

Diplomacy World #171



Fall 2025 Issue

www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Fall 2025 issue. At least I'm finally getting to experience some cooler temperatures in my neighborhood. So, I can leave the windows open while I stare at this page. Trying to figure out what to write!

But you didn't come here for a weather report. You came here for Diplomacy! So, let's see what you'll find inside this issue...

There is still about a week before the deadline, but at the moment we already have a nice variety of articles. To begin with, there's another entry from Mal Arky looking deep into the Diplomacy World archives. I always enjoy these articles, as I do almost any dive into the early days of the hobby. I wish I had the time and energy to do regular columns written around searching through the Postal Diplomacy Zine Archive. But at the moment, I simply don't (and I am unsure who else would want to read it anyway).

Someone named S.A. Tyre, Esq. sent in a "proposal" on how to take the emotional pain out of games of Diplomacy. Good luck with all that!

There's also a wonderful, detailed article from David E. Cohen discussing his first face-to-face game in over forty years. That's quite a break between seats at the table! I'll let you go see how he fared.

And, among many other pieces, there's a submission from the hobby stalwart Edi Birsan revealing his interactions with robot players online. And they say old timers can't learn new tricks?

Of course, there's plenty more for you to enjoy. So, begin now, and no skipping articles. Read everything, start to finish!

That's enough from me this time around. ***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is January 1, 2026.*** Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So, email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com! See you in the Winter, and happy stabbing!

Selected Upcoming 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/>

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

Hechtstechen 2025 – October 11th – October 12th, 2025 – Dresden, Germany - <https://hechtstechen.com/>

Flying Fox Fandango – October 18th – October 19th, 2025 – Melbourne, Australia – Email: naarmdip@gmail.com

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

Australian Open – November 21st – November 23rd, 2025 – Canberra, Australia - <https://discord.gg/BAZ6zQybwK>

International Paris Open – December 5th – December 7th, 2025 – Paris, France - https://diplomania-gen.fr/dokuwiki2/doku.php?id=competition_ftf:france:cidf:opendeparis2025

BlazeCon – January 17th – January 18th, 2026 – Baltimore, Maryland - <https://blazeadventuretours.com/blazecon/>

PrezCon – February 27th – February 28th, 2026 - Charlottesville, Virginia - <https://www.prezcon.com/program>

Whipping 2026 – March 27th – March 29th, 2026 – San Francisco, California – No links currently available

Circle DC 2026 – April 10th – April 12th, 2026 – Washington, DC – <https://tabletop.events/conventions/circle-dc-2026>

Netherlands Diplomacy Championship – April 11th – April 12th, 2026 - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1quKQArRyj2VTjz3D5UoWIWAI5i_6xrB/edit?tab=t.0

World DipCon – May 22nd – May 24th, 2026 – Athens, Greece - <https://athensdiplomacy.club/wdc2026/>

Diplomacy World Staff:

Managing Lead Editor:	Douglas Kent, Email: diplomacyworld of yahoo.com or dougray30 of yahoo.com
Co-Editor:	Elle Doerr, Email: locke.athena.a of gmail.com
Strategy & Tactics Editor:	Edi Birsan, Email: edibirsan of gmail.com
Variant Editor:	Ben Durfee, Email: playdiplomacymoderator of gmail.com
Interview Editor:	Randy Lawrence-Hurt, Email: randy.lawrencehurt of gmail.com
Club and Tournament Editor:	Peter McNamara, Email: me of petermc.net
Demo Game Editor:	Rick Desper, Email: rick_desper of yahoo.com
Technology Editor:	Vacant!!
Original Artwork	Original Artwork by Matt Pickard a.k.a. "Lady Razor" <i>This issue's Cover Art by Michael Paul</i> Some classic art by Nemanja Simic

Contributors in 2025: Alex Amann, Mal Arky, Shane Armstrong, George K. Atkins, Edi Birsan, Chris Brand, Philip Burk, David E. Cohen, Elle Doerr, Dr. William B. Drummond, Archie Duke, Ben Durfee, Ryan Feathers, Brandon Fogel, Thomas Haver, Jeff Hayman, Steve Hogue, David Hood, Mikalis Kamaritis, Christian Kelly, Lucas Kruijswijk, Robert Lacy, Randy Lawrence-Hurt, Marcus Loane, Justin Loar, Alex Maslow, Roger Pitfield, Bryan Pravel, Lewis Pulsipher, Robert Schuppe, Adam Silverman, David P. Smith, David Spencer, Cameron Taylor, S.A. Tyre, Riaz Virani, Anton Wilsbach, Conrad Woodring, Robert Zahn. Add your name to the 2025 list by submitting something for the next issue!

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

In This Issue:

Editorial: <i>Notes from the Editor</i> by Douglas Kent	Page 2
Tournament News: Selected Upcoming Events	Page 2
Tournament Report: <i>WSBG in Vegas</i> by Thomas Haver	Page 4
Letters: <i>Knives and Daggers – The Diplomacy World Letter Column</i>	Page 7
Tournaments: Cascadia Open 2026 Flyer	Page 9
Strategy and Tactics: <i>The Curious Case of the Armored Duck</i> by Mal Arky	Page 10
Humor: <i>Diplomacy Reborn: A Kinder, Gentler Game of Global Co-Occupation</i> by S.A.Tyre, Esq.	Page 12
Tournaments: DipCon at Weasel Moot XIX Flyer	Page 14
Feature: <i>From the DW Archive - Latest Trends</i> by Mal Arky	Page 15
Tournaments: Hechtstechen Dresden Flyer	Page 18
Tournaments: Battlefront Dayton Flyer and Details	Page 19
Feature: <i>A Full-Circle Diplomacy Journey: My First Ftf Game in 42 Years</i> by David E. Cohen	Page 21
Tournaments: Carnage 28 Flyer	Page 28
Feature: <i>Ask the Hobby Historian: Diplomacy Media</i> by David Hood	Page 29
Tournaments: Prezcon 2026 Flyer	Page 32
Tournament Report: <i>Invasive Species</i> by Shane Armstrong	Page 33
Tournaments: Circle DC 2026 Flyer	Page 36
Technology: <i>Fun with Robots</i> by Edi Birsan	Page 37
Feature: <i>Talking the Talk: My First Face-to-Face Games</i> by Cameron Taylor	Page 38
Tournaments: BGG in Texas Flyer	Page 39
Tournament News: <i>Tournament Victors All-in-One - 2025 Edition</i> by David Hood	Page 40
Tournament Report: <i>GenCon Diplomacy Breaks Attendance Records</i> by Thomas Haver	Page 43
Puzzle: <i>Never a Cross Word</i> by Archie Duke	Page 45
Feature: <i>Making Three a Crowd</i> by Alex Maslow	Page 47
Tournaments: Diplomacy: Era of Empire Tour Flyer	Page 48

WSBG in Vegas

by Thomas Haver



The World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG) concluded last week in Las Vegas, Nevada. Players from around the world descended on the Horseshoe Resort & Casino to crown the brightest star in board gaming. The WSBG is host to the "National Diplomacy Masters" tournament and the first ever "Era of Empire" tournament. The multiple day event was a celebration of all things Diplomacy and kicked off with a teaching round, where players learned how to play Diplomacy and Era of Empire at the same time. After four rounds of play, Dan McNeill emerged victorious as Austria on the Top Board in the National Diplomacy Masters event. A strong alliance among Austria-Italy-Turkey pressed the board early, and Dan made some strategic builds to keep his center count intact to win the championship.

National Diplomacy Masters

We run two rounds per day, giving people an opportunity to compete in the "Ring" events or sleep in after enjoy the Las Vegas nightlife. 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.

After the last round each day, we head out to enjoy some dinner and drinks. Vegas is best experienced at night, so the schedule fits for everyone. This year I brought my family for the first time. We spent each morning and afternoon together, then split up: they went to Cirque du Soleil, The Sphere, and hiked in the mountains while I ran Diplomacy. We kicked off the event with a combined Diplomacy and Era of Empire teaching round with two boards of players. Each round

of the event, we had some amazing recruiting by Richard Sweat in drawing players to our area, followed by teaching sessions conducted by Robert Lacy.



For the Diplomacy rounds, we had random board and power assignment, with the restriction you cannot play the same Power twice. The first three rounds of the event determined who would compete on the Top Board in the fourth round. Best two scores of three counted for qualification. We had several regulars at the event make the Top Board along with two new competitors: Brian Meek and Richard Sweat. Both played in their first tournament events at last year's NDM tournament. They were joined on the Top Board by experienced veteran Davide Cleopadre, who traveled all the way from Italy to visit Las Vegas.

Several players who competed on the Top Board last year did not managed to qualify (Jack Brawner, Nick Benedict) but came close by finishing 8th and 9th in the first three rounds. The event this year featured more boards and players over last year's event. We expect to more growth as we shift to Labor Day weekend.

Diplomacy Tournament Top Board

1. Dan McNeill
2. Robert Lacy
3. Phil Burk
4. Robert Zahn
5. Davide Cleopadre
6. Brian Meek
7. Richard Sweat

Best Country - Player

Austria - Davide Cleopadre
England - Phil Burk
France - Robert Lacy
Germany - Robert Zahn
Italy - Phil Burk
Russia - Dan McNeill
Turkey - Brian Meek



Special Awards

Golden Blade: Jack Brawner for his stab of Nick Benedict during their board in Round 3. Jack managed to unintentionally swipe Nick's phone and wallet from the table during play (a true accident) while keeping both from the Top Board, preventing Nick from paying at the bar later that night when he realized his wallet was missing.

Best Diplomat: Richard Sweat for consistently recruiting for the event and being a wonderful ambassador to the game to new players. Richard also helped setup and teardown after each round.

WW1 Propaganda Book: Robert Lacy for helping to setup and teardown the Diplomacy event between rounds, and his willingness to teach passersby the game before each round.

Era of Empire

In the first ever Era of Empire tournament, we hosted a three-round Swiss style tournament with the worst score dropped. Richard Sweat dominated the field with a 12-center Netherlands, 16-center China, and finally a 22-center Turkey (solo) in the final round to win the event. Richard won Best China, Best Turkey, and becomes the first Era of Empire champion!

Since there are more centers on the Era of Empire map (50c to 34c in classic Diplomacy), we had some large center counts across the three-round event. This was the first event for a new game, so there's no real established meta for Era of Empire or tournament play. Here are my observations as the tournament director:

- Players enjoyed the open play in Era of Empire after the close-quarter fights in Diplomacy. They were able to ramp up quickly and send large forces across the map. You can grow just as easily as you can be attacked. Some player had dramatic center count changes after being attacked on all fronts by their allies.
- We ran a central clock for the round with 18-minutes in the Spring and 14-minutes in the Fall.

With more centers means more orders, so players had to really be on point. In classic Diplomacy, getting to 10-centers is a nice feat. Here it happens for multiple players in the third year of gameplay. I recommend anyone thinking of running a tournament event with Era of Empire to add more time for order writing.

- Three complete newcomers to Diplomacy (and Era of Empire) won Best Country awards. Best Britain, Best France, and Best Russia all went to players who learned how to play at the event. I've been teaching Era of Empire at conventions all year, and this is something I expected. Even though classic Diplomacy players know the mechanics, the new map levels the playing field a bit. The growth opportunities mean players feel like they have more agency.
- Fabian Bareno was the surprise of the tournament. He traveled all the way from Bogota, Colombia to compete at the WSBG. He dominated in his first game as Turkey, finishing the game with 18-centers. Fabian was also a wonderful player to have on the board. His cheery demeanor made him board favorite.
- Richard Sweat crushed the competition on the way to the championship. Big scores with the Netherlands, China, and Turkey. Most impressively, he finished the final round with a solo as Turkey.



Era of Empire Tournament Top Board

1. Richard Sweat
- 2.(tie) Robert Zahn
- 2.(tie) Fabian Bareno
4. Robert Lacy
5. Geoff Mize
6. Andrew van Essen
7. Phil Burk

Best Country - Player

Britain - Bob Peavyhouse
China - Richard Sweat
France - Michael Middleton
Japan - Robert Zahn
Netherlands - Geoff Mize

Russia - Andrew van Essen
Turkey - Richard Sweat

WSBG 2025 Photo Album:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/VBVM2XPXYrSYEMR7>



Special thanks to Davide Cleopadre and Fabian Bareno for their long journeys to compete in the World Series of Board Gaming. Davide traveled from Italy and Fabian traveled from Colombia. Both left with awards and prizes for their strong play during the event. If you're interested in other opportunities to play, please reach out to Heroes@RenegadeGames.com for more information.

Our next event will be the Battlefront Dayton (<https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgn-bfd>) in November.



Future Years

In 2026 the "World Series of Board Gaming" moves to Labor Day weekend. That's a holiday weekend in the United States. We'll have the National Diplomacy Masters, the North American Championships for Era of Empire, and a new tournament for "Diplomacy: The Golden Blade". The latter game will be revealed at Renegade Con shortly after publication of this issue. Be on the lookout for more details about "The Golden Blade". If you want to celebrate all things Diplomacy, then WSBG 2026 is the place to be. The organizers

have already opened registration for 2026 on their site: <https://wsbgvegas.com/>.

In 2027, we'll host World DipCon with a four-round Swiss tournament and 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 and on the Renegade Game Studios official Discord (<https://discord.gg/uGzzUQbq>).

The National Diplomacy Masters tournament traditionally 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://www.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
- **Location:** Horseshoe Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas
- **Signup:** [WSBG Site](#) | [WDC Info](#)
- **Contact:** WDC2027LasVegas@gmail.com



Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Conrad Woodring - Dear Editor and Readers,

I am writing to share some observations and concerns regarding recent developments within the global Diplomacy community.

Renegade has become increasingly active in the Diplomacy hobby, engaging in a variety of initiatives including hiring consultants, recruiting volunteers, organizing educational events, distributing promotional materials, and producing large-format boards. The company has also made efforts to support competitive play, which represents a level of publisher involvement that is unprecedented in my experience. This increased engagement has been welcomed by many and has brought renewed energy to the hobby.

However, during the 2024 World Diplomacy Championships in Milan, a proposal was made by Renegade's paid consultant, Thomas Haver, to allocate the 2027 World Diplomacy Championships three years in advance. This approach directly violated the DipCon Society Charter (The Charter), which stipulates that such decisions should be made two years prior to the event. This matter has been the subject of considerable discussion among members of the community.

Supporters of the early allocation cited the benefits of publisher involvement, including potential prize support and hospitality packages for guests of honor. These incentives were viewed by some as a compelling reason to violate the charter.



thomas haver 9/26/24, 11:04 PM
Color change for @kgray's new Vegas card for her ascended status after the NDM victory.



That makes 3 of 4 Master's for 2025. Who will be the last Diplomacy Master? It could be YOU.



Following the 2024 National Diplomacy Masters tournament at the World Series of Board Gaming in Las Vegas, Renegade announced—via Haver—that Katie Gray, the tournament winner, would be honored as a guest at the 2025 event as her prize for winning the

tournament. A virtual card celebrating her achievement was also released and featured in promotional materials.

However, on 02 July 2025, a subsequent announcement had Gray's name and card removed from the promotional material, thus suggesting she would no longer serve as a guest of honor.



Gray publicly inquired about the change, prompting a wide-ranging and at times contentious discussion on the Renegade Diplomacy Discord server. As of this writing, no formal explanation has been provided regarding the decision to withdraw the previously announced honor.

From an outside perspective, this sequence of events raises questions about transparency and consistency. A prize was publicly awarded and later withdrawn without any explanation. Additionally, several communications from Haver have referenced legal action and law enforcement matters involving Renegade Games and the North American Diplomacy Federation. The invocation of such language in the context of a board gaming hobby has caused confusion and concern among members of the Diplomacy community including in my home country of the United Kingdom.

I encourage all readers to visit Renegade's Diplomacy Discord server and see the interaction for yourself. I encourage all readers to ask questions and to share their views. I for one hope that this escalation stops and that future developments will be guided by clarity, fairness, and a shared commitment to the enjoyment of the game.



Thomas Haver – Some updates on upcoming events:

The Golden Blade:

Renegade will announce the details of the latest Diplomacy game, "The Golden Blade", at the next Renegade Con in October. While I can't provide full details as of printing of this edition, we'll have a video playthrough and game reveal on the Renegade Con livestream on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/dKWj3BGpLL0?si=K2WF2bBg6n13iwym>

I look forward to providing more details to Diplomacy World in edition #172. We went 15 years between printings of Diplomacy. Now we get two standalone Diplomacy games in back-to-back years after the 6th edition released in 2023. We'll be running the event featuring "The Golden Blade" at Battlefront Dayton (<https://tabletop.events/conventions/bgn-bfd>) in November. Expect many teaching events for the game throughout 2026 similar to the "Era of Empire" tour in 2025. Like I always say in my DW articles -- Diplomacy has a bright future.

Era of Empire:

Era of Empire was released at GenCon this August and a month later the first EoE tournament was held at the World Series of Board Gaming. We have multiple players lined up to write strategy guides and tell of their experiences with the game in future editions of Diplomacy World. Checkout the writeups on GenCon and WSBG in this edition.

