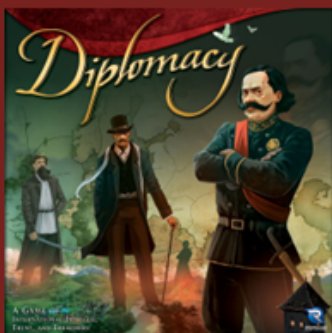
Diplomacy



Tournament Diplomacy is returning to Texas!



After years of growing Diplomacy in the Dallas area, veteran organizer Robert Lacy will host tournament events at BGG Spring and BGG Con in Dallas, Texas in 2026. Both events will be three rounds of Diplomacy using three different games: Diplomacy, Era of Empire, and a mystery Diplomacy game to be announced. Are you the best all around Diplomacy player?



???
Mystery
Diplomacy
Game
???



BGG SPRING 2026

Dates: May 21-25, 2026

Venue: Hyatt Regency DFW Airport

Site: https://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/BGG_Events

BGG CON 2026

Dates: Nov 18-22, 2026

Venue: Hyatt Regency Dallas (Reunion Tower) in downtown Dallas

Site: https://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/BGG_Events



Contact Robert Lacy for additional details: r_lacy@yahoo.com



GMs Take Note!

by Lucas Kruijswijk

The different editions of the Diplomacy rulebook give very little guidance about order interpretation, especially when a player messes things up by mistake (or on purpose). A poorly written order with nevertheless one meaning should be followed. A unit without an order should hold. And for players who leave the game, we have the civil disorder rules. But it doesn't go much further than that.

As author of the DATC (Diplomacy Adjudicator Test Cases), I was invited to review the rules of the new Era of Empire variant, and this was one of the discussion points. Before delving into what was added, let me first tell you about a face-to-face game I was once involved with. In Winter 1901, France ordered three builds, while it was only entitled to two. What to do? We were playing without a GM, and we didn't have any specific house rules. And, let's be fair, if not playing a tournament, house rules should not be necessary.

Denying all three builds would be rather devastating for France. Although there are always players that don't mind to win like that, for me personally it wouldn't be satisfactory. Allan Calhamer writes in Games & Puzzles No. 21, 1974:

The final problem of organizing a seven-person game, was not solved until I started studying Law in 1953. There I became aware that players who failed to meet their responsibilities towards the game should be made to suffer light penalties such as the loss of a single move; so they are encouraged to comply, but are not normally wiped out by minor lapses. The game should be designed so that it could charge right on in spite of poorly written orders and the like.

Building nothing would not be in the spirit Calhamer describes. The alternatives are to allow the first two builds, or the last two builds. For taking the first or last orders, it means that we recognize orders as actually **being** first or last, and that an order set isn't just a random list of orders.

This becomes even more apparent with disband orders. Suppose a player orders two disbands, while he or she is only required to disband one? I don't think that any GM would ignore all disbands, and then apply the automatic disband according to the civil disorder rule, with the possibility that a unit is disbanded that was not ordered to disband on the first place! I believe most GMs would disband the first one listed, and ignore the second.

The Era of Empire rulebook has some guidance. It says that in case of excess, the first builds or disbands should be followed. I don't think anyone would object this, and it would have helped to resolve the three builds of France in 1901

But the Era of Empire rulebook goes further. In the movement phase, it says that in case a unit receives multiple orders, the first one should be followed. This is more controversial and many GMs (but certainly not all) would rule a hold instead. In the DATC, this was also the recommendation up to now.

Yet, I do want to defend this guidance, because it has the advantage of a consistent and straightforward way of interpreting orders. In any phase, whether it is movement, retreat or adjustment, the orders are processed from top to bottom, where earlier orders take precedence over subsequent orders. The alternative, ruling a double order to hold, would mean that in the movement phase we do not consider the sequence, while in the retreat and adjustment phase we do. Just processing from top to bottom is simpler, and simplicity should be valued, especially since any choice would be arbitrary anyways.

In addition, I would say (although it is not specifically written in the rulebook) that anything that is not a proper order, should be skipped. Consider the following orders of Russia, that only may build one unit:

Build F St. Petersburg
Build A Moscow

So, Russia makes two mistakes. It doesn't specify the coast of St. Petersburg and it orders two builds instead of one. The first build will fail. The rulebook has always been very specific on that. But do we ignore this order and build in Moscow or do we say that the first build order still occupies the build slot, and the Moscow build is ignored?

I think it is more straightforward to ignore everything that is not proper. Otherwise, we get the discussion whether something still resembles an order. Suppose Russia ordered 'Build F' or 'Build F St.'. Would that block the build in Moscow? By ignoring everything not proper, that discussion is avoided.

Similarly, situations may occur in the movement phase. Consider the following German orders:

A Holland – Burgundy
A Holland Supports Kiel
F Kiel Holds

Germany intended to order Belgium – Burgundy, but by mistake wrote Holland. If this first order resulted in A Holland Holds, then support for Kiel will not be executed. If the order is completely ignored, then the support for Kiel will be executed. The most straightforward way, that avoids new discussions, is to process from top to bottom, ignoring any improper or impossible order. So, the first line is ignored and the support for Kiel will succeed. Of course, if a support or convoy order doesn't match, then this is not ignored, but fails immediately for that reason.

I think it is a good thing that the rulebook now clarifies these situations. One could go further and detail out many other issues. In Diplomacy World #20 (from 1978), Mark Berch wrote an article about this, and the DATC also lists many possible ways to mess up an order. However, codifying this in the rulebook has also a

drawback. Some players will use it to argue with the GM, or even abuse it by deliberately writing an unclear order knowing how it will be executed. Some unpredictability on how things will work out is maybe a good thing, and if a game is played with a GM, it is up to him or her how to decide how to handle things.

The Renegade 2023 edition fixed some long-standing issues in the rules which I commented on in Diplomacy World #165. It is good to see that this is being continued, and that further gaps are being closed.

Oh, and as for the France who ordered three builds? In my game, we rolled a die (who said that the game has no dice?). If we rolled a 1 or a 2, we would use the first two builds; for a 3 or a 4 the last two, and for a 5 or a 6 we would allow no builds for France. The die was wise: it showed a 1.

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> and <https://diplobn.com/schedule/>

Anjou Feu XIV – July 12th – July 13th, 2025 - Château la Tomaze, 6bis rue du Pineau, Champ-sur-Layon in Bellevigne-en-Layon (Maine-et-Loire), France - https://tdfdiplo.fandom.com/fr/wiki/Anjou_Feu_XIV

2025 Jameson Hand Memorial ARMADA Regatta – July 25th – July 27th, 2025 - Boulder, Colorado - <https://www.facebook.com/events/965271088819369/>

Norwegian Diplomacy Championship – July 26th – July 27th, 2025 – Spilloteket, Kongens gate 7, 0153 Oslo, Norway - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sYEK5RplEan972j4zHPqcoDsBVw5VMF-h48jGxLuBsk/edit?tab=t.0>

World Boardgaming Championships – July 28th – July 29th, 2025 – Seven Springs, Pennsylvania – <http://www.boardgamers.org>

U.S. Diplomacy Championship at Gencon – July 31st – August 2nd, 2025 – Indianapolis, Indiana – <http://www.gencon.com>

World Boardgaming Championships – August 1st – August 2nd, 2025 – Seven Springs, Maryland – <http://www.boardgamers.org>

Boston Massacre 2025 – August 8th – August 10th, 2025 - Pandemonium Books and Games, 4 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts - https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScdLpcchXzmukNYxWwWy5BxlG_kS5EjBwO8RZkuZOu-lqYGCg/viewform

Cane Toad Classic – August 30th – August 31st, 2025 - Meeple and Mug, 63 Hardgrave Road West End, Brisbane, Australia - <https://diplomacygames.com/canetoad/>

National Diplomacy Masters – September 19th – September 23rd, 2025 – Las Vegas, Nevada – <https://wsbgvegas.com>

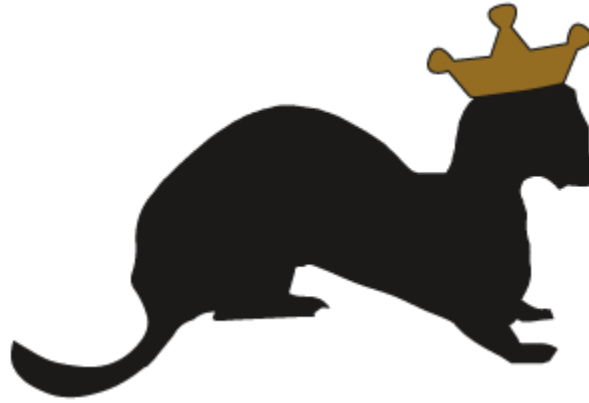
Dipcon at Weasel Moot XIX – October 3rd – October 5th, 2025 – Chicago, Illinois - <https://windycityweasels.org/weasel-moot-xix/>

Carnage – October 24th – October 26th, 2025 – Killington, Vermont - <https://carnagecon.com/>

EuroDipcon – November 7th – November 9th, 2025 - Leiden, The Netherlands - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/12HPK6zWU70rkh9BStJyLBcEtcx5bdS6A/edit>

Battlefront Dayton 2025 – November 7th – November 9th - Hope Hotel & Richard C. Holbrooke Conference Center, 10823 Chidlaw Rd #A, Dayton, Ohio – See flyer within this issue

DipCon 2025 at Weasel Moot XIX



The Windy City Weasels are thrilled to announce that DipCon 2025 will be held this fall at the nineteenth edition of the Weasel Moot, our annual tournament. The games will take place October 3rd to 5th at the Springhill Suites near O'Hare airport. The rooms, all suites, are \$129/night, the airport is a quick, free shuttle ride away, and there is a short walk to the Blue Line subway heading directly downtown. Registration is \$50 before September 1 and \$60 after, half-price for students.

We'll kick things off with a group dinner for earlycomers on Thursday, October 2, continue with a midday outing on Friday, October 3, and then get right to Diplomacy with the first round Friday evening. We'll have morning and evening rounds on Saturday, October 4, and then crown a new Alpha Weasel and North American champion following a fourth round on Sunday, October 5.

Check out moot.windycityweasels.org for more information or to register. We look forward to seeing you this fall!

The Sneak: Brandon Fogel, Chris Kelly, Kevin O'Kelly, Bryan Pravel

The Team Round, WDC 2025, San Francisco

by Steven Hogue

The tournament director explained the rules and procedures: sort yourselves into groups of seven, come up with a team name, assign each player a different power, then write all that down and turn it in. (Forced social interaction, off board? Eep.)

My whole angle was to speedrun this team building process and get it over with as soon as possible, so I took initiative.

I turned to everyone else sitting at the table with me. "Who wants to be on a team? Raise your hand." It didn't take long. We got seven.

Alright, I'm writing down everyone's name, we need a team name.

Yuri was pretty quick with Stabbing Westward. Apparently that's a band. Perfect Diplomacy team name, right?

Okay, I couldn't care less which power I play.

"Who wants to play what power? Just start calling them if you want them."

"Okay, what do you want? How about you, there's two left."

Austria was last. I wrote it by my name and turned in our paper.

First one done.

My neighbor was the ally who had stabbed me in the previous round. We'd been England and Germany, and then we were Austria and Italy. That was cute. Russia was Peter McNamara.

Turkey wanted us all to prioritize containing Peter. But I wanted to work with my prior ally in Italy and so..Turkey died. And Peter topped the board.

Okay, that being said...! Peter and I worked together, mostly seamlessly after 1901 We never took a dot from each other. But I did set up a couple defensive lines that were perhaps a bit...pre-emptive.

In the end I was just one dot behind, twelve to eleven, and by agreement-ish, meaning I told Peter if his extra dot came from the west, I wouldn't fight him over it.

You see, I didn't really care much about being the board topper at the end of this game.

That would've been great, of course. Of course! But it wasn't at the top of my list.

What I cared about most was something else entirely.

Two times in my most recent Austrian games, I had spent my energy signaling as much as I could to Russia that I wanted to work with them. At different times, I was offering arrangements that favored them.

In both cases, Russia had consistently sided with Turkey. And in both cases, Turkey had topped the board.

I was sick of it, and I felt like some point of mine remained unproven, though I still knew it to be true. I still wanted to see this conversation play out on the board.

And so, we go again.

My pitch to Peter was as close to a carbon copy as I could muster of the pitch I'd made to my previous Russian neighbors.

Peter agreed to an arrangement that favored him. Peter won.

Just like how in those other games, Turkey had agreed to an arrangement that favored them, and won.

Look, I understand this doesn't actually prove anything at all, but it's a cathartic experience for me. Absolutely worth it.

Anyway, later I found out we won the team round. I got a medal with a red ribbon. Not Best Austria, but kinda!

And, again. That team name?

I mean, come on.

Stabbing?

Westward?

chef's kiss

Diplomacy: Era of Empire at LexiCon

by Thomas Haver



This past weekend we ran a “Diplomacy: Era of Empire” demo at LexiCon (<https://lexicongaming.com/>) in Lexington, Kentucky. China board topped with 15 centers followed closely by Russia with 13 centers. There was some smart play by China in leveraging Japan, Netherlands, and Britain at times to cut off both France and Russia.



It was wonderful to finally attend this convention. Years ago, this event was recommended to me by a friend, but my schedule never aligned. Happy to finally make it. The convention is doing fantastic as well -- they announced a complete sellout on Saturday. We hope to return next year with even more events.



Initially Russia jumped off to an early advantage and was looking to put Japan away – taking both Otaru and Sakhalin while maintaining supremacy in the Sea of Japan. However, China negotiated several strong alliances that pushed Russia out of the east, leaving only a single pirate fleet to eventually take Formosa. In the west, it was Britain and Russia tackling Turkey early in the game to prevent the Ottoman’s from escaping their box. In the South, the combined forces of China and Britain limited French growth. However, it was a fateful stab by the Dutch that sealed their fate. The game may have ended in a solo for China if not for the time-limit. Skillful play by a newcomer!



Next week several other GMs will be running Diplomacy and Era of Empire teaching events at game conventions. If you would like to participate in the Renegade Heroes community program, please check out the link below. We run events at local game stores, game cafes, conventions, libraries, and more.

Renegade Heroes community program:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/introducing-the-renegade-heroes-community-program/>

You can get details on the new Diplomacy: Era of Empire variant at

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-era-of-empire/>

World Boardgaming Championships

WBC is an annual gaming convention held at Seven Springs Mountain Resort. The best two rounds of three will count towards the final tournament score. Best Country awards and prizes will be provided by the organizer. Food and drink will be provided during each round, with a pizza party during Round Three. A teaching round will be taught on Friday with board game prizes to select competitors.

August 1st – 2nd in Seven Springs, PA

Demo - 5pm-7pm Friday

Round One - 7pm-11pm Friday

Round Two - 10am-2pm Friday

Round Three - 7pm-11pm Saturday

Scoring: C-Diplo

Rank: Best two out of three rounds

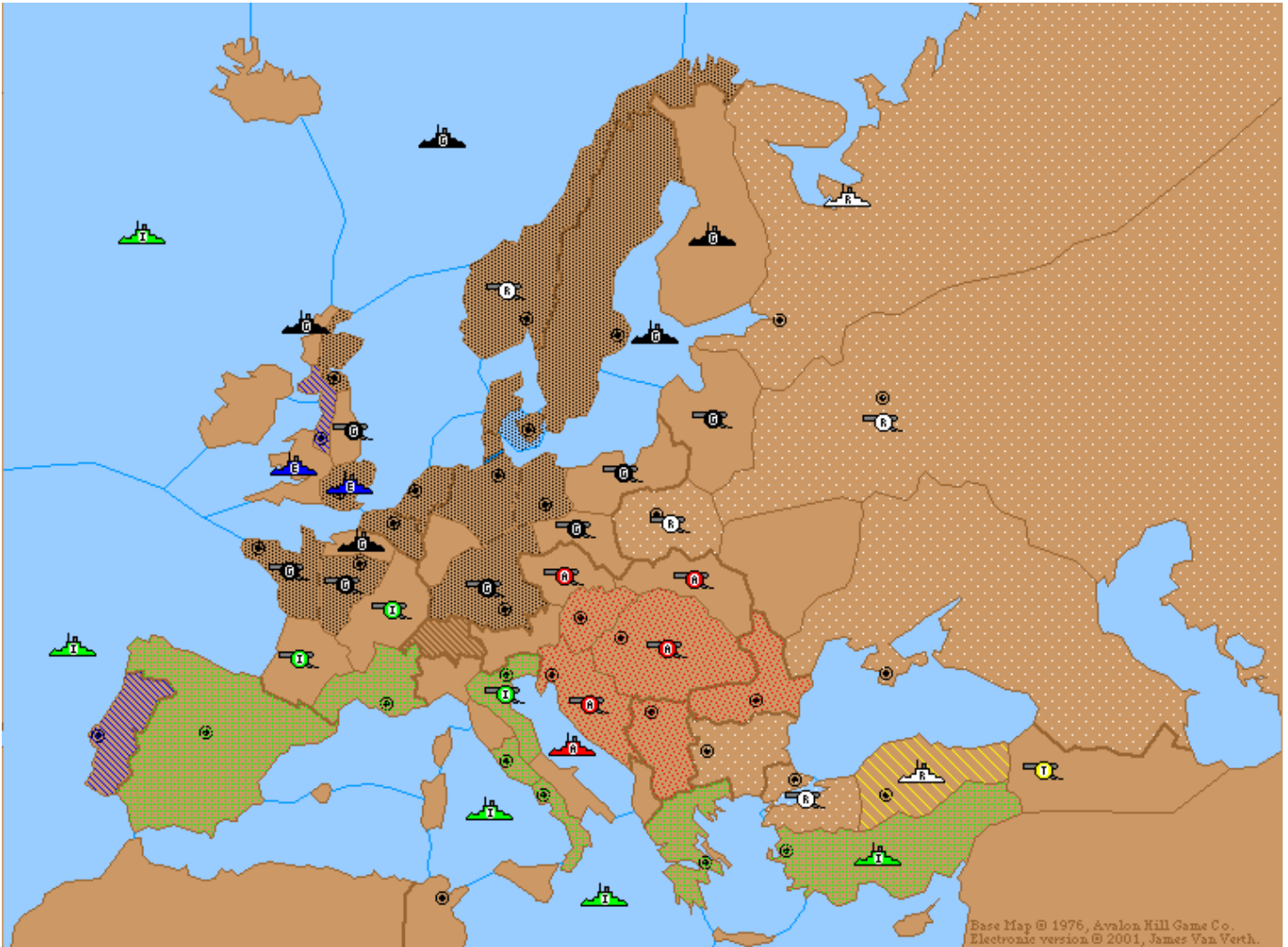
Contact: Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.boardgamers.org/>



A Diplomacy Order Challenge

by Edi Birsan



This is an actual situation in a game on Backstabbr.

The positions are as follows:

Germany:

Fleets: Cly, NWG, Fin, Bot, Pic
Armies Yor, Bre, Par, Mun, Sil, Pru, Lvn

The **Turks** have their last center Ank occupied by Russia.

Russia:

Fleet Ank, STPnc,
Armies Nwy, Mos, War, Con

Austria:

Fleet ADR
Armies Tri, Boh, Gal, Bud

Italy:

Fleets NAO, MAO, TyS, Ion, Say
Armies Pie, Gas, Bur

England:

Fleet Wales, London

Note that Russia is in Norway which is still owned by Germany and England is in London also owned by Germany.

The diplomatic situation is that Germany at 12 has been moving towards a solo and has the English/Italian/Russian/Austrian united in planning a response to try to cripple the Germans if not contain them. The Turks in Armenia are believed to be active and looking for a center. It is the Fall of 1906. What do you do as the German and the Allies?

Some of the challenges are:

Liverpool: England has taken London and owns Portugal and Liverpool, ideally they want to be able to build in Liverpool which the Germans have a force of two on directly and a fleet in the Norwegian that can cut any support from North Atlantic.

Brest/Paris/Belgium: how to deal with this complex set of supports and moves.

Munich what does it do?

Warsaw is under threat and that trips into the issue of St Petersburg.

Norway and Sweden present multiple solutions but affects what Norwegian does that affects Liverpool decisions.

How to deal with positioning forces for the next move after adjustments.

So what do you do on either side. Write to EdiBirsan@gmail.com with subject line "Challenge."

What actually happened will be revealed next issue, along with comments and recommendations.

50th Anniversary Origins in Columbus, Ohio

by Jeff Hayman

Hello all, this is Jeff Hayman (aspiring novelist and middling Diplomacy player) writing about the recent Diplomacy tournament held at the 2025 Origins Game Fair in Columbus, OH. Bottom line – GREAT time by all who attended! Many thanks to Tom Haver, Renegade, and Origins!

This was my 10th FTF Diplomacy Tournament and 1st Origins. I've attended Dip events in PA, NV, MD, and VA in the past...and although I've enjoyed them all, this was the best experience considering all factors such as convenience/price/size/opportunity/accommodation/etc. Origins was by far the EASIEST event to attend, both in regard to its proximity to an airport, and overall registration/accommodations.

There were 8 conventional Diplomacy boards played over two days (three rounds) with 30 Diplomats all vying for the championship. Additionally, there was a major teaching event BEFORE the tourney incorporating the upcoming Era of Empire Diplomacy variant which featured two boards (along with two other conventional Diplomacy boards). Thus, there were AMPLE opportunities for a player to participate in multiple games over the course of the weekend WHILE STILL having time to partake of the myriad of larger Origins offerings.

Economically, Origins probably offered the best 'bang for the buck' of all the FTF tourneys I have played. For

example, easiest to get to, cheaper than Vegas, more modern facilities by far than WBC, larger than PREZcon, and on and on... Additionally, anytime you attend a DIP event hosted by Tom Haver (the hacker character of "John" in my novel "The WALL" is based on him, and yes, there IS a Diplomacy reference!), you are guaranteed some GREAT swag...and often times dinner and drinks to boot! Thus, I can vouch that Columbus has the best pizza I've ever had (yes, Columbus!...who knew?!) and the best Gin and Tonics at Goodfella's (though they didn't feature "Hayman's Old Tom" gin...their loss!...but good recommendation by Phil Burk nonetheless).

