

# Diplomacy World



**#108**

**FACE TO FACE**

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





# Notes from the Editor

Welcome to another issue of Diplomacy World, the flagship publication for the Diplomacy hobby since the 1970's. Though those years, the zine has seen many ups and downs, and I'm hoping that we're at the beginning of an upswing at the moment. Simply put, the real world has required a much greater part of our lives than it had a year or two ago. This is not limited to DW Staff, obviously, but to those loyal readers and contributors without whom this publication could scarcely survive. We've seen some turnover in the Diplomacy World Staff lately, but I am happy to say the new blood appears to be more than up to the task at hand.

In that regard, I will mention that Jim O'Kelley has resigned his position of Club and Tournament Editor, effective immediately. While Jim continues to maintain his involvement with the Windy City Weasels, and hopes to contribute to Diplomacy World as time allows, he simply felt that he has been unable to do the job up to the standards he had set for himself. Jim is a major force in the Diplomacy face-to-face hobby, and being a mere human (despite what others might say about him) there is a limit to how many hours a week he can devote to Diplomacy. And drinking. Well, Diplomacy and drinking. You get the idea. So we're beginning the search for a replacement, and once we have one in the position we'll announce it in the diplomacyworld Yahoo forum and on the Diplomacy World website.

So, on to this issue. Despite the intrusion of life and work and family and the economy, we've still managed to assemble an impressive collection of articles for your enjoyment. With a theme of Face-to-Face Diplomacy, you will find articles on that topic from such varied luminaries as Jim Burgess, Jack McHugh, and Dave Simpson. There are also quite a few ads and fleyers for upcoming face-to-face events, so be sure to start marking your 2010 calendars now!

There are some very interesting, and generally humorous, Strategy & Tactics articles as well in this issue. Our new S&T Editor Joshua Dannker-Dake not only continues to contribute excellent material, but he also has gone out and wrangled a brand new contributor, the esteemed Mr. Richard Hannon. I hope you enjoy his fine work.

Please also take the time to read the article by Andy Hull and Conrad Woodring on the North American Diplomacy Federation (NADF). The NADF is attempting to take a more active and prominent role in the hobby at large, and if they are going to succeed they need your support, your ideas, and your participation. Part of this new gameplan includes a more open and publicized description of what it is they are doing, so I think you can expect to find additional articles on the NADF and their

activities as new issues of Diplomacy World are released.



I hope that a good number of you are following the Demonstration Game of the Known World variant. A large chunk of this issue is taken up by another three game years, as the commentators make their way through the twists and turns of the map. In a variant such as this, with so many players, it takes quite a bit of work for the commentators to keep track of all the nuances, but our trio of announcers are doing a fabulous job. Of course they're not always right in their analysis, as each turn afterward may reflect, but remember: they write their commentary season by season, with absolutely no hint of what may be going on in the next season, and with no insider-knowledge of the negotiations between players. If you haven't been reading the Demo Game, I strongly suggest you check it out...remember, you can always go back to the prior issues and start from Spring 901! In fact, every single issue of Diplomacy World ever produced can be downloaded for free from our website, <http://www.diplomacyworld.net>. Take advantage of the years of material you can find there!

***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is April 1st, 2010.***

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 Spring, and happy stabbing!

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

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## Themes for Upcoming Diplomacy World Issues:



### Diplomacy World #109: Economic Variants Deadline for #109 Submissions – April 1, 2010



### Diplomacy World #110: Friends and Allies: Relationships On and Off the Board Deadline for #110 Submissions – July 1, 2010



### Diplomacy World #111: Internet Diplomacy Deadline for #111 Submissions – October 1, 2010

# In This Issue:

<b>Editorial:</b> <i>Notes from the Editor</i> by Douglas Kent	Page 2
<b>Humor:</b> <i>The Franco-Italian Alliance</i> by Greg Duenow	Page 5
<b>Internet:</b> <i>webDiplomacy – The Diplomacy Hobby Open Internet Platform</i> by Kestas Kuliukas	Page 5
<b>Theme Article:</b> <i>My Favorite Con Memories</i> by Jack McHugh	Page 7
<b>Theme Article:</b> <i>The Future of Face to Face Diplomacy in the UK</i> by Dave Simpson	Page 8
<b>Convention Ad:</b> <i>The Top Ten Reasons to Attend Dipcon 43 / Whipping 7 in San Francisco</i>	Page 10
<b>Tournament Announcement:</b> <i>3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Winter Blitz</i> by Michael Sims	Page 11
<b>Strategy &amp; Tactics:</b> <i>You Might Be a Loser If...</i> by Steve Cooley	Page 12
<b>Technology:</b> <i>Call to Participate - Electronic Protocol Chapter 11 and the JDPR</i> by Chris Babcock	Page 16
<b>Strategy &amp; Tactics:</b> <i>The First time I Ever Played Diplomacy</i> by Joshua Danker-Dake	Page 17
<b>Hobby Organization:</b> <i>The North American Diplomacy Federation</i> by Andy Hull and Conrad Woodring	Page 19
<b>Feature:</b> <i>Pleasing Doug Kent: How to write for DW the Easy Way</i> by Chris Sham	Page 22
<b>Feature:</b> <i>Towards Transcendent Player Communities</i> by Chris Babcock	Page 23
<b>Hobby Flyer:</b> <i>North American Diplomacy Federation Advertisement</i>	Page 24
<b>Strategy &amp; Tactics:</b> <i>The Ignorway</i> by Richard Hannon	Page 25
<b>Theme Article:</b> <i>Time to Plan Your FTF Diplomacy Activity for 2010</i> by Jim Burgess	Page 27
<b>Hobby Service:</b> <i>Ask the GM – An Advice Column for <u>Diplomacy World</u></i> by “Game Master”	Page 28
<b>Convention Ad:</b> <i>The Top Ten Reasons <u>NOT</u> to Attend Dipcon 43 / Whipping 7 in San Francisco</i>	Page 29
<b>Feature:</b> <i>A Ducky Christmas</i> by Stacey Williams	Page 30
<b>Strategy &amp; Tactics:</b> <i>The Foundation to Any Good Diplomacy Game</i> by Alex Maslow	Page 33
<b>Convention News:</b> <i>Selected Upcoming Conventions</i>	Page 35
<b>Convention Ad:</b> <i>HuskyCon VIII Ad</i>	Page 36
<b>Contest:</b> <i>Diplomacy World Variant Design Contest Reminder</i>	Page 37
<b>Convention Ad:</b> <i>DipCon XLIII / Whipping VII Ad</i>	Page 38
<b>Demo Game:</b> <i><u>Diplomacy World</u> “Known World” Variant Demo Game - Spring 905 through Winter 907</i>	Page 39
<b>Humor:</b> <i>Limericks</i> by Greg Duenow	Various

# The Franco-Italian Alliance

by Greg Duenow

The best alliance in my opinion for face-to-face play is France and Italy. I know it is always overlooked, but you should try it. (I don't have to try it, since I already know how great it is. Aren't you paying attention?)

The Italian opening in this misunderstood alliance can sometimes best happen with a full force attack. As the Italian player you should talk to France first. See if he wants to try this alliance. He will either say yes or no. Next talk to Germany, but don't tell him what France said. You can either lie or don't say anything. Sometimes a shrug works. Next you definitely want to talk to Russia. See if he knows anything. Share a tidbit if you feel crazy. Talk to Turkey if you want to make Russia feel paranoid. I find Russia gets really mad if you call him over to talk to both of you guys, but then say 'never mind' and chuckle. See if Turkey is willing to build armies.

Next, talk to Austria. This is boring so I won't go into detail. Take Austria only a couple of feet from the table and the whole time you talk to him talk really loud. Repeat everything he says really loud. Accidentally spit on him, then stomp on his foot. Do not apologize.

Lastly talk to England. See if he can take Norway with

an army.

If you are the French player, talk to England and Germany for the whole time and pretend to do a Western Triple until the very end. Then give Italy the wink.

So by now the game has progressed, your alliance is solid, and Germany and Austria have been eliminated. Italy's puppet is Russia. France's puppet is England. Turkey has a lot of supply centers, but no puppet. When you talk to the other puppets say you don't trust your true ally, you only trust his puppet. When your puppet asks about your ally's puppet say you think he is working with Turkey against this puppet and the other puppet.

Once Turkey is eliminated you must talk to your ally about the end game. Try to split the supply centers in half, this way neither France nor Italy loses or wins. But if someone has to win, make sure it is you!

Actually, that last part is good advice for any game!

***[[I suggest that you keep your feet out of range if you're negotiating with Greg.]]***

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## webDiplomacy; The Diplomacy Hobby Open Internet Platform

by Kestas Kuliukas

I write much more code than prose, but I've done a poor job sharing this message with the wider Diplomacy Hobby community. So here is my attempt at letting you know what webDiplomacy is in relation to the Hobby, and why I'm writing to you about it.



First let me introduce myself; I'm the creator of "webDiplomacy" (previously "phpDiplomacy"); an open source project intended to make Diplomacy accessible to a wider audience, so far giving at least 60,000 people

a first taste of Diplomacy and hosting at least 15,000 games. (Spread over the three largest webDiplomacy-based Diplomacy Hobby communities at webDiplomacy.net (c2005), playDiplomacy.com (c2007), and Facebook phpDiplomacy (c2008).)

The Diplomacy Hobby has always been on the forefront of technology, as far as I can tell PBEM Diplomacy servers predate the earliest internet chess servers by 5 years. Back then an open source server by Ken Lowe allowed this social game to expand to a fledgling global internet community from many tiny local pools. Sites like dipbounced and stabberfou continued this trend expanding the community base by integrating new web technology, and I think webDiplomacy has been and will be a big help in continuing to integrate new technology and expand the community.

Like all new Diplomacy software, webDiplomacy integrates the latest internet technology available. It

borrowed the Ken Lowe njudge idea of using open source to make the project adaptable and extensible, and it uses the dipbounced and stabbeurfou ideas of keeping a common community for all games on the server, with a common scoring system.

What it brings to the table, other than the incremental technology increase, is the idea that newcomers should be able to come to the server and start right away. This is done by having a scoring system that is forgiving to new players, friendly web 2.0 graphics, an introduction to the rules that appeals to the short attention-span of curious web-browsers, and most importantly it replaces written order syntax with drop-down menus or point-and-click maps, making it much easier for newcomers to learn the rules as they go.

Many of these newcomers have gone on to become great players, and become part of the Diplomacy Hobby community outside webDiplomacy. Many great players from the wider Diplomacy Hobby community have enjoyed the new, larger arena these new servers have provided, and the ability to test themselves against a wide range of players.



Aside from being open to newcomers, we try to keep the system itself open; open access to the database of players and games, open access to the code, open to suggestions and criticism...this has been a huge catalyst

for improvement.

Tom Anthony has used the open database access to create a more effective ranking system, him and others including Chris Babcock are looking at finding ways to query the huge, open archive of order data to generate interesting statistics about gameplay. Figlesquidge created a vector based map which interacts with the server via AJAX, and Jayp, in starting his own Korean Diplomacy Hobby community, has added extra choices to allow gunboat, anonymous, and live games. Carey Jensen added code to allow instant messaging, and Chris Hughes ported the code to Facebook. Carey Jensen and Oliver Auth have several variants developed, along with toolsets to make variants as easy to develop as possible, even before variants are officially supported in the main code (expected to be supported by December 2009, for webDiplomacy's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday).

Thanks to the open-source license and development model an improvement to any webDiplomacy server improves all webDiplomacy servers.

So maybe you've got an idea for a new audience you could reach with your own webDiplomacy server, or you can think of something interesting to do with millions of neatly indexed order and unit records, or you want to increase your readership, or unite a set of similar communities in some competition, or bring a great new idea to several existing communities in one swoop. With every server running its own custom code it just wasn't possible, but with a unified internet Diplomacy platform it is.

The Diplomacy Hobby has a neat new platform, and now more than ever it is up to the community to decide where to go with it.

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**webDiplomacy**

<http://forum.webdiplomacy.net/> - The development forum (with links to various webDiplomacy installations)

<http://webdiplomacy.net/webDiplomacy-latest.tgz> - The latest code tarball

<http://webdiplomacy.net/developers.php> - Information for developers and webmasters



# My Favorite Con Memories

By Jack McHugh

I have been going to cons for over 30 years - although I have only gone to a handful in the last 15 years - so I have a lot of favorite convention memories. I wouldn't want to write an article of all of them as I don't think anyone would find it very interesting. So in response to Doug's request for an article on con memories, I will limit myself to a few.



In Diplomacy, making an alliance with someone new is a challenge...so if you have to do with two people it's even more of a challenge. Making an alliance with two **novices** makes that even more problematic. Watching Brad Wilson try and pull off at alliance at an old Atlantic Con in late 1980's was highly entertaining. Brad often tried to put together complex alliances using novices, and they often fell apart as novices never do quite what one expects.



Watching Brad get frustrated as his newbies would fail to do what he wanted was highly amusing. Brad would always end up crying on my shoulder later, inevitable ending with the lament that "they didn't do what they were told." This is a common problem with most Dip players, and novices can be as independent as any old timer.



Another thing I enjoyed about cons is just socializing with players. The best time I had at last year's Husky Con wasn't actually playing any particular game. I did enjoy myself playing, but was happiest just chillin' on the back patio with people. Sitting around with Conrad discussing scoring systems or favorite TV shows, smoking stogies with Jim O'Kelley, or hearing about Graham Woodring's work in China was a blast.



Learning about new games is also a lot of fun. I remember being taught [Modern Naval Battles](#) after a Dip game years ago at another Atlantic Con and I enjoyed the game so much a I bought a copy (which I still have.) This year I learned [Munchkin](#), a Steve Jackson card game, which apparently has a ton of expansion kits which you can read about if you click on the game name. We played several games and I enjoyed it once I got into it, although the game can get bogged down if you have too many players.

So remember, when you're trying to decide whether to get off your lazy butt and attend a Diplomacy convention, don't just think about the game itself and how you think you'll finish in the tournament rankings. There are a lot of other reasons to go, and a lot of other ways to enjoy yourself besides just pushing the pieces around the board.

***Jack McHugh is the Diplomacy World Variant Editor, and a lot of fun if you can get over how much he enjoys whining about everything.***

# The Future of Face to Face Diplomacy in the UK

By Dave Simpson

In this article, I discuss the developments that have taken place on the UK F2F scene in the short time that I have been involved with it and outline what I see as a direction for the future.

## First a bit of background about me.

Unfortunately, I was too young to get involved in the postal hobby in the UK when I was first given Diplomacy as a present one Christmas, despite there being a flyer for it in the box. I enjoyed a good few games with my brother and with friends, but I never managed to play a 7 player game of Dip at all in my youth, before Role Playing Games took over my gaming life completely.

Fast forward many years, to a day when my boss happened to mention Diplomacy to me as we were discussing games we could play whilst having to wait around for things to happen during a large disaster recovery test we had planned. That discussion and the aborted 4 player game we held in a hotel foyer over a couple of beers during the test weekend was sufficient to reignite my interest. I quickly discovered that you could play online and I was away. I've been playing Diplomacy properly (i.e. with the full complement of 7 players) since December 2006. My first few games were email games on the njudges but as has been documented elsewhere (<http://www.diplom.org/Zine/F2008M/Simpson/inconing.htm>) I started playing Dip face to face at ManorCon too, once I had discovered that there was somewhere to go to play the thing in person.