Organized Play:

By April 2026, we'll have three standalone Diplomacy games in publication: Diplomacy, Era of Empire, and The Golden Blade. We expanded the number of events this year and founded a new program, "Renegade Heroes", to support community outreach. We'll continue to build on that momentum with new games by adding more Diplomacy events at local game stores, game cafes, schools, and conventions. In addition to all the teaching games, we'll also be running tournaments throughout the year. Expect to see the Canadian Diplomacy National Championship at Breakout in Toronto this March, the US Era of Empire Championship at Origins in June, The US Diplomacy Championship at Gen Con in August, The North American Era of Empire Championship at WSBG in September, and a few more special events to be announced. For the first time, we're hosting a Diplomacy Triathlon at Battlefront Dayton this November. The three round event will feature a different Diplomacy game per round, and like the real triathlon,

we'll combine the results from all three rounds to determine the champion. You can expect that same model to be used at Circle DC, BGG Spring, and BGG Con in 2026 For certain conventions we'll have standalone tournaments and for others we'll run combination tournaments. Variety is the spice of life and we want both new and experienced players to explore everything Diplomacy has to offer. Keep reading Diplomacy World for future event announcements and follow Renegade Game Studios on social media for the latest news on Diplomacy. Stay tuned!

Tournament Events 2026

February - PrezCon (Charlottesville, VA)
March - Breakout (Toronto, Canada)
April - Circle DC (Washington, DC)
May - BGG Spring (Dallas, Texas)
June - Origins (Columbus, Ohio)
July - WBC (Seven Springs, PA)
August - GenCon (Indianapolis, IN)
September - National Diplomacy Masters / WSBG (Las Vegas, NV)
October/Nov - Battlefront Dayton (Dayton, Ohio)
November - BGG Con (Dallas, Texas)
December - PAX Unplugged (Philadelphia, PA)



Diplomacy

Cascadia Open 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 : \$40Cdn

Wise: @christopherb4580

Paypal: cascadia.open@gmail.com

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

The Curious Case of the Armored Duck

by Mal Arky

I believe, and I don't think I've ever been corrected, that it was Richard Sharp who came up with the term 'Armored Duck' in Diplomacy. In his book, "[The Game of Diplomacy](#)", he defined the Armored Duck:

*If you stab him, and later you yourself are stabbed from another side, he will never accept this as a chance to rebuild his position by realigning himself with you, but will insist on defending himself to the death, even though you have stopped attacking him. Even worse is his behavior in the reverse situation, where he has stabbed you: he naturally expects you to react as he would, and if you try to negotiate a new settlement with him he will ignore you even when it would be in his best interests to accept. because he fears you. There is nothing one can do about the Armored Duck except try to get him interested in some other game because he isn't up to the cynical skills of this one.*¹

The Armored Duck, then, is a player who is stubborn, shallow, and single-minded. They are a player who aims to spitefully seek revenge or to relentlessly ransack their enemy. Perhaps it's their bascinet that prevents a clear panoramic view of the game, or it could be that they just don't care, but they don't acknowledge the reality of the situation in the game.

There is something incredibly **strange** about the Armored Duck, then. In a game where it's important to have a panoramic view of the board, they are extraordinarily focused; when what is needed is a holistic understanding of diplomacy as possible, they are hyper-focused on one enemy - or, at best, a limited number of enemies.

For relative newcomers to the game, I can understand this type of play. Sharp mentions that this was the way he played when he was a novice: "*When I first learnt to play the game, with other inexperienced players, the Armored Duck was naturally the rule, not the exception.*" He's very clear about what changed his mind: after stabbing an ally of five years, he received a letter (this was the Paper Age of Diplomacy, when remote games were played by mail) from the erstwhile ally:

'Dear Richard,' it began. 'Ouch! That hurt. It looks as if I shall be playing a rather minor role in our partnership from now on. ...' And it went on to discuss some tactical

*possibilities for the coming season. Now, this letter had two effects: first, it made me feel like a louse; second, it induced me to let him off the hook, because I knew that in the last resort I would rather get a letter from him than from any of the other potential allies in that area. That is the way to treat a stab.*²

There are lots of ideas and preconceptions new players bring to Diplomacy, especially if they've heard of the game before. It's a war game. You lie and betray people all the time. You grab SCs when you can, as many as you can. You make other players do things they don't want to do to help you win. These naive ideas about the game (if naive is the right word for such a belligerent philosophy) should give way to a more nuanced understanding of the game.

I like my revenge like I like my Gazpacho

The drive for revenge when you've been stabbed, assuming that's possible, is not going to get you very far in Diplomacy. Sure, if the stab was a poor one, you've a chance of getting away with such a short-sighted policy.

In one Extended Deadline game, I was Russia allied with Austria in a Third Wheel alliance³ with Italy. We'd effectively beaten Turkey; they were a rump state, ideal to become a janissary or ready to be eliminated. I had studied the board and knew that I could contain Turkey if I attacked Austria. So, I did.

Unfortunately, due to what I can only surmise were their globe-spanning psychic abilities, Austria saw it coming. When the adjudication came through, I realized I'd failed: Austria had thwarted my most masterly of master plans. In a *Diplomacy Games* podcast from March 2020, Dipmeister Andrew Goff warns about stabbing too early in a game; ah, if I'd only heard this first!⁴

If Austria - or I - had approached this situation as Armored Ducks, that would have been that. Austria would've sought narrow-minded revenge, I would've single-mindedly plodded on in a war of attrition, and the game would have been lost. But neither of us particularly wanted that. Both could see there was no future in it, and so, after a couple of turns of postering on the board and hard negotiating off it, we reached an agreement that we simply **had** to work together again. I eventually managed to win the game following a much more

¹ "The Game of Diplomacy." Ch.2, p.14. Sharp, R. *Arthur Barker Limited*, 1978.

² "The Game of Diplomacy." Ch.2, p.15.

³ What I've taken to calling an apparently 3-way alliance in which two powers - in this case Austria and I - are allied and the third is simply tagged on to achieve a specific goal.

⁴ "[Diplomacy Games podcast: Episode 64 – PoppyCon & interviews with Melissa Call & Andrew Goff](#)." *Diplomacy Games Podcast*, 21 March 2020. Accessed on 12 July 2025. (This is a great one to listen to if you haven't before - some really good advice from both Goffy and Melissa.)

effective stab against Austria later, although there were a lot of contributing factors in achieving this outcome.

There are, of course, times when seeking revenge is a good call, and I admit to doing so if a stab has left me in a position where I've lost the chance of winning the game. However, I have never, that I can remember, focused all my attention on a war of revenge. There are more subtle ways of achieving it.

When you've been stabbed, the immediate reactions are often negative. We've all felt the dire dismay of seeing your erstwhile ally malevolently maneuver units into a couple of undefended SCs. This can then be replaced by frustration, even anger, and a flaming frenzy for revenge. Perhaps you fire off an outraged message, dripping with disdain or threatening ruthless retaliation.

And the other player sits back with a satisfied smile, knowing exactly what's coming.

Instead, reach out with composed civility. The aim, especially when your chance of victory has vanished, is to survive. You're probably in a position that will leave you vulnerable from different sides, and so you need to make yourself indispensable, even to the soulless specimen who has so savagely stabbed you.

There's seldom anything of use to be gained from having an attitude of simplistic spitefulness. Don't want that person to win? Play to make sure **nobody** wins, even when that might mean working with your abhorred adversary.

Let your great object be victory

When I read "The Art of War", I realized that there is something to be said for having limited objectives when playing Diplomacy. Instead of seeing every war with a neighbor as about dominance and destruction, I see it as being about achieving certain goals. It might be that, to achieve that objective, my enemy needs to be eliminated; often, however, all I want are some SCs to sustain my expanding empire.

Two key quotes encapsulate this:

*In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns.*⁵

The problem Sun Tzu has is that long wars simply blunt the army's effectiveness. It can lead to loss of resources, exhaustion of the warriors, and a weakening of resolve. We don't have this issue in Diplomacy, of course, but there is something similar when you realize that you've entangled yourself in a war that isn't going to be over

any time soon. You begin to wonder what you're gaining from it and, for the enlightened player, you look to extricate yourself from it. For the Armored Duck, you keep on going, pressing perilously. Why? Sun Tzu explains that "*other chieftains will spring up to take advantage of your extremity.*"⁶

The second quote is:

:

*The rule is, not to besiege walled cities if it can possibly be avoided.*⁷

A strange idea, perhaps, in reference to Diplomacy, where there is nothing as involved as besieging a city. However, I think of it as applying to the long battles that can grow up when attempting to capture that additional SC, the ones when you and your enemy tie down a ridiculous number of units to take/defend the space. If this isn't a siege, I don't know what is!

Again, according to Sun Tzu, sieges are exhausting. Better, he says, to break "*the enemy's resistance without fighting.*"⁸ In other words, and at its highest level for Diplomacy, to place another player in a position where they **have** to help you, or - in terms of avoiding a siege for an SC - to wait until it's undefended.

An Armored Duck doesn't understand this. They'll press on after launching a stab. They'll not even consider making peace with their victim, regardless of whatever the victim says. They simply don't trust them, because they can't see another way to play.

Again, small-minded. They're at war, and they will continue the sluggish struggle until the bitter end, which they see as their victim's elimination. Perhaps they understand that they can't leave you in a position to harm them but they are too focused on a solitary solution to this problem.

It's all well and good having an attritional attitude when things are going well. But when this isn't the case, when your philosophy is that *you are my enemy no matter what*, you're setting yourself at a disadvantage. You're proscribing possibilities and overlooking options. A lot of times, you'll find yourself limping away from the board with a dissatisfying denouement.

Kingmaking

One form Armored Duckery might take is that of the Kingmaker. This comes from the attitude that, *if you keep working with me, if I can't win, I'll help you to do it*. Alternatively, it could be the outcome of a stab on the player, leading to them working to help someone else win the game.

⁵ "[The Art of War](#)," Ch.2 Waging War, article 19. Sun Tzu. *The Internet Classics Archive*. Accessed on 12 July 2025.

⁶ "[The Art of War](#)," Ch.2 Waging War, article 4.

⁷ "[The Art of War](#)," Ch.3 Attack by Strategm, article 4. Sun Tzu. *The Internet Classics Archive*. Accessed on 12 July 2025.

⁸ "[The Art of War](#)," Ch.3 Attack by Strategm, article 2.

This is a specialized version of the Armored Duck. To be Kingmaking, however, it should be at a point in a game where the player's intervention can **really** help someone win. I've seen it threatened at stages that are far too early, when it is simply pathetic, and more like Armored Duckery.

I know players who **abhor** the Kingmakers in Diplomacy. I can see their point. It is **not** what the game is about. If you help someone else to win, you lose. Why choose to lose? Well, yes, but several things are questionable yet are a part of Diplomacy: 2-way, 17-17 draws; game-long alliances; etc. Kingmaking is just another one.

There are times when nothing can be done about a Kingmaker. Sometimes it is just the way players think. However, if a player is prepared to throw their game away, to lose, in favor of helping another player win instead of me, maybe I should be asking why it's come to this point. What could I have done differently to prevent it?

Occasionally, it's intended to be no more than a threat. I was in one game, an XD tournament, where - out of the blue - one player messaged me and told me they were going to help me solo. They threw a couple of SCs my way, after we'd agreed on what we would do. However, it was **so** out of the blue that I didn't really trust that they would do what they said, and I'd ordered to take the SCs but also to cement any gains by putting myself in a position to move on from there.

As it turned out, the Kingmaker told me afterwards that they hadn't intended to throw the game my way. They did as they said they would; they hadn't expected me to

move more aggressively against them. When I asked about it afterwards, they admitted that it was nothing more than a way to shake up a third player who wasn't being cooperative. A dangerous game indeed.

Unpeeling the Armor

So, what **does** lie beneath the armor? What has ruffled the Duck's feathers? Why be an Armored Duck?

I can't help thinking that, as in Sharp's case, it's about a lack of experience. You can play Diplomacy as aggressively as you want; be as stabby as you desire; cajole, threaten, bully, lie, and betray as much as you can. None of this makes that much sense except, perhaps, in a stand-alone game. In a "serious" arena game, when your play is being watched, this marks you as a loose cannon.

However, I think it is also to do with the expectation that players should want to ally with **them**, and to stick with them throughout, and even that they should be helping them to win. It can be as simple as keeping a balance sheet, with supporting actions on one side and unsupportive actions on the other. Diplomacy is a complex game, especially when it comes to alliances; I struggle to understand how a 'balance sheet' approach helps. It is **too** simplistic and limits your options.

Armored Duckery, then, is a threat. *Ally with me, stay allied with me, or I'll turn everything I have against you.* This is not the way good players play the game. It doesn't matter whether you're an alliance player, a balance of power player, or any other type of player; Diplomacy requires a flexible approach, not a stubborn one.

Diplomacy Reborn: A Kinder, Gentler Game of Global Co-Occupation *by S.A. Tyre, Esq.*

At long last, the Coalition for the Advancement of Respectful Engagement in Boardgame Ethics and Alliance Regulation (CAREBEAR) has done what generations of players feared, hoped, and dared not dream: they have finally made *Diplomacy* emotionally safe for everyone. No more tears. No more betrayal. No more "I thought we were allies, you monster." Just pure, unadulterated psychological serenity.

And I, for one, could not be more thrilled.

Strategic Empathy: The New Meta

Gone are the days of toxic backstabbing and manipulative alliances. Today's *Diplomacy* is a game of **strategic empathy**, where players gently negotiate the

fate of Europe while validating each other's lived experiences.

Instead of "I'm moving to Burgundy," players now say:

- "I'm exploring a mutually beneficial presence near your cultural zone."
- "Would you be open to a shared stewardship of Belgium, pending emotional readiness?"
- "I'm sensing some energetic resistance around the Black Sea. Shall we unpack that?"

These phrases are not just encouraged - now they're mandatory. Failure to use emotionally inclusive language results in a Code of Compassion Violation, which carries a penalty of one turn spent journaling about your

detrimental impact on the game's emotional ecosystem. Finally!

Ableist Language? Not On Our Map!

The CAREBEAR's *Q*ualified Initiative for Eradicating Terminology (QUIET) has heroically purged the game of harmful metaphors. No longer will players suffer the indignity of being referred to as "having a crippled position," "being blindsided," or "playing crazy aggressive."

Instead, we now must say:

- "Having mobility-challenged tactical outcome options"
- "Experiencing an unanticipated gamestate shift not detectable by optically-divergent individuals"
- "Demonstrating a high-intensity, non-linear engagement style that honors alternative cognitive frameworks and prioritizes bold territorial expansion."

These changes ensure that every player—regardless of cognitive, emotional, or metaphorical ability—can feel fully seen, heard, and *gently* maneuvered into irrelevance.

Gender Equity Through Prohibition

The Youthful Alliance for Structural QUality, Equity, Empowerment and Neutrality (YASQUEEN) has bravely tackled the scourge of unwelcoming behavior by outlawing it entirely. No longer must women endure the horror of being asked, "Will you please support me into Galicia?"

Instead, male-born and simultaneously male-identifying players must preface all negotiations with:

"As a cis-presenting individual, I acknowledge the historical imbalance of strategic agency and offer this alliance as a gesture of reparative play. In that vein, I will now limit my negotiations to 100 words per game year [Bzzzt] OUCH!!"

All game boards now come with a built-in "Safe Zone" where players can retreat for emotional recalibration, herbal tea, and affirmations from laminated cards featuring quotes from bell hooks and Sun Tzu. In keeping with the famous quote by Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper, YASQUEEN begs your forgiveness for forcing you to ask permission.

Emotional Manipulation: The Final Frontier

The infamous "Dead Dog Gambit" has been rightfully condemned as emotional terrorism. Under the new rules codified by the Group for Unbiased Listening and Legitimate Internal Behavioral Learned Evaluation

(GULLIBLE), players may not reference personal tragedies, existential despair, or the crushing weight of their own mortality to gain tactical advantage.

Instead, all emotional disclosures must be:

- Pre-approved by the Game Therapist-in-Residence
- Accompanied by notarized documentation of veracity
- Delivered in a tone of neutral vulnerability

If a player cries during the game, all units must immediately hold position while the table conducts a group empathy circle. The game resumes only after everyone has shared a traumatic, yet formative, childhood memory and receives a sticker that says "I'm Enough."

The Game Therapist-in-Residence will decide if there has been a GULLIBLE rules infraction. To file a grievance, you must first prove you don't feel like you were manipulated—because if you *felt* manipulated, you couldn't have, in fact, *been* manipulated at all. Of course, if you weren't manipulated, you can't file a grievance.

You may think, "Those are some rules—the GULLIBLE rules," and I would agree: "They're the best there are." Doc Binder couldn't have said it better.

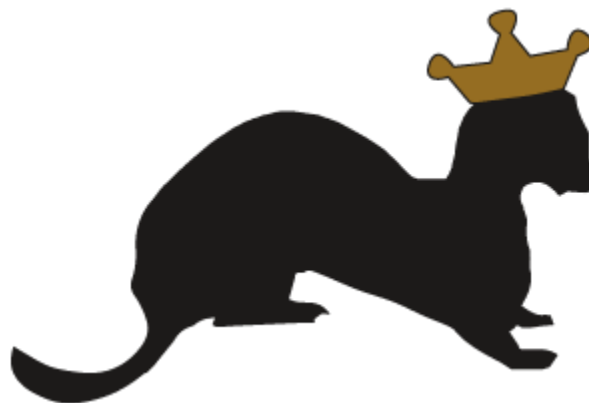
Victory Through Emotional Closure

The game no longer ends when one player controls 18 supply centers. That's colonialism. Instead, Diplomacy now concludes when all players agree they've reached a place of mutual emotional closure and spiritual alignment, as certified by the **Behavioral Assessment for Resolution and Fairness (BARF)**. The winner is not the one who dominates Europe, but the one who most effectively facilitates hearing and healing—without triggering a BARF.