As for my experience in the games, I stuck to my usual "Hey, I'm the best ally you can have!" strategy...and also (as usual), PROVED it! I didn't win the tourney (also as usual, LOL), but I 'Laureled' (also as usual!) and won a Best England on the last round...AND got to KEEP the wooden map board! Additionally, I ensured that my two allies from rounds one and two (Chris Glassburn and Jack Wilsbach) also won their respective Best Country awards. So really, if we ever happen to meet on a Diplomacy board, rest assured that together, we can go far!

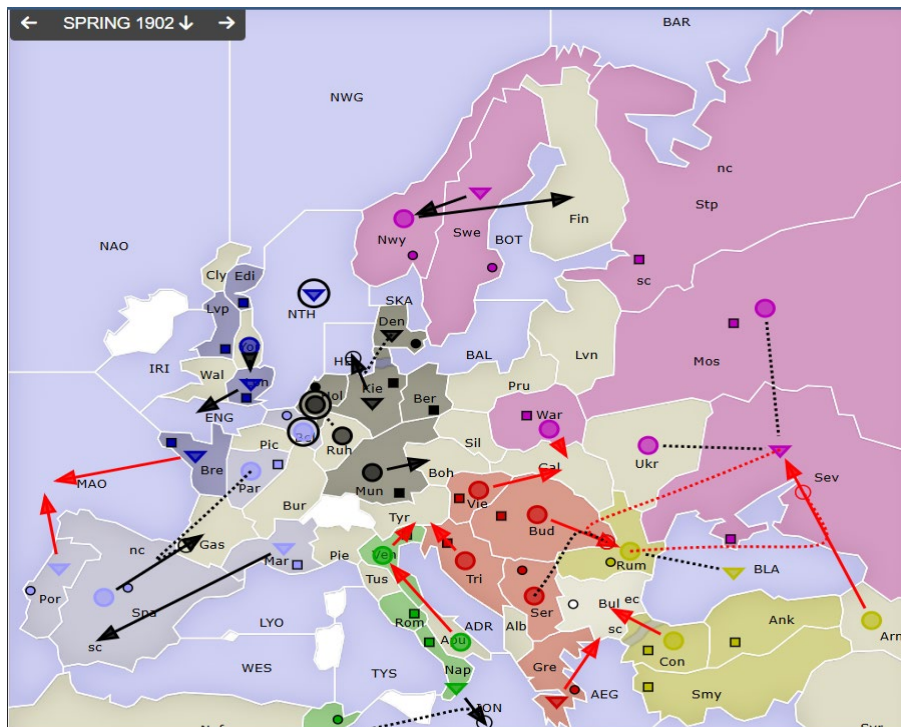
Be sure to check out "Diplomacy at Origins" next year!

by Mikalis Kamaritis

I see a little silhouetto of a move. Mikalis! Mikalis?! Why are you in Bohemia?

So, to cut to the chase - I played two top boards at the start of this year as Germany in quick succession in VDL and then in the DBNI semi-final. Now, the prevailing meta may not be quite as AIR-heavy as it was a couple of years ago, but they're still hardly an uncommon feature. I love the flexibility that Germany has, but there's one very clear way to remove all of that flexibility - Russia going to Silesia, Austria to Bohemia, and Italy (or Austria) going to Tyrolia. Is this instantly fatal for you? No, it's certainly possible to defend Munich and Berlin. It might even be possible to pick up a center or two with your fleets whilst doing so, whether in Scandinavia or in England. But then you have the big issue many a Germany player has faced - where are you building? If most of your units are tied up defending the home centers, then you won't have any free home centers to build in. However, if you think I'm just writing an awful lot of words solely to point out that Bohemia is more likely to successfully bounce a move to the line than the much more easily supportable Silesia or Tyrolia moves, then I'll shut that down now. Sure, that's a small benefit, but I'm not here to talk about an AIR that's already coming to the line.

But does that introvert have any less to offer you? Should you ignore quiet, 'safe' little Bohemia for the glitz and the glam and the fame and the glory of Tyrolia? Let's say you're playing Germany, you have maybe one army to spare, and you want to do *something* in the East to help boost your position. Do you go for Tyrolia, go for glory, be the superstar, get the attention? Do you ignore the south and go for Silesia, and charge your light brigade at the Russian positions? The songs might be sung about you, but is that really the best path? These seem to be the usual choices. But there's a third province you can move into. There's Bohemia. And it's my favorite of the three, by far.



Spring 1902 in my DBNI semi-final, and I already have a superfluous army as I've chosen to side with France against England, whilst also working with Steven Hogue's Russia. Italy (Riaz Virani) has shown a willingness to attack Austria (Noam Brown). Bohemia here I come!

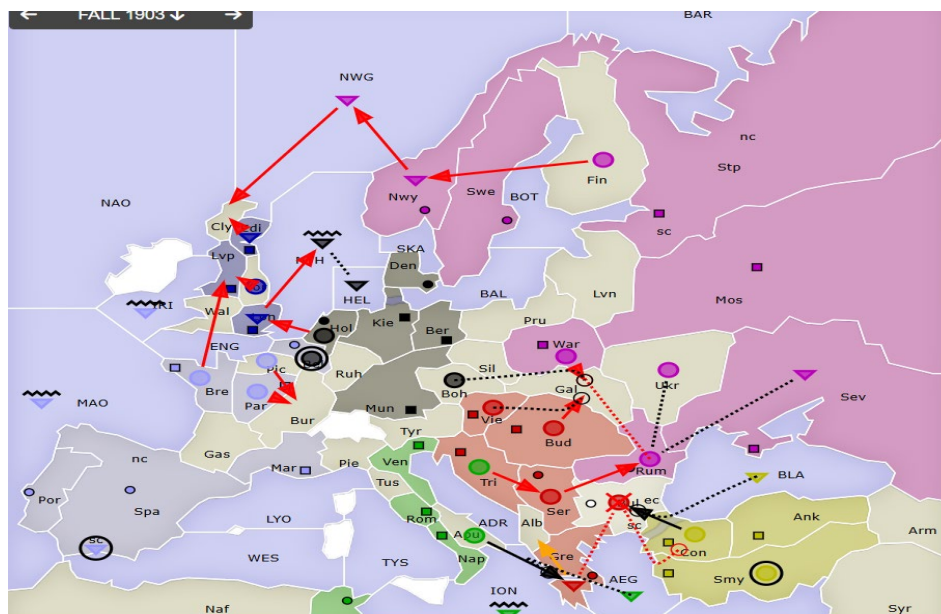
Any way the wind blows, does it really matter to me?

AIR - The next center after Turkey dies? Munich.
AR - The next centers after Turkey dies? Venice and/or Munich. Possibly even before Turkey is dead.
AT - The next center after Rumania is captured? Venice.
After that? Munich is soon on the shopping list. If this is a RAT, then you can even scratch Venice from this.

You might see a recurring theme there that German centers very quickly become Austrian targets in most eastern alliances (excluding the AI). But, does that mean that Bohemia is there solely to kill Austria ASAP? Well, no, because if that turns into a very rapid wintergreen then IR can also flip on Germany quite easily. This is also why Bohemia should *not* be supported by an additional army in Tyrolia (at least until you're very ready for a full-scale war in the east). Bohemia is an annoyance to Austria, but it is not an *existential threat* to them. Bohemia combined with Tyrolia very much is, so you can be much surer of Austria throwing everything at you in the latter scenario. Bohemia is instead there as both a policeman and a potential friend.

RT - Juggernauts are not terrifying. It is not 1990. If by some miracle they're actually beating AI, then you can either work with Russia in the north or kill them with England there.

RIT - Good luck stabilizing that once Austria dies. It's just gonna turn into one of the above three.



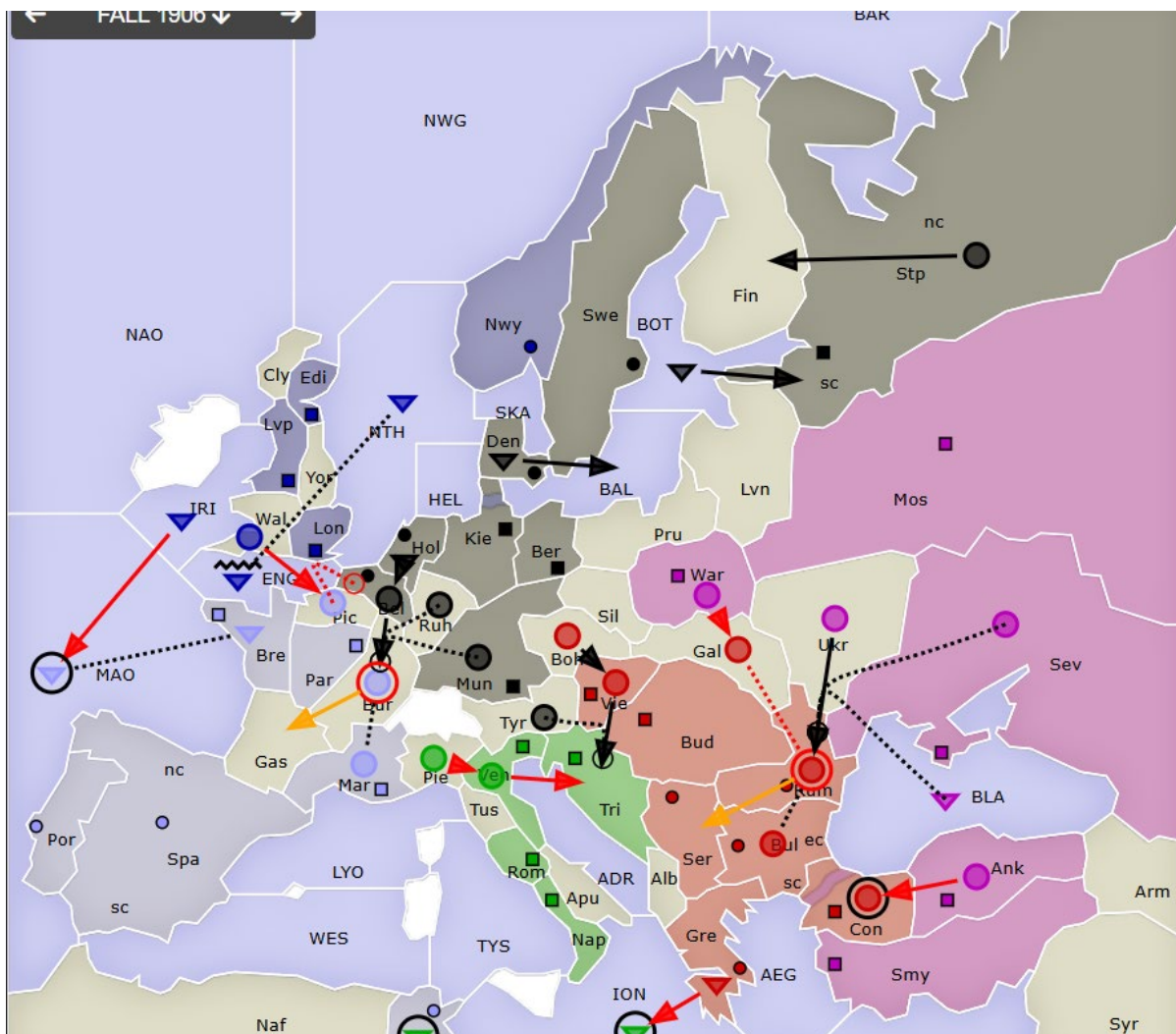
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So, you're in Bohemia - now what? Well, time to make one of those positive alliances for you a reality (note: this includes an AI which is anti-Russia!). Bohemia's real power is the control it gives you over Galicia and Tyrolia. If Italy wants to jump on Austria, you can now provide them with the support to make it happen. If Italy and Russia are doing too well, though, maybe you want to help Austria defend GAL, maybe you even want to help them defend TYL. And if you're working with Russia in the north against England... Why limit that to the north? Now you can support Russia to Galicia, and from there in a full invasion of Austria, as I did to great effect in my DBNI semi-final.

Spare him his life from this monstrosity?

Notice that in *none* of these scenarios is Vienna the primary target. Does that mean it's not worth going for? Not at all! I think Vienna is an extremely underrated German center, as in almost any multipolar carving up of

Austria it's actually quite unlikely for any of the easterners to want you to lose Vienna to one of their rivals, so your chances of keeping it are pretty high - all whilst it continues to do the diplomatic job you're looking for by offering supports on Bud, Tri, or Gal. But Vienna isn't the main reason for going east - influence is. If taking Vienna is on the cards and makes sense within the board dynamics, great. If you instead think Austria's survival is more important, or are concerned about Italian or Russian or even Turkish growth... Be a friend to Austria. Just be a friend that's very very hard for them to suddenly turn on. My German performance in the VDL top board in January saw me go to Bohemia but side with Austria as a way of containing Russia and Italy while I walked a tightrope in the west. I didn't win that game, but losing it on a tiebreak without ever worrying about Munich makes me pretty confident that going to Bohemia wasn't the cause of my eventual coming up short.



F06 on the VDL top board, and after Wardie in Austria initially kicked me out of Bohemia, I retreated to Tyrolia and supported his stab of Jordan Connors' Italy, whilst simultaneously negotiating with Matt Totonchy in Russia to free him to attack Austria and balance it out (hence the switch of units in STP). Maximal influence with a single unit.

Just gotta get out, just gotta get right out of Munich

And there you have it - Bohemia is a great province for helping Italy or Russia attack Austria. A great dissuader of moves to the line by AIR. A great place for taking Vienna and growing yourself. German presence in Bohemia aids Turkey's hopes of surviving by giving you ways to break an AIR at its root. And it does all of that whilst letting Germany expand outwards, rather than

draw armies into the middle of the board on its borders. So next time you have an army in Munich sitting there holding, think to yourself: Is there something this unit could be doing to help me win this game? Can it shape the east into a more favorable alliance for me? And the answer, unless you're about to charge it into France, is almost always going to be yes. You're Germany - *everything* really matters to you.

Origins Diplomacy Celebrates 50 Years of Backstabbing

by Thomas Haver



Hey Diplomacy Fans! Rogue Judges just completed a special event: The 50th Anniversary of Origins Game Fair. Starting with Baltimore in 1975, the convention moved around the country each year until settling in Columbus, Ohio in 1996. Origins is one of the oldest Diplomacy tournaments in the world. To celebrate the occasion, Origins created a history site: <https://origins50.org/>. I highly recommend anyone interested in the history of gaming check out the site.

As the tournament director (TD) of Origins, I also celebrated a different sort of 50: number of tournaments organized. That's the most by any organizer in the history of the game. Origins was my first competition and I've been the TD of the event since 2011. Fitting that my hometown convention becomes the 50th tournament run. In honor of the event, we gave out special golden anniversary gifts to our players: challenge coins, "Order of the Knife" pins, and commemorative pens.

The annual Diplomacy tournament was best two of three rounds running Friday and Saturday. We also hosted a teaching round on Thursday for both Diplomacy and the upcoming Era of Empire (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-era-of-empire/>). We had 27 players participate in the teaching event and 30 players participate in the tournament.

The Thursday night teaching round has been an annual tradition for more than a decade. Most people who try Diplomacy aren't looking for competitive play. Instead, they want a fun experience with their friends & family.

Given the difficulty in getting seven players together for a game, a convention is the perfect opportunity to play. This year was different though: we had classical Diplomacy alongside Era of Empire at the same time. The two games are close enough that I was able to teach the rules simultaneously, noting the differences between the two games where deviations existed. This outcome was also intended when we redesigned Era of Empire. We wanted new players to learn one game and be able to easily transition to the other game.

The teaching round went exceptionally well. We had two giant maps and two large fabric maps. The board top of each game received a copy of Diplomacy. Like most of my teaching events, I rotated between all the boards to answer questions and help adjudicate orders. I was most pleased with the response by players to Era of Empire. As I've given demos of the game across the country, my confidence in the success of the release has grown. Diplomacy has a bright future and has room for more games based on the core mechanics.

Round 1 started on Friday evening. We brought out the LEGO Diplomacy board for the round. A theme emerged from this round that continued throughout the tournament: Turkish dominance. Robert Lacy played a smart game, leveraging a solid initial position against Austria and then Russia to top his board with 11. Phil Burk's Turkey went after Russia from the start. He allied with Robert Zahn's Italy and also went into Austria early. It was an absolute rout with assistance from Germany and England. Looking over the board, Phil saw that he could get to 16 centers if he stabbed his Italian ally, but 18 was a tall order. He elected to hold off on a push that was unlikely to succeed because it was the first round. No need to disrupt the event meta with such a huge score that also involved stabbing many neighbors. The closest game occurred on the giant map, where Geoff Mize's France (9) edged out Anton's Wilsbach's Austria (8) and Evan Walter's Germany (8) for the board top. Defending champion Andrew Boyd, who last year became the youngest ever champion in Origins history, faced an early game alliance that eliminated him. Returning as champion is a tough endeavor – kudos to

any tournament player who repeats as champion at an event.



Round 2 began on Saturday morning. Ryan Feathers, a first-time player at Origins but experienced tournament player, shook off the first game failure and dominated his board out on the giant map. As England, he allied early with France (Andrew Boyd) to roll Germany. The pair then pressed on Russia (Phil Burk) and Italy (Jeff Hayman). To their credit, despite Gwen Feight's Germany being attacked from the outset, they stayed on and ended the game as a one-center power in St. Petersburg. Jack Wilsbach's Austria took advantage of the experienced western powers to grab centers off Turkey and Russia, becoming the dominant power in the east. Nearing the end of the game, Ryan saw an opportunity to move against his French ally and took the chance. He setup for a 2-center stab of his ally, and the game ended at 11 centers for England and 7 centers for France.

Inside the room on one of our custom boards, Robert Zahn was having a resurgence similar to Ryan Feathers. He had finished with 4 centers as Italy in Round 1 and was looking for a strong result to give him a chance at the championship. Initially disappointed with the Turkey draw because 14 centers was tough to top for a Best Country, Zahn leveraged several strong alliances to hit Austria and then a beleaguered Russia. On the western side of the board, Robert Lacy's slow-played his position as England. He allied with Germany and opted to take the remnants of Russia. He waited for his allies to overcommit on their respective fronts to make big plays the last two years of the game. However, his efforts were not enough to beat Zahn's Turkey. Lacy finished with 12 centers as England to Zahn's 13 as Turkey. Another big result for Turkey this tournament.

Going into the final round, Robert Lacy was the tournament leader with one board top and one second place finish. Several players were also in contention for the championship. Since the event is best two rounds out of three, anyone with a first-place finish or a strong second place finish was capable of overtaking Lacy so long as he didn't earn another board top. For other players farther back in the pack, there were a host of

awards to win, from Best Country awards to Best Diplomat to the coveted Golden Blade for best stab.

Round 3 was played on all-wooden boards. We like to switch up the game boards used each round, rotating the giant map with fabric maps and LEGO & wooden boards. Ideally each player gets to compete on three different setups in an event. Board one was a custom wooden map designed by a member of Rogue Judges twenty years ago. We only use this board at Origins to make it a special occasion. It was on this board that Geoff Mize's championship hopes as Germany were dashed by Phil Burk's France and Anton Wilsbach's England. When you have two players' capable of winning a tournament as neighbors, they end up competing for the heart of the board. A decision by common neighbors can determine the winner and most players are aware of this, which leads to some fun reversals of fortune as they negotiate and plead for assistance. Anton Wilsbach ended up topping with 10 centers as England by some crafty moves in the final two years, edging out Phil Burk's France at 9 centers. The result meant Burk would end up behind Lacy in the rankings regardless of Lacy's finish.



Board three was an early Western Triple. Robert Zahn, who had a board top in Round 2, was aiming for at least a second-place finish to have a chance at the championship. He allied with Nick Bay's France and Cody Gates' Germany. The alliance held firm for the game, eliminating Russia, Austria, and Italy. Jason Covitz's Turkey enjoyed the western alliance because he was the original focus of his neighbors, and gladly picked off a few centers from his attackers. The end of the game saw a rarity from Zahn: a stab. Zahn is known to most regulars as a strong ally. He keeps his word and almost never stabs. Almost never. Given the tournament was on the line and this was the 50th anniversary of Origins, Zahn wanted that championship. As with most Western Triples, England enjoys seeing their allies overextended, and Zahn seized that opportunity to make a big stab and then hold onto his gains to finish at 13 centers. His two allies finished tied for 2nd on the board at 8 centers each. Well done by Zahn. The blade may have been rusty through lack of use, but it cut deep all the same.



Board two was the game of the tournament and perhaps one of my all-time favorites as TD. It had a mix of new and experienced players. We had tournament leader Robert Lacy piloting France. On the other side of the map was Ryan Feathers as Turkey, fresh off a board top in the prior round. WBC regular Jeff Hayman was England, Philip Jordan was Austria, James Blackshire was Italy, and Treaton McCann was Germany. From Spring 1901 this game went wild. Treaton's Germany went all-in on Russia. In most tournaments, you'll see the bounce in Sweden or perhaps a rotation into the Baltic Sea early for an anti-Russian play. He was ready to move on Russia from the start.



The early game look to be controlled by Lacy's France and Hayman's England, who formed a strong alliance. They were inseparable allies. I thought it would be a boring England-France finish for 1st and 2nd place after a 3-build for France in 1901, but I was very wrong. Italy and Austria initially setup for a Lepanto on Ryan's Turkey. The eastern powers were infighting while England and France wasted no time turning on Germany earlier than expected for a Western Triple, because it was really EF with German shock troops into Russia. Even though he was under attack, Feathers managed to swing Italy and Austria back to his side and setup an effective defense, eliminating Russia at the same time. They stopped the western advance and the game looked like it was locked into a stalemate. Ryan was slow

playing his allies though. A stab was within reach, but Turkey elected not to take it too soon because he was hoping to use the tournament clock to hit a stab before the event ended, not allowing either France or England to make a counterplay. However, his Austrian ally made known to the board he wasn't leaving the line. Lacy and Hayman saw the centers in front of Turkey would mean the board top, so Lacy elected to stay on the line himself. I suspect he was happy to see his ally England "stab" him for the board top, as Hayman's first two scores were not good enough to win the tournament, but Feathers finishing in second on this board likely meant he wouldn't beat Lacy's two good scores. The final turn of the game had Feathers Turkey go to 12 centers, with Hayman's England jumping to 14 centers. Not only did Jeff Hayman board top -- he also took away Best England from Ryan in that final move. A big stab by Robert Lacy of himself and his opponent. A tense turn of fortunes from year to year with the smaller powers eating up the drama to end the game.