## Diplomacy Face to Face at ManorCon.

So there I am, ManorCon 2007, keen and fresh faced, never having played a full Dip game F2F and not knowing anything at all about any of those new fangled fancy Euro Games (or those old 18xx games) that others at the Con were enjoying so much. The Dip tournament was a blast, a non-stop adrenaline rush and a great learning experience, so I was not that fussed by the fact that there were only 2 boards on each of the 3 days. There had been widespread floods in the UK at the time, so quite a few people didn't travel to ManorCon that year – I'd missed the Friday game myself.

One thing that was immediately evident was that a lot of the players taking part knew each other very well (not always helpful for a newbie, I must admit) obviously I didn't let on just what a noob I was, but I figure that as no-one had ever seen me before, they must have realised. As the weekend progressed, I discovered that there were quite a few ex-dip players playing other games nearby (they can't *completely* leave it alone) and they tend to like to keep an eye on what's happening in the Dip tournaments. I soon realised that I'd missed out on an immense amount of history within the hobby, but I

was made to feel very welcome.

I was hooked.

Over the next year, I discovered more about the Dip scene, all the old zines, old UK Cons, 24 boards at ManorCon for World DipCon 1 and so on. I'd missed it all. By the time I got started, ManorCon was the only UK Con left where people would go to play Dip. I was one of the small number of people who planned to go to ManorCon solely to play Diplomacy. Anything else that came along whilst I was at the Con was simply a bonus.

I went back to ManorCon in the summer of 2008. This time, I recognised quite a few people, they recognised me, things looked promising on all fronts. Whilst actually playing the game, I sucked big time, but it was as much fun or more than the previous year.

On the bright side, ManorCon 2008 was a little bigger than the previous year, as there were 3 boards on Friday and Saturday. There may even have been 3 on the Sunday as well, had a fair few of us not stayed up all night playing Ca\$h n Gun\$, Settlers etc. I think unusual alcoholic beverages were involved too (Gihan!) Evidently, a large breakfast was not enough to revive us sufficiently and a few people didn't make the start of the third round.



So, to ManorCon 2009. Only 1 board. That was a shock. Sure, there were almost as many stand-by players signed up on the game sheet as there were actual players, but I seem to recall that most of the stand-by players were signed up to play by other stand-by players, rather than actually signing up themselves! I'm not sure that Celine Dion was actually going to show up either. The fact we had even the one board at all without having to beg someone to play was because Gwen



Maggi was over from France to play in our step of the EDC.

One board on each of the 3 days. 8 players in total. Not a lot of variety there really, so at the end of the tournament, David Norman had to ask the dreaded question "Do you want to have a Dip Tournament at ManorCon next year?" Everyone said yes, but that would not be enough, action had to be taken!

Some pretty serious conversations ensued and I asked everyone involved on the Sunday to give me their contact details and everyone agreed. I set up a Yahoo! Group and soon a small core of players were involved, including everyone from the ManorCon Sunday. The group can be found at

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/ukf2fdip/>

I'm heartened by the fact that there's people around who are as keen as me to revive Diplomacy in the UK. This year F2F Diplomacy came as close to dying out as an organised UK event as I think it could possibly get.

### **Post ManorCon**

The word has been put out, slowly, and people are coming along, slowly, to join the ukf2fdip group. Our immediate target was to revive Diplomacy at MidCon, simply to raise the profile of the game whilst still only needing a small number of players. There was also the small fact that we were all keen enough to want to play some more games of Diplomacy, so it was not much of a drag to be honest. The plan worked, as in November 2009, Diplomacy was back at MidCon for the first time since 2005. All 6 Brits who signed up at ManorCon to start the UKF2FDip group turned up again to play, which was great. Something to build upon for the future.

Nine players took part at MidCon 2009 and more probably would have played, had we not decided to try to guarantee those who had turned up initially the number of games they wanted to play, as obviously, 9 in to 7 does not go that well. We must have looked like we were having fun, as people came over to see what the fuss was all about and we even had time to talk to them and explain how the game worked whilst we were playing it.

### **The Future**

There's already been a shift in the way that people turn up to play Diplomacy in the UK, as we have realised that if we turn up with the intent to win the tournament at all costs, then there may not be any tournaments to go to next year. Better to sit out a game to let someone else have a go, otherwise we will not encourage any new players into the hobby and we won't appear attractive enough to the old hands to drag them back away from the shiny, new, shorter games that are so popular these days. To combat everyone's seemingly reduced attention spans, the MidCon games were shorter than those at ManorCon. We played European style, C-Diplo to 1907, which was a significant change for the majority

of us UK centric relatively new players. This also meant that we could easily fit 2 rounds in to the same day, which was nice, so we had 2 rounds on Saturday and one on Sunday.

Although we can look back on 2009 with a certain sense of achievement, the members of the ukf2fdip group still need to do a lot more if the f2f scene is to survive. We need to look at ways to encourage new players in, with demo games, learning games, mentoring, free beer, whatever it takes. Just one or two new faces at every event in 2010 would be ideal, plus there's also the option of roping in the old faces as well, they know who they are! Next MidCon, we should advertise a Friday night introductory game to see what we can do with a captive gaming audience.

The best hope I have for the UK F2F scene is that we have a bunch of very friendly, keen, players, without too much game related baggage hanging around so far, as there's been no hard feelings anywhere along the way (yet!). Quite a few of us have only been playing for 3 or 4 years, so we're not jaded by any means. Diplomacy is still new to us, we've never been abroad to play a game, never won a Con, so there's still a lot of things to be done and a lot of friendships to be made along the way. There's also a bunch of much more experienced guys still on the scene, who know how things should be done, know what scoring systems work, know how to run a tournament and so on. The plus side for these guys is that they now have new opponents to suss out, which is more interesting for everyone.



Not content with just turning up at Cons and trying to look approachable, we're planning a Tour of Britain for 2010, with a planned series of tournaments which will soon appear on the EDA website and start to garner the

attention of players from other countries too. We have to take the opportunity that is being presented to us next year, with both the EDC and WDC taking place so very close to the UK. With a motley crew of Brits planning to attend, we can go out and evangelise there, as well as trying to get a few games in against new opponents, so hopefully we can tempt more people over to the UK in future.

The first "Tour of Britain" event is planned for Edinburgh in Feb 2010. Yes, there's a London event planned as well for later in the year, but so far nothing is planned for Liverpool. You could come to Brighton instead though! These new events will, no doubt, be quite challenging as

we have to sort out venue, accommodation, publicity, the whole lot, from scratch. We'll be at ManorCon in the summer and MidCon for the UK National Championships in November as well, so come and seek us out!

The ukf2fdip group is all about promoting F2F Diplomacy in the UK, but this does not mean that you have to be a UK resident to join up, as if you're considering coming over to the UK for a game, then we'd really love to hear from you.

**Dave Simpson is the moderator of the ukf2fdip group:** <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/ukf2fdip/>  
*I just thought I'd mention that one more time ;-)*

## Top 10 Reasons to Attend DipCon 43 / Whipping 7 in San Francisco\*

Brought to you by the Bay Area Diplomacy Association (B.A.D.Ass.)



**#10** The only major Left Coast Diplomacy tournament in 2010

**#9** More prizes awarded than any other three tournaments combined.

**#8** Hundreds of Diplomacy players from Bangor, Maine have promised to attend.

**#7** Opportunity to destroy the 2009 Grand Prix champ on his own turf.

**#6** Enjoy the great weather in San Francisco, the Cherry Blossom Festival right outside the hotel, and all of the great scenery and activities around the Bay Area...before or after the Diplomacy rounds, of course.

**#5** Perfect opportunity to live by the mantra "It is better to have stabbed and lost then not to have stabbed at all."

**#4** You don't have to get on a boat to attend.

**#3** A scoring system that most people actually like. But you can complain about it if you want, we don't mind.

**#2** Learn the difference between a Carebear and a B.A.D.Ass. Bear.

**#1** It's DipCon - do you really need an excuse?

**\* Please also see our companion article "Top 10 Reasons NOT to Attend DipCon2010 in San Francisco"**

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Winter Blitz

[www.diplomaticcorp.com/winterblitz](http://www.diplomaticcorp.com/winterblitz)

by Michael Sims | Order of the Lion | diplomaticcorp.com

Winter has finally set in, and a new year has come. But not only does winter signify that those of us who are succeeding in our games get builds but more importantly winter means that it is time to BLITZ! Now in its third year, the Winter Blitz will begin this January and have two full rounds of action-packed Diplomacy complete by June.

The Winter Blitz was dreamt up in the fall of 2007 as the moderators of Diplomaticcorp (DC) were thinking about the challenges that online Diplomacy tournaments faced. At the top of that list were things like disinterest, drop-outs, holidays or vacations, sickness, and length of time commitment – all of which the WB was created to address.



The WB is by design, a *tournament!* That is, it's not just a collection of games happening around the same time in their own worlds – these games run to one tournament schedule, possibly the harshest schedule ever set in human-run Diplomacy games. Just ask any of our past GM volunteers what it takes to run a game with up to 4 deadlines per week!

- Spring every Monday
- Retreats every Tuesday
- Fall every Thursday
- Retreats (and Builds) every Friday

The WB is known for its no-holds-barred, ruthless Diplomacy games. With such a fast pace, many players NMR – far more than in a typical dc game. This creates a survival of the fittest atmosphere, where those players who can get their act together, come up with a plan, and

execute – all in a matter of a couple days, will excel. Meanwhile there is no downtime for players to get bored or forget they're in a tournament. If you are eliminated early on, the next game is starting just a couple weeks down the road with a *fresh set of prizes* for round 2. With the modified Swiss-System ([www.dipwiki.com?title=Swiss\\_System](http://www.dipwiki.com?title=Swiss_System)) players who do poorly in round 1 will be paired against similar underperformers for round 2, giving them an even greater chance of winning the round 2 prize!

Like all games at DC, every WB game is run by a human Game Master (GM). These folks are the best of the best, and make the Winter Blitz a reality. My personal thanks goes out to all who have helped before, and to our great team that we have lined up for this year. Having a human GM helps maintain the community atmosphere, reduce unintentional NMRs, and make sure everything goes to plan. If you would like to help with a future tournament, email [feedback@diplomaticcorp.com](mailto:feedback@diplomaticcorp.com). Our GMs for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Winter Blitz will be the truly outstanding lineup of Christine, Cory, Adam, Sam, John, Fredrik, Darryl, Alan, and Vegas.

The WB is not for everyone! It is a immensely challenging format. For the casual player that does not check mail on a daily (or even more frequent) basis, a slower standard game might be more appropriate. (see [www.diplomaticcorp.com/recruiting](http://www.diplomaticcorp.com/recruiting)) But for those who are on their email all the time, the WB is a dream. It's an immersive tournament format in which one *feels* like you're playing in a tournament. Folks were lining up this year to find out when the tournament dates would be announced – and when players are seeking out the tournament and raving about it, it makes all the hard work worthwhile.

To read more about the Winter Blitz, see [www.diplomaticcorp.com/winterblitz](http://www.diplomaticcorp.com/winterblitz). Rules, roster, standings, and even the 2008 and 2009 results can be browsed online. The impressive dual solos by Nigel to win the WB08 and similar results by Garry to win the WB09 can be ogled over – I still don't know how anyone could pull off back-to-back solo wins. Congrats to both champions, and good luck to all as we get ready to start the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Winter Blitz!

***Mike Sims of the Order of the Lion can be found lurking around [www.diplomaticcorp.com](http://www.diplomaticcorp.com) when he isn't doing whatever else it is he does...he won't give me any personal information because it is only available on a need-to-know basis, and clearly I do not need to know!***



# You Might Be a Loser if . . .

By Steve Cooley

Several years ago, comedian Jeff Foxworthy started a series of jokes with the tag line, "You might be a redneck if . . ." My goal in this article is to help players recognize flaws in their games that almost ensure losing. For many who read the title, you recognized yourself right away. However, I don't believe you have to be a Loser—believe it or not, it's a conscious decision you've made. But, enough of Dr. Phil.

My motivation is simple: I travel to some major events and nothing so spoils a good game like incompetence. I'm sorry if that makes me seem like a know-it-all. After 30 years of playing, I'm still learning and I think most of us would admit we are not perfect. That said, what separates good players is not a willingness to travel. In fact, I was moved to write this by a number of players who travel a lot and are absolutely terrible. The funny thing is I think some of them know how bad they are. However, what they don't understand is *why* they are poor players. I hope this article will help to expose their tendencies to the light so that they will, in the immortal words of Bob Newhart (search youtube Bob Newhart and these words), "Stop it!"

Let me put it another way: there are plenty of people who fancy themselves chess players. I happen to be a dabbler. I've read books, played speed chess, studied openings (although I never remember more than about 5 moves), etc. Mostly, I just know the basic tenets of chess strategy. So, when someone tells me how good they are, I am usually nervous about playing them. I'm no match for a learned chess player. However, when they open with their Queen Rook Pawn to the fourth space, I relax. They have no idea what they're doing. They don't know anything more than how to move the pieces. They are, in effect, wood-pushers. If you don't know more than the rules of Diplomacy, you are a wood-pusher. To make it clear, I will consistently use a capital 'L' to begin the word "Loser" because you fall into a unique class—an experienced player with a clue as to how bad you are, BUT no clue on how to improve.

Each of the following principles is egregious in and of itself. Each of them can destroy any possibility you might have of doing well. When they are stacked upon one another in a player, there is no nice way to say it: you've got the anatomy of a Loser. You have as much chance of winning as a poker player with a fatal "tell." So, without further introduction, my list of "You might be a LOSER if . . ."

**1. You might be a Loser if . . . You think you've succeeded just because you've reached 6 centers!** I don't care if it's Winter 1901 and you're sitting on 6, you've not "won" the game or even played (necessarily)

played well. Ever seen an Italian take Munich, Trieste, and Tunis in 1901? It doesn't turn out well, generally.

Beyond that, the number of supply centers doesn't necessarily indicate how your game is going. There is a principle known as "concentration of force." Simply put, if your pieces are scattered so that they cannot cooperate, you've got a problem. To be fair, some situations and some countries lend themselves to this issue. However, a good player recognizes this and is nervous about the situation—and works his/her negotiations toward being able to lessen his presence in one area or another so that he can have superior forces where needed.

To place this in context, let's look at a fairly typical situation. Italy has units in the East Mediterranean (in and near Turkey) and the Western Mediterranean (in and near Spain). Some players will look at their supply center total and think they are doing well. For example, Italy owns Home, Tunis, Smyrna, Marseilles, and for six. He's got the following units: A Mar, F Spa (sc), F Wes, F Aeg, F Eas, A Smy.

Now, a Loser will look at the board and think, "Hey, Italy is a tough country and I've made it to six. I'm having a good game." The truth is you're essentially playing two three-center powers and cannot effectively control either front. What is worse is this: if any united effort is made against you either in Turkey or in the Western Med, not only can you not stop it, but Austria will be very tempted to "walk the boot" (send an army or two into your homeland to take Ven and Rome). When that happens, the Loser will shrug his/her shoulders and say, "Well, that's what happens with Italy. I had a good game." No, no you didn't. You got eliminated. More importantly, it was predictable. It was just a matter of time before someone took advantage of the fact that you were stretched out all over the map.