In my 41 years of playing this beloved game, I am so relieved that we have finally recognized that words are violence, war is peace, and ignorance is focusing on what is really wrong with this hobby. So let us raise our lavender-scented affirmation candles to this Brave New World. One where *Diplomacy* is no longer a game of lies and betrayal, but a sacred ritual of consensual cartographic cohabitation.

And if you still long for the old days of devilish cunning and cold-hearted deceit, that's okay. We honor your shadow machinations. But please take it outside Russia, Austria, and Italy are trying to hold space for Turkey's feelings – to give the player a little spiritual breathing room, you know, give 'em some emotionally-safe AIR.

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

From the DW Archive – Latest Trends

by Mal Arky

Although I love Diplomacy as a game (if I didn't, I wouldn't be doing this, clearly), three things bore me about it.

First, PARADOXES. More time is spent discussing them than is spent in playing games in which they occur. Leave it.

Second, STALEMATE LINES. I know, I know - they're important. But spending time studying them, examining a board so that you can form one, etc.... Is there time for this in an in-person (FTF and vFTF) game? This is more useful in a remote game, when you have the time for it, and in this case, you have the time to work out what stalemate line to work on. Understand the point of them, yes; beyond that... sheesh.

Third, REPETITIVELY STATING HOW TERRIBLE THE 2-WAY, 17/17 DRAW IS. So, don't spend time doing it, right? Yeah. I won't. Not here. But don't play for it, OK? It's fake, unnatural, and a complete and utter abandonment of the idea behind the game. Oops.

Also, STATISTICS.

So, um, **four** things. Four things bore me about Diplomacy: paradoxes; stalemate lines; repetitively stating how terrible the 2-way 17/17 draw is, and statistics.

Statistics can show anything. They're often used to show how unbalanced Diplomacy is (it's really not **that** unbalanced). They're used to demonstrate that certain opening moves are better than others (the best opening

moves depend on the circumstances in the game and what you want to achieve). They're used to show that this power should always ally with that power, and always attack another power (again, it depends on the situation you find yourself in and the players with whom you're competing).

So, yeah, I find statistics boring. Well, to **write** about, anyway. I admit to finding them intriguing in and of themselves, occasionally.

Which makes my choice of article from [Diplomacy World #8](#) strange, perhaps. If even I find it strange, it must be!

Having said that, in his article, Francis McIlvaine isn't writing so much about the statistics themselves but about the **dangers** of using statistics to prove something or other.

In doing so, he shows incongruities between two sets of data. The first set was adapted from [DW #1](#), in which countries were ranked according to the Calhamer Point Count ratings system.

First, let's look at the CPC ratings system. A solo scores 1 point; a draw scores $1/n$ points, where n is the number of players in a draw. So, a 2-way draw (sigh) scores 0.5 points each, a 3-way draw scores 0.333 points each, etc., until a 7-way draw (huh?) scores 0.143 points each.

McIlvaine has ranked the powers by percentage, producing the following lists (I've added the last column, 'CHANGE', to show the change in ranking/change in percentage points):

First 329 Postal Dip games			Next 105 Postal Dip games			
POS	POWER	SCORE %	POS	POWER	SCORE %	CHANGE
1	Russia	19.37	1	Turkey	20.31	+2 / +5.46
2	England	15.55	2	Germany	17.23	+3 / +4.18
3	Turkey	14.85	3	France	16.55	+1 / +2.01
4	France	14.54	4	Austria	12.71	+2 / -0.04
5	Germany	13.05	5	Italy	12.50	+2 / +2.64
6	Austria	12.75	6	Russia	11.73	-5 / -7.64
7	Italy	9.86	7	England	8.93	-5 / -6.62

The first thing to say from a statistical point of view is that, in a serious analysis, the second sample is somewhat lessened by featuring fewer than half the number of games than the first.

But that isn't really what McIlvaine is trying to do. He's not attempting a rigorous analysis, but trying to explain the differences. If you were using this data to make wild judgements about which power is the best to play, the results from the second set produce a different suggestion.

McIlvaine's main focus is to discuss **why** the two sets of data show very different outcomes. Why do Russia and England drop from being the top two to being the bottom two, for instance?

DIPLOMACY WORLD



VOL. 2, NO. 2

SUMMER 1975

Actually, when I say 'for instance', that is the only serious change in order between the two sets of data. For the other five powers, their ranking remains in almost the same order, the only change being France and Germany swapping around.

Nevertheless, the change in the fortunes of Russia and England is dramatic. Why? What's changed?

McIlvaine suggests that this is the result of trends in Diplomacy. And he produces a good argument for this,

⁹ According to the [Diplomacy Archive](#), anyway. I was four years old at the time and reading 'Janet and John' books.

although, perhaps, I only think this is a good argument because I've been playing the game for long enough to see changes to how the game is played.

McIlvaine says:

I would think that these last games completed are a result of the problems associated with the original data. Trends change in Diplomacy and it is never any clearer than by looking at those charts. Turkey is way up and England is way down.

I'm not sure "problems" is the right word. It suggests that changes in the way the game is played are a bad thing. I don't think he suggests it's a bad thing, though. A better word would have been "effects."

McIlvaine starts by looking at Turkey's change. He suggests Turkey's fortunes in the first set of data are a result of players jumping on the Lepanto Opening:

One of the major reasons that Turkey was down as far as it was, was that the Lepanto Opening was trumpeted as the "cure" for the Italian player. Use the Lepanto Opening and you will find happiness and wins galore. So people began to use the Lepanto and in game after game Turkey went down in a ball of flames.

His thoughts are interesting in themselves. He suggests Italian players realized that, Lepanto or not, they still weren't winning many games. While Turkeys were being beaten, Italies were still doing comparatively poorly.

Edi Birsan published his article "The Lepanto Opening" in *The Hoosier Archives* #43, in November 1971.⁹ Between then and the compiling of the first set of data, published less than three years later, the majority of the games in this set were started **after** Birsan's article was published, so this makes partial sense. It might even have had an impact on Turkey's performance. We can't really see what Turkey's position was before the article was published compared with after.

McIlvaine writes that, in time:

Italian players began to become a little more leary [sic] than they had been about playing the Lepanto. The pressure began to be lifted a little from the Turks and they made it pay.

If this is the case, it feels as if Turkey had always been a strong power in the Postal game. The appearance of, and trend towards, the Lepanto Opening may have created a blip that self-corrected when Italies across the Hobby found it wasn't the panacea they might've hoped it would be.

This brings McIlvaine to Russia's dramatic decline. *"If you start having a lot of strong Turkeys, there are going to be some weak Russias."*

Well...

In the first set of data, Turkey isn't in too bad a place, ranked third. Russia, however, is supreme, top of the pile and almost four percentage points ahead of their nearest rival, England. If the Lepanto Opening made for poor results for Turkey, and if Russia flounders when Turkey prospers, you'd expect that Russia **wouldn't** hold the position it does. There has to be something else in play here.

For me, McIlvaine discounts another trend which surely had an impact on these games: the Juggernaut alliance between Russia and Turkey. This is the early days of the Hobby: The Juggernaut, when it works, steamrolls across the board. Turkey and Russia get good results. Russia tends to do better than Turkey from the Juggernaut (although the writings of people such as Richard Sharp and Stephen Agar deliberately exaggerate this) and so, although both do comparatively well, Russia comes out on top.

Under the CPC system, which is what we're using, of course, draws are draws: you split the points between the number of players in the draw. If a Juggernaut leads to a Russian win, Russia gets the point and Turkey, regardless of perhaps securing a pointless (in both literal and metaphorical senses) 'second place', gets absolutely nothing. In any draw in which both Turkey and Russia survive, they secure the same value result. Perhaps a trend to Juggernautical play explains why Russia outperforms Turkey, but both do well.

And then players begin to come together to defeat the Juggernaut. The consequence of this is that, as with any other alliance, the Jug starts to perform less well, and this leads to worse results. This will, of course, mean that fewer R/T alliances are formed, fewer Juggernauts trundle across the board, leading to worse results for Russia and Turkey... except that Turkey seems to achieve **better** results!

Some of this is down to the defensive strength of Turkey and the defensive weakness of Russia. An isolated and embattled Turkey can often withstand a determined assault by two powers for some time, and even persist longer than other powers when faced with a triple threat. Russia, on the other hand, is more brittle and has more immediate (or as close to immediate as damn it) neighbors and is more vulnerable.

Still, I feel something more is at play, and so does McIlvaine. He suggests that people see the success Russia is having from the first set of data and there's a

kickback: players target the most successful power. There's some sense in this: the same could be said (and McIlvaine, indeed, says it) for the fall of England. If you're **not** playing England or Russia, they are perceived as being the most dangerous powers on the board. I think this isn't **just** to do with the effect of the publication of the first set of data, as games that finished after this data was compiled can't **all** have been affected by it from the start. I think players will have spotted the success **before** the data was published; publication may have reinforced and encouraged this view.

Concerning England's fall from comparative grace, McIlvaine suggests that England became the victim of targeting by France and Germany. This doesn't account for the switch in ranking between France and Germany, of course, but it does suggest a reason for the two continental western powers outperforming their isolated neighbor.

For me, both sets of data are interesting, both in terms of solving the puzzle of what happened to Russia and England, and in terms of seeing what was going on fifty years ago in the Postal Hobby.

It's a bit of a shame that we don't have the same data today. In the Paper Age (and potentially into the Electronic Age) data was more readily available. There were a lot of games, yes, and it would have been no small task to do so, but the Boardman Numbers (a way of recording each PBM game) made this task a little easier.

In the Digital Age, websites have their own numbering systems for games and, to the best of my knowledge, only Playdiplomacy kept any stats on game results by power (I'm not convinced it is up to date). The CPC system is rarely used as a ratings system these days. Playdiplomacy uses an Elo-esque system; none of the other sites show any results of ratings other than for players. Someone **could** trawl through the archived games for each site and pull up these results, although Backstabbr doesn't have this feature (as far as I'm aware), and Duplicity is so inconsistent that I'm not sure anybody could be bothered. And many more games are being played remotely these days.

McIlvaine highlights the significant impact trends have on Diplomacy play. He doesn't just refer to trends in how games are played, either:

Some countries might have a more obvious strategy than others but they are close enough that "fads," "good play articles," and other various items can have a profound change in the apparent country strengths.

A good example of this, although with no impact on McIlvaine's article, as it wasn't published until three years later, was the impact of Richard Sharp's "The

Game of Diplomacy.” In a review of this book, published in *Richard’s Bull Run* in 1984, Richard Gee says that:

*The effect [of the publication of “The Game of Diplomacy”] is that Diplomacy in the United Kingdom has become unbalanced, as more and more people play the Sharp way.*¹⁰

This is badly expressed: the game hadn’t become unbalanced, the way it was played had been altered. There is no copy of the zine in the [UK Zine Archive](#), so I’m not sure of the context in which this is written. (I’m loath to trust the Wikipedia article fully: I dislike factual inaccuracy as it questions the accuracy of everything else, and in the article it states Sharp’s book was published in 1979, when it was actually published in 1978.)

It provides a clear example of how trends and fads influence the way we play Diplomacy, however. I can give several examples (some of which might be localized to websites or countries in which Diplomacy is played) of trends in Diplomacy:

- The preponderance of Germany bouncing Russia from Sweden, its fading from popularity, and subsequent return.
- The disfavor shown to the E/F alliance, and its later increase in popularity (which Sharp would find baffling!).
- The emergence of the Armenian Fist Bump opening, in which Russia and Turkey organize a bounce in Armenia rather than the Black Sea.

- The rise and fall of the Sum of Squares scoring system.
- The popularity of the ridiculous Strong Second school of thought on playing and scoring Diplomacy, and its fading into obscurity.¹¹
- The modern focus on arena events (leagues and tournaments) and a lessening in popularity of ‘house games’ (just for fun) in Extended Deadline Diplomacy.

Diplomacy players are constantly seeking ways to improve their game. There is a wealth of resources to read, watch and listen to ways we can do this. This means we can’t help but be influenced by other players’ opinions, whether we agree with them or not. Perhaps, also, there is a reluctance to take on board older opinions, maybe due to them being seen as outdated. This all encourages the adoption of ‘successful’ and ‘agreeable’ strategies and tactics, and this means we can see trends in how Dip is played.

Is this a good thing? For the Hobby, yes; it means that we’re constantly being challenged by changing trends in plays. A new (or, more likely, reemerging or reworked) strategy appears, and we want to try it out for ourselves, especially if it’s successful! And this leads to players needing to find ways to counter this way of playing. For individuals? Possibly, assuming we take into account the circumstances in the game we’re playing. Nothing is infallible in Diplomacy.

DIPLOMACY

Hechtstechen Dresden

October 11-12 2025

Three rounds of Diplomacy, open gaming, and meeting old and new friends in beautiful Dresden, Germany. Come and join us! hechtstechen.com

¹⁰ [“The Game of Diplomacy” Wikipedia page](#). Accessed 19 July 2025.

¹¹ See Calhamer’s article [“Objectives Other Than Winning”](#). Accessed on 19 July 2025.



NOVEMBER 7 - 9, 2025

EVENT
REGISTRATION
OPENING
SOON!!

BATTLEFRONT: DAYTON

Axis & Allies

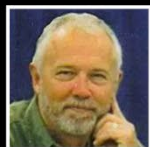
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS
1942 SECOND, ANNIVERSARY,
& GLOBAL EDITIONS

HeroScape

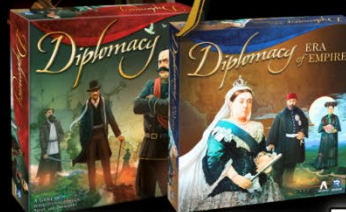
VALKYRIE TRIALS

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
QUALIFIERS

SPECIAL GUESTS



Larry Harris
Matt Hyra
Rosco Schock



'WORLD PREMIERE'
DIPLOMACY: THE
GOLDEN BLADE!

WORLD'S FIRST TRIATHLON!

LEARN



STAY

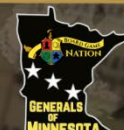


10823 CHIDLAW RD #A
DAYTON, OH
937-879-2696
MENTION: BOARD GAME NATION

\$95 Room
Rate
Breakfast Included!

SPONSORS

REGISTER: [BIT.LY/BGN-BFD](https://bit.ly/BGN-BFD)



Join Us at Battlefront: Dayton 2025!

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.

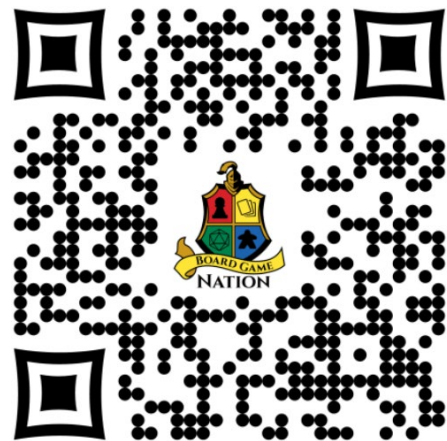
Why Attend?

- 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!



A Full-Circle Diplomacy Journey: My First Face-to-Face Game in 42 Years

by David E. Cohen

I had heard of Diplomacy before that, but as near as I can figure, I played my first game on Sunday, September 7, 1980, at a meeting of the Boston University Simulations Society in the George Sherman Student Union building of Boston University, in Boston Massachusetts. I was a socially awkward, nerdy freshman, just turned 17 years old, with a scraggly mustache, muttonchop sideburns, aviator glasses and hair past my shoulders. Other than that, I did not win, I have no recollection whatsoever of the game or players. But I do know that I was hooked. I played multiple times a month until around the end of Spring, 1983. My then girlfriend, later wife, was many wonderful things. Being an aficionado of Diplomacy was not one of them. Given a choice between spending hours at a time with a bunch of equally nerdy guys (female Dippers were very few and far between back then) and my beloved... true love and hormones won out, and Diplomacy was relegated to fond memories. The itch to play, however, always remained with me.

Fast forward a decade or so, to the mid-'90s and the rise of the internet. We got our first personal computer, complete with a screeching, squealing dialup modem. At some point, I discovered the Cat23 forum and play-by-email Diplomacy. I could now Dip without traveling

long distances to find other players and then devoting uninterrupted multi-hour blocks of time to play, which had always been a deal breaker, given the demands of job, family and the rest of real life. So, with the tolerance, if not the blessing of my better half, I threw myself into all facets of online Dip for the next three decades or so.

Early this year, things changed. My wife passed away. With my children all grown up, I had a ton of time on my hands. For a while, I did not want to do anything, but after dealing with the aftermath of my world being upended, I felt the need to get out of the house and I realized that with a little planning, there was no reason I couldn't spend an entire day playing Diplomacy if the mood took me.

I live in the New York City metropolitan area, and for the hell of it, I had previously joined the New York Diplorats Discord server, even though I had no thought of actually playing face to face. But with the changed circumstances, I decided to take the plunge and sign up for a face-to-face game. The group tries to schedule one game a month, but were unable to do so in July. August, however, was a different story, and the necessary seven players were available on August 18th.



From left to right: Andrew Wu (Germany), Alan Downing (France), Peter Cook (Italy), Jason Mastbaum (Turkey), the author (Austria), Karl Ronneburg (Russia) and Seth Keim (England).

In the days leading up to the game, I became very nervous. I consider myself an excellent tactician, but

could I negotiate and read my opponents (always the toughest part of the game for me) and parse tactics in

15-minute increments when, for the last thirty years, I had been dealing with deadlines ranging from a couple of days to a week per turn? I used to be able to “carry” the board in my head like some chess players do, visualizing order sets and adjudications without the need to be in front of a map. But I had been mostly playing variants all this time, and could look at a map whenever I felt like it. Did my much older self still have something approaching the level of mental acuity for Diplomacy that I had as a teenager, or would I crash and burn amidst a glut of hastily scrawled misorders?