In their collective fight for the championship, Lacy and Feathers both came up short. It was a fantastic back-and-forth. Feathers gained control of the board by offering something neither France nor England could – agency in how they played their game. Lacy's strong alliance helped put him into position to win but was too overtly rock solid to maintain dominance when it was time to rally the board. So, it was absolutely fitting and hilarious that these two players TIED in the final standings, sharing second place.

Robert Zahn emerged victorious with two strong board tops, including a huge final year to seal the Midwest Diplomacy Championship. Zahn previously won the event in 2006 and 2016. Robert Lacy earned the

coveted Golden Blade award for "best stab" in the tournament by taking out two potential tournament winners in the same game (himself and Ryan Feathers). Ryan Feathers won the "Best Diplomat" award for playing peacekeeper among infighting smaller Powers against a strong alliance that was rolling the board, setting up an effective defense. Both Golden Blade and Best Diplomat awards were given for play on the same board in the final round.



Top Board:

1st - Robert Zahn
2nd (tie) - Ryan Feathers
2nd (tie) - Robert Lacy
4th - Phil Burk
5th - Anton Wilsbach
6th - Geoff Mize
7th - Jeff Hayman

Best Country:

Best Austria - Jack Wilsbach
Best England - Jeff Hayman
Best France - Geoff Mize
Best Germany - Evan Walter & Cody Gates
Best Italy - Chris Glassburn
Best Russia - Andrew Boyd
Best Turkey - Phil Burk

Special Awards:

Midwest Diplomacy Champion - Robert Zahn
Golden Blade - Robert Lacy

Best Diplomat - Ryan Feathers
Best Propagandist - Jason Covitz

Event Pictures:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/HuTynXLQ91hrjikE9>

I'm pleased with the results of the tournament. We had great showings in both the teaching round and the tournament games. Our returning champion Andrew Boyd managed to claim Best Russia. Chris Glassburn returned 13 years after his Origins championship to win Best Italy. We finished the final round with a trip to Goodfella's for pizza and drinks. As always, it was wonderful to see many familiar faces travel from afar and to enjoy the company of first-time tournament players. We'll be back for another year with events for both classical Diplomacy and Era of Empire. With some good fortune, perhaps even more for our players.

If you're interested in playing a F2F game at our events, I recommend joining the official Discord for Renegade Game Studios: <https://discord.gg/TFPfdDKF>

We also have many convention events in the next few months. Upcoming Events:

Dice Tower East (July 2-6) - <https://dicetower.com/dice-tower-east>

AnthroCon (July 3-6) - <https://www.anthrocon.org/>

CharCon (July 11-13) - <https://www.charcon.org/>

World Boardgaming Championships (July 26 - August 3) - <https://www.boardgamers.org/wbcindex.html>

US Diplomacy Championship at GenCon (July 30 - August 3) - <https://www.gencon.com/>

National Diplomacy Masters at WSBG (September 19-22) - <https://wsbgvegas.com/>





National Diplomacy Masters

The World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG) and Renegade Game Studios are joining forces to host the National Diplomacy Masters in Las Vegas, Nevada. The tournament is being held in conjunction with the WSBG championship to crown the brightest star in board gaming.



Compete against our honored Diplomacy Masters:

- Italian Master **Daide Cleopadre**
- US National Champion **Robert Zahn**
- Famed GM **Phil Burk**
- Mystery Diplomacy Master to be announced

Do you have what it takes to defeat a Master?
Find out at the World Series of Board Gaming!

- September 19-23, 2025
- Horseshoe Hotel & Casino
- Four Round Diplomacy tournament with Top Board on Sunday
- First "Diplomacy: Era of Empire" competitive event
- Hotel & Tickets: <https://wsbgvegas.com/>



**Davide
Cleopadre**



**Robert
Zahn**



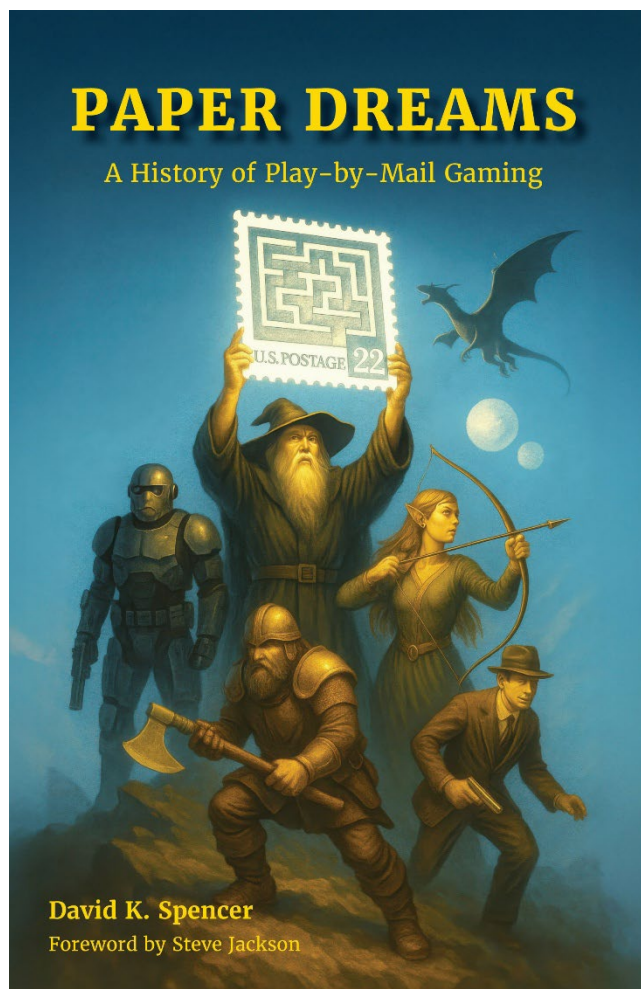
**Phil
Burk**



**Your Name
Here**

Paper Dreams: My Take on Diplomacy in Play-by-Mail

by David Spencer



My uncle was merciless. At the game board anyway. A close friend later described him as, “the smartest person I ever met.” That was a good assessment. So, as a young teen, I was at a disadvantage. I tried mightily, but don’t recall ever beating him at chess or *Diplomacy*, the two tabletop games we played when I saw him for a few days once or twice per year. That is, when I wasn’t playing the fascinating video games on his ever-present

Apple IIe into the early morning hours, like *the Bard’s Tale*, *Castle Wolfenstein*, *Jumpman*, *Miner 2049er*, *Telengard*, and others.

That was my only exposure to *Diplomacy* until I got my son to play a few games decades later. So, perhaps I can be forgiven for not understanding the popularity of the game or how it evolved from the tabletop into other forms like play-by-mail (PBM) and online. The fact that I’ve never played with more than two people may be more horrifying for readers here.

In any case, I didn’t find out until the 2020s that *Diplomacy* was a prominent figure in the PBM gaming world. In 2024–2025, when I wrote *Paper Dreams: A History of Play-by-Mail Gaming*, I not only dusted off memories of playing the game with my uncle, but I learned much more about it. I had to. *Diplomacy* is an indispensable part of PBM history.

No one here needs a refresher about the game’s history, but unfamiliar *Paper Dreams* readers will learn about it. I mention *Diplomacy* more than two dozen times through the book. There’s coverage of its history, of course, to include amateur gamemasters running it through the many Dippy Zines available from the 1960s to today. Throughout the book and in the appendices, readers will also get a sense of how many PBM publishers ran games of *Diplomacy*. And yes, *Diplomacy World* appears in the book as well, both in the text and in the further reading section.

Most *Diplomacy World* readers won’t learn much more about the game itself or its history. But *Paper Dreams* places *Diplomacy* in the context of the gaming world since the 1960s, with significant coverage of the retro gaming decades of the 1980s and 1990s. For gamers who were active in those periods, the nostalgia will return in *Paper Dreams*.

Amazon link: <https://a.co/d/351IMln>

Never a *Cross* Word

By Archie Duke

Never a **CROSS** word No. 3

ACROSS:

- 1 Stop for a drink! (6)
- 5 Bishop gets frisky after getting another drink!! (6)
- 8 Premier club magazine. (7)
- 9 Opening passage. (7)
- 11 Erstwhile African despot extremely overdominant – imbecile! (5)
- 12 Agnes almost follows title holder to region of France often downed. (9)
- 13 This line was taming and containing nothing once formed – especially Hitler. (7)
- 15 End is about certain – that's guaranteed! (7)
- 16 Reportedly, appointed character in charge to get ahead of outwardly righteous winners. (7)
- 19 Ship rotten Greek cheese on type of platform. (7)
- 22 After last month, liner that may be material is going down. (9)
- 23 Mixing grog and last of vodka will lead to "bovver". (5)
- 24 It is inside of Addis Ababa she despises – shameful! (7)
- 25 Madly bash tin to obtain potent Bohemian-style brew. (7)
- 26 Save regret around setting up of enemy supply centres. (6)
- 27 Twisted king got tattooed. (6)



'It's the diplomatic equivalent of the Nimzo-Indian, I will have nothing whatsoever to do with it.'



'I will have a word with my cousins.'

DOWN:

- 2 Doing this in and out could be financially beneficial. (7)
- 3 A guiding principle whichever way you look at it! (5)
- 4 Ferocious female - she's a fighter! (7)
- 5 Lots of cases can – among other things – carry emotional issues. (7)
- 6 Unfortunately, sat in a pit for starters in Italy. (9)
- 7 Satisfy bet concerning widow with benefits. (7)
- 8 Such a principle can usually go without saying. (5)
- 10 Ordered east and idly surrender. (5)
- 14 Prehistoric ethnic oil concoction. (9)
- 16 Spirit of Moscow? [Featured in 23 Across!] (5)
- 17 Incredible cod cake won a rosette. (7)
- 18 Scam left Germany backwards and surrounded by swine. (7)
- 19 In the main, likely to be dense. (7)
- 20 Gas starts nearing middle of freed French region. (7)
- 21 Time it takes echo to reverberate around the opening of parliament. (5)
- 23 Renowned British Admiral consumed by Shakespearean sonnet. (5)

ANSWERS to 'Never a CROSS word' No. 2

ACROSS: 1 Sweden, 5 Norway, 8 Atlanta, 9 Belgium, 11 Vichy, 12 Crescents, 13 Latinos, 15 Titanic, 16 Bavaria, 19 Mudbath, 22 Aggressor, 23 Jihad, 24 Tea-time, 25 Everest, 26 Stones, 27 System.

DOWN: 2 Wildcat, 3 Dandy, 4 Nuances, 5 Noblest, 6 Relocated, 7 Avignon, 8 Anvil, 10 Music, 14 Norwegian, 16 Beast, 17 Vagrant, 18 Answers, 19 Markets, 20 Athlete, 21 Had it, 23 Jeeps.

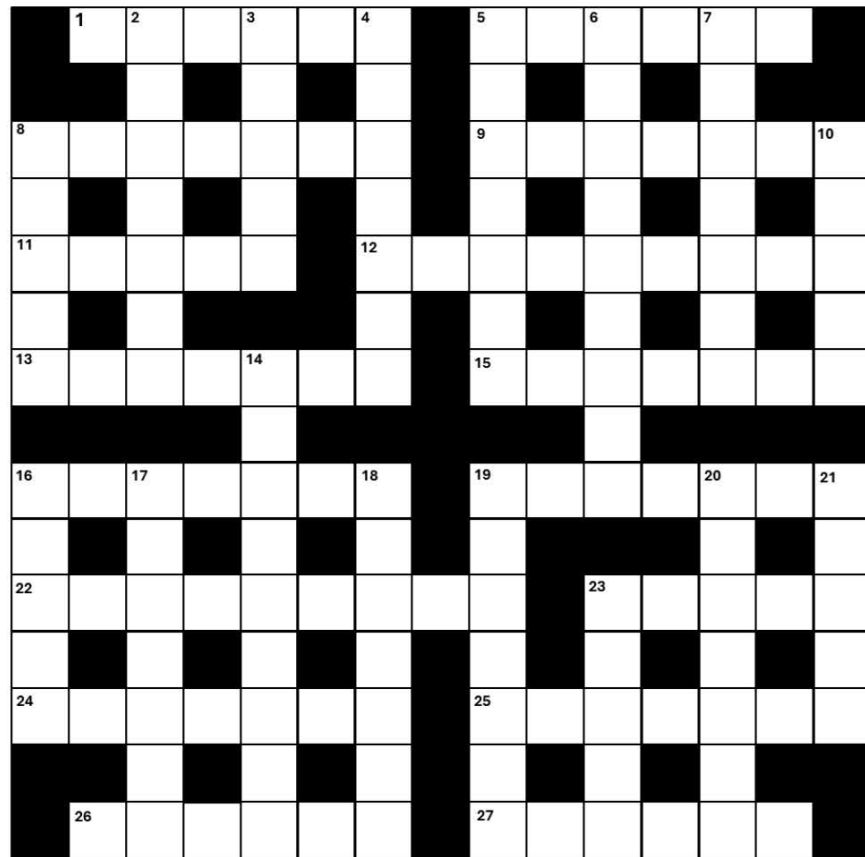


'Was it not Aristotle who said, *'One who is aiming at tyranny asks for a bodyguard'?*



'Are you absolutely certain we are going in the right direction?'

Never a **CROSS** word No. 3



By Archie Duke



Are you going to be resisting our advances too?

Origins Tournament 2025

by Robert Lacy

Overview

We started off with a Learn to Play game of the new Diplomacy Era of Empires on Thursday night. It was a good warm up for the main Diplomacy tournament at Origins. There were two full boards for Era of Empires and two full boards for regular Diplomacy in the teaching rounds and the board I was on had six experienced Diplomacy players who were regular tournament players and a really good casual player who fully knew the rules, so it was a good board to be on. I drew Turkey. At the start of the game, I wanted to do a Russia-Turkey team up and sweep east across the board, but kept an option open for working with Britain. Unfortunately, Russia mis-ordered first move getting provinces mixed up and putting an army in a weird position. To get this army back to position he had to make some wasteful moves around the Caspian Sea. This disorder left him 1 less supply center than he should have gotten in the first fall build and also left him exposed to me in the west. In the spring negotiation phase Japan and China then came to me saying they were going to tag team Russia in the east, take Vladivostok and push Russia out of Port Arthur. This was setting up a situation where if I was going to turn on Russia, now was the time. I made the plunge and turned on Russia, but Japan and China did not do as they indicated and just smiled at me as the orders were being read. I still had an upper hand on Russia though and was committed now and moved quickly to take Russian areas in the west and pushed Russia back to the middle of Russia by game end. To his credit the Russian player tried to negotiate with me to end the conflict, but with a friendly Britain still somewhat far from me and my units on the move I felt I had no reason to stop.

With my other neighbor Britain, at game start I negotiated frankly with Britain that he could not hold Aden long term so we should not fight over it and should instead redeploy that unit to India where his starting Aden unit can be more useful. In return I said I would not take Aden without telling him and I would not do it if it would cause him to go down a supply center. I kept that deal and thus early game conflict between Turkey and Britain was removed and set the groundwork for both of us eventually working together by game end as allies. I also reminded him of one of the other Era of Empires changes from regular Diplomacy; you can build in any open supply center you control, not just in home areas like regular Diplomacy. He was aware of this and agreed by proposal was sound. We both also found as the game progressed that we had similar worries in the Netherlands in the south with lots of fleets moving around and Russia to our north, both of which moved us to be closer allies.

As a regular Diplomacy player, I find that the higher supply center count makes the game move faster and the rapid early game growth makes the game more accessible for newer players as one typically grows 6 to 8 centers before getting into real conflict with neighbors; thus, you are in the game longer and cannot be eliminated very fast, giving you a chance to defend, rally, or get help from other players. Players can still be eliminated, but it is not as fast in Era of Empires as it can be in regular Diplomacy. I also feel that the game moves faster than regular Diplomacy with the new conscription rules and ability to swap unit types. I will also mention that we had several misorders in the game, all due to many areas having similar sounding names. I strongly recommend if you play Era of Empires to keep an eye on the names, write them out fully and double check what you are writing especially as you have more units to manage in Era of Empires as opposed to regular Diplomacy. Post game myself and the players all discussed the difference between regular Diplomacy and Era of Empires. We all commented that we had to really stare at the board more as the areas and what they are adjacent to are new; we do not have the map memorized at all. I think to some degree this helps level the playing field some right now between experienced and new to Diplomacy players.

The Diplomacy Tournament

In round one we had an uneven number so I volunteered to play on two boards at the same time. It is crazy doing so but I kind of like it. I drew Austria for one board and Turkey for the other. My Austria game didn't not go well as Turkey and Italy both decided to attack me and I got no help from a standoff and an aloof Russia despite me telling Russia that he was next if I did not get help, which turned out to be true as he went out of the game after I did. Being hit hard from the start I was constrained and just started defending. Somehow, I managed to retreat around the board from one supply center to another with one army that just would not die, which was amusing but the inevitable was there.

On the Turkey board things were rocking. I ended up toping that board. Initially I was wanting to work with Russia as my main ally, but an over extended Russia left him weak and an aggressive Italy started looking like a better long-term ally. We turned on Russia, taking Vienna, Budapest, and Sevastopol from Russia in the Fall of 1904. I then was faced with what to do with Italy as they had units but was forced to leave them in a defensive position. I didn't see much of a path for growth with the time allotted as St Petersburg and Warsaw were a few moves away and required positioning of new builds. It sort of pained me and I thought hard about it, hoping Italy would do it first and

make the decision easy, but instead Italy actually started to reposition to go after France. After seeing this I attacked Italy while I had the chance in 1905 and kept pushing, picking up a few supply centers until we ended the game in fall 1906.



In round two I drew England and came in second with 12 supply centers, missing tying the top board by 1 center. It was painful as I could have tied up- the game if I had been gutsier last move, but that was all in retrospect. This board had experienced players including past tournament winners in other events. I think it was the toughest board I was on all tournament. I led off early in supply center counts as England staying 1 or 2 supply centers ahead of my allies, but Turkey was able to capitalize on Russia and Austria and Italy being all spooked and distracted by an England-France-Germany alliance and was able to take supply centers from behind methodically. Our western triple worked well at first as it seemed the other players didn't realize it till at least the end of 1902. But this three-way alliance got awkward as time went on and France became fully and completely deployed in the south, leaving all of France and Iberia exposed. France also stalled out some in the south as Italy and Austria got their act together. The French position proved to be too irresistible to me and Germany and by 1905 we turned on France. I give kudos to the French player who accepted this with grace. It is always good when there are no hard feelings, it is just a game.

Round 3 was one of the most interesting tournaments rounds that I have ever been in. Game play was wild and intense. I am sure it will be talked about for a while. It took me several days to digest what happened and replay in my head what went wrong and what I could have done differently. I went into round 3 of the Origins Diplomacy Tournament as a tournament leader but there were others able to catch up or out score me. I drew France. Next to me as England was an experienced player whom I had played with before and respected. One of the other potential tournament champions was

playing Turkey on my board. The other players were less experienced and unknown to me as to their play style or abilities. Given this, I went to England and we decided to be allies. From my point of view England was the one that I needed to keep on side. I helped him with the northern strategy. We also were constantly reviewing our moves with each other, supporting where needed and pointing out possible moves and counter moves to each other and then following up before time ran out to make sure nothing changed and what we discussed was remembered correctly. It was a very good and enjoyable alliance of two likeminded players with similar play styles who saw big picture and both were profiting from working together. We saw Italy and Austria initially setting up for a Lepanto move, while an unorthodox Germany went straight for Warsaw from the start. It was not a great move for Germany but amusing and set the game on its head from the start throwing unexpected chaos into the middle of the board.

In the game we were able to move quickly and get England to take Scandinavia and northern Russia. As France I was able to get 3 builds first fall and then in 1902 secure Germany quickly and position fast to Italy. In fall 1901 my English ally picked up 2 builds. Next to us Germany made very unorthodox moves to the east to take Warsaw, when we saw this England and I became hungry jackals and Germany the baby gazelle. Germany told us he was going to do so in the initial diplomacy session but neither believed him. Once the spring 1901 moves were read England and I were both salivating inside as the orders were read and then giddy in the next diplomacy phase. I had lobbied Austria and Italy to set up a Lepanto move; England backed me up separately with both in the negotiations. We definitely had an interesting and unusual game going on. Both Austria and Italy were setting this up but then there were some bungled Austria orders or bad Austria-Italy coordination and Italy was not able to get into the Eastern Mediterranean or Aegean as Turkey blocked the moves with a fleet in Smyrna and Constantinople. This was at the same time I swung my fleets and armies to the Mediterranean to go after Italy. I was counting on the timing to be perfect in that I swing in as Italy puts itself in a bad position. In the early game me and my England ally were off to a good start, getting to 10 France and 8 England by mid game. Of note now was that early in the game as England and I raced for supply centers we came to an agreement that we would not betray each other and would help each other to top supply center count no matter what. England kept his side of the agreement, as did I. Things then bogged down as Turkey was able to rally Italy and Austria to defend against me while also picking up the remainder of Russia. England then called for a concession to me. It was discussed and considered, I felt like perhaps for a second it was almost going to pass but after more discussion Turkey decided to reject it wanting to go for the win. After then next moves were read and the turn

completed nothing changed on the board at all, England proposed a concession again, this time Turkey refused outright. But we were stalemated unless someone did something dumb or made a misorder. After two more years of orders and moves and seeing the board was locked down and I could not advance more I told my England ally to stab me, take my exposed supply centers he was next to already, and block both me and Turkey from winning the board. I will admit there was also an element of 'if I am not going to win, Turkey is not either' going on. Thus, I took out two potential tournament winners, stabbed myself in the process, Turkey who was racing to overtake in supply centers and in effect the whole tournament changing the top scores all at once with the last year moves as well as the top country awards. At game end everyone left was amazed at my tactics on the board, complimenting me which was nice. I really poured everything into that game. They said they could not believe that I outguessed and held Venice for 4 game turns without losing it. Afterwards my England ally was telling me and others how helpful having a solid ally was and how good I was at pointing out the moves. I told the England player that it was collaborative, we bounced ideas off each other.

Of personal note, Origins holds a special place in my heart. Origins XIX in Ft Worth Texas back in 1993 was the first big Diplomacy tournament that I ever played in. I still have the convention badge. Also, in the four games that I played in, I did not have one single mis-

order the entire tournament, five games if you include the Era of Empires demo. I believe that was a tournament first for me. Usually, I am good for at least one mis-order in a tournament, usually at a crucial time. No errors in orders were a personal accomplishment for me that I was proud of inside.