A good player will look at the same situation, realize he's overextended and not move so aggressively west for one supply center! For Marseilles and a vague hope for something more, the poor player has left his entire position exposed.

Now, is it always wrong to split your forces? No, but you need to have sufficient forces in an area to make a difference. Furthermore, you need to know that the clock is ticking—every moment that you've got a few units here and a few there is another moment that ALL of your holdings are in danger.

**2. You might be a Loser if . . . You think it might be okay to break a stalemate line, knowing that someone else will win the game.** Now, let me be

clear—it is not always wrong to break a stalemate line (a line of units preventing the major power on the board from getting to 18 centers). For example, breaking one in a 9-8-9-8 supply center situation may not be a horrible gamble. Still, you should have a reasonable hope (an educated guess—and if you're a Loser, that's just not possible) that your position will improve. A 4-way is not a great result (and if you think so, you're definitely a Loser), but it is better than being eliminated or merely surviving.

However, for me this is personal. I once lost DipCon on a move of this dubious quality. The minor powers had all united and had an impenetrable stalemate line. One player was on the other side of the line and, after much negotiation, convinced one of the minor players to allow him across the line, resulting in a solo. With all due respect (for the person, not the play), that is feeble.

Again, there are situations in which “throwing a solo” may be a legitimate device. For example, maybe the other minor powers are “dotting” you (taking your centers one at a time) while maintaining the stalemate line. You object and say, “If that happens again, I’m throwing the game.” But, that was not the situation.

Losing a game to a solo is a disgrace. It happens, but it should not be something that you contribute to—especially when a stalemate line has been established!



**3. You might be a Loser if . . . you think any dot you can take *should* be taken!** There is a chasm of

difference between “can” and “should.” Just because supply center is available doesn’t make it a “good” move. One-center stabs can actually make your position worse! My favorite example is a game I won (why wouldn’t that be my favorite?).

I was playing Austria. I formed an AIR and we took out Turkey. In the West, France stabbed England for Liverpool and eventually snaked Tunis from Italy. In the *coup de grâce*, France also took Munich. To keep these 3 centers required at least 2 units each. It’s as if the French player thought he was at an international buffet: “Ah yes. I’ll have a bit of Liverpool, a touch of Tunis, and just a smattering of Munich, but hold the Kiel.”

Of course, it also really ticked off the English, German, and Italian players. This worked very well for me and I was able to get to 18 without ever building a fleet. That should never happen. No good player would turn all of his neighbors against him unless he was in an unassailable position—and certainly not when it would lead to another player winning.

It can be okay to take a center, but you have to consider the fallout. Will you lose an ally? Will the power from whom you take the center turn its attention from a bigger threat? On the other hand, if this is your “next victim,” and taking that one center will weaken him as you maneuver to do further damage, then it’s a good stab.

Too many players fall victim to this false dictum: “I see the dot, therefore I must take the dot.” That is your inner Loser speaking to you! Don’t listen!

**4. You might be a Loser if . . . you cannot wait to throw in the towel!** As soon as you get stabbed, knocking you down to 2 or 3 units, you say to yourself (and everyone else in the room), “I’m dead! I’m blanking dead!” There are players (and I pray they are reading) who literally do this. There are players who will begin to act as if they are dead as soon as the countries are announced. Instead of “Austria,” they hear “First country eliminated on board number 4 will be . . .” and then their name. Maybe they’ll hang onto hope until after Spring 1901, but when they inexplicably give up Galicia and Trieste, they announce, “I’m dead.”

The truth is you *might* be dead. However, you also have something that other players on your board don’t have: nothing left to lose. If you can mentally write off the game, but still look at the possibilities, you will see that with a break or two, you can get right back into it. Let’s say that only happens in one out of 25 games. If you don’t at least look for it, it can *never* happen. I have seen 2-center Turkeys win. I’ve personally won as Russia after losing Stp and volunteering to be someone else’s vassal. I’ve survived games I had no business surviving.

Good players admire players who pull out all the stops, who negotiate for their gaming lives, who offer ideas,

who get inventive, who don't simply roll over and die. It's a game! Someone wins and the others lose, but the object is to have fun. Once your chances for a win seem to have slipped away, you have reduced your apparent "threat level." In other words, no one is afraid of you—this gives you an opportunity that you may be able to use.

Let me promise you this: if you want to give up on a game, the other players will let you. Furthermore, they will gladly take your dots. They will also not take you seriously as a player because they will recognize something you have not figured out—you are a Loser.

**5. You might be a Loser if . . . You cannot see the steamroller coming your way.** In other words, you have no sense of the strategic situation. For example, you're playing Russia and you're heavily committed in an attack on Turkey that turns into a difficult tactical exercise while EF march quickly through Germany, you may have to change course. Of course you don't want to! That's why you're a Loser—you can't see the big picture!

One of the keys for a good Diplomacy player is to make his/her plan fit the overall strategic situation. If you are playing Italy and an RT forms right from the beginning and you head west, well, guess what Bucko? That's right—you're a Loser.

Many articles have been written about Italy (or some other country) needing to play a "balance of power" strategy. The truth is every country has to understand what impact their actions will have to the balance of power. Years ago, I remember one game I drew England and one of the best players I've ever known was France. The German was typically a good and cautious player, but he said, "You guys wouldn't have any problem with me opening to Silesia, Prussia, and Baltic, would you?" As I recall, we mumbled something about a Triple, then I made plans to convoy to Holland while France took Belgium. Germany was dead by the end of 1903. Why? Because his moves so altered the expectations of England and France that they had no interest in attacking each other.

If you ring the dinner bell, you can expect your "allies" to feast on the carcass you're offering. It's fairly simple really—in real life, it's called "consequential thinking." What is likely to happen if I rob a bank? The FBI will arrest me. What will happen if I, as Russia, launch a 1901 attack against Germany? Well, it could work. It's theoretically possible and, once in a lifetime, all the pieces could come together. However, for every 199 times it's tried, it's only going to work once—at most.

You need to examine the entire board every turn and try to figure out what everyone else is doing. This is also how you know who might be willing to help you achieve your own goals.

**6. You might be a Loser if . . . You don't act in accordance with your best interests.** I know, I know this is so basic. So, fine, explain to me why I see players with experience fail this test over and over again. There are times in every game I've played where players are duped. Anyone can get stabbed. That's not what I'm talking about.

Let me see if I can give an example to clarify this principle: you are playing France and sitting on six supply centers (home, Iberia, and Belgium). England is your ally and has already taken Nwy, Swe, Den, Stp, Moscow, and Kiel. He's got a fleet in Baltic and is on the verge of taking Warsaw. In other words, he's doing exceptionally well and you're doing above average. When the discussion turns to Holland, he asks for your support in and you say, "Sure."

Now, Italy moved to Piedmont in Spring 1901 and has been trying to take Marseilles every turn since then. He has also been propping up Munich against your assaults and is getting ready to shift all of his fleets against you. It looks like you will get zero builds this year and England will get at least two. Why not ask for Holland yourself? Just because England is more demanding doesn't mean he's more deserving.

There are a myriad of other examples—how many times do we see Italy open with a Lepanto, but get little or nothing for it? Sometimes you have to be demanding. Sometimes you have to be accommodating. However, good players always make sure not to be so accommodating that they cannot defend themselves.

**7. You might be a Loser if . . . Your sense of danger is less acute than the AI of the many PC Diplomacy games that have been released!** You miss obvious threats or ignore them altogether. It is one thing to trust an ally. It is another thing entirely to place your (gaming) life in his hands. Some illustrations are simple: Turkey should not allow Russia to hang out in Black indefinitely; England cannot allow anyone else into North; France cannot allow another power to occupy MAO, etc. However, what of a situation where it seems like you've got a good relationship with another power?

Maybe you're France and England has been in the Channel for the duration of the game, but he's been a great ally and so it's been no big deal. You are both pushing on Germany and the cooperation has been excellent. That's all well and good, but you are allowing him to hold a tactical knife and counting on him not to apply it to your back. That may work. But, if you get shanked, don't blame me.

**8. You might be a Loser if . . . Panic sets in when you hit a certain level.** I used to be a good player, back in the day. I remember one tournament championship game (we used to always play a winner-take-all final board) where my ally reached 9 or 10 centers (He was



England and I think I was Germany) and he said, "I don't know what to do." I said, "Win!" He said, "I don't know how." I said, "Then, get out of the North Sea and I'll win." He did and I did.

Even if you haven't been to this level before, you don't have to let the rest of the board know. In fact, it's suicidal to announce you have no clue what to do. For many players, this level is about 5-6 centers. They draw a Central Power and are determined to "circle the wagons" and survive at that level. It won't work. It just makes you an easy target.

**9. You might be a Loser if . . . Your tactics are completely predictable.** There are a number of ways to move and sometimes "the best" moves are not "the best." I remember making a few really obvious moves in Vancouver a few years ago and getting my clock cleaned several turns in a row.

Diplomacy is not chess. It's not simply a matter of moving in the "best" way. It is a matter of getting inside your opponents' heads, knowing what they will do, and ordering the moves that will take advantage of their moves.

If you think Diplomacy is like Risk without dice, that it is all about tactics and not about reading people, you've come to the right place. You need to go to the next LA (Loser's Anonymous) meeting. The game is about people as much as it is anything else—which is why no two games are ever exactly alike.

**10. You might be a Loser if . . . You get eliminated without subsequent introspection.** If can simply shrug your shoulders and not ponder what went wrong and what you might need to change about your approach, you are a Loser.

Did you do all you could? In a recent game, Doug Moore was Turkey and faced an AIR against him. What did he do? Well, he organized a Western Triple, hoping that would distract the AIR. After that was not fast enough to save him, he offered to be a vassal just to survive. In other words, he pulled out all the diplomatic, strategic and tactical tricks in the book to try and survive a 3:1 onslaught. He lost, but it wasn't for want of effort.

A Loser would have folded his/her tent and been eliminated quickly. He/she would not even consider actually organizing a Triple to contend with the Triple he/she faced. The idea of doing anything to survive would not have occurred to him/her. After all, a Loser loses, right?

There are key moments in most every game where one decision you make will have lasting impact upon the game. You need to be able to identify those moments after the game so that you can understand what you did wrong.

No one is born an expert Diplomacy player (okay, maybe Chris Martin and Hohn Cho, but that's it). You have to learn. Reading articles about openings and strategy can only take you so far. You also need to be able to identify the flaws in your own game. If you don't, you are going to be permanently of the Loser class.

For those who struggle with one or more of these rules, I offer the following list. Please, please, please: cut it out, laminate it, and tape it to the inside of your notebook, the palm of your hand, your opponents' foreheads, wherever you need it to remind you of what not to do. You don't have to be a Loser. Losing happens; being a Loser is a choice! Thousands of dollars are wasted every year by Losers who travel about the country without any hope of winning the tournament. In fact, before they leave home, they probably make a little goal of how many turns they can survive. Don't be that person! Don't be a Loser!

Let me phrase these points in a positive way:

1. Concentrate your forces whenever possible.
2. Maintain stalemate lines unless breaking them can help YOUR position—and won't lead to someone else winning.
3. Any stab should be aimed toward giving you a substantial advantage over the person you are stabbing. There can be a huge difference between taking a dot from your ally and *effectively* stabbing him/her.
4. Fight to survive! Use every diplomatic, tactical, and strategic weapon at your disposal.
5. Watch the whole board! What happens on the other side matters to you.
6. Act in your own best interests. If someone asks you to do something against those interests, say "No" (or "nein," "nyet," etc.) or at least ask "why."
7. Look at the tactical situation around you. Know what the risks are. Players who ignore potential threats will soon no longer have any dots to worry about.
8. Success is 18 centers. Everything short of that means you still have work to do.
9. Study tactics. There are a multitude of ways to move. Try to anticipate the moves of your opponent, and then work on a way to stop them.
10. Losing consistently is not bad luck. It is bad play. Change what you are doing.

I want to see the level of play at tournaments lifted. I am confident that there are many players who know they are

Losers but don't know what to do about it. Unlike other "Anonymous" self-help groups, I am here to tell you that you are not helpless. You can change your situation. Start here. Start today. Paste this list on your mirror. Memorize it. Repeat it to yourself out loud in public.

Okay, if you actually do that, you've got other problems. But, remember this: being a Loser is a choice. Please,

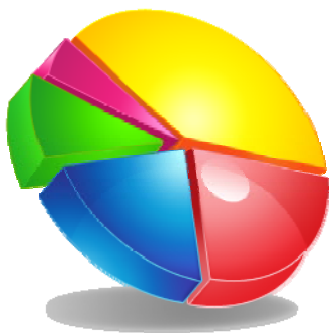
for the sake of all of us, stop making that choice.

***Okay, the big question...is Steve an expert in identifying losers from having to deal with so many of them...or is he himself a loser in disguise? Get across a board from him and find out for yourself, foolish mortal.***

## Call to Participate: Electronic Protocol Chapter 11 and the JDPR by Chris Babcock

This is an open call for those who have administered on-line Diplomacy games or who have other relevant experience to participate in discussions about quality assurance, data exchange and ratings systems for Diplomacy games that use electronic systems.

The Electronic Protocol was several things, but most importantly it was a quality control system that enabled Diplomacy to scale from play by mail to play by email. In today's Web 2.0 environment, it is easy to look at the EP House Rules and elements of the Judge Diplomacy hobby like the Judge Diplomacy Player Ratings and see them as 10 years out of date. The facts of the matter are that, at their inception, they were 10 years ahead of their time and -- with a little love -- they can be again.



To start, the Judge Diplomacy Player Ratings and the Diplomacy Ratings and Resignation system are making a comeback in 2010. The new maintainer, Chris Babcock, will bring the statistics up to date and begin publishing quarterly updates. Following that, he is looking to expand the scope of the JDPR by including more on-line venues as game sources. That means work on Electronic Data Interchange formats for the Diplomacy hobby and an update to the EP House Rules to accommodate web-based Diplomacy applications without compromising the core values of the protocol.

Simply put, Diplomacy games should be meaningful for the participants (free from NMRs, duplicates, and

collusion) and implemented in a way that assures these qualities while making games accessible for players. This quality control is the goal of the EP House Rules and the foundation of the JDPR.

Play by web games and emerging formats like play by Wave:

<https://wave.google.com/wave/#restored:wave:googlewave.com!w%252BXtJN5yLUB>

(Contact the author for an invite if you do not have a Wave account already) have different security requirements than play by email. Additionally, people are forming closer relationships over the Internet than could have been anticipated 20 years ago. An updated quality control system for play at a distance Diplomacy needs to take into account the privacy of players, location data available from the access methods, and the role of on-line social networks in the game.

The intent is to establish a new Electronic Protocol Coordinating Council. This EPCC will update the EP House Rules in a way that is inclusive of more on-line systems and work to establish policies and best practices for technologies that will affect the future of electronic Diplomacy. Our goal will be to promote the use of technology in the Diplomacy hobby by providing readable guidelines, working software and meaningful statistics.