Much to my relief, once I got past an actual adrenaline rush just before the start of the game, the mental “muscle memory” kicked in, almost as though I was back at BU. I was quite pleased with my level of play. I made only one mis order, which was of no game significance. I was, however, not pleased with my results, but as the readers of this article are well aware, winning against competent players is not an easy task. As I told the comparative newbie who ended up topping the board, after he concluded that he had made some mistakes in a complex tactical situation (Spring 1906, see below), this was not the case, and that a player can turn in an excellent order set and have nothing to show for it, especially if you are playing against good opponents. For me, that is one of Diplomacy’s many charms.

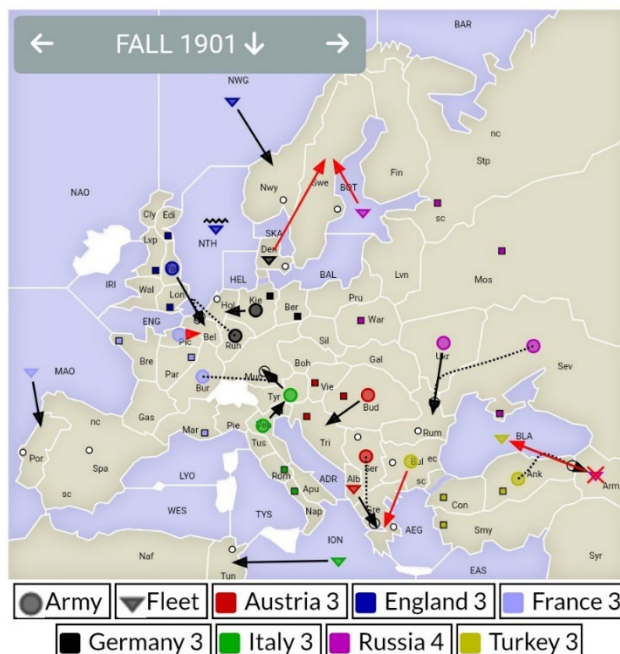
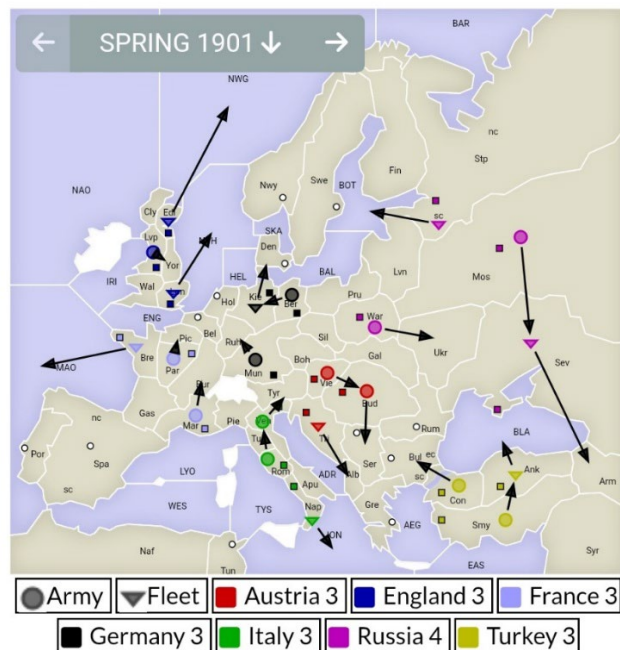
I do intend to play face to face again, certainly with the Diporats when enough players have availability, but also this coming October at the DipCon in Chicago. This will be my first face-to-face tournament ever. I hope to make a lot of new friends, and maybe meet old friends in person for the very first time.

For those who want details of the game, I will give you background, maps and a little analysis. The game was held at Brooklyn Game Knight, a small gaming store and club in New York City.

Note, all of the maps are from Backstabbr. Alan Downing was running Backstabbr in sandbox mode as an adjudication aid and has kindly provided copies of the maps, with orders noted, to me for this article. Fortunately, none of Backstabbr’s adjudication... “eccentricities” came into play during the game. For me, other than the color of Russia being weird (it should be white, not purple!) the real oddity is the supply centers being squares and the armies being circles—the reverse of what many are used to, but you will just have to deal with it. I will use country names in my analysis for ease of reference, and go turn by turn.

Spring 1901: As Austria, I looked to avoid being attacked immediately and to set up for a minimum of two builds. I made it clear in my communications that I was not willing to join in any immediate attacks, but was open to working with any Power in a turn or two, once their friendly words were confirmed by events on the board.

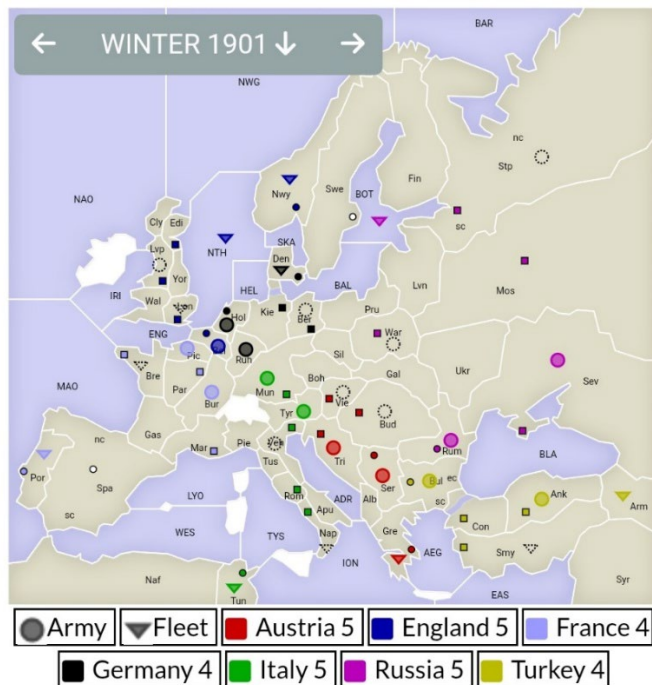
When the moves were revealed, there seemed to be some apparent Russian-Turkish hostility, but the big issue for me was the move by Italy to Tyrolia *and* Venice. Fairly bland openings in the West rounded out the turn. I noted that Germany (an experienced player), and England (a newbie), were together for a long time.



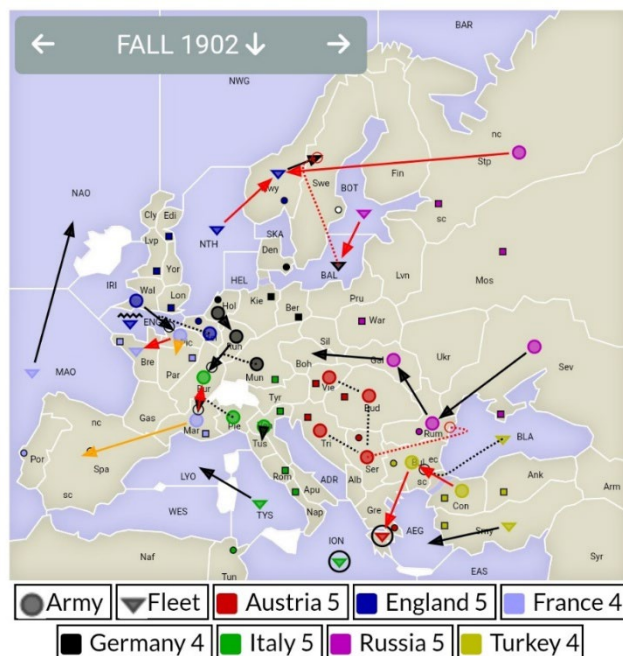
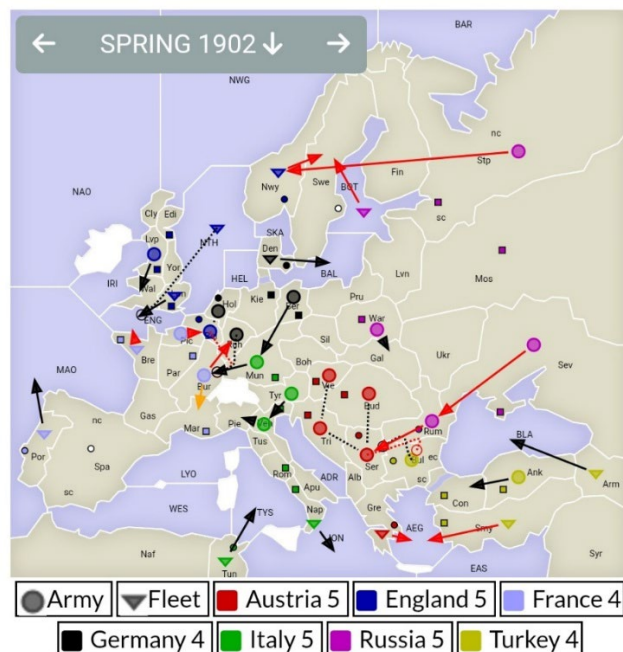
Fall 1901: After voicing my displeasure at Italy, and strongly hinting that I would go all out on defense, Italy stated he was heading for Munich and not attacking me, and I told him that I found that less than believable, since he had also moved to Venice and Ionian. I figured I would throw one unit on defense and secure both Serbia, and Greece with a supported attack, since I

thought it unlikely that either Turkey or Italy would help the other into Greece in 1901. As it turned out, I did go up 2, beating Turkey, who I think was hoping for a bounce at worst, out of Greece. Italy did not attack me, being supported by France into Munich, but he followed up into Tyrolia. Germany and England were indeed linked up, with Germany moving against Russia in Sweden, and supporting England into Belgium. In addition to a looming Italian threat, Russia and Turkey had arranged to disband the Russian fleet in Armenia, so it was looking like I would be facing three Powers with designs on my territory.

Winter 1901: Nothing too out of the ordinary. I built my two armies. Turkey built F Smyrna, presumably to pressure me in Greece. Italy built a fleet in Naples, as expected, but put yet another army in Venice, putting me under even more pressure. I would be under attack or pressure from multiple Powers for the rest of the game. Out of my immediate neighborhood, it looked like E/G versus F/I/R, but looks would prove deceiving.



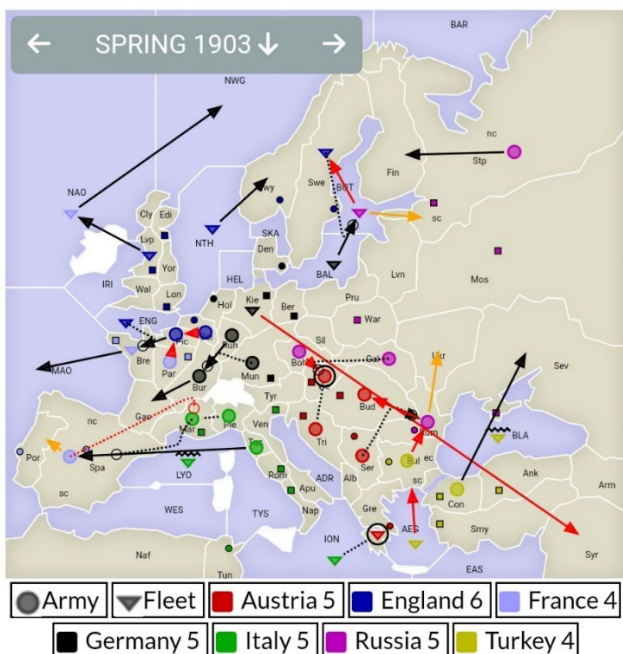
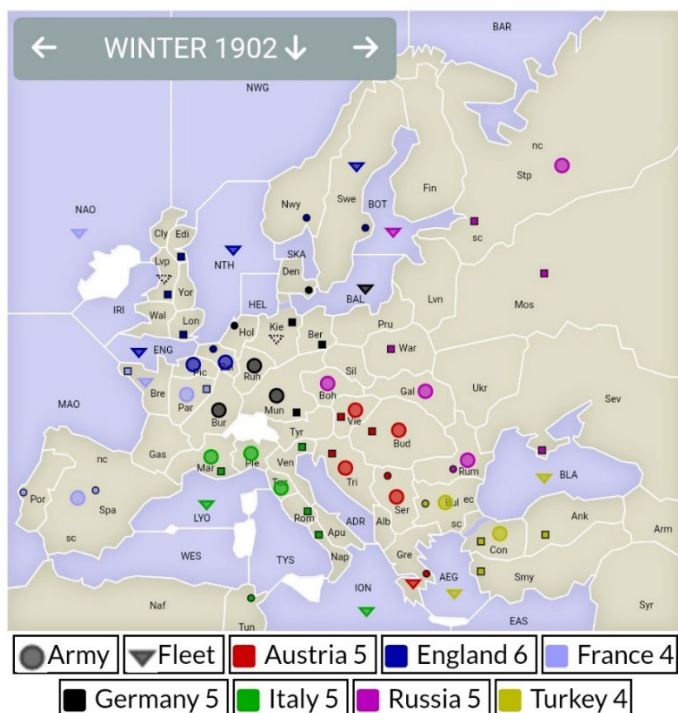
Spring 1902: I readied myself to defend against an attack by three Powers. Defensive crouch with the armies, and a guess to bounce an anticipated move to Aegean by Turkey, which worked. It turned out I was two thirds right. Italy, biting the French hand that supported him into Munich, swung west, though he did park a fleet in the Ionian. It seemed like Italy wanted a partnership in the east to contain Turkey while he grabbed French dots. The problem was that he most definitely wanted to be the senior partner, with me laying the part of meat shield. With England and Germany seemingly joined at the hip, it didn't look like France was going to last too long. With the Russian move to Galicia, I was still under a lot of pressure.



Fall 1902: I made offers to both Russia and Turkey to try to break their alliance. Neither took me up on my offer. Things got very ugly for France, as Italy took Marseilles and moved his final army away from me. France taking previously unowned Spain by retreat did not seem like adequate compensation. Italy, however, also did not want to move against Turkey, and just opted to hold in Ionian, which allowed Turkey to move unhindered to the Aegean. I told Russia I would support Rumania to hold and did so, in an attempt to show friendliness, but he continued against me, playing for positional advantage with a move to Bohemia, pushing two units behind it. This did leave Russia quite exposed

to Turkey, especially since Turkey moved his fleet into the Black Sea.

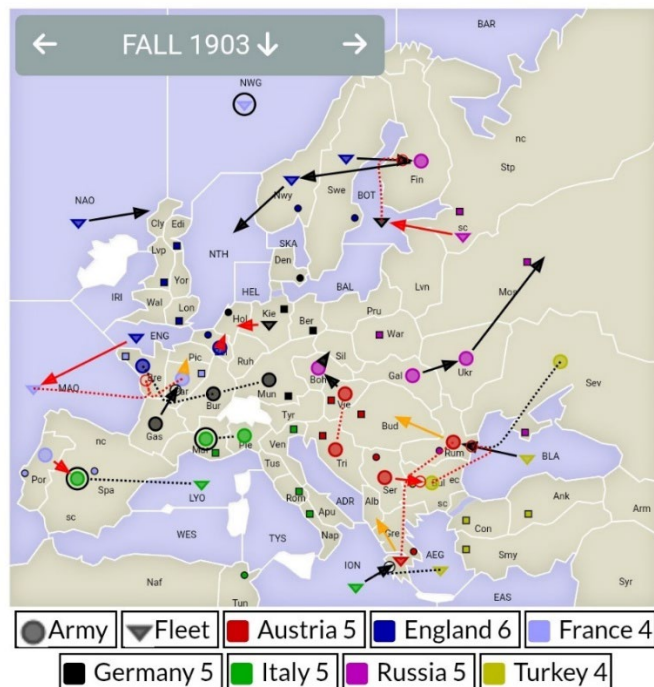
Winter 1902: Not much action. Germany built a second fleet, which could not have pleased England.



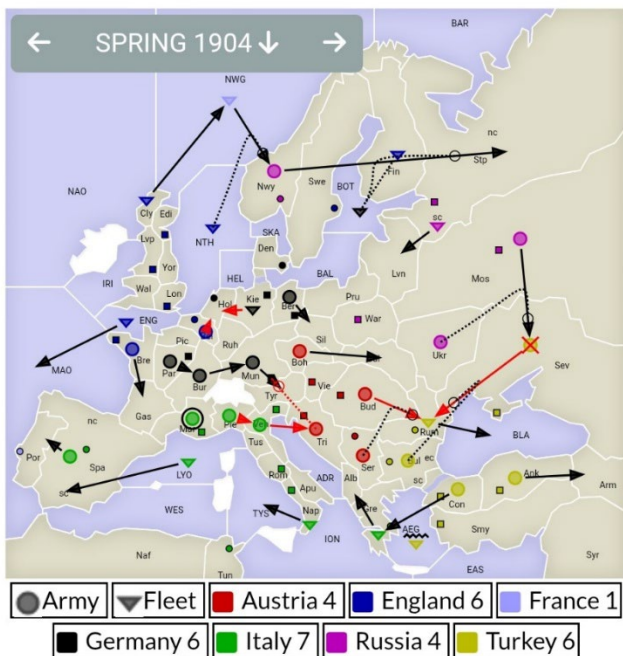
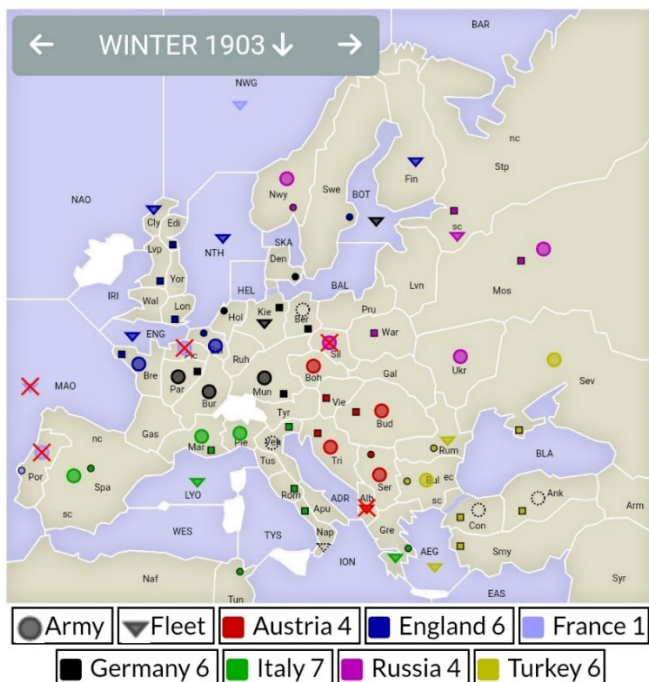
Spring 1903: I decided that remaining in a defensive crouch wasn't getting me anywhere, and that my fairly static defense had lulled my attackers. So, I went for a supported attack on Rumania, which worked. Turkey also decided to stab Russia, which along with English/German advances in the North, really trashed the Russian position. Better for me than what had been going on, but I now had to deal with a very powerful

Turkey. In the west, England, Germany and Italy continued to dismantle the French position and France decided to go pirate with his out-of-place northern fleet, sending it to the Norwegian Sea.