I also want to thank the Tournament Director Thomas Haver for an excellent and well-run tournament. This was the 50th Diplomacy Tournament at Origins, and also his 50th tournament as a tournament director. Thank you also as always to Renegade Games for the excellent product and prize support. They really do an excellent job supporting their games and events.

Reflections on 30 Years of Tournament Play

by Robert Zahn

Origins is my sentimental favorite for the best Diplomacy tournament. I first learned the game at Ohio State University, then started playing regularly in tournaments after the convention moved to Columbus -- my hometown. It's also where I started making Diplomacy friends and where I encouraged players to get some food and beverages after each round. We often met late at night since the original open time format had most games end after 1AM. Many friendships were built over drinks at the hotel bar. I remember helping Keith McComsey win the tournament just to stop a person who had bragged the year before about not having any competition in the tournament. Some of my best friends -- Jerry, Geoff, Jason and many more were formed with the competition we had and then sharing drinks later. I have two sons who have played Diplomacy for years; it was a pleasant surprise to have met two other fathers also with two sons who played Diplomacy in the Origins tournament. A true family affair.

Gen Con is of course the largest convention in North America and usually has the best overall competition.

However, each year usually has a set of newcomers who provide excitement, as you don't know their skills or motivations. My regret with Gen Con is that I first played in 1998 and won the tournament too soon. It was my first major tournament and a lucky win to start my tournament career. However, while I loved the game, I took the win for granted and didn't play again at Gen Con until 2005. My regret is not missing the tournaments but instead missing the friends that I played with in 1998. The tournament director changed twice in those intervening years. Gen Con also allows me the chance to make new friends and keep old friends that I see each year.

I've since played at many different events across the country and even had an opportunity to play in Italy. The special moments for me are the ones spent playing with my two sons and enjoying the company of many friends along the way. Competing for the trophies and plaques over the years has given me some satisfaction, but ultimately, it's still just a game. The lifelong friends are the best part of Diplomacy.

Move over Taylor Swift, because Queen Victoria is going on tour!

The Eras Tour was so last year. The Era of Empire Tour kicks off in 2025 with teaching events for "Diplomacy: Era of Empire", the new Diplomacy game from Renegade Game Studios.

Attend any of these convention events for your opportunity to play "Era of Empire" before the game is available in stores. Participants will receive special "Era of Empire" branded swag and have a chance to win the game. So, take up the challenge of the "Age of New Imperialism" and join the race to establish your own empire!

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-era-of-empire/>

*Dates and events subject to change



The poster features the word "Diplomacy" in a large, elegant, golden script font at the top. Below it, in a smaller, bold, black sans-serif font, is "THE ERA OF EMPIRE TOUR". The background is a textured blue. Below the title, there is a table listing events by month and location, with a list of specific events on the right.

JANUARY	GRIMSBY, ON	• NIAGARA BOARDGAMING WEEKEND
FEBRUARY	MINNEAPOLIS, MN	• CON OF THE NORTH
FEBRUARY	CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA	• PREZCON
FEBRUARY	HOUSTON, TX	• OWLCON
FEBRUARY	LOUISVILLE, KY	• GAMA EXPO
FEBRUARY	ROTHSCHILD, WI	• EVERCON
FEBRUARY	AURORA, CO	• GENGIIS CON
MARCH	LAS VEGAS, NEVADA	• DICE TOWER WEST
MARCH	ORLANDO, FL	• ESCAPE WINTER CON
MARCH	INDIANAPOLIS, IN	• WHO'S YER CON
MARCH	MILWAUKEE, WI	• ADEPTICON
MARCH	WASHINGTON, DC	• CIRCLE DC
APRIL	LEXINGTON, KY	• LEXICON
APRIL	GLEN ELLYN, IL	• CODCON
MAY	COLUMBUS, OH	• BUCKEYE GAME FEST
MAY	KANSAS CITY, MO	• MIDWEST GAME FEST
MAY	MILWAUKEE, WI	• GAMING HOOPLA
MAY	ST. LOUIS, MO	• GEEKWAY TO THE WEST
MAY	KNOXVILLE, TN	• ROCKY TOP GAME CON
MAY	KERNERSVILLE, NC	• RECON
MAY	DALLAS, TX	• BGG SPRING
MAY	BURLINGAME, CA	• KUBLACON
MAY	BIRMINGHAM, UK	• UK GAMES EXPO
JUNE	COLUMBUS, OH	• ORIGINS
JULY	ORLANDO, FL	• DICE TOWER EAST
JULY	CHARLESTON, WV	• CHARCON
JULY	SEVEN SPRINGS, PA	• WORLD BOARDGAMING CHAMPIONSHIPS
AUGUST	INDIANAPOLIS, IN	• US DIPLOMACY CHAMPIONSHIP AT GEN CON
AUGUST	SEATTLE, WA	• DRAGONFLIGHT
SEPTEMBER	LAS VEGAS, NEVADA	• NATIONAL DIPLOMACY MASTERS AT WSBG
OCTOBER	COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA	• NUKECON
OCTOBER	CINCINNATI, OH	• CINCITYCON
OCTOBER	BLOOMINGTON, IL	• FLATCON
OCTOBER	MADISON, WI	• GAMEHOLECON
NOVEMBER	TORONTO, ON	• TABS CON 66
NOVEMBER	DALLAS, TX	• BGG CON
DECEMBER	PHILADELPHIA, PA	• PAX UNPLUGGED

*EVENTS AND DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE



Diplomacy

THE ERA OF EMPIRE TOUR

A Postcard from Sydney

by Shane Armstrong

21-22 June saw the rebirth of tournament Diplomacy in Sydney, Australia. The largest tournament in the country since the FTF scene's rebirth in 2024, and the largest tournament in Sydney since 1990, Sydney saw almost the entirety of the Australian hobby make the journey to the Harbour City to duke it out in the haunt of the old razor gangs, Surry Hills. 15 players from the Diplomacy Capital of the World, Canberra, and 7 from Melbourne were joined by attendees from Brisbane, New Zealand, and a healthy smattering of players from both Sydney and Newcastle to secure 5 boards across each of the three rounds. Round 1 Board 1 saw Nancy Jin (ACT) top as Turkey on 9, followed by Peter McNamara's (VIC) 8 dot Germany. Board 2 also saw a 9 dot Turkish top, with Gavin Atkinson (QLD) taking out top spot. Board 3 nearly broke the tournament, with Jamal Blakkarly's (ACT) 18 dot France leaving second placed England (7 dots) in the dust. Board 4 was taken out by Gus Cowan (NSW) as France on 9 dots, while board 5 saw Shane Armstrong (ACT) and Max Roe Banks (ACT) share the honors as England and Russia, followed by tournament debutant Jasmine Gray (NSW) in France on 7.



Best England/Best Stab

The tournament utilized a Swiss-style seeding system which removed some of the spontaneity generally felt on boards in Australia, though the Snakepit Bangkok scoring system was well received by players and also meant that Jamal Blakkarly's Round 1 solo did not completely decide the result on Day 1. Round 2's top board saw Nancy Jin take her second top of the tournament as Germany on 7 dots, followed by Shane Armstrong's Austria-Hungary, Peter McNamara's England, and Max Roe Banks's Italy on 6 dots each. The players agreed to draw this game in Spring 1905, rolling back to the Fall 1904 center count, the earliest time in which a game could be drawn under tournament rules.

Board 2 saw Tianyu Sun (ACT) and debutant Clare Bradbery (ACT) roll the board as France and Germany respectively on 11 and 10. The third board was topped by another tournament debutant, Eliezer Schwarz (NSW) as a 7 dot England over Tristan Barrett's (NSW) 6 dot Italy. Brandon Austin (ACT) made the third round a live game by managing a 17 dot Germany, 10 SCs clear of second placed Dominick Stephens (NZL). Brandon's achievement should be further praised, as he also shared a three-way board top of 7 while double boarding on board 5 as Turkey, with Jason Gray in Austria-Hungary, and Henri Gray in Germany also scoring well, though it should be noted that Brandon's score in this game did not count to the overall standings.



Best Debut

The third round's top board saw another three-way draw with Clare Bradbery in Austria-Hungary, Jamal Blakkarly in Germany, and Tianyu Sun in Turkey all on 8 SCs. Board 2 saw the 34 SCs shared 3 ways, with Andrew Goff (VIC) in England and Shane Armstrong in Russia on 12, with Max Roe Banks finishing on 10 as Turkey. Board 3 was topped by Robert Hillier (VIC) in Germany, closely followed by the Turkey of Dominick Stephens. Board 4 saw another dominant performance from a tournament Diplomacy debutant, with Stella Walter's (ACT) 11 dot Russia taking top spot ahead of fellow debutant Henry Fitzpatrick (NSW), and newly dubbed 'Kid-Killer' Marcus Loane's (VIC) 8 dot France and Italy respectively.

The 5th and final board of the round saw Steph Tarrou (NSW) take out Best Stab, getting 5 dots in the final year and finishing on 13 as England. This also netted her Best England at the death, just getting over Andrew Goff's third round effort of 12.



Best Shane Cubis



Best Russia and Best Turkey



3rd Place



Best Italy



2nd Place



1st Place

The final standings constituted a Canberra sweep of the top 7 spots:

Jamal Blakkarly
Brandan Austin
Clare Bradbery
Shane Armstrong
Tianyu Sun
Max Roe Banks
Nancy Jin

Best Austria Hungary: Clare Bradbery (Round 3, 8 SCs)
Best England – Steph Tarrou (Round 3, 13 SCs)
Best France – Jamal Blakkarly (Round 1, 18 SCs)
Best Germany – Brandan Austin (Round 2, 17 SCs)
Best Italy – Gus Cowan (Round 3, 8 SCs)
Best Russia – Shane Armstrong (Round 3, 12 SCs)
Best Turkey – Max Roe Banks (Round 3, 10 SCs)

Best Debut – Stella Walter (11th overall)
Best Stab – Steph Tarrou

Best Shane Cubis – Kyle Dean
Gangster Move – Jamal Blakkarly for surviving an early assault in Round 2.

The tournament was ably covered by DBN
(<https://youtu.be/bbem8AjRWB8?si=mBZMMYKHFFzIVC-R>).

Congratulations to debutant Tournament Director Jason Gray for running a successful tournament, ably supported by the wonderful Darcy Morris, who will soon become Australia's loss and Europe's gain for six months.

Here's to the Sydney Cup becoming a regular part of the Australian circuit going forward, and operating as a springboard for the growing Sydney scene!

More from Australia at the end of August when Brisbane's Cane Toad Classic doubles as this year's Asia-Pacific Diplomacy Championships!

World DipCon and Beyond

by Ryan Feathers

It was over cocktails in Las Vegas, lamenting a doomed Italy against a relentless Western Triple, that I first heard about the Whipping Diplomacy tournament. Katie Gray and I had just met over a game of Diplomacy, as part of the National Diplomacy Masters tournament taking place at the World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG). While discussing the game and other events, she mentioned she really enjoyed the Whipping tournament, and that it was coming up in April of 2025, and that it also happened to be World Dipcon, and that I should make an effort to go.

The seed was planted, and a few months later I made my plans to attend. It would be my first dedicated Diplomacy event. I've played in other Diplomacy tournaments, but they were smaller events, taking place as part of larger gaming conventions. Specifically, I adore the World Boardgame Championships (WBC), a week-long event that runs tournaments in over 150 different games. Diplomacy is just one of the many games I play in and compete in there. The WSBG taking place in Vegas was another such convention where I was enjoying competing in things like Brass: Birmingham and Acquire, along with the Diplomacy tournament. I've had a variety of success in plenty of games, including a 2nd place tournament finish in 2024 at WBC for Diplomacy (which you can read about in Diplomacy World #) I had a lot of fun playing Diplomacy in 2024 at WBC and WSBG, and so was looking forward to diving more into the Diplomacy hobby. Hence, my presence in San Francisco, and walking in to the Hotel Sperro for the Whipping Diplomacy tournament to crown the 2025 world champion.

The start of the event was slightly tricky, being to almost every attendee, a brand-new face. For many this time was great to reconnect with friends, but plenty too were working to be welcoming to me and I started to get to know some folks. Plus, I did at least know Marcus and Katie from the Las Vegas event and was able to engage in my own little bit of reconnecting with existing friends.

This was a sharp contrast then to the end of the weekend, by where not only was I seeking out others, but some were seeking me, to all get in our goodbyes. Over the course of four rounds of Diplomacy and socializing between games, many new friendships were forged. This is the real reason I continue to go back to many of my favorite gaming conventions, and what I adore about these tournament and gaming communities—the people and friends I make. It takes a certain type to want to take a vacation to travel across the country or world to play board games all day, and unsurprisingly those are my type of people. The games throughout the weekend were great and the tournament experience was enjoyable, but the combination of those things with the people playing the games is what makes events like this magical. It is what makes me commit multiple weekends, vacations and travel days per year chasing that experience of great people playing great games with great skill.

I was treated to some of those great people playing with great skill in round one. I had the good fortune to pull France, but in England there was a former world Dipcon champion, Doc Binder, and in Italy there was the regular

season Virtual Diplomacy League (VDL) champion, Justin Loar. Being the new guy, I think they thought I might be some easier centers, and I was soon besieged by fleets from both sides. I was proud of my play in this game though, both tactically with making sharp moves to repel them, and diplomatically in keeping Germany on my side through the early attacks, and later in getting Doc and Justin working with me, rather than against. In the end I had my best success of the tournament, and a nice showing with tying Doc for the board top. It would be my only real success of the four games, but it was nice to have a solid game result.

I don't think it's particularly interesting to read about other's games in general, so I'll spare the details on the rest. Suffice to say I managed to log a single center Russia, single center Austria, and an Austrian elimination. We later all learned from the tournament director that Austria logged a very high percentage of eliminations, and I joked that I needed to write an article for Diplomacy World 'Stop Killing Austria'. Perhaps I will follow through someday. Instead, I'll try to focus the rest of this article on the actual feeling and experience of participating at a World Dipcon (WDC).

The first thing, and the part that I think is so cool about attending any tournament focused board gaming convention, is getting to play games you love against experts, and watching how they work. On this front, I think I was quite lucky; it could equally well be argued I was unlucky for running in to so many strong opponents. Regardless, in my four games I got to play against three different world champions (Doc Binder, Doug Moore, Yann Clouet), six different Europe or North America Dipcon champions (the three prior WDC champs, Karthik Konath, Mikalis Kamaritis, Tonya Gill), and a regular season VDL champ (Justin Loar). Since coming home I've been enjoying watching the Diplomacy Broadcast Network's coverage of many games and events, and its fun knowing I got to play with several of their consistent commentators (Mikalis, Karthik, Jonnie Gillam). On top of that stellar slate, I also got the pleasure of playing a game with Spyros Dovas, the main organizer for WDC 2026.

Otherwise, the best part of these sort of gaming conventions are simply the friends you make along the way or get to reconnect with. For me, I really valued seeing and getting to catch up with Marcus and Katie, individuals I had first met in Vegas in the fall. It was great seeing and chatting with both of them once again, even without winding up in any specific games with them. In

terms of gaming helping to make lifelong friends, I was also chuffed to spend some time with one of my closest friends from high school. He lives in the Bay Area now, but during my childhood years we had played so many games through our local club. Diplomacy was one of those, and those games in the early aughts are what have hooked me on playing since. The text chain letting him know I would be in town for the World Diplomacy Championship was rather fun, with him being uncertain if I was serious or not. I failed to convince him to hop back in for some games of Diplomacy, but enjoyed the time to catch up on life and reminisce about all those great gaming memories.

I can only hope the same things will occur another fifteen years from now, in some other city across the world, connecting with friends I've met over games from my time in San Francisco. It's hard to know what that far in the future will hold, but already in the months since I've returned I've virtually reunited with several over Diplomacy games in the Virtual Diplomacy League. I'm fully expecting to see many familiar faces when showing up to Weasel Moot in Chicago, for the North America DipCon in the fall. I'm looking forward to playing many excellent games with even better people.

Whether you're a seasoned player or just Diplomacy curious, there's nothing quite like the camaraderie and competition of a live tournament. I'll be at Weasel Moot this fall—hope to see you across the board!



Summer Showdown: Upcoming Tournaments and WDC 2027 Planning

by Thomas Haver and Anton Wilsbach

Readers of Diplomacy World have likely seen the many flyers and “Era of Empire” tour schedule in prior editions. We’ve got an action-packed Summer with teaching events and tournaments across the US. We thought we would take the time to discuss three major tournament events, one of which will be host to WDC 2027. These are the World Boardgaming Championships (WBC), the United States Diplomacy Championship at Gen Con, and the National Diplomacy Masters at the World Series of Board Gaming. WBC and Gen Con both overlap with the official release of “Era of Empire”, while the National Diplomacy Masters will feature the first ever “Era of Empire” tournament. Let’s get started!



WBC (August 1-2)

<https://www.boardgamers.org/>

The World Boardgaming Championships (WBC) is an annual competitive gaming convention organized by the Boardgame Players Association (BPA). Originally founded as “AvalonCon”, the convention is the spiritual successor of Avalon Hill. The convention is held at the beautiful Seven Springs Mountain Resort in Pennsylvania. WBC emphasizes tournament gaming, where players compete for championship titles in over 100 different games, which is referred to as the “Century”. WBC focuses on structured events, with official rankings, laurel points, and wood plaques awarded to winners (players often humorously ask each other “Did you win wood?” after an event finishes). The convention has a strong community among serious board gamers who attend the event annually. The convention also includes teaching sessions for new players.

Tournament Details

The annual tournament is three rounds over two days. The best two rounds of three will count towards the overall tournament score. Best Country awards and

tournament prizes will be provided by the organizer. Firm time limits for negotiation and order writing will be followed to ensure expedient play for competitors with other events on their schedule. Food and drink will be provided during each round, with a pizza party during Round Three. The style of play is open to all skill-levels and encouraging for new players to earn experience. A teaching round will be taught on Friday at 5pm with board game prizes to select competitors

Round Structure

Demo - 5pm-7pm Friday

Round One – 7pm-11pm Friday

Round Two – 10am-2pm Saturday

Round Three – 7pm-11pm Saturday

Scoring: C-Diplo

Rank: Best two out of three rounds

Prizes

- All players receive: **challenge coins, Diplomacy shirts, Diplomacy pens.**
- Top Prizes:
 - **Champion** – WBC Diplomacy Champion wooden plaque & custom Diplomacy wooden board
 - **Top 4** – WBC wooden plaques
 - **Top Board** – Custom Era of Empire hats
 - **Best Country awards** – wooden plaques AND custom etched whiskey glass sets
- Other items: board games, tumblers, coasters, hats, keychains, etc.

This year we introduce a new GM to run the Diplomacy tournament: Anton Wilsbach. Anton is a long-time player and volunteer at Diplomacy events. He’s been running Diplomacy at Buckeye Game Fest for years. He’s bringing custom wooden boards, wargaming mats, classic boards, and a giant walkable map. The swag will continue to flow, as will the food & drink provided during the rounds. If you have questions about the event please reach out to heroes@renegadegames.com.

WBC 2024 photo album:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/s9CumtgDwvfr98z6>

US Diplomacy Championship at GenCon (July 31 – August 2)

<https://www.gencon.com/>

Gen Con is one of the largest and historically significant gaming conventions in the world, held annually in Indianapolis, Indiana. Founded in 1968 by D&D creator Gary Gygax, Gen Con has grown into an iconic event, attracting tens of thousands of attendees from around the world for the “Best Four Days in Gaming”. In addition to a massive exhibit hall with hundreds of publishers, Gen Con hosts tournaments, game demos, panels, workshops, and more. The annual Diplomacy tournament at Gen Con is one of the oldest in existence. Diplomacy was played at the first Gen Con in 1968, and the annual tournament has been a staple of the convention since the 70s.



Tournament Details

The Diplomacy event at Gen Con is the largest in the world. Last year we had 176 unique players across our events. To give maximum flexibility to attendees, the event allows competitors to square off in one or more of the four tournament qualifiers. The seven Best Country winners from all qualifiers advance to the Top Board on Saturday night. Our group hosts multiple Diplomacy Introduction events concurrent with the tournament events, with play style encouraging newer players to have a positive experience. This year, we're also running Era of Empire Introduction events next to Diplomacy, so we'll have boards all over the place. Gen Con is the official release of Era of Empire, so get your first printing copy and come play with us! If you have questions about the event please reach out to heroes@renegadegames.com.

Round Structure

Introduction to Diplomacy and Era of Empire – 12pm-4pm Thursday, 8pm-12am Thursday, 12pm-4pm Friday, 8pm-12am Friday

Round One – 12pm-4pm Thursday
 Round Two – 8pm-12am Thursday
 Round Three – 12pm-4pm Friday
 Round Four - 8pm-12am Friday
 Championship Board - 4pm Saturday



Prizes

- All players receive: **challenge coins, Diplomacy shirts, Diplomacy pens.**
- Top Prizes:
 - **Champion** – United States Diplomacy Champion wooden plaque
 - **Podium (Top 3)** – Olympic style medal trophies for the US Championship
 - **Top Board** – Custom Era of Empire hats and signed copies of Era of Empire from the Top Board & Renegade staff to commemorate the event
 - **Best Country awards** – wooden plaques AND framed WW1 propaganda posters that match the Power (nation and color)
- Other items: board games, tumblers, coasters, hats, keychains, etc.

Last year we had Board Game Nation (BGN) record the Top Board with a four-camera setup, including having each player mic'd up. That video should release on July 11. BGN will return to record the Top Board. Dinner is provided to the Top Board and we plan meals between each round and nightcaps after each day's events are complete. We've got all sorts of prizes and awards to give away. Since this event is also the release of Era of Empire, you'll get a chance to make history by participating in the first ever public games. Be part of Diplomacy history by attending Gen Con with us!

