

# Diplomacy World

## Issue 105 - Spring 2009

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



**The Endgame**

# Notes from the Editor

Some issues of Diplomacy World seem to magically fall together. Articles you never expected arrive in your inbox, and somehow these delicious morsels form a grand and delectable meal. As the Lead Editor, when all is said and done, all the editing has been finished, and the issue has been transferred to pdf format and uploaded to the internet, you sit back in your chair like you've just enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime culinary experience...one which you will replay in your mind hundreds of times in the future.

...and then there are issues where the enjoyment level of begging and pleading for articles, editing, and putting it all together is more like eating a cold bag of fries from some drive-thru fast food joint.

I'm not going to say this issue was quite as bad as all that, but for some reason March seems to have been a very difficult month for people, myself included. As a consequence, finding the energy to develop this into an issue I could be truly proud of was hard to come by. Likewise, the Diplomacy World Staff members whom I have grown to rely on so heavily were short on time, energy, and inspiration. So some of the pieces of the puzzle I hoped to put together don't fit exactly the way they are supposed to. Maybe after serving as Lead Editor for the last two years, I'm finding it more difficult to discover new or exciting topics to write about or request articles on. More likely, it's probably nothing more than real world pressures collectively dampening some of the enthusiasm around here. New blood always helps, so if you haven't written for Diplomacy World before, why not give it a try? And if you have, consider stepping up to the plate and making a commitment as a staff member or a senior writer!

As for this issue of Diplomacy World, I think that even after all my usual hand-wringing and doomsday predictions, things came out pretty well. There's truly a wide selection of articles; something for everyone. Whether you love the tongue-in-cheek reporting of face-to-face players such as Jim O'Kelley or Siobhán Granvold; the technological opinions of Chris Babcock; the strategic scribbling of Joshua Danker-Dake; or any of the other writers this time around, I like to think that while this isn't the issue of Diplomacy World I am most proud of putting together, it isn't the one I'm least proud of either.

I hope that the readership has started to get the hang of the Theme idea we've been using for a while. The purpose of the Theme is to give potential contributors some inspiration for topics to write about. Then we can take those articles and, because they'll deal with similar

topics, they help tie an issue together and make it flow better. Just remember, simply because each issue has a theme does not mean we only want articles which relate to that theme; we generally expect only three or four theme-related articles per issue. Likewise, if you have an article you want to write, and the subject matches a theme for an issue nine months down the road, there is no reason to wait...write it now and send it in, and we'll publish it now (unless you WANT it saved for the theme issue for some reason). In fact, your article might help inspire others to write over the coming months, and it will be **their** material which fills the theme quota in that future issue.

Oh, that reminds me, if you have an idea or suggestion for a theme we might use for an upcoming issue, please let me know. I can always be reached via email at [diplomacyworld@yahoo.com](mailto:diplomacyworld@yahoo.com).

Speaking of the internet, for those of you on Facebook, there is a small but growing Diplomacy World group which you can join. It's really there just for readers to discuss what they enjoy, or don't enjoy, about each issue. Likewise, there is the Diplomacy World Readers forum on Yahoo which you can find at:

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/dwreaders/>

which serves the same kind of purpose. And I always recommend that if you want to be notified about deadlines and the release of each new issue of Diplomacy World, that you join the main Diplomacy World Yahoo forum at:

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/diplomacyworld/>

If you need help figuring any of this out, just let me know.

I'm sure many of you have enjoyed the professional artwork supplied by our Staff Artist, Nemanja Simic. One thing which Nemanja does NOT do for us though, which I'd like to see, are some simple line-drawn Diplomacy-related one-panel humorous cartoons. These used to appear in Diplomacy World and many other Dipzines, but these days I don't see them anywhere. Anybody interested? Email me, or just try a few and send them in!

***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is July 1st, 2009.***

Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So email me! See you in the Summer, and happy stabbing!

## Diplomacy World Staff:

Managing Lead Editor:	Douglas Kent, Email: diplomacyworld of yahoo.com
Co-Editor :	Jim Burgess, Email: burgess of world.std.com
Strategy & Tactics Editor:	Mark Zoffel, Email: zoffel of earthlink.net
Variant Editor:	Jack McHugh, Email: jwmchughjr of gmail.com
Interview Editor:	Jim Burgess, Email: burgess of world.std.com
Club and Tournament Editor:	Jim O'Kelley, jimthegrey1013 of yahoo.com
Demo Game Editor:	Rick Desper, Email: rick_desper of yahoo.com
Original Artwork	Nemanja Simic, Email: nemanja.painter of gmail.com

**Contributors in 2009:** Tom Anthony, Chris Babcock, Jim Burgess, Joshua Danker-Dake, Andrew Goff, Siobhán Granvold, Benjamin Hester, Eric Hunter, Sioraf as Killeens, Jake Mannix, Chris Martin, Jack McHugh, Thorin Munro, Offsuit, Jim O'Kelley, Adam Silverman, Nemanja Simic, Queen Suzanne, Rod Walker, W. Andrew York. **Add your name to the 2009 list by submitting something for the next issue!**

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

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## Themes for Upcoming Diplomacy World Issues:



### Diplomacy World #106: Historical Diplomacy Variants (pre-1900)

**Deadline for #106 Submissions – July 1, 2009**



### Diplomacy World #107: Balance of Power Deadline for #107 Submissions – October 1, 2009



### Diplomacy World #108: Face-to-Face Diplomacy Deadline for #108 Submissions – January 1, 2010

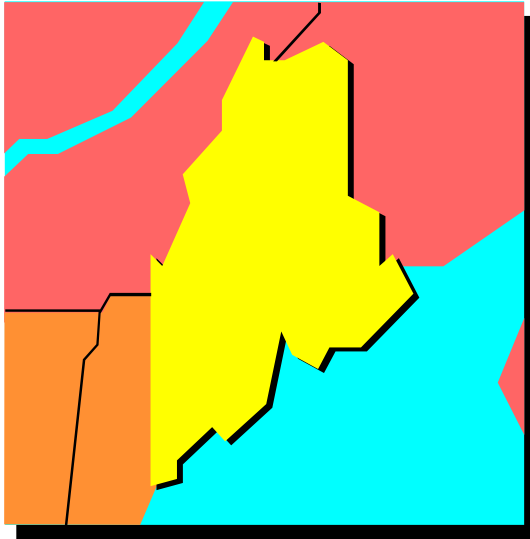
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# The Central Powers System - A Response by "An NADF Player" From the Pacific NW

by Jake Mannix

I'll preface this analysis of the opening / alliance that David outlined in the Winter 2008 Diplomacy World article by first stating that I was not at Bangor when (the erstwhile) DipCon 41 was held, so I didn't see the game David seems to be defending (and in particular have not actually heard about the game in enough detail to know even which power got the solo).



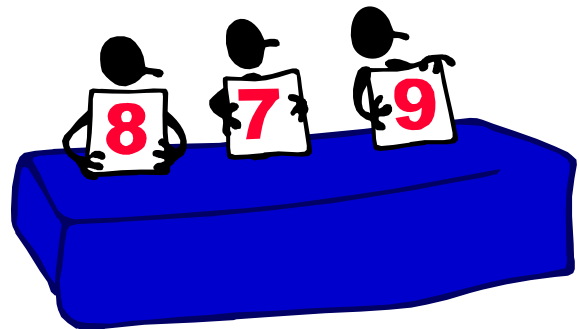
I'd like to also state for the record that such an opening doesn't look at all fixed, for anyone involved (although feeding Holland to France would look pretty odd to me, for reasons that I'll detail below).

At a first glance, the CPS opening looks familiar to me, in parts: EG going all north anti-Russian, even to the point of doing the Silesian move, is uncommon, but not unheard of. The Porcupine + Key Lepanto from AI is slightly less uncommon, but very strong players use it (my Turkish, and Chris Martin's Russian positions were pretty seriously crushed by a similar early stage set of moves by Yann Clouet's Austria and Tom Kobrin's Italy on the championship board at WDC XVII).

Overall, EG going for Moscow and AI taking everything south of that are strong, and leave RT with nothing to do. But it basically completely assumes France is passive, with the only caveats being 1) he's told that he'll be killed by all of EGAI if he does anything naughty, and 2) in exchange, hey, take Holland and hang out in Hol+Bel with two armies, and 3 fleets floating around Iberia. I would seriously love to see what Doug Moore would do with the S'03 French position.

Backing up a bit - I really have very little problem with the AI moves in this - help Germany into Russia, fine:

he's over-extended, and EF will probably smash him soon. But that's the point, really: what is E/F doing in all of this? England has done all of this work, given Belgium and Holland to France (to build fleets!), to get what? StP, of all things? I've played England on boards where AI is a tactically superior and diplomatically safe set of allies, and if you leave Russia alone, trust me, they are \*supporting\* your army over from Nwy - StP just to spite AIG (and asking "Will you pretty please support my one remaining army in Moscow with that unit from now on, to make sure They don't get it?"). This rabid anti-Russian strategy from England used to be fairly common in Seattle, but I've rarely seen it do well. What's better? Aim for StP weakly, keep a few units back nearer to home (say to AIG: "I'm not sure I trust France to remain passive - I'll keep these away from our German pal"), ready to be used to England's benefit in EFG squabbling that will almost assuredly come before David's analysis indicates.



Next up: what are France and England doing \*diplomatically\*? Why on earth are they content to push for an early RT exit, the natural balancing powers to keep AIG in check later in the game? Again, certainly this kind of play used to be common in Seattle, especially where scoring systems at tournaments were very "kill-based" (smaller draw -> more points, pretty much regardless of the number of supply centers everyone has), as France is happy to see the potential draw size shrink not at their expense. But if you're paying for your own growth (and eventual solo shot)? As soon as Germany is stretched out to Warsaw and StP is in England's hands (and probably before), England and France are discussing when they eviscerate Germany together. Personally, looking at the theoretical board after the W1902 builds, if they went as described, as either France or England, I would be negotiating A Nwy - Nth - Den, F Bar-Nwy, with England offering to make peace with Russia and hold his line: StP S Mos, Mos S StP; combined with France possibly \*not\* doing "all hold", and instead unleashing the cannons: F MAO - NaF, F Spa - Wes, F Mar-GoL, A

Gas - Bur, A Bel - Ruh, A Hol S Bel-Ruh (or dive for Kiel - hey, maybe he's convoying to Lvn or something?). France has 3 fleets to Italy's two (in the right position), with a Turkey still alive and kicking to cut supports from the other side (see how E/F are happy now to have kept Russia and Turkey alive?). F Eas-Ion is even more valuable than A Mos S StP), and Germany will be losing 2 out of Den+Kie+Mun in the upcoming fall (and then the remaining one the following year, together with Warsaw most likely going to either Austria or Russia). The build France gets from Germany fuels another fleet into the Med, unless France is pretty sure that Austria will be stabbing Italy soon (which isn't too unlikely, seeing Austria's reduced chance of gains in the east with Germany no longer at Russia's throat and Italy having to pull off of Turkey).

I'm not saying that is the only way this would shake down, but in general, the statement that a strong French player would take "all hold" as the 1903 moves when you're sitting on 7 centers is craziness. Maybe England really is an anti-Russian bigot of the Buz Eddy school of Diplomacy, so you can't count on England turning out of the AIGE alliance... then how about 1903 turning with Germany against England? S1903: F Swe-Ska, F Bal-Den from Germany (while still taking Moscow with England's support!), while France goes Mao-Eng, Por-Mao, Spa-Por, Mar-Spa, Gas-Bre. Those fleet moves alone, if England does as David describes for the S1903 moves, guarantee that Nth is held by Germany, and Wales by France, not to mention the unenviable choice F NAO must make for the fall, with F Mao - Iri/Nao, F Por S Spa-Mao coming up while the convoy to Wales drops in.

Or what if EG are twin brothers, both from Seattle and love to kill Russian players? Then still, France can tell them, "Err, hey guys, maybe we could kill even more folk? Why let AI kill Turkey while you guys take out Russia, when we could probably just kill all three of them?", and do a traditional serious Western Triple, where France actually *uses* those fleets shooting for the med, S'02: F Spa-Wes, F Por-Spa(sc), F MAO-Naf: two fleets on Tunis, forcing Italy to use both to cover for the fall, leaving nothing to cover Spa-Gol which can be used to break the deadlock, taking Tys+Tun in '03. Now just creep an army along the Mar-Pie-Ven coast and wait for Turkey to break any stalemates set up by AI in the middle.

Alternately, in games where I've seen EG vs R and AI vs T (and R), the English, German, and Italian players understand what I've described above, and put their remaining, bored units to good use: they kill France *while* killing Russia and Turkey, which isn't hard to do if you don't give Belgium and Holland to the French.

My overall points being: 1) killing Russia helps England basically not at all, 2) letting R/T get pushed out of the game is *completely* out of line with France's best

interests, and most importantly, 3) Sitting back and doing nothing is never the right move: France simply cannot play this passive, and would not, if they know what they are doing. They shouldn't just stab willy-nilly, but all they have to do is pick *one* target out of EIG, and pick any one of England, Germany, or both, to join him, and this "central powers" quickly devolves into something completely different (or else, to pre-empt this, two of EGI actively attack France, with the third remaining neutral), to the point of it being hard for me to imagine what sort of play style leads to it being commonplace.

***Jake begins this article by pointing out that he is referring to a particular game, and that he wasn't sure who took the solo on that board. For the record, and the sake of clarity, in the game that Jake is referring to which took place in Bangor, Maine, France is the nation which took the solo victory. I believe the lineup (and someone feel free to correct me if I'm wrong, as I wasn't there either) was David Webster as France, Dennis Hutchins as Germany, Jake Massey as England, Calvin Patterson as Italy (those four being "Bangorians"), "Father Mike" as Austria, Jim Burgess as Turkey and Chris Campbell as Russia.***



**PAINTINGS,  
ILLUSTRATIONS,  
PORTRAITS,**

as well as original drawings from Diplomacy World are available for purchase directly from the artist



**Nemanja Simić**

E- mail:

nemanja.painter@gmail.com

See the complete gallery at

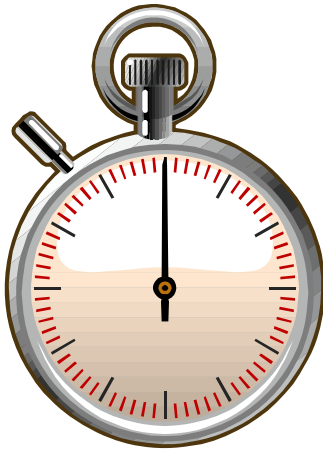
**<http://klint.deviantart.com>**



# Some Thoughts on the Benefits of No-Press Diplomacy for Face to Face Play

By Chris Martin

I make no secret of the fact that I consider online Diplomacy to be, at best, a weak substitution for the *real* game. To my mind, there is very little relationship between the experiences: an intense combination of strategy, tactics, persuasion, and decision making that players undergo when playing over a board with fifteen minute deadlines and the disembodied, leisurely, time-pressure-free back and forth of games with more than twenty-four hours – and as much as a week, or more – to negotiate, evaluate, plan, analyze, etc. Your Mileage May Vary, of course, and I don't intend this as a polemic against internet play (though if I inspire a few people to get out from behind their computers and play a game of Dip with friends, that wouldn't be the worst thing ever), in fact quite the opposite. I wish to point out that the tactical exercise offered by playing no-press diplomacy offers very real benefits that can carry over to your face to face play. I contend, however, that for you to reap the benefits of no-press, you have to treat the game as you would a real-time situation – get the results, look at the map, make a decision, and submit your orders for the next phase. Set a timer for five or ten minutes (MUCH longer than you would get to look over the board in face to face) and submit your orders before the timer expires.



At first glance, this strategy might seem to put you at a serious disadvantage. You are playing against others who, at least hypothetically, can take as much time as they need to analyze positions, set up decision squares, work out the Nash equilibriums for each player's position (I'm looking at you, Jim Bob. Or is that David Norman? I can't tell *because its no-press*). Indeed, you may well find that your initial results are not as good as they might have been, if you had taken more time. This, however, is the very thing for which you should prize the experience – where was your initial analysis lacking? What mistakes do you make, and why do you make

them? Are you too trusting of your “allies?” Are you disinclined to take necessary risks? Do you overvalue certain positions? When looking at possible attack/defense combinations, are there opportunities that you regularly fail to consider?



This is the kind of exercise that really matters for the Face to Face player. This will enable you to better see the results, understand the implications of the moves – ABSENT any diplomatic maneuvering – and adjust your tactics accordingly. So many players fail to understand the implications of builds/removals, or the way in which the map's geography directs mid-game play, or get caught up in the webs of misdirection which capable diplomats weave. Obviously, what other players say matters – the trick is to be able to check what they are saying against what they are doing, and make sure they line up. Similarly, there will come a time in no-press games when a position seems to call for longer analysis; however, if you are using the game as a means to improve your ability to quickly analyze the board, you should still read the results, look at the map, and send in orders within five minutes. Then, if you want, you can second guess yourself.

**Chris Martin has won numerous face to face tournaments, including the 1998 world championships and the 1999 North American Grand Prix (not to be pronounced in the French manner). Chris is currently ranked 3rd in the 2008 Vermont Group No-Press tournament. And the Co-Editor, at whom this article is partly aimed, takes the author's point as exceedingly well argued. Visualizing the board to make quick judgments is a skill we can all continually improve on. No-Press on!**

# Australian Diplomacy Championship 2009

by Thorin Munro

The 2009 Australian Diplomacy Championship was held in Sydney, Australia from January 24<sup>th</sup> through the 26<sup>th</sup>. Over three days, and 13 games, the active and growing Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy hobbies showed – once again – that Diplomacy was best meant to be played in person, where battles could be fought while new friendships were discovered.

## Day 1 Summary – “HOT HOT HOT”

Sydney put on scorching, humid weather for the first day of the Championship. The community center air conditioning was not able to combat the summer heat. So the games became not just a battle of diplomatic skills, but also a real test of stamina. Opening up registration at 9am, we quickly found ourselves with enough players to fill three boards. By 10am we had 26 signed in, and were ready to go. There was a genuine feeling of 'now *this* is a **real** tournament'.

I gave a quick welcome, including a thank you to Sean Colman and Seropeco for the incredible first prize (a trip to Columbus, Ohio for World DipCon). It's the third year his game company has sponsored the event in this magnitude. Our other sponsor is a boutique drinks company, Springleaf Ice Tea, and as it turned out the fridge full of tea was demolished over the heat-wave!



**Shane starts the day with a cold beer as Thorin welcomes everyone, and newcomer Gavin wonders what he's got himself into!**

And so the gaming began. Three games got underway immediately. Two completely new players (Leena and Gavin) were paired with experienced players, and tagged along with them to learn about the game. This proved to be a very successful way of easing first timers into Diplomacy.

The fourth game, with the remainder of players, started at 12 noon, with two early eliminations getting back onto

the saddle. A fifth and sixth game were started later in the afternoon.



**A game in progress: Kim Colman, Jake Cruyws and Leena Hu**

There was actually one solo in the first round, in the game nicknamed “Esk.” Something must have got Andrew Goff, the defending champion, very motivated. He controlled the game from the outset as Germany and scored a HUGE 23sc....in 1908! What can I say? My distant observation was that Goffy managed to eliminate his main rivals in the West - Peter McNamara's England and Lachlan Scarf in Russia - and dived across the stalemate line into Tyrolia, and then into an undefended Venice. From there he just kept rolling. Will Black's Austria got to 10sc in 1905, but then it was all downhill, left holding 1sc at the finish. The lurking Turk, Chris Hennessy, picked up 7sc as a very minor consolation. Everyone around the board looked completely exhausted from the game and the heat. Except the cheeky, cheerful maestro, Mr. Goff! Well played.



**Yes, that's 23 German centers.**



We stopped play around 6pm, and everyone headed to the local hotel for well earned cold drinks, dinner and more board gaming. We were all looking forward to a cool change in the weather.

### Day 2 Summary – A Cool Change

The quote of the day came from by Lachlan Scarf, at the pub after the second day's play. "You guys are just like my Uni mates, only older!" Scarfy, those twenty years fly by quickly ☺

Thankfully, a cool change did blow into Sydney overnight, and Day 2 was greeted by very pleasant playing conditions. Much of the sweating returning to where it's meant to be: over the game moves and fickle alliances!

Two additional players arrived: Sean 'Crusher' Phelan and Chris Goff, taking the total attendance to 28 over the two days. Five games were completed, and remained in progress. That isn't counting Ticket to Ride Europe during the day, and Attika and Power Grid down at the Summer Hill Hotel. That's where I left about a dozen people: playing games, drinking beer and attracting comments from curious patrons and staff. Maybe Scarfy was right on the money after all.

There were no solos during Day 2, but a number of two-way draws. As the gaming drew to a close, Goffy still had a commanding lead on the scoreboard, with Steve Lytton a distant second.

### Day 3 Summary – Can he do it?

The big question on Day 3 was whether anyone could catch last year's champion? He held a solid lead with a solo already on the scoreboard. The rest of the field was largely left fighting for minor positions and best country awards.



"Rottnest" in progress with kibitzers. L to R – Sean Colman, Thorin Munro, Leena Hu, Peter McNamara, Steve Lytton. Unknown back.

"Rottnest" was the 5th game Goffy played in the tournament, and he was keen to secure anything other than an elimination to cement his lead. Drawing and playing a patient Italy, he gained 8sc by game end. JC (R/1) had a strong alliance with Gabriel (T/6) before the wheels fell off with a couple of unfortunate orders and a misplaced fleet in St Pete. Steve Lytton (E/8) made a shaky start down to 3sc in 1902, fought on in alliance with F-G, and persevered. Leena (G/3) rounded off an incredible first tournament, going from zero experience to being capable of mixing it with very strong opposition. Overall, an excellent new student of the game.

So when the dust settled and the results were tallied, Andrew Goff had won the Australian Championship for the second consecutive year. An incredibly consistent performance and the first time anyone has won back to back Australian Championships. When taking into account his overall success in tournaments in 2008, Goffy is *the form* Australian player. He will now represent Australia at the World Diplomacy Championship in Columbus, Ohio later in the year, courtesy of generous sponsorship by Seropeco games. In all there were 28 players and 13 games played.



Third Place: Bill Brown, First Place: Andrew Goff, Second Place: Thorin Munro (and Sean Colman)



Best Novice Leena Hu (13<sup>th</sup>) with Sean and Thorin



**Best Country winners: Thorin, Shane, Bill, Goffy, Will, Liam, Sean**

Best country winners were:

Best Austria Shane Cubis (13)

Best England Tristan Lee (16)  
 Best France Bill Brown (16)  
 Best Germany Andrew Goff (Solo)  
 Best Italy Will Black (10)  
 Best Russia Bill Brown (15)  
 Best Turkey Liam Cosgrave (11)

Following the completion of the presentation ceremonies, there were clearly many people who had made new friends and thoroughly enjoyed themselves through the intensity of the tournament. I look forward to seeing everyone (and their Diplomacy playing friends) same time, same place in 2010...if not sooner at one of the 2009 ANZ tournaments.

***Thorin Munro was the Tournament Director for the Australian Diplomacy Championships. The full results and a more detailed, game-by-game summary of the tournament, are available at [www.daanz.org.au](http://www.daanz.org.au)***

## Ask the GM

### An Advice Column for Diplomacy World

Dear GM:

I am stuck in a variant I think is terrible. I don't want to resign but I also don't want to finish this dog of a game out. What should I do?

Variant Blues

*Dear Blues:*

*What kind of a Diplomacy player are you that you can't end the game throwing your centers to a neighboring power??? Anyone who is not a complete Diplomacy dolt should be able to do this. Your inability makes me wonder if you shouldn't go back to less challenging games like Operation or Hungry Hippo.*

*Your Pal,*

*The GM*

Dear GM:

Although I didn't attend last year's DipCon, I believe it was poorly run. Even though it was run according to the

then current DipCon charter, I invalidated it and stripped the current DipCon committee of their right to setup this year's con, although I had no real authority to do this. How should I explain this to the hobby at large so it doesn't look like a naked grab for power?

Hobby Busybody

*Dear Busybody:*

*Clearly you've not played enough Diplomacy if you are dumb enough to ask me for advice for such an easy question. All you have to do is wrap yourself in the cloak of "protecting the hobby" and call some kind of kangaroo court where you and your allies can safely pack the bench and jury to get the outcome you want. Now stop bothering me with such easy questions and get back to running your UberDiplomacy schemes.*

*Your Pal,*

*The GM*

***Got a question for Game Master? Send it to [gamemaster "of" diplomacyworld.net](mailto:gamemaster@diplomacyworld.net) and maybe it will appear in a future issue of Diplomacy World!***

# SF Whipping Diplomacy Tournament

## April 17-19, 2009

*Friday: Round at 7pm*

*Saturday: Rounds at 9am and 6:30pm*

Sunday: Round at 9am, Awards ~4pm



Hotel Tomo in San Francisco  
1800 Sutter (between Bush and Geary)  
For more info contact: [adam.silverman@gmail.com](mailto:adam.silverman@gmail.com)



# Taking Your Game to the Next Level

By Andrew Goff

Diplomacy is a game which repeatedly challenges even the best players to improve their game, throwing down the gauntlet as new ideas impede accepted strategies and new players bring different attitudes and styles to the game. Apart from questions of motivation, the reason why extended periods of dominance are so uncommon is linked to this: other players will have their attitude changed by someone winning even one tournament, and the strategy used to win is usually examined and that pathway to victory closes a little.



This can be very frustrating for anyone who has ever won a tournament, but is often unfathomable to a newer player. Unfortunately, new players still have to deal with this as it changes the game just as they are learning it. Unlike learning a sport, where your skills can develop in a stable environment, Diplomacy challenges you to learn in a dynamic environment and this contributes to the very steep learning curve.

The biggest challenge is that we are not taught how to learn in this environment – the rules of high school math and English do not change under our feet! This article, while not professing to teach you how to learn in another manner, will hopefully challenge you to see the game from different perspectives. Hopefully it will also challenge you to think beyond “how should I open?” or “what is the best way to play this country” to questions that address the “why” and the underlying concepts of the game.

## Concept One: Opening Grooves not Opening Moves

NEWSFLASH: There is no best set of opening moves.

You heard me, “the best” opening move is a creature of mythology. There are “favorite” opening moves, and “standard” opening moves, and the idea of a “best” set of opening moves. All three of these concepts lead to poor

play.

The novice mistake is to search for one “the best”, but this is in fact the easiest opening disease to cure! Most players will throw the idea out once they get towed a few times after using it. Some will get stuck on this concept, constantly seeking a best move, convinced they just haven’t found the right one yet. This attitude, in practice, degenerates into “the favorite” as described below – though the person may be more annoying as they try and sell their favorite as “the best”!

Much more dangerous to improving your play are “the favorite” and “the standard”. The reason for this explains why there is no “best” move as well; it is because the opening is not an exercise in tactical movement, but acts as the scene setter for the strategies for the game and, critically, the negotiation mechanics between the players.