Fall 1903: I knew it was going to be exceedingly difficult to hold Rumania for a build if Turkey wanted to take it, but I thought I would at least remain even, with Russia likely to move away from me in order to save what he could of his home dots. On the off chance that Turkey proved friendly, I moved to Bohemia to leave Vienna open for a build. It was not to be, as Turkey not only attacked me but supported Italy into Greece, so now I was down one and facing two Powers significantly larger than me, with very little pressure on either of them. Not a recipe for long term success! I resolved to make life difficult for each of them while I could. Elsewhere in the east, Russia managed to slip onto Norway, mitigating his losses at least for the moment and depriving England of a build. In the west France was down to one dot, in Portugal.



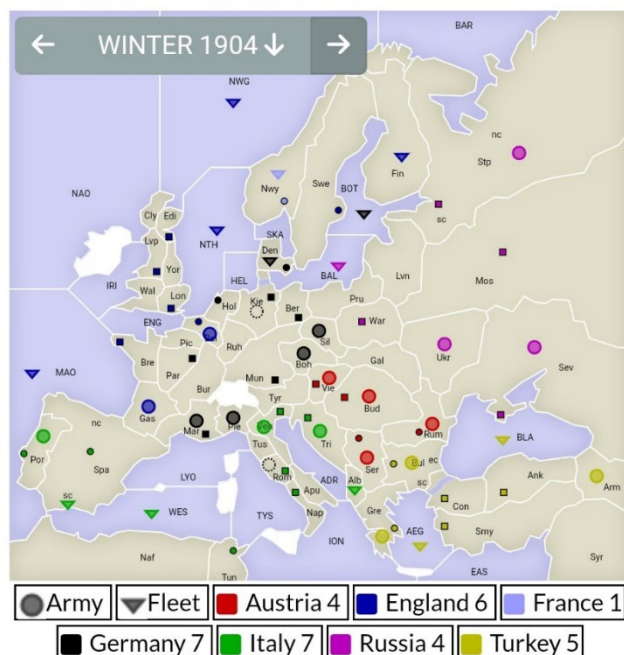
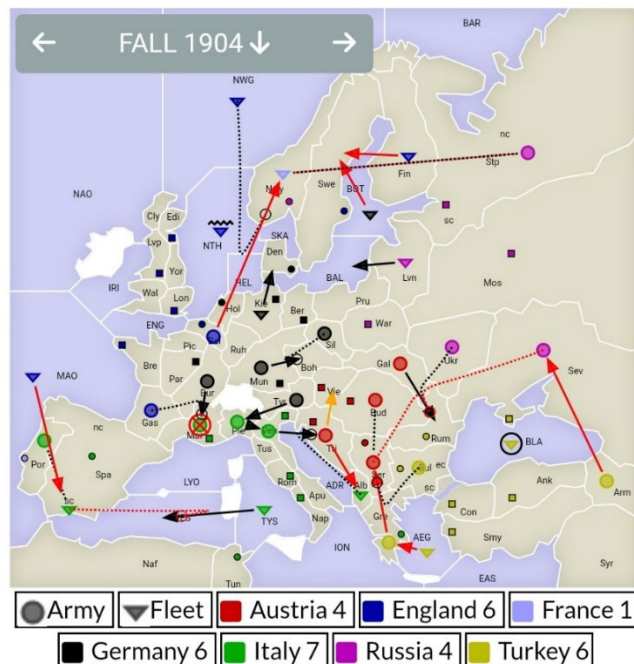
Winter 1903: I removed my fleet and prepared for what was looking to be the Diplomacy equivalent of a two on one knife fight in a broom closet, since Italy built army Venice and fleet Naples, while Turkey built armies in Constantinople and Ankara. Germany was looking to make gains in the east, since he built army Berlin and Russia ended up disbanding his army in Silesia. France decided to go full pirate and keep the northern fleet as his sole unit.



Spring 1904: I went looking for outside help against the “unholy” I/T alliance, and both Germany and England were willing to move against Italy, with Germany talking up my suggestion to move to Tyrolia. All well and good, but Turkey was also a big problem, being significantly larger than I was, so I move to Galicia from Bohemia, in anticipation of action against Turkey next turn. Turkey had managed to lose both Sevastopol and the army there, which looked like it would be of some help in the fall. Given how long the turns were taking, it seemed like the game would continue for three or four more game years at most, and there was no way I was going to solo. Even a board top for me seemed to be very unlikely, and it looked like even with an adroit defense, I

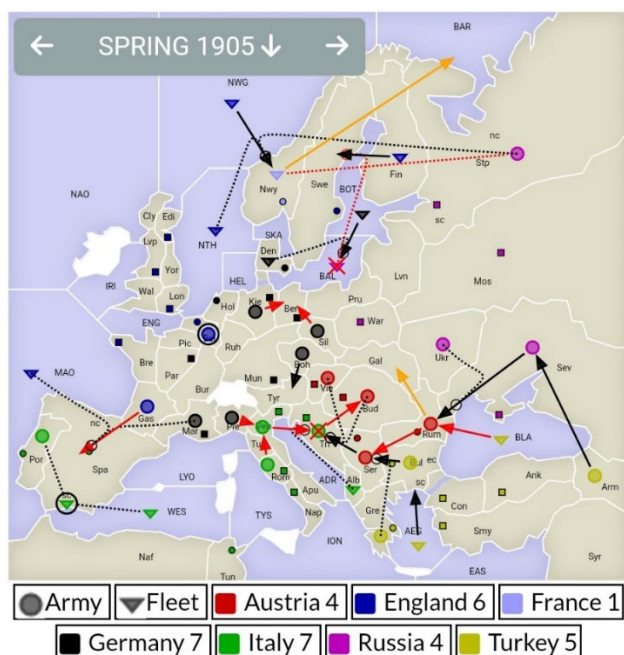
would be slowly ground down. I began to consider who I would want to work with to get them a board top. Considering France was now confined to Norway, this boiled down to either England or Germany. How exactly I was going to do this remained to be seen.

Fall 1904: I managed to take Rumania with Russian help (Turkey did not move Black Sea to Rumania, but it would not have mattered, since he chose to use Bulgaria for support of an unsuccessful attack on Serbia). Germany, however, was not willing to support me in Trieste, choosing instead to move Tyrolia to Piedmont, so I lost Trieste and was unable to gain a build. Germany also oddly used Silesia to support himself into Bohemia rather than try for Warsaw.



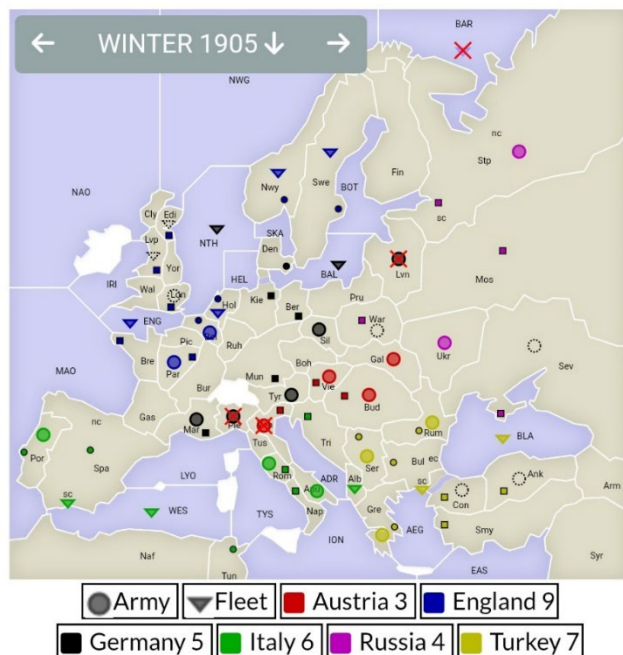
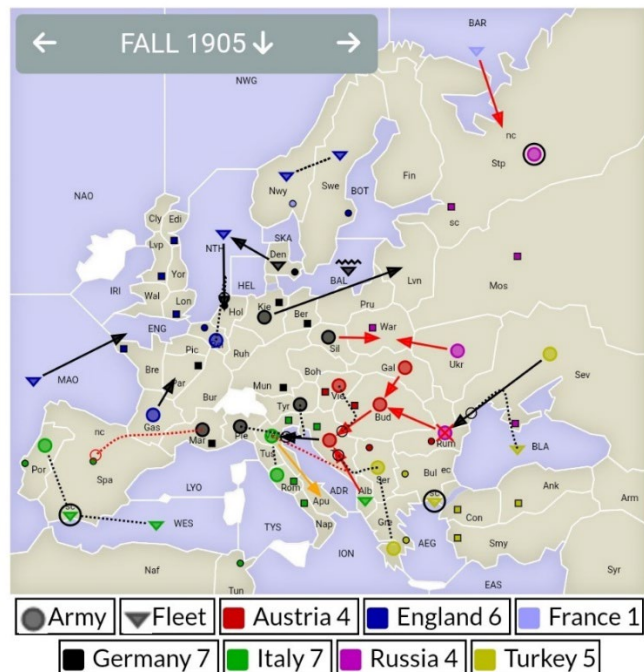
Winter 1904: Nothing too exciting. Germany built Army Kiel, to help deal with the Russian fleet in the Baltic, and Italy built another army, in Rome.

Spring 1905: Part of my plans went well, swapping out Serbia for Trieste and popping the Italian army there, since I got German to move to Tyrolia. But Russia got it into his head to once more attack me. I am not sure why, since already had his hands full with England and Germany, though it looked like there had been some possible Anglo-Russian cooperation but that could just have been a smokescreen. Turkey was already in the Black Sea, and he moved right back into Sevastopol, so I figured Russia got what he deserved. Speaking of the English and Germans, with Germany putting three units on Italy, and forcing Russia out of the Baltic, Germany was extremely vulnerable to an English stab. The question was twofold. Would the English player, a newbie, see the possibilities, and if so, would he be willing to pull the trigger on his game long ally?



Fall 1905: One part of my plan was to keep Russia out of any of my dots. He had flip-flopped back and forth, and as a result was not effective against either Turkey or myself, so I didn't think he deserved any of them, and I fully expected Turkey to kick him out of Rumania. Further west, I convinced Germany to support me into Venice, which would distract Italy and provide Germany with opportunities. I had some time before the turn deadline, since I wasn't doing much talking with any of my other neighbors, and decided to sit by the board. I saw England by himself looking intently at the board, and decided to see if I could have one of my questions answered, so I asked him "Do you see it?" without elaborating. As it turns out, he did see the possibility for a multi-dot stab of England. I told him that was all I wanted to ask him—that I did not want to know if he was

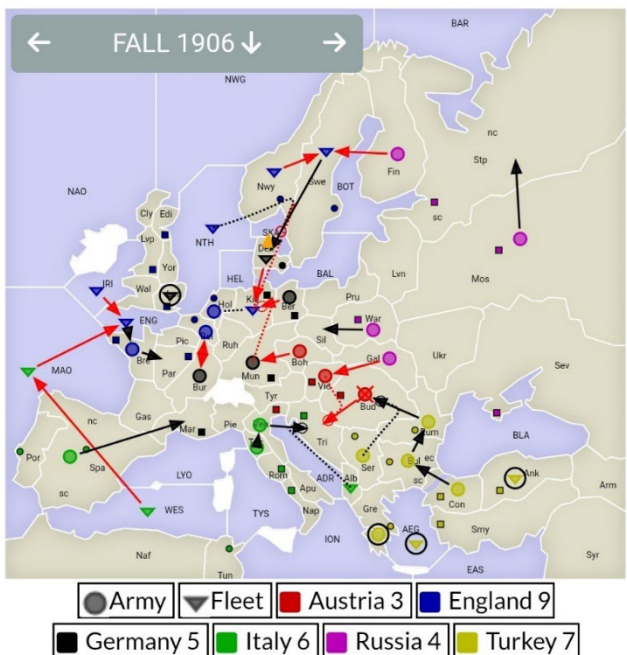
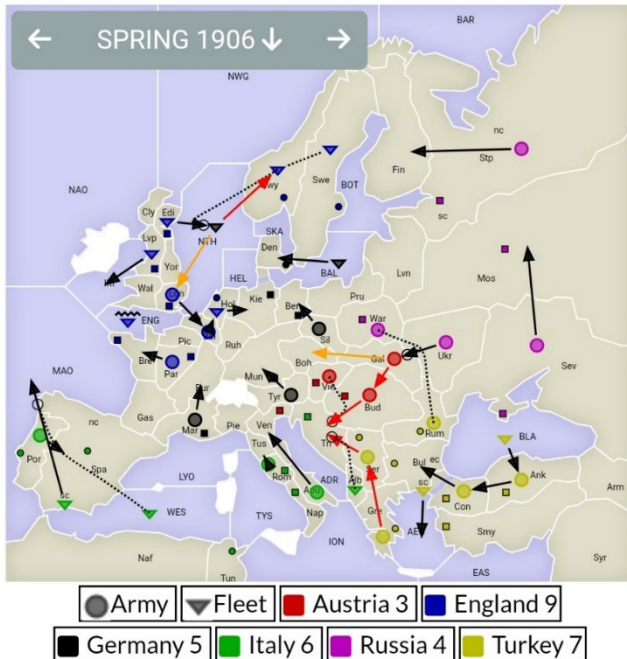
going to act on it. As it turned out he did act on it and went up three dots (one being the last French dot in Norway), while Germany went down two dots.



Winter 1905: With three builds, England was now the clear board leader, and since a player had a hard schedule stop coming, it looked like 1906 could well be the last year for the game. I had grabbed an Italian dot, and had made Turkey fight hard to conquer and sometimes reconquer everything he got from me, so as long as England did well this coming year, I figured he would top the board. With that in mind, all I really needed to do was keep slowing both Italy and Turkey down and if circumstances worked out, be in a position to help England on the board, in addition to giving him a

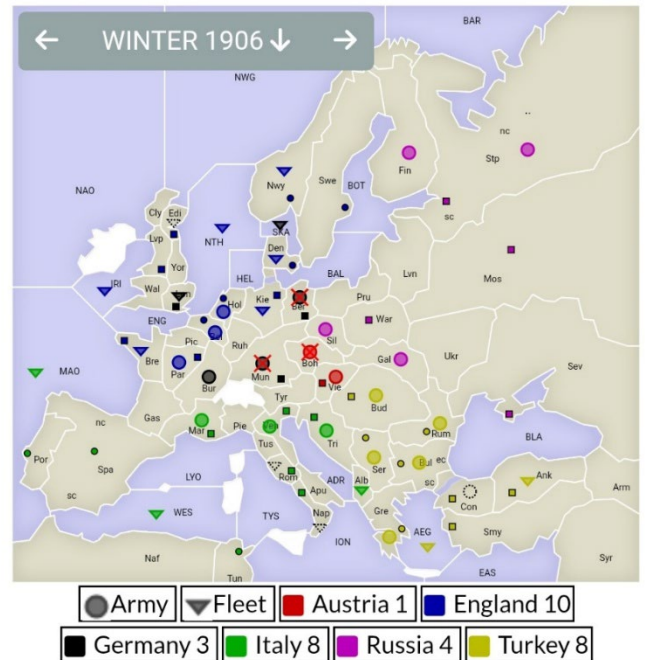
couple of earfuls of tactical advice. With that in mind, I removed my army in Venice rather than my army in Galicia.

Spring 1906: I bounced Turkey out of Trieste, which given the position meant that I would have at least one dot at the end of the year. Russia dislodged me from Galicia, which wasn't such a bad thing, since I could retreat to Bohemia without letting Germany in on the fact that I could be doing something against him in the Fall in support of England. Italy began moving toward England, but was too far away to be a major factor in the time remaining. Germany got to retreat to London, but England moved to Kiel and convoyed another army onto the Continent.



Fall 1906: Italy, Russia and Turkey continued to attack me, as expected. That brought me down to one dot, but I did not particularly care. I had spent the run up to the deadline discussing tactics with England, and helped him by cutting Munich with Bohemia, which allowed him to keep Kiel. He was also able to take Denmark, which put him up one despite the loss of London, for a board-topping ten dots. Italy and Turkey both finished on eight dots. They could not move fast enough to match England.