Gen Con 2024 photo album:

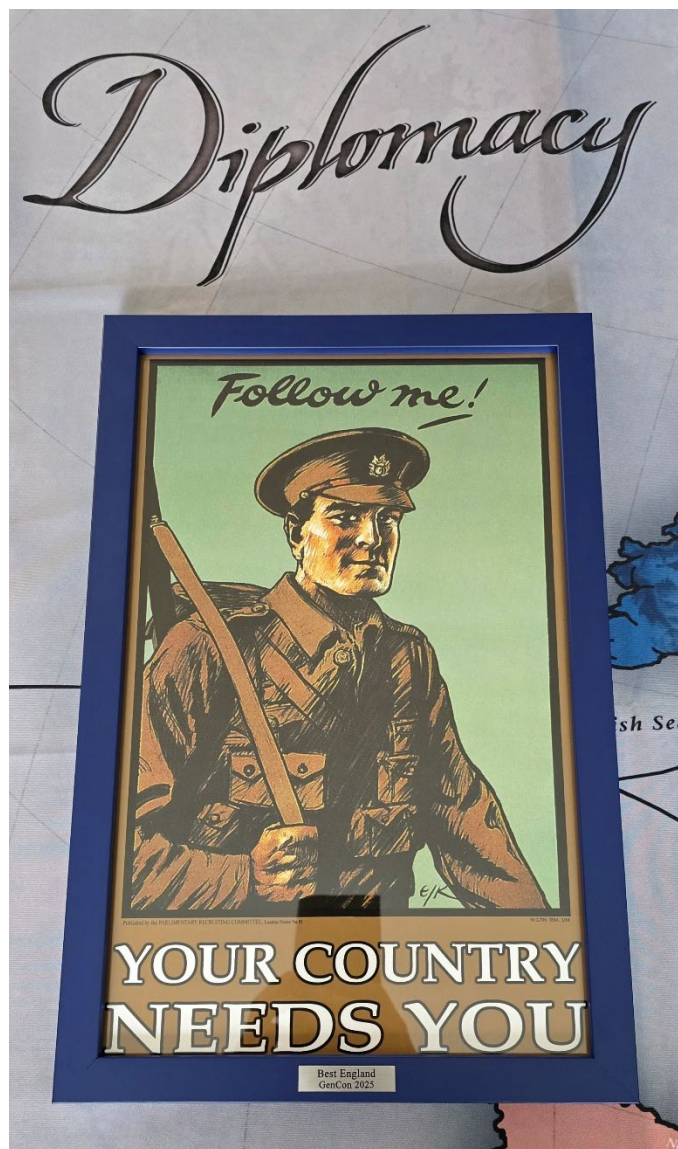
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/tBiisGGEGMxcBpau6>

National Diplomacy Masters at the World Series of Board Gaming (September 19-22)

<https://wsbgvegas.com/>

The *National Diplomacy Masters* is a tournament held in Las Vegas at the “World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG)” convention. The Diplomacy event started in 2024 with a partnership between WSBG and Renegade

Game Studios, the publisher of Diplomacy. The event will be held annually under the name and will be the eventual host tournament of World DipCon (WDC) in 2027. For those unfamiliar with the convention, it started several years ago as a competitive board gaming event with cash prizes. Every day there are multiple qualifying "Ring" events. The winners of each Ring event (such as Acquire, Azul, Terraforming Mars, etc.) proceed to a playoff to determine the WSBG champion. They have over \$200,000 in cash & prizes.

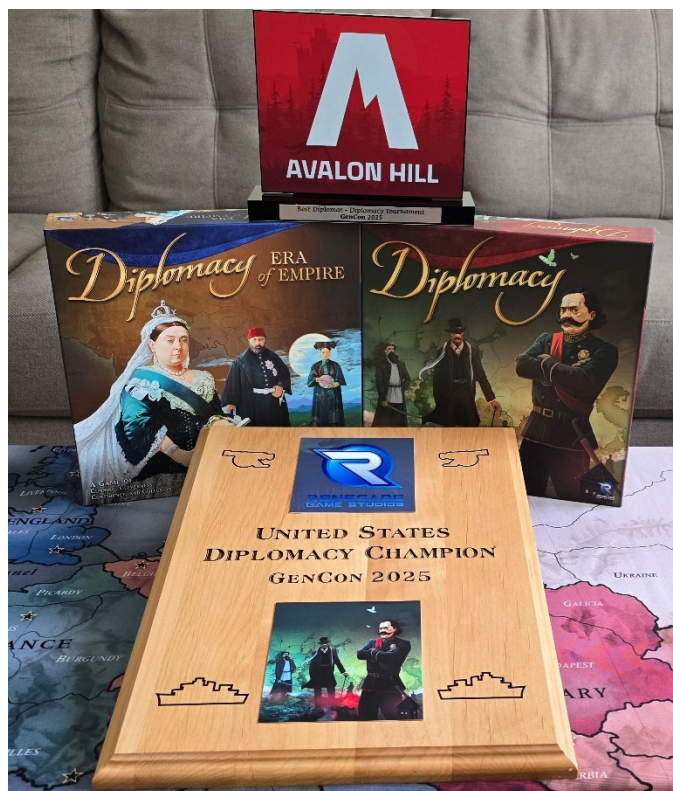


Tournament Details

The Diplomacy tournament is held in a specially designated area within the WSBG convention. We have our own storage room and a large space for the giant, walkable Diplomacy map. Does Diplomacy have a cash prize like some of the Ring events? No, we avoided that by supporting our players up front. Cash prizes in Diplomacy events can drastically alter behavior, and we wanted to avoid that. Instead, we invested heavily in

prize support for all players: Diplomacy challenge coins, Top Board wooden trophies, Best Country awards, board games, shirts, pens, stickers, magnets, keychains, mugs, tumblers – the list goes on and on.

This year the Diplomacy tournament has WEEKEND dates (September 19-22) and an "*Diplomacy: Era of Empire*" tournament. That means four rounds of classical Diplomacy with a Top Board and separately three rounds of Era of Empire in a Swiss-style event. If you want to play Diplomacy, you could play seven rounds during the convention. If you wanted more Diplomacy, you got it!



Round Structure

9/19 - Dip/EoE introduction - 3pm-5pm
 9/19 - Diplomacy R1 - 6pm-10pm
 9/20 - Diplomacy R2 - 2pm-6pm
 9/20 - Diplomacy R3 - 7pm-11pm
 9/21 - Diplomacy R4 - 2pm-6pm (top board & and all other R4 games)
 9/21 - Era of Empire R1 - 7pm-11pm
 9/22 - Era of Empire R2 - 2pm-6pm
 9/22 - Era of Empire R3 - 7pm-11pm

Travel & Accommodation

- **Direct flights** to Vegas from over 160 global destinations.
- **Hotel on-site** at Horseshoe Resort – \$125/night - \$140/night convention rate depending on when you book.
- Easy airport transfer (3.1 miles).



as we assign those boards to designated tables in our event space. We have many parent-child pairs at our events, so this will open attendance up for all.



Activities

- Wide range of **family-friendly** and **adult activities** on-site and nearby.
- Key attractions include: The Strip, Bellagio Fountains, Red Rock Canyon, Cirque du Soleil, The Mob Museum, and dozens of dining and entertainment venues.

Cost

- Event entry ranges from **\$89 (Diplomacy only)** to **\$1099 (all-inclusive stay/play)**.
- Detailed info available at [WSBG](https://wsbgvegas.com/).

Prizes

- All players receive: **challenge coins, shirt, pens.**
- Top Prizes:
 - **Champion** – “Welcome to Las Vegas” style acrylic trophy
 - **Top Board** – “Welcome to Las Vegas” wooden coin boxes
 - **Best Country awards** – “Welcome to Las Vegas” wooden trophies
- Other items: games, tumblers, coasters, hats, keychains, etc.

NDM 2024 photo album:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/HUzd8U8oqSy4K8rf7>

Future Years

In 2026 the “World Series of Board Gaming” moves to Labor Day weekend. That’s a holiday weekend in the United States. One other detail regarding an online question I received about the age 18+ restriction on certain events: I was told by WSBG that for cash payout events, that restriction needs to be in place (legal reasons). However, since Diplomacy doesn’t have a cash payout, we can host games with under 18 so long

WDC 2027 will be a four-round Swiss tournament with a Top Board to determine the World Champion. WDC 2027 will take the place of the existing “National Diplomacy Masters” event at the World Series of Board Gaming. The hotel site is also the event site, so no additional travel is required. Additional event information can be found at the WSBG site (<https://wsbgvegas.com/>) and on the Renegade Game Studios official Discord (<https://discord.gg/uGzzUQbq>).

The National Diplomacy Masters tournament honors four competitors each year as part of the event. Each competitor receives a “Stay & Play” package to cover hotel & event costs. This tradition will continue at WDC by celebrating the achievements of players on the board and those organizers who uplift face-to-face play. Additionally, four hotel rooms will be made available to international travelers representing different nations. Each hotel room has two queen-size beds, so multiple competitors can elect to stay together for the duration of the event. Lastly, the WSBG will offer travel stipends to select VIPs to help support event attendance.

For full details and updates, visit:

[WDC2027.com](https://wdc2027.com)

Contact: WDC2027LasVegas@gmail.com

2024 Photos: [Google Photos Album](#)

Video Coverage: [Board Game Nation YouTube](#)

Key Details on WDC 2027:

- **Dates:** September 2027 (Labor day weekend)
- **Location:** Horseshoe Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas
- **Signup:** [WSBG Site](#) | [WDC Info](#)
- **Contact:** WDC2027LasVegas@gmail.com

An Interview with Noam Brown

by Randy Lawrence-Hurt

World DipCon 2025 took place in San Francisco over the weekend of April 4-6, and resulted in a brand-new World Champion being crowned! I sat down with WDC Champion Noam Brown to hear his take on how it all played out.

Randy

Could you talk a little about how you got into Diplomacy?

Noam

A group of high school friends and I were very into board games and there was a phase where we played a lot of Diplomacy. Even though I wasn't particularly good at it, I enjoyed it because it was such a different game than any other I've played. I would continue to play it every once in a while. After college I lived in the DC area and played a few games with the Potomac Tea and Knife Society. I would also occasionally play games online. In 2017 I did an internship at DeepMind in London and went to WDC in Oxford, which was my first world championship (I didn't do very well).

Randy

Never played much by email or through one of the websites for online play?

Noam

I played a few extended press games on webdiplomacy.net but I wasn't very active.

Randy

Prior to your recent championship, I think most folks in the hobby knew you for your work on Cicero, the Diplomacy-playing AI. How did you get involved with that?

Noam

I started grad school in 2012 and specifically did research on how to make an AI to play poker. It was a fun project, but there was also a lot of challenging theory and engineering that had to be developed. In 2017 we succeeded and made the first superhuman two-player no-limit poker bot. In 2019 we followed that up with the first superhuman multiplayer poker bot. At that point I put a lot of thought on what I wanted to work on next. I had actually considered researching Diplomacy AI when I started grad school, but I felt it was too ambitious of a project at the time. However, by 2019 there had been a lot of advancements on AI for natural language, so I thought aiming to make a natural language Diplomacy bot would be ambitious but not completely crazy. At the time I was working at Meta in their AI research org, and I asked for permission to form a team focused on this effort. At the time I told them I thought it would take 5

years and had a 50/50 chance of success. They were supportive nonetheless.

Randy

How did working on the Diplomacy AI influence your own playstyle?

Noam

It definitely taught me a lot about the strategy and tactics of the game. Cicero is really good at reading the board and anticipating how other players will behave. But Cicero was also designed to play anonymous games, where nobody knows who they are playing against. That's quite different from face-to-face Diplomacy where reputations are a concern. When I started playing face-to-face games in the hobby I adopted Cicero's playstyle, so this led to me developing a reputation as a transactional player that would always try to do as well as possible on the board I was playing on.

I think this points to an interesting feature of Diplomacy: there's no "right" way to play. We trained Cicero to always try to do as well as possible on the current board. But for a lot of face-to-face players, they care about winning in the long run, and they are willing to sacrifice a few points on a board if it means preserving a reputation that will benefit them on future boards.

I found that my reputation as someone that was always trying to do as well as possible on the current board, just like the AI, ended up being a liability. At WDC 2023, I found it very difficult to find allies in my game. For experienced players, I think my reputation was a factor. For new players, I think I was just not very good at persuading them to work with me.

I did quite poorly at WDC 2023, and this motivated me to reflect on what I wanted to optimize for. I decided to aim for a world championship title, and that meant changing my reputation so that when the next WDC came around, I would have an easier time finding allies.

Over the next couple years, I tried really hard to build a reputation as a reliable ally. If there was a really good stab opportunity, like 3+ dots, then sure I would take it, but short of that I'd try to stick to my word. I also tried to do better at finding allies in S1901, including less experienced players. This is something that Cicero does extremely well, and it's one of the social skills that I borrowed from the bot.

Randy

Moving on to WDC 2025, what was your mindset going in? Did you think you had a shot of winning it all?

Noam

I put my chances of winning at maybe 3%. I had confidence in my ability, but Diplomacy is an inherently high-variance game, a lot of strong competitors were attending, and WDC 2025 was going to be the biggest WDC in years, with more than 100 attendees. I got a good night's rest before the tournament and just tried to be in a positive mindset going in.

Randy

Can you talk us through what happened on your first couple boards?

Noam

Board 1 started off well. I was Germany and worked out an early alliance with France, who was known as a dependable ally. I thought we'd be able to take out England quickly and sweep the board from there. Unfortunately, England was Peter McNamara, and he managed to convince the entire board that the FG was an imminent threat to everyone. Russia moved to Baltic, Italy and Austria both moved against Munich, and I was ultimately eliminated pretty quickly.

I made two mistakes in board 1. First, I should know by now to never go against Peter McNamara. Second, I didn't spend enough time talking to players on the other side of the board. I thought it was a huge mistake for Italy and Austria to move against me, and indeed it ended up poorly for both of them, but it was ultimately my fault for not checking in with them frequently and advising them against making a bad move. I made sure not to repeat this mistake in my later rounds.

Board 2 went a lot better for me. I was England in what was essentially a Western Triple (due to Russia opening against Germany) and found myself on 8 centers by W1902 with 3 builds. France and Germany were both moving their units away from me and I didn't want to spook them so I decided to waive 2 of the builds. The other players were surprised, to put it mildly. But the game ended well for me: I topped with 16 centers.

In board 3 I was Turkey, and I found myself in an early RT vs AI with neither side positioned to make fast progress. It was clear that FG was soon going to eliminate England while the east was stalemated, so Brandon Fogel (Austria) came to me and suggested I support him into Rumania, and that we could run an Italy-Austria-Turkey alliance. I agreed, but now that I knew Austria's moves I worked out a set of moves with Russia that ensured we'd get Serbia. After that, Austria's position quickly crumbled. This is where I think my years of reputation building paid off. If I had maintained a reputation as a purely transactional player, I don't know if Brandon would have even considered pitching such a move to me.

I again found myself in a good position but France was entering the Med and I wanted Italy to feel comfortable defending against that, so I moved my units back and (once again) waived two builds. I waived a total of 4 builds that game. But it paid off: I ultimately topped the board with 14 centers.

Randy

So, going into the final round, you had to know you were one of the tournament leaders; how did that impact your strategy for the final board?

Noam

I actually didn't track how I was doing in the standings. Final board scores weren't reported so I only had a vague sense of how others were doing. I figured I was entering the final round in the top 7, but beyond that I wasn't really sure. I also intentionally didn't mention to people that I was doing well in the tournament because I didn't want to put a target on my back for the final round.

Also, WDC 2025 didn't have a single top board. Instead, there were 3 top boards, and the points for that board counted for more than usual, so I knew that as long as I did well I could win the tournament even if I didn't top the board. Because there was so much uncertainty in the standings, I decided my strategy for the top board would simply be to end with as many centers as possible.

Randy

What happened on your final board?

Noam

I drew Italy. I immediately hit it off with Russia (Andrew Zick) because we had a very similar read of the board: both Austria and Turkey would have to go. In particular, I could tell there was zero chance he would work with Turkey. I made an unconventional opening move but one that I like: moving Venice to Piedmont. It acts as a speed bump for France without being too hostile. But it posed such a dilemma to France that they ended up not submitting any orders in time, and also Austria misordered and failed to take Greece. That changed the dynamic of the game a lot.

I had originally been committed to an AIR alliance taking out Turkey first, but due to Austria's disorder I decided it would be better to focus on Austria first. Meanwhile, France concluded that they had no shot in the game after their disorder and decided to janissary for England/Germany and move into the Med against me. That posed a serious dilemma: do I focus on finishing off Austria/Turkey in the east, or do I turn around and defend against France? Ultimately I decided that the higher-risk but higher-reward strategy was to focus on taking out Austria/Turkey despite the creeping French fleets and German armies.

By the midgame France was down to 2 centers. But I noticed that England/Germany had let France keep Marseilles, so if France got a build they could put a unit there behind the English/German line. EG had asked France to tap my unit so that they could take Venice from me. I instead pitched to France that I'd let them walk into Naples. Fortunately, after much discussion, France agreed to take me up on the offer. I still lost a center, but I gained an ally, and that was enough to preserve my position in the west while Russia and I finished off Turkey.

By 1908 I was still on 6 centers (with two of my home centers occupied by France) so things weren't looking great for me. It was a timed round and we were in the range where the board could be called at any moment so I decided to take a gamble: I stabbed France and Russia for 2 centers total even though none of my home centers were open to build. Fortunately, everyone agreed to a draw right after that. I ultimately finished with 8 centers in a 9/9/8/7/1.

I didn't expect that to be enough to win the championship. But when a few folks asked how I did they told me my score might have actually been enough to win. It wasn't until rewards were handed out for 7th - 2nd place and my name hadn't been called that I knew I had won. Ultimately, I won by a single center.

Randy

How does it feel to be a World Champion?

Noam

It feels great! It took a while to really sink in but it eventually hit me. It's an accomplishment that I'm proud of. Also, the belt is pretty cool.

Randy

Any advice for players aspiring to improve their game and maybe win their own championship?

Noam

First, I'd say don't be discouraged by losses. I wasn't particularly good at Diplomacy when I started playing and I didn't seriously think I'd ever win a world championship. But it's something you can get better at with study and practice. Second, I'd say don't neglect the human element. One thing I've learned is that there's no "right" way to play Diplomacy. Everyone comes in with their own style, motives, and goals. A big part of the game is understanding what those are for each player and factoring it in when making decisions.

Randy

What future tournaments can folks expect or hope to see you at?

Noam

I look forward to defending my title at WDC 2026. I might also be at a few other face-to-face and virtual tournaments between now and then. And I look forward to participating in many more tournaments to come!

Fear and Loathing in San Francisco: A Scarifying Journey Into the Heart of Humankind

by Dr. William B. Drummond

1. Hornets! Hornets! Laundry service, and humanitarian aid.

It was a vague, persistent buzz that I noticed a few seconds before the punishment for my excesses caught up and immediately surged to the front of mind, punishing my frontal lobe for its poor judgment the night (and, let's be honest, the morning) before.

I ignored it, too indisposed to pay the buzzing much heed as it was overwhelmed by the vigorous prison-style shanking my brain was taking as I slowly returned to groggy semi-consciousness. My eyes remained firmly shut, briefly perceiving light through their lids, my spidery blood-vessels briefly captivating and then almost instantaneously too much to bear. My mind snapped back to misery and dis-ease. What the fuck happened last night?

That fucking buzz. A recurring, underwhelming hornet-like tickle near my ribs. My phone. Perhaps that might

explain how I got into this situation, though deep down I knew the explanation was that it was entirely self-inflicted. Eyes still held shut, I reached into my inside pocket, and answered the phone, ill-prepared for my sense of hearing to become the next thing to come under assault.

I winced, even though the speaker wasn't particularly loud. My brain was a few seconds behind in processing everything, but gradually caught what seemed like the pertinent pieces. "WDC" "Whipping" "San Francisco". I mumbleslurred some vague form of words as a question..? A response? Either way, it didn't matter. The caller's reply again only came in in snippets. "Expenses covered", "intern" "email details". I muttered what vaguely felt to be something affirmative, and plopped the phone down on my chest with a dull thud, letting out an exhausted sigh. How am I at the stage where taking a call is an ordeal?

Flat on my back, a frenzied ape grinding a stick into the pock-marked termite mound that passed for my brain, I again sighed deeply and opened my eyes. It was broad daylight. Blue sky. OK, I was outside, in an unfamiliar location. A small tree above and plants to my right. A semi-neglected garden bed. Christ. A new low. Wait, "intern"? No, hold on. That can wait. Time to get vertical. I sat up. No trousers. Fuck. No shoes, but socks. They were dry. At least that was something. Another deep sigh. My eyes focused to my left. There were my trousers, neatly folded, though my shoes were strewn haphazardly down near my feet. OK, I can work with this. Wallet?! It's there, cash and cards all present and correct. So, I wasn't hanging out with violent thieving degenerates last night. Trousers on, ignore the protesting brain. Up on my feet, I eventually get into my shoes, forcing my feet through, pushing the backs down and ignoring the laces, steadying myself on the tree to stay upright.

Dusting myself off more out of reflex and ritual than targeting anything in particular, I ventured out of the garden bed and into the street. Nope, still no idea. It looks as though there's shops at the intersection up the gentle slope of the hill. Of course it'd be up the hill - I was so much liquid last night, downhill would have been all I could manage. Struggling back up towards civilization and away from the domestic banality of the garden bed, my self-loathing approached its usual low simmer. It was a psychic struggle to drag myself up that hill, despite its low gradient and the relatively short distance. I needed water, that much I knew. Food was too much to think about. The final decision was caffeine or more booze, but that was up to fate and what I first found at the top of the hill. It was nearly 11.30 - it was almost a coin-flip as to whether the first thing I spotted was a cafe or a pub.

Cafe it was. As much as gentrification irritated me, I knew at least in my circumstances that this was for the best. I slid into a booth in the darkest corner, used what felt like the last of my energy to politely ask for an Americano and plenty of water, while making it at least visually clear that I was a man in some desperate need of help, and closed my eyes again.

The water arrived promptly. A grateful thanks, and then some hydration. The water was cold, and it was difficult to swallow given the last thing I'd consumed was probably closer to hand sanitizer than legit booze at whatever time it was that I toddled out of wherever I had been. I shut my eyes again, and felt the water hit my fragile stomach like a crystalline jab. This was going to be a tightrope. I definitely had The Fear. The coffee arrived in short order, but would probably take about half an hour to be at a drinkable temperature. This timeframe was fine. I dozed lightly, sipping water and hoping not to make things worse.