A “favorite” opening move is also a weakness because it often ties a player into a pre-determined negotiation and strategy plan in order to make that move. Do you love opening Mos – StP? Then every time you draw Russia you will find yourself negotiating in order to make that move possible. You have locked yourself into a strategy regardless of what else is happening on the board. Ask yourself “What opportunities am I missing from doing this?” and you should find that you have closed a lot of doors all in the name of trying to open the one you are aiming for... and if that one is locked, where will you now go?

However limiting “favorite” openings may be, “standard” openings are even worse traps for intermediate players. Yes, they are standard for a reason, but if I see one more Italian opening with a Lepanto with the sole reasoning being “it’s the standard opening” I might just cry. The trap here is that you are not thinking about your opening. You might be doing exactly the wrong thing, or it might be the perfect move for the game... but opening the standard way regardless of other factors is foolish. It is, from my experience, the number one way very good players dominate boards: recognizing when the standard opening was misused.

So “What should I do?” I hear you all ask! My very strong advice is to look beyond the moves, and into the groove of the game. In your openings, talk to the other side of the board as well as yours trying to find out what they are up to; use your intuition as well as tactics – a great example of this is the underused Turkish Opening of [Con – Bul, Ank – Bla, Smy – Syr] when you feel an AIR alliance is forming – it’s a shock opening which aims to stir things up while also defending strongly against an Italian Lepanto without threatening back. It combines a



clever tactical move with the intuitive need to shake things up. A standard opening here would simply solidify the AIR alliance. Of course, if you were to open like this in a game where a strong RT alliance was likely you would have made a shocking opening!

Another example is in negotiation: when you are playing newer players there is no need to go to the fine details of "how do you see this game going?" and so forth – just ask them what their favorite opening is! If you can then facilitate that happening you will more than likely find an ally! Your opening becomes absolutely a tool of negotiation to the point where the moves almost don't matter.

### **Concept Two: Liar Liar Pants On Fire**

Diplomacy players lie too much. And no, I'm not taking an ethical stand or just trying to stop you lying to me! I'm serious, Diplomacy players lie way way too much.

The rules of Diplomacy expressly allow lying, and many players therefore feel that this gives them free reign to lie non-stop start to finish, or assume that because the rules allow something it therefore should be done and/or will have no consequences. This is of course ridiculous! The rules of Baseball allow you to intentionally walk a batter, but you don't see pitchers doing it all the time just because they can.

A lie is your most powerful weapon in a Diplomacy game. It can and should define the game. I aim to tell no more than two lies in a game of Diplomacy, and even then only if they are needed. Most experienced and successful players would be unlikely to tell more than that. When and how to let a real stinker out there is a subject for another time, and this concept is easy to learn from. Randomly (say about once in every 5 games you play), do not tell a lie. Don't even deceive or omit or trick or anything. Just be honest. You'll need to plan very differently, and you'll find it very hard. But it can be a very valuable learning experience to find other ways to be successful which you can then take back to the rest of your game.

### **Concept Three: $X \text{ minus } X \text{ equals } 2X$**

I can hear you all saying "well he's got that wrong hasn't he". But let me expand on the idea a little for you. Every action has an equal reaction. If you gain "X" then someone is losing "X" somewhere else.

A very strong Australian player from the 80s called Luke Clutterbuck codified this idea and used it as a basis for his decision making. To take the simple tactical example, If I as England take Belgium I get "+Bel". If I take it from the French, they get "-Bel". If I am at war with the French, the net benefit to me is not one, but 2 centers. Of course, I don't get all the benefit – Italy or Germany may also be attacking, so it could be  $1 \frac{1}{3}$  for me and

$\frac{1}{3}$  each for them. This is a very oversimplified example, but it goes to show the principle.

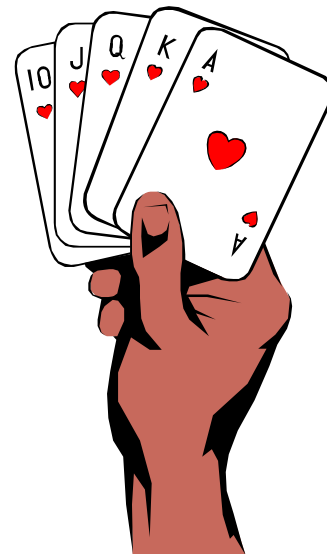
Now, apply that principle. Take it beyond the tactical, into the strategic. My pet hate will serve as a good example. Germany is considering bouncing Russia in Sweden in Fall 1901, should he? In no more than 1000 words justify your answer using this methodology. Best three to be published next issue!

Of course, this methodology is very limited and has since been discredited as a holistic playing guide, but the principle of looking at the "reaction" as well as the "action" is one that is inherent and powerful in all multi-player board games.

### **Concept Four: the Poker Player's Guide to Guessing Right at Diplomacy**

How many times have you been in fifty/fifty guess situations and just guessed? Oh dear, that's too many.

The "50/50" guess is never just what you see on the board. There are three other considerations: Is there a better way to win? Is there a better way to lose? And can I find out what the other player is doing?



In many cases, a 50/50 leads to a next turn where winning one way is substantially better than winning the other. Classically this occurs around stalemate crunch positions such as MAO, Ion and Tyl. If winning Tunis means the other player then defends everything else you may even be better off losing the guess to keep the situation alive! Most players consistently miss this!

The same is true in reverse, but far more critically. Many stalemate lines break not because they couldn't be held, but because the defenders over-reached and left themselves with three 50/50 guesses in a row rather than conceding the first and locking the line. Again, why defend Tunis and risk all of Italy? Just chuck Tunis away

and become immovable!

Both of the above examples are commonplace, but look at every guess to see if there is actually a better move to make than just guessing. Poker players do this all the time. If poker were only about who had the best cards it would be far less interesting! Good poker play means trying to get the most out of the situation, not just “guessing” if you have the better cards; it’s never a black and white picture and the same applies to diplomacy “guesses”.

If you see where this analogy is going it will come as no surprise that the third point is also strongly applied in poker. You never just guess. You gather information, you look at body language and you try and influence the other player to make a mistake. The number of times I’ve elicited ridiculous moves by insisting a situation was a 66/33 instead of a 50/50 is astonishing. The number of players who will give away their moves by staring at the point they are leaving weak will blow your mind.

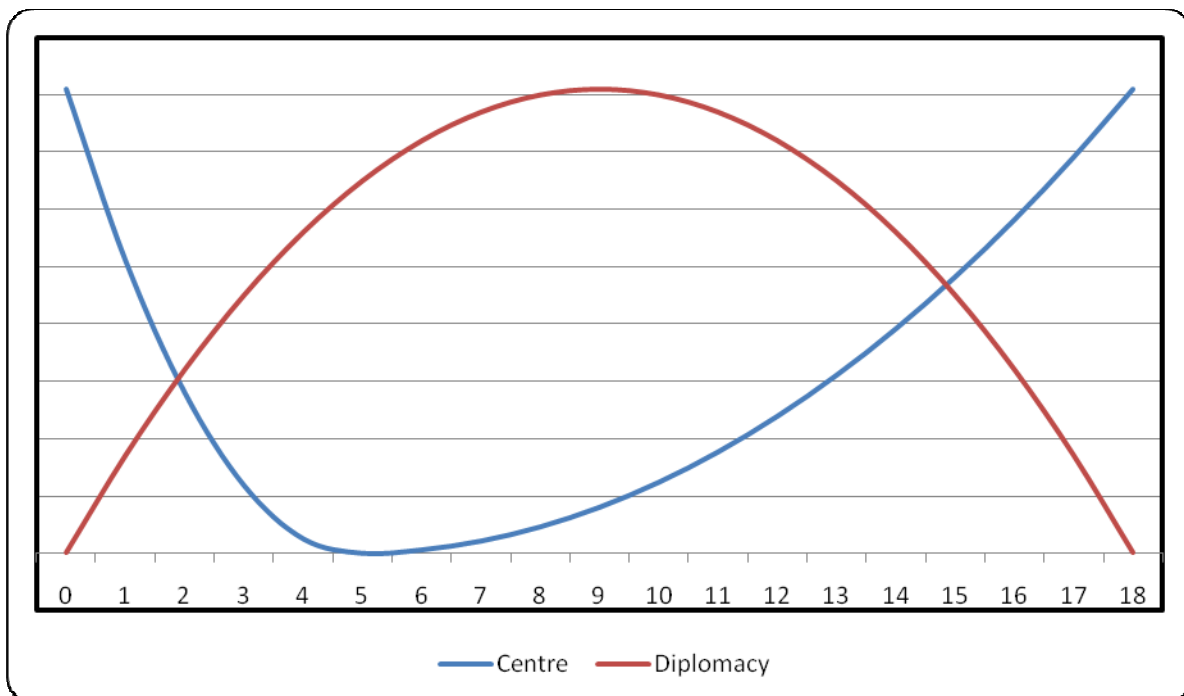
Table talk can fluster people beyond belief; even asking for confirmation of orders close to a deadline from the other side can be hilarious! If nothing else it increases tensions in the other person, but often you will get a dead giveaway gifted to you from this kind of thing. This all of course cuts both ways. So misdirect where you can! Then mis-misdirect... and suddenly 50/50 guesses start looking more like poker and less like luck by the minute.

### Concept Five: Relativity and Perception

Diplomacy is a game of perceptions and relationships. I love asking newer players what an “average” game of Diplomacy is, because they always get it “factually” wrong!

In Australia, where we are heavily centre-based in perception, the average game of Diplomacy is, of course, 34 divided by 7 (aside: funny how the average game of Diplomacy is irrational). If it were where you finished it would of course be fourth place. But ask someone and they will say “eight or nine” or “3<sup>rd</sup> place”. Most players would consider a true average game to be a bit of a failure!

This creates an interesting dichotomy whereby there are two “centre points” of the game: a psychological one and a tactical one. This splits the game into two conceptual elements of value – supply centers (and tactical position) and diplomatic advantage (such as trust, alliances, etc). The value of each changes for each player throughout the game. A player about to be eliminated \*should\* be burning every diplomatic advantage they have in order to stay in the game – the value of one centre is infinite and diplomatic advantages are meaningless. Likewise going from 17 to 18. Conversely, going from 6 to 7 is almost meaningless by comparison to the Diplomatic advantages that will drive future growth. I know this is a bit heavy so try this graph on for size:



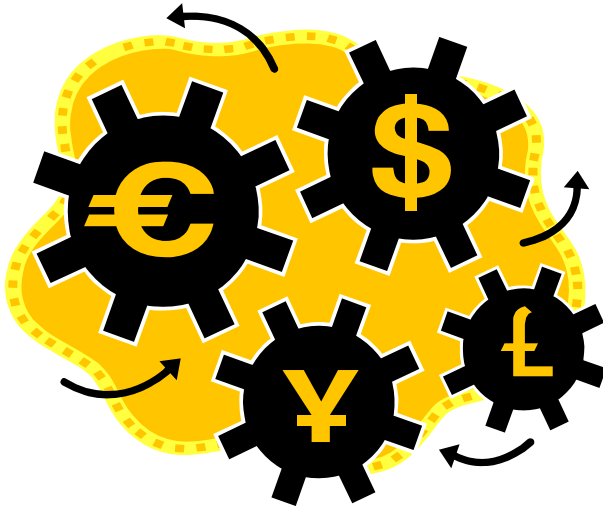
Just as a visual aide, use the graph to see what matters at a given moment. Or, I should say, a given moment for a given player. Relativity kicks in brutally here, and the dynamic of the game can be expressed as players

exchanging “Blue” for “Red” in the graph above depending on the situation. The inherent bargaining in the game could be said to be based around the conversion of the two.

Once again, this idea is not original and has flaws – but rather than me point them out think it through!!! What are the weaknesses that mean a system based on this can be taken advantage of?

### Concept Six: It's The Economy, Stupid...

...and in Diplomacy economy means tempo. Moving efficiently is so essential to the game some people base all their tactical decisions around it. We'll get to that shortly.



First, what is tempo? Tactically it is simply how quickly you can move – Par – Bur – Mun is faster than Par – Pic – Bel – Ruh – Mun. Tempo is best when combined with the understanding of “exponential gain”: that the faster I have grown the more capable of further growth I am. If I have 5 units, I have 5 potential tempo, whereas if I have 15 I have 15 tempo. I am more powerful!

Tempo is deeper than that though. Critically it identifies how you lose tempo, primarily through bouncing, having the wrong unit types, and having “unusable units”. The classic case of tempo would be England having a useless fleet stuck in Barents having just taken StP and now requiring that fleet to take Tunis. That's a lot of wasted moves before it can be useful!

Tempo theory has had a lot written about it and it is a very useful concept, and I recommend you read up on it and judge for yourself. But I find it fatally flawed because it never draws a strong link between the tactics of tempo and what it imperatively means you should do. Saying “going slowly is bad so you should go faster” doesn't tell me how... nor most importantly which way to go. I won't sabotage it or misrepresent it any further – get out there and read about it from an advocate.

Don't think that economy doesn't also apply just as strongly to other Diplomacy – be quick and direct in your negotiations and you effectively negotiate more than the

other players! Create distractions... if the other players are wasting their energy (on the board or off it) then you have an advantage.

### Concept Seven: The Psychology of Winning

The one sole thing all diplomacy players who win consistently share is psychology. The great Rob Stephenson once commented to me that “it is easy to get to the top; the hard part is staying there”. Sure, the motivation to win just so you can nail the world to the wall is enough to get to the top for many people, but to stay on top you need to do more.

There are generally three ways this is done:

- 1) Positive
- 2) Negative
- 3) Pure, unadulterated psychosis

Yep, you heard me right, psychotic people can consistently win Diplomacy. I will bravely assume that you aren't psychotic, so we can rule that out... but be aware some people who play this game are.

Most consistently great players derive their motivation from negatives. I have no hesitation saying that my need to win is driven by the habitual caning I got when I first played in tournaments as a teenager. I needed to be accepted as an equal of the adults, and as a result the Australian hobby bred a monster. I (hope I) have moved beyond that initial motivation, but the need to tick all the boxes still motivates me – I am not a complete Diplomat till I win that World DipCon (and etc..).

Some people are motivated by positive things. There are not as many of these, and it is important to note that it is not a “better” motivator. Positively motivated players are far more likely to share their motivations because they are far more likely to be honest with themselves about them.

This all leads to two things: what is your motivation? And what are your opponents' motivations? Gaining an understanding of what is driving others is critical to manipulating them. I can't be nice about that. If you want to use someone leveraging their motivations is the number one way to achieve it. Likewise, being aware of yours will stop you being manipulated – and I don't mean what you say they are, but the underlying ones.

Of course, many players lack motivation and won't win. If you don't want to win for some reason, find one! It's not hard to find something, but drifting is not a way to win.

Finally, dealing with the psychos (especially the talented ones) is a skill in itself... but the key remains motivation. Think “Silence Of The Lambs”... how would you beat Hannibal (and would he be a very good Diplomacy player)?

### Concept Eight: Convoy/Move/Support/Hold

Convoys are better than moves. Moves are better than supports. Supports are better than holds.

### Concept Nine: Everything you have read about alliances is wrong

Well, not everything, but up to a point you are wrong. I shall be terse. It is not the best play to ally with the best player, the worst player, the player in the lead, the central power, the corner power, the power earlier in the alphabet, the girl, the old guy, the local, the player with more armies, or the person who drinks the most.



In particular, it is disgraceful to support the leader getting further ahead. You'd have to be out of your board gaming mind to do that... but people do. Don't be one of them.



Oh, and girls, work it. Diplomacy players by and large will ally with girls because they like girls. Even some of the best ones! If some dummy wants to give you all their centers because you are a girl, more power to you.

### Concept Ten: The First Rule of Diplomacy Club...

Is that the best players always keep some tricks to themselves. They will not share all, nor should they be expected to. So the critical point here is to learn from them. Don't just give up. Learn from the guy who beats you. While there is no substitute for being on 14 centers yourself for learning how to deal with it, looking at the game from the perspective of someone who is – asking yourself how you would act, watching how the person concerned acts, and then analyzing if you could have done better and what you really liked about how it panned out.

Players in the lead are always a good mark, but watch the good players when they lose just as much. I had the pleasure of watching Toby Harris get ripped to pieces as Austria at World DipCon last year, but his fight and play was superb and I learnt a lot from it. He finished on three in a situation where I would have been eliminated, so I must therefore have something to learn from the situation.

The best will not give it all away, but they will put it all out there for you to see. The best leave it all on the field; you just have to pay attention to each and every game you are in to fill in the pieces. All the best players adapt their game continually. I won the last two Australian Championships by playing totally different styled games!

The learning never stops and your game should constantly be evolving. And on that note we are back to where we started. Think about your game, you must keep learning to keep winning.

You may not agree with all (or any) of the above concepts. I don't! The point is that they should make you think about the game beyond where to move Munich next time you draw Germany.

I promise next time I'll make an easy tactical article... but until then feel free to send your feedback to me at [acgoff@hotmail.com](mailto:acgoff@hotmail.com). And let's see what you have to say about Sweden!

**Andrew Goff just won the Australian Diplomacy Championship for the second year in a row...so maybe you should listen when he's offering you some advice! If you don't agree with some of his points, or even if you agree with ALL of them, take a few minutes and write a Letter to the Editor for next issue. And remember: ALWAYS give all your centers to any women in the game! Better safe than sorry...**



# Thoughts of Disinterest, or Why I Have Not, and Will Likely Never, Attend a Diplomacy Tournament

## by Offsuit

Now at the age of twenty-five, I have played Diplomacy, somewhat sparingly, for nearly half of my life. I was introduced to the game through various chess opponents at a time when I was actively involved in that game. A rotating group of ten to twelve people would play occasionally, once a month at its most frequent incarnation, myself sometimes taking a sabbatical of a year or two as outside concerns (such as my physical proximity to the game) outstripped my enjoyment of play.

Near the year 2000, thanks to the wonder of the internet, I discovered the existence of the hobby at large. Through websites like Diplomacy World, The Diplomatic Pouch, and the NADF, I came to realize just how immensely this game was enjoyed by people outside of my local group. My immersion in playing chess, live, in tournaments, led my fascination immediately to the face-to-face, tournament-style competitions. Like a good chess player, I began to memorize the names of players, their results, and the con reports that told how they were achieved. I devoured tournament retrospectives by anyone and everyone that was there, preparing myself mentally for the day when the opportunity would be present for my attending such an event.

Not limiting my interest to simply improving my game play, however, I turned as much focus toward other aspects of the face-to-face tournament scene. Like any sheltered kid with an unchecked mind, I attacked the problems inherent in every scoring system with the ruthless abandon of the mathematically unskilled. Such problems kept me awake at night, better than a Big Gulp full of Red Bull. I never did quite accomplish what I set out to; somehow an elegant solution always escaped me.



I also was quite enamored with the international aspect of the game. Somehow, I thought, if this game could appeal to myriad peoples around the globe, surely this is something I could be heavily involved with. The flags next to the names on tournament results pages colored a fantastic palette in my mind: American, New Zealander, Swedish, Canadian, South African, Brazilian, French, German, British, Australian, Italian, Belgian, Norwegian, Israeli, Sammarinese, and so many more. Each of these nations seemed to have, at the very least, a small knot of devoted players. Among my semi-congealed thoughts were those of Olympiad-style tournaments, with these devotees representing their countries at international events, designed primarily around the team concept.

And, because so much of the discussion available to me centered on it, I thought plenty about the organizational aspects of what is a purely niche hobby. So many articles, one paragraph blurbs, and single-line throwaways centered on the topic of continually organizing, or refining the organizing process, that I could not help following those twists and turns, had I even wanted to object. And while I, as much as anyone, am a hardcore nerd for such hierarchical functions, the origins of my disconnecting with the hobby I had never connected with, except in spirit, were sewn.

I began to read tournament results, still with the same zeal as before, but slowly coming to dread the few paragraphs detailing hobby meetings and activities. Often times my fears were unfounded, or at least unsupported; if there was any possibility of a schism within the hobby, it was well hidden. Any politicking that did occur seemed, at least from what information I could glean, to leave turnout totals unaffected.

But that wasn't the case, at least as time went on. It wasn't even necessarily specific instances of infighting or the appearance thereof, at first; just from reading relatively antiseptic online reports of conventions and events gave an impression of tension. I realize that Diplomacy can be a tense game, full of strong personalities, the type geared toward success in a game where personality is the only real advantage one has. My belief, however, was that these personalities weren't left at the board, as much as everyone recommends that they should be. Interested parties make decisions in their own interest; players tend to make organizational decisions in the same way they would play the game.

I realize I speak in generalities. I don't know anything firsthand, as I've mentioned before, and as such, I only

can rely on what I've perceived through the words of others, and the facts as they stand. I may be completely wrong: the face-to-face national hobby could be exploding in size, and morale and volunteerism from its most ardent followers could be at an all time high. New tournaments could be popping up everywhere, as new local groups, like mine was, are proactively recruited and embraced into the greater population of the Diplomacy hobby. New records could be being set, as I write, for tournament size and hobby group membership. Now could be the halcyon days of Diplomacy in North America.

If it is, I don't see it.

I see instead the premier annual event getting stripped from one group of players, primarily new to the hobby at large, and moved to another event, after the original event had already taken place, because of accusations of cheating and manipulation. I see accusations of cheating directed at players whose names I followed since I discovered the greater hobby scene. I see all this done in a sense of righteous indignation from both sides, ignoring the fact that, in a game that maybe a thousand people will play this year total, and maybe two hundred will play at public tournaments, the entirety of the hobby hierarchy focused its attention on invalidating the efforts of twenty-two people. I see that, in reaction to this, the focus was not on repairing the relationship with those people negatively affected, but on exorcising them and preventing anything or anyone similar from infesting the hobby's purity in the future.



As anyone who has joined an online forum can attest to, the acidic and vitriolic nature of one's writing is vastly increased by the fact that one knows that they'll never have to look in the eye of the people they're insulting and disagreeing with. Face-to-face Diplomacy players obviously will have to do so, but the fact that their dealings are primarily based on a game which favors deceit and acidity only serves to enhance that angst

when they resume communicating with each other from afar. As I said before, interested parties will behave in their own interest. People who are primarily Diplomacy players, and secondarily Diplomacy organizers (chairpersons, directors, committee members, and so on), will act as a player would act, first and foremost. The fact is that, in any walk of life, if a person has a vested interest in the outcome of something over which they have control, they will manipulate that outcome to their advantage. Since this is something that is a required trait of Diplomacy players, it stands to reason that this behavior would amplify among Diplomacy leaders and organizers.

I know that, when I was an active local player, if North America's premier Diplomacy event came to my town, I would have played no matter what. I also know that, even if I had finished dead last, had that event been nullified and ignored (for whatever reason) by the hobby that I hoped would welcome me, I would have been so devastated as to never want to play that game again. And I'm an adult (and by the sounds of things, more so than most of the people on either side of that recent issue); do you dare imagine what a child, unaffiliated with either side and playing with the big boys for the first time, would think upon learning that his debut Diplomacy experience was rendered meaningless?



I'm not from Maine, and I personally know none of the people involved, so I don't have any stake in what took place regarding DipCon 41. I also am reserving judgment; having read all I could find about the issues surrounding it, the only conclusion I can come to is my own disgust at most of the actions of both parties. Until Diplomacy players can accept their own fallibility as Diplomacy organizers, and accept a format which promotes largely disinterested leadership, these poisonous flare-ups will continue to happen, cyclically, purging anyone moral from the scene and killing any excitement that new blood, such as myself, could have built up for the hobby.

***[[While identified to me, the author of this piece chose to remain anonymous for its publication.]]***

# The DW Interview:

DW Interview Editor Jim-Bob Burgess Interviews DW Variant Editor Jack McHugh

**DW (Jim-Bob Burgess):** For our interview this issue, we're going to be interviewing our Variant Editor, Jack McHugh (JM). Just how did Jack end up here anyway?

**JM:** I originally started playing wargames from Avalon Hill with a childhood friend while in junior high school. When I was in high school I started playing other wargames and multi-player games like Kingmaker and Diplomacy at the Penn Gamers Club. Eventually I wanted to play longer games. The problem with the club was we were limited to only five or six hours, and that's not really long enough for a good game of Diplomacy. So I started to play Diplomacy by mail.



**JM:** My first game was in 1984 in John Boardman's *Graustark*. I played Austria and was eliminated, but made one of my first hobby friends, Baron Powell, the designer of the well-received 1900 variant. I played in several zines throughout the 1980's such as Dick Martin's *Retaliation*, Phil Reynolds' *Ishkibibble*, Mike Gonsalves' *Crimson Sky*, David Hood's *Carolina Command and Commentary*, and Doug Kent's *Maniac's Paradise*. I also attended several East Coast DipCons, and helped Robert Sacks run various games at AtlantiCon (until that was absorbed into World Boardgaming Championships in about 2001).

**JM:** I met our illustrious editor of *DW* when he saw my name in a few zines and wrote me to join games in his zine *Maniac's Paradise*. Eventually I wrote a subzine for him and we collaborated on various hobby projects, like "Your Zine of Zines" which was our review of zines. Naturally when Doug was stuck for editors for *DW* he asked me. I like variants so I decided that being the variant editor was the best fit for me.

**DW:** Thanks, Jack, for that introduction. OK, I have a few directions I want to go in, but let's start with some general hobby questions. Edi Birsan has famously said something along the lines of "My father taught me that it was important to concentrate on your vices, for me that is Diplomacy." Do you see Diplomacy as one of your

vices? Are you concentrating it in that way or do you have other vices?

**JM:** I would say that *DW* is part of my overall gaming vice. I'm primarily a two-player historical wargamer first, and a boardgamer second. I do enjoy multiplayer boardgames, especially the newer German games. If I had to pick one type of game to play, it would be a traditional two player wargame. It's the historical gaming that got me into the hobby--the Panzerblitz, Midway and Third Reich wargames by Avalon Hill--and they are what keep me in it. Today it's more GMT and Decision Games but it's the same type of game.

**DW:** I understand, I started that way too. My first of the wargame board games I had was *Blitzkrieg*, before *Diplomacy*. Though I really don't play those games these days any more. And now, about some directions in the hobby. I actually have separately and uniquely valued all of my participating eras in the hobby. In the 1970's for me it was something I developed with friends from high school and how I kept up with them. The 1980's started wonderfully as it did for most of us and then deteriorated into the Great Feud. The 1990's were characterized by the acceleration of the Internet development, which was very exciting and where I was at the center of the start of many of the diverse hobbies there. And the 2000's have been a period of being "too busy in real life" but "hanging on to my Diplomacy vice". I could not value these eras against each other in my mind though. How do you see your eras of Diplomacy involvement and could you rank them in any meaningful way?

**JM:** In the 1970's and into the mid-80's was my face-to-face gaming era at the University of Pennsylvania gamers club (which, by the way, still meets every Thursday night between 6 pm to 11 pm in Houston Hall) and attending various East Coast Cons. In the mid-1980's my group of gamers at Penn graduated so I gravitated toward the pbm hobby as way to find new gamers. I still did a lot of cons - mostly on the east coast - but I did make it to a CanCon in Toronto one year--that period went on until the about the mid 1990's.

**JM:** I met some of the local Philadelphia gamers like Tom Swider, Paul Kenny, and Brad Wilson, whom I became friends with and I am still friends with to this day, but our relationship isn't as gaming-centered as it was ten or fifteen years ago. I only regularly game with Tom Swider, but I still see Brad and Paul. I go to the Eastern Pennsylvania Gamers Society in the Oxford Valley Mall ([www.EPGS.org](http://www.EPGS.org) for more info and times if you'd like to go) now and then when I need my face-to-face gaming fix. However I haven't made many friends



outside of that club--most of the interaction is strictly gaming. I miss that about the old PBM hobby, the chance to get to know people outside of the game.

**JM:** Since about 1998 my primary way of gaming has been either face-to-face or over the internet. I use the Judge as well as DiplomaticCorp.com. I haven't made as many friends outside of the games. Unlike the old PBM hobby, you get less personal interaction with the players and the publisher.

**DW:** *Hmm, that's interesting, I know I agree with that, I think all of us old postal types have noticed the same thing, why do you think that is? The hot thing on the Internet these days is Social Networking. I certainly have lots of my Diplomacy pals on Facebook with me and for whatever that is worth, it keeps some kind of connections.*



**JM:** The old zines attracted publishers and writers as well as players. The most well-known zines back in the day were known for their articles as much as for their play. It really is true: some people do buy *Playboy* for the articles. Most Diplomacy game websites are run like warehouse gaming zines like *Cheesecake* or *Graustark*--an occasional aside or article but mostly just games. In other words, there is no outside readership. The only people who see the results are the players and that's it. The kibitzers of *Kathy's Korner* or *The Home Office* simply aren't there anymore.

**DW:** *Well, John Boardman would take extreme exception to your characterization of Graustark as a warehouse szine. But if you were not inclined to take features like Dungeons and Christians seriously, as John most definitely does, I could see that. Cheesecake for some years now has mostly been just a single sheet of paper and is the classic warehouse szine. My sense of you is that you really are at heart a ftf kind of guy. In your recent hobby resurrection, though, to my knowledge you haven't ventured back out into the ftf world. Could you say something about that? When was*

*the last time you got together ftf for Diplomacy, and why aren't you doing it more?*

**JM:** In Diplomacy when you say ftf you are talking about are the conventions. I just haven't had the money or the time to go to many cons. I also don't like to go alone. One of the things I used to look forward to years ago in going to a con was as an adventure or a road trip with your friends. It's also a great way to cut expenses by going with other people and sharing the room and cost of travel. However, as everyone has gotten older and has responsibilities like jobs or families it's harder to find people that want to go. I've found that I've got the same issues as well.

**JM:** There are also less of the old style housecons like the current HuskyCon, which are geared for those with limited financial resources. Meanwhile the WBC and PrezCons, the more professionally run cons, are much larger and longer with many more offerings. On the downside that does make them more expensive than they were 15 or 20 years ago.

**DW:** *As I hope you are beginning to see, in the new worldwide Internet Diplomacy hobby, which even is making great inroads in China these days, there are many, many strands and sub-hobbies. I get around a lot, and have seen McHugh traces around, but probably am missing some things. What parts of the Internet sub-hobbies have interested you to date? Are you exploring others, what would you be looking for?*

**JM:** I generally hang around those areas that allow me to play games like DPJudge, DiplomaticCorp.com and Stabbeurfou.org. I haven't done any real-time playing over the internet yet but I think I'd like to try that next.

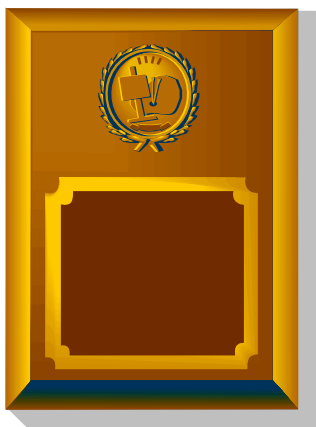
**JM:** I should make more of an effort to use Facebook or MySpace but I have never really gotten into using the social networking pages. I do think this maybe the next big area to find Diplomacy players--the problem is that there are many of these type of social sites so it's difficult to stay up on all of them.

**DW:** *Well, actually, the lack of "control" on Facebook means that the people playing on Facebook are playing a flawed version of the game. Eventually that will be fixed by someone, somehow and that will be a good way to connect and to see what is going on with people outside the games. OK, let's turn to some of your hobby roles. Preparing to bash me, myself, and I. You recently agreed to join my relatively moribund committee overseeing the Hobby Awards. I want to get it started again, and have been trying to accumulate the input I have, but it is amazingly difficult to track the entire worldwide hobby. What advice do you have for me in this project, and be prepared to follow up on it so I can get a Hobby Awards Ballot into the next issue?*

**JM:** I think you need to move it to the web as well as



change the focus of the Hobby Awards from its 1970s/1980s focus on paper publishing and ftf convention play to a more web oriented award structure and more emphasis on automatic GMing, like DPJudge and tournaments that are run online. Playing has moved off of the page or board and onto the hard drive and the internet and the rewards need to reflect that.



**DW:** *Pretty well done, I'm going to run it on SurveyMonkey this time. And now, the Variant Editorship here. We've published quite a number of articles on Variants in the last 5-7 years, much of which I have solicited. Have you gone back and read those articles? What did you think of them, can you direct our readers to some highlights? I'm thinking before you came back and took over this slot here.*

**JM:** I enjoyed your Diplomacy Variant roundtable discussions in DW 97/98 and I liked Scott Morris' simple rules variants in DW87 and Edi Birsan's Escalation Diplomacy in DW90.

**DW:** *Yes, me too, but Escalation seems to be one of those love/hate things. You joined the DVWorkshop Yahoo group, for the design of variants, last year, when I think you took over this slot. But I don't recall you posting anything or directly soliciting any DW articles from there. Have you done that where I just haven't noticed, after watching the fits and starts of that group over the last year (which has almost 200 members), how do you think it can be used to help the DW Variant section?*

**JM:** Mostly I get people to write from the variant games I am in either by asking players or GMs to write for DW. For example that's how I got Doug Burgoyne to write an article on his hidden map variants: I played in a couple and asked Doug to write an article, which he did. As for DVWorkshop group--if we can get a small percentage, say three to six percent of the membership, to write for DW on a semi-regular basis, say two articles a year, we

would have plenty of Variant articles.

**DW:** *I promoted using David Cohen's variant game design for the current DW Demo Game that you're playing in and I'm commenting on. I do NOT want to discuss that on-going game in particular, but how do you think generally about the use of the DW demo game and variants, do you think we will want to do more of it? I pretty much organized this one and the previous one we did on the Modern variant, but I'm looking to you to lead the future on this now?*

**JM:** The biggest problem with running variant demo games is finding variants that have been adequately play tested. I actually think this will become easier as more and more variants are played online we'll be able to find the good variants. The danger in using new variants is they might not be very good, so you're left with running a demo of a bad game.

**DW:** *Many people have designed variants of all different kinds, map variants, silly variants, rule change variants, economic/SC addition variants, and many more. What are your favorite kinds of variants and why?*

**JM:** I prefer a good map or simple rules variant as long as they aren't too complicated. A good variant should be easy to understand yet hard to master. I tend to avoid economic variants because they tend to be too complicated to easily foresee the consequences of your moves or those of your opponents. When you can't see the possibilities of your moves, you're playing blind, and I don't find that very appealing.

**DW:** *Yes, I'm an economist, so you would think I would like economic variants, but I really don't. I like the basic simple Supply Center system. Is there anything else I haven't covered that you would like me to ask you about?*

**JM:** We have yet to see a Diplomacy variant site in the tradition of the old variant zines like Fred Hyatt's *The Home Office* or Fred Davis' *Bushwacker*. I hope to see one or two of these types of diplomacy variant sites pop up in the near future.

**DW:** *Indeed. OK, that's the call for you readers out there!! Thanks, Jack, for pulling my bacon out of the fire and getting this one together. I have an agreement from John Boardman to do the next interview, I just have to make it happen (a bit difficult since he's not on the Internet, but I'll do it). As always, if the readership wants me to interview someone, or someone wants to be interviewed, just ask!!! Contact me at [jfburgess@gmail.com](mailto:jfburgess@gmail.com).*

# Scuffing the Maginot Line

A Column about Technology and Society in the Diplomacy Hobby

By Chris Babcock

## The USPN Diplomacy Judge

USPN "PowerNet" is a new judge running the latest development DPjudge code at <http://uspn.asciiking.com>. The DPjudge, originally coded by Manus Hand as a front end to the Ken Lowe judge, combines a web interface and an email interface with a single adjudicator. This is significant because, while use of email judges has remained stable, web-based adjudicators have experienced explosive growth. DPjudge straddles this line, making USPN not only the newest play-by-email Diplomacy server but also the newest play-by-web server.

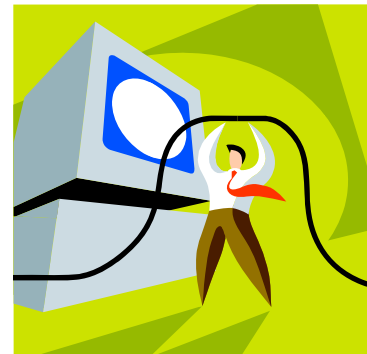
The biggest driver of growth for Diplomacy on the web is the phpDiplomacy platform. The simplicity of the interface, Open Source code, and the instant availability of new games has created a perfect storm to drive growth. By the numbers, the DPjudge platform running on USDP has about 750 active games. The top 3 servers running phpDiplomacy combine for over 1600 active games, including the 930+ active games on [playdiplomacy.com](http://playdiplomacy.com), which replaces the original phpDip adjudicator with DiploJuge.

What makes USPN potentially interesting for the hobby is not new technology, although that will be coming too, it's the introduction of a technology strategy. Individual administrators have often been the people driving the code. One person coding, deploying, patching and administering the server. The best of these use a test server and movecode to a production server when the code seems to run. With USPN, however, development on the DPjudge platform gains two things. One is the promise of an Open Source development model. The other is the formation of a development pipeline.

Simply put, USPN is not a test judge. DPjudge source code is available in two flavors - production and development. USDP, with its installed base and history, will continue to be the flagship of the production code. USPN, however, will be running the latest code off the test judges of the ASCII King server farm supported by USAK. DPjudge code contributed by Manus Hand, Sam Tyler, Chris Babcock, Mario Huys and other developers will see widespread use first on USPN. The difference between "development" and "testing" is that, while there will be some development churn on USPN, there will be very few hot patches. USPN will be as stable as some of the better run production servers today.

In DPjudge, we see a working Diplomacy server with a significant user base that is accessible using either email or a web browser. While DPjudge has suffered from a 6

year hiatus in development, that ended last year. Originally ahead of its time, DPjudge needs only subtle enhancements to compete with other web-based adjudicators in usability and installed base. Since the origin of DPjudge, hardware has gotten faster and the Python interpreter has greatly improved, bringing the performance of a Python-based server in line with expectations created by servers implemented in less facile computer languages. With the implementation of modern development patterns, the DPjudge stands poised to make a new run at what Manus Hand calls "World Domination."



The importance of the DPjudge platform to the Diplomacy hobby lies in its potential to blend the play by web and play by email communities. Its fifteen year history and its heritage in the 25 year old judge community provide a stable and mature player base with an interface comparable in accessibility to much younger web-based communities. USPN contributes to this role by demonstrating the developers' commitment to releasing the code for widespread deployment for non-commercial use under an Open Source license.

**Chris Babcock is keeper for the USPN and USAK judges (among others), Secretary of War for the DipWorld hand-adjudicated play by email group, and custodian ad continuum of the Worldmasters Tournament archives. This is the first article in a series on technology-based solutions to issues causing fragmentation in the Diplomacy player base. The purpose of this series is to discuss these solutions and to promote the implementations. If you think this looks like agenda setting and shameless self promotion then you are absolutely correct. Ask Doug for your own column if that bothers you. Letters to the author can be sent to [cbabcock@asciiking.com](mailto:cbabcock@asciiking.com). Select content from dialog about this article will be published with the next column.**

# Why Write an Endgame Statement?

By Doug Kent and Jack McHugh

Variant Editor Jack McHugh wanted to contribute something for this issue that dealt with the theme of The Endgame. Well, maybe "wanted" is too strong a word. How about, I kept bugging him to do it, and he finally caved? We decided he'd submit a Top Ten list of why it is a good idea to write an endgame statement when a game is finally over, even if you didn't win. And then he asked me to give my commentary on each one, in the now-famous Kent/McHugh style from the days when we reviewed Diplomacy zines in Your Zine of Zines. So enjoy, or hide your head in the sand. Or both.

## ***Top 10 Reasons to Write an Endgame Statement Even When You Don't Win:***

### **10. Allows you to learn from your mistakes**

If you want to write an honest, proper, EOG (as they are known), it can be a good place to discuss how you lost the game, and why...not just so others can read about it, but also because it forces you to analyze what happened. "I forgot that, as Italy, you **MUST** build more armies to grow. The temptation to build fleet after fleet must be avoided." Or perhaps, "Bouncing in Gal would have been a good defensive move, but when I told Austria I wasn't interested, I should have realized he'd take that as an invitation to occupy it himself."

### **9. Allows you to learn from others' mistakes**

Just because this is **your** endgame statement, you can still criticize the other players' blunders. "The jackass tried to support his F Nth with his A Lon, **TWICE!** It isn't like he just learned the game, Conrad has been playing it since the 60's. This is a good time to ask Conrad if you can borrow some money; he'll forget within two days."

### **8. You can vent about the fools who refused your generous alliance offer.**

There's no rule that says you have to be accurate or make sense in an EOG. Be like a politician attacking his opponent: just make sweeping, grandiose statements which **MUST** be true simply because you SAID them. "I offered Austria to make peace and become allies after he occupied Rome and Venice in 1903, but the moron refused. So it was no surprise to me when in 1910 Turkey stabbed him. I told him it was inevitable. If he had let me keep Naples and Tunis I could have won the

game for him. Any idiot can see that."

### **7. Gets the editor of Eternal Sunshine off your back about not contributing articles to his zine.**

This one isn't exactly true. Contributing articles just makes me ask you again. And not contributing makes me ask you anyway. I never go away. I'm like herpes.

### **6. Can be used as part of your insanity defense in your next game.**

"Look, it's your own fault that you trusted me. If you had bothered to read my last endgame statement you'd have realized I never stick to an alliance until after 1905. You were cannon fodder the minute you agreed to attack Germany. By the way, thanks for Spain and Portugal."

### **5. Your therapist says writing is good therapy for you. (Oops that's just for editor Sack Kent.)**



If you're really angry about the game, this is a good place to vent and get away with it. People rarely, if ever, write responses to EOG's, so go wild. Blame anyone and everyone. "I was shocked and angered by what Garret did. I mentioned that I would be a bit hard to reach for a week because of the chemotherapy, and he took that moment to write the other players and warn them about my 'ominous silence.' Bastard." You can even blame the GM. "I phoned my order changes it the night before the deadline, but his wife said he was working late.

Funny, when I called his work number they told me he and his secretary had both **left early**. How odd."

**4. Shows everyone your superior literary talents for those unable to write super creative press.**

Press is a lost art. It used to mean printed dispatches during the game, often with long, entertaining fictional passages, characters, or just good old fashioned rock throwing. Now I think internet players use the term to mean "letters I write to the other players." So your EOG may be the only chance you have to dazzle the literary among us. You might even get nominated for a Hobby Award...if you can wait another 5 years for Jim Burgess and his so-called "committee" to get the things organized.

**3. Can be the basis for your strategy in your next Diplomacy game.**

Plant a seed. Say "Next time I play Germany, I will ally with Russia, or at least work with him. This was the last game I try to bounce in Sweden." Then when you get Germany, send that EOG to the Russian player. Of course you'll

bounce him in Sweden anyway, but perhaps he won't be expecting it.

**2. Will be a useful basis for your Diplomacy memoirs**

One day, when Jim Burgess contacts you for a Diplomacy World interview, you'll be able to use these EOG's to refresh your memory. Or, the lies you told will help you forget the awful truth, and you can use them as supposed evidence of triumphs you never had. Remember, if you tell a lie often enough, it becomes the truth.

**1. Most fun you can have not playing Diplomacy or engaging in mega-Diplomacy hobby projects.**

Where else can you write pages of lies, veiled threats, personal attacks, complaints, and rewrite history without any fear of retribution? Be like John McEnroe on the tennis court; throw things, have a real tantrum. If nothing else, you'll make a name for yourself. Then some poor newbie will meet you on a Diplomacy board and think "I've heard of this guy. He must **be** somebody. I'll try to ally with him." Sucker.

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## Selected Upcoming Conventions

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://diplom.org/Face/cons/index.php>

**The Whipping in San Francisco** – Friday April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – San Francisco, California – email [edibirsan@astound.net](mailto:edibirsan@astound.net)

**2009 CODCon Open** - Saturday April 18th 2009 to Sunday April 19th 2009 - Glen Ellyn, Illinois (a Chicago suburb) - <http://codcon.com>

**KublaCon** - Friday May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009 to Sunday May 24th 2009 - Burlingame, Near San Francisco airport, California - <http://KublaCon.com>

**Como Over the Lake** - Saturday June 13th 2009 to Sunday June 14th 2009 - Brunate(CO), Italy - Website: [http://http://diplomacy.cleosolutions.com/component/option,com\\_attend\\_events/Itemid,1](http://http://diplomacy.cleosolutions.com/component/option,com_attend_events/Itemid,1)

**The Boston Massacre** - Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup> 2009 to Sunday June 21st 2009 - Pandemonium Books and Games, Central Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts - [www.diplom.org/BostonMassacre](http://www.diplom.org/BostonMassacre)

**World DipCon Championship at Origins 2009** - Wednesday June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to Sunday June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – Columbus, Ohio – <http://www.originsgamefair.com>

**ManorCon** – Friday July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to Monday July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – Stamford Hall, Leicester University, United Kingdom - <http://www.manorcon.org.uk>

**PacificCon/Conquest** - Friday September 4<sup>th</sup> 2009 to Sunday September 6<sup>th</sup> 2009 - Santa Clara Marriot Hotel, California - <http://www.conquestsf.com/>



# WACcon 2009 – A Goddess' Perspective

By Siobhán Granvold

As a rule, I am usually much better about writing these synopses of tournaments directly after the tournament has ended. However, 2009 started me off at a sprint and has yet to lay off on the pace. From school, to moving to a new city, to life planning, relationships, and diplomacy, there has barely been time for a girl to take a breather. So, here I sit, on April Fool's Day, in a coffee shop, plugging out a write-up for 2009's WACcon. The reason I attempt to get these things done quickly is because I have a deplorable memory if I let it sit for too long. But, here goes nothing. If it turns out badly, I will say it was intentional, for April Fools. If it turns out well, I take all the credit. So, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, here goes nothing.

In proper fashion, my arrival to the tournament was fraught with complication and annoyances. Though 2008's trip was certainly more difficult, this year did not disappoint. I managed to book my trip early enough, while in class in fact, and managed to coordinate it with the rest of the Bay Area crew that was crazy enough to travel to the rainy north for another weekend of pain and humiliation. Upon arrival we were convoyed to the WAC by none other than Mark Zoffel with a complete accounting for how much better drivers in Seattle are than on the rest of the west coast. Upon arrival we were greeted with clouds, sarcasm, and coffee. The immediate groupings began and we all reminisced over last year's happenings, how much we missed here or there, and what our thoughts on the rest of the tournament were. New faces were here and there, along with the usual crew. All in all, the opening ceremony (if you will) was successful and enjoyable.

And then it all went downhill from there. My recollections of the details are sketchy, at best. But what I do remember strongly was the first round. It has been decided and decreed that the Bay Area crew is no longer allowed to travel together in such close-knit packs. For not only did we have the same flights, but also congregated our seats so that we could talk strategy on the way up. Thankfully we did not anger each other too much during the tournament and no one had to request a seat change for the flight back. The first round went according to plan. Sort of. Edi and Andy rocked their boards according to plan (from what I remember at least). Adam Silverman and myself were seated together, and as neighbors. As Turkey and Italy we could have worked something out earlier. But, alas, did not. After a few years worth of our obligatory fighting (which Adam and I usually carry out for full games) we decided that we could work out our differences and made our amends. We did that to our own joy and surprise. Adam and I often have issues working out our differences, and it is usually my fault we cannot work that out. But, our IT worked to our advantage and for

one night the Bay Area cheered us along. And it went downhill from there, at least for me. We did well enough, as a group, and I'm not entirely disappointed with myself. But with trips to Europe on the line the competition was fierce.



I got the chance this year to see a little more of the city than I have been able to in the past, I and was glad for it. A good friend of mine showed me around the city and took me to the sights and sounds of the city. Upon my return I hit up the bar and drank my fair share (and a couple extra) of beer, vodka, and wine. In true Diplomacy fashion those of us in the presidential suite drank more than our fair share, and continued to do so after the scheduled events for the evening had closed themselves out. After Andy's adventures with women at the bar, John Hill attempting to teach the same woman Diplomacy whilst Andy hid in fear in the corner, we all stumbled down to the bar (minus the cougar Andy picked up). Bless their hearts for not turning us away. The 20 or so of us stumbled in right after last call and filled up the tail end of their night with drink orders and drunken debauchery. We ended the night with 2am pizza delivery and a pile of Diplomacy men on top of Adam Sigal. Between piggyback rides, Jim's rainbow hat, Graham's tea-bagging, the olives and the bean, and the man pile on the bed, the gay jokes abounded. The pretty pretty princess award was appropriately awarded, but amusingly it was not awarded to a woman. Though, in retrospect, possibly it was given to one of the most feminine in attendance.

The weekend was, again, a rousing success, and I look forward to another year in the rainy city. So, with much undulation, adulation, and fanfare I leave you gentlemen to your plotting, planning, and scheming.

***[[Siobhán Granvold is now on my official list of Diplomacy Goddesses.]]***

# A Day at the Forge: Manipulating All to Achieve Victory

## Part 1: Manipulating Today's World and Humanity

By Sioraf as Killeens

### Introduction

Today's world is characterized by an obsession with empirical evidence. As usual, humanity has decided to follow the majority and the way the tide is flowing. As a result of these three characteristics, humanity has never wronged itself more philosophically.

In spite of both non-religious and religious people having an obsession with whether or not God exists, neither

side realizes that they have not come up with a decisive answer that cannot be realistically opposed. The non-religious argument is heavily based on empirical evidence, and therefore barely allows even the possibility of God to exist; the empirical is the realm of the senses, the known universe and the definite. God is not a being that is proved definite by the senses, nor who exists exclusively on Earth.

Although it is universally acknowledged that grass is green, not everyone believes in God and so God is a priori (a priori being the realm of the mind, whether within the known universe or not, the possible and the unlimited). The religious argument is heavily based on the Bible, and while it does provide some evidence empirically, it provides no evidence a priori. As a result of the flaws in both arguments, neither side has put beyond all reasonable doubt whether or not God exists, although both sides are convinced that they have. Although the non-religious argument is stronger, it is stronger in the wrong place, and greater force only succeeds if it is applied properly. Therefore the non-religious argument has an equal chance, and not a greater chance as commonly supposed.

### Manipulation

Thus, we have discovered that empirical evidence alone will not be enough to uncover the irrefutable truth. Lying is a large part of Diplomacy, and so telling another player a believable lie is of course important. In Diplomacy a player is often saying "I will move here" or "I will do this". The empirical is the definite, and since the future is not definite, empirical evidence will not be flawless in determining if the other player is telling the

truth. I have seen players tell me things in online games and providing empirical evidence from other games. Although the evidence they provided was completely accurate, it did no good in convincing me that they would do in the games we were in together what they had done in the games they cited. The question (which is - of course - will they do what they are saying they will?) in those games they referred to did not allow an empirical answer. There are three types of questions which

incorporate every single question in existence:

- Questions which allow the true answer to be either empirical or a priori.
- Questions which allow the true answer to only be empirical.
- Questions which allow the true answer to only be an a priori one.

An example of the third category would be "How many characters will be in my book?" The characters cannot yet be seen, heard, touched or tasted, and they have not yet been transferred from one's mind to anything with which the senses can interact. To find out if what a Diplomacy player is telling you is true you must make your calculations a priori...but doing the right thing is not enough; the thing must be done the right way. To make a successful a priori calculation:

- Is it possible?
- Is it realistic?
- Is there an a priori possibility strong enough to prove it wrong?

If the answers are yes, yes and no, then what you sought to prove true or false is true. Using those three bullet point procedures one after the other - but in combination - you should almost certainly have ascertained whether or not the player is lying. Unfortunately, it is impossible to get even a faint idea what a beginner will do, and you will learn this the hard way. Indeed I have been stabbed in 1901 more than once!

From Wikipedia: The terms "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" are used in philosophy to distinguish two different types of knowledge, justification, or argument: a priori knowledge is known independently of experience, and a posteriori knowledge is proven through experience. Thus, they are primarily used as adjectives to modify the noun "knowledge", or taken to be compound nouns that refer to types of knowledge (for example, "*a priori* knowledge"). However, "*a priori*" is sometimes used as an adjective to modify other nouns, such as "truth." Additionally, philosophers often modify this use. For example, "apriority" and "apriority" are sometimes used as nouns to refer (approximately) to the quality of being *a priori*. Examples of proposed candidates of *a priori* knowledge include " $2+5=7$ ", the propositions of Euclidean geometry, and "all bachelors are unmarried". Examples of proposed candidates of *a posteriori* reasoning include "Protons are made of quarks" and "Hitler died in 1945."

Humans have an obsession with numerical advantages, and many western countries have become (socially speaking) tyrannies of the majority. When a beginner observes the board, he genuinely believes that the player with the most supply centers is the one in the lead. Therefore, when trying to add a player to an alliance with three or more players in total, you should approach the potential ally with an ally you already have, with both of you standing up straight.

What makes Diplomacy such an amusing game is that it encourages humanity's common and yet dubious interests: war, lying, greed, and betrayal to further one's own goal. Nothing short of a threat of execution will persuade someone to defy human nature. No; what you must do is choose the less obvious action to win more effectively. In short, don't fight the dubious interests; in real life - as in Diplomacy - if one goes too far with the dubious interests, one sooner or later brings about one's

own demise. It is so much easier for an enemy to kill himself rather than you killing him (I speak metaphorically, of course). You should, with subtlety, encourage your enemy to overdo his dubious interests to a ridiculous degree, and then he will as good as defeat himself.

Although I have previously stated that humans are obsessed with numbers argumentum ad populum, one of the most popular logical fallacies won't work in Diplomacy, because there are only six players other than oneself; so any majority will be tiny.

***The author has been playing Diplomacy since the day before his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. He plays online because he's too busy to play face-to-face (as he is working on a secret project, and joining the Reserves). He won his first solo on the 27th of October 2008, 42 days after he started playing Diplomacy! He lives in the Deep South (of Ireland, that is).***

## A Short Treatise on the Austrian End Game

By Benjamin Hester

Few would deny that the Austrian position poses the greatest challenge on the Standard map. Those fortunate Austrian players that are not immediately dog-piled and eliminated by some combination of IRT face a slew of threats in the midgame, usually from their early allies, or one member of the EFG triangle that developed their position rapidly.

But what of those select few Austrian players that survive the initial onslaught, fight their way to a secure corner, and reach the end game? At long last, their early disadvantages are turned in their favor, and the benefits of their location finally begin to be revealed. Let's take a moment here to explore those benefits in the context of three common end Austrian game scenarios.

### **Benefit #1 - In the Trenches (the AT Scenario)**

In this scenario, let us assume a solid AT alliance has formed early on, and that AT have succeeded at least in eliminating Italy and removed Russia from his/her southern holdings. Of the opposition, let us also assume that FG have bested England, and reduced Russia to a janissary. All four positions are at rough SC parity, 7-8 SCs each.

This setting heavily favors the German and Austrian positions, who are poised to build their gains along the central stalemate lines, particularly so relative to Warsaw - where many a solo drive has been halted.

One of the key challenges of the mid and end game phases of Diplomacy is to place builds in preparation for a stab without tipping off your intended target. Another

is to rapidly advance your builds to the front lines where needed. In these two categories, the Austrian position reigns supreme. The same central location that causes such vulnerability to Italy, Russia, and Turkey in the beginning allows for greater flexibility in the end game than other positions enjoy.



So we find that Turkey is encumbered by the need to spend multiple seasons advancing their gains towards the front line, all the while exposing their home SCs to a brutal Austrian stab through the Sevastopol-Armenia corridor or straight through Bulgaria. Germany enjoys similar benefits from their central position in the trenches, but significant defensive disadvantages (see #2 below.) Meanwhile, France often stalls in the midgame of these scenarios, as their early momentum runs headlong into a wall of emerging Turkish fleets.

### **Benefit #2 - A Rock and a Hard Place (the AR Scenario)**



Austria has a significant defensive advantage in the end game as well. Consider the simple count of adjacencies to their home SCs, as well as the narrow avenues of approach from the Turkish and Italian holdings. While the opening finds Austria surrounded by voracious neighbors hungry for the rich field of Balkan SCs, once one or two of those neighbors have been eliminated, their overall security typically increases dramatically - exponentially if they have fought their way into the corner position, as occurs in the best AR alliances.

With Turkey eliminated (and a presumed stable Black Sea region settlement with Russia), Italy becomes much more manageable. While it is rare that one sees Austria become a true naval power, it can happen, and especially so in the context of a good AR alliance (perhaps the most rare alliance between neighboring powers, but a wrongly neglected one, I think.) This is perhaps the alliance option with the highest probability of a favorable outcome for Austria, though also one of the most difficult to negotiate.

### **Benefit #3 - Freedom Isn't Free...unless you're Austria (the AI Scenario)**

All of the positions in Standard Diplomacy have a natural "bent" towards focusing on either land power or sea power. This effect usually continues until the early midgame, at which point clear leaders emerge, serious solo plans start to take shape, and players begin to calculate the exact mix of armies and fleets they will need for victory. Miscalculation of this blend in the midgame has turned countless would-be solos into draws, as players become stalled with unused units stuck behind their own fleet or army lines.

Austria is largely spared from this process. Their prospects for victory are pursued almost exclusively over land for the majority of the game in most situations, and nowhere more so than in the context of a good AI alliance. Presuming that AI (with or without Russia) dismantle Turkey, and then turn outward (Austria against Russia, Italy against France) - Italy shoulders the entire burden of Austria's naval defense, and often proves loyal if Austria commands a position in Tyrolia early on (the best allies are the ones that are scared of you!)

Presuming they are opposed by an equal strength EF or EG alliance, Austria can pour out armies into Russia and Germany, potentially reaching 18 along a line from St. Pete-Ber-Kie-Mun-Ven. Only very rarely will a fleet need to be thrown into the mix to keep Italy honest, who often has their hands full with England or France (or both!)

You'll have to pardon the portions of this little essay where I leave to the reader the burden of deducing exactly how the situations I describe are created. Doug requested an article on the endgame - and I have focused my efforts there. A full study of the Austrian position is a lengthy and daunting task, and perhaps one that a more worthy author than I should even be paid to undertake ☺ I also make no exception in the end to the first sentence of this essay - Austria remains one of the most difficult positions on the map. Still, as many of the successful business managers of our day have discovered, if you develop the strengths of your organization rather than focusing on its weaknesses, you can achieve greater results. So I humbly suggest the three key benefits of the Austrian position listed here for consideration, whenever the reader tries their hand at Austria next.

***Benjamin is the ACD of Diplomatic Corps, and the designer of the Sengoku, South American Supremacy, Dark Ages, and Balkans1860 Variants. You can see some of his work at <http://www.geocities.com/nairenvorbeck/files>***



# Diplomacy and Cryptography: Defining Trust

By Chris Babcock

What is trust? That may seem like an impossible question and, unless we place severe limits on the scope of the discussion, it is. Trust means different things in different contexts - trust between friends, lovers, business partners - the list goes on. In the context of cryptography, however, trust is a useful concept because it has a very narrow and specific meaning. It follows that a similarly precise definition of trust may also be useful for Diplomacy.

Cryptography is not limited to sending secret messages. While encryption is one of the processes and benefits of cryptography, it is not the only benefit of the science. Modern encryption techniques<sup>1</sup> also provide authentication of messages and, as a product of that, non-repudiation. Let me explain.

Russia and Turkey are discussing the future of the Black Sea. They use encryption because they do not want Austria to know their plans, but there are more important things than keeping their plans secret. Turkey must be able to trust that the "no bounce" message did, in fact, originate from Russia. After all, what if there is a Lepanto in the works and Austria is trying to compromise Turkish security by creating a situation where there is a Russian fleet in the Black Sea? What Turkey needs is authentication. The message needs to contain proof that it came from Russia in order to for Turkey to be able to trust the authenticity of the message.

When we want to be certain of the identity of someone we meet in person then we are introduced by mutual acquaintances, check government supplied credentials, note distinguishing details or otherwise use the accepted means of authentication for that social situation. The strictness of the verification required scales with the importance of the situation. In a casual setting, we make accept a handshake and a word. For employment or signing legal document, it might be a picture ID and a secondary document.

When we play Diplomacy at a distance, we often rely on the return address of the sender - an item that can be

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<sup>1</sup> In discussing cryptography in this article, I'm mostly referring to PGP. PGP stands for Pretty Good Privacy. OpenPGP is an email encryption and authentication standard. GnuPG is free software and one of many ways to use PGP in personal email. This isn't just for Linux geeks. Please see:

<http://www.cryptography.org/getpgp.htm>

for information on how to obtain and use PGP for your email. To discuss privacy and identity issues with the author, please see the bio below.

trivially forged. Sophisticated postal players may verify the postmark of a message, but there are anecdotes of that being spoofed in the postal hobby. I'm not aware of any such attempts in the email hobby, but they are trivial to attempt and their effect would be lost on the unsophisticated user. Since much communication in postal Diplomacy is in fact conducted by email, the issue of authentication has far reaching consequences.

Public key encryption provides a way to authenticate the originator of a message, even by email. Russia and Turkey each have two keys - one is a private key and the other is made public. When Russia writes his missive to Turkey, he uses his private key to make a copy of the message that can only be decrypted with his public key. Then he uses Turkey's public key to encrypt the message (and the copy) so that the only way to decrypt it would be to use Turkey's private key. The result is a message that only Turkey can read and that only Russia could have sent.

So the turn processes and Russia moves F SEV - BLA... or he doesn't. Either way, he does not have the option of saying, "I didn't send that message." Authentication carries with it the benefit of non-repudiation. Russia cannot deny that he sent the message. While that does not necessarily modify his behavior, it does make it easier to hold him accountable.

In this context, trust is a very simple collection of facts. Turkey is the only one who can read the encrypted message. Russia is the only party who could have sent it. The message could not be intercepted or altered in transmission. Russia cannot deny the message after the fact.

None of these facts that form the basis of a cryptographic definition of trust have anything to do with the character of the sender or the recipient of the message. They are facts about the process of communication.

These facts have side effects in the emotional realm that we normally associate with definitions of personal trust, but the trust defined in cryptography is completely independent of the character of the parties communicating. This is the essential fact that makes understanding the process valuable for us as Diplomacy players. As long as our definition of trust in the game is derived from the model of personal trust it will remain an evasive and potentially dangerous influence in our game. If, instead, we develop a working definition of trust that is based in the facts then we have a useful tool for communication.

Fortunately, the game board itself provides us with a

source of facts. For the Black Sea tango, by any route it takes at least two moves for F SEV to reach ANK. If the parties bounce in the spring then they can probably trust a DMZ in the fall because there is no way that either party can harm the other before builds. That is only the most obvious situation. The principle itself holds true for any number of hot spots at any stage of the game - A mature player will only grab a supply center or other strategic position when the value gained thereby exceeds the cumulative losses anticipated from severing the relationship. The essence of skill in Diplomacy then boils down to a player's tactical ability to create an evolving situation, one where it is enough to trust that it is not in the other party's best interest to break an agreement.

For this definition of trust, it is fine that the other player is a thief and a scoundrel... at least within the context of the game. If anything, you want your ally to share a narrow and unemotional definition of trust for this purpose. Sure, you may be able to exploit an overly trusting individual if you can sell him on your character, but you can never trust him yourself because he will be subject to emotional influences and paranoia as your ally then reckless vengefulness when you make him your enemy. It is best to avoid such souls altogether when you can or wait to exploit their vengeance if you can't avoid them at the board.

Meanwhile, we are faced with out of game authentication issues in the hobby. As a judgekeeper, I often come across situations where one player wants to appear as two different players or otherwise wants to deceive

others in ways that are inappropriate in the context of the game. With the reorganization of the North American Diplomacy Association, there is a genuine concern as to how to authenticate members of the hobby who have not attended public events. The judge provides a weak form of password authentication for players, but voting in a hobby association like the NADF should - and will - have more rigorous standards.

In the simplest possible terms, cryptography shows us a model of trust that we can apply in our games and it provides specific tools that can be used in order to positively authenticate our fellow players. Just as on the board we cannot rely on a naive and emotional favor of trust, so too in our hobby associations and play at a distance Diplomacy formats we cannot rely on credentials like email addresses or even IP addresses that are easily faked. We must use available tools to establish a mature and beneficial trust based on verifiable facts of identity.

***[[Chris Babcock is the judgekeeper on USAK, where he has added filters that make it possible for users to use modern MIME emails with the judge. He has recently completed work on several less visible features for USAK that update compliance with industry standards and best practices for automated mail systems in order to make mail delivery from the judge more reliable. His next project is providing PGP services as an alternative to plain text passwords. He can be reached at [cbabcock@asciiking.com](mailto:cbabcock@asciiking.com) to discuss hobby, social and technology issues.]]***

## Tournament Tales: WACCon in Three Acts

By Jim O'Kelley

**WACCon, Seattle, Wash., January 23 to 25, 2009**

### **Act 1: "Waiter, there's a phallus in my soup."**

It was good to be back at the Washington Athletic Club in Seattle for the sixth annual WACCon.

I had topped my board in the first round Friday night, and because the tournament had such a great turnout—it drew 45 players—we played our game in the downstairs lounge rather than in Hagerty's Sports Bar. Consequently, I only had a few drinks.

And unlike last year, when I froze my ass off on the floor of the Presidential Suite, I had scored a prime spot on the suite's couch, so I was well rested, clear headed and feeling pretty good when Conrad Woodring suggested that we augment our Saturday morning breakfasts with Bloody Marys. I agreed immediately.

We were at Torchy's, fortifying ourselves for round 2 with fellow Presidential Suite denizens Graham Woodring,

Siobhan Granvold, Adam Sigal, Alex Amann and Kevin O'Kelly (no relation), rehashing the previous night's games and trading stories from other tournaments.



**Jim (from left), Graham and Conrad steel themselves for Round 2 during breakfast at Torchy's.**

Graham and I were tag-teaming the story of the nerd-spawning at Gen Con.

"All weekend," I said, "we were watching for a sign that the annual spawning of the nerds was about to begin."

"And then during the top board," Graham said, "this big guy walks into the room, stands on a chair, and yells, 'Free Cookies!'"

"And Graham turns to me and says, 'That's the sign!'"

Just then, our waiter brought the Bloody Marys. I'd never had one before and was anxious to get started, so I plucked out the spear, which skewered a green bean and two olives, and took a generous sip. It was way too spicy for me, so I passed it to Graham and ordered a mimosa.

Conrad then launched into the Cliff story from last year's HuskyCon. I was doing color while absentmindedly playing with the green-bean-and-olives spear when all of the sudden it dawned on me that I was holding comic gold in my hand.

"So, I run over to the ledge and call out, 'Is someone down there?'"

I gently removed each olive from the spear, then pulled off the green bean.

"We hear this groan. 'Oh, it hurts.'"

Next, I speared one of the olives, then the green bean, and then the other olive.

"'Who's down there?' I ask. 'It's me, Colin.' The dumbass fell off the cliff, so now we all call him Cliff."

"Check this out," I said, holding up my makeshift penis. "This is going to be awesome."



**Now that's funny.**

## **Act 2: Life Imitates Diplomacy**

Chris Brand is a slippery bastard.

Last year on WACCon's Saturday night, I staked an early claim to one side of the Presidential Suite's L-shaped couch, but Brand came into the suite with a big group, innocently sat at the far end of my length of couch, and then gradually spread out until I was forced to either touch him or move to the floor. I moved to the floor.

Color me weird, but I don't like to put myself in a situation where I might accidentally touch another man.



**Eric Mead (from left), Graham and Jim at the Elephant and Castle.**

On this night, a bunch of us had left the WAC around midnight in search of food. Our quest led us to the nearby Elephant and Castle, where, unfortunately, we were too late for food—the kitchen was closed—and too early for karaoke—the bar was advertising Karaoke Idol for Sunday night at 8. Oh well, at least they were serving drinks.

We had a couple of rounds and then went back to the suite to order pizza. Once we placed the order, I immediately staked a claim to the Murphy bed, which Brand had occupied the night before.

Amann and O'Kelly both tried to weasel their ways on to the bed, but I fended them off. Even when the pizza arrived, I sprinted toward the table, grabbed a couple of pieces, and raced back to the bed. I dared not leave an opening. Nevertheless, Brand somehow established a foothold, and I knew I was in for an epic battle.

I held my ground as he almost imperceptibly oozed toward me. And then, just as it seemed the battle was lost, Graham leapt onto the bed, landing between us with arms and legs spread.

Now, on a Diplomacy board, Graham would never leave himself that open, so I'm not sure why he did so here.



But he did, and he paid for it.



**Jim stakes his short-lived claim to the Murphy bed.**

With frightening speed and in a single motion, Andy “Buffalo” Bartalone sprang toward the table, snatched a paperback book, and fired it at Graham’s nuts. Graham writhed in pain while the rest of us laughed hysterically. Buffalo had scored a direct hit, and I’m told that’s no easy feat.

And eventually, Brand forced us both off the bed.

### **Act 3: WACCon Idol**

Kevin O’Kelly and I had an 11:20 p.m. flight back to Chicago. Buffalo and Dave Maletsky, meanwhile, had separate flights back to D.C. between 10 and 10:30.

So at 8:45, we were all gathered outside the WAC with hosts Nathan Barnes and Mark Zoffel, the latter who had come to drive us all to the airport, and the Woodrings and Chris Martin, who were staying on till Monday.

“You know,” I said as I was saying goodbye to Graham, who would be leaving for China in a few weeks, “I really don’t have to leave until about 9:30.”



“Let’s keep drinking,” he said. The bunch of us had been at a place called Palomino, where the food and drinks were a lot better than the service.

“The Elephant and Castle has Karaoke Idol tonight,” I said. “Want to go?”

Kevin preferred to get to the airport early, so he and the others left with Zoffel. I grabbed my bags and walked with Graham, Conrad, Nathan and Chris to the Elephant and Castle.

There were only three people there for karaoke. I ordered a shot and a beer, drank both and then put in my first song. “Brandy (You’re a Fine Girl).”

The KJ called my name, and I sang. Chris followed with something I’d never heard before, and then Graham did something awful by Metallica.

Then Nathan sang CCR’s “Fortunate Son,” and he was awesome, the kind of karaoke singer who makes it less fun for the rest of us.

I still had time for another song, so I put in one I had never performed before.

We listened to each of the strangers perform, and then it was my turn again.

As we waited for the song to queue, I dedicated it to myself and told the crowd, which had now doubled, that I had to leave for the airport immediately afterward. Then the music started, the lyrics appeared, and I sang, “She packed my bags last night, preflight...”

I was no William Shatner, but I got through it with help from the crowd. Then I hugged my friends, grabbed my bag, and raced outside to catch a cab.



“I’m not the man they think I am at home, oh no no no, I’m a Rocket Man...”

***Jim O’Kelley is the Diplomacy World Club and Tournament Editor.***



# The Ghost Rating System

By Tom Anthony

In his article on Internet Diplomacy in [Diplomacy World](#) 103, Jason Koelewyn made the insight that "...most of us are geeks of one flavour or another, and geeks love numbers and rankings." Just the shortest glance at statistics will show that this has held true at phpdiplomacy.net, the website where I play my Diplomacy. It is the host of 380 active games at the time of writing, and boasts over 5000 completed games. Like diplomaticorp.com, this site has surpassed the 100 player 'barrier' for active members, as well as over 13000 registered members.

In August of 2007 the points system was introduced by the developer of phpdiplomacy, Kestas Kuliukas, after the number of players had dropped due to Civil Disorder ravaging the community over the past six months. He will be able to give a far better account than me, but suffice it to say that a sudden boom in players at the beginning of 2007 had swamped a small community, changing it from one where you knew every player to one where you knew few. The site was in trouble because the social responsibility that was once there was lost. Ever since this introduction of the points system the growth of phpdiplomacy has been dramatic. In just one year the number of unique 'hits' had increased by over seven fold. Clearly then ranking players is of the utmost importance for successful Internet-Diplomacy. The reason for this is simple- there was a number, a badge that said that you were a good player or a bad player. If you went into CD or joined too many games, you never got more points. So you just didn't go into CD or join too many games if you actually

wanted to play. There is one thing that points don't do however, and that is tell you with any accuracy how good the various players are, and it would be much better to have an accurate rating system for Diplomacy. I recognized this at once, and actually left the site at about the time the points were introduced, for a short interval. It is to this end that I have developed Ghost-rating, a system designed for Internet Diplomacy rating, rather than tournament scoring, in that it is meant to rate a large group of people.

There were two major aims for this system:

1. To promote desirable behavior
2. To be an accurate rating system.

Sadly, these two may very well be antagonistic, although, what is really wanted is for people to play at the best of their ability: not playing so few games that they don't get a feel for how to play Diplomacy, not so many that they cannot concentrate properly on each game, and to never enter Civil Disorder. The traits of a good player are the traits that we wish to encourage, so if we rate players properly, in theory it should all fall into place.

The single inspiration for my system comes from the work of Prof. Arpad Elo, who developed the Elo-rating system since adopted by FIDE's (the Fédération Internationale des Échecs or World Chess Federation). His work underpinned mine, with the formula:

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$$\text{New Rating} = \text{Old Rating} + V \times (\text{Result} - \text{Expected Result})$$

Here, the result is some method of scoring the game, so that the sum of all players results always equals one (It must always equal the same, otherwise it stops being a zero sum game, which is silly. Equaling one is a nice convention). Expected result is defined as a function of the seven players' starting ratings, and what that function is depends on the way the result is defined. Clearly this too has to sum to 1 (you cannot expect anything else). V defines how quickly the ratings change. It is desirable to have V such that a player's rating changes about the same amount no matter who they play.

This formula makes the rating system zero-sum, so ratings are the same over time, unless the average standard increases/decreases. It is always hard to compare over time, but this system give us our best shot at that. Each player starts on the average rating which is 100 (Chosen because firstly, it seems natural to start on

a power of ten, and secondly, 10 is too low to avoid using decimal places, 1,000 is plausible but 10,000 is too high for ratings to be memorable.)

This formula is all well and good, but we obviously need to define V, Result and Expected Result. I have done this for three different rating systems. The first, and simplest, is Winner Takes All. Basically, winning gives you a score of 1, anything else gives you zero, except for n-way draws that give you 1/n if you are part of the draw, otherwise, zero.

Now, for this, we can define ratings to follow a certain rule with expected result, or rather to take it as an axiom. I used the idea that ratings could be a win ratio. So if player A has a rating of 120, and player B has a rating of 60, in a game with both of them playing, player A is twice as likely to win as player B. That gives us the following formula:

If  $R_i$  = Rating of player  $i$ .

And  $E_i$  = Expected Result of player  $i$

$$E_1 = R_1 / \sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k)$$

$$\left( \sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k) = R_1 + R_2 + \dots + R_7 \right)$$

Now we need to work out how to get  $V$ . Clearly it has to be some function of the ratings of the players involved, so let:

$$V = f(R_1, R_2, \dots, R_7)$$

Consider the new rating of player 1, given that his real

$$\text{New Rating} = R_1 + f(R_1, R_2, \dots, R_7) \times \left( \frac{r}{(r+k)} - \frac{R_1}{(R_1+k)} \right)$$

Now, if we put  $f(R_1, R_2, \dots, R_7) = \sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k)$ , we get:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{New Rating} &= R_1 + (R_1 + k) \times \left( \frac{r}{(r+k)} - \frac{R_1}{(R_1+k)} \right) \\ \text{New Rating} &= R_1 - (R_1 + k) \times \frac{R_1}{(R_1+k)} + (R_1 + k) \times \frac{r}{(r+k)} \\ \text{New Rating} &= R_1 - R_1 + r \times \frac{R_1 + k}{r+k} = r \times \frac{R_1 + k}{r+k} \end{aligned}$$

Since the closest guess at  $r$  is  $R_1$ , we can then say that:

$$\text{New Rating} = r \times \frac{R_1 + k}{r+k} \approx r$$

And so it works to have  $V = f(R_1, R_2, \dots, R_7) = \sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k)$ , but only on average. If we were to actually do that, one defeat would be taken to be precisely your average skill, and your rating would plummet, one win would see your rating skyrocket, so we have to divide  $V$  by some constant to keep ratings from boomeranging around. If we set the average (and starting) rating at 100,  $V = \sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k) / 17.5$  gives a variance of 40, which seems about right from my models, although discretion can be used.

Hence for Winner Takes All systems, you just combine the formulae above, to get

The second scoring system I shall look at is "Points Per Supply Centre". Basically, result = SCs owned/34. This is rather more complicated in terms of expected result,

$$E_1 = (18 \times \text{Chance of player 1 to win} + 16 \times \text{Expected success in nonvictory}) \div 34$$

We know from the WTA formula above that:

$$\text{Chance of winning} = R_1 / \sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k)$$

So all we need to find is the Expected success in non-victory. Herein lies a problem: that depends on who the victor is. If player 1, clearly there cannot be any success

rating should be  $r$ , and assuming that all other players are accurately rated, with the sum of their ratings =  $k$ .

Result, on average, should be given by

$$\text{Result} = \frac{r}{r+k}$$

by virtue of the expected result formula. Then, on average:

because you clearly can only win 18 centers maximum. The reasons for imposing the maximum are two-fold. Firstly, it is not desirable for players to draw out a game in an attempt to try to gain extra centers, and secondly, it would be impossible to quantify how likely a player is to get 19 centers rather than 18, for instance. (It should be noted that using this scoring system does mean that every game must be played to the end, with no concessions, although this isn't an article about different scoring systems)

Because of the complication this maximum creates, it is necessary to look at the outcome as having two possibilities. The first is winning, and getting 18 SCs, the second is not winning and getting 16 or fewer SCs. You then need to look at both of these, and calculate the Expected Result that way. In essence:

in non-victory for player 1, and if player 2 is victor, the chances of success are different than if player 3 is a victor, because the people you are competing against

are different. In fact, if player j is victor, with  $k \neq 1$  the

success for player 1 in non-victory is given by:

$$\frac{R_1}{(\sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k) - R_j)}$$

The chance of that actually ever happening is the same as player j's victory chance, so we must multiply by that. Summing this for all possible j winning (other than j=1,

where there is no chance of success in non-victory because you have won) gives us the expected success in non-victory,  $Dr_1$ :

$$Dr_1 = \sum_{j=2}^7 \left( \left( \frac{R_j}{\sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k)} \right) \times \left( \frac{R_1}{(\sum_{k=1}^7 (R_k) - R_j)} \right) \right)$$

Now, sadly, these don't always sum to the same amount, so, although in proportion to one another, we

have to scale them up or down to sum to 1, giving proper expected success in non-victory by the following:

$$\text{Expected success in nonvictory for player 1} = \frac{Dr_1}{\sum_{k=1}^7 (Dr_k)}$$

Now, for V, it doesn't make too great a difference if you use the same formula as for winner takes all, although clearly it would be possible to find one that works in the same way as the winner takes all one does for winner takes all, but ultimately the exercise is probably pointless, due to the approximation at the end, and the inherent problems with rating a game such as Diplomacy. That, and the fact that the formula would no doubt be hideous, has meant that I have not created a V formula specific to PPSC.

So you can again take all these formulae and make the calculations necessary.

The third and final system for measuring success that I can conceive of is a position or place based system. You assign certain values for winning, coming second, third fourth etc. with seventh place being worth nothing. The values of the different places can be  $V_1, V_2, V_3$ , etc. Of course  $V_1 + V_2 + \dots + V_6 = 1$ . And:

$$E_1 = V_1 \times \text{Chance of 1st} + V_2 \times \text{Chance of 2nd} + \dots + V_6 \times \text{Chance of 6th}$$

Now, the chance of 1<sup>st</sup> is given by the WTA formula. The chance of second is given by the second part of the points per supply centre, with  $Dr$ . The chance of third is found in the same way as the chance for second, except that there is a first and second place chance that has to be considered. For fourth place, the same again- except with first, second and third to be considered. Etc. I haven't actually worked out the formula for this, because phpdiplomacy doesn't use places anywhere to measure success, but conceptually there is no problem<sup>[1]</sup>. Also, the formulae would be a mess to write out. V would be kept the same again, for the same reason.

<sup>[1]</sup> I will explain this more fully to anyone who is interested, however, as for the other two. E-mail me at Thomas [dot] William [dot] Anthony [at] gmail [dot] com

[2] Note on expanding the possible result systems with composite systems.

Now, you may wish to go further than any of those three systems, by finding some composite of them, for instance half winner takes all (an odd concept) and half points per supply centre. To do this is very simple. You have a, b and c as the proportions of the three different systems, so  $a+b+c=1$ . Then:

Additional Notes:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Result} &= a \times \text{WTA result} + b \times \text{PPSC Result} + c \times \text{Placing Result} \\ \text{Expected Result} &= a \times \text{WTA Exp.Result} + b \times \text{PPSC Exp.Result} + c \times \text{Placing Exp.Result} \end{aligned}$$

And V would be given by:

$$V = a \times \text{WTA } V + b \times \text{PPSC } V + c \times \text{Placing } V$$

if you chose to change V between the different systems.

[3] Note on CD: In a normal game, we have a system to rate players under every system I can think of, however

CD always presents a problem. We need some way of assessing the strength of a country's position. That

might be SC count, or the system suggested by Allan Calhamer on page 12 of Diplomacy World #2 (<http://www.diplomacyworld.net/pdf/dw2.pdf>): saying what it should be is beyond the scope of this article. Whatever it is, it gives the strengths of the different countries. This can then be scaled so that the sum of the strengths is 1.

When a player falls into CD, **Result = Strength - 1** to both penalize the CD and measure the success of the player too. Expected result is as before.

When a player takes over CD, multiply each players' rating by the strength of the position, and use those figures for the players' ratings in the Expected Result calculation. You will have to decide on how to alter V, and indeed if to alter V, but it would always be by multiplication of a constant.

I am reliably informed that it was often done that a positive result when a country is taken over from CD saw the player who took over gaining the points, but a negative result saw the player who fell into CD losing points. This method is conceptually inferior because it doesn't measure how well improved the position of the CD nation is from the take-over, so taking over a strong nation will give an unfair boost in rating, and furthermore running a country into the ground, falling into CD, and then having a skilled player resurrect the country beyond what you could hope to do would be left un-penalized. This point is particularly valid in the context of internet diplomacy.

[4] Note on expected result.

You could change all three systems by not treating the different countries as the same. Basically, at the start of the game, you make it as if each player is taking over a CD, defining the strength of each player differently. I chose not to do this because the relative difficulties of the nations There are, no doubt, other factors that could be considered, such as proximity to stronger players, however it would be difficult to really make this count for something with good justification.

[5] Note on application to internet diplomacy.

Normally internet diplomacy has many games running concurrently. I would for this take a players' rating to be the average of the ratings in each movement phase. When there is a CD takeover, you use the average of the ratings in each movement phase from the time of the takeover only.

***This kind of article makes me long for the days when Paul Milewski would write statistical stuff for me in Diplomacy World and Maniac's Paradise. Yes, you need to concentrate to wrap your brain around formulas like this, but if you're interested in statistics and data, it is time well spent. By the way, this system is Copyright © 2009 Thomas Anthony. Please contact at:***

[thomas.william.anthony@googlemail.com](mailto:thomas.william.anthony@googlemail.com)

***if you wish to use the rating system***

## Which Way to Victory? England's Opening Strategy

By Joshua Danker-Dake

### **ENGLAND'S LONG-TERM GOALS**

England begins with fantastic defensive position and unrivaled naval power, yet very often delivers a surprisingly mediocre performance. Frequently he gets mired at four or five centers with no real prospect for expansion. Why does this happen? The answer is, in most cases, a lack of long-perspective, which inevitably leads to tactically unsound alliances and orders.

The overwhelming majority of viable English openings can be divided into two categories: Northern (EDI-NWG, LON-NTH) and Southern (EDI-NTH, LON-ENG) (where A LVP goes is less important and will be discussed later). Richard Sharp observed that the Northern Opening was considerably more popular in his day than the Southern; that still seems to be the case. But a thorough analysis reveals the Northern Opening to be considerably inferior because it almost completely ignores England's biggest problems. Sharp correctly identified England's two most pressing questions: 1.

What can be done about France? 2. Where can England hope to get 18 supply centers?

Simply put, France is the enemy. France controls MAO, the back door into England, and can move through that door in force with surprising quickness. This completely neuters any defensive strength England might otherwise have. Furthermore, a French presence in the English Channel is much more threatening to England than an English presence in the Channel is to France. From there, England only threatens Brest – but France threatens London and has free access to the Irish Sea, whence he can attack Liverpool. And England can be surrounded and conquered by surprisingly few fleets, which France builds right on England's doorstep.

It takes 18 supply centers to win: where are they coming from? England, as much or more than any other country, needs to think about this from the beginning. It's nearly impossible for England to win without establishing a



presence in the Mediterranean – most likely England will need to get at least to Tunis. It's a long trip.

### **KILL FRANCE IMMEDIATELY – THE SOUTHERN OPENING**

England has to attack France eventually; why not get started early, before France strikes first? The Southern Opening (EDI-NTH, LON-ENG), in its various iterations, can be profoundly anti-French. It forces France to cover BRE, meaning he either takes a chance on losing it or passes up a build in Iberia. This also allows England to make a supported attack on Belgium, a traditionally French target.

So where should the army go? In the Southern Opening, A LVP has two logical destinations: Yorkshire and Wales. Wales is more aggressively anti-French because England can convoy into Brest. Otherwise, as long as England isn't concerned with convoying to Norway, they're more or less the same. England can convoy into Belgium with support from either Yorkshire or Wales; they will upset France equally well. Belgium is as good a place as any for England to convoy his army to – that foothold on the continent is vital to England's long-term success. Putting the army in Yorkshire also maintains England's ability to cover all three home centers should attempts to convoy the army bounce.



Following the Southern Opening, if England is feeling particularly adventurous, he may move ENG-MAO. MAO threatens Brest, Spain and Portugal, and also gives access to the Mediterranean. Even if England doesn't pick up any centers here right away, he can still give France all kinds of headaches. It can also help England get a leg up in the Mediterranean, which is necessary for victory. Additionally, a small, friendly English presence there may persuade Italy to take up arms against France.

Buz Hannon suggested a more extreme follow-up to the traditional Southern Opening: in most cases, forget Norway altogether and give France both barrels. On the surface, this seems like a bad idea, but since the fleet in Norway must almost always remain there to protect Norway, and can only offer England support in the North Sea, it isn't so stupid after all – and perhaps that build is not always so vital for England. Should the Southern

Opening succeed and the English Channel be gained, Hannon advocates some rather exciting options: England can attack Brest and Belgium simultaneously (with or without convoys, as desired), or mount a supported attack on Belgium if he thinks that more likely to succeed. Here, England only takes Norway if France or Germany is in position to mount a supported attack on Belgium – he takes it for the sole reason that he has nothing better going on.

Hannon's approach is not universally viable, and it is not a strategy to rely on. But Hannon demonstrates a good awareness of Norway's place in the British Empire, and it's definitely something to keep in mind. Most importantly, it's exciting – which means at some point, you might be able to surprise somebody with it.

### **BOGGED DOWN IN SCANDINAVIA – THE NORTHERN OPENING**

The school of the Northern Opening (EDI-NWG, LON-NTH) leaves France alone entirely. Depending on how England follows up and things shake out, the opening may turn out to be either anti-Russian or anti-German. The Northern Opening is pro-France – not in the sense that it invites friendly relations and cooperation, but in the sense that it invites France to walk all over you.

Scandinavia in general and Norway in particular are overvalued by many Englands. Scandinavia (for the purposes of this discussion, that means Norway, Sweden and St. Petersburg) presents England with several difficulties: first, supply centers there must almost always be constantly occupied to be protected from Russia and Germany; second, England can rarely go farther than St. Petersburg. Both of these problems contribute to debilitating stagnation. Sharp concurred; by moving east in force, he said, England is "starting off in the wrong direction, making a beeline for the St. Petersburg cul-de-sac." England simply cannot take these centers and keep going – he must stop, and tie up units there indefinitely.

Assuming England takes Norway in 1901, the unit there is hardly safe. Russia, whether or not Germany has bounced him out of Sweden, is frequently tempted by the idea that a build in St. Petersburg after 1901 will enable him to take both Norway and Sweden with just two units. And often, he's right – Germany is rarely in position to make a supported attack on Sweden and England always has better things to do with a North Sea fleet than support a pinned-down unit in Norway. So England can be easily pushed out of Scandinavia altogether. This means that Norway (and every other part of Scandinavia) should not and cannot be depended on in England's short-term plans.

What then shall we say? Should we ignore Scandinavia forever? By no means! But in most cases it does make sense to postpone invading Scandinavia as long as possible. The closer you get to victory, the more every

line becomes a front line, and the units in Scandinavia will cease to be such a drain on England's prospects. Leave Scandinavia until an end-game grab for centers – there's typically no need to poke the bear before that. Plan ahead and realize that St. Petersburg should be as far as you need to go, and no further.

What about the army? In the Northern Opening, Yorkshire and Edinburgh are the usual destinations for A LVP. Yorkshire is most common; from there the army can protect London if France moves to the Channel. From Edinburgh (the Churchill Variant), the army can be convoyed by either fleet – this is considered as anti-Russia as it gets, even though England's convoy destinations are the same. A LVP-EDI also invites France to have his way with you.

In any event, while taking Norway is usually strategically viable, convoying England's lone army there seems always to be a poor idea. Get that sucker on the continent where it can do you some long-term good.

Anti-Russian Englishmen wishing to press their luck in Fall 1901 can try either the Bohas (F NTH-SKA, A EDI-NWY) or the Eastern Push (F NWG-BAR, A EDI-NWY; this works with LVP-YOR and LVP-EDI). These openings are undeniably exciting, but England's success becomes scarily dependent on France keeping his hand out of the unattended cookie jar, a risky proposition at best.

A particularly short-sighted England can attack Germany with the Bohas. He can also try the Magdeburg: here, England allies with Russia from the start – Russia does not try to move into Sweden; instead, he goes to the Baltic Sea, letting Germany into Sweden. Meanwhile, England slips into Denmark. This too is exciting, but it depends heavily on Russian cooperation and may encourage Germany to pursue a French-German alliance. A French-English-Russian alliance may be tempting here, but as the middle party, England will inevitably face the squeeze before too long.

### **A DOUBLE-MINDED MAN IS UNSTABLE IN ALL HIS WAYS – THE SPLITS**

A third category of opening, the Splits, moves LON-ENG and EDI-NWG. This is very pro-German, and reveals an indecisive Englishman who is unwilling to commit to progress in any quarter. If he gets beyond five supply centers, it is through no real merit of his own; fortune has smiled upon him.

### **ALLIANCES**

Germany is the ideal partner for England. An anti-France alliance is often appealing to Germany, and it lends itself to mutual trust better than most alliances. Of France, Germany and Russia, Germany is in the poorest position to attack England with multiple fleets. Meanwhile, England has to work harder (and leave his backside

exposed) to establish a significant presence in Germany than he does in France.

In the typical Diplomacy game, even if Russia opens with two units north, he is primarily focused on what's going on in the south with Austria and Turkey and, as long none of the Western powers is attacking him, really doesn't have much stake or involvement in what's going on in the West beyond Scandinavia in the early stages. Russia may crowd England out of Scandinavia, but it's unlikely he'll be a threat to England beyond that for quite some time; Russia typically does not amass units in the north unless he has a reason to – he usually can't afford it.

France should be told whatever is necessary for him to allow England into the Channel. An anti-German alliance with France may be tempting, but it proves problematic. As long as he has Brest, France has access to England's back door, making it considerably easier for him to stab England than vice versa. Additionally, for England to make real headway in Germany, he must strike into the middle of the board, which can stretch his lines dangerously thin unless he can take more than his fair share of German centers.

Cooperation can never be assumed. The Northern Opening and its follow-ups are more dependent on diplomatic relations and cooperation from other powers. Many of the Northern follow-ups *only* work with active help from other countries (plus France leaving you alone). The Southern Opening needs German help to be truly successful (which is usually in Germany's interests), but in a worst-case scenario, at least England can defend his home centers.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Beyond any doubt, France has the potential to be the greatest threat to England – to play as though this were not the case is to lie to oneself. He is devastating in the Channel; he has unprecedented access to the English homeland. Why not work immediately to neutralize him?

It is typically cost-prohibitive for England to occupy Scandinavia, a dead-end street. East is not the way to English victory. Why waste the resources?

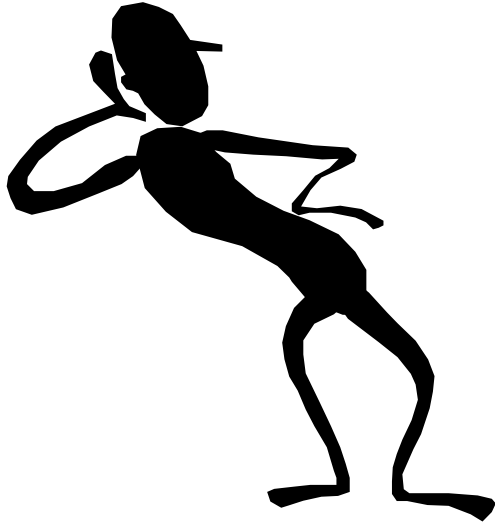
While the Northern Opening gives England plenty of options, it deprives him of the best ones in his long-term interests. Meanwhile, the Southern Opening, with only slightly fewer options, is more tactically sound, and gives England as good a chance at expansion as he's likely to get, because it addresses England's greatest needs: the threat of France and the path to 18 supply centers.

***Joshua is a valued and reliable contributor to Diplomacy World...so the next time you're in a game with him, give him at least one of your dots.***

# PSHAWN!

By Queen Suzanne

There will be those individuals who will maintain that we've been an inmate at a highly secret, highly classified rest home (i.e., a facility for the mentally deranged) over the past 30+ years. Such a tasteless rumor. To them we say *Pshaw*! For those unfamiliar with that term, we invented it to show our contempt and/or disdain ("pshaw") and our extreme boredom ("yawn").



There will be those individuals who maintain that we have, for several years running, been declared the World Champion Beer Can Crusher in the category *bare feet*. (The current record is reputed to be the highly-mystical number of 329 beer cans crushed barefooted in 2.93 minutes. It has been reported that the Champion dazingly dances upon the beer cans.) To them we say *Pshaw*! We wonder why anyone would attempt to crush beer cans with one's feet. Such a vulgar plebian activity.

There will be those individuals who maintain that we were kidnapped and imprisoned by certain unnamed, so-called leaders of the Diplomacy World because we were instrumental in organizing the Diplomacy Widows Association (DWA), which plotted to overthrow and supplant said unnamed so-called leaders of the Diplomacy World. Again we say *Pshaw*! We have always maintained the most cordial of relationships with the Diplomacy World. In fact, our vassal Doug-Less of Kent worships our words so much that in a snit he declared to us that "if somebody doesn't write an article for the current issue of this rag, I'm going to quit publishing!" (Ah, such delicious power!)

Never let it be said that Queen Suzanne would, or could, ever desire the end...the demise...the downfall...the *death* of the Diplomacy World! [In the background is

heard what sounds like a coughing fit.]

Therefore, with angels and archangels, we have deigned to come to the aid [mighty trumpets sound mightily throughout the remainder of the sentence] of our hapless Doug-Less of Kent by submitting this exclusive, profound, picturesque and wholly truthful account of our activities since retiring from the public purgatory of publishing, which is to say, reigning supreme over the various and sundry dippy zines that pass for literature in the Diplomacy World.



Those who have studied the lore and history of the Diplomacy World know that we are the Royal Mother of two most Royal and Loyal Princes: Prince William and Prince John. These Royal and Loyal Princes were the delight and joy not only of their Royal Mother but of the entire Queendom. The peasantry eagerly awaited the heralds bearing the monthly news of the activities of the Royal and Loyal Princes.

What has happened to the Royal and Loyal Princes during the ensuing years? Where are they today? And what, you ask, of ourself - what glorious things have occurred in our life? Where are we today? Alas, we promised only five hundred words to our hapless Doug-less - and we never go back on our Royal Word. Your curious wonderings will need be put on hold until the next

***[[Just my luck folks, a woman who delivers what she promises...but only exactly what she promises! I figured that, with the Royal "we" there was a chance she'd deliver 1000 words.]]***

# Grand Prix Watch

## A-Sig Walks the Walk at WACCon

By Jim O'Kelley

Didn't I read somewhere that Adam Sigal could be the player to watch in 2009? I'm not sure who penned those words, but A-Sig made him look like a genius by plowing through a loaded field at the sixth annual WACCon.

The 2009 Grand Prix started with a bang, as 45 players descended on the Washington Athletic Club in downtown Seattle, January 23-25. They competed on 20 boards over the four rounds, including 16 boards over the three largest for a Grand Prix score of 160 points. Sigal, a resident of New York City, seized those points with a dominant performance that included two two-way draws and a three-way. (In a departure from previous years when the tournament featured a complicated center-based scoring system that only Seattle player and physicist Jake Mannix could understand, this year's WAC used the time-honored, draw-based, idiot-proof DixieCon scoring system.)

On the top board, Sigal racked up 13 centers as England to win the tournament easily over Conrad Woodring, who finished with 9 centers as Turkey. A Long Island Woodring who now lives in Texas, Conrad soloed in the second round as France and finished fourth in the tournament.

Dave Maletsky of D.C. also soloed in the second round, as England. He finished second in the tournament. Jon Saul of Denver, last year's runner-up, finished third.

Eric Mead of Seattle was fifth, Adam Silverman of the Bay Area was sixth, and Diplomacy's good guy, Jim O'Kelley of Chicago, was seventh.

Mead and O'Kelley both employed the Mead Method to finish in the top seven. That is, they failed to qualify for the top board but scored well enough in the final round to leap-frog two of the guys who got smacked around in the championship game.

With WACCon wrapped, the Grand Prix crossed the country to Providence, Rhode Island, where from February 6 to 8, TempleCon was attempting to qualify for the Grand Prix for the first time in its three-year history.

In each of its first two years, the TempleCon Diplomacy tournament attracted only seven players. To increase attendance and qualify for the Grand Prix, Tournament Director Jim Burgess worked closely with the convention organizers to promote the tournament. In addition, he helped forge a new regional circuit called the Nor'Easter to increase TempleCon's appeal among New England

players. (Other Nor'Easter events include the Boston Massacre in June, HuskyCon in August and Carnage in November.)

He also focused specifically on attracting new tournament players by posting on the convention's message boards and chat groups, and encouraging new players to give the tournament a try.

"People showed up who I didn't even know were coming," Burgess says. "They read the chat group discussion."



Burgess personally welcomed all the newcomers, helped initiate them, and invited them to watch Edi Birsan's training videos, which he ran on his laptop.

His efforts speak for themselves. This year, TempleCon's Diplomacy tournament drew 21 players, a 300 percent increase. The tournament fielded seven boards over the four rounds, including six in the three largest rounds, the minimum requirement for Grand Prix qualification.

"If you want to build your tournament up to Grand Prix status," Burgess says, "it's definitely worth the effort to bring in new tournament players."

With TempleCon's success, Boston Massacre's triumphant return last year, and Carnage's jump to nine boards from six, New England Diplomacy is definitely on the rise.



Pete McNamara, the Australian transplant, won the tournament with a performance that included an Italian solo and three Best Country awards. Boston's Jonathan Hill finished second. New Englanders Steve Cooley (formerly of Los Angeles), Robert Rousse, Charles Steinhardt, Alex Amann and Melissa Call (a New Zealand native) rounded out the top board.



Unfortunately, the Grand Prix' fast start stalled at PrezCon, held February 27 to 28 in Charlottesville, Virginia. Just three years ago, this tournament hosted the North American Diplomacy Championship. In each of the past two years, it fielded a modest six boards. But this year, only nine players competed, as work commitments claimed stalwarts such as Andy "Buffalo" Bartalone and Chris Martin.

"Once the regulars started dropping, attendance spiraled downward," said Brian Sheldon, who directed the PrezCon tournament. The tournament managed just one board per round.

Speaking of a rising New England, Boston's Hill won the tournament. Mike McMillie of the D.C. area finished second.

The downward attendance trend continued at the National Block Party, held March 27 to 29 in the sleepy Louisville suburb of New Albany, Indiana. Last year, the NBP participated in the Grand Prix for the first time,

attracting 22 players and fielding five boards. But this year, it drew just 12 players and fielded only four boards.

Organizer Ric Manns attributed the attendance drop to the economy and also to Louisville's deep run in the NCAA men's basketball tournament. The same weekend, the Cardinals were playing in nearby Indianapolis. (In fact, on the ride home, I saw a long line of cars heading south on I-65, flying their Louisville flags. Inasmuch as the Cardinals had been bounced from the tournament that day, the cars resembled a funeral procession.)

O'Kelley soloed in the first round as Austria and posted a three-way as Italy in the second to win the tournament. He's now in the embarrassing position of leading the Central Shuffle circuit while also administering it.

Mark Kusnir, a senior at Louisville, finished second. For much of the final round on Sunday, Kusnir conducted his negotiations in front of the lobby TV. Unlike his beloved Cards, he topped his board.

So, after four events with only two qualifying, Sigal leads the Grand Prix with 160 points. Maletsky is second, at 144. Saul is third, with 130 points. Woodring is fourth at 117, and Mead is fifth with 105.

The race now turns to the weekend of April 17, when the Bay Area Diplomacy Association will hold its sixth annual BADAss Whipping in San Francisco, while the Windy City Weasels holds its third annual CODCon Open in the Chicago suburb of Glen Ellyn. Both tournaments rely heavily on local players, so perhaps that will help break the slump.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual DixieCon will be held in Chapel Hill over Memorial Day Weekend. Then it's on to Boston for the Massacre, June 20 to 21, followed by the World Diplomacy Championship at the Origins Game Fair in Columbus, Ohio, June 24-28.

By the next issue, we'll see who's still walking. Stay tuned!

***For more information about the Grand Prix rules and upcoming events, please visit:***

<http://diplom.org/~seattle/grandprix>

***To follow the action and for all the latest tournament results, go to***

<http://eurodip.nuxit.net>

***click the flag of your preferred language, and then click Results.***

DEAR MR. KENT:

*This is to inform you that you have qualified for a bail-out under the SEC Memoria Useless Institutions Act of December 2008. You will receive ... (mumble...mumble) (adding machine...clunk clunk) (abacus...click click) (um.....) about \$2.19 and 500,000 reams of paper. This will be dumped on your front lawn on 16 April 2009, the day after WE receive OUR bail-out money. This paper is recycled from Shredded Top-Secret Incriminating Memos, processed on 19 January 2009. Yee-hah! y'all!*

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## THE ADVENTURES OF FATMAN AND FROTTAGE

THE CASE OF LADY WINDBOTTOM'S FAN

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***Snit the Fifth: Into the Dark and Evil Land of Doofenschmertz  
(New Title—I Still Have No Idea Where This is Going)***

### I. Fall 1904

#### ***On a barren heath in Syria.***

The Three Sisters sat having tea at an elegant set tea table with 81 place settings. Nearby, the road between Jerusalem and Damascus, running south to north. The table was dominated by a huge samovar, 5 feet tall and 3 feet in circumference. Various soft teacakes and assorted tender sandwiches were piled high on flowered platters – soft and tender because the Sisters shared between them only 1 tooth.

Ah, but of course you see the Sisters as they are now, in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, haggard hags, masses of wrinkles, crows' feet, face-lift scars, and warts. But there was a time when they were the talk of the Middle East (not to mention Greece, Midgard, Mt. Olympus, and Scotland). Even when Rome was falling into the Imperial swamp, they were still had a certain allure, as of a fine wine still worth drinking but on the cusp of becoming vinegar. Tiberius used to brag that they would ... um ... read his fortune every night around midnight.



The tea party was only in its first hour. "Dearie," gummed the oldest Sister, Ruth, to the middle Sister, who currently had the Tooth, "more tea?"

"Oh, yes," replied Livia, gesturing with her dagger. Her

tea cup floated over to the samovar. Refilled with tea, it floated back to its place next to Livia's plate. Livia faced in the younger (if that is the term) Sister's general direction. "Dearie, may I borrow the Eye? I'd like to get a sandwich but I'd like avoid the anchovy paste and peanut butter."

"Of course, dearie," Curly Mae laughed; "here 'tis."



The eye, glowing an attractive bloodshot red and putrescent green, popped out of Curly Mae's right socket and floated into Livia's left socket. Livia peered at a platter of sandwiches, selected a couple of cucumber-and-strawberry-cream-cheeses, popped them in her mouth, stood up and cried out, "Clean cup! Move down! Move down! Clean cup!"



After much confusion, stumbling, exchanging of the Eye,

complaining, and recrimination, they moved down. As they sat down, a scantily clad – **very** scantily clad – elf ran over, cleaned up the abandoned places, and reset them. The Sisters' tea-time can last for months.

After more tea, more cup changes, more trading of body parts, and catty conversation about ancient queens (female and/or male and/or both), the Sisters noticed a figure coming up the road from Jerusalem. His wobbling arms held out in front, he stumbled and wandered from side to side, occasionally falling and generally behaving in a very disoriented fashion.

Curly Mae, who currently had the Eye, described this phenomenon to her Sisters. Then the Sisters called out together, "Hail, O discombobulated person!"

"Who calls me?" said the man, turning his head from side to side. It was obvious to the Sisters – well, Curly Mae, anyway – that he was unable to see. Curly Mae hobbled over to him and maneuvered him to a seat at the tea table. Then there was chaos while the Sisters got clean cups and the elf-busboy did his routine.

When everything had calmed down, the man spoke again. "I was on my way to Damascus. Suddenly there was a blinding light and a god appeared to me. I'm not sure which one. Ba'al, I think; or maybe Apollo. He said, 'Go thou to Damascus and the truth will appear to thee at the Kit-Kat Klub.' Then he vanished, but the flash of his glory left me without my sight."



Taking the Eye, Livia examined the man's hand. "You will meet a tall dark romantic man ... oh, um, no, uh, you will come to a well in Damascus and a really darling elf ... well, actually, uh, it looks like you will regain your sight and go on to found a religion that hates women, burns all sorts of incense and candles, and fights wars where they kill millions of men, women, and children indiscriminately."

"Oh, great," said Curly Mae. "Like we need yet another one of those."

The man went off toward Damascus singing war-psalms, happy as a grig. Curly Mae sighed, "His name was Paulie Torso. He used to write science fiction."

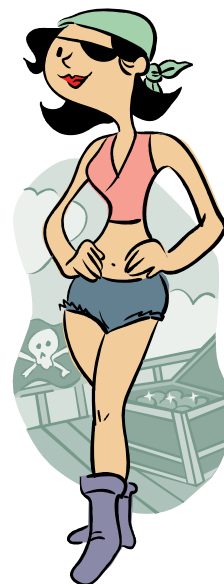
"There is more," said Livia, peering into an old crystal Coke bottle. Strangers are about to enter the Dark Land of Doofenschmerz, and the fate of the world will hang in the balance."

There was a moment of shocked silence. Then everyone shouted, "Clean cup! Clean cup!" But they found the samovar was empty and had to wait for the elf to make 50 gallons of fresh tea.

## II. Winter 1904

The first snowfall of Winter occurred before the Season change. Or at least that was the presumption, since at midnight, 21 December 1904, about 3 feet of snow – replete with naughty writing and even naughtier pictures, all in the traditional yellow – spontaneously appeared on the ground in the eastern portions of the province of Smyrna.

Fatman, Frottage, Damn Pirate Jenny, and their friends pressed on, hoping to keep ahead of Austrian Imperial forces that were pressing eastward to secure the Armenian and Syrian borders. The number of their little party had increased by 1: a pet platypus purchased by Jenny at a local Petschmerz. The creature did nothing but growl and she named him Parry.



Fatman's party – guided by the mysterious Klarkth Va-Kent – clambered over a steep rise in the hills of the Lower Plaza-Tauros and beheld at last the forbidding volcanic crags of the Dark and Evil Land of Doofenschmerz. Taller than the dim scene, presiding over the darkness and evil, so to speak, was the sullenly smoking Mount Doofus. "There (whoosh-whoosh)," said Klarkth Va-Kent, pointing at the ancient seat of Evil; "there is the location of the Castle Schmertz, home of the Wicked Witch of the East, Queen of

Doofenschmertz, Royal Scion of the House of Sith."

Fatman raised a masked eyebrow. "The Sith?"

"Whoosh-whoosh!!" Klarkth Va-Kent commented. "A great and nasty family of the Mysterious East. (Whoosh-whoooooooooosh.) Why, I should imagine that the Sith are responsible for half the dreadful mischief in the Middle East. You know, if nobody's there when you answer the bell of your tent-flap, it's probably some Sith pupa doing the runner. (Whoosh-...) If your mother-in-law turns all mottled black and green with a horrendous itch, it's no doubt some Sith that's slipped her a mickey or minnie or whatever. (...whoosh.) If your soup tastes absolutely ghastly, your cook is probably some distant Sith cousin."



Fatman raised the other masked eyebrow. "Are they as evil as all that?"

(Whoosh-whoosh-whooshity-whoosh.) "Indubiddly!" Everyone stared at Klarkth. "I'm a Flanders on my mother's side. Ahem... anyway, the Sith have two main interests: magic, black; blood, tasty. And among the family witches, there is none more malevolent than Barbie."

Frottage snickered. "Bar...(snicker)...barb...(snicker, snicker)...(snick...)...Barbie?"

Klarkth snorted. "(Snort!) [See?] Well, it's just a...a sort of nickname we used to give her because she favored a lad named Cain."

"Really!" exclaimed Frottage. "Do you know this Queen of Sith that well?"

"Know her! Know her?? Why, she's my sithter."

We shall leave our friends milling in confusion, uncertain whether to groan or raise their hands. Jenny was looking around, asking, "Where's Parry?"

**Next:** *Fit the Sithxth, "Wicked Is As Wicked Does, If I Don't Change My Mind".*

**Whilst the groans die down, I suppose we can get to last issue's little mathematical problem. Once again the number of proposed answers received was 0.9999 – we'll round it up and call it 1. This answer was received (as in DW 103), from the estimable Edi Birsan. Regarding the sequence of numbers given, he writes:**

*"There are several possibilities and a few probabilities. I personally like 59 as the next number though a very strong case could be made for 39 followed by 27, 18, 12, 7, 3 and finally 1. What I like about later case is that it is not disprovable in that the presupposing of a sequence existence therefore allows a step back in the dynamic of the background rules of the sequence that adds a statement of reversal. I could also make a case that there was an error in the sequence if the background was shifted from mathematics (which I suspect it is not) to the New York Subway map circa 1955 ish and you followed the IRT on the East Side, with stations that had existed though not all active and were matched to where their actual exits were regardless of the name of the station."*

**This problem is best approached by listing the intervals between the integers in the list: 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 11, .... A cursory examination of that list will no doubt prompt the casual observer to exclaim, "Why, it's a trick question!" And so it is.**

**Edi, Edi, Edi ... haven't you been in enough games with me to know you can't take me seriously? Thanks for your answer ... it had me thinking for a bit that I'd accidentally stumbled on an actual sequence – but since I can't add 2+2 and get the correct answer more than twice in a row, my chances of doing something mathematically correct, even by accident run somewhere into negative numbers.**

**This issue's teaser is the following question: The names of the Three Fa...um, Sisters are Livia, Ruth, and Curly Mae. For whom are they named? As a hint: they are currently alive, live together in the same house, and are in some way related (but are not sisters). As usual, send your answer (or guess) to [catu11us@pacbell.net](mailto:catu11us@pacbell.net) and the winner(s) may or may not get a prize if the current prize has multiplied sufficiently. A prize is not guaranteed but there's a good chance if what has multiplied has sufficient appeal to my utterly warped and twisted sense of humor.**



# The Final Endgame

By Douglas Kent

The wind was starting to pick up, and I could hear the leaves dragging along the ground when they were caught in the little tornados. Outside it was dark and ominous, but inside I had a roaring fire which brightened the room and my spirit. I pushed the open window down its final inch, locked it, and returned to my sideboard, where the Diplomacy board was spread out. Sipping on a good VSOP, I examined the position, set to match one in a game I was enjoying by post. Satisfied that my latest orders were the best I could do, given the situation, I eased into my leather chair. Placing my snifter on the table, I stretched to reach my volume of Tolstoy. Home alone, I was ready to lose myself in good literature.

But only a few pages in, just as my mind was beginning to transport itself to another place, there was a knock at the door. Instinctively, I turned to look before rising, and there before my very eyes I saw a shocking sight: a cloaked form passing through the wooden plank and into my study. The long cloak was gray in color, but that was all I could see. No feet protruded from below, no hand through the sleeve, and from under the hood was nothing but blackness.



"I have come for you," the figure said, and instantly I realized my time had ended. My mind raced; the comfort I imagined that some felt was not there. Instead my base survival instinct was awakened. But what could I do? I was powerless against the forces of nature. The fireplace poker would be my nearest weapon, but I saw no hope of a physical assault being successful.

"I know what you are," I said. "And I understand why you are here. But I have much I still wish to do with my life. Is there no way...."

"What must be done, must be done," Death spoke. The voice came from under the hood, but no mouth could be seen, no jaw in motion. "You cannot beg, bribe, fight, or resist." He waved a sleeve towards the sideboard. "You cannot negotiate this action, no matter how skillful a diplomat you may be."

"Diplomat?" I asked. "Oh, that is merely a game. I am no diplomat."

"I am familiar with this game of yours, Diplomacy. I have read the rules, studied the minds of those who played it when I came for them. I find the idea intriguing, but alas I have not attempted to participate."

The idea struck me, just as a delaying tactic. "Perhaps then, before you take me, you would like to play a game?"

He stood motionless for a moment. "Perhaps. You *are* my last acquisition of the evening."

"Great," I said. "I'll just pop out and round up five other players and then we can –"

"Hold. You may not leave this room. But I can supply the players. Unfortunately I am not permitted to bring back those who have been taken, but I believe I can arrange for five opponents of one sort or another. Close your eyes, mortal."

Frightened, I did so. About ten seconds later, during which I heard nothing, he spoke again. "You may open them."

There in my study, I was surrounded by amazing sights. Some of them I was able to identify, but others I could not. A row of five beings, players if you will, were arranged in front of the sideboard. On the left was what appeared to be the form of Arthur Conan Doyle. Death stood to me left, and I cocked my head to whisper to him.

"Is that Arthur Conan Doyle on the left? I thought you said you could bring people back from the dead?"

"Oh, we never allowed him to move on, not yet. He was so steadfast in his spiritualist beliefs of the afterlife and how it worked, we enjoy rubbing his nose in his mistakes. Cottingley Fairies, indeed."

Next were two inhuman creatures, standing erect like men, but unclothed save for loincloths. Their skin was deep red, and smoke seemed to surround them.

"Demons?" I asked, pointing.

"Not exactly," replied Death. "But that description will suffice until I take you. Some things need not be understood by you at this moment"

To the right of the demons was a head, floating in the air without visible means of support. The face looked

familiar, his gray hair combed and styled neatly. In my mind's eye I pictured the head with a baseball cap on it. Could it be?



"Is that Ted Williams? I mean, his head?"

"Yes. Cryogenics is not a method mortals can use to cheat Death. However, due to what I would describe as otherworldly legal complications – for lack of a better term – we were only able to move Mr. Williams' body to its destination. The head remains until the Powers That Be can decide on a course of action. While the system is constant and has served well always, small loopholes still exist."

The last figure on the line was instantly recognizable, but I was confused by his presence.

"Steve Guttenberg? Wait a minute, he isn't dead!"

"No," explained Death. "That isn't Steve Guttenberg. It is just an apparition which represents his career."

"Gotcha," I replied. Made perfect sense to me.

"You may remain on this world only until the end of the game. Then, I must take you."

We drew blocks for nations. I was Turkey. The Demons drew Germany and Italy. Russia was Ted Williams' head (I had to draw his block for him). Guttenberg's career drew France, Conan Doyle has Austria. Death was given England. And the game began.

Initially we had to sort out the problem with Ted Williams. Unable to write because of a lack of arms, we all agreed he could simply recite his orders aloud before the other orders had been read. Other than that issue, this looked to be a typical game. Death had provided all players with an understanding of the rules, using powers I am unaware of.

I spoke to Death in the far corner. "Look," I said. "You're the only one in this group I've met, so maybe we could work together against Russia. Williams is going to be a pain to deal with; he's crabby, has an itch on his nose he can't reach, and I bet he'll float around and eavesdrop on all the negotiations. I'll get Doyle to help us out, but once he's committed I'll march in Austria."

You convoy to Norway in the Fall turn, grab St. Pete in '02, and I'll support you into Moscow later on."

I was surprised that Doyle made no mention of Sherlock Holmes. He seemed more interested in talking about his spiritual beliefs, and I had to constantly direct the conversation back to the game. Williams agreed to leave the Black Sea empty if I promised to scratch his nose before Winter 1901. My initial negotiations with the rest of the board were brief; Guttenberg kept asking if I knew anyone in Hollywood, and the Demons smelled strongly of brimstone.

1901 went as you might expect. I opened with F Ank – Bla, A Con – Bul, and A Smy – Arm. Russia and Austria bounced in Gal, while the fleet in Sev sailed to Rumania, France opened to the Channel, while Death moved fleets to Nwg and Nth. Italy and Germany made the unusual move of bouncing in Tyrolia, which I couldn't remember having seen before! In the Fall, Death left London uncovered (and convoyed to Norway) but France moved Ech-Bel, which led me to believe the move to the Channel was arranged. I took Sev, giving me two builds. Austria grabbed Serbia, but had to cover Trieste with his fleet. Italy bounced in Tri but took Tunis with his fleet.

Russia was looking to be on the ropes, and I had two builds. Things were looking rather good so far.

By 1905 the board had solidified into a three-power race. Ted Williams had been eliminated, his head disappearing with his unit in Warsaw. Austria was the next to go; he was forced to move his forces west to counter a constantly aggressive Italy. Apparently Doyle had made some comment about the Demon not really existing, and that had set him off. Death and Guttenberg had sliced and diced Germany like a clove of garlic, but now Death had the upper hand as France had left his flank completely exposed. When Guttenberg swung his forces back around towards England, I was able to collect what was left of Italy without being forced to share any supply centers.



Death and I had tried to demilitarize the Russian region, but I guess neither of us trusted the other enough to

really do that. So instead we were supporting ourselves against potential attacks. Guttenberg had exposed himself to me when he scrambled to defend against England, but I had to be careful about when to slip the knife in. If I moved too quickly, Death would be able to get to 18 before me. So I kept telling France that yes, he'd be remembered for much more than the "Police Academy" films, and assured him that the first in the series was actually funny. Poor guy had done a bit too much dinner theater for my taste.

When it came down to grabbing the last of France's centers, I had to make a three guesses, each of them a 50/50 shot. I was lucky on two of them, but a very creative assault from Death kept me from grabbing the third dot before he did. Still, I was at seventeen. But so was Death.

Negotiation was no longer necessary, so we studied the board. I was never the greatest endgame player, so I couldn't be sure I'd gotten everything positioned properly. I looked at all the important spots; Munich, Spain, Mid-Atlantic, Bohemia...I had to give it one turn just to be certain. Spring 1912 came and went, and no progress was made by either side. I had done it. I had successfully built the stalemate line. A smile came over my face. This was the loophole I had been looking for.

"Well, Death, it seems I was able to outsmart you after all!"

"What do you mean mortal? You cannot defeat Death. My mission is always completed."

"Well, we're stalemated. Don't you see? You can't get to an eighteenth center, and neither can I! And since you agreed to let me stay until the game was over, I have succeeded! I may not have won the game, but I won the war. I don't have to go with you!"

I expected Death to be angry, perhaps to sweep the pieces from the board. But instead he just stood there, his hood shaking from side to side.

"Foolish mortal. I am surprised at you. I cannot be outsmarted. I am afraid you overlooked one factor in this game of yours."

The room was beginning to grow dark before me, as Death waved his sleeve through the air in a slow dramatic motion. I could feel my eyelids growing heavy as I grabbed for the chair to support me. "What do you mean?" I asked. "We're in a stalemate. You can't take any of my centers. What could possibly let you win now?"

As I fell to the floor and blackness enveloped me, I heard Death's voice inside my head and realized my mistake. "What could let me win, mortal? How about a timely NMR?"

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## Why Do Games End?

By Jim Burgess

This issue of *DW*, we have an endgame theme, so I thought I would write some of my thoughts in general on the endgame, evolved over forty years of play. I believe that the natural end to a game comes out of the play of that game up to the endgame. In some sense, if the 18 center solo is the sole goal, no one should give up before someone achieves it in games played via E-Mail or postally. So why do they do so? Here are some reasons with my thoughts on each.

Two Way 17-17 Draw: These evolve in two ways. It is not very stable to end up in a 17-17 naturally as a draw, the three way is much more likely. But as two powers at opposite ends of the board, usually one of RAT (or Italy in a game where France/Italy have never really opposed each other) and one of EFG, push up against the stalemate lines separating them they can take out the last centers and never really have either of them with a shot at the solo. Careful negotiation to hold each of the combatants back from the solo is usually needed to do this, since it is quite rare around that stalemate line for a clear situation to evolve with no such solo chance. It essentially does not happen at all when Italy is one of

the players and has broken into the Iberian/French centers or if the two players are both from one of the eastern and western triples. Much more common is the situation where the 17-17 is managed by the players and one or both players pass up clear solo chances. One might ask, why? Well, this is the magic of the game of Diplomacy. Negotiation, personality, and history of a game can lead to negotiated ends. Some players carebear it with an attempt to call these situations "shared wins", a term that draws many Dippers into apoplexy every bit as screeching as nails scraping a blackboard. I would never do this personally, but I've seen it happen innumerable times. It is a real part of the game. If you don't want a carebear pair to try to create something they're going to call a carebear win, you have to battle it on the board, since negotiation once you get into the endgame is essentially useless. So, you have to be able to lock up a four, five, or six way draw to stop this before the two carebearing players get around all the stalemate lines. This dynamic is not admitted as "acceptable" by many Diplomacy players, but if you think that way, you're guaranteed to be let down, and let down often. But many such 17-17's are something more

complex.

Dave Kleiman (Germany) and I (France) once shared a 17-17 where Dave could have taken a win any time in the last game year and a half or so. This game was a very public game with hundreds of observers and it had a Bourse attached to it. Quite frankly, one reason for having it end up in a 17-17 was the Bourse and how much fun it was to watch everyone howl. I must admit though, that I had a mess of sweaty palms waiting through each of the last few adjudications wondering if Dave really would follow through. And rec.games.diplomacy, the Usenet newsgroup where the hobby discussions of that time (late 1990's) took place, was filled with discussion and recriminations for awhile. For those who have a purist streak, they want to make war on such behavior, and sure, why not try to do it as megadipping about the game. But I've never seen anyone change their minds from this sort of argument. It is important as a player, though, to be assessing the personality traits and tendencies of your opponent in such a game. I thought Dave Kleiman was going to give me (and that's what it was, since he COULD have taken the solo) the 17-17, but I was never sure. I LOVE that about this game. Amor fati, embraced in all its glory.



Three Way Draws: I am one of those who believes the three way draw is the only stable outcome of a game amongst Intermediate/Expert players. Such players really should not let some single player win, and neither is the 17-17 very stable, as previously asserted. Therefore, if everyone is REALLY trying to solo, they should get stuck on three. And the back and forth balance of power tradeoffs in such a game can take a very long time. But the fact that one begins with an odd number of powers in the standard game, seven, and moves toward the odd numbers most naturally, is a feature of the game theory of the game. As an economist and theorist, I'm sure such a thing actually could be formally proved, and it surely has been

asserted over and over, but never actually has been proved. Do we care? I think not. Just remember that when you get down close to a three player endgame that it may not be worth your time to keep trying to play it out to a solo against good players. They just will not let you do it.

Four Way Draws: Most commonly, these are the outcome of two player alliances, a pair of them, one on each side of a stalemate line. But they also can be three players on one side and just one on the other. The closer that "one player" is to a 17 center line and the potential 18 center solo, the more that four or five or even larger draws must be formed to stop the solo. And sometimes they cannot be "whittled" or players do not want to whittle them. I think a massively under-respected skill in this game is the skill to be a small power in a draw. I have proposed a scoring system, partly in jest, that actually gives the smallest power in a draw the most points and the largest the least. You can find it in the Diplomacy AtoZ (<http://www.badpets.net/Diplomacy/AtoZ/B.html>) as the Burgess Dipcon Rating System.

Larger Draws: In most cases larger draws (when there was no restriction on the length of the game in a formal manner) are the outcome of the deeper psychology of a particular game. I have really been in 7-way draws that were good games. I've also been in 7-way draws that were awful games, stopped in frustration at something or another. In fact, every 7-way draw I've ever seen or been in that really was a 7-way draw (not ended by some artificial means) either was a really neat memorable game (most of those were old style postal press games where everyone was incredibly engaged) or an unmitigated disaster.

Last Comment on Endgames: Judging an endgame as a "good endgame" is always going to be a subjective judgment on which reasonable people can and will disagree. But I would argue that a "good endgame" is one that fully reflects the characteristics and personalities of what came before it, OR was such an entirely different outcome from what should have been expected that it becomes memorable for that. An example of the latter was the famous game "carebear" where Dan Shoham soloed after playing every turn up to the last turn in carebear fashion, seemingly headed to a 17-17 negotiated draw, when he stabbed for the win. And he argued THAT was the true carebear outcome, because the solo was there for the taking and needed to be taken. So we come back full circle to where we started, with 17-17's. Sometimes they happen, sometimes they don't.

***If you see Jim Burgess on Facebook, don't be fooled. That photo he uses is something like 7 years old.***



# Diplomacy World Demo Game

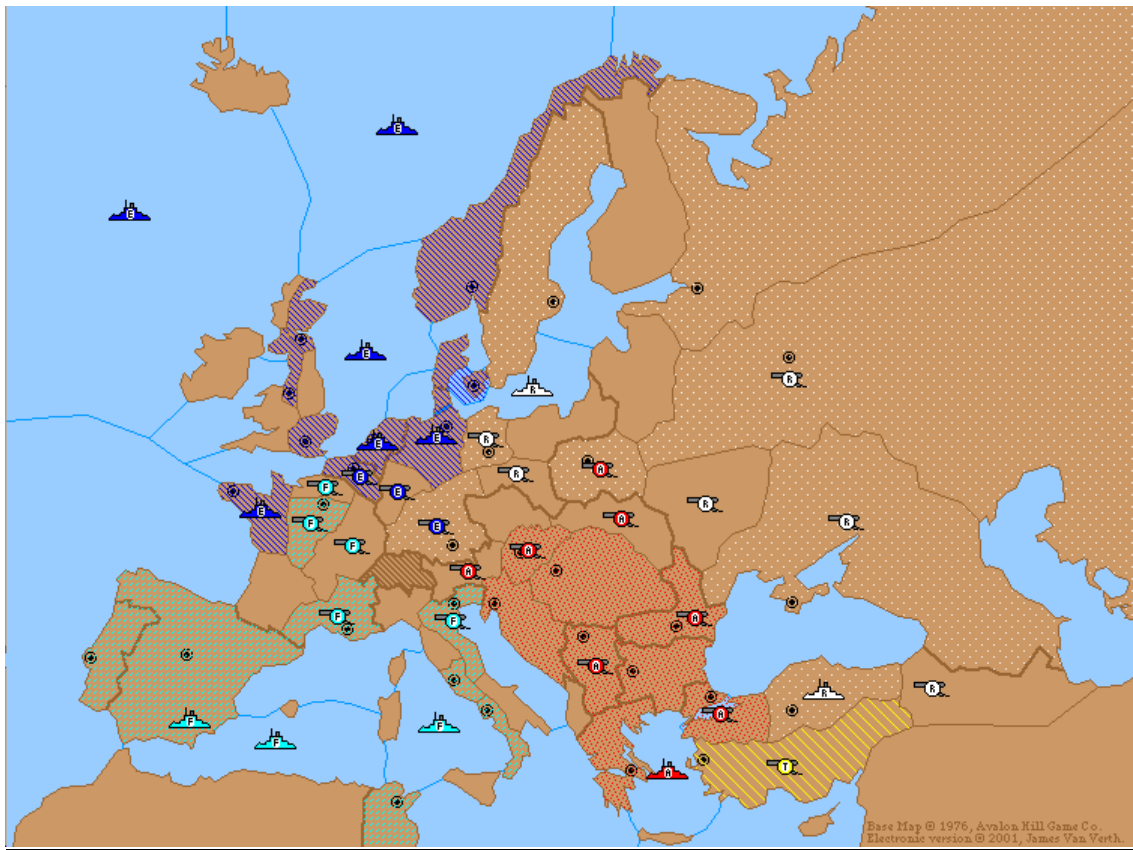
## Regular Diplomacy – “After the Rapture”

### Cast of Characters:

GM: Rick Desper  
Austria: Adam Silverman  
England: Dan Lester  
France: Jake Mannix  
Germany: Mike Hall  
Italy: Doug Moore

Russia: Mark Zoffel  
Turkey: Andy Marshall

Commentators: **Jim Burgess (Bold)**,  
*Eric Hunter (Italics)*



### Spring 1909 Results:

**Austria:** A Budapest – Galicia, A Constantinople - Ankara (\*Fails\*), A Galicia – Warsaw, F Greece - Aegean Sea, A Rumania Supports A Budapest – Galicia, A Serbia Supports A Rumania, A Trieste – Tyrolia, A Vienna - Bohemia (\*Bounce\*)

**England:** A Belgium – Ruhr, F Brest Supports F North Atlantic Ocean - Mid-Atlantic Ocean (\*Cut\*), F Denmark – Kiel, F Holland Supports A London – Belgium, A Kiel – Munich, A London – Belgium, F North Atlantic Ocean - Mid-Atlantic Ocean (\*Bounce\*), F North Sea Convoys A London – Belgium, F Norway - Norwegian Sea

**France:** A Burgundy Supports A Kiel – Munich, A Paris Supports A Burgundy, A Picardy - Brest (\*Fails\*), A Piedmont – Marseilles, F Rome - Tyrrhenian Sea, F Spain(sc) - Mid-Atlantic Ocean (\*Bounce\*), F Tunis - Western Mediterranean, A Venice Hold

**Russia:** F Ankara Supports A Smyrna - Constantinople (\*Void\*), A Armenia Supports F Ankara, ~~A Munich – Bohemia~~ (\*Dislodged\*), A Prussia – Silesia, A Sevastopol Supports A Ukraine, A St Petersburg – Moscow, F Sweden - Baltic Sea, A Ukraine Hold

## Turkey: A Smyrna Hold

The only retreat is A Munich. Its only valid retreat is Berlin.

### Spring 1909 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

GM Rick Desper: Austria wins the coin flip and walks into Poland.

*From which Adam is likely to be dislodged this Fall.*

GM Rick Desper: English soldiers gets French help into Munich

*Did Jake think Dan was stabbing Mark? That's the only reason I can see for Bur S Kie-Mun.*

**Austria: Adam makes some good moves here, the lucky slip into Warsaw, and coordinates well with Jake to dislodge the Russian Army from Munich.**

*Okay, I suppose that is possible, and AF might have suspected (or known about) Mun-Boh, Kie-Mun, but I'm not sure it is in Jake's best interest to trade an eastern focused Army in Mun for a western one.*

**Munich is one of the linchpins on the board. If England already holds Munich, it is easier for England and France to work out a safe deal for England to stab Russia and move all the armies there east. Bouncing over Bohemia also helps keep that path clear while Austria gets into Tyrolia. Again, I'm just saying this is how it looks to me, we have to wait and see how they actually negotiate it out.**

*I can see the logic in this, but it is a gutsy move by Jake, if that is what he's doing. Dan's failure to bring Fleets to bear on MAO means that Jake can solidify his defense over the next turn or two, so you may very well be right, Jim.*

**But, I still don't see why no one bothers to talk to Andy.**

*Maybe they are talking, but he's not listening.*

**Possibly, but I don't think so, I can see why Andy would not respond to Mark, but not to Adam, that's the way to stay in the game for Turkey.**

**Adam really wants to get his fleet into the Black Sea to push the line back. I think Andy would work with him if he asked. Then the move if F Aeg-Con supported by Smy, A Con-Bul. Assuming that doesn't happen, he has some interesting choices, he can try to support himself to take Andy out. That may be what Mark anticipates though. He also could try the risky A Con-Bul, F Aeg-Con anyway and**

**probably bounce.**

*Overall a strong set of moves from Adam, though I think I would have offered Con S Smy-Ank to Andy.*

**England: No crack in the northern alliance either, though England is now in Munich. Other than that question about how that happened (do we think that was an unwanted support? Probably), is there anything much to talk about here? No, Scandinavia is clearing out.**

*I wouldn't rule out Ber-Den to make up for the loss of Munich, either.*

**Correct, they still have not cleared out completely, and that is the way that Mark would stab back. But I can't see how Mark follows through on that very well. This is why his strategic position is not good.**

*I don't see Ber-Den as a stab, but rather as a deal to keep Mark even or close to even, since it is unlikely that Dan will be able to vacate Munich this Fall. Then, if Dan is stabbing Mark as you suggest, Nth-Den, Kie s Mun-Ber, Ruh-Mun, Mar-Gas, Pic S Par-Bre gives Jake and Dan each one build.*

*Dan's Armies aren't going to beat Jake, so convoying to Bel for the second turn in a row compounds the error I feel he made last Fall. NAO S Bre-MAO, Nth-Eng would have been superior, since it would have forced Jake to worry about more things.*

**One comment on Eric's thought about the second convoy to Belgium. Again, if Jake and Dan are trying to set Mark up, this is just the way to do it, not press the fleets, but allow Jake to get fleets back and get the armies onto the continent to push east. I'm not saying it is happening, only that it is an option. Jake still needs to take and hold Gascony just to make sure Dan doesn't go there, but I think he can do that this fall.**

*The combo of Lon-Bel, Bur S Kie-Mun does suggest that EF is setting up Russia. I didn't see it, and probably wouldn't have in Mark's shoes, but you could be right.*

**France: I thought the unwanted support to Munich was interesting. Jake is thinking, thinking, can I get Dan to turn on Mark again? Only if Dan is the one in Munich. So put him there.**

*That could be what Jake was thinking.*

It will be interesting how quickly the central Mediterranean is TOTALLY devoid of fleets.

*I probably would have gone with Tun-NAf, since Tun-Wes blocks TyS-Wes this Fall, and as I said above, I don't understand Bur S Kie-Mun.*

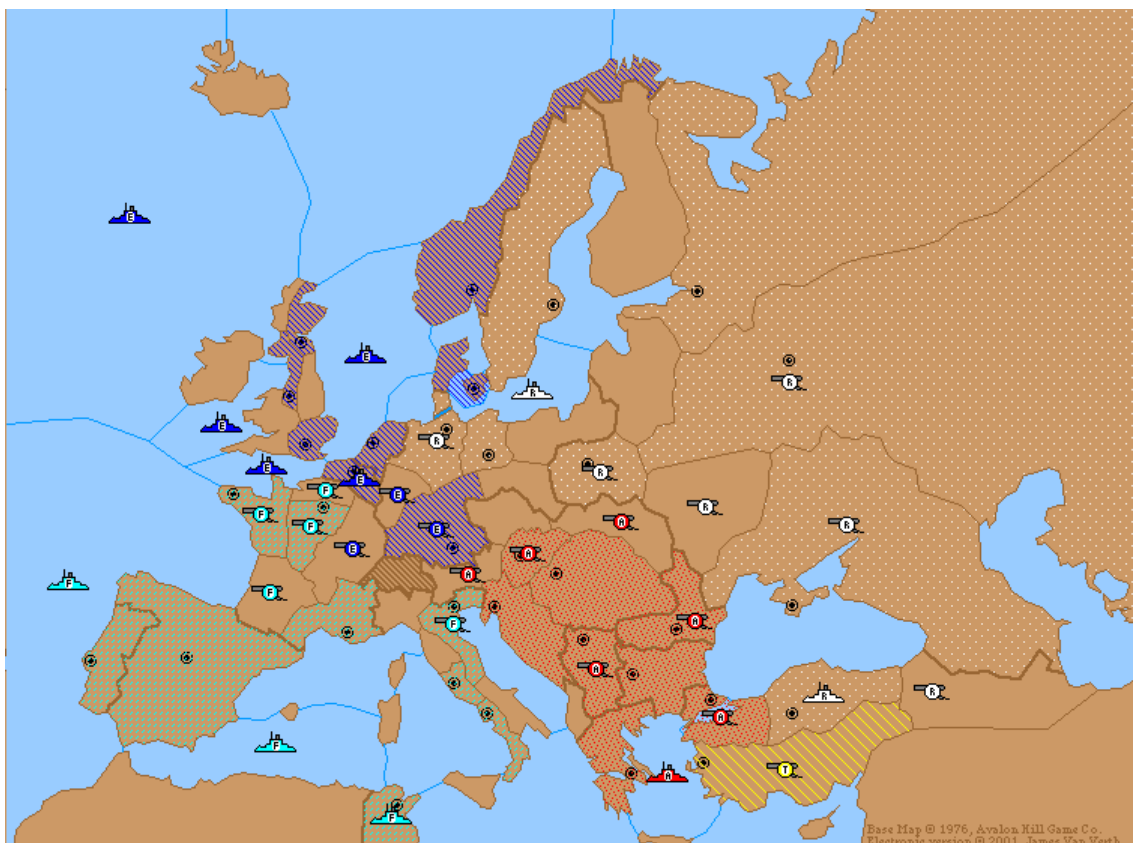
**Russia:** Mark has the toughest row to hoe to avoid being the odd man out in reducing this toward the three way. ER vs. AF will not create a stable four way along the stalemate line (and they all know this). Mark's lines are the most at risk. A bit of an interesting tactical situation across Warsaw to Rumania for the fall moves. A novice might look at Warsaw and say, I've got three on it, as long as Dan doesn't interfere, A Ukr to War with two supports is guaranteed. Well, yes, but to ensure that you don't get a bounce with A War-Ukr with two supports, A Sev must move to Rum to cut that support. But that creates two problems, one is that if Adam knows that he can get into Ukraine and the other that he has a retreat back to Livonia or Prussia unless Mark completely trusts Dan and moves to both places. I think all of that makes Mark at risk next year from

either Dan or Adam or both. We know Andy won't accept Mark's support, I wonder if he has tried to ask or not. In any case, Mark at best is at 7 for down one, a bad trend at this point in the game.

*I'm glad to see Mark at least try to engage Andy, but he's in a difficult position now with Dan in Mun, Adam in War, and little hope for growth. As for the retreat, I can't see a reason to disband.*

**Turkey:** I would prefer to see Andy playing rather than just holding out the string. This just shows though that even good players essentially stop playing and a player must anticipate or play with those single center powers to gain. I think Andy would help Adam if Adam just asked. Better if Andy tried to play and asked. But no evidence of anything happening for many game years now.

*\*sigh\* Agreed. Down is not out; minor Powers should always be talking, making offers, trying to get a build or position on the stalemate line in exchange for helping a major Power advance.*



### Summer 1909 Results:

**Russia:** Retreat A Munich - Berlin.

### **Fall 1909 Results:**

**Austria:** F Aegean Sea Supports A Constantinople, A Constantinople Hold, A Galicia - Ukraine (\*Fails\*),  
A Rumania Supports A Galicia - Ukraine (\*Cut\*), A Serbia Supports A Rumania,  
A Tyrolia - Munich (\*Fails\*), A Vienna - Galicia (\*Bounce\*),  
~~A Warsaw Supports A Galicia - Ukraine~~ (\*Dislodged\*, retreat to Livonia, Prussia, or OTB)

**England:** A Belgium – Burgundy, ~~F Brest – Picardy~~ (\*Dislodged\*, retreat to English Channel or OTB),  
F Holland – Belgium, ~~F Kiel – Denmark~~ (\*Dislodged\*, retreat to Helgoland Bight, Holland or OTB),  
A Munich Supports A Belgium - Burgundy (\*Cut\*),  
F North Atlantic Ocean - Irish Sea, F North Sea - Denmark (\*Bounce\*),  
F Norwegian Sea - North Atlantic Ocean, A Ruhr Supports A Belgium - Burgundy

**France:** ~~A Burgundy – Belgium~~ (\*Dislodged\*, retreat to Picardy, Marseilles, or OTB),  
A Marseilles – Gascony, A Paris Supports A Picardy – Brest, A Picardy – Brest,  
F Spain(sc) - Mid-Atlantic Ocean, F Tyrrhenian Sea – Tunis, A Venice - Tyrolia (\*Fails\*),  
F Western Mediterranean Supports F Spain - Mid-Atlantic Ocean

**Russia:** F Ankara Supports A Smyrna – Constantinople, A Armenia Supports F Ankara,  
F Baltic Sea Supports A Berlin – Kiel, A Berlin – Kiel, A Moscow Supports A Silesia – Warsaw,  
A Sevastopol - Rumania (\*Fails\*), A Silesia – Warsaw, A Ukraine - Galicia (\*Bounce\*)

**Turkey:** A Smyrna - Constantinople (\*Fails\*)

### **Fall 1909 Commentary:**

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

**Austria:** Adam was not the one to finally start negotiating with Andy, that wasn't so good for him. Note my comments last time about the tactics, Adam should have tried A War-Ukr with two supports. That actually would have worked in this case to annihilate Ukraine. He did identify that Turkey was going to support Russia, so he held in Constantinople. Now his main choice, rebuild at home, or retreat into the rear of Russia. I thought Russia was going to have a removal, more on that below, but it might be better to R:otb and rebuild at home. The other question is how to react to the Russian stab of England. Given all that, I would negotiate before deciding which place to retreat, and there are some clear options for Adam in the choice he makes.

*I'm not sure what advantage a Retreat off the board would give Adam, unless he built a Fleet to send to Turkey. Mark isn't building, so retreating to Lvn threatens the open StP, and makes the defense of Ukr and War much more difficult. If I was going to order Aeg S Con, I would have thrown in Con S Smy-Ank to make Andy think and Mark worry.*

**England:** OK, so Dan was stabbed. He WASN'T stabbing Mark, but it looks like Mark thought he was. I sense one of those "Dan is busy and disappears" seasons. Mark got nervous reading things the same way I did, and he pounced. He stayed even as a result. But there is talking to do at this point, I think this could go any way at all, Dan could make up with Mark or not. I suspect this gets

everyone finally agreeing to attack Mark, but that's just a guess. But, what about France....

*Was he? The self-bounce in Den with Ber-Kie could have been agreed to, though the Russian Army in Kiel is more threatening than it would have been in Den. Still, F Kiel Disbands, followed by RA Kiel-Pru/Lvn by Convoy would further disengage the ER Alliance.*

**France:** Jake is starting to figure out that the next shift is coming, and perhaps he comes back and attacks Austria, once he gets a line with England? There are lots of choices here, so anything can happen, but now perhaps Dan listens. The fleet in Tunis is still two moves away from Austrian centers and the A Venice is closer than that. He took Gascony and Brest, giving up Burgundy, basically a decent trade.

*Given Tyl-Mun, Ven-Tyl, I would have ordered Mar-Gas, Par S Bur, to hold Bur, and then taken Bre next year with Gas S Pic-Bre.*

**Russia:** Well, well, there are two possibilities for how ER relations were going. First, Mark saw what I saw and jumped before he was jumped, OR this was a fake game between Dan and Mark so Mark could keep the extra unit. I don't discount the last one, but I think it was the first one. Also Mark gets kudos for finally dealing with Andy. Andy stays in the game.

*I lean toward the second, but we'll see.*



**Turkey: OK, Andy, good move, try to do something!**

*I'd suggest Ank-Bla, Smy S Arm-Ank for next Spring.*

### **Autumn 1909 Results:**

**Austria:** Disband A Warsaw.

**England:** Disband F Kiel. F Brest – English Channel.

**France:** A Burgundy – Picardy

Ownership:

Austria: Budapest, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Greece, Rumania, Serbia, Trieste, Vienna.

England: Belgium, Denmark, Edinburgh, Holland, Liverpool, London, Munich, Norway.

France: Brest, Marseilles, Naples, Paris, Portugal, Rome, Spain, Tunis, Venice.

Russia: Ankara, Berlin, Kiel, Moscow, Sevastopol, St Petersburg, Sweden, Warsaw.

Turkey: Smyrna.

Adjustments:

Austria: Supp 8 Unit 7 Build 1

England: Supp 8 Unit 8 Build 0

France: Supp 9 Unit 8 Build 1

Germany: Supp 0 Unit 0 Build 0

Italy: Supp 0 Unit 0 Build 0

Russia: Supp 8 Unit 8 Build 0

Turkey: Supp 1 Unit 1 Build 0

.

### **Winter 1909 Results:**

**Austria:** Build A Trieste

**France:** Build A Marseilles

### **Autumn and Winter 1909 Commentary:**

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

**GM Rick Desper:** Well, I was hoping the Austrian position would be more interesting, but he neither retreated to Livonia nor built a fleet. Nor waived the build, which would certainly have been interesting.

**Austria:** Rick comments here as being clearly against the choice, I think the situation is more complicated. France is sending vibes that he is coming barreling back at Austria again, the Trieste army threatens Venice, but doesn't threaten a fleet attack in the Med, that could be a way of telling Jake..... uh, no, don't try that. All that being said, having the unit in Livonia or a fleet Trieste just seem to show many more possibilities. It seems to me that the Diplomacy here among the four big powers is VERY hot, VERY deep, and VERY complex. Let's try to get them to talk about this in some depth in the endgame statements when we get to them. I think Adam is thinking about declaring peace with Mark though.

*Austria suspects ER conflict? I'm doubtful. Hopefully he'll build a Fleet. I'd say Rick did our job for us. ☺ Why A Tri, rather than A Bud, though? B A Bud would have allowed Bud S Rum, Ser-Bul, and a stronger defensive*

*position. B A Tri suggests that he's going to stab Jake by taking Ven.*

*I'm not sure I see the French threat to Austria, so I see A Tri as a way for Adam to grow. Take Ven, build a Fleet, take Rome, build a Fleet, take Nap, build a Fleet, take Smy and Tun, build two, and Adam has secure place in the Draw, and a decent Solo shot.*

I did mean that the French threat to Austria existed IF Austria did not build that army and Tun-Ion came in the spring and further advances after the English/French border became more stable, I do understand that building the army rather than the fleet in Marseilles makes locking that up more difficult with an English fleet in Mid-Atlantic.

England: Dan has three fleets on Mid-Atlantic, Jake only has two, if England and Russia are still allied, as looks likely, I think Eric was right that Dan was just giving Mark a center, then the Mid-Atlantic can be dislodged. But Burgundy is in trouble, A Pic-Bur with supports can annihilate that army. It isn't clear that much is happening on this front in the near future.

*To me England's Autumn pretty much screams that ER are still allied, or at least Dan thinks so.*

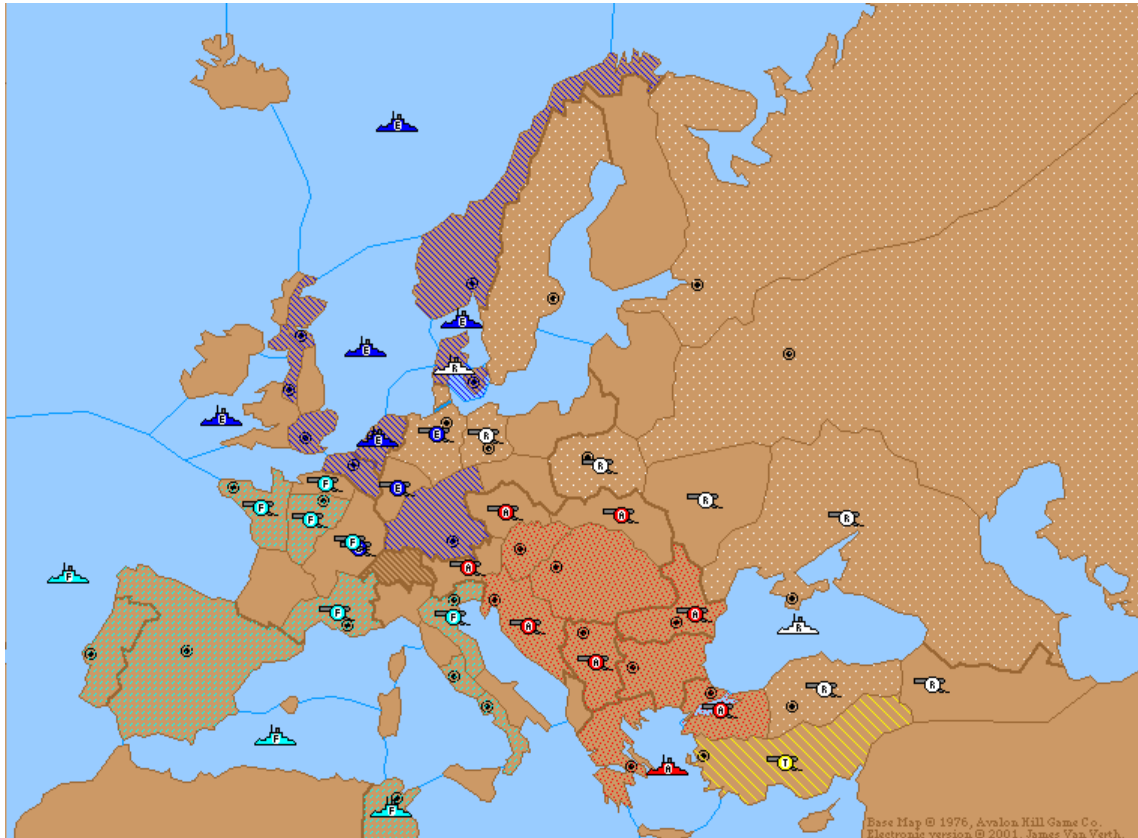
**France:** Some will wonder why Jake didn't build a fleet, move it to Spa(SC) in the spring, and with Tun-Naf, he could have had four fleets to blast back into Mid in the fall successfully, possibly, unless Dan moved one more fleet up. But since Dan probably would do that, Jake instead opted to annihilate the English A Burgundy.

*France's retreat is reasonable since he has only one open Home Center. His build makes dealing with A Bur*

*fairly straight-forward, but Jake is likely to pay the price for Tun-Wes, Rom-TyS, followed by Wes S Spa/SC-MAO, TyS-Tun. Spa S Wes-MAO, TyS-Wes would have allowed Jake to hold MAO, now he'll lose it.*

**Russia:** Mark is playing Diplomacy fast and furious here. He gets Austria to back off, and Dan gives him a center. What does Mark do? He has options, we like options.....

**Turkey:** Stay with Russia, switch to Austria? Does it matter? Yeah, it does.



### **Spring 1910 Results:**

**Austria:** F Aegean Sea - Ionian Sea (\*Bounce\*), A Constantinople Supports A Smyrna - Ankara (\*Void\*), A Galicia Supports A Rumania, A Rumania Supports A Galicia, A Serbia Supports A Rumania, A Trieste - Tyrolia (\*Bounce\*), A Tyrolia - Munich (\*Bounce\*), A Vienna - Bohemia

**England:** F Belgium – Holland, ~~A Burgundy – Munich~~ (\*Dislodged\* - retreat to Belgium or OTB), F English Channel - North Sea, F Irish Sea no move received, A Munich – Kiel, F North Atlantic Ocean - Norwegian Sea, F North Sea – Skagerrak, A Ruhr Supports A Munich - Kiel

**France:** A Brest Supports A Picardy, A Gascony – Burgundy, A Marseilles Supports A Gascony – Burgundy, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean Hold (and prays, FWIW), A Paris Supports A Picardy, A Picardy Supports A Gascony – Burgundy, F Tunis - Ionian Sea (\*Bounce\*), A Venice - Tyrolia (\*Bounce\*), F Western Mediterranean Supports F Mid-Atlantic Ocean

**Russia:** F Ankara - Black Sea, A Armenia – Ankara, F Baltic Sea – Denmark, A Kiel – Berlin,

A Moscow – Sevastopol, A Sevastopol – Armenia, A Ukraine Supports A Moscow – Sevastopol,  
A Warsaw Supports A Ukraine

**Turkey:** A Smyrna Supports F Ankara (\*Ordered to Move\*)

The only retreat is A Burgundy. Its only valid retreat is Belgium.

### Spring 1910 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

GM Rick Desper: Very disorienting - I have orders from everybody. Well, except Daniel wrote 'F Lpl - Eng', and left F Iri unordered. So...here they are.

I want to make a general statement about misordering. We all make misorders. And we all have our favorite all-time stupid disorder. It is worth cultivating an approach to the game that minimizes one's own misorders. For FTF in particular, I have an ingrained habit that I never deviate from, I write down my units, all my units, at the board while I ponder the board before negotiating. When I am not moving the pieces, I've usually done this before all the pieces are in fact moved. And occasionally there is an urgent diplomatic need to grab someone first (though I'm a bit of a recency effect person, usually I would rather talk to someone AFTER they've had an initial go with someone else and be the last one to talk to them rather than the first), so I do that and then write my units down. But this actually works in E-Mail Dip too. Always start by copying your unit positions down, and then move them. You can tell that Dan is not one of those people, he makes this sort of disorder somewhat frequently. My all-time favorite mis-order was when I was playing at World DipCon in Paris and was trying to use the French names for all the provinces -- for fun. I miswrote where a unit was that way and screwed up a position completely..... end of that experiment. You're trying to reduce the variation on these things that you can control. Good advice, this probably didn't hurt Dan all that much since he decided to leave Jake along and turn back toward Mark, but still, care is the watchword.

*Yup, and for an email game there are so many programs available that let you push the virtual pieces around, and then create an email with your final orders in it that it is doubly unnecessary. Even the low-tech method of replying to the last set of moves will avoid this sort of mistake. This, of course, makes the suspicious side of my nature wonder whether the disorder was deliberate. Dan may have agreed to a full shift away from Jake and decided that "accidentally" leaving one Fleet behind on border-patrol would be safer.*

Of course there always is the intentional disorder option, that may actually be what happened here. Some very good players, when playing with other

very good players, always assume that a miswritten order is intentional and make the other players deal with it in negotiation as if it were intentional. That is not a bad strategy, partially built from the concept that the subconscious mind also can make one misorder when one "wants" to keep that fleet behind on border patrol. I know that has happened to me to some degree.

Austria: Interesting set of "well, you did this with him, and that with him, and this other move with the other guy" moves from Adam. Presumably he agreed with Jake NOT to dislodge him from Venice and at the same time bounce Dan from retreating back from Burgundy to Munich. Jake still bounced to Tyrolia, rather than to Trieste (so if Austria's moves had gone he would get in), so Jake played ball there. But they also bounced over the Ionian. Was that an arranged bounce? Possibly, but we don't think so, do we? Adam was faced with the fact that last turn Andy and Mark coordinated and so Constantinople was at risk while Adam bounced. Clearly Adam was awakened by Andy's coordinated move and said, "hey Andy, I'll support you to Ankara". So Adam tried that with Andy, didn't fly, Andy did an uncoordinated support move to Mark (showing Mark wasn't on board with him all that much). Then, lastly, he tried to tell Mark on his other front that he was moving on England, to Bohemia, threatening to allow Mark to advance and continuing the unaggressive move started by not retreating to Livonia. Did Mark buy it? No, Mark took advantage by shifting further down and setting up some VERY bad choices for Adam in the fall. BUT, at the same time, did Adam help to convince Dan to turn on Mark to help? I think he probably did! Although he still didn't help Dan over Munich, he did succeed at influencing an English stab of Russia. Overall, pretty much of a mess for Adam. Which choice now? He can try once again to get Andy to work with him, give up trying to protect Galicia and Ionian and try to save the centers. The moves to do that are A Gal-Ukr, A Ser S A Rum, A Rum S A Con-Bul, and get Turkey to support F Aeg-Con. Of course, if Arm cuts Ank and he moves to Rum from Ukr, that doesn't work (relies on surprise by Andy's choice), plus he is hoping that France backs off, or even helps him take Munich. But does Adam want Munich?? Or does he just take Venice to try to stay even?? Everyone note carefully how these

good players keep trading stabs to try to gain advantages, recall last turn Russia was on the ropes, but stabbed for an English center (it now looks like a stab rather than a gift). This turn Austria is the one on the ropes. Creative moves are called for, and choices about how to manage France.

*I'm thinking that now that Jake and Dan have disengaged, Adam will take Venice in the Fall. The question is, will Mark let him build? The problem with the "one from column-a, and two from column-b" approach is that the over-all order-set is unfocused, and Adam once again cedes the initiative to the more active Powers.*

That is correct, but some very aggressive discussion and negotiation can negate that disadvantage. If you're going to make moves like this, with every other opponent you have to put YOUR interpretation of events on the board first, before they absorb completely what you did actually do. If you do this well, you can prevent opponents from ever seeing the "unfocused" overall order set that you actually made.

England: I'm not sure, if Dan was going to stab Mark anyway and keep just the one fleet west that Irish Sea wasn't the place to put it. OK, if one wanted an agreement between England and France now, what's the keystone? England keeps moving F Iri-Mid, France keeps moving F Mid-Iri. F Wes goes back to Tyh this turn and France and England drive east. This works after just one more turn. The benefit of an agreed upon bounce like this is that neither power wants the other's move to succeed and there are not alternatives in play. But of course IS that what is happening? England did NOT dislodge Mid, but neither did France move F Wes-Tyh last turn. He "prayed" instead like he wasn't sure what would happen. Now Jake could try to move north instead. What is England's comeback? Don't do that, basically. And he does move F Iri-Mid to bounce F Wes-Mid if Mid is going to get frisky. Otherwise, he didn't really think he WOULD get into Munich, so he opened up Belgium (not Burgundy to Burgundy) to retreat to. Also F Hol will help defend Kiel. England is likely to be even this time, though Dan specializes in the kinds of tricky multilateral moves that could end up with him up one this time, I'd actually bet on that, as unlikely as it looks from the board position. Lastly, as we move to France, there must have been SOME discussion, since France didn't move the "all in" attack on Burgundy, but a smaller attack that Dan could have thwarted.

*Yes, it looks to me like EF agreed to most, if not all, of their moves. Mid-NAO, Wes-Mid this Fall would put Dan in a difficult spot, though. With French help Dan can hold Mun and Kiel, and take back Den, for a build, though I could see Dan giving Mun to Jake to let him*

*flank Adam, and build F Mar.*

That's the way these back and forth issues always go, you can keep stabbing back and forth, there always are gains to be made. If you play it too safe, in such a game, you usually get left behind by the stabbers.

France: It is unclear to me if Jake actually did the moves promised to Dan or not. Looks to me like they dealt for A Bur-Mun, but then Jake convinced Adam to bounce Dan from there, so then Jake only went into Burgundy with two supports and not with the protected attack from Picardy. In fact, he risked it while using Paris to protect Picardy. Still, Jake completely cleared up his risky position (not to say it won't return), but that was slick, wasn't it? I think it looks to me like he does the next deal with Dan (Iri/Mid mutually attack, other units move away) and they both move east. If Adam doesn't take Venice this turn, then Mar-Pie successfully shores up Jake until his fleet dominance rolls Austria's entire position. If that all happens, Adam is in big trouble. But we do expect Adam sees it. I see Adam taking Venice this time.

*\*nod\* Jake correctly judged both Dan and Adam this turn, when Tyl S Tri-Ven, ENG & IRI S NAO-MAO would have left him in a very bad spot. Now he could very easily reassert his position as board-leader. I do think that Adam has to take Venice this turn, but even if he does the renewed EF rolling east spells trouble for him.*

Especially without the Austrian fleets to oppose France.

Russia: Interesting, Mark fixes his position in the south, gets Adam to save him with his OTB retreat, and then here is Dan stabbing him again! It is possible they dealt about Kiel and Denmark, but unlikely as Dan moved far more than he needed to East. Mark now has to figure out what is next. I think you have to commit your forces to try to take two Austrian centers and for that....

*And Mark has a real problem in the north. Ska-Swe, Nth S Kie-Den, Ruh S Hol-Kie, Nrg-Bar could easily cost Mark the two he hopes to take from Adam.*

This is why the EF is so dangerous: they have initial advantages on both fronts, so both can gain.

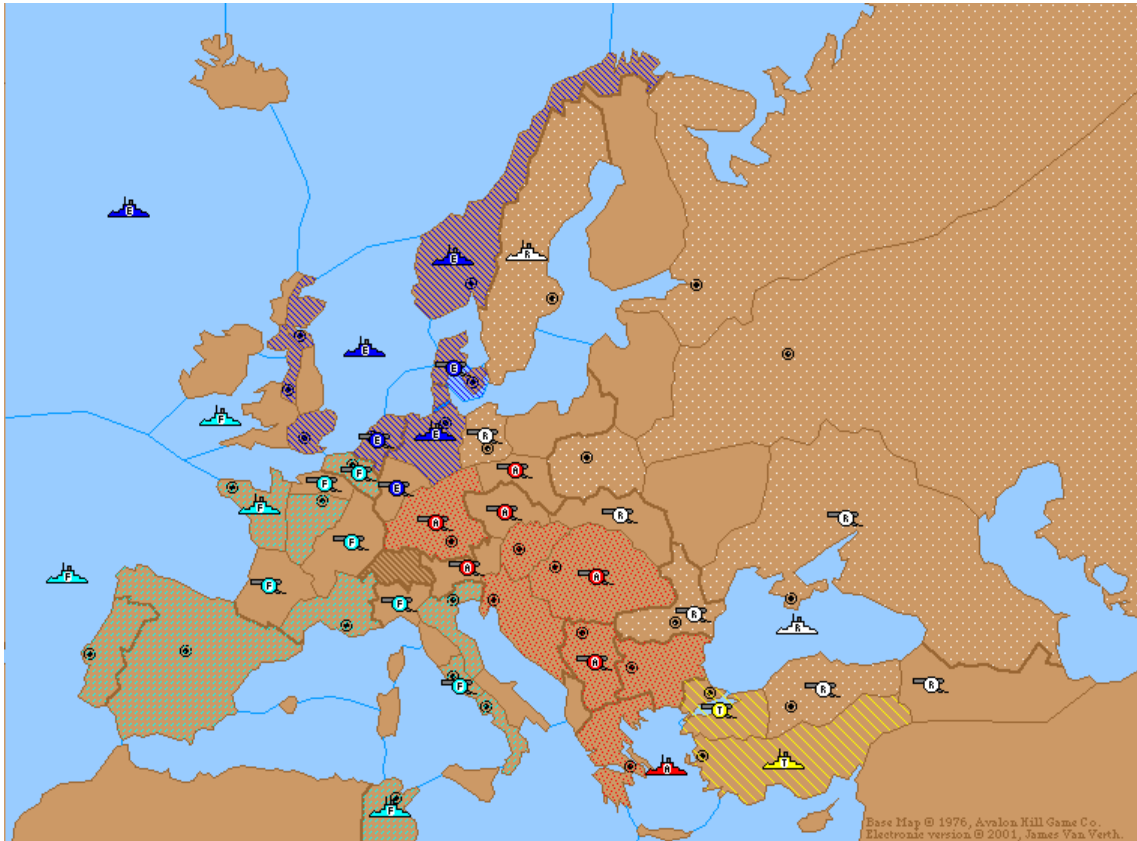
Turkey: Mark wants Turkish help! But he didn't communicate with him, or changed at the last minute. What's Andy to do? Go with Adam? That's what I'd do right now.

*I would guess it was a last minute change that got communicated to Andy, but that Andy didn't have a chance to respond to. Mark tends to be a last-minute*



negotiator. Of course, the turn processed before the deadline, so...

I think it is more likely that Mark didn't bother to let Andy know, but I don't get it.



### Summer 1910 Results:

**England:** Retreat A Burgundy - Belgium.

### Fall 1910 Results:

**Austria:** F Aegean Sea - Ionian Sea (\*Bounce\*), A Bohemia Supports A Tyrolia - Munich,  
~~A Constantinople Supports A Ankara - Smyrna (\*Disbanded\*)~~, A Galicia - Silesia,  
~~A Rumania Supports A Serbia - Bulgaria (\*Dislodged\*, retreat Budapest or OTB)~~,  
A Serbia - Bulgaria (\*Bounce\*), A Trieste - Tyrolia, A Tyrolia - Munich

**England:** ~~A Belgium Hold~~ (\*Dislodged\*, retreat to Holland or OTB), F Holland - Kiel,  
F Irish Sea - North Atlantic Ocean, A Kiel - Denmark, F North Sea Supports A Kiel - Denmark,  
F Norwegian Sea - Norway, A Ruhr Supports F Holland - Kiel, F Skagerrak Supports A Kiel - Denmark

**France:** A Brest - Gascony, A Burgundy Supports A Picardy - Belgium, A Marseilles - Piedmont,  
F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - Irish Sea, A Paris - Picardy, A Picardy - Belgium,  
F Tunis - Ionian Sea (\*Bounce\*), A Venice - Rome, F Western Mediterranean - Mid-Atlantic Ocean

**Russia:** A Ankara Supports A Smyrna - Constantinople, A Armenia - Bulgaria (\*Bounce\*),  
A Berlin - Kiel (\*Fails\*), F Black Sea Convoys A Armenia - Bulgaria, F Denmark - Sweden,  
A Sevastopol Supports A Ukraine - Rumania, A Ukraine - Rumania, A Warsaw - Galicia

**Turkey:** A Smyrna - Constantinople.

### Fall 1910 Commentary:

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

**Austria:** On the good side for Adam, the EF bounced back the other way again, on the downside, RT finally made a joint move!!! Adam chose not to take Venice (probably at least partly based on the discussion that led Jake to head back north) and instead went for Munich. The bounce over Ionian was probably part of an AF arranged bounce; however, he needed some help against Russia. And more generally it isn't clear what Adam hopes to gain from a wholesale attack on Germany, Russia is going to gain here, and moreover Turkey can now build a fleet. Overall, it is hard to see how Adam doesn't fare somewhat poorly next game year. I think he's going to have to attack Russia as best he can to hold on.

*Adam continues to work with Jake, and against Dan, but gets attacked by Mark, who is attacked by Dan. So, Austria and England each lose a Center, as France and Turkey build. Russia remains even, but is in deep trouble unless Dan turns to meet the French threat. Adam is also in trouble unless Dan continues to attack Mark, forcing him to pull back to defend.*

*No real reason for Adam to do anything but retreat, though.*

**England:** It's always a tough call, did Dan really misorder? If he did misorder, should Jake still have stabbed back? Did it matter? Did Dan make a mistake by choosing to intentionally misorder? In any case, none of it really matters, EF could have been dominant, instead we have another merry-go-round with Dan losing some.

*I think Dan's mistake was turning back to attack Mark, not failing to order Iri-Eng last Spring. Dan had position against Jake in '08 and squandered it with repeated convoys to Belgium, as Jake brought his Fleets west. Moving back against Russia just gave Jake the opening to attack.*

*I didn't understand why Dan turned to attack Mark last turn. He had position on Jake and had he pushed forward, he would have controlled the west. Now Jake does, and Dan is back in a fight for his life. Any progress Dan makes against Mark now is likely to be negated by French gains from England's weakly defended backside.*

I believe the answers to this conundrum lie in our discussion about misorders with last season. Either Dan was trying to be "too cute" with his intentional misorder and Jake called him on it, or when Dan misordered unintentionally, Jake decided that he couldn't trust Dan and took advantage of the opening. It is worth noting again the guess over

Irish Sea/NAO that Jake guessed right. When he did that, Dan's position becomes quite untenable. Still, the deeper question is why Dan agreed to pull off Jake in the first place, it does seem that it was the lure of a nearly unstoppable EF. If they had REALLY moved cleanly with all units East, I don't think it could have been stopped. Dan either intentionally or unintentionally with that one move seemed to ruin the opportunity. All to Jake's credit.

*I suspect it may go deeper than that, even. Jake may have said, "I'm not happy about the 'misorder', or the fact that you tried to move adjacent to Brest. Why don't you order Iri-NAO, and I'll order Wes-TyS, Mid-Wes, then, all our Fleets can continue east", and when Dan agreed, Jake knew that Mid-Iri, Wes-Mid would work. My guess would be that Dan will retreat to Hol, and disband F Nwy.*

**France:** Jake remains the most impressive in his play here, in that he faces no serious risks again after having things look very dire a few seasons ago. There is the beginnings of some fleets in the Med though, as Turkey likely builds one in Smyrna. In the very long run, that means he could have RT pushing out. But he has lots of time to deal with that. Solid moves and a good guess to get into the Irish Sea. Now he can support himself into NAO and unless Dan convoys an army back home, Liverpool falls next year.

*\*nod\* Or he can Convoy Gas-Wal as he orders Bre-Eng, and have a shot at Lvp and Lon. With reasonable play Jake ought to be able to lock down the Nap-TyS-Tun line before RT can threaten it. Then it's just a matter of moving into Scandinavia for the Solo.*

*Jake is clearly winning the diplomatic war here. He knew what Dan and Adam were doing and moved to take advantage of it. With the pressure Adam is under, the game is Jake's to lose.*

*Building F Bre seems obvious.*

**Russia:** Finally, Mark makes the deal with Andy and makes advances without losing too much. He does have risks though, since Sweden is indefensible likely, even with the pressure Dan is getting from Jake. Berlin also is likely to fall, and he can attack Austria, but Warsaw is open. Still, I expect some more wizardry from Mark to stay in the game at Adam's expense.

*I can see Jake supporting Adam into Kiel or Berlin to create a blocking force against Mark. An excellent set of moves from Mark to take two Centers from Adam, and greatly strengthen his position in the south. The north is a problem, but continuing to attack can't look attractive*

to Dan at this point.

**Turkey: Hey, better late than never. Andy will be hard to eliminate now, the RT is a natural.**

*Since Andy is working with Mark against Adam, building F Smy seems likely.*

### **Autumn 1910 Results:**

**Austria:** Disband A Rumania.

**England:** A Belgium - Holland.

### **Winter 1910 Results:**

**Austria:** Build A Budapest

**England:** Remove F Skagerrak

**France:** Build F Brest

**Turkey:** Build F Smyrna

### **Winter 1910 Commentary:**

Commentators: Jim Burgess (**Bold**), Eric Hunter (*Italics*)

**All is as expected here. Adam got a little cute in retreating off the board and then building the Army Budapest, this is a small lesson to the novices reading this though. Even if you KNOW you're going to build A Budapest, where you can retreat, always retreat off the board. Give yourself the options and use it as an item for discussion with the other players. Options are always good.**

*In a more general sense, always consider your retreat and adjustment options together. If you have a retreat open, but will be facing disband(s) in adjustments, consider whether you can gain diplomatic leverage by retreating off-the-board, as Adam did earlier in Warsaw, or if making the retreat behind enemy lines, and then pulling a different piece gains you a bigger advantage. Often, retreating and then disbanding during adjustments will force an attacker to build to defend against the retreated Unit, slowing his advance against you, and giving you time to organize your defense.*

**Of course, in the FTF game one ordinarily cannot**

***I suspect that in the next two issues you can look forward to a LARGE dose of this Demo Game, as we'll likely publish not just the final years, but also all the end-game statements from players and commentators, either all in #106 or spilt between #106 and #107.***

**negotiate between retreats and builds, but in most all E-Mail games one can, and one should use the opportunity. England and France with their moves commit to attacking each other again, and Dan has lost much tempo in the exchange, repeating, that is kudos to Jake, very important to gain tempo in these back-and-forths.**

*Yes, there are occasions when it is necessary, or at least advisable, to change course, but so often the loss of tempo can be devastating, especially when the Power you are pulling back from fills the void created with his own Units.*

**And Andy built the Fleet Smyrna that we've already discussed. Andy is most definitely back in the game now, better late than never.**

*Umm, probably. Andy could easily see Arm-Smy, Ank S Sev-Con, Bla C Sev-Con, followed by Con S Arm-Smy in the Fall. I would guess that Mark will work with Andy against Adam, though.*

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## **Knives and Daggers**

### **The Diplomacy World Letter Column**



**John Woll** - You asked me for the spelling of my last name when I sent in the haiku (Woll), but you changed my first name from John to Jonathan. Luckily, I

don't really care - this e-mail is simply to advise you of the fact, and let you know that there will NOT be a lawsuit filed ☺



**Don Del Grande** - Having hosted a number of Dip tournaments in larger gaming conventions, including WBC in 2005, I can agree with most of the things Jim-Bob Burgess mentioned in "Running a Diplomacy Tournament in a Gaming Convention: Whys, Hows, and Wherefores." However, he left out one other factor that affects how the game is run; while most games at large conventions have clear definitions of first, second, etc. place in each game, allowing for one or two players to advance from one round to the next, Diplomacy's concept of variable-size draws does not lend itself well to an elimination format, so players have to set aside time for at least two rounds, and usually three or more, in order to have any shot of doing well in the event.

It also seriously helps if the convention's organizing committee is able to accommodate the fact that Diplomacy does have special needs. When I ran the Diplomacy tournament at the old Pacificon (replacing Jim Bumpas, who had run it through the 1980s, including a DipCon in 1981 (and, I understand, died in 1997)), the boardgaming organizer understood the fact that we pretty much needed a room of our own, even in the days when most of the boardgaming area was taken up by an all-day Magic: the Gathering Pro Tour Qualifier tournament on the convention's first day. On the other hand, at WBC, Don Greenwood had enough problems juggling the schedules of over 100 events, so my request to have multiple rounds on the same day was turned down (although, to be fair, he did let me bend the con's rules a little and allow for a multi-round points-based tournament); between that, the fact that I would not be available on the Thursday of that week, and the knowledge that playing on Sunday would mean having everybody rush around at the end of the tournament to get their awards and have their pictures taken before the convention officially closed, the event was played Wednesday - Friday - Saturday, so anyone who came just for Diplomacy (and it's about 90 miles from both Baltimore and Philadelphia) would have to shell out for three nights of hotel rooms plus the con's registration fee just to play three games.

One bit of advice: I learned this one the hard way at DipCon in 1993 - have a plan to handle the situation where 36 people show up for a round.

**[[Without question, for success at a serious Diplomacy tournament, a player cannot allocate much time for any other gaming activity. The only way to get around that is using a different style of scoring system, which (as always) will turn into a major debate before, during, and after the event. Scoring systems are a never-ending topic for debate. How about some more articles on them, folks?]]**



**Andrew Goff** - Dear Lovers and Liars,

It's been a long time since I've seen an article in the style of last issue's "Central Power System". Far too precise for Diplomacy, the play-out of moves looks good, but only if other players do not respond to the situation of the game.

The most common Strategic fallacy in Diplomacy amongst new players is that Austria, Italy and Germany are somehow lepers on the Diplomacy board. This stems from a key fact: static games with "limited" vision amongst players results in the scenario described in the article: EF v RT fighting on stalemate lines for board dominance. This occurs because of two reasons, the stated one from the article ("easy" DMZs) but more significantly the failure to see "beyond the horizon". For example, to beat an RT alliance, any western alliance OTHER THAN EF is a comfortable favorite. In games with very good players, RT is in fact one of the weakest alliances! But then the eastern powers can combine to pick the best alliance to combat the new dominant western alliance... and so on indefinitely if we limit ourselves to East V West scenarios. New players very often fail to see beyond the first target and think strategically rather than tactically.

This is where it is essential to look beyond the "standards". So often newer players do not see "alternative" alliances and this is where the central powers get spanked. I highly recommend GR and IF as two of the most powerful alliances in the game: I'll swear by a 10+ average for both parties when I get on either side of those two! Central powers rely on the game NOT stalemating and "classical" alliances (such as EF, RAI, RT, etc) massively tend toward this (also causing the noted lack of solos). So while GAI is certainly one of the neglected alliances (I actually had my first tournament win back in '96 on the back of a 12-10-10 GAI), the point is there are half a dozen very strong alliances which central powers must seriously consider in order to influence the game.

Otherwise, as Edi Birsan says so often: there is NEVER a BEST opening, only the best option for that particular moment. For example, in the outlined plan, EF should look at each other after Sil/Pru/Gal and go... us vs. the world lets go. It's 15 centers each and home in time for a late lunch. If they are at each other then it's a great opening... but an EF with Turkish help from F1901 is, well, fatal to this opening.

Think dynamically, and please PLEASE can we collectively get over taking "Italy/Austria/Germany" as inherently weak - it is only based in truth for newer players, but the reinforcement of the message stops self-assessment and improvement and therefore becomes self-perpetuating.



# Pontevedria #88

compiled by  
W Andrew York  
POB 201117; Austin TX 78720  
wandrew88@gmail.com

*Pontevedria* historically was produced by the Diplomacy hobby's Boardman Number Custodian, or their designee, and listed the currently available 'zines and game openings within the hobby. Over time, it expanded beyond traditional games of Diplomacy, and its many variants, to include similar multi-player games offered within Dip 'zines and the postal hobby. *Pont* was last published and mailed in the late 1990's as the hobby moved more and more into the electronic realm. This resurrects the purpose of *Pont* as a column within *DW* and provides a one-stop place to find GMs, 'zines (in whatever form) and game openings that are part of the non-professional, human monitored/moderated gaming hobby.

This isn't the place to find solely computer moderated games, commercial enterprises, on-line gaming or interactive/real-time gaming. This is the place for folks to find openings in traditional face-to-face or beer-and-pretzels multi-player board games overseen by a human game master and which encourage player to player contact and interaction (even though some games are "Gunboat" style).

## GM's Wanted

If there is a game you would like to play and it needs a GM, send in the request. All current requests will be listed in each issue and, if possible, matched with a GM. If you are a GM that might be willing to respond to a particular request, sign up for an early notification or look for requests. All requests will be verified each quarter to ensure that the requester(s) is still interested in playing that game.

## No Current Game Requests

Disclaimer: Information listed is the most current available at time of publication and is verified quarterly with the listed publisher, game master or responsible party. No listing should be accepted as assured or guaranteed; but, rather, should be confirmed with the indicated contact person prior to exchanging funds or making any arrangements/commitments/agreements.

Updated and additional information is solicited and very welcome, presuming that it fits within the guidelines of the column's purpose, and all appropriate submissions will be included. In general, a GM/publisher has to agree with inclusion in this column before they are listed.

The publisher and compiler have no financial stake in any of the listings and make no promises or guarantees regarding the entry's accuracy nor of future publication schedules, game mastering or any efforts by the listed individuals.

## Zine Listings

### **The Abyssinian Prince**

Publisher/Country - Jim Burgess/USA  
Contact Information - 664 Smith Street; Providence RI 02908; burgess of world.std.com or jfburgess of gmail.com;  
[www.diplom.org/DipPouch/Postal/Zines/TAP/index.html](http://www.diplom.org/DipPouch/Postal/Zines/TAP/index.html)  
Frequency of Publication - every three weeks, when timely  
Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication - Feb 83/Dec 08  
Subscription Costs - Free via email; \$1.50 per issue by mail  
Game Openings - Diplomacy, Spy Diplomacy, Devil Take the Hindmost, Modern Diplomacy  
Other Games Currently Underway - Breaking Away  
SubZines Which Appear - By the WAY, Eternal Sunshine, Tinamou  
Notes/Comments - Note that the subzines have most of the game openings

### **Boris the Spider**

Publisher/Country - Paul R. Bolduc/USA  
Contact Information - 203 Devon Ct, Ft Walton Beach FL 32457-3110, prbolduc@aol.com;  
[http://members.cox.net/boris\\_spider/BorisHome.html](http://members.cox.net/boris_spider/BorisHome.html)  
Frequency of Publication - monthly  
Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication - Mar 85 / Mar 09  
Subscription Costs - \$12.75/yr (12 issues) for hardcopy; \$1/yr for e-version (waived if overseas player; seldom collected if Stateside)  
Game Openings - Blackbeard, Wizard's Quest, Colonial Diplomacy  
Other Games Currently Underway - Diplomacy, Balkan Wars VI, Machiavelli, Kingmaker, Gunslinger, History of the World, Circus Maximus, 1830 Coalfields/Reading, Blackbeard, Russian Civil War, Rail Baron  
Potential Future Offerings - 18xx, Age of Renaissance, Magic Realm, Kremlin, Dune, Puerto Rico

### **By the WAY**

Publisher/Country - W Andrew York/USA  
Contact Information - POB 201117; Austin TX 78720-1117 or wandrew88@gmail.com  
Frequency of Publication - included in each **The Abyssinian Prince**  
Date of Last Publication - December 2008 (Issue #20)  
Subscription Costs - Free  
Game Openings - Metropolis, Tombouctou, Hangman: By Definition  
Zine in Which Subzine Appears - **The Abyssinian Prince**

### **Cheesecake**

Publisher/Country - Andy Lischett/USA  
Contact Information - 2402 Ridgeland Ave; Berwyn IL 60402  
Frequency of Publication - Every Six Weeks  
Date of Last Publication - March 21, 2009 (Issue #286)  
Subscription Costs - Free  
Game Openings - Diplomacy  
Note/Comments - Andy's email address is available upon request by regular mail. Be sure to include your email address when requesting his.

### **Damn the Consequences**

Publisher/Country - Brendan Whyte/Thailand  
Contact Information - obiwonfive@hotmail.com  
Frequency of Publication - c. 6-weekly  
Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication - Began 1987/Latest issue #147, January 2009  
Subscription Costs - 35Baht to Asia, 45 to Europe/Australasia, 50 to the Americas/Africa (US\$1=32baht)  
Game Openings - Railway Rivals, Origins of WWI, Tactical Sumo, Diplomacy, Britannia, Maharaja, Sopwith, Snakes & Ladders, Machiavelli, Mornington Cres NOMIC, World Record, Dream Mile  
Other Games Currently Underway - Railway Rivals, Bus Boss, Diplomacy, Wooden Ship and Iron Men, Sopwith, Banbury Merton St, By Popular Demand, Where in the World is Kendo Nagasaki, Robo Rally, Maneater

### **Eternal Sunshine**

Publisher/Country - Douglas Kent/USA  
Contact Information - 11111 Woodmeadow Pkwy #2327, Dallas, TX 75228; dougray30@yahoo.com, <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/>  
Frequency of Publication - Monthly  
Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication - Feb 2007/Apr 2009  
Subscription Costs/Special Requirements to Receive - Free, available in pdf and html or appearing in **The Abyssinian Prince**  
Game Openings - Diplomacy, Deviant Diplomacy II, Gunboat, Intimate Diplomacy Round Robin, By Popular Demand, Diplomacy Bourse  
Other Games Currently Underway - Diplomacy, Gunboat 7x7 Tourney, By Popular Demand, Diplomacy Bourse  
Potential Future Offerings - Youngstown, Diplomacy, Gunboat 7x7 Tourney, Cannibalism  
Zine in Which Subzine Appears - **The Abyssinian Prince**  
Notes/Comments - Also includes columns or subzines from Heather, Jack McHugh and Andy York. Andy York loves cats, especially mine, and he hopes to visit them again very soon. He has asked me to sell them to him many times, but I refuse. But I am glad Andy loves them so much. Meow. (sic)

### **Minstrel**

Publisher/Country - Rob Thomasson/UK  
Contact Information - rob.thomasson@virgin.net; rob.thomasson.com  
Frequency of Publication - Monthly  
Subscription Costs - none for electronic version  
Game Openings - 1829, 1830, 1835, 1856, 1870, 18EU, Railway Rivals, Outpost  
Other Games Currently Underway - St. Petersburg

### **Northern Flame Volume 2**

Publisher/Country - Robert Lesco/Canada  
Contact Information - 49 Parkside Drive; Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6Y 2H1 rlesco@yahoo.com  
Frequency of Publication - I try for every two months but in practice it's quarterly at best.  
Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication - Originally December 1987;  
I took over in September of 1994 and I am assembling the newest issue just now.  
Subscription Costs - \$1.00 per issue  
Game Openings - none at this time, though will open a game if requested  
Potential Future Offerings - I always hope to be able to run a variant other than gunboat

#### **off-the-shelf** (currently on hiatus)

Publisher/Country - Tom Howell/U.S. of A.

Contact Information - 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363;

**Error! Reference source not found.;** [www.olympus.net/personal/thowell/o-t-s](http://www.olympus.net/personal/thowell/o-t-s)

Frequency of Publication - traditionally six weekly

Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication - 18 Oct 1992/ 31 Mar 2007

Subscription Costs/Special Requirements to Receive - postal: US\$1 per issue/free play on web site

Game Openings - none at present

Other Games Currently Underway – Diplomacy, Woolworth Diplomacy II-A, Fog of War Diplomacy, Breaking Away!,  
By Popular Demand, Downfall

#### **Out of the WAY**

Publisher/Country - W Andrew York/USA

Contact Information - POB 201117; Austin TX 78720-1117 or [wandrew88@gmail.com](mailto:wandrew88@gmail.com)

Frequency of Publication - included in each **Eternal Sunshine**

Date of Last Publication - March 2009 (Issue #06)

Subscription Costs - Free

Game Openings - Facts in Five, Railway Rivals, Empire Builder, Liftoff!, Pandemic

Zines in Which Subzine Appears - **Eternal Sunshine**

#### **S.O.B.**

Publisher/Country - Chris Hassler/USA

Contact Information - 2000 S. Armour Ct.; La Habra, CA 90631;

[www.sob-zine.org](http://www.sob-zine.org); [chassler@roadrunner.com](mailto:chassler@roadrunner.com)

Frequency of Publication - Every 6 weeks

Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication - April 1993/March 2009

Subscription Costs - Paper: \$2.00/issue (inside U.S.), \$3.00/issue (outside U.S.); Web: Free

Game Openings - Machiavelli, Gunboat Machiavelli, Gunslinger, Merchant of Venus, History of the World, Industrial Waste,  
Outpost, Power Grid

Other Games Currently Underway - Kremlin, Silverton, Seafarers of Catan, New World, Dune, Puerto Rico,  
Age of Renaissance, Republic of Rome

Potential Future Offerings - I'm open to suggestion...

Notes/Comments - The zine is mostly about the games, but it also hosts a regular column about science.

#### **Tory Bleeder, The**

Publisher/Country - UK

Contact Information - [thebagge@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:thebagge@yahoo.co.uk)

Frequency of Publication - annually

Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication - 2001 / 2008

Subscription Costs - free, via email only

Game Openings - None (My zine just reports diplomacy games within the British Telecom and Post office board games club as well as the Australian club western front although it is an unofficial sub-zine within both clubs lacking official approval on account of the Tory Bleeder's utter devotion to Mrs Thatcher and to all other right wing politicians).

Other Games Currently Underway - BT & PO BGC ... Diplomacy Games R and game Stalin (the Tory Bleeder doesn't run them I just report them and provide maps as the official zine the Bleeder looks like a piece of toilet paper and doesn't have any maps), in Western Front Colonial Diplomacy game Kitchener and Diplomacy Game Otto. (Again Western Front runs these games I just report them and provide maps as Western Front refuses to publish maps of games)

Potential Future Offerings - My zine specializes in the abuse of all lefties, I don't run any games at all.

Notes/Comments - The Tory Bleeder is a sub-zine to the Bleeder which is the official zine of the BT & PO BGC (Europe's oldest zine and club circa 1970 and up to issue 292. The Tory Bleeder isn't an official sub-zine but it is up to issue 9).

#### **Variable Pig**

Publisher/Country - Jim Reader/USA and Richard Smith/UK

Contact Information - [jim\\_reader@hotmail.com](mailto:jim_reader@hotmail.com)

Frequency of Publication: Target is 6 issues per year but actual frequency varies

Date of First Publication/Date of Last Publication: 1987/February 2009

Subscription Costs/Special Requirements to Receive: No costs although donations of stamps or money to cover postage costs encouraged. Only requirement to receive the zine is to be playing in a game (or sending mail and maintaining contact)

Game Openings: It's A Raid, Snowball Fighting, Railway Rivals, Bus Boss, Teadance, RoboRally and 6 Nimmt. Lyric Quiz and By Popular Demand game can be joined at any time.

Other Games Currently Underway: Awful Green Things From Outer Space, Lyric Quiz, By Popular Demand, Railway Rivals (7 games), Bus Boss, Der Fuhrer, Breaking Away, Cafe International, Hare and Tortoise, Fair means or Foul, Teadance, Where on the Tokyo Metro is Kendo Nagasaki, Work Rest and Play, Fearsome Floors, Golden Strider, Sternenhimmel, RoboRally, Maneater, Pitagoras, Shanghai Trader and Puerto Rico

Potential Future Offerings: Always more Bus Boss and Railway Rivals, Rail Baron

Subzines: VP comprises "Polar Pig" and "The Universe is a Pink Blancmange Called Simon"