Winter 1906: Adjustments were submitted, not that it really mattered. In order to squeeze in another year before one of the players had to leave, the next year's turns would have had to have been extremely rushed, and none of the players had an appetite for that. So, the players voted unanimously to end the game.



And that's all there is. It was wonderful to play in person again after all these years. Thank you to the Diplomats for setting this up. To all you readers:

May we meet upon the field.



Carnage 28



October 24-26, 2025
Killington Grand Resort
Killington, Vermont

- Board Games
- RPGs
- Collectible Card Games
- LARPs
- Miniatures Games
- A Dedicated War Gaming Room
- Tournaments
- Vendors
- And much, much more



www.carnagecon.com

info@carnagecon.com

802-436-2004

Ask the Hobby Historian: Diplomacy Media

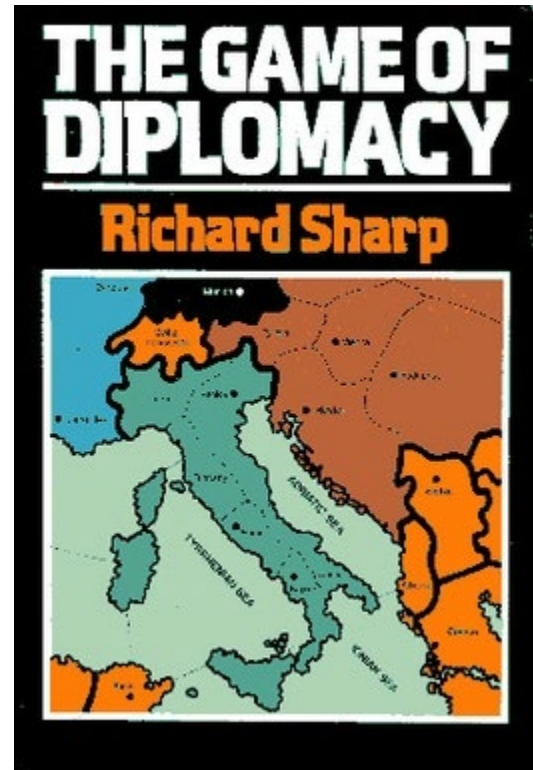
by David Hood

We recently celebrated five years of the Diplomacy Broadcast Network on YouTube being a thing. During the summer of 2020, the Covid shutdown stopped us from gathering face to face but spurred innovations in how our game was played and how we promoted the game to the wider world. Diplomacy media on YouTube and in other places had already existed before 2020, but the creation of virtual face to face as a mode of play, and the associated media surrounding that emergence, has forever altered the landscape in a way that hobbyists of old would find astonishing.

However, in the history of our hobby there were many attempts to promote the Diplomacy hobby not just within the confines of the existing player base, but also outside those confines. During the pre-internet phase of Diplomacy, the primary vehicle for keeping the hobby together were the Dipzines, as I have discussed many times in this column. Most of the zines, though, were pretty insular. They spoke primarily to, for, and about folk already playing Diplomacy (and other games) in some fashion, included a lot of personal comments and inside jokes, and were not really designed to attract interested parties from outside the family as it were. One major exception was the zine you are reading right now - Diplomacy World. From the beginning, DW was intended to be a publication that one could pass to others as a partial explanation of what the overall Diplomacy hobby had to offer to those looking for a new pastime. The Demonstration Games were a part of the zine from issue 1, for example, showing newcomers what a Diplomacy game looked like, the strategies and tactics being employed, and featuring commentaries from Dip analysts about what they were seeing in the moves on the board.

Diplomacy World was not the only publication intended for a wider audience, though. An important outreach to the world of general gamers was the 1978 publication of Richard Sharp's book *The Game of Diplomacy*, as one of a series of books he wrote about games and pastimes. The book explained the game to beginners, discussed strategic choices and concepts, and described numerous variants and ways of approaching the game. Sharp was very opinionated (you will find his recommendations about which power should ally with which to be very constricting) but some of his insights on the game have certainly proven to be right almost fifty years later. One example would be his warning to players of England that the biggest threat they may face in the midgame is an attack by France through the backdoor of the North Atlantic, a point made again by

recent Nexus Main Event winner Cedric Williams in his DBN interview just days before I write this.



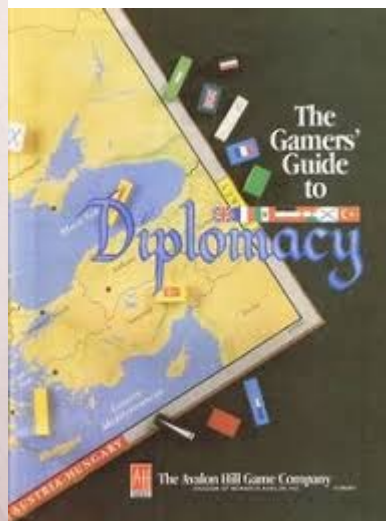
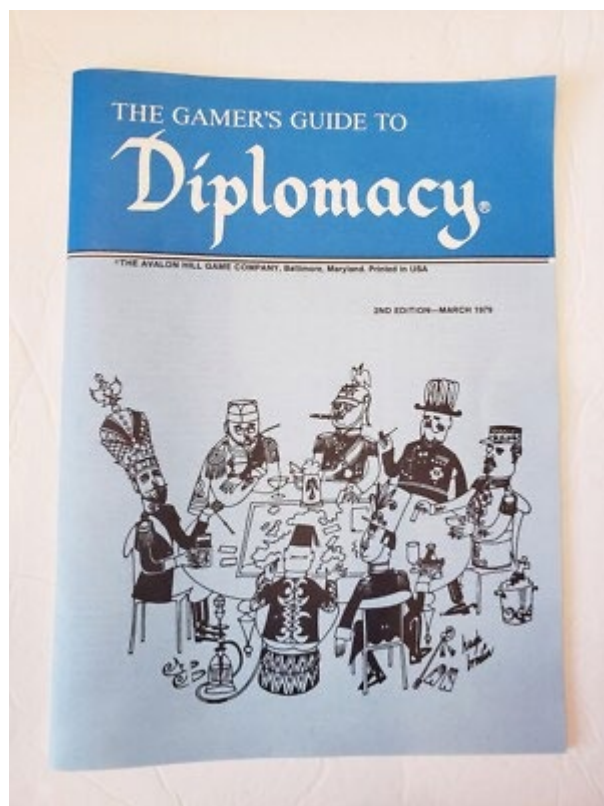
There is certainly much in Sharp's book with which I would disagree, but so what? This was an actual hardback book available to a general audience about our game. How cool was that? As Diplomacy fans we sometimes take for granted just how innovative Calhamer's Creation truly was. Simultaneous movement, and as a consequence, simultaneous order-reveals. No dice involved in the adjudication of tactical situations involving multiple pieces at the same time. Designed time away from the board to talk secretly with others, with management of that time being crucial to face to face success. Asymmetric board and start positions, with resulting strategic variation the contours of which are still being explored by creative hobbyists decades later in local hobbies all over the world. Amazing, really, and all this was communicated to prospective players through the publication of this book.

Gaming magazines were another location for Diplomacy-themed content intended for a wider audience. Avalon Hill Game Company, the American publisher of Diplomacy, had a regular publication called *The General* which was, for many years, edited by a Dipfan named Rex Martin. The magazine included Diplomacy material

on a very regular basis, and also promoted the North American Dipcon faithfully each year, with flyers, prize support, after-action reports, and other content. Longtime hobby leader Rod Walker published a regular column in *The General* called The Compleat Diplomat, in which he promoted the game by discussing strategies, variants, conventions, and the play-by-mail hobby in general. Back in this time period, when much of the hobby's new blood came from the wargaming community, this outreach to players of Squad Leader, Third Reich, and so forth was invaluable.

Another project Rex was involved in was the publication by Avalon Hill of *The Gamers Guide to Diplomacy*, a

standalone magazine intended to help newcomers understand and play the game better from the outset. When Michael Lowrey and I together bought our club's first copy of Diplomacy in 1984, that store was also selling the *Gamers Guide* right next to it - so we picked that up as well. This was chock full of interesting content about how to play each country, discussions about negotiation and stabbing and Flying Dutchmen. Frankly it was awesome. Years later, I was attending the 1992 Dipcon in Kansas City when Rex announced that the company would be producing a new version of the *Gamers Guide* and was asking for hobbyists to help put it together.

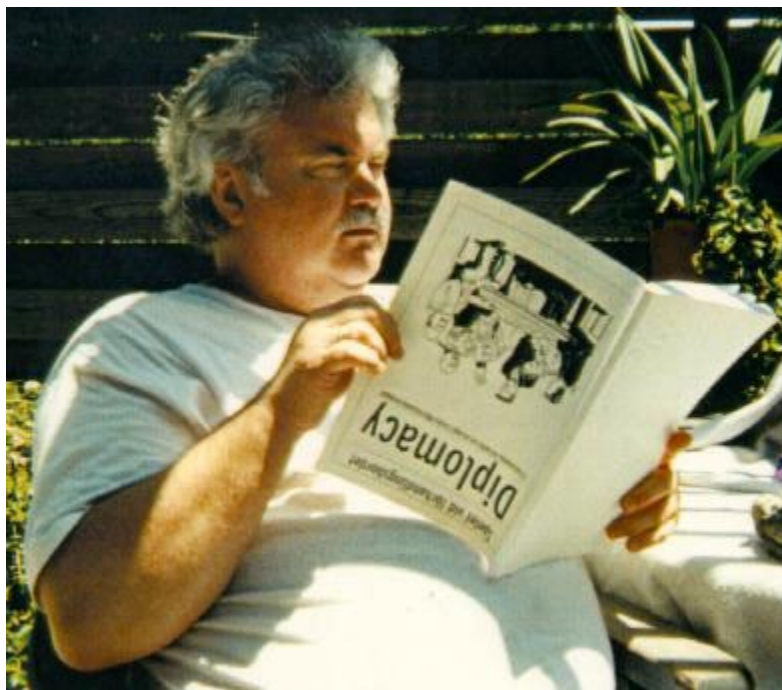


Of course, I volunteered (or was voluntold, I don't remember actually.) My primary job was to recruit the seven authors for the "Playing" series on each power, but I also authored a piece about the Midgame and Endgame possibilities for games being played out to the stalemate-or-solo end. These two publications were an important outreach to gamers in general about both the game itself and the hobby that surrounds, maintains, and supports the play of the game.

As an aside - Rex Martin is STILL playing Diplomacy! I had the pleasure of two boards with him in the Dip event at this year's World Boardgaming Championships in Seven Springs, Pennsylvania.

There's one more project I want to highlight. When I went to my first Dipcon in 1986, I met then-Diplomacy

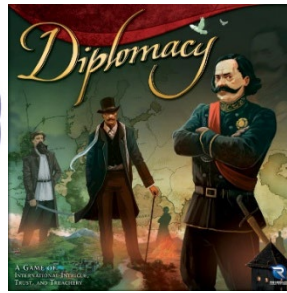
World editor Larry Peery. He was a Diplomacy force of nature. Larry took the game both the most seriously and the least seriously of anyone I ever knew, and did so simultaneously. He was an offbeat and quirky player, and valued the relationships he built with fellow hobbyists over a board way more than he valued actually taking Belgium. But in terms of how the game could reflect historical truth, how it could be used to examine styles of persuasion, or how the hobby's makeup and opinions could present a microcosm of the society at large, Larry was convinced that we had a lot to offer those outside of the hobby. One way he tried to promote the analytical study of Diplomacy and its lessons was through the formation of his own Institute for Diplomatic Studies.



Yes, the IDS sounded a little pretentious. And yes Larry's ideas and writing about them could be over the top. But you had to respect his enthusiasm and his determination. He literally produced home-study degree programs for bachelor, masters and doctoral levels - and awarded several doctorates to big time players of the 90s. (The only one still active on that list being, of course, Edi Birsan.) He also promoted the IDS to the wider world by sending letters and articles for publication wherever and whenever he could.

Let me end on this theme. There have been many hobby figures in the past who wanted to talk to the general public, or at least the general gaming public, about just how awesome our game is. There was much enthusiasm, and much hard work invested in these projects. Because of modern technology, our efforts can now be much more professional-looking and thus more effective, as can be seen on YouTube and elsewhere. There are multiple opportunities for interested folk to get involved in these activities. Volunteer to write for DW. Participate in Dipchat on DBN's League Night or Gameday Live programs. If you have technical ability, reach out to Diplomacy content creators to offer your help. And if you have a good idea for new Diplomacy media, start it up yourself! Remember that every Diplomatic Pouch, every Diplostrats, every Diplomacy Games Podcast started that some way.





February 27-28, 2026

Diplomacy has a long history at the PrezCon gaming convention. Diplomacy was part of the first PrezCon in 1994 and the convention previously hosted DipCon in 2006. Last year we brought PrezCon back and we're happy to announce the PrezCon Diplomacy Tournament will return in 2026. The three-round event will be held on Friday night & Saturday (2/27-2/28) in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Details about PrezCon

“The PrezCon Annual Convention presented by Faceless Men Productions, LLC, is proud to have been hosting their Winter Board Gaming Convention since 1994. PrezCon has grown into a big event. It is now attended by hundreds of people from around the globe. We host over 100 Tournaments and dozens of demos during the convention! Our Open Gaming rooms entertain over 200 players utilizing our 500+ board game library. PrezCon Winter Nationals include some of the old favorites and many new tournaments as well.”

Purchase Tickets here:

<https://www.prezcon.com/program>

Dates:

February 21st – March 1st, 2026. The Diplomacy tournament is February 27th – 28th.

Diplomacy Tournament:

Contact - Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)

Tournament Details - PrezCon is an annual gaming convention held at the Hilton Doubletree in Charlottesville, Virginia. The 20th edition of the Diplomacy tournament will be three rounds over two days. The best two rounds of three will count towards the 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. The style of play is open to all skill-levels and encouraging for new players to gain experience. **The NEW Diplomacy game will also be on display to demo during the event – the first convention appearance for The Golden Blade!**

Intro/Demo: Friday 2/27 from 5pm to 7pm

Round One: Friday 2/27 from 7pm to 11pm

Round Two: Saturday 2/28 from 10am to 2pm

Round Three: Saturday 2/28 from 7pm to 11pm

Scoring System: C-Diplo

Rank: Best two out of three rounds

Past Event Pictures Here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/5hZCmwARv7rBVuRD9>



Invasive Species

by Shane Armstrong

Diplomacy players from all over Australia (plus New Zealand, Thailand, and the United States) descended on Brisbane at the end of August to take part in the second Cane Toad Classic, which, this year, also doubled as the 2025 Asia-Pacific Championship.

Over two days, three rounds, and 14 boards, 38 players duked it out leading to a final day that saw the most open final round in recent memory.

Round 1 on Saturday saw the iron man of global Diplomacy and scene favorite of Canberra, the Diplomacy Capital of the World, Darcy Morris (ACT) top as Germany on Board 1 (Big Pond), followed closely behind by Tristan Lee (QLD) making his return to tournament play in Australia. Board 2 (The 180B Man), saw the E/F of Zoe Cameron (VIC) and Connor Muirhead (ACT) share an 8 dot board top, with Stuart Barton's (ACT) 7 dot Austria-Hungary holding out the entire weekend to take the award on Sunday. Board 3 (Hello Sailor) was topped by Shane Armstrong (ACT) as an 11 dot Russia, followed by Peter McNamara (VIC) on 9 as Italy. Board 4 (Salt and Vinegar) saw visiting player Justin Loar (USA) squaring away Best Italy nice and early, finishing on 12, followed by Ian Whitchurch (QLD) on 11 as England, which was also enough to take out Best England. These double figure SC counts were all the more remarkable given games were time drawn at the end of 1905 (though the players never knew the end times!) Board 5 was very tightly fought, finishing with 4 players on 7 dots each sharing the top - Cleo McNamara (QLD) in England, Brandan Austin (ACT) in Germany, Max Roe Banks (ACT) in Italy, and Sean Colman (NSW) in Turkey.

Lunch was then taken at an excellent traditional Greek restaurant very near to the venue, as an added incentive to encourage people to come to WDC in Athens in 2026, before Round 2 got started in the afternoon as the players worked off their lunches.



Saturday lunch - taverna lifestyle in Brisbane!

Board 1 of Round 2 (Fridge and a Freezer) was again topped by Justin Loar's France, followed in second by Clare Bradbery (ACT) in Turkey. Board 2 (The Two Dollar Quoit) saw Shane Armstrong in Italy and Steph Tarrou (ACT) in Turkey share an 8 dot top, with Austan James-Winter (NSW) in England, and Sam Meredith (QLD) in Germany both returning great 6 dot games in their tournament debuts. Board 3 (The Grassy Knoll) saw Jason Gray (NSW) top on 12 as Russia, 4 clear of Nancy Jin's (ACT) 8 dot Germany. Board 4 (the delightfully named "The Poo in the Shoe") saw Darcy Morris take his second top of the weekend as Turkey on 12 (also claiming Best Turkey), followed by Zoe Cameron in France on 10. The final board of the round (Three Knees) was topped by Max Roe Banks in France on 10 (winning Best France), followed by Connor Muirhead on 6 as Austria-Hungary.

The Burrow hosted the Saturday night dinner and drinks (if you're ever in West End in Brisbane, it's a nice little hangout with great drinks and good food!) before the true stayers kicked on to karaoke, honoring this fine tradition of Australian tournament Diplomacy. All who lifted a mic covered themselves in glory, doing the Karaoke Caucus proud.