The hornet again. Shorter. An email. It can wait. Let me sit in my fragile misery, occasionally sipping water to try and drown the brain-ape. Another jug of water materializes, along with 2 Paracetamol and 2 Ibuprofen. More quiet, grateful thanks. I take all four, holding The Hardest Working Organ in Journalism, my liver, hostage in an attempt to gain a little more executive function.

Time passes. The coffee cools, is consumed, and is replaced with more. More cold water is poured into me. Nature calls. The next big test. My host wordlessly points me out the back, I ease my way past the kitchen and through the back door. "Always remember never to trust me" is scrawled at eye-level on the cistern suspended 6 feet up the wall. The task is completed, and I start to feel a little more human. I slump back into my booth - lunchtime punters kept to the front of the shop, probably to spare them the fright of seeing the worthless animal in the back corner.

Whipping. Yep, plenty of self-flagellation going on here. I check my email. Something called WDC at Whipping, to be held in San Francisco in April. A quick search leaves me little the wiser. Western Digital Corporation? Nope. World Dance Council? Possibly? Nonetheless, flights are booked; accommodation and expenses are covered. A juicy expense account in the style of the Rivers of Gold period of journalism remained my only non-negotiable when working with a publication, and I made a point of making every editor rue the day they agreed to that stipulation.

And yes, an intern, who will meet me on arrival in San Francisco. Another young mind to poison, I guess. Who knew what they'd make of my general air of degeneracy? I figure it'd go one of three ways. I'd find a willing accomplice, a subservient lackey, or I'd scare the absolute bejesus out of them upon meeting and would be able to fly solo while having adjoining hotel rooms to myself. All upside. I ordered a steak and a pint. Things were looking up.

2. Travel tips from a Doctor of Journalism, offsideers onside.

I make a habit of bargaining away business class seats when negotiating my expense account, and I always sit at the very back when on flights. It gives me the chance to build rapport with the cabin crew. To share a knowing look when they're dealing with the entitlement crew. To mutter a disparaging comment about those in the pointy end when the time is right. The back of the plane is for the people who know exactly how things work and for people who can get things done. It means quick drinks and, if we crash, being one of the last to die.

It also means being last off, but that's fine. Exhausted customs and immigration officers wave you through - dogs are off sniffing at other baggage carousels. In this

case, it means I'm greeted by a sign with my name on it held by a kid with a bum-fluff moustache who looks like he's still in high school. He looks at me expectantly, like I'm about to give him a sip of his first beer. "Dr Drummond" "Of course kid, did anyone else who came off this flight come even close to fitting the profile? How long have you been in town?" "I just got off the same flight..." "Same flight, son? Did you fly business, or coach" "Coach, of course" "Good, let's get out of here. Screw cabs, which way is the BART?"

He goes to grab my bag and I flap at him like a perturbed ibis. This kid's only going to draw attention to me if he lugs my bag like a porter on some sort of urban jungle trail. Right now, my paranoia has been aggravated by a lack of sleep and an inordinate number of cans of shitty domestic beer. We board and make for Powell St Station and the Hotel Spero. An urban rail journey always gives me some insight into a new city. I spot a guy painstakingly spiking a cigarette with some concoction. This quite horrifies the kid, who is probably just disturbed at seeing a cigarette, and is probably clueless about the crafting going on. The roller remains unaware of the anthropological study he's become part of. He then exercises some discipline, only sparking his creation as he alights at 16th and Mission.

3. Adjoining rooms like a family holiday with your parents, another kind of buzzing.

Me and the kid roll through the automatic doors. I let him lug the baggage now. I could do with the attention on check in. "Dr Drummond, I'm a Doctor of Journalism" "Are you here for the convention, sir?" "I am, and I'd be grateful if you could arrange a quiet room and buckets of ice to be left outside the door at 6 hourly intervals." A bellhop appears, and the kid is relieved of his duties as we're whisked towards an elevator.

Adjoining rooms, just as promised. Before I've got time to put the Do Not Disturb sign on the door, there's a knock. The bellhop? I open the door cautiously... A cheerful, slightly manic, but also clearly preoccupied fellow in a cap. "Dr Drummond, great to have you with us! Adam Silverman, I'm one of the WDC organizers. Here's the schedule, talk to you later" He shoves pieces of paper into my hand and that of the kid and buzzes away again. I'm never a chance of getting a word in. Clearly overly busy, or a speed freak, but his eyelids were too heavy from exhaustion to substantiate that possibility.

I make sure the Do Not Disturb sign is engaged and encourage the kid to do the same. Best to let him settle in. My room is windowless, and his backs onto a small alleyway. I don't much care for hotel room views, as long as the drinks are kept cold.

I absentmindedly fish out and crack a beer from the minibar, without even checking what I'm poisoning myself with. It'll be lager of one kind or another. I then flop onto the bed with the schedule, and the can foams with mild enthusiasm as my body comes to rest. Never do your research. It just breeds preconceptions. To truly experience an event, you should know as little about it as possible, and try and move through it with some form of impairment.

Thursday... wine tasting, redwoods, Marin County, hiking, blah blah blah... Never been gladder to have missed something. Humans invented buildings for a reason - to conceal their misdeeds from others. Enough performative virtue.

Evening: Dinner at The Harlequin, followed by a karaoke bar. I turn my attention to the kid. "What the hell do you make of this? Some sort of convention where they load up on steak, get hammered at a bar, kick on to a karaoke joint, and then try and impress each other the next morning with raging hangovers... Should we even bother going to this? "I'll go anywhere for an expenses-covered meal, Dr Drummond, but there's no way I'll be able to go to karaoke, I'm under 21!" "Don't worry kid, this town is crooked as any, and minimum wage hasn't shifted in years - Aleander Hamilton has the key to that particular door." We drain both rooms' minibars (expenses!) and nurse a fine buzz as we brave the softer end of the Tenderloin and head down to SOMA.

4. Steak dinners, The Hobby, and the continued corruption of a minor.

We roll into The Harlequin to a scene of straights, fixers, maddies. I spot a Civil War General, a permagrinning East Coaster in a sombrero. Some from the tech sector, a gentleman from the Carolinas. A few foreigners - the genial French, conceited Australians, a handful from England, a couple of potential Canadians who will no doubt be asked about emigration multiple times over the weekend. Some confused partners along for the ride who probably wish they'd pre-loaded before braving this scene. Excited chatter swamps me. This is a king hell-mad mob - old acquaintances are re-met, names are put to faces - strangers quickly become friendly with each other, and the old stagers seem to just sit back and take it in. As one, they refer obliquely to "The Hobby".

I find myself with a Greek family (this is a family event?! Bad Asses, Whipping? Fair enough...) and the Vermont via Veracruz hombre in the sombrero as I make small talk and refrain from mentioning my assignment. "Just along to see what it's all about", I say, not betraying my total ignorance at what I'm meant to be covering. I don't want to know what I'm in for. I just want to experience it. There's steak, the booze flows, as predicted - tongues loosen further and vocal cords are lubricated. I periodically lose sight of the kid. Whenever I spot him I

slip him a drink – no way do I want a straight offside as I enter this particular circus. By the end of dinner, I've been offered a tour around Athens where this circus apparently next rolls in in 2026, a hot tub party in a Vermont winter, and a pub brawl in Warrington. All three sound like a good time, but I remain a journalist of simple tastes.

We roll out and towards the karaoke bar. They refrain from carding the kid – seems like they just want this mob in and then out of their venue as quickly as possible. Drain those wallets over the bar, move 'em on. It doesn't take long for this lot to get into it. I keep the bar staff busy – I find out the Civil War General is all about Modelo. It's the best choice here so we sit back and neck a couple, just taking it all in. Now the kid has the mic – unleashing the sprechgesang, saying the word "gnarly" over and over, and yelling about how he's "the shit". I like this guy more by the minute. The English contingent gets up and gives us Oasis (of course they do), we get some My Chemical Romance, and then the metal kids give us Aerials by System of a Down. As time ticks down, a small, softly spoken woman I've not seen all night takes the stage and gives a bar-perfect rendition of What's Your Fantasy by Ludacris. The room is gobsmacked, then erupts. Easily the performance of the night. What the actual hell is going on here?

5. A good waste of breakfast booze, and the only acceptable fanaticism

Official breakfast at the Buena Vista. Introduced to a new range of freaks, weirdos, and those who have just got good at hiding it. Too much bread, and over-friendly and over-familiar wait staff. Please just let me nurse my hangover in peace as this lot drone on about Rats and Western Triples. This place is known as the inventor of the Irish Coffee, though I've never seen such abuse of Irish Whisky in my life. The amount poured over the bar in making these damn things would make Behan weep. I'm pro-day drinking though, so as I get a few in amongst the attendees, I chat to a few Giants fans who are also getting a few in before heading down to the ball park. There's some cautious Opening Day optimism, but no signs that they'll go deep into the playoffs. The eternal hope of the sports fan, followed by the deep-seated realism of the true sports fan. The sugar in these Irish coffees immediately makes me pre-diabetic. A bunch of these convention lunatics are off to Alcatraz. I wonder to myself how many will make it off again. From the vibe I'm picking up off some of the American players, a few would appear to be keen to put each other overboard on the ferry ride over. Let the Bay Area's hungriest sharks sort it out.

6. Play stupid games, win stupid prizes, open sewers for the next 50mi, roll calls and Ruhr...

Off to get credentialled. I'm introduced to the busy guy's co-organizers – Siobhan and Alex, and I get my credentials. They're no different to the participants. Works for me, hide in plain sight no need for these freaks to think I'm not one of them – I thought I'd stand out, but for the most part I'm pretty inconspicuous. There's something still going on here – There's a table that includes a flogger, a ball gag, a suspiciously insertable sculpture, and multiple copies of the war criminal bastard Henry Kissinger's *Diplomacy*. That might be the freakiest thing I've seen so far. Just what do they plan on doing with multiple copies of a book last seen in 1996's *Muppet Treasure Island*?

The kid rolls in the worse for wear. I let him sleep this morning, but he seems traumatized. The alley his room backs onto is something of an open latrine, and I can tell he's seen some things. This is a jaw-droppingly beautiful city filled with wonderful people, but the lack of a proper social safety net in a city rapidly made unaffordable by the most break-neck rapacious inhuman form of capitalism has made things particularly dystopian. How is the presence of taxi and uber drivers a bigger problem to be dealt with by the country's best and brightest than a total lack of public amenities and human decency for society's worst off? I guess you can't profit off an IPO in ensuring a bit of dignity.

I give the pre-event "hobby" panel discussion a wide berth – a bunch of inside-baseball chat that's no doubt appreciated by those for whom this event is their Woodstock, but context I don't require to cloud my quest for Objective Journalism. Instead, I'm off to the hotel bar to see what's on offer, and I let the kid take it all in and make what he wants of it all. His thousand-yard stare suggests it'll all just wash over him.

There's a shout from upstairs of "rollcall!" I peel myself off my barstool and stumble upstairs. Names are called, "boards" are called, and then names are linked with long dead empires. There's a blur of motion, introductions are made, and then people grab different colored notepads and peel off into small groups for conversation, and, I soon learn, connivance.

There's not much more to describe of this. It's all so painfully simple but made to look painfully complex. I see characters played, and true personalities come out. Softly spoken sweetness spun for shameless personal gain. Rivalries, alliances, a bearded man who just won't stop shouting. This is like Lewis Carroll's Caucus Race – they get up, run around for a while, stop, and then do it all over again. One guy is dressed in clothes covered in bananas. There's a pleasant smiling woman from the Netherlands. These boards seem almost irrelevant to the weird little conversations that go on and the relationships that are built and then destroyed as one person betrays another. Human existence from time immemorial played out on a micro scale. For hours. Who is winning? Who is

losing? It becomes increasingly hard to tell. Fortunes rise and fall, marriages of convenience are struck, and deals are made to end the madness and go to bed.

I'm still there at 4am and have seen people grow slowly madder and madder as the night has worn on. I'm not sure what's more disturbing – the exhausted participants who can barely stay awake and have let themselves begin to sink into the black depths of unwitting compliance with things clearly against their interests, or the equally exhausted but overstimulated lunatics who look like they could do this for years. One group is left. A friendly Australian woman continually says the word 'Ruhr' with two rolling 'Rs' that are far funnier to those huddled over the table than your correspondent. This has truly descended into an orgy of weirdness. Alexander Hamilton no longer holds the key, the freaks do, and they ain't giving it back.

I make my way upstairs to find a replenished minibar. I find myself unable to sleep, my brain running a mile a minute with the chatter of this weird little subculture. Army Belgium to Rrrruhrrrrr...

7 Doubling down, dropping out, drooping, drooling, and duping

I'm not sure I manage sleep. I'm not sure many of the participants do. 2 more of these things today, no set end time – you could be doing two of these at once. Pure King Hell madness. The kid has succumbed. I heard his name in the roll call this morning. Gone native. Swept up in the madness. I leave him to it. Who am I to tell a man where to get his kicks? The morning is another blur of quiet, gentle persuaders, blowhards, subtle threats, not-so-subtle threats. Desperate, irrational pitches for survival, bald faced lies, and a handful of relentless self-promoters with absolutely no shame. Those that listen are a mix as well, credulous, incredulous, those too tired to be either. This has become psychic trench warfare – it doesn't appear as though anyone has eaten since the Buena Vista. The banana guy is now dressed as a beer spokesmodel. The hotel lobby has run out of coffee, and those with some common sense have moved on to the hotel bar between games to try and quieten down the noises ricocheting around their overtaxed heads. I've become one with this. Don't try and understand it – just behold it in all its beauty and contradictions – the best and worst of humanity all at once, limited time only, tickets still available!

I manage to get a bit of time with the Modelo loving Civil War General. We recount famous Kentuckians – Colonel Sanders, Jennifer Lawrence, Johnny Depp, Raoul Duke, George Clooney, Muhammad Ali... I set the world to rights with a guy who has been doing this nonsense for more than 50 years, and I meet plenty of people who are just doing this for the sheer fun of it. It don't look like fun

to me, but masochism seems to be the recurring theme for the weekend.

Day blends in to night, I have no idea when the final people are done. It's fascinating watching people work out how to handle how they're going. There's no league table, so nobody can tell if people are lying or telling the truth. This quickly becomes fraught – someone somewhere knows how your last game went. I can't work out what's worse, those that lie about their previous results, or those that avoid the topic like the plague. Who should you trust less when you're across a board from them? The day/night/whatever eventually ends. People retreat to their hotel rooms for a handful of sleep. Tomorrow they'll announce the standings going into the final round. The top 21 will play each other, but who is in the top 21? A few people know. Those who got massive scores and managed not to get eliminated will be there, but there's a cohort of about 10 players on the bubble, not sure if they've done enough to put themselves through. Those are the ones I feel sorry for driven to the edge of madness in pursuit of a chance to mix it with the best of this lot.

8. 21 bum salute, the endless procession, futility, acceptance.

No sleep, no breakfast, just lobby coffee until that runs out and the hotel bar opens again. If it's Saturday, it still must be Belgium. The top 21 are called. Jubilation for some, disappointment for others, but it's all taken with good nature. They all know that the masks will soon start to slip as the top 21 join battle. The rest of them divide themselves into teams. The kid has found 6 likeminded individuals and he's off again – We don't really need each other right now. He's found his people, and I've found my story.

I linger a while longer. It's all more of the same and they wouldn't have it any other way – a flurry of activity, the fog of war. Different personalities trying to work together and build trust. The most craven rat bastards amongst them taking every opportunity possible to gain an advantage, even at the expense of working relationships and general human decency. Those ones would make Nixon blush. Again, human nature in microcosm. I learn over the weekend the game is Diplomacy. It's nearly 65 years old, and it's never really been out of print. WDC is the World Diplomacy Championship, and that this tournament has been going nearly 40 years. What does it matter who wins? People come and go, The Hobby remains.

I leave the floor. I leave the Spero. I find myself a dive bar that meets my exacting standards. It's apparently about to get bought out by a memecoin moron. Another who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Well, he hasn't sullied it yet. I get well drunk, running the weekend through in my head until I don't

recall what happens next. I somehow find myself back in my room at the Spero the next morning. I again have a raging hangover. I yell out for the kid. No response. I throw a hotel directory at our shared door. No response. I mutter another expletive, roll over, and check my phone. A message from the kid. "I was Germany in the

team round. I got eliminated. I'm signed up to play something called Speedboat, and I'm going to EDC in Leiden in November..."

The Hobby endures. The Hobby is eternal.

Renegade Heroes: An Update on Organized Play

by Thomas Haver



In the last issue of Diplomacy World, we announced the expansion of Renegade's organized play program. Over the past year we were informally reaching out to people to join whom we knew ran events in the community. In April we announced a new name for the program: Renegade Heroes. The community had 200 existing volunteers built over a decade, and this announcement expanded the scope of the program. Below is a reminder on the mission of Renegade Heroes and an update on what's happened since the last issue:

"The goal is to uplift volunteers to teach games at local game stores, game cafes, conventions, local libraries, and pretty much anywhere else they want to play. Examples of support can include event promotion, material support (e.g., games and swag), financial support (e.g., hotel badges, hotel rooms, travel vouchers). For Diplomacy players, one of the biggest challenges is getting seven people together for a game. Leveraging public places with publisher support is a good means of promoting more widely and getting new & existing players to show up. We want more people playing Diplomacy."

There is no commitment on time investment – everyone can set their own level of involvement. If you want to run monthly Diplomacy games at your game store, we can help facilitate that by working with the store owners and getting promotion out there. If you want to run games at a convention, we can help there as well. The program is also a wonderful means to connect the most passionate members of the community in one place so we can collaborate."

Since the announcement, we've received an enormous response from players across the globe for all Renegade games. We have submissions from Australia, Germany, South Africa, Singapore, and more. We're still reviewing applications and onboarding new volunteers. Out of the dozens of Renegade titles available to run, we have 29 new volunteers specifically calling out Diplomacy. This is a wonderful start and an expansion to the existing volunteers running more than 38 convention events and dozens of local game store teaching events. We even had a request from someone working in German Military Intelligence seeking "convention kits" to be used in non-profit settings for general staff college students.



We've empowered some of our new volunteers to run events at local game stores and conventions by sending them kits with games to teach, loading them up with prize support, providing assistance with convention

housing, and promotion through socials. We also have some nifty Renegade swag for them to keep so everyone knows they're with the Heroes program. One of the coolest moments of the program to date was when David Hill, author of the famous Grantland piece on Diplomacy, signed up to be a Hero. He has a demo kit for the upcoming "Era of Empire" game and put it immediately to use.

The growth of organized play is not limited to individual volunteers. We've also grown through partnerships. For instance, we're supporting the Tri-State Trail competition by having Renegade provide direct product support and events. This means more games at AdamCon, River City Con, Cincy Con, Buckeye Game Fest, LexiCon, Who's Yer Con, CinCityCon, and AcadeCon. In 2026 we'll be hosting a Canadian Championship in Toronto at Breakout; we were at Breakout this year and will be at TABSCon later this year. More Canadian events are planned for 2026 so stay tuned to the linked social accounts below for future announcements. Our Spanish-language license partner Devir Games provides support for not just Spain, but also to Central and South America. We're eager to see more organized play events in regions not historically known for Diplomacy. Lastly, the North American Grand Prix is proceeding successfully, including picking up a few extra events with the addition of new Heroes running convention Diplomacy. We've had many established players crossover to new convention events and new signups from teaching sessions. We look forward to running a similar circuit for the Axis & Allies community with some strong crossover potential. We want to reward both those organizers helping to grow the community as well as competitive players seeking glory.



If you're reading this and are interested in joining the cause, please consider applying for the program using the link below. If you're not quite ready to volunteer but

what to keep track of our activities, you can follow Diplomacy and Renegade with the social media accounts linked below.

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/introducing-the-renegade-heroes-community-program/>



Socials:

-Diplomacy-

BoardGameGeek:

<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/483/diplomacy>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ftfdiplomacy/>

Twitter/X: <https://x.com/FtFDiplomacy>

BlueSky: <https://bsky.app/profile/ftfdiplomacy.bsky.social>

-Renegade-

Discord: <https://discord.gg/AEux4PD3>

Twitter/X: <https://twitter.com/PlayRenegade>

Instagram:

https://www.instagram.com/renegade_game_studios/

YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/@RenegadeGameStudios>

Discord: <https://renegadegamestudios.com/discord>

Cascadia Open 2026

2026

31st Jan - 1st Feb 2026

Schedule:

*Optional meal and social event Friday evening.

*Round 1 9:00am Sat 31st

*Round 2 5:00pm Sat 31st

*Round 3 8:30am Sun 1st

Registration 15 minutes before each round.

All games will end in a solo victory, after 1909 fall retreats, or earlier if all surviving players agree.

Where: Holiday Inn Express 15808 104th Ave, Surrey,
BC, Canada

Cost : \$30Cdn

Wise: @christopherb4580

Paypal: cascadia.open@gmail.com

Tournament Director: Chris Brand
Questions:? Cascadia.open@gmail.com



Origins 2025

by Philip Burk

If you have yet to play Diplomacy: Era of Empire, let me encourage you to get to a gaming convention where it is being previewed before its official release at GenCon later this summer. As much as I value playing in classic Diplomacy tournaments, playing Era of Empire was the highlight of Origins for me. But before I continue about Era of Empire, however, I think it's notable to congratulate Rob Zahn for bagging yet another Diplomacy tournament championship. This year, the third and final round of the Origins Diplomacy tournament was wild. At the start of the final round there were legitimately at least ten players how had a shot at winning it all, which led to some crazy dustups. The atmosphere was intense, but incredibly enjoyable.

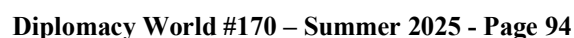
Which leads us back to Era of Empire. There were two boards, one of which was Thomas' now famous large floor maps, along with a new set of 3-D printed large pieces, including the very nice Dutch orange for Holland's pieces. The other was a smaller version of that huge floor map, but we did have a shrink-wrapped pre-release copy nearby. Oh wait, what? Game play for Era? Oh yeah, that was even better. Era will demand that traditional Dip players approach it in a different manner. There is no board-stalemating large position, and from what I can tell, no minority stalemate positions, either.

Actions on one side of the board can have dramatic effect on the opposite. The key here is the interplay between Turkey, Russia, and Britain, where a hard hit against one of those powers will generally result in the other two greatly benefitting. For Japan, China, Holland, or France, that could be a Bad Thing™ in that they would rapidly face one or two quite large powers.