***If you are interested in serving the hobby community as a member of the new EPCC then contact the author by email at <[cbabcock@asciiking.com](mailto:cbabcock@asciiking.com)>. What we are looking for is people who will critically examine the way that technology affects the Diplomacy hobby and look for ways to encourage sustainable growth. While we would love to find players who are experienced in technical writing, electronic data interchange, ELO rating systems and social network analysis, the most important qualification is a love of the game.***

# The First Time I Ever Played Diplomacy...or How Bad Players Wreck It for Everybody

By Joshua Danker-Dake

## Face-to-Face Diplomacy

The theme of this issue is face-to-face Diplomacy. I have little insight to offer on that subject other than that if you are England and five-center France is taking forty-five minutes to write down his orders each turn, the most productive use of your time is to go wash the dishes. So I'm going to talk about something else.

## The First Time I Ever Played Diplomacy

The first time I ever played Diplomacy was on the USOS judge with a friend and a number of his friends. This was *not* the first time any of them had played Diplomacy, although all of them were fairly new to the game.

I drew Russia; the only other player I knew was Italy. Little did I know that Austria had decided to attack me immediately based in large part on the strength of my family name (a bunch of us were theology students, and my grandfather is the world's foremost New Testament lexicographer). But I'm getting ahead of myself.

This was my first game – I was familiar with the rules, but I really had no idea what I was doing as far as strategy. As a naïve Russia, I let Turkey talk me into a mutual agreement not to enter the Black Sea – of course, he immediately moved there, then feebly argued that it was a misunderstanding/accident. He supported Austria into Rumania, and I got no builds in 1901 (or at any point the rest of the game).

For we soon discovered that Austria had masterminded a Germany-Austria-Turkey-England (GATE) alliance. More to the point, he was telling each of these powers how to move each turn, as well as what to say to the rest of us, and they obeyed him. Not only that, but every press we sent to Germany, Turkey and England were all passed right along to Austria. Take your hat off to him – smoke it if you got it. With no adjacent allies, I was eliminated in 1904.

By this time, Austria was at nine centers while none of his GATE minions had more than six. Italy and I attempted to convince Germany, Turkey and England that Austria was their puppeteer. But they asked Austria if he was just using them for his own ends and he said no, he'd never do that, and so they didn't believe us. At that point there was nothing left for us to do but mercilessly ridicule them.

We finally convinced Germany that he was, in fact, being used by Austria, and that Austria, with Russia dead, Turkey with mostly fleets (by 1905, six-center Turkey had four fleets, and he thought this was just dandy) and

Italy on the retreat, was coming for him next. So Germany attacked England, naturally.

Even when Austria put armies in BER, SIL, BOH *and* TYR, Germany continued his attacks on England. During all of this, Turkey kept building fleets and heading west, because he asked Austria if Austria was going to stab him and Austria said no, of course not.

Suffice it to say, Austria won in 1907 with twenty supply centers, and, impressively, without ever having had a supply center taken from him at any point in the game.

## Bad Players Playing Badly

So what do we take away from this, other than that some people really might not be cut out to play Diplomacy? There is a universal principle to be found, one that this particular game illustrates with all the subtlety of an incontinent rhinoceros: it is harder to play with and against bad players – not, as some people philosophically assert, because they are unpredictable, but because they do stupid things that bring ruin both upon themselves and upon their neighbors.



It seems to me that most bad Diplomacy players are bad because they are short-sighted. They focus on short-term goals at the expense of long-term goals. Obviously, there's nothing wrong with pursuing short-term goals. Diplomacy is won in stages, after all. But grabbing for every available supply center isn't the answer.

Success in Diplomacy is based in large part on achieving balance in two areas: trust versus betrayal and small gains now versus big gains later. Novice players, trying to find their way, often swing to one of two extremes, hurting themselves and others because of poor planning.

On the one hand, you often get what happened to the extreme in my game: novice players who are too trusting, too gullible. They become faithful lackeys



because everything has gone so well up to this point, and they hope blindly that it will continue thus – they convince themselves that the other power has their interests at heart. It typically doesn't take more than a couple of games to disabuse these players of that notion.

But more often, novice players go the other way – they are impetuous; they snatch at whatever is set immediately before them. They jump the gun and sink their chances of winning with the premature stab. This is harder to cure. It is also the root of a preponderance of bad play.

### **Planning**

Direction is fundamental. You have a finite number of units and a finite number of opportunities to put them to use. Doing so intelligently not only displays a good management of resources, but also generates momentum. As you move, you should be constantly asking yourself, "Where do I go from here?"

With England, we can look at a rather obvious example. I touched on this in *Diplomacy World* 105 and my colleague Richard Hannon (who, incidentally, played Italy in the aforementioned fiasco) discusses it in some detail elsewhere in this issue. Norway is a tantalizing target for England, but he may soon discover that Scandinavia is a quicksand-filled dead-end, requiring as many or more units to maintain as it produces, and without significant avenue for mid-game development. Where does England go from there? Does he open on multiple fronts? Or does he begin in a more growth-friendly direction and leave Scandinavia for later in the game?

Running into dead ends or ending up with your forces on the wrong end of your empire are problems that can affect every power. From Spring 1901, you must ask yourself, "Where are my eighteen supply centers coming from?" You will revise the answer as you go, but keep it in mind at all times. How often have we seen a player plot and plan to seize a few centers, only to get them and then get stuck because he didn't know what he was going to do after that? The whole "let me get to seven centers and then see how things are looking" strategy will quite often get you stuck at seven centers.

### **The Stab**

The stab is one of those things that makes Diplomacy great. The idea that no agreement is binding is delightful. The stab is a catharsis for some of your repressed hostility: "I had a horrible day and got cut off in traffic – I'm going to go home and stab France!" (I've played with a number of people who, I'm convinced, actually made decisions like this.) The stab, whether face to face or online, is what makes the pulse quicken the moment before orders are revealed. It's the most exciting part of the game. But that doesn't mean you should do it the first chance you get. Pulling the trigger on a stab too

soon is a problem that many players who can't turn the corner have trouble with.

It's also a big reason why a bad player makes a bad ally: because he doesn't do what's in his own best interests; because he hurts his own long-term game by stabbing you. You may work out a strategy that benefits both parties in the long run, and a bad player will stab you halfway through the plan because he was swayed by small gains. (Here, some people say, "Hey! Diplomacy is a zero-sum game! A gain is a gain, and it's a loss for somebody else." That's true, but it's only a zero-sum game with respect to resources, not to allies and enemies – after all, you can always make more enemies.) And I'm a big believer that in many cases you should take the opportunity to teach your former ally that lesson by spitefully dragging him down with you.

There aren't hard and fast rules on when you should or shouldn't stab an ally, but here's an easy common sense guideline: does the stab cripple your target? If so, do it immediately! Do it because it's a good idea! Do it because it's exciting! Do it because what is best in ~~life~~ Diplomacy but to crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentation of their women? (Apologies to Conan the Barbarian)

But if your stab doesn't cripple your former ally, then you've only provoked him – and in doing so, given yourself one more enemy (and one with a grudge) and told the rest of the players that you are untrustworthy. Too often, a premature stab is just going to get you bogged down on a new front.

There is the occasional perk to playing with bad players. After all, it cuts both ways. When playing online, a bad player's press can be an indicator that a stab is coming. Some people get ready to stab you and all of a sudden their press changes substantially. Some of them will clam up, go off the grid, and, as it were, stop returning your calls. Others will start sending ridiculously detailed messages on future plans out of the blue. You might as well just write to me and say, "I'm going to stab you next turn" (I imagine such inadvertent transparency happens in face-to-face Diplomacy as well; I just don't have the experience with it – but I know a lot of people who can't look another man in the eye and lie to him). The point is, you've got to be consistent in your method and tone. Don't let your pre-stab jitters spill over into your communication. And again, that's more easily fixed online than face to face.

### **Conclusion**

Play intelligently – it's half the battle. Plan ahead. Invest for the long term. Don't jump the gun. And don't let Austria tell you what your orders are.

***Joshua Danker-Dake is our S&T Editor – a recent addition to DW Staff - and has been doing a bang-up job so far!***

# The North American Diplomacy Federation (NADF)

Promoting the organized, face-to-face play of the world's greatest game.

by Andy Hull and Conrad Woodring

Most of the face-to-face community knows what it is. Some of us do not as it has fizzled in recent years. For those of you that do not know what the NADF is, it is a non-profit corporation that was incorporated by Buz Eddy a few years ago. The mission of the NADF as Buz founded it was:

"To increase the enjoyment of people playing competitive Diplomacy in North America."

The NADF has done just that. For years Buz collected game results and published both game results and a ranking system. He organized voting for the NADF All Stars each year. Masterpoints, Rainbow Points, 'this week in North American Diplomacy,' were all contributions that Buz gave us consistently for years. Regardless of whether or not you feel the ratings accurately reflected playing ability, new players would discuss and compare ratings. It was fun to go online and see how each tournament, each game affected your rating. It was fun following up how other tournaments went that you couldn't go to. It was the one place where you could be sure you would see tournament results after every tournament.

The original website that Buz created to disseminate his information ([www.diplom.org/nadf](http://www.diplom.org/nadf)) has been dormant since May 2008.

Succeeding Buz as president of the NADF, Dave Maletsky desperately tried to gather people to craft a comprehensive NADF Charter, so as to outline a formal organizational structure and begin delegating responsibilities. Consensus building in our hobby is challenge at the very least, and key volunteers left the project of reforming the NADF. The process stalled.

In the fall of 2009, the reins were transferred again. Currently, Conrad Woodring is listed as President, Dave Maletsky as Vice President, and Buz Eddy as Secretary. The NADF team assembled to reform the NADF includes two groups. A representative of each major local hobby. Active or not in the NADF, each local hobby should have some sort of representation. That person can either be a voice for their local hobby, an active member of the NADF board, or simply a relay for information back to their local hobby. The hobby representatives whom have volunteered so far are as follows:

- Melissa Call - New England
- Andy Hull - San Francisco Bay Area
- Mark Zoffel - Seattle
- Joe & Lori Wheeler - Washington D.C.

- Jim O'Kelley - Chicago

This list is by no means a final list. Anyone reading this who wants their hobby to be represented is encouraged to please contact any of the board members (Canadians and Latin Americans are welcome). The second group are the doers. There are more things to do than any one person could do.

- Jim O'Kelley – Rules and Standards, Grand Prix Organizer
- Lori Wheeler – Record Keeping and Rankings
- Chris Martin - NADF Invitational, Rules and Standards
- Conrad Woodring - Website project lead, President
- Andy Hull - Technical Working Group
- Joe Wheeler - Technical Working Group
- Bob Holt - Technical Working Group
- Chris Babcock - Technical Working Group
- Steve Cooley – Member at large
- Edi Birsan - ambassador to Hasbro and our peer organizations in Europe and Australasia

There are many things that need to be done and there is still room open for volunteers. Specifically web development and design talent is needed.

## The NADF: A Central organization

Let me paint a picture for you. Porthos, a 26 year old college graduate moves to San Francisco to find a job. New to the city, and with free time to fill, he does a quick search about a game he played in high school with his friends. His search brings him to the NADF website. It looks good, it's well maintained, it's up to date. There is a live news feed, updated regularly, about things going on all over the country. In just two clicks he is looking at the results from the last game played in San Francisco. Another click shows him the results from the last tournament. He can read about how the event went, see pictures, see the event history, board history... each click bringing an increasing level of detail. From there he can find out about the Grand Prix, DipCon, World DipCon, everything.

He's excited. He tells his friend's from high school about the website he found and that he's thinking of going to one of the groups gatherings. They look up contacts in their area and now we have 3 of his ten friends wanting to play. He's excited.

That's what the NADF needs to do. Porthos needs to find the NADF out of his curiosity and we need to capture him by looking fun, and then send him to the

right places. Currently the hobby exists because of a few isolated pockets of activism. Washington DC, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle are hotbeds for activism. Unfortunately there isn't any centralized entity between these groups, and few bridges/gateways exist to bring in new players to the face-to-face hobby. That's the heart of what we need to accomplish; The NADF should bring new members to the hobby, and increase event attendance among existing hobby members. We will explore ways to reach out to the following major demographics:

- **Existing face-to-face players:**

We are looking at ways to get them to come to more events (i.e. make the events better). There are several things that the NADF can do here, but we have to be careful not to get too involved in the events that go on. We want a centralized hobby organization but not one that starts trying to take control of events away from the organizers.

- **Online players:**

This is a huge group of people that probably just don't know about all the face-to-face diplomacy that is going on around the country. Reaching out to this group will have the highest return on effort of the three identified here. Drawing online players away from their computers and into cafes, bars, and people's homes will provide results. The NADF will do it's best to bridge the gap and help online players make that jump.

- **Other gamers:**

There are a lot of Diplomacy players out there, they just don't know they are Diplomacy players yet. This may be the hardest group to turn, and will therefore have the lowest return. This group is our lowest priority.

### **NADF Store and Fundraising**

The NADF currently has no funds. Lengths are being taken to minimize expenses. We are doing our best to use all volunteer labor as is clear from our advertisement this issue and from this article. Costs are inevitable and we are gladly taking player donations to cover costs as they come up.

A series of NADF designs will be created and made available on shirts and things through an online store. Money generated from the sale of merchandise will be used to support the NADF website and various other initiatives. We will of course accept donations.

### **Open Process**

In an effort to create transparent organization we will be publishing Minutes from our monthly meetings online so that interested persons can read and comment on them. This will be one of the first features of the NADF website once we get it operational. It is our hope that we can

avoid the fracturing hobby disputes of the past in this way. Our hobby is currently too small to afford any feuds. We also hope that in addition to creating a transparency to the organization, publishing meeting minutes will allow interested parties to follow along with the process and share our enthusiasm.

### **Standards**

Our goal will not be to referee the face-to-face hobby with lots of rules. We will do our best to prevent something like what happened in Maine from ever happening again. Other than that, we will do our best not to hinder the diversity and innovation of the current events in North America. Events that are successful are successful because their organizers do a good job. We do not want to step on anyone's toes and try and change that. Events that do a poor job creating a well run and fair tournament will not be the tournaments people go back to, and thus their importance in the hobby will remain small and insignificant. Establishing basic standards will help burgeoning events and hobbies get some guidance. This will help organizers create the kind of tournament people want to go to.



### **Promoting Competition**

The NADF will resume tracking player ratings. The rating system will most likely change. One of the hurdles we have to cross is how best to rate games. It is a question that we are trying to answer right now, and it will probably be some time before a complete and comprehensive answer is out there. The NADF will continue to the fine tradition of the Grand Prix. The master-points system may or may not disappear, and we invite outside input as we are considering the issue.

A new initiative, spearheaded by former diplomacy world champion Chris Martin, will be to host a NADF invitational. The development of this idea is still in its infantile stages, but it is something that Chris is excited about, and that the rest of the NADF board supports. The criteria for qualification will be clearly laid out so that there is no mystery as to who will be invited. This falls in



line with our spirit of having an open process.



### **Supporting Collaboration**

In 70's our hobby did a great job utilizing the technologies available to it. Using phones, snail mail and publications, tournaments were organized and players came together. Now we are approaching 2010. Our hobby is as small as it has ever been. The technologies available to us today are vastly more powerful than even 10 years ago. As a hobby we are lagging behind in structure, technology and organized activism. By addressing just one of these themes, we can make great strides forward.