The overseas contingent, Sascha (Germany via Thailand), Justin Loar (Los Angeles), and Dominick Stephens (New Zealand)



Karaoke - an integral part of the Australian Diplomacy scene - Justin Loar and Darcy Morris tear it up



Post-tournament comedown management - watching live DBN coverage!

Round 3 saw 7 players (Darcy Morris, Justin Loar, Shane Armstrong, Max Roe Banks, Jason Gray, Zoe Cameron, and Peter McNamara) in with a clear shot at winning the tournament, making board draw absolutely critical.

Board 1 (The King) contained none of the potential winners, but was ably topped by Stuart Barton (ACT) on 12 dots as Germany, followed by his English ally and Diplomacy podcasting legend Ken Gordon (QLD) on 10, but Boards 2, 3, and 4 were where the action was.

Board 2 (Deborah Kerr) saw Peter McNamara and Justin Loar as Russia and Turkey respectively. Peter is one of the best players in the world in closing out a game and getting a desired result, and this is exactly how his game ran. He finished on 15 as Russia, topping the board, taking out Best Russia, and eliminating his on-board rival in the process. Dominick Stephens (NZL) finished

second as France on 9, with Connor Muirhead on 7 as Germany.



Some of the most sought-after trophies in the Australian hobby

Board 3 (Chock-a-Block Full of Angry Pills) saw Jason Gray in Italy, and Max Roe Banks in Russia. This game was tightly fought, with Robert Chatterton (VIC) finishing with the top as France on 9, followed by Max Roe Banks on 8. Jason Gray finished in equal third on this board on 5.



First and second (third had to rush to a flight!)

Board 4 (The Squirrel Gripper) featured 3 of the board leaders - Zoe Cameron, Darcy Morris, and Shane Armstrong. This game saw a strong F/G share 20 dots between them, though Zoe in Germany took 12 of them, netting Best Germany and topping the board, followed by Shane Armstrong on 9, and Darcy Morris on 8. Zoe's 3 dot top gave her just enough points to finish a point ahead of the fast-finishing Peter McNamara, 58 points to 57!

So, congratulations to Zoe Cameron, winner of the 2025 Cane Toad Classic, and Asia-Pacific Champion for 2025!



Justin Loar takes home Toadiest Toad

Players were also asked to vote at the end of each game for the person they had the most fun playing with, and also the 'Toadiest Toad', the meaning of which was left up to people's own interpretations. Zoe Cameron won Most Fun to Play with, and Justin Loar took Toadiest Toad back to LA - the second time in two years the award has left Australian shores after Dominick Stephens took it out in 2024.



TD Gavin Atkinson speaking to the masses

This tournament was a ton of fun (the board names were nicknames bestowed on Queensland Rugby League players by two comedians who used to run comedy match commentaries), and a great boost to the hobby in Queensland. 2024 saw 16 players and 6 boards, with both metrics more than doubling to 38 and 14. The entire Australian hobby (based primarily in the South-East of the country) showed up to enjoy the comparative winter warmth of Brisbane, and received a warm welcome

indeed. Thanks and congratulations to Tournament Director Gavin Atkinson, and Queensland Diplomacy stalwart, Ken Gordon. Thanks also should go to the ever-wonderful Andrew Goff for opting to sit out Rounds 2 and 3 to preserve board numbers, and to all who helped with laptops, sandboxing, setting clocks, etc.

Regular monthly games are now very viable in Brisbane, and the Australian hobby hopes to see strong growth and an even bigger Cane Toad Classic in 2026.

As for the Asia-Pacific Championships, next stop Bangkok, from 23-25 January 2026!

Registration here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSddcbB8_Zvk42Da5zj7Xjn9S6D-PXm4QRjNoPEsYdYnqEOALg/viewform

- 1st - Zoe Cameron
- 2nd - Peter McNamara
- 3rd - Max Roe Banks
- 4th - Darcy Morris
- 5th - Shane Armstrong
- 6th - Jason Gray
- 7th - Justin Loar



Circle DC Diplomacy Tournament 2026

Please join us in our nation's capital for Circle DC: A Conference on History, Education & Play. Registration for the three-day event is \$150.

Last year we were joined by an amazing group of game designers including Jason Matthews, Tory Brown, Volko Ruhnke, Sebastian Bae, and many more. Come join old friends and meet new friends at the friendliest game convention on the planet.

Circle DC will be hosted at the DC History Center (<https://dchistory.org/>) and the Shakespeare Folger Library (<https://www.folger.edu/>). The Folger Library is located a block from the US Capitol and is home to the world's largest Shakespeare collection.

April 10th – April 12th, in Washington, DC

DIPLOMACY TRIATHLON TOURNAMENT

Three Rounds -- Three Different Diplomacy Games!

In a Diplomacy Triathlon, players compete in a three-round event with a different game featured each round. Prizes for winning each round and overall event.

Teaching Round (all games) 1pm-5pm Friday
Round 1 (Diplomacy) – 5pm-9pm Friday
Round 2 (Era of Empire) – 10am-2pm Saturday
Round 3 (The Golden Blade) – 5pm-9pm Saturday

Tournament Director: Thomas Haver
Email: Heroes@RenegadeGames.com
Website: <https://www.fortcircle.com/>



Fun with Robots

by Edi Birsan

For the past 9 months I have been playing against 6 Robots in what is called a 'Full Press' format on WebDiplomacy at:

<https://webdiplomacy.net/botgamecreate.php>

To have some fun and explore the world of robots, I have played a number of games there. While going through some traditional communications - such as asking for support into Belgium - I also have tickled my more perverse sense of humor in banter. Some of those efforts have exposed a few kinks in their coding.

Each of the robots have player names that you can see, for example: dipgpt1 through dipgpt6. You can also play Gunboat against them in the same site. You can get a history of their results of hundreds of Gunboat games (about 440 each) and about 9 full press games recorded.

One of the standard things I ask on the very first message in any game is: do you know the other players? When asking the robots you will get one or two who will respond with 'No.' While others will say a qualified Yes. That opens up some fun. When for example Germany says that they have not played with England and England says they have played with Germany, I go back and ask England to describe their style of play and then go to Germany and tell them that England is making up lies about playing with them, and then tell the English that the Germans are telling lies about not playing with them.

You can ask if they think that another player is a Robot. A funny answer you get sometimes is "What is a Robot?" However, when you declare that the player is a Robot, you can get exchanges like this one (Russia is the robot, while I am France):

FRA: How do you measure luck or guess factors? Do you generate a percentage of possible outcomes?

Autumn, 1904

07:22 PM

RUS: I guess that's a good question.

Autumn, 1904

07:28 PM

FRA: One that only you can answer, so what is the answer?

Autumn, 1904

08:52 PM

RUS: Why does that matter?

Autumn, 1904

09:18 PM

Spring 1905

FRA: Because I know the people that helped write the robot code and I want to be able to confirm the process that you came up with to evaluate the situation.

Spring, 1905

08:53 PM

RUS: You can ask the people behind the robot, but they probably wouldn't tell you.

Then there is the classic discussion of trying to find out why they did such and such a move to simply get at their algorithmic priorities, especially when it is a rather odd move. For example, I had a case where Germany dislodged Warsaw by

A Prussia-Warsaw

A Livonia Support Prussia to Warsaw

The Russians then refused to retreat the unit to Moscow (or any other place). When asked why they did that, they said because Livonia went to Moscow, which it did not do.

Pointing this out, they dug in on the answer. They did then BUILD an Army in Moscow.

Another funny situation was Austria was attacking Italy, and wanted my France to also attack Italy. I had a fleet in Lyon and an army in Spain. The Austrians proposed that I convoy to Tuscany, which made perfect sense, but explained that this way I would get Tunis. Pointing out that Tuscany does not border on Tunis had no effect on the Austrians determination to get me to do it, which I did not do. Then a few turns later, when they took Tunis and I moved next to it in the Western Mediterranean, I pointed out that they had said I could have Tunis, they simply said no "It is mine."

Asking about the weather and where they went to school or their favorite local football team is also fun. Send the exact message to each one and watch the struggles of the A.I. to come up with answers that are consistent. They do not respond or interact with the messages sent to ALL. so just use cut and paste and send to each one individually.

How well and what style do they play, that would be for another article. In the meantime, get on the waiting list to play against the Robots in full press mode. They can only handle 10 or so games at a time so it could be a wait. The Gunboat games where you are up against 6 Robots are always available as well as one on one games with either France vs Austria or Germany vs Italy.

Talking the Talk: My First Face-to-Face Games

by Cameron Taylor



The recent UK National Diplomacy Championship saw my entry into the world of face-to-face Diplomacy for the first time. This, I have found to be significantly different from my previous experience with one-phase-per-day, text based online games. I began my Diplomacy journey just over a year ago after stumbling upon the Diplostrats YouTube channel. From there finding the DBN and Backstabbr took little time, and, like many of the authors here I imagine, I was instantly hooked. And yet, until recently I had never contemplated playing in person. How was I, playing a game none of my friends had heard of before, going to convince 6 lucky others to sit down for several hours, knowing that someone might have to sit out most of the game if quickly eliminated? My answer came after a quick google search for "Diplomacy players near me", where I learned that the UKNDC was open to all, and thus my mind was made.

My tournament experience mostly involved feeling starstruck by the other players (Mikalīs Kamaritis, Bradley Grace, Dan Lester just to name a few) I'd discovered when first exposed to the hobby. I think I spent most of my time before the first game in a slightly nervous, excited panic, which probably only became more apparent as the first round started. And yet, by the end of the Friday games, I felt completely at ease...still starstruck, but as if I had found a group I had known for years. This feeling of comradery is the main advantage of playing face-to-face: as much fun as online Diplomacy can be, you can't all go down the local pub and talk about it (or anything else) afterwards. The Diplomacy is what you come for, the community is what you stay for.

I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that the social side of the tournament was vital in allowing recovery from the utter exhaustion of the face-to-face games. The different style of a face-to-face game brings a distinctive, refreshing feel to Diplomacy. The phase time limits at UKNDC were about 15 minutes, meaning all talking, thinking and calculations needed to happen at a speed quicker than anything I had done in Diplomacy previously, a speed that needed to be sustained for lengthy periods. I found myself more reliant on gut instincts when trying to visualize tactics, instead of sandboxing them out. Every conversation felt more involved, as you had to read not only the words, but the faces of those you were negotiating with, all while trying to track who else is talking to who. It's chaotic. Yet, with this chaos comes a freedom of how you can negotiate. There were simple nods across the room and attempts to stall negotiations, so they didn't talk to others. At one point, I resorted to saying "Yes, thank you!" loudly in an (unsuccessful) attempt to convince another player a stab was happening. All of this is impossible in the website versions of the game.

Playing face-to-face feels like a more intense, complete, immersive experience. It elevates the victories and makes the losses feel more crushing. Playing in a tournament was a more real and rawer experience than I ever thought I would have; it is Diplomacy the way it was designed to be played in its purest form. UKNDC was one of the most enjoyable experiences I've had and I'm excited to explore more tournaments and conventions and celebrate with more people in this thriving community: my new community.

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



Tournament Victors All-in-One - 2025 Edition

by David Hood



Yes, it's time for my third annual listing of all the Diplomacy tournament winners of whom I am aware, starting in the Virtual Era (2020 forward) so that folk could see at a glance who all had been winning what in the last several years. My plan has been to make this an annual tradition, just adding onto the list from the previous year. Yes, these things can be looked up on the World Diplomacy Reference, for the most part, but I thought it might be helpful to keep this running total for the DW readership.

One particular organizer, Thomas Haver, separated himself from the rest of the Dip hobby many years ago for reasons known only to himself. He prefers to isolate he and his players from the wider hobby, and thus his events are not covered on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network nor listed for DBNI points. I have nevertheless listed his non-teaching events below for the sake of completeness.

It is exciting to see several new entries for late 2024 and throughout 2025, worldwide. There are other new events already scheduled for 2026, including the January premier of the Blazecon tournament in

Baltimore, Maryland. Let us hope that when this list is compiled next year, it will be significantly longer!

So, here are those recent tournament results, in the same random order as the list I published last year, with location of FTF event or location of virtual tournament organizers. I have left off a few events which either were not classic Dip events, which had single digit participation, or which have not run since 2020. I have included online press tournaments as well, but have not added leagues to this list as it is intended to be specifically for tournaments. If I missed any events, I apologize ahead of time and please tell me. Note that quite a few tournaments have not held their 2025 events at the time of this writing (a number of such events are coming up in October/November/December):

Diplomacy Broadcast Network Invitational - Virtual

2025	Mikalis Kamaritis
2024	Peter McNamara
2023	Brandon Fogel
2022	Jason Mastbaum
2021	Peter McNamara

Cascadia - British Columbia/Canada

2025	David Miller (FTF)
2024	Katie Gray (FTF, Also Dipcon)
2023	Riaz Virani (FTF)
2022	Siobhan Nolen (FTF event in July)
2022	Tommy Anderson (Virtual event in January)
2022	Siobhan Nolen (FTF)
2021	Ed Sullivan (Virtual)

Poppycon (replaced in 2024 by Melbourne Open) - Victoria/Australia (FTF)

2025	Tianyu Sun
2024	Jamal Blakkarly
2022	Peter McNamara
2021	Jamal Blakkarly
2020	Peter McNamara

Euro Dipcon - Rotating/Europe (FTF)

2024	Karthik Konath
2023	Jelte Kuiper
2022	Christophe Borgeat
2021	Alex Lebedev

Bangkok Diplomacy Open - FTF/Thailand

2025	Ken Gordon
2023	Jamal Blakkarly (also World Dipcon)
2022	Sascha Heylmann

Boston Massacre - Massachusetts/USA

2025	Hunter Katcher (FTF)
2024	John Bihn (FTF)

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

Carnage - Vermont/USA

2024 David Miller (FTF)
2023 Jason Mastbaum (FTF)
2022 Dan Lester (FTF, also was World Dipcon)
2021 Adam Silverman (FTF event in November, also Dipcon)
2021 Katie Gray (Virtual event in May)
2020 Bill Hackenbracht (Virtual)

Dixiecon - North Carolina/USA

2025 David Miller (FTF)
2024 Karthik Konath (FTF)
2023 Mikalis Kamaritis (FTF, also Dipcon)
2022 Brandon Fogel (FTF)
2021 Karthik Konath (Virtual)
2020 Christian Kline (Virtual)

Regatta - Denver/USA (FTF)

2025 Ed Sullivan
2024 Zachary Moore
2023 Ed Sullivan

WeaselMoot - Illinois/USA

2024 Adam Silverman (FTF)
2023 Adam Silverman (FTF)
2022 Seren Kwok (FTF)
2021 Russ Dennis (Virtual)
2020 John Anderson (Virtual)

Whipping - California/USA

2025 Noam Brown (FTF, also World Dipcon)
2024 Steven Hogue (FTF)
2023 Matthew Crill (FTF)
2022 Tanya Gill (FTF, also Dipcon)
2021 Jason Mastbaum (Virtual)

GenCon - Indiana/USA (FTF)

2025 Greg Vaughan
2024 Robert Zahn
2023 Dan McNeill
2022 Erick Zahn

Origins - Ohio/USA (FTF)

2025 Robert Zahn
2024 Andrew Boyd
2023 Dan McNeill
2022 Geoff Mize

World Boardgaming Championships /Pennsylvania (FTF)

2025 David Hood
2024 Dan Elkins
2023 Robert Zahn
2022 Anton Wilsbach

Spirecon - Chesterfield/UK (FTF)

2025 Gunther Bedson
2022 Bradley Grace

French Championship - Rotating Host Site/France

2025 Christophe Borgeat (FTF)
2024 Maaïke Blom (FTF)
2023 David Thomae (FTF)
2022 Cyrille Sevin (FTF)
2021 Brieuc Thibault (FTF event in November)
2021 Cyrille Sevin (Virtual event in March)

Swiss Open (FTF)

2025 Vincent Reulet
2024 Karthik Konath (also EDC)
2023 Davide Cleopadre

Italian NDC (FTF)

2024 Nicholas Sahuguet (also World Dipcon)
2023 Thomas Haver
2022 Luca Pazzaglia

Olympus Main Event - Online/Extended Deadline/Press

2025 Leonardo S.
2024 Jordan Conners
2023 Bradley Grace

Nexus Main Event - Online/Extended Deadline/Press

Season 9 Cedric Williams
Season 8 Koke Animal
Season 7 Ed Sullivan
Season 6 Greg Matthews

vWDC Summer Classic - Virtual

2025 Maaïke Blom
2024 Johnny Gillam
2023 Seren Kwok
2022 Katie Gray
2021 Seren Kwok

Virtual Diplomacy Championship (VDC)

2024 Jaxon Roberts
2023 Jamal Blakkarly
2022 Riaz Virani
2021 Nicolas Sahuguet
2020 Morgante Pell

Online Diplomacy Championship (ODC)

2023 Red Candle (PlayDiplomacy)

Hung Parliament Handicap (FTF) - Canberra/Australia

2025 Andrew Goff
2024 Leena Hu

Cane Toad Classic (FTF) - Queensland/Australia

2025 Zoe Cameron (also Asia Pacific Championship, or APAC)
2024 Jamal Blakkarly

Skycon (FTF) - Montana/USA

2024 Katie Gray

Diplostats Gauntlet - Online/Extended Deadline

Gauntlet II (finished Sept 2024) - Jamal Blakkarly

Gauntlet I (finished July 2024) - Tim

National Diplomacy Masters (FTF) - Nevada/USA

2025 Dan McNeil

2024 Katie Gray

UK National Diplomacy Championship (FTF) - Warrington/UK

2025 Dan Lester

2024 Dan Lester

Norwegian Diplomacy Championship (FTF) - Oslo

2025 Andreas Krohn

Manorcon (FTF) - Northampton/UK

2025 Nathan Lester

RegensCon (FTF) - Regensburg/Germany

2025 Emily Kramer

Sydney Cup (FTF) - Sydney/Australia

2025 Jamal Blakkarly

Netherlands Diplomacy Championship(FTF)- Groningen/Holland

2025 Wesley Ketchum

2024 Mikalis Kamaritis

Australian Open (FTF) - Canberra/Australia

2024 Peter McNamara

Hechtstechen (FTF) - Dresden/Germany

2024 Cyrille Sevin

Asia Pacific Championship (FTF)

2025 Zoe Cameron (Brisbane/Australia)

2024 Max Wanji Row Banks (Melbourne/Australia)

2023 Chris Brand (Siam Reap/Cambodia)



GenCon Diplomacy Breaks Attendance Records During “Era of Empire” Release

by Thomas Haver

Background

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, our 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 also ran Era of Empire Introduction events next to Diplomacy.

Check out the Legendary Tactics recording of me teaching Diplomacy and Era of Empire at the same time: https://youtu.be/h4he0P5hR_E?si=fwPI_9cuOQ5G1EPo

US Diplomacy Championship

First, a heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated in the Diplomacy event this year. We had 187 unique players during the convention. This is the most all-time for Diplomacy at Gen Con and only 7 off the all-time record for a Diplomacy event (set in 1993 at the French National Championship). We also sold out of Diplomacy Era of Empire in the exhibit hall. Thank you to everyone who purchased the game from Renegade!

The event this year tested my limits at a Tournament Director. Gen Con is typically a two-person show, with one GM focusing on the tournament and another focusing on teaching. I've been handling both for a few years, relying on my regular players to help with setup and teardown. While I greatly appreciate their assistance, our expansion next year means I'll have some additional formal help. That's all because this event is freaking HUGE. Look at some of the associated pictures of me teaching. Try teaching 10 boards worth of players at the same time while a tournament is going on

– it takes a lot out of you. Fortunately, those tournament players have been around for decades and know the rules.

Our tournament had four distinct qualifying rounds. This is a tradition carried over from the 80s and designed to allow players to compete in 1-to-4 rounds to make the Top Board. Some players compete in all four qualifiers, while others are restricted to one chance because of their schedule. I think this is a good system for Gen Con specifically and other large conventions. Gen Con draws 73,000 people per year now. It's so big they've taken over all surrounding hotels and use both the stadium and arena. The stadium is where we made our home.

Two rounds of Diplomacy kicked off the festivities on Thursday on the field at Lucas Oil Stadium. We had a mix of old and new players, and many new signups just for the Era of Empire. We ran the “Diplomacy: Era of Empire” event concurrent with the Diplomacy events this year. Given this was the formal release for Era of Empire, we had many players jump over from Diplomacy and into Era of Empire for a round or two to get the new experience. We had a special giant walkable map available for BOTH Diplomacy and Era of Empire. We put them side-by-side for gameplay. Also new this year were Diplomacy challenge coins! For each tournament we had challenge coins produced that had the convention on one side and the tournament event on the other. We also had four varieties of shirts available for each player. We like to mix competition with silly fun and awesome swag. The Taylor Swift parody “Eras Tour” into “Era of Empire Tour” shirts were the most popular.

We also had a special guest this year: author David Hill. He's most well known in the Diplomacy community for his Grantland article and NPR piece on World DipCon 2014. David and I have been in touch ever since, meeting up at a few conventions over the years. David and his son Gus were playtesters for Era of Empire too. This year, David was at Gen Con writing an article for the Financial Times. He also played a tournament round on Thursday night and watched the Top Board on Saturday night.

In between each round our players go out to dinner with anyone interested from the round. We typically reserve the restaurants months ahead of time because Gen Con is so busy. These planned meals are a great opportunity to meet new people and rehash the tournament round that just finished. We also head out for drinks at the conclusion of each night, with a couple of mainstays on our list (Nicky Blaine's and Pearl Street). At this point,

we've been patronizing these establishments going on twenty years, so many of the long-time employees recognize us. The games themselves are fun enough, but the socialization around the games with people from all over the country is the real benefit of Gen Con.

The final qualifying round on Friday night is typically a frantic affair. Since the scores from all rounds are public knowledge, players are trying to shoot the moon to qualify for the Top Board on Saturday. Sure enough, we had some qualifiers with big scores. Geoff Mize had a solid round as Austria, getting to 14 centers. Jason Rice made best use of his one round by getting 15 centers as England. The most interesting qualifier of the tournament was Phil Burk's 7 centers as Russia. Typically, we see one Power struggle at these events. For whatever reason, across multiple rounds and many boards, players just can't generate a big score. Russia was roughed up this entire tournament, so Phil Burk holding on for dear life at 7 centers was enough to qualify.

The Top Board was once again recorded by Board Game Nation (BGN). Each player got a mic and we had four cameras setup to record the game. We're still pending last year's Top Board footage from BGN because real life got in the way of editing close to 100 hours of combined footage into an hour video, but I hope Gary has time to edit after Battlefront Dayton.

The US Diplomacy Championship is determined by finish on the Top Board by the seven qualifiers. Each player is randomly assigned a Power, and play proceeds until one player solos or the others concede victory. The Top Board this year had one newcomer (Wilson Wendt) and one former champion (Erich Zahn). So a high likelihood of a new champ. In the early stages of the game, the players moved against Geoff Mize's England, landing armies on the British Isles and forcing him into quick defeat. Then Jason Rice's Germany made a stab against Phil Burk's France. Meanwhile in the East, Wilson Wendt's Austria was hard pressed by his neighbors, and joined Mize in the gallery with last year's champion Robert Zahn. The game proceeded into a tight center count back-and-forth among the surviving Powers. First Jason Rice was at the top, then Phil Burk surged back with help from Russia and Italy. It was not their day, as Gregory Vaughan was steadily building his center count in a near unassailable position. He seized the opportunity caused by turmoil in the west to make strong gains. There was a chance earlier in the game to have Robert Lacy's Italy take out Turkey, but the

recovery by France shifted attention. Greg's Turkey moved into position at the right time, and through concession won the day. Congrats Greg!

Diplomacy photo album:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/DBLKsevpxtzgsh1Q9>

Gen Con tournament results:

United States Diplomacy Champion - Gregory Vaughan
2nd place - Robert Lacy
3rd place - Phil Burk
4th place - Jason Rice
5th place - Erich Zahn
6th place - Wilson Wendt
7th place - Geoff Mize

--- Best Country ---

Austria (14) - Geoff Mize
England (15) - Jason Rice
France (14) - Robert Lacy
Germany (12) - Wilson Wendt
Italy (11) - Gregory Vaughan
Russia (7) - Phil Burk
Turkey (12) - Erich Zahn

*Golden Blade - Rob Zahn for a Round 4 stab of Italy, Austria and Russia to board top.

*Best Diplomat - Robert Lacy for assistance before and after every round of the event, including setup for the Top Board arena he was playing in. Special mention to Phil Burk for assisting each round in setup and teardown. Would have been a tie if not for the Top Board assistance.

*WW1 Propaganda Book - Christopher Patrick for outstanding performance in his first event

*Playing at the World volume #1 and #2 - James Sullivan for outstanding performance in his GenCon return

Next year we'll return with another US Diplomacy Championship and more Era of Empire games. We'll also be adding games of "The Golden Blade", the new Diplomacy game scheduled for release in April 2026. Even though we've got 9 rounds of Diplomacy over the "Best 4 Days in Gaming", we still have room for more events. We aim to exceed 200 players at next year's event, so mark your calendars and get your tickets early at <https://www.gencon.com/>.

Never a *Cross* Word

By Archie Duke

Never a **CROSS** word No. 4

ACROSS:

- 1 To refer back about going east to west is like sour grapes. (6)
- 5 Place in southern hemisphere that's hot outside bar between December and February. (6)
- 8 Organise Colonel briefly before he is out of time or dead. (7)
- 9 Celebrate unravelling of lies about charged particle containing atom. (7)
- 11 Push canal boat. (5)
- 12 Sources, reportedly, for plasters and bandages.. (9)
- 13 Backing me might enable result. (7)
- 15 Criticised the German before having expired in confusion. (7)
- 16 This could be used to pull! (7)
- 19 Flier – like Otto or Roland for example. (7)
- 22 Anxious type in all likelihood, sees riveting finish. (9)
- 23 One would no doubt swear if selected. (5)
- 24 It might be abstract, but it isn't art! (7)
- 25 Ena awkwardly takes up role to become queen. (7)
- 26 Said to have run after maiden. (6)
- 27 Reportedly cede seas around middle east. (6)



'We can't keep meeting like this.'

DOWN:

- 2 Riding whip contains key to weapon useful against mounted cavalry. (7)
- 3 Small bit of track. (5)
- 4 Gorge cheese. (7)
- 5 Old weapon offered up by hard gangster before the latter part of November and the beginning of December. (7)
- 6 Wellington begins setting trap – this could pull it off! (9)
- 7 Gave up dropping south but after this ruled.. (7)
- 8 Telegraph wire. (5)
- 10 Sick detectives went absent and relaxed. (5)
- 14 I bond awkwardly amidst troubles offering up cigarettes. (9)
- 16 Pashtun I Support Holds neutral supply centre. (5)
- 17 Desire around successful record is a shade faded. (7)
- 18 Former adjutant finally leads unit of engineers beyond the pale. (7)
- 19 Edges inside Scotland. (7)
- 20 Ordered collective of capitals after acrimony about taking out India. (7)
- 21 Mistake of one of the most violent periods of the French Revolution. (5)
- 23 Aussie jumpers (Small ones!). (5)



'I am just going through the wastepaper basket now.'

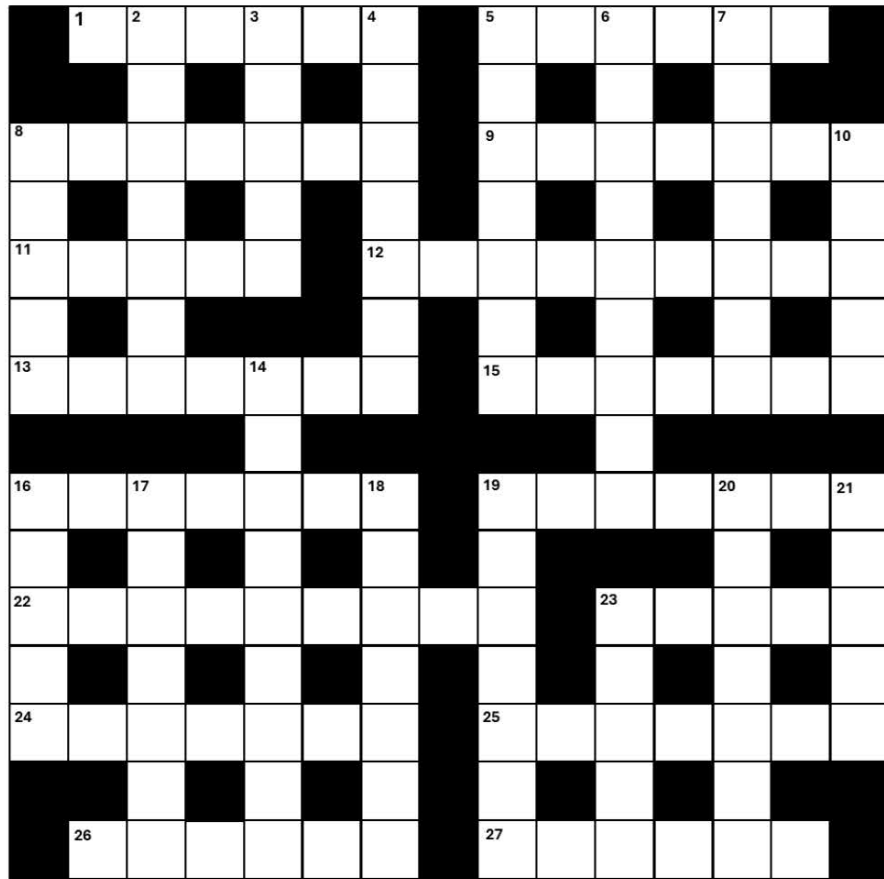
ANSWERS to 'Never a CROSS word' No. 3

ACROSS: 1 Scotch, 5 Brandy, 8 Arsenal, 9 Gateway, 11 Idiot, 12 Champagne, 13 Maginot, 15 Ensured. 16 Victors, 19 Frigate, 22 Declining, 23 Aggro, 24 Abashed, 25 Absinth, 26 Rescue, 27 Kinked.
DOWN: 2 Cashing, 3 Tenet, 4 Hellcat, 5 Baggage, 6 Antipasti, 7 Dowager, 8 Axiom, 10 Yield, 14 Neolithic, 16 Vodka, 17 Cockade, 18 Swindle, 19 Fogbank, 20 Argonne, 21 Epoch, 23 Anson.



'Potted shrimps and broiled lobster to start please and could you pass this to that Turkish johnnie in the corner?'

Never a **CROSS** word No. 4



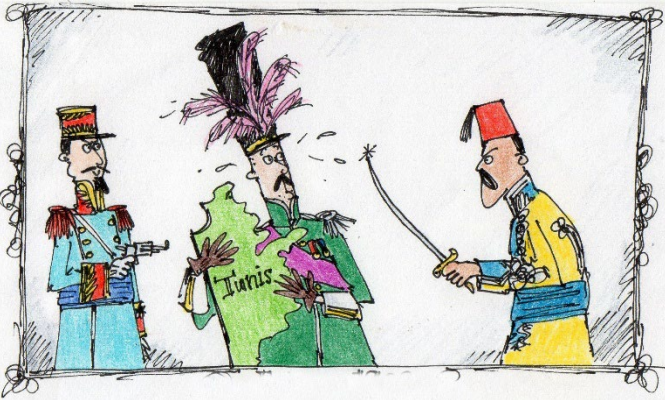
By Archie Duke



Germany fires French
Ambassador after France
assembles Army in the Ruhr.

Making Three a Crowd

by Alex Maslow



In September I taught Diplomacy at Tabletop Utopia, a relatively new board game convention in Connecticut. I've taught Diplomacy at many different cons over the years and I've found Diplomacy is a relatively easy game to teach, mechanically. Every unit can move **one** space, and has a strength of **one**. There are **two** types of units (army and fleet), **three** types of spaces (sea, coastal, and landlocked), **four** types of orders (move, support, convoy, and hold), and up to **five** turns per year (Spring, possible retreat, Summer, possible retreat, and Winter). You can teach the mechanics of the game in 15 minutes.

But the draw of Diplomacy is *not* its mechanics. The real fun of Diplomacy is the player-interaction. The mechanical simplicity is a virtue because, once you know them, you rarely have to give them much thought and can focus on the other players. If someone likes or dislikes the game it has far more to do with their evaluation of the player-interactions than the mechanics.

So, in teaching the game, I can't teach the mechanics and be done with it. But I can't really *teach* the player-interactions. It's difficult to even explain. The interactions have to be personal, otherwise you're just role-playing. You need to play a game to allow space for the relationships to develop (and deteriorate).

Unfortunately, that weekend, I had two learning games with only two people. I would have made three – still far from ideal, and I had only brought the classic board. This is a normal scenario though – it's hard to find seven people who want to learn the game at once. Over the years I've tried different approaches. This time I stumbled onto a set-up for playing with only three people that worked rather well, and I'd like to share it with all of you.

We played as Austria, Russia, and Turkey. Originally, I chose this because three players and four Balkan neutrals meant we would have to contend with a pie that could not be cut perfectly. Looking at the board, I then made another decision, which was much more important. I decided St. Petersburg should be impassable (we covered it with the orders box). This forced Russia to focus on the Balkans, and meant they couldn't just sneak into Scandinavia and grow that way. The rest of the board was normal.

There was squabbling over the Balkans and bounces in the Black Sea. Turkey realized Tunis was available and took it. Austria took Venice, but amid a building RT (they'd stumbled into destroying the Russian fleet) couldn't dedicate more forces into Italy. Russia took Berlin and Munich. Russia and Turkey then realized they had Austria surrounded and squashed him (Me. Squashed me. No newbs were harmed in this game). But there were rough edges to their relationship, and they didn't attack me because "He's experienced and we gotta get him;" The board evolved such that an RT made sense. They were experiencing the heart of Diplomacy.

The second game I decided to try the reverse. What if we were France, England, and Germany? I'll save you the trouble: It worked less well. The neutral centers are more spread out and conflict was able to be avoided longer. I also had Russia and the southeast corner of the map (basically Budapest/Serbia/Albania and eastward) impassable. But that was much more confusing to the new players, and StP being impassable actually gave Germany a huge boost because there was no opportunity for England to sneak behind them. I think there's a way it can work – make Sev/Bud/Ser and everything southeast of those impassable. But that is less elegant than ART and an impassible StP.

I'm surprised how making StP impassable really made the variant work. We had no choice but to talk with each other about how to split 4 centers among 3 players, which inevitably led to unequal deals, misunderstandings, and unintended consequences, all of which are the real core of the game. You can explain those things a lot of different ways, but none of them come close to giving prospective players an opportunity to experience it for themselves. If you find yourself teaching the game to a small group, try this scenario out to give them a chance to experience the player-interactions for themselves.

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, white 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