But what does this MEAN? It means that classic Dip players who cling to center counts and strike long-standing alliances might find themselves really struggling. I'm excited about Era of Empires because it will introduce the concept of whole-board play much, much earlier in the game. In classic Dip, I've found that alliance realignment commonly occurs at the mid game, after the first player is eliminated. But in Era, the potential for realignment always must remain on a player's mind. There is no East-West separation of the board. There's just... the whole board. This means that getting to the endgame sooner might actually happen, and that's a Good Thing™.

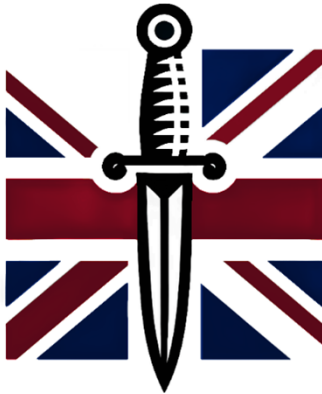
Era of Empires at Origins was a blast for me. I hope to see you, or perhaps meet you if I don't know you, yet, at an Era of Empires game in the near future.

by Stephen Agar



One Year In: The State of UK Diplomacy

by Conrad Woodring



- 5) Facebook group,
- 6) Instagram account,
- 7) Reddit account, and
- 8) WhatsApp Community.

Everything was built around a communication strategy with the basic thesis that if you everyone who plays or could be interested to play, knows when and where games are, people will come and play. And thus, our primary objective: to bring people together around the Diplomacy board. We followed up the initial launch in December with the 2024 UK Diplomacy manifesto (available at www.Diplomacy.co.uk/about) outlining our strategy to rejuvenate the hobby in the UK.

Now, one year in, it's time to reflect on our progress—and we want your feedback. Write to us, write to Diplomacy World, or reach out to other UK players. Tell us what's working, what's not, and how we can do better. If you think we can help you, just say so.

We've come a long way—but we know there's still a long road ahead.

The Numbers: Where we Stand

For those who prefer data to prose, here are the key performance indicators (KPIs) we've been tracking:

Primary KPIs

Boards Played
Unique Players
New Players
Returning Players
Non-Returning Players

YoY Variance	2025 mid year	2024	2023
+1	15	14	6
-8	45	53	30
-20	20	40	n/a
+11	24	13	n/a
-10	(27)	(17)	n/a

Secondary KPIs

Players >1 game

Newsletter Posts
Newsletter Subscribers
UK Diplomacy website visits

-3	18	21	13
-8	10	18	n/a
+20	46	26	n/a
+1900	1900	n/a	n/a

We're especially proud of the 15 face-to-face games played so far this year. With events like ManorCon and the NDC in Warrington still to come, we're on track to exceed our 2025 goal of 20 games across five UK locations (London, Chesterfield, Brighton, and Kenilworth already checked off).

However, we've seen a drop in new player acquisition—20 so far in 2025 compared to 40 in 2024 – which is

defined as people who haven't played face-to-face in the UK in 2023 or 2024 (e.g. UK hobby legend David Norman would count as a new player under this metric). That initial surge came from the excitement of launching our platform. We attracted players that frankly were easy to attract. Moving into 2026 will be harder and slower, requiring new strategies and tools.

Retention is another key focus. Our current rate is 45%—decent, but not where we want to be. Our aim is 60%+. We're tackling this with direct outreach, asking players why they haven't returned and what we can do better. With numbers still manageable, this personal approach is both possible and essential.

The Strategy: Acquire and Retain

Everything we do is guided by two goals: attract new players and keep them coming back. Every decision, every initiative, every event is measured against these two metrics.

The 2024 launch was about building a communications platform that unified the efforts of:

- **Organizers** like Bradley Grace, Chris Woolgar, Mikalis Kamaritis, and Isaac Jukes
- **Content creators** like Stephen Agar and Chris Ward
- **Ambassadors** like Toby Harris, Dan Lester, and David Wigglesworth

We then divided our outreach into five target groups, each with its own strategy:

Group 1 - Existing face-to-face players

This group is the foundation. They're already playing—we just need to keep them engaged and informed. Our leadership team ensures they know about every opportunity to play.

Group 2 - Hobby Veterans

The UK was once the global hub for Diplomacy. Many veterans are still around, and thanks to outreach and support by Toby Harris, Jeremy Tullett and Stephen Agar, we've seen some return to the board.

Group 3 - Online Players

This has been our biggest success. A new generation raised on virtual Diplomacy is discovering the joy of in-person games—pints, pubs, and all. Bradley Grace has been instrumental in bridging the online and offline worlds.

Group 4 - Existing Gamers

This is where we've underperformed. But that's changing. New leaders like Andrew Yang and George Mork are bringing Diplomacy back to gaming conventions. George's event at Midsummer Con was a great start, and we're planning more for ManorCon and MidCon.

Group 5 - Totally new players

This is by far the hardest group to pull in. It is hard to convince someone new that spending five hours at a

brewery playing diplomacy is a good use of their Saturday. As we work our way through the quick wins in groups 1, 2 and 3, group 4 will be slow and group 5 will be extremely difficult. The platform is set up to attract the first three groups. We are just now executing a strategy for group 4. We don't yet have an answer for group five. We're open to ideas so if you've got one why not send it in to the editor of Diplomacy World and share your thoughts.

The Look ahead

We're excited for what's next. UK Diplomacy will bring the game back to ManorCon and MidCon; the game's historical UK homes. The UK NDC is set to double in size. SpireCon is pushing the limits of its charming venue under Chesterfields iconic twisted church spire.

New leaders are stepping up:

- Emerging talents like Andrew Yang, Tom Garretty, and Nat Shirley are challenging orthodoxies around good play with new and creative ideas,
- George Mork is making inroads with the gaming community,
- Chris Woolgar and Bradley Grace continue their vital organizing work, and
- Hobby veterans like Jeremy Tullet, Stephen Agar, Dan Lester, and Toby Harris remain invaluable mentors.

We also have British nationals leading global efforts:

- Isaac Jukes runs the Virtual Diplomacy League,
- Mikalis Kamaritis serves on the board of the Diplomacy Broadcast Network,
- LadyRazor publishes the Diplomacy Briefing, and
- Stephen Agar publishes *God Save the Zine*.

But it's not just the headline names that matter. Every small act—filling a board, inviting a friend, buying a pint for a newcomer—helps build a stronger, and better community. After all community is about service and I'd like to close this update by taking a moment to recognize some of the people who have acted in service to the hobby that we all love. So, if you see any of these folks (in addition to the folks listed above) at a board, do something kind for them:

John, Phil, Theo, Hugh, Other Hugh, Mark, Keir*, Other Stephen, Luke, Peter, Marvin, Chris, David, other David, Dan, and Hans.

(*Especially Keir, because I owe him two pints.)

50/50 Shot: Lessons from A Tournament Director

by Thomas Haver

When I first started playing Diplomacy as a teenager, I wouldn't have imagined more than 20 years later I would still be playing the game. I also wouldn't have imagined the number of Diplomacy events I've run since that first house game. Recently I celebrated a milestone: 50 tournament events organized. That's the most events all-time in the storied history of our game. By coincidence, my 50th event was at the 50th anniversary of Origins Game Fair, which also happens to be my first tournament competition. Leading up to the occasion, I had an opportunity to reflect on the journey and what lessons I could impart to other event organizers.

My Background

I'm a tournament player turned veteran events organizer. I've been volunteering for Rogue Judges running board game events since 2007. Later, I was named an official Events Coordinator for Hasbro / Wizards of the Coast and TD of the US Diplomacy Championship at Gen Con. Since 2022 I've been an Expert Consultant with Renegade Game Studios on Diplomacy, Acquire, and other games. I'm the co-designer of the upcoming Diplomacy Era of Empire. Most recently I've been leading the Renegade Heroes program for community outreach.



In addition to running the most tournament events in Diplomacy history, I've run countless Introduction events, teaching close to 2,000 players how to play

Diplomacy. I was named to the inaugural class of the Renegade Hall of Fame (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/renegade-hall-of-fame>) and I'm the only Diplomacy TD to win the Board Player's Association "GM of the Year".

I also work a "real" job in technology, speak at tech events around the world, volunteer for a number of charities, and have an absolutely wonderful family who support my Diplomacy habit way more than any loving family should. They're amazing,

Tournament Advice

Diplomacy tournaments are almost always multi-round events. That's where the similarities end. Tournaments are wildly different depending on the organizer or group running the event. There is no universal scoring system across Diplomacy tournaments. There is no accepted optimal number of rounds. The scoring systems are typically at the discretion of the organizer, of which there are dozens in existence. Some events have formal round end times whereas other events are open-ended. In other words, if you're planning to be a tournament director then you get to make the rules. However, there are some pieces of advice to help along the way.



While some events have no strict end time, it's still important to consider the human element. If you're planning to have long games, then also plan for breaks in the middle of the game for food & drink & the call of nature. If you start late in the evening, that means your

players could be playing into the early morning hours. Exhausted players make mistakes. If that exhaustion builds up over the course of the tournament, some players may miss rounds to catch up on sleep or make mistakes on the board or act out because they're grouchy. Your tournament has to end at some point and people will have to travel home. If your final round runs into those travel schedules, you may be faced with player's dropping out. In my experience, it's best to have reasonable start and end times for rounds, with hard cutoff times for the final round to ensure everyone can make it home safely.

The 6th edition rules for the game allow for the game to end via solo or via draw. They also allow players to set a turn-limit or time-limit, with the winner decided by the player with the most Supply Centers. Consider using the turn-limit and/or time-limit for your events. The benefit of this method is you can play for activities external to the tournament itself such as dinners or sightseeing.

When determining a tournament structure and scoring system, my best advice is to keep an open mind. As tournament director you get final say because you're devoting the time, energy, and likely finances to organizing the event. However, it's important to run an event people enjoy and want to return to year-after-year. Seek advice from prospective players about the best round structure and scoring system to use. Poll the attendees on meal options and activities external to the event. When the event is finished, solicit their feedback on what they enjoyed, what they didn't enjoy, and recommendations for improvement next time. Most tournament players recognize the effort required to organize an event and will be kind to a tournament organizer putting themselves out there in service to the community.

Players

Introducing a multi-round tournament for a game that's intended to be self-contained will yield some interesting behavior. As tournament director you must come to expect and adapt to player's acting differently in a tournament than a one-off game. Each tournament player has a differing opinion on what "doing well" means to them. For some, anything less than domination is considered a failure. For others, survival is their aim. During the course of a tournament, player's may target the tournament leaders on a board regardless of their negotiating skill. Player's may also make decisions to earn themselves an individual award (such as Golden Blade for Best Stab or a Best Country) that ultimately imbalance a given game. Some players "reset" after each game whereas others hold a grudge if their prior round was ruined by someone. As tournament director, you can't control this behavior any more than you can control the weather. What you can do is positively impact

the culture of the event so players have fun even though each has a different motivation.

As a tournament director, it's important to set expectations at the start of the tournament related to player conduct. Ultimately, it's just a game. Remind them: it's just a game. Whether they're hardened tournament veterans seeking glory or casuals seeking an experience, they're all playing a game. Publish player conduct expectations in the tournament rules and let players know ahead of time they are to respect one another and make their best attempt to play out each game in a professional manner. I like to remind players of the Bill & Ted principle: "Be Excellent to Each Other". Because Diplomacy can be a tense game and tournaments add pressure you can expect people to have outbursts of bad behavior. It's important to intervene in those moments to lower the temperature in the room and get everyone back on track. Be the peacemaker that helps build mutual respect between players



One approach I use to help build culture (and limit negative experiences) is to plan group meals. Whether its food delivered to the tournament venue or everyone is going out together as a group after a round, breaking bread with your fellow players helps humanize them. They tell "war stories" about past games but also try to steer conversation into their lives. Find out what they do for a living, details about their family, their other hobbies, etc.. It's much more difficult for player's tempers to rage when they know the person sitting across from them. Building that camaraderie creates long-lasting friendships. The majority of regular tournament players I know who play for years tend to do so because of the people, not the game. They made friends at the board

and during dinner who they look forward to meeting year after year. For example, one of the player's I met at my first tournament ended up becoming my best friend; I even named my son after him because his family has been my extended family for decades. It all started from shared food & drink at that first tournament.

Venues for Play

Tournament Diplomacy doesn't rely solely on existing players. As tournament director, you should look to build up a player base in your local area so the combination of locals and/or travelers creates a fun mix during an event. The role of tournament director is also that of teacher. But how do you find players to teach? Diplomacy players looking to spread the word should offer support to those new players where they're already playing: local game stores, board game cafes, local libraries, game conventions, and schools. The following are my recommendations for engaging each:

Local Game Stores and Board Game Cafes: Both venues are typically looking for live events in their stores. They want volunteers to teach games – especially games they have in stock. Offer to run “Introduction to Diplomacy” or “Learn to Play Diplomacy” events at their store with enough advanced notice to fill out a board. Use the Diplomacy “Quick Start Rules” in the new edition to get players into a game quickly. Be there as a backfill possibility but ideally as the non-playing GM to help facilitate the game.

Local Libraries: Most local libraries have a collection of games to check out. Donate a copy of Diplomacy to the local library with contact information included so anyone looking at the game can find you for face-to-face play. Additionally, most libraries also hold events open to the community. Either join an existing gaming event or propose your own to teach classic games like Diplomacy.

Game Conventions: If you see a local convention within driving distance, consider submitting events as a volunteer to teach Diplomacy. You don't need to run a tournament at these events, but instead focus on teaching the game. I've been teaching “Introduction to Diplomacy” concurrently with the Diplomacy tournament at Gen Con for years now, and the Intro events always outsell the Tournament events. Not every player who learns Diplomacy wants to compete, so align their expectations with the positive experience you're providing. It's nice to have tournament players, but being the person responsible for their first positive experience with Diplomacy means more.

High Schools: Diplomacy can be used in either an after-school Board Game Club or part of a History / Government class. I've been working with high school teachers in my area to facilitate Diplomacy in the

classroom, so they know how to integrate the game into Government, History, or Speech class. Donate a copy to your local school in need so we build the next generation of Diplomacy players!

Communication

Diplomacy players often fancy themselves as master communicators. Leverage some of that confidence into communicating with your prospective players. One thing that's great about today's tech landscape is you have dozens of modes of communication. That's also the downside – there's no one best way to reach players. To reach the most potential players you have to be willing to consistently communicate with them across multiple forms of social media. For most of my events, I communicate with players via email, text, newsletters, Discord, Twitter (now called X), BlueSky, Instagram, BoardGameGeek, YouTube, WhatsApp, Reddit, Slack, Facebook, Diplomacy Zines, etc. – heck I've even used LinkedIn to recruit players. I'm going to let you in on a little secret: I hate social media. I haven't met an organizer yet who was in love with all those platforms. I had a period of time when my social media accounts were dormant and it was glorious. Now that I'm running events for Renegade I'm all-in on everything. It's part of responsibility if you want to be a tournament director. You must reach players by whatever means necessary.



In your communication with players, keep them up-to-date on the core details of your event: location, timing, costs, travel, accommodation, tournament rules, etc.. Have these details in multiple formats, whether it's a word doc that can be sent out via email or a flyer to be printed physically or social media cards that fit a given template. The hard work is the first time you create the template; you can reuse that template year after year. So put in the time early and it will pay dividends later.

You'll have to repeat yourself often. Players have a nasty habit of forgetting key details of an event or the location of a group meal. Be patient. Just like you will need to build habits as tournament director, they need to get used to how your event is run.

After the event concludes, please provide a follow-up with your players. If possible, share media (pictures and videos) taken during the event. Create a writeup, sometimes termed an after-action-report, that covers the event details. Ask them to create writeups of their own so you can get some nice press about the event. You want those not in attendance wishing they were there, so they hopefully decide to attend the next year. I also strongly advise you to publish your event in Diplomacy World, and no Doug Kent did not pay me to write this sentence. Stay consistent with your communications and your tenacious approach will yield more players and more events.

My Mistakes

Trial and error tend to involve quite a bit of error when you've reached 50 tournaments organized. I learned much from reading reports in Diplomacy World at the Diplomatic Pouch. I learned more by attending tournament events. It was three years between my first tournament event played in and my first tournament organized. Still, I've made many mistakes and continue to make mistakes. The key is to learn from them and adapt, so you can refine your events and improve the player experience.



First, generally avoid giving strategic or tactical advice or provide commentary directly to the players. It's ok to listen and inquire about games, especially if you're intending on writing a report later. I prefer to refrain from comments on active games until they are done. I love to kibitz on boards though, so finding a non-playing partner to chat about the games is the best way to have your fun as TD.

Second, work to apply rulings consistently across the entirety of the tournament. This can be really challenging when reviewing potential misorders. Some tournament rules are strict about Order format, which makes the TD job easier but also lead to some bad feelings when the intent is clear but the Order is invalid by a technicality. As someone who has now worked on the rules for multiple Diplomacy games and had to deal with some hurt feelings by TD rulings, it's best to give all players an out based on intent. Also, write into your tournament

rules to give you the power to make changes when needed, including a board or player continuing. Because you're dealing with Diplomacy players, you're going to have people twisting the rules sooner or later. Since tournaments can be stressful, you'll also have players miss turning in their Orders on time. I recommend providing a formal grace of one minute per player per game, and escalate by first having the TD facilitate the game before finally going toward "No Moves Received" territory. Neither you nor your players want to win based on a technicality.

Third, run the tournament for the players attending – not you and not the peanut gallery. Everything that you do, from tournament format to venue to timings to meals should be open to change. It's not about you, it's about them. The ultimate measure of success for an event is whether they had fun. Did your event give them some happy memories? If so, they're likely to return. I run multiple events where I would prefer to use a different scoring system, different round timings, and even different awards. My role is in service to the players, so I make the changes that best suit them. I take it to heart when a player has a poor experience at my event. I want to know what could have been done differently and/or what can be done better next time. I'm willing to change for the benefit of the players. After 50 events organized – the most all-time -- I'm still learning and willing to change. If you start running tournaments with that in mind and show players you care about their experience, they're likely to forgive any missteps and put their trust in you again.

It's ok to make mistakes. Learn from them and grow. No event is perfect. Stay positive about your efforts to improve and you'll be rewarded with players who come back year and year looking for your events.

My Top Ten Events

I've had time to consider my favorite moments as Tournament Director from the many different events over the years. Here are my Top Ten events of all-time:

#10 Geekway to the West 2016

Since my first tournament organized in 2008, I was slowly adding to my yearly events. In 2015 I ran four tournaments and in 2016 I added an extra one at the request of a teacher. Kathleen Mercury was a local school teacher in the St. Louis area who heavily used games in her classes (<https://www.kathleenmercury.com/>). She's designed a number of games and volunteered for the "Geekway to the West" convention. After meeting her at Origins, she invited me to run Diplomacy at Geekway for her students. I took a leap of faith and elected to run a tournament at a convention I had never attended before in an area not exactly known for Diplomacy.

The event was a surprising success, with many of her students competing along with some regular convention attendees. I don't believe anyone competing in that event had ever played in a Diplomacy tournament before. I taught the game before each round and had to wait to begin round two to allow a mother to bring her kids to the convention. Of all the tournaments I've run, this was definitely the most wholesome. Just good clean fun by all involved. The winner of the event was Nick Chicoine, one of Kathleen's students.

Recently, I had an opportunity to reminisce with Kathleen about that tournament. All those kids are in college now. A moment that made me feel old. Then I realized I've taught players and later taught their kids after they became father's. Stay around Diplomacy long enough and you'll see generations get backstabbed on the board.

#9 Origins 2011

This event marked the beginning of my time as Origins tournament director. The tournament had dropped down to 10 people in 2010 due to the prior year's World DipCon obliterating the local player base. Many long-time players at Origins quit after that World DipCon due to the behavior by a few groups. I attended Origins on that Wednesday but elected to skip the tournament that year, suspecting a disaster brewing at the event because of the players coming into town.

When Dan Mathias retired after the 2010 event, I took on the tournament director duties and the tournament went under the Rogue Judges banner. Rogue Judges is a volunteer Game Master group that focuses on teaching games at conventions. The group has existed since the 90s and was also running the Gen Con Diplomacy tournament. Leading up to the tournament, I put in a significant local recruiting effort. I was teaching the game at local game clubs, game stores, and my local university. I reached out to the regulars and worked to get some out-of-town players to attend. The event ended up being a success – we went from 10 players in 2010 to 41 players in 2011. We kept the Origins Diplomacy tournament alive. Diplomacy and Origins have been hand-in-hand since the first Origins in 1975, so maintaining this annual tradition is important. I've had added many responsibilities since that first event fourteen years ago – a wife & two kids, a vastly expanded role in my career, international speaking at tech events, and volunteer work for three charities. For as long as I can devote time, I'll be around to make sure Diplomacy stays at Origins.

#8 PrezCon 2024

PrezCon is often called the "Winter Nationals" because a large number of attendees are made up of WBC regulars and features many competitive events similar to the Century at WBC. The convention is held over President's Day weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia. The

Diplomacy tournament was first held in 1994 and had been a regular fixture in the tournament scene, even hosting DipCon in 2016. However, attendance declined in 2009 and 2010. Without a tournament director, the tournament ceased to exist. When Renegade expanded the scope of their organized play program, PrezCon made the short list of events to resurrect. The location of the event and culture of the convention made it right for Diplomacy.

When we announced the return of PrezCon to the Diplomacy scene, we set about recruiting prior attendees of the event. We also recruited heavily from our regular player base to give this tournament a shot. PrezCon was reborn. We conducted a successful teaching event before round one and ran a three-round event on the last weekend of the convention. The tournament was a solid mix of regular players and newcomers. The final result was a happy coincidence: Claude Worrell won the revitalized PrezCon and was the last winner of PrezCon in 2010 before the tournament disappeared. Diplomacy players can expect PrezCon to stay on the tournament circuit for years to come.

#7 Gen Con 2016

2016 was a turning point for Diplomacy under Wizards of the Coast. After volunteering for Hasbro/WotC for a few years, they formalized the arrangement in writing by making me an Events Coordinator. They also gave me explicit permission to use Diplomacy IP for non-commercial promotional use. They offered prize support in the form of games to interested volunteers. Most importantly, they established a United States Diplomacy Championship at Gen Con.