The new NADF will be a conduit for communication. To this end, we are building the foundations for a new community website that will allow our hobby to share, form and debate the ideas that affect us all. We are exploring how we can best enable and support the national hobby with social networking tools such as web forums, blogs, comments and player profiles. We are also exploring the potential of aggregating games organized on sites like Meetup.com and Facebook and presenting them in a single event calendar of Diplomacy house games and tournaments in North America.

The NADF must exist to support the local hobbies. Part of our goal in building a new community site is carefully balance what content should be shared at the national level and what is best handled by the regional hobbies. To this end we are working on a model to allow regional sites to publish important content such as tournament invitations and schedules to the NADF. The new site will comprise the information back-bone for the hobby.

A rich and high-profile website gives us the greatest chance to reach-out to online players and other curious

gamers. Online players in particular are already at their computers playing diplomacy online, we just need to introduce ourselves into their online diplomacy experience and draw them out to events. There are many people out there who are simply not informed about face-to-face events, whom we will reach out to.

Finally, we have formed a small working group to define a single electronic file format that can describes the state of any standard Diplomacy game, either in-progress or finished. A simple yet expressive, human-readable file format will enable tournament results to be published electronically and electronic games to be exchanged between judges and supporting tools. Our group has chosen XML to fulfill this need and is currently working on an XML Schema, a special type of XML file that describes the layout of the file format in a manner that is understandable by both humans and computers. The NADF offers a community incubator to rapidly develop the initial version of the standard that we will subsequently open to the wider hobby. We are aiming to capture the attention of the developers of Diplomacy software by growing a critical mass of support around the format. Simply, the wider the base of tools that use our format, the more incentive there is for other tools to also support it.

### **Future**

We plan to have the new websites, design and structure done by April 1st, 2010. We will do our best to get as many of our core features ready, but we have a prioritized list of features to implement and will do them in order. We do not currently have a target date for our full package of features to be finished as we will undoubtedly run into obstacles along the way. More than likely, the website will be an iterative process that may very well run a year. The website project will be the single largest and most important deliverable that we have planned for 2010.

We also plan to foster a relationship with Hasbro and get the company to support the hobby at least as much as they have already been doing. In addition to building and maintaining a relationship we will be building relationships with our peer organizations around the world.

We hope that everyone else in the hobby is as excited about this as we are. We encourage everyone interested to send us feedback or volunteer to get involved in the process.

***Andy Hull and Conrad Woodring, major players in the NADF, urge you to visit [www.TheNADF.org](http://www.TheNADF.org) to learn more and to get involved!***



# Pleasing Doug Kent: How to Write for DW the Easy Way

By Chris Sham

It's funny how well camouflaged deadlines can be. I could have sworn it was still sometime in September, and not December 31<sup>st</sup>, on the verge of the latest DW article submission deadline (and happy new year, by the way). I have a cunning plan to start a whole series of articles examining the real world military histories of each region on the standard Diplomacy board, but that'll now have to wait to premiere in issue #109 (or thereabouts).



So I thought I'd better find a different way to contribute to issue #108, and it occurs to me that a few pointers to help and encourage prospective new contributors to Diplomacy World might be a good idea. Fresh perspectives are always valuable, and I know for a fact that Mr Kent & Co. would rather have too many articles to pick from than too few. If the advice herein helps improve the rate of new contributions, then everyone wins, right? (At the very least, I get my name in the credits again, for only 60 minutes of half-arsed work. We've all got to get our kicks somehow.)

So, my advice:

1. Submit something. Even if you think it isn't very good, even if it doesn't make a lot of sense, and even if it's not really in English. There's a whole fine staff of DW editors standing ready to help you polish up your work and give you the specific advice that'll help you improve your writing in future. On the other hand, if you never submit anything, you'll never get to improve on your weaknesses, and you'll certainly never get published.

2. You don't have to write about the game itself. I felt quite liberated when I realised that. Take a look through the last few issues; everything is Diplomacy-related, of course, but only some of the articles are heavy-duty rules and strategy analyses. There's plenty of room for lighter articles about the people, events and processes involved in keeping the hobby going, whether it's general advice, specific reminiscences or announcements of upcoming news. You certainly don't have to know every little intricacy of the game system to make a valuable contribution.
3. If you haven't already, start thinking about your next contribution as soon as you get the latest issue. Good ideas usually take some time to form and they certainly don't appear out of nowhere, so start actively mulling any vague inspirations sooner, rather than later. You might only get a clear idea of what you want to say at the last minute, but that's better never getting there at all.
4. Once you know what you want to write, write it. Having the best ever idea for an article is not much use if you can't put it in writing and email it in. Force yourself, in whatever way works for you.
5. If you do miss the nearest deadline, don't just scrap all the work you've done already. Just think of it as getting a head start on the next deadline.
6. This is a volunteer job. If you're writing for DW, it's because you want to, so don't feel any pressure. There's nothing wrong with only ever submitting one article; it's not like you'll be abducted and dumped in a slave pit the moment you submit your first article, and forced to write for DW against your will forever more (or so the man with the big whip tells me). Some people will enjoy writing for DW more than others, and you'll never know if it's an exercise you'll want to repeat unless you try it.
7. Submit something. Seriously. What's the worst that could happen?

***There is at least one inaccuracy in this article, but I'm not going to tell you what it is! Mooohahaha! You won't find out until you get off your lazy butts and submit some articles!***

# Towards Transcendent Player Communities

By Chris Babcock

Without exception, today's on-line Diplomacy player communities suffer from a critical disconnection with live playing communities. This is expected, because on-line Diplomacy servers so far have not had integration with face to face Diplomacy player communities as a design goal. In light of the success of social networking sites and the increasing availability of software for integrating social media with niche sites and pulling content from major social networks, there are some features that current and future programmers of Diplomacy site software should consider including in their designs in order to create player communities that transcend the barriers between different playing formats.

First and foremost is player profiles. Public profiles that reflect the user's specific contributions and activities are the on-line equivalent of home. Facebook Diplomacy inherits profile pages from Facebook, which is good. A Diplomacy site, however, could offer more in terms of Diplomacy specific data on player profiles like providing easy ways to declare club memberships and talk up coming events. The more a player can customize the profile, the more of an ownership stake will be developed in the community.

Real names are important. It's understood that some players may have legitimate privacy concerns, but it is important for players to have real non-disposal identities. Continuing nick names or other legacy user IDs as a substitute for real names that players use in their day to lives erects an unnecessary barrier to on-line players becoming part of real life player communities. Even more critical, wide use of screen names allow for disposable identities. Player communities need stability and accountability for their membership and, just as important, the perception of accountability and the humanization that using real names provides the community.

Real world location is an important piece of player data for connecting players to local groups and events. There are ways to collect and protect this information while using it to accomplishing goals related to community development in ways that are respectful of players' privacy. Look for USAK and the NADF to rolling out geo-location features for community support in the coming year.

Communication is as important as game play. Players should be able to discuss Diplomacy-related matters and off-topic issues and retain the choice of whether or not to

share off-site communication channels with other players. This means a combination of public and private communication channels should be offered, like forums and private mailboxes, and that forums should not be controlled by the topic police. Diplomacy players are people first. relating to one another as people, real people with differences as well as commonalities, is one of the keys to developing on-line communities that are robust enough to prepare players to interact with each-other socially in live settings.

Real time play with private press is necessary to prepare players mentally and emotionally for live games. Games with three day deadlines or even 24-hour games do not prepare people for the pressures of making tactical decisions in a 15 minute time frame. Real time games, however, are generally no press. The adjudicator on tomorrow's Diplomacy player community site will support real time Diplomacy with an event-driven timer and a push interface. Event-driven means that the timing engine fires at the deadline to process adjudications (and notify late players) rather than waiting for a polling process. A push interface means that game events, like adjudications or available press, appear in the window of your browser or other client without waiting for you to refresh your browser or check for new mail. You will know when other players are available, you will be able to interact using voice, video feeds and shared maps, and you will be able to stop a game and finish it at an agreed time or with extended deadlines.

Finally, future on-line Diplomacy venues will use OpenSocial and other major Social Networking APIs to exchange game, player and event data -- even personal contacts.

The future is federated. Interoperability is bringing an end to the need for big servers and heavy infrastructure to support useful networks. The Diplomacy hobby can support dozens, maybe even hundreds, of player community sites if they deploy emerging standards in order to be inter-operable and socially aware. The sites that most accurately reflect real life playing conditions and social activities will be those that are most successful in terms of meeting the real needs of players going forward.

***Chris Babcock is the Diplomacy World Technology Editor, and remains deeply involved in many critical projects for the future – especially “big-picture” ones.***



[www.TheNADF.org](http://www.TheNADF.org)

The North American Diplomacy Federation is reinventing itself and needs volunteers! Never heard of the NADF? For those of you that do not know what the NADF is, it is a non-profit corporation that was incorporated by Buz Eddy a few years ago. The mission of the NADF as Buz founded it was:

**"To increase the enjoyment of people playing competitive Diplomacy in North America."**

Currently we have a team of 10 enthusiastic, energetic, diplomacy-loving volunteers, but we need, want and welcome more help. We cannot stress enough that we want our process to be a collaborative group effort to provide a service to the hobby. Currently we are looking for:

1. **Design Talent:** We want to create a brand image for the NADF as well as design a highly functional but aesthetically pleasing website.
2. **Web Development :** One of our biggest deliverables for 2010 will be our current website development project. We already have great talent working on this, but would not be opposed to more so that the labor can further divided.
3. **Non-profit legal experience:** The NADF is incorporated as a non-profit orgnaization. We will undoubtedly need legal counsel as we begin to grow.
4. **Local hobby representitives:** The purpose of the NADF is to support you the players. We want each local hobby to have a representative participate in the reinvention of the NADF
5. **Ideas:** If you have an idea that you think will serve the hobby and you are willing to take the lead on, we won't say no.

# The Ignorway

By Richard Hannon

Dating back to the Norman Conquest (and perhaps even before), the French and English haven't ever really been friends. Despite geographic proximity, there are too many factors that preclude alliance. Perhaps the most important of these is mistrust. Separated by a scant ninety miles of water, each country is uncomfortably close to the other. Such is the case in standard Diplomacy.

A few issues back, Joshua Danker-Dake outlined his theory that England should always attack France first—a value the two of us share. Without rehashing the evidence in great detail, some of the important pillars that underpin this line of thinking are important to keep in mind. First, Scandinavia is a dead end. Only two or three builds and a complete reversal of course greet the Brit in the north. Usually Germany and France (England's natural enemies) will be outgaining England if she chooses the northern route. Second, going north exposes England's backside to a stab. Either Germany or France shouldn't need too much tempting to shoot for the North Sea or the Channel. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the opening ignores the outcomes that England needs for a win: armies on the Continent and naval superiority as far south as Tunis.

Why not shoot right for these outcomes at the game's opening? While it is true that tactics do not exist in a vacuum and the diplomatic situation on the board supersedes pre-game tactical planning, a seldom-used, risky opening strategy like the Ignorway always has a chance in the stale, repetitive world of standard Diplomacy openings. The Ignorway opens fleets to the Channel and the North Sea while the army goes somewhere from which it can convoy.

You may recognize this as a fairly standard opening, but the second turn changes things. Norway is ignored in the short term (thus giving the opening its name) and the fleets and army attack France directly. The Ignorway puts off Scandinavia entirely until the mid- or endgame and focuses on one thing only: giving France both barrels. This opening, after the first turn, seems normal enough to most observers as most Englands will either convoy to Norway or move there from the North Sea. However, the Ignorway seeks to leverage that relatively passive move as another assault vehicle on the French position. Yes, a build may be lost, but that isn't important in this early stage, especially since that build will inevitably be a fleet that moves back into the North Sea to replace the unit pinned in Norway. Your Norwegian unit can only advance on Russia, and with an all-out French assault, keeping your enemies few is extremely important. Russia will usually be more than happy to accept your invitation to focus on the southern regions.



The Ignorway proceeds as follows: F LON-ENG, F EDI-NTH, A LVP-YOR or WAL. The army is moved with respect to the game situation—whichever move makes it easier to convoy onto the Continent in turn two. If France has taken the bait and is likely to vacate the Channel, Wales may be better from an alliance with Germany perspective. From there it threatens convoy into three strategic spaces. Brest, obviously, would be the best destination for it, but the least likely of success. An army in Wales is a red flag to Paris and would likely cause France to lose a build in Iberia because of the unit spent to cover his home center. It is the same to Berlin and may persuade your ally to be more helpful. Your loss of a build in Norway is balanced by his loss of a build in Portugal or Spain. An alternative to the Brest convoy is Picardy. An army in Picardy allows a supported attack on Brest or Belgium in year two, which really is not too shabby. If Germany can be persuaded to move MUN-BUR in turn one, France will really be on the ropes early. The third option is to convoy to Belgium. The advantage to this is the supported nature of the convoy. Use ENG to convoy and NTH to support—just be sure that Germany won't screw it up by assaulting NTH.



As for the army, while Wales is more direct, Yorkshire is, in most cases, superior. The advantage in cloaking your anti-French intentions more than outweighs the small bonuses of the Wales maneuver. Yorkshire threatens the three same spaces as Wales without the skywriting warning France of your intentions! Trust me, the Channel will have done that enough (though I have seen quite a few games in which France was happy to allow England into the Channel to support himself into Belgium). Yorkshire can get to Brest with a double convoy, and most people don't usually plan against double convoys. Yes, the fleet may be blocked, but Wales holds no advantage in getting to Brest. Yorkshire can also reach Picardy in the same manner, as well as Belgium. This move is a better grab for Belgium as it is harder to disrupt the support from ENG as a MAO French fleet is unlikely to move ENG. The disadvantage of a Yorkshire convoy is that it requires the use of both fleets to reach Picardy or Brest. Wales can do the same using only ENG, leaving NTH free to respond to threats or shoot for Belgium herself. How great would it be to have F BEL, A PIC at the end of year one? That, however, is extremely unlikely and therefore shouldn't be planned on. However, it is not impossible, and it leaves room for LVP-WAL as a valid opening move.

So let's survey the board and the end of turn two vis-à-vis the pivotal English outcomes. Has England worked towards earning naval superiority in the Atlantic? Yes, emphatically. She has traded a "natural" build in Norway for a stronger assault position on her Atlantic rival. Has England gotten armies on the continent? Again, yes, if things have gone well. At the end of the first year she inhabits either a neutral supply center or French home territory. What has England sacrificed in search of these goals? Most importantly, a build. Builds are needed because they are flexible. Fleets can be built where needed, and that can be nice. Another army may come in handy. However, builds also cost tempo. Ignoring Norway saves you two moves at least that can be aimed at France instead of a neutral center.

No discussion of openings is complete without looking at negotiation and alliance. The Ignorway is the same—perhaps even more so than most openings. Italy, Austria and Turkey are best left in the dark. It may be tempting to invite the Italian to the invasion, but you really cannot afford your hand to be tipped. If you are bounced in the Channel turn one, you may as well give up on the risk of this opening. Austria and Turkey, obviously, don't need to know either. Russia is a bit trickier. This opening set really needs Russia steaming southwards, but you can't really achieve that by telling the Russian player that you'll be ignoring Scandinavia. That would just tempt him to help himself to those Northern builds. Better to remain vague about your intentions until the axe falls. With luck, Germany will stand him out of Sweden and Russia will shoot southwards, as most players do without coercion.



Germany remains the lynchpin of negotiation. You need a successful commitment from him to move against France. You also need to negotiate Belgium for yourself as part of the package. Defeating France, and, in turn, Germany, requires armies in Europe. An army in Belgium can effect operations in the interior that a fleet cannot. This is vital, and the easier, the better. However, alliances are best struck when fairly divided. A French assault that gives England Belgium, Brest, Portugal and Spain and gives Germany Paris and Marseilles has a few holes. Extending the promise of alliance to include Italy isn't a bad idea; give Germany the lion's share of those centers as a promise. Alternatively, promise one thing and then underdeliver on it. Just remember, to win as England you need to capture Tunis, St. Petersburg, Iberia, Scandinavia, Germany and France. The Ignorway gives you a leg up on the harder-to-capture portion of those centers and leaves the easier ones until later.

This plan is, of course, fraught with risks and holes. It is easily exposed by a northerly-aggressive Russian or a G-F alliance. If you're the type of player who likes to get four or five builds and then work to consolidate as you "see what happens," or if you are happier drawing than being eliminated, the Ignorway may not be for you. On the other hand, if you like fresh, exciting tactics and would rather die going for a solo win than split the spoils in a four-way draw, the Ignorway is right up your alley. I encourage Englands looking for an alternative to give it a try—you just might like it.

***Richard Hannon who will become a regular contributor to Diplomacy World, if Joshua Danker-Dake has anything to say about it. I support that endeavor! He lives in Tulsa with his wife and son, and he's getting a graduate degree in New Testament at ORU.***

# Time to Plan Your FTF Diplomacy Activity for 2010: A Personal Commentary

By Jim-Bob Burgess

We all probably are too tied down to life, work, and such to travel to enough Diplomacy conventions, but really, if you plan now and make arrangements you can get out of your rut and into some FTF Diplomacy this year. Speaking for myself, my last couple of years have been a bit insane and I know when I don't have enough time to play FTF Diplomacy that my life is too insane and I had better slow down a bit. I've been ignoring this lately, but this year I'm going to make some of those slow down efforts. I'm going to get out and play a bit more Dip this year and then really make a push back out in 2011. In doing that, what I really, really would like to do is to find my way to spending my birthday in Sydney, Australia that year, when we seem to have a DownUnder World DipCon coming up, let's all keep thinking about that, but this article is going to be about this year. You can get more details and keep up to date about FTF Diplomacy cons in general at:

<http://devel.diplom.org/DipPouch/Face/cons/index.php>

First off, speaking of DownUnder, the Aussies are having their National Championships in just a few weeks (Jan. 23-25) in Sydney, but if you're not already down there then you're probably not going. We need to salute Thorin Munro, who has been doing a great job of reorganizing the DAANZ part of the hobby. I can't imagine more fun than attending a DAANZ convention. Guess who's next up on the schedule, that's right, me. I'm hosting TempleCon (<http://templecon.org/10/>) right here in Providence, RI, February 5-7, and you're all invited. The organizers of TempleCon are a bunch of steampunk whackos, really helpful and committed to helping us keep building up the Diplomacy tournament. We have a host of committed New England locals and though we've moved the venue again, the organizers have given us some great space. If you can get here, you can crash in the room I've reserved at the Crowne Plaza near the airport (courtesy van will take you right to the hotel!). It's pay what you can, but if you fly in I wouldn't expect you to pay me anything unless you wanted to. Right now only defending champion Peter McNamara is staying in it, you don't want him to be lonely, do you? No, THAT'S not what I meant!! More seriously, haven't you always wanted to meet me?? And if you've met me before wouldn't you like to meet me again (shamelessly plugging!!!)??? If you let me know by E-Mail by the Pre-Reg. deadline of January 15<sup>th</sup>, I'll pre-register you for the weekend for the discounted price of \$30 and let you pay me on site. Peter McNamara is originally from Australia and we're using his adaptation of the Detour scoring system Detour09 in this Australia/New Zealand paragraph. We'll finish it up with

the regrowing New Zealand Championships February 20-21 in Auckland run by Will Black. This tournament had gotten really tight but got seven players again in 2009 for the first time since 2006. Help Will and Grant Steel keep this one growing. Another theme of this paragraph is that I was having trouble for awhile getting TempleCon out of the one board scene, but 2009's breakout year had 21 players and and we want to improve on those games and totals this year.

The next thing I want to talk about is the new trend to have local tours with sequences of connected events spaced through the year within a distance that you don't have to fly. We had a very successful "Nor'Easter" in the northeast part of the US last year, which starts with TempleCon in February, Boston Massacre in June, HuskyCon in August, and Carnage in November and the Nor'Easter is on again this year. The DAANZ sequence is now up to six tournaments (<http://daanz.org/>). The Brits also are trying to re-energize their Diplomacy tournaments, they have a new Yahoo group:

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/ukf2fdip/>

and a five tournament sequence leading off with ScotCon February 26-28 in Edinburgh, moving to Brighton in May, and the ManorCon at its relatively new location in Leicester in July. Dave Simpson has more on these efforts up above and I know I'm rooting for a big sized Dip resurrection at ManorCon this year, I'm sure we can all help them out!! I myself have been to two ManorCons (1994 and 2001) and have found them to be among my most memorable FTF events. David Norman runs the Dip and so of course that is done expertly, but the whole atmosphere is friendly and fun, partake of the traditional "real ale" where they have kegs brought in specially – nine of them this year! The University of Leicester currently hosts it, and in traditional ManorCon style, you can get your traditional English Breakfast and dorm rooms. This really is an essential part of the experience. Also, think about joining the famous Croquet tournament that Steve Jones runs for them, this is a highlight! There are many others circuits as well, including the Tour de France (no, not that one!). Find all the "circuits" with histories of the events and outcomes at [http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/affiche\\_circuits.php](http://eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/affiche_circuits.php) There are roughly ten of these around the world in any year so you can go to a number of tournaments in your closest circuit and participate. Of course, all of the major US tournaments are part of the Grand Prix. Laurent Joly has been doing a wonderful job of keeping up the tournament database, go look up some friends now and hie thee to an event to join them.

Lastly, this year, World DipCon is going to be in The Hague, Netherlands, the details have yet to be announced, but it looks like it is going to be August 19-22, just one week before Euro DipCon in Paris. Euro DipCon this year is going to be something a bit special as WACcon in the Pacific Northwest has decided to transmit itself to Paris for August 26-29<sup>th</sup>, 2009. I'd like to end this little nudge with some comments on getting to Paris and being in Paris, partly from my own experience in Paris in 2001 at World DipCon. First off, once you are there Xavier Blanchot provides one of the great services to the hobby when he provides accommodations for free. How can you pass up a free hotel in the center of Paris?? Just imagine the late night gaming with a hotel full of Dippers, you CAN wake up in the morning and play. And like I've done, you can walk over to the Louvre and spend an afternoon browsing the French painting like you can nowhere else. Yes, flying into Paris is expensive, but here are a couple of ideas that might make it easier. You may be able to fly cheaper into and out of Amsterdam, Netherlands, and go to World DipCon the week before and then train down to Paris. Or, I'm sure Brits will be taking the Eurostar from London to Paris and traveling to Paris to a Diplomacy convention with a fun group of Brits is an experience you will never forget (from my 2001 experience). There is no experience in my life more memorable than bouncing around Paris streets barhopping with Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, Italians, French, Brits, Irish, and

whoever else the cat dragged in. I also think there are some cheap flights on some of the non-Brit/US airlines such as Aer Lingus to London, if you can travel through their home airports (e.g. Dublin). One of the big regrets about the French tournaments is how few Americans have gone there (I think over the years there has been fewer than two dozen of us – Laurent Joly probably could tell us) and I hope there will be that many Americans this year alone, more than doubling our attendance output. Be one of them!!!

I know a very large number of you think that you have too many other commitments and you probably do, I know I do. What, you're a Diplomacy player and you can't negotiate your way to a Diplomacy tournament, sure you can! You can cement in friendships that you've made on line, I've met a couple hundred of you in person, but I'd like to meet more of you this year. You will not regret making time for a FTF Diplomacy tournament or two or three. And failing that or if you would rather play without a tournament scoring system, there are lots of house game groups getting together for individual games, why not find and join one of those. Let's see if we can get EVERY reader of this article and this issue of Diplomacy World into at least one FTF game this year. Don't be the only one who craps out on this. You'll regret it!!! Cheers and best wishes for a healthy and dippy 2010, make some Dippy memories and share a few of those very special belly laughs when something completely insane happens, do it..

## Ask the GM

### An Advice Column for Diplomacy World

Dear GM:

What's the best present you can get a Diplomacy player for Christmas?

Signed, Santa Claus

Dear Claus,

*The best gift for a Diplomacy player is centers, preferably leading to a solo win. If you mean gifts outside the game than I suppose a copy of the latest version of Diplomacy is always good. So is arranging a game with anyone from the staff of DW as they are pretty dumb and their dots can usually be taken without too much effort.*

Your Pal, The GM

Dear GM:

What's a good New Year's resolution for a Diplomacy

player to make?

Signed, Looking for a Better Year

Dear Year,

*The best resolution you can make is to play in as many games as you can handle without NMRing, as the GM thinks this is the biggest problem with the hobby today. Our staff at DW will also say, or whine, that you should write articles for them to submit to DW on a regular basis. Of course our staff are lazy pukes that require constant nagging to just submit any articles so who cares what they think, eh?*

Your Pal, The GM

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

# The Top Ten Reasons NOT to Attend DipCon 43 / Whipping 7 in San Francisco\*

## **#10 I don't know when or where it is!**

Response by the organizers: Do you live in a box or something? It's coming up in just a few months, the weekend of April 16-18 in San Francisco, CA at the Hotel Tomo in SF's Japantown area.

## **#9 I heard that DipCons suck.**

While there have been some aberrant data points over the past decades, in general DipCon is regarded as the premier annual tournament in North America. That means the best Diplomacy gaming and the most fun of tournaments throughout the year. And this time around you won't even have to set foot in Maine!

## **#8 The weather sucks in San Francisco in April**

Actually it's generally pretty nice, like most times of year here in Northern California.

## **#7 If I show up, Edi Birsan is just going to take all of my centers.**

If you do show up, Edi Birsan promises that you can have your choice of Belgium, Rumania, or Sweden. Assuming you are playing Russia, France, or Italy, respectively. Anyways, Edi hasn't won any tournaments in San Francisco (yet).

## **#6 San Francisco is far away. And it's expensive to fly there.**

Airfare is actually very inexpensive now - there are flights from the east coast for well under \$300. And SF is very easy and cheap to get to from the Pacific Northwest. We're serviced by three airports, San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland, which gives you plenty of options for finding a convenient flight.

## **#5 I hear the organizers are a bunch of tools.**

Okay, you got us on that one. But who's spending their spare time reading a Diplomacy magazine? Tool.

## **#4 There are no other activities for me to do while I visit, and if family come with me they'll be bored.**

No way - the tournament is in the heart of Japantown during the Cherry Blossom Festival. And we're walking distance to the Union Square, North Beach, and Chinatown areas. There's also easy access to all of the parks in SF like Golden Gate Park, the Presidio, and Alcatraz, and it's just a short drive to other sight-seeing locations like Muir Woods, Point Reyes National Seashore, and Sonoma/Napa wine country. Much more than a visitor could do in a week, let alone a long

weekend.

## **#3 The scoring system is lame.**

It's hard to keep everyone happy with any scoring system, but we've found that most hobbyists really enjoy playing under the Whipping system. We use a hybrid system that offers roughly equal rewards for center count, board top, and draw size (DIAS only). You can find details, as well as house rules at our website: [www.bayareadiplomacy.org](http://www.bayareadiplomacy.org)

## **#2 I spoke to someone who went to the Whipping last year and he told me it was the most fun he's had at a Diplomacy Tournament - with all the hype, I'm afraid that if I go this year, I'll be disappointed.**

We've heard the same thing from past attendees of the Whipping, and we're working as hard as possible to continue to make the Whipping one of the best Diplomacy tournaments held every year. Be it the intense competition during the games, sharing some drinks with friends after games, or the many amusing prizes and side-games going on, every year our attendees have great things to say. And having DipCon in 2010 should only make it better!

## **#1 Okay, fine, maybe DipCon in SF would be fun, but I don't know how to sign up or get more information**

You can sign-up and get more information online at <http://www.bayareadiplomacy.org/dipcon.php> and take advantage of the pre-registration fee of only \$30. Or you can email the tournament director directly with questions or comments at [adam.silverman@gmail.com](mailto:adam.silverman@gmail.com).

## **So there REAL question seems to be, "What reason could you possibly have not to come to DipCon in 2010???"**

We look forward to seeing you there!

\* Please also see our companion article "Top 10 Reasons to Attend DipCon43/Whipping7 in San Francisco"

***The DipCon 2010 Organizing Committee is:  
Adam Silverman, Tournament Director  
Edi Birsan, Coordinator of Prizes and Sur-prizes  
Andy Hull, Webmaster  
Condé Creek, Director of Recruiting and (extra) Special Events***



# A Ducky Christmas

By Stacey Williams

**Don “Archduck” Williams’ favorite Christmas present of 2009, shown below. The pedestal is cherry wood with a Jacobean stain.**

**Sincere thanks to Wizards of the Coast for granting a one-time-use permission to have the gameboard artwork reproduced, and to RP Digital for outstanding digital reproduction work.**

**Heartfelt thanks are also due Manus Hand for his advice, guidance, and discretion. You’re a born coconspirator, Manus. =;->**



**The board was crafted by the Van Vegten family of Gathering Wood, [www.gatheringwood.com](http://www.gatheringwood.com).**

**The crown molding pedestal base is modeled on a gorgeous cabinet in the Van Vegten’s home.**



**The two short sides of the pedestal base have carved finger grips to allow the gameboard to be lifted out of the pedestal base.**

**Yes, the board is big! Thanks to Chris Montes of CRM Sales for scrambling to build a custom box in time for Christmas.**

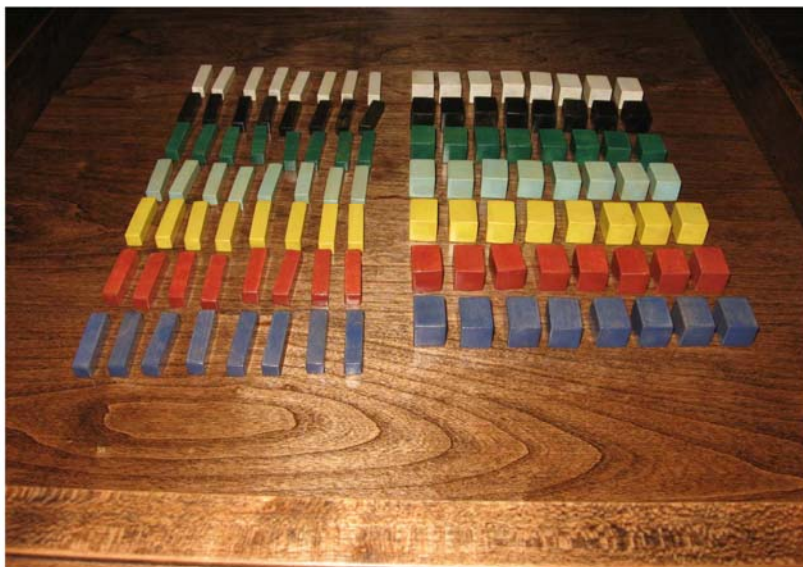


**The base contains two compartments, allowing for a center strut to support the gameboard and leaving plenty of room for gamepieces (and inscriptions.)**

**Allison Van Vegten did a beautiful job creating the satin-lined velvet bags for the “blocks and sticks” (armies and fleets, Don tells me.)**







**The gamepieces are maple, cut and stained to replicate the original mass-produced wooden pieces. Thanks to Jim Van Vegten for recommending the better stain color for the French pieces, which Don tells me is an improvement on the original even a purist can love.**



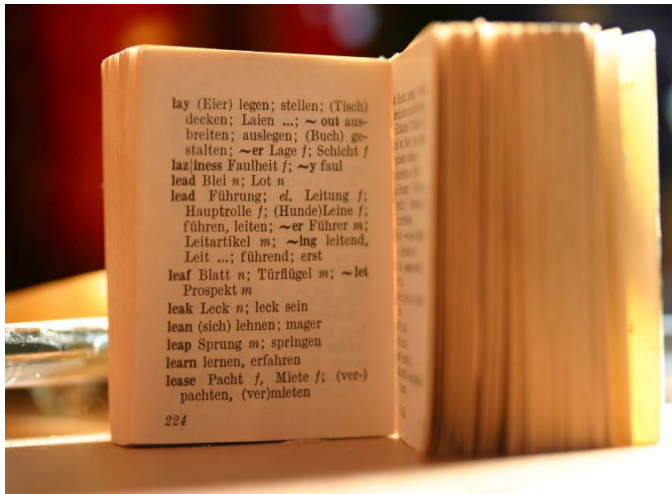
**Don's gameboard with the armies and fleets of the Great Powers in a typical post-Spring 1901 array.**

**I cannot say enough good things about the talented and delightful Van Vegten family, who created this one-of-a-kind work of art. For more information on the creation of Don's board, visit [www.gatheringwood.com/blog](http://www.gatheringwood.com/blog).**

# The Foundation to Any Good Diplomacy Game

By Alex Maslow

Throughout the history of diplomacy zines, there has been a great interest in applying writings and statistics to Diplomacy, despite not originally being developed with the game in mind. And now we have a curious number of articles dedicated to, essentially, taking quotes and statistics wildly out of context, all for our own enjoyment of saying "See? Even Sun Tzu agrees with me!" It is silly, self serving, and wholly irreverent. And I want in!



This article will take one of my favorite book series, Isaac Asimov's Foundation trilogy (except it is actually seven books), and try to apply some of the most memorable quotes from the series to the game. [All quotes taken from Wikipedia. Sorry, I couldn't be bothered to actually re-read all the books]

## Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.

Diplomacy is a war simulator, which makes violence an integral part of the game. However, I would suggest that 'violence' is also an emotional state. You know you have the upper hand in any post-stab situation when you get a screaming e-mail from your victim. But no one expects an e-mail understanding the move, applauding it, and suggesting to move on. If you have just stabbed someone and receive a violent correspondence, pride yourself on a job well done and continue the wound. If you have just been stabbed, take some time to compose yourself, and then write a chipper e-mail to your stabber. You don't have to congratulate him, but the more rational you appear to be, the more likely he is to maybe take his gains and turn back. I don't mean to say a pleasant e-mail is a remedy for a stab, but it can sometimes salvage the situation, or at least allow you to retain your dignity.

## It pays to be obvious, especially if you have a reputation for subtlety.

There are players who plan and plan and plan, and there are rivals who counter plan and counter plan and counter plan. These usually result in the most exciting games to play in and to watch. Then there are those who plan and plan and plan and those who just do. These are not as intriguing, but they are exciting nonetheless. Sometimes, with a bit of luck, the "doer" will result the victor (at least in that confrontation). That's why novices thrown into a game of vets (the poor chaps!) usually gain a few depots immediately. They rarely WIN, but their linear playing, in itself, adds a complexity to the game.

However, if you can and do plan intricately, sometimes a straightaway stab is a good way to do it. They'll be watching your movements because they think your stab will be seen a turn or two in advance. Then you hit them WHAM BAM with an otherwise mediocre stab, but one that surprises the haywire out of them. This isn't a strategy to be used all the time, but if you're Germany allying with France against a now floundering England, there is a lot to be said for diving prematurely into a stab and taking Bel, instead of waiting for when you can nab Bel and Bur and Eng. As the quote indicates, the more sparsely this is used, the more effective each execution will be.

## Never let your sense of morals prevent you from doing what is right!

Very simple: Morals have no place in Diplomacy. I don't care if he supported you into two depots instead of insisting a split. I don't care if you share birthdays or if your mother knew his father in a night of untold secrets or if he's just been a solid and trustworthy ally all game. When the moment comes to stab, you must stab. If he is a good player, he will bow to your wisdom. If he's a grouchy player, well, then maybe he didn't deserve those depots anyway.

Also, in reference the "The Grand Alliance," I don't care what England did to you Fall 1901 – you and he and everyone else must work together to stop country XYZ from winning. Put grudges aside. And as for the "Well, he played a good game – he deserves to win." If he's such a good player, make him win the hard (and honorable) way. Many players can get 15-17 depots – it takes a pro to nab the 18<sup>th</sup>.



**To succeed, planning alone is insufficient.  
One must improvise as well.**

Dip veterans know this plan very well. It's not that the best laid plans turn to rubbish; it's that the best laid plans in S1901 may simply no longer apply in S1902, or even F1901! It's good to plan; you should always try to think several steps ahead. But Dip is a game where you can (will!) get screwed and something will happen to hamper your plan. In that case, it is vital that you be able to just keep moving forward. Something unforeseen will happen. That French fleet sitting in MAO will suddenly swing to Wes, or Russia will make the never-convenient-for-Germany F01 move of GoB to Bal. A monkey wrench will always find its way into your game. Your ally in 1901 may not be the best ally a few years later (even if he isn't suddenly an enemy). You need to be ready for the changing tides and you need to be willing to respond. Otherwise, you'll find surviving past 1904 very difficult.



**Gratitude is best and most effective when it  
does not evaporate itself in empty phrases.**

So instead of driving a harder bargain, you agreed as France to cede Belgium and Holland to Germany. After all, as he said, you get Portugal and Spain without a fight. So he should get two depots, too. But the cutthroat bastard then took London and is refusing to support you into Liverpool, insisting that splitting the island will make for uneasy relations, but that he still wishes you the best of luck.

This Kaiser is not a bad ally; you're just a bad negotiator. Anyone can say anything they wish. But it's the situation on the board that matters. If someone insists that words can replace SC, just insist that, while you appreciate their well wishes, the fact is you need that depot and demand a split. If they still refuse, well, then perhaps they actually don't have your best interests at heart, and you're better off finding a different ally.

**Only a lie that wasn't ashamed of itself  
could possibly succeed & Nothing has to be  
true, but everything has to sound true.**

This is absolutely key to diplomacy. If you're going to lie (and there are many players who don't, preferring to deflect direct questions or ignore ultimatums) you have to tell it with conviction. You have to dig deep for a lie that is plausible, and then lay down all the reasons why you would do that action. You might even begin to think "man, this is a good plan – maybe I SHOULD do it." If

you ever reach that point, you have almost undoubtedly convinced your rival. When you lie, it must be straightforwardly, and it must be with a plan good enough to work.

**A particular event may be infinitesimally  
probable, but the probability is always  
greater than zero.**

An Austrian/Italian war is raging with an Italian army in Tyrolia. As Germany, you feel pretty confident in your war against France. But many times the Austrian and Italian leaders will call a truce, because no one is gaining and everyone else is still growing. Now Italy can respond to France's pleas for help by sending Tyrolia to Munich. It may be unlikely, but if it is possible, it is your duty to guard against it. At the very least, if it is possible, you have to consider the chance it happens, even if you ultimately dismiss the likelihood.



**Anyone who displays a capacity for double-  
dealing must forever be suspected of being  
capable of displaying it again.**

This is actually a double edged sword. On the one hand, it is natural to see so-and-so stab what's-his-face and figured "Boy, that was brutal! I'm not gonna trust anything he says!" On the other hand, everyone in diplomacy has stabbed someone during their time. And the game cannot be played if nobody ever cooperates. I tried it with some friends – no one could support any units other than their own – and it just wasn't even remotely exciting. Interestingly, Italy won, taking advantage of the chaos of the Balkans to take Trieste immediately and build fleets upon fleets and taking control of the whole Med by 1903.

Anyway, one must instead watch WHEN other's stab, and how they stab. Some stab for a depot or two. Some stab for the win. Some stab with builds only practical for one purpose (A "friendly" Germany who builds two fleets in one winter is not really "friendly" to England). Some stab for fun. A select few stab for boredom. Some stab to cripple. The point is, most people stab at predictable times. And most people stab only during a few situations. So if you see someone

stab so-and-so because so-and-so had left his home depots wide open, maybe you shouldn't blame the stabber for just being reasonable, and instead, if you end up allying with him, be sure to CYA (cover your ass). But if Turkey stabs Russia for control of Serbia just to get another unit in his war against Italy, he might not be the most reliable ally, or at least needs to be guarded against more carefully than other allies.

**The observer influences the events he observes by the mere act of observing them or by being there to observe them.**

Last year I wrote an article outlining a new strategy for Italy. It wasn't very good (so don't bother to look it up, I never bothered to publish it), but one of the compliments I got on it was using non-negotiation as a strategy. I said to contact England to get whispers of the EFG but ignore Turkey, at least in S01. Then, when breaking a DMZ with Germany, ignore him that turn. The point was that, by being present in discussions, you draw attention to yourself. By ignoring, too, you affect the situation the other way.

If you, as Austria, point out to Italy that France can convoy to NaF and threaten Tun, a possibility that is always present is suddenly on high alert in the Italian's mind, and it may alter his thinking. Even if you have no intention of moving to the Channel, bringing it up to the French may worry them enough to affect relations elsewhere. This is a small piece of a large puzzle and obviously does little by itself but, when used at times of

great tension, can completely distract the attention of a rival to an otherwise unlikely event

**Human beings are very conservative in some ways and virtually never change numerical conventions once they grow used to them. They even come to mistake them for laws of nature.**

As has been reported in most articles, Diplomacy is a game of personality. There is rarely a "best" move, and when there is, it is not guaranteed it will be followed. Unlike chess, there are social (diplomatic) considerations that can override tactical supremacy. Further, a player's personality affects their game greatly, and must be taken into consideration. It doesn't matter what you or the "experts" think that player should do – only his opinion matters.

Which basically boils down to: Thanks for reading this article, but please don't confuse it with fact. It is quite impossible to truly predict any diplomacy game. No matter what the statistics bear out, it is always possible for Italy to come away with a win and for France to be booted by 1903. And as frustrating as that is, in all honesty, it is what keeps us coming back for more.

***Alex is a welcome newcomer to Diplomacy World. Everybody should send in letters proclaiming how great he is, so he'll get a big ego and decide to contribute more in the future.***

## Selected Upcoming Conventions

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

Australian Diplomacy Championship 2010 - Saturday January 23<sup>rd</sup> - Monday January 25<sup>th</sup> - Summer Hill Community Centre, 131 Smith Street, Sydney, NSW, Australia – [thorinmunro@hotmail.com](mailto:thorinmunro@hotmail.com)

TempleCon 2010 - Friday February 5<sup>th</sup> - Sunday February 7<sup>th</sup> - Providence, Rhode Island - <http://www.templecon.org/10/>

Anjou Feu - Saturday February 20<sup>th</sup> - Sunday February 21<sup>st</sup> - Avrillé (near Angers), France - <http://membres.lycos.fr/interzines/ouest.php>

New Zealand Diplomacy Championships 2010 - Saturday February 20<sup>th</sup> - Sunday February 21<sup>st</sup> - ASB Stadium, Kohimarama, Auckland, New Zealand - <http://daanz.org>

PrezCon "The Winter Nationals" - Wednesday February 24<sup>th</sup> - Sunday February 28<sup>th</sup> - Doubletree Hotel of Charlottesville Virginia - <http://www.prezcon.com>

Chill Out Con IV - Friday April 16<sup>th</sup> - Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup> - Hanover, Germany - <http://www.diplomacy-bund.de>

DipCon 43 / Whipping 7 - Friday April 16<sup>th</sup> – Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup> - San Francisco, California - <http://www.bayareadiplomacy.org/dipcon.php>

Brighton DipCon I - Friday May 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday May 9<sup>th</sup> - Brighton, Sussex., United Kingdom - <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/ukf2fdip/>

ManorCon XXVIII - Friday July 16<sup>th</sup> – Monday July 19<sup>th</sup> - Leicester University, United Kingdom - <http://www.manorcon.org.uk>



HuskyConVIII is only a few months away. While a weekend hasn't been nailed down yet, you should still start thinking about how you are going to get the North America's top Face-to-Face Diplomacy Event.

- **Location:** Long Island, New York. Just 90 minutes from Manhattan, JFK airport and Lagaardia airport
- **Cost:** Full room and board completely free! Space is limited though and if we run out of house space, people will have to start camping
- **Who:** Anyone is welcome. All skill levels and all ages
- **When:** It will be sometime in July. We are choosing our weekend around the WDC in Holland, and EDC in Paris. We are waiting on them to pick their dates
- **Why:** Unparalleled hospitality, beautiful venue with a cliff overlooking Long Island Sound, incredibly friendly welcoming atmosphere... just ask one of our previous attendees. This event is a must for any Diplomacy player
- **More Information:** Check out the results from [HuskyConVII!](#) This year's website will be coming soon

## ***Reminder* - The Diplomacy World Variant Design Contest**

After reading through old issues of Diplomacy World, I found a contest where readers were asked to design and submit new, original variants in exchange for prizes. And I figured what the heck, even if my prior Diplomacy World writing contests had been met with less-than enthusiastic response, perhaps I could generate some more excitement with something on the designing side of the game.

The rules are pretty simple. Design and submit an original variant, using one of the topics listed below. **Multiple entries are permitted** (whether you choose to use more than one topic, or multiple entries for the same topic). This must be a new variant – one which has not been openly play-tested yet (if you and a buddy or two want to try it out to see how it works, to help you make revisions along the way, that's fine). The variant should include the map (if it uses anything other than the standard Diplomacy map), rules, and designer's notes giving some insight into why you chose to produce the variant in the form it ultimately is submitted in. Variants may be for 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9. If two or more people want to design a variant together, that's fine too, but you'll have to figure out how to split the prizes on your own. Speaking of which, the prizes will be:

**1<sup>st</sup> Prize: \$50 (or the equivalent in your local currency) in cash, or in a gift card for eBay or Amazon.com**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: \$25 (or the equivalent in your local currency) in cash, or in a gift card for eBay or Amazon.com**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Your choice of a number of DVD's (new and used) from my pile prize. If outside the US or Canada, an alternate prize will be mutually chosen.**

I may decide to award additional prizes depending on the number of entries. DVD's, Diplomacy World merchandise, a Diplomacy set, gift cards, or who knows what else. Prizes are supplied by Doug Kent who, while DW Staff may be consulted in evaluating entries, will remain solely responsible for their disposition. Hopefully some useful comments will be received from the readership after publication as well.

All submissions will appear in Diplomacy World (not necessarily all in the same issue, depending on how many entries are received). By submitting these variants, you agree not to submit them elsewhere until they've appeared in DW, giving Diplomacy World right of first publication. All other rights remain with the author. We would just like the variants to appear in Diplomacy World first since they're being created for this contest.

Now, for your choice of topics, I have selected six historical periods. As I said, you may submit multiple variants, whether that means different topics or all for the same topic. ***The final deadline for variant submission will be March 15, 2010.*** This still gives you nearly 3 months to complete your entries, with the idea that at least **some** entries will appear in Diplomacy World #109.

**The historical topics are:**

**The Napoleonic Era  
Post-Soviet USSR  
Ancient Greek States  
Current-Day Global Dominance  
Ancient Israel Region  
Yugoslavian Breakup**

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# Diplomacy World Demo Game – Known World Variant – (Also Known As “DC229”)

## The Current Players:

Arabia - Matt Kremer,  
Byzantium - Gregory Alexopoulos.  
China - Lynn Mercer.  
Denmark - Former Trout (aka Sanford O'Donnell).  
Egypt - Ian Moes.  
France - Nigel Phillips or Nigs as he likes to be known.  
Germany – Russ Manning, the replacement Germany.  
India - Andy Jameson or the White Wolf.  
Khazaria - the game designer, David Cohen.  
Russia - Darren Sharma.  
Spain - Nathan Deily.  
The Samanids - played by John Reside,

Srivijaya - played by Mike Morris.  
Wagadu - Mikael Johansson,  
Axum - Benjamin Hester.

## The GM:

*Nick Higgins (Verdanda Italics)*

## The Commentators:

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

## Spring 905

PRESS #1 (Spanish):

A cunning North African Moor  
found he could traverse shore to shore  
with hops and with skips  
'cross multiple ships  
to visit the Frankish back door

said he, "It's a shame that these infidels  
are sacking and burning our citadels  
but I'm happy to say,  
turnabout is fair play,  
we can wash our sandals in their Frankish wells"

So mark well the words of Sun Tzu,  
though paraphrased - they are still true  
the wise man once said  
make sure your foe's dead

before you decide to have two

Press #2 (Anonymous)

\*\*\*\*\*

Green hills above the northern wall,  
White water winding east of the city.  
On this spot our single act of parting,  
The lonely tumbleweed journeys ten thousand li.  
Drifting clouds echo the traveller's thoughts,  
The setting sun reflects my old friend's feelings.  
You wave your hand and set off from this place,  
Your horse whinnies as it leaves.

Li Bo

\*\*\*\*\*

## Spring Adjudications

Arabian A Arm - Mos  
Arabian A Der - Bal  
Arabian A Geo S A Der - Bal  
Arabian A Ind - Knj \*Bounce\*  
Arabian A Jer S A Aqa - Ale  
Arabian A Kak S A Der - Bal  
Arabian A Knj - Chl \*Bounce\*  
Arabian A Man - Ujj  
Arabian A Mec S A Aqa - Ale  
Arabian A Sha - Ind \*Bounce\*  
Arabian A Ujj - Ras  
Arabian F Ars S F Mas  
Arabian F Mah S F Mas  
Arabian F Mas S A Ujj - Ras \*Cut\*

Axum A Aqa - Ale  
Axum A Lub S A Sud  
Axum A Mak - Aqa

Axum A Sud H  
Axum F Gad S F Mas  
Axum F Phe - Sus \*Bounce\*  
Axum F Soc S F Mas  
Axum F Zim - Gos \*Bounce\*  
  
Byzantine A Mac - Dal \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine A Slr S A Rom  
Byzantine A Thr S A Ono  
Byzantine F Aes - Ios  
Byzantine F Cre - Cis \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Cyp - Cis \*Bounce\*

Chinese A Cha S A Uyg  
Chinese A Chn S A Uyg  
Chinese A Nep S A Tib  
Chinese A Pal S A Tib  
Chinese A Tib S A Uyg

Chinese A Uyg S A Tib  
Chinese F Kai H

Danish A Bor S F Liv  
Danish A Saa - Kar \*Bounce\*  
Danish F Ics - Whs  
Danish F Les - Fis \*Bounce\*  
Danish F Liv S F Les - Fis  
Danish F Wsx H

Egyptian A Ale H \*Dislodged\*  
Egyptian F Egs S F Ale  
Egyptian F Lis S F Egs  
Egyptian F Tar H

French A Aqt - Tou  
French A Gas S A Aqt - Tou  
French A Hel - Lom \*Bounce\*

French A Lbu - Aut \*Bounce\*  
French A Nar - Aut \*Bounce\*  
French A Pam - Zar  
French A Sal S F Nos - Cad  
French A Swa - Lot  
French A Tol - Val  
French F Dub - lcs  
French F Nos - Cad

German A Dal S A Vol - Ono \*Cut\*  
German A Mor S A Vol - Ono  
German A Sax - Sor  
German A Vis S A Vol - Ono  
German A Vol - Ono  
German F Sgs H

Indian A Var H

Khazar A Bal - Srk  
Khazar A Srk - Sev  
Khazar A Tam S A Bal - Srk

Russian A Bja S A Che - Kar  
Russian A Bul - Mrd

Russian A Che - Kar  
Russian A Kie - Vol  
Russian A Maz S A Kie - Vol  
Russian A Ono S A Mac - Dal  
\*Cut\* \*Dislodged\*  
Russian F Est S F Fis  
Russian F Fis H

Samanid A Ati S A Der - Bal  
Samanid A Bas S A Ati  
Samanid A Buk - Blk  
Samanid A Ghu - Kip  
Samanid A Kas H  
Samanid A Orb - Khi  
Samanid A Qar - Orb  
Samanid A Sam S A Sog  
Samanid A Sog S A Kas

Spanish A Kut - Lom \*Bounce\*  
Spanish A Tou - Aqt \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\*  
Spanish F Cad - Gra  
Spanish F Lgs C A Kut - Lom  
Spanish F Mau - Kut \*Bounce\*

Spanish F Sjt C A Kut - Lom  
Spanish F Tys C A Kut - Lom

Srivijayan A Cho - Chl  
Srivijayan F Cob S A Cho - Chl  
Srivijayan F Jam S F Mis - Sus  
Srivijayan F Jas S F Mis - Sus  
Srivijayan F Mis - Sus \*Bounce\*  
Srivijayan F Sus - Gos \*Bounce\*  
Srivijayan F Ras - Cho  
Srivijayan F Ser - Mas \*Bounce\*

Wagadu A Jej - Jel  
Wagadu A Jel - Aga  
Wagadu A Kan - Zaw  
Wagadu A Tah - Mau \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu F Sta S F Nos - Cad  
Wagadu F Swo S F Sta  
Wagadu F Tas S F Sta

Neutral A Pec H  
Neutral A Rom H

### Retreat Possibilities

Egyptian A Ale can retreat to Bar, Tri or disband  
Russian A Ono can retreat to Sla, Ava or disband  
Spanish A Tou can retreat to Pam, SpM or disband

### Spring 905 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

**Denmark is still bringing his forces east to take out Russia, apparently asking France to follow his fleets east. Nothing that Russia can't handle easily, so far.**

So this is clear, Denmark doesn't have enough units in the right places to move further on Russia. But the French have moved F Dublin to Icelandic Sea, following as Suzanne says. This still offers not much, but an interesting guess. For the attack to really work well, you would want an army in Great Britain somewhere that could be convoyed to Komia, but there is only the army in Saamiland, that defends the already weak Scandinavian line. An interesting tactical situation could be created if Saamiland is convoyed to Komia at the same time as Karelia is convoyed to Uppland. We'll see if that happens, but Denmark is left in very precarious positions on all fronts.

*Denmark could land his fleet in Komia. (The French fleet could follow.) Of course he shouldn't, but he's done all sorts of things he shouldn't.*

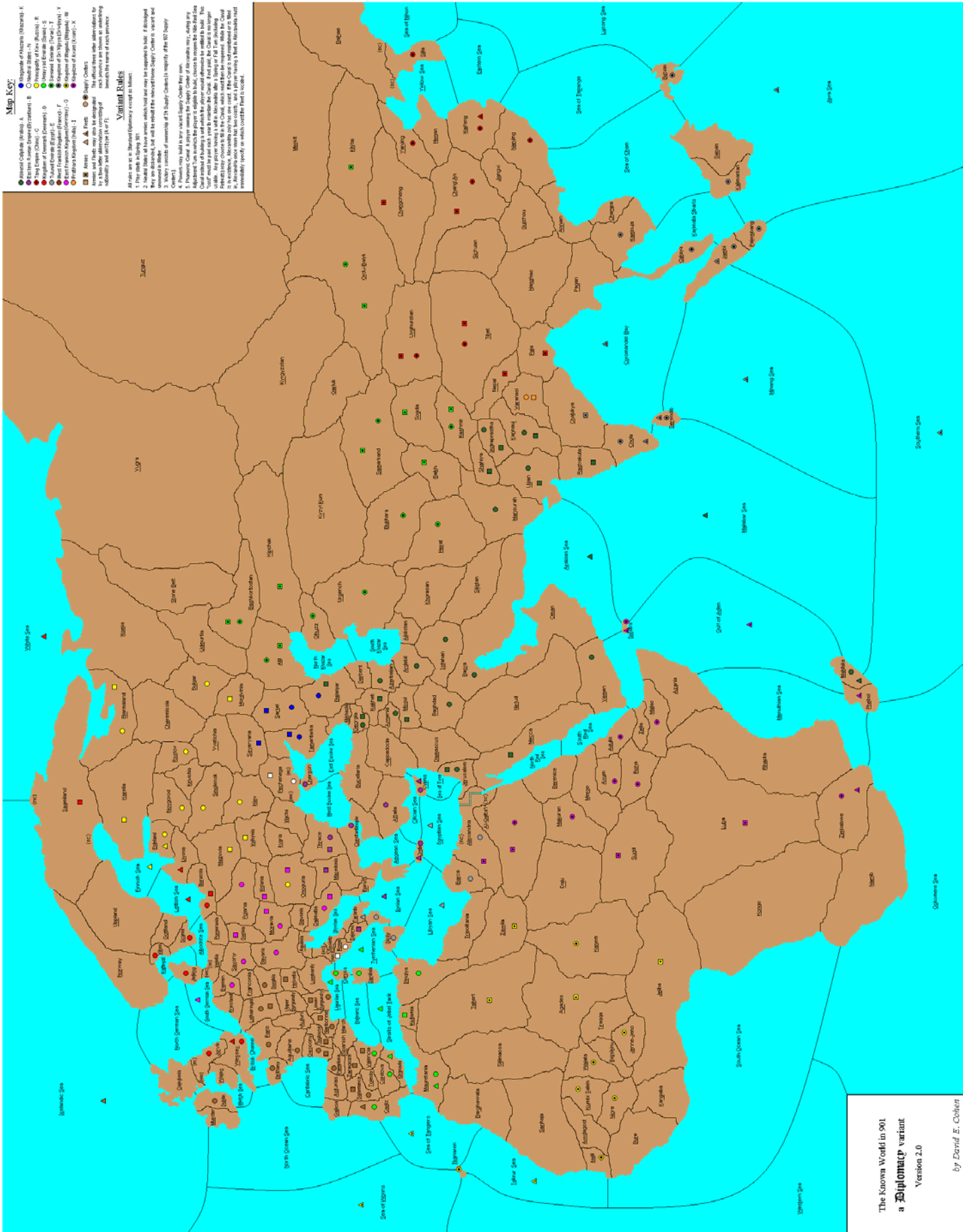
**Germany seems to have made another mutual**

**drawback agreement with France for his western border. Once again, Germany is drawing back more than France.**

This seems to be the on-going deal there. Germany has committed to it and needs to gain against Russia to survive.

**Germany did finally get Ono. But this fall he'll have to guess whether to use everything to hold onto Ono, or to cover Polonia with support, unless he gets help from Denmark. And if Russia retreats to Sla, Bavaria will be under threat as well. Not a very solid position.**

Agreed, but Denmark is threatened as noted above with having an army running around his home centers, so really this is a house of cards, I expect the Russian will be able to start making headway back unless someone annoys him sufficiently from behind. That annoyance, as I note below, probably is sufficient to keep Ono since Volhynia is likely to be otherwise engaged.



- Map Key:**
- Naval Capital (India) - ● Naval Capital (Africa) - ● Naval Capital (Europe) - ● Naval Capital (Asia)
  - Naval Capital (North America) - ● Naval Capital (South America) - ● Naval Capital (Australia)
  - Naval Capital (Antarctica) - ● Naval Capital (Arctic) - ● Naval Capital (Tropical)
  - Naval Capital (Desert) - ● Naval Capital (Mountain) - ● Naval Capital (Coastal)
  - Naval Capital (Island) - ● Naval Capital (Peninsula) - ● Naval Capital (Bay)
  - Naval Capital (River) - ● Naval Capital (Lake) - ● Naval Capital (Sea)
  - Naval Capital (Oceania) - ● Naval Capital (Polar) - ● Naval Capital (Subtropical)
  - Naval Capital (Temperate) - ● Naval Capital (Tropical) - ● Naval Capital (Subtropical)
  - Naval Capital (Desert) - ● Naval Capital (Mountain) - ● Naval Capital (Coastal)
  - Naval Capital (Island) - ● Naval Capital (Peninsula) - ● Naval Capital (Bay)
  - Naval Capital (River) - ● Naval Capital (Lake) - ● Naval Capital (Sea)
  - Naval Capital (Oceania) - ● Naval Capital (Polar) - ● Naval Capital (Subtropical)
  - Naval Capital (Temperate) - ● Naval Capital (Tropical) - ● Naval Capital (Subtropical)

**Naval Rules:**

1. Naval bases are in the same category except in the case of the following:

- 1. Naval bases in the same category except in the case of the following:
- 2. Naval bases in the same category except in the case of the following:
- 3. Naval bases in the same category except in the case of the following:
- 4. Naval bases in the same category except in the case of the following:
- 5. Naval bases in the same category except in the case of the following:



*I expect Russia to do well simply because his tactics have consistently been better. But it doesn't really matter.*

*I don't see what France gains by keeping him around. France cannot blast his way into Africa on his own. OTOH, he can roll Germany with ease.*

**Russia shows a solid defense against the Danish-German offensive, even though he's lost Ono for now.**

Well, actually I disagree, it is a bit static. The real choice is what to do with Est and Fis and the simple support doesn't really move the position at all (stating the obvious). The real key for Russia now is what Khazaria does in his death throes. He could finally try to take out the neutral in Pechenega, but more likely he stabs at Kiev while mutually supporting his other last two units. Russia cannot afford losing his capital, and while this is the last end of the Russia/Khazaria war it is perhaps a defining moment. Given the weakness of the other positions arrayed against him, and the intensity and position of the other units moving on Khazaria, this will likely be the last year of this significant annoyance, but it could be crucial in the balance of power. And then of course, the question is what do the units do once they finish taking out Khazaria. I have good vibes over that discussion, but we will