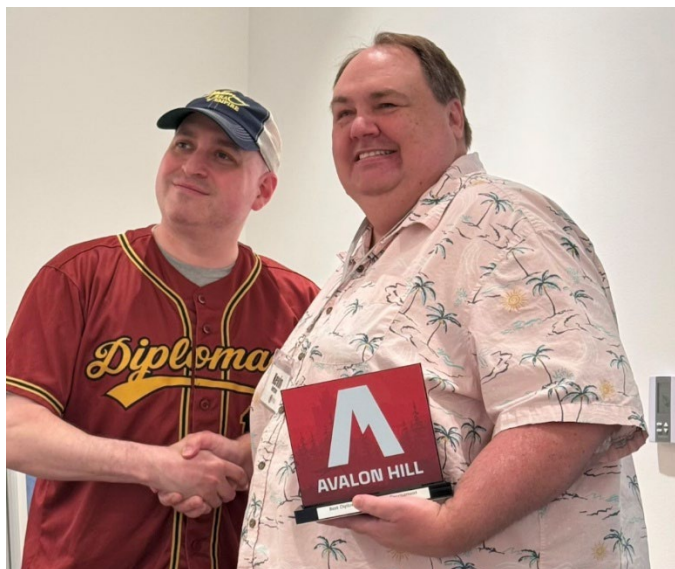
Gen Con 2016 became the first ever US Championship. We got some major upgrades to the tournament material and promotion from the publisher. This was finally the legitimacy that Diplomacy players had sought for decades. The event itself had a fantastic finish. Brian Zahn as France had a commanding position against Dan McNeill's Turkey late into the game. The Gen Con Top Board is played until a concession or solo is achieved – there is no time limit. Brian had an opportunity to solo; the moves were right there on the board. However, after a game that lasted more than 12 hours everyone was tired. Brian missed the key move that would have given him the first US Championship. Dan McNeill rolled Brian back and crossed the stalemate line. Exhaustion gave way to a concession to Dan, who claimed his first Gen Con tournament win and title US Champion.

#6 Circle DC 2025

The pandemic led to many changes in how we lived our lives. One small item that suffered in the grand scheme of things, but remains important to us Diplomacy players, is face-to-face play of the game. Washington, DC was once home to some of the best and most active Diplomacy players in the United States. With multiple

organizers retiring and others unable to fill the role, Diplomacy in DC went silent. In 2023 when Renegade was doing a promotional tour for the new edition of the game, I immediately thought of DC as an event location. Enter Circle DC.

Fort Circle Games is a relatively new publisher, but they've made a big impact. Founded by Kevin Betram in 2017, the company focused on historical and war games. They started hosting a convention called "Circle DC" in 2023 and we joined up with a teaching session of giant Diplomacy. We returned in 2024 with more teaching rounds and filled those boards too. So, when it came time to plan for 2025 events, we added a tournament. The teaching events and tournament had tremendous turnout. After a 6-year absence Diplomacy had returned to DC. The tournament was attended by internationals from Germany & England, and included an actual diplomat. We also had media coverage by Legendary Tactics and the first reveal of the giant Era of Empire map. Everything about the event was a success, with many thanks to Kevin Bertram for supporting Diplomacy from the start.



#5 National Diplomacy Masters 2024

When the World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG) reached out to Renegade about extending the partnership, I was eager to see what could be done for Diplomacy. I met some of the organizers at PrezCon earlier the same year, who were impressed with the tournament setup I had at the convention. Renegade was already a sponsor at WSBG through Acquire. We aligned well on vision for events and competitive play going forward. This new event, called the National Diplomacy Masters, would not only be held in a highly competitive environment, but would also allow us to treat tournament players and organizers. We had four "Stay & Play" packages to cover the costs of hotel & all events at the convention for "Masters". These packages were awarded to two tournament champions and two

volunteer organizers. We planned out dinner & drinks after each round, not just for the players, but for everyone that wanted to attend. Groups larger than the number of people playing the boards went to dinner after each round to enjoy Vegas in style. Board Game Nation (BGN) recorded the event, capturing the Top Board with a multi-camera setup and recording each player individually.

The inaugural event was a stupendous start to what should be a long-term partnership with WSBG. In 2025 we expanded the event to include Era of Empire as a separate tournament. Diplomacy and Vegas are a great combination.

#4 Origins 2015

Origins 2015 makes the list because of one man: Nathan Cockerill. Nate had been an Origins attendee for decades. A huge Diplomacy fan, he competed in World Championships and DipCon, including winning DipCon in 2012. His life took a difficult turn when he was diagnosed with cancer. He moved back home to Greenfield, Ohio where his parents and brother lived. There, he would teach Diplomacy at his local high school. While not strong enough to play, he always hoped to continue once he beat cancer. For a time, his health improved, and he felt good enough to play in one last event. He absolutely crushed the tournament event, finally claiming the Origins championship he pursued for so long. It was a wonderful moment not just for Nate, but also his friends and family who came to see him win.

We didn't see Nate return to defend his crown in 2016 because the cancer returned and he was not healthy enough to compete, but he sent his love to the regular players. We created a special "Tough Bastard" award in his honor. In August he lost his battle to cancer and we lost a great friend. His love of Diplomacy was so strong it was mentioned in his obituary (<https://www.murrayfetro.com/obituary/3838308>). In his honor we would host two charity tournaments in his name, the Nate Cockerill Memorial, raising money for the local arts program at his high school.

#3 WBC 2023

The World Boardgaming Championships (WBC) in 2023 was the year of upgrades to mark the 6th edition release of Diplomacy. WBC has a special place in Diplomacy lore because it was originally AvalonCon. When Avalon Hill was sold to Wizards of the Coast, the spiritual successor of that great company continued with AvalonCon and all the wonderful people who attend year after year. This event was special because we had three Italian visitors making their first trip to the United States and multiple first-timers attending because of the new release. I spared no expense in treating my players: completely new custom map setups including a giant walkable map, large wargaming maps, large fabric maps, wooden boards, swag galore, games for

everyone, and plenty of food & drink. I covered the large group lunch in between rounds two & three, and then placed a large order at Mountain Pizza for the round three party.

For all the effort put into the WBC Diplomacy tournament, the Board Player's Association voted me the "GM of Year" over all GMs in the Century. I was the first Diplomacy tournament director to win the award in the history of AvalonCon/WBC. It was an honor that means more to me than any championship as a player, including the world championship, because it was accomplished in service to others.



#2 Origins 2025

The 50th anniversary of Origins coincided with my 50th tournament run. A golden Origins Diplomacy tournament. To mark the occasion, I had challenge coins created, custom Diplomacy Origins pens, and "Order of the Knife" pins for our tournament players. We had numerous players return after years away to commemorate the anniversary. We had special setups each round, from an all-LEGO board in round one to multiple wooden boards for the final round. This was also the first time I taught Diplomacy & Era of Empire simultaneously to a group. We had two boards of classical Diplomacy and two boards of Era of Empire scheduled for the same time, so I taught both games at once. Era of Empire is the reimagined Colonial Diplomacy, which had won an Origins Award back in 1995. Here we were playing the first new Diplomacy game in 30 years at the same convention it won the award. A great group of new players, a great group of tournament players, and an exciting end to my 50th tournament with Robert Zahn clinching the Midwest Diplomacy Championship in the final turn of the game.

#1 US Diplomacy Championship at GenCon 2023

The perfect storm and one of my all-time favorite LIFE moments. I had been working with Renegade over the past year on the 6th edition of Diplomacy, which was formally released at Gen Con. It was amazing to see the Diplomacy banners and signs and stacks of games in the exhibit hall. Both Avalon Hill and Renegade attended our Top Board awards presentation, with each team signing Diplomacy games for the Top Board participants. I gifted Dan Bojanowski an Allan Calhamer "Diplodocus" medal for his work on the new edition (there are only 3 remaining medals that Calhamer produced in the 70s). Dan McNeill returned from retirement to claim the US Championship against our Italian visitors Davide Cleopadre and Matteo Anfossi in a fantastically played game.

Most meaningful of all -- it was during the championship game that Chris from Avalon Hill told me Diplomacy was brought back because of us: the Gen Con players. When the Avalon Hill team was reformed at Hasbro HQ, I was referred over to them by the Wizards of the Coast brand manager. We had pleasant discussions but didn't get an opportunity to meet face-to-face until 2022 at Gen Con. Almost every tournament regular at Gen Con told the Avalon Hill team in Hall C about the Diplomacy event -- about how passionate they were about the game and how much effort was put into the event year over year. At that Gen Con, Chris stopped by our Top Board to provide us with some Avalon Hill Team prizes and thank us for keeping the game strong. Fast forward a year later and Chris tells us during the Top Board the response of the Gen Con players convinced them to license the game for production. If you ever doubt yourself about making a larger impact on the community, remember those Gen Con players. Their advocacy and support for Diplomacy at Gen Con gave us the new edition. Stay positive and keeping spread the love of the game.

Call To Action

Building a Diplomacy community requires tremendous work and a good deal of help to be successful. So, consider this my "Call to Action" (CTA) for those interested in organizing face-to-face play locally. Please reach out to me either via email (heroes@renegadegames.com) or find me on Renegade Game Studios official Discord (<https://discord.gg/renegadegames>). I'm available to provide advice on how to get started, provide material support, and assist with Renegade providing official support & promotion of your events. Take the first step by reaching out!

Diplomacy TCG - It's a Game About Making Friends

by Justin Loar

Like many of us, I've spent my entire life playing games — board games, word games, sports games... I remember playing Chess at four years old about as well as I do now, and my video game collection is allegedly in the thousands. When I first played Diplomacy, it was like all of these wrapped into one, with a vibrant, active community of star players, home venues, high-stakes championships, play-by-play analysts, and a brief but rich history of like-minded folks who all loved this game before us where community is the point.

A few things became immediately apparent to me playing my first competitive games. By definition, everyone who plays Diplomacy becomes a micro-celebrity. High-level players will know how to tailor their style to fit the person they're talking to, especially if they've played together before or if they're familiar by reputation. If you know that Isaac Juckes is a very slow-paced, cagey player who prefers cautious openings, you're never going to approach that guy with an aggressive high-tempo pitch. If you know that (REDACTED) is playing, you want them somewhere on the other side of the board because that guy is going to cause some total chaos that you don't want to be anywhere nearby. Knowing each other makes you a better player.

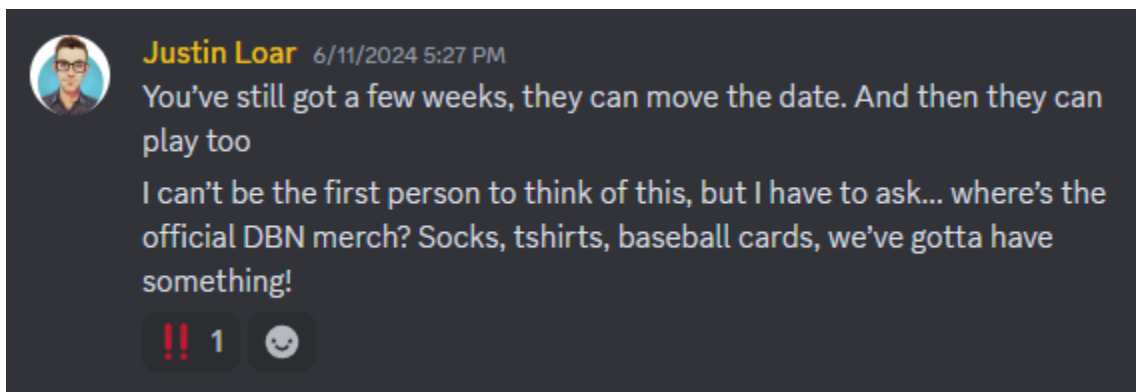
I thought about this a lot when I was first starting to learn the game. I had one good game early on and accidentally developed a reputation for being good at Diplomacy before it was true, so I was watching a lot of Diplomacy Broadcast Network on YouTube, reading articles I was finding interesting, asking for lots of advice

after every game, and playing a lot. Doing all this, I was able to meet a lot of those micro-celebrities. People I'd only read about, or that I watched on TV, and all of a sudden I'm across the table from them trying to set up an Armenian Fistbump. I was becoming star-struck for people no one would describe as famous, not even among us, but because they were a fellow serious player with their own "reputation" and their own style and their own sense of humor, just like me. And after the game is over, I'm likely going to look forward to playing with them again and spending another six hours with them. We watch each other's rises and falls, stellar dramatic games getting stopped at 15 centers or getting blown to shreds in 1902, and eventually we become stories themselves worth remembering and recounting for years.

And not just that, but those relationships spur us on to inventing new ways to celebrate the game and each other. At some point I decided that the community had already been so welcoming to me as a new player this past year, I wanted to take one big swing at making something for everybody.

I was envisioning a deck of cards of all the usual suspects; the competitive Diplomacy players you'll see rock up huge scores at all the big events you read about and watch on TV. The ambition was to create the largest fan art project in the history of Diplomacy.

As I was writing this article, I came across the exact timestamp when I first proposed the idea of a Diplomacy trading card game in a chat with some organizers:



What you see was the total response I got. There is no official DBN merch. This entire hobby is a passion project by an indeterminate collective of people who just do this stuff. I figured since there wasn't really anyone to give me permission to make something cool, there also wasn't anyone who was going to stop me.

What I should have expected, but didn't, was how many people were ready in the wings to help me.

Before I did anything else, I knew that this project wouldn't work at all unless we had a phenomenal, recognizable artist. There's no good way to quickly standardize a bunch of reference photos in a meaningful

way, and I was sure a small handful of players would prefer it if I wasn't printing out flashcards with their names and actual faces on them. I knew I wanted to source the art for this project from another Diplomacy player who would be deeply familiar with the kind of inside humor that player trading cards would require. There's no story here, because Matt Pickard (Lady Razor) was the obvious pick. His distinct political cartoon style is so well-known and sought after that it might as well be the official fan art style of Diplomacy. A project of this scope and scale needed the big guns, and Lady Razor art is the biggest gun in the arsenal. The project simply would not have existed without him.

Once the art was covered, I knew I wanted this project to have an air of legitimacy to it. It's nice to collect fan art of your friends, and maybe have some fan art commissioned of yourself to show friends and family, but it needed more. That was when I started working with the good folks on the DBN stats team — namely Bryan Pravel, Brandon Fogel, and Captain Gaming — to compile some basic statistics about players from the publicly available information published by tournaments and leagues. This was where the project really started to take the form of a real trading card game: a real collector could probably divine something meaningful about players they know well, or less well, from knowing a little more about how that person tends to play. Personally, it was already encouraging me to perform better to make my own numbers go up.

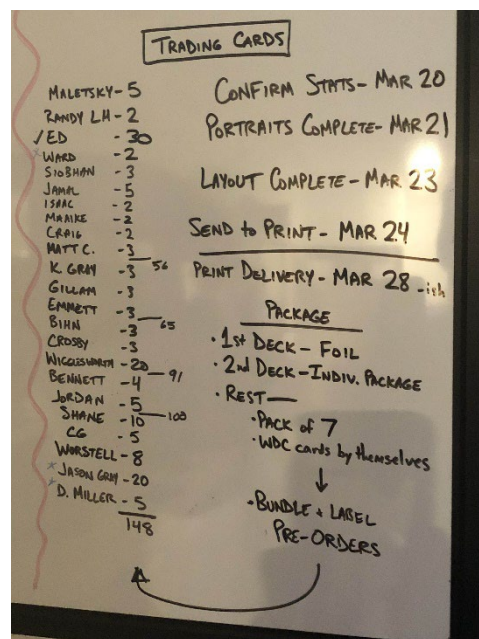
Last step was to find the right venue to get these cards in people's hands. I called up hobby legend Adam Silverman to ask his permission to debut the cards at WorldDipCon 2025. This would famously go on to be one of the largest and most successful tournaments in living memory, and I wanted to contribute my small part to it. And you know Adam — he'll go along with any dumb idea.

Over the next few weeks, I drafted a template that would let me churn out different players' cards quickly while keeping a uniform design. By the time DBNI had finished and many finalists had sent DBN their reference photos for "promotional materials" such as this, we would have a plan in place ready to generate an entire season's worth of statistics and graphs. I would have only a couple days to finalize the data, send it off for print, then package them to pile into a car and drive up for the tournament.

It was a last-minute discovery that I could add holographic foil to these cards, which some people had already started asking for. In popular trading card games, some cards are holographic or "shiny": highly valued limited editions that eagle-eyed collectors know to seek out. If you spot any shiny Diplomacy cards out there, know that you're looking at the first edition ever printed for that card. There is only one in the world.

The last detail before I could finalize the design was my favorite part of the whole project: player testimonies. You're not a celebrity unless people are talking about you, and no one likes talking about each other more than Diplomacy players. At the bottom of every card, I wanted a personalized message written about each player, written by other players in the community. I couldn't possibly write all of these myself, and I didn't want to. This was a megaphone I was giving to everyone in the community who wanted to talk a little love on someone else, just as others did for them. Even if it was tough love. Each of those are quotes from some anonymous person you know who likes your company.

Within a few days of my first announcement, a whole bunch of you signed up to pre-order packs from me. I was getting messages from all over the world, people attending WDC and their friends, asking me to hold aside stacks of cards for them. Before long, I started keeping this list as a permanent fixture on my whiteboard with the whole plan laid out:




This way I knew roughly how many cards to print: one holographic First Edition deck, one deck of cards to give away to each individual player featured (if I'm making a trading card of someone, that person deserves to have a copy of that card, no questions asked), and everything else fit into packs of 7 to each make one full Diplomacy board. I would front the costs, which were less than expected, and recoup everything from small dollar donations per pack that people told me they were more than happy to contribute.

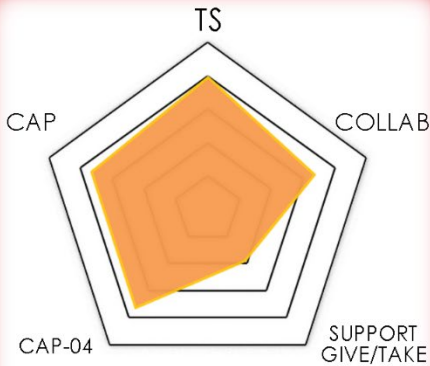
So, there I was; after delighting my local print shop with the weirdest job they'd gotten in months, driving a giant crate of 3,500 Diplomacy trading cards to San Francisco.

Around 400 of those cards featured the WDC organizers as their own class, with enough for everyone at the tournament to go home with one or two. About 1,000 of

those cards were already reserved, and by the morning of the last day of the tournament I was completely flush out.




Maaïke Blom
GRONINGEN, NLD

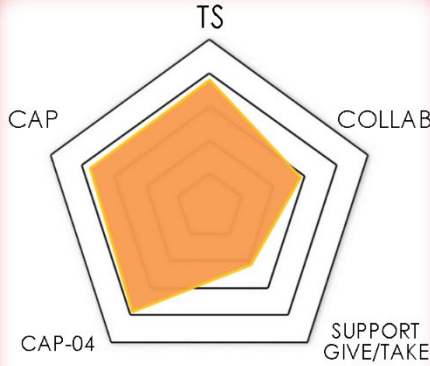


1	CHAMPIONNAT DE FRANCE	80
2	TOUR OF BRITAIN	36
3	THE GAUNTLET 1	36

"The hardest part about competing with Maaïke is the five other players who are already allied to her."



Craig Mayr
LAUREL, MT, USA



5	CARNAGE	13.7
7	WHIPPING	12.5
15	CASCADIA	6.4

"Craig's favorite ally is the one he couldn't kill first."

Each card featured:

- A hand-drawn portrait by Lady Razor
- Player's name and local area

- Statistics for the 2024-2025 DBN season, which included:

- **TS:** Top share, generally the player's win-rate across all events
- **CAP:** Centers Above Power, which is the final center count relative to the average for that power. For example, if one power averages at 5 centers, CAP is this player's score relative to that averaged across games.
- **CAP-04:** Same as above, but for 1904. This generally measures early game aggressiveness.
- **COLLAB:** Collaboration, or the relative likelihood that a player will coordinate with another player for supports
- **SUPPORT GIVE/TAKE:** When this player is involved with a support, this is the relative likelihood that they will be

giving or taking the support (higher stat means that player gives more supports, lower stat means that player graciously accepts more supports)

- Player's top three events according to DBNI score, with tournament rank on the left and DBNI points on the right
- Player testimony from the community

All throughout the weekend, players were collecting as many little portraits of their friends and fellow competitors that they could get their hands on. It wasn't unusual for someone to drop into a conversation briefly to ask if anyone had found a particular card they were interested in, or to brag about the shiny card they had just gotten through a trade.





I wouldn't be much of a game designer if I didn't design a few ways to actually turn your card collection into a proper functioning game. Here are some suggestions. If you come up with your own, please tell me.

- Standard: Draw seven cards and seed them into random power selection. Debate which player would win based on what you know about how they play. Bonus points if any of those players are present for the conversation.
- Matchmaker: Draw two cards into two random powers. Discuss how you'd expect this alliance between these players to work. Bonus points if you and a friend each roleplay a mock negotiation between these players.
- Stat Check: Draw a hand of seven cards, in a group of however many players. Pick a stat you'd like to compare. All players select one card in their hand that they think will have the highest (or lowest) of that stat. Once you play that card, it's discarded from play. The player whose card wins the most comparison checks wins.

What I should have expected, but didn't, was how quickly Diplomacy players would find a new social

dynamic around the cards. In a room of over a hundred people, everyone had a reason to talk to someone they had never met. We all got to learn a little bit more about each other and have a laugh. And after every last promise and every last stab, we all got to take a small piece of each other home in our pockets.

I won't be the first person to insist that Diplomacy is "different" than other games. Some of my favorite conversations with other players have been asking, why might that be? I always listen to how people answer. It tells you everything you need to know about how that person plays; how they approach the game. Next time you sit down next to that player — *and as long as you're playing, there will always be a next time* — you'll remember what they told you about what they think makes this bizarre, magnificent game so special in their lives. And so much of the time, the answer really is as simple as, "the people themselves, the most playful and clever things about them, are what make the game worthwhile." It's the only game I've ever encountered where being decent to people, sincerely connecting with people, and seeking out mutual benefit **is** good gameplay. It's self-evident that knowing each other and celebrating the best parts of each other is the real game we're all playing, and it's one where we all win. And if you don't have any redeeming qualities, you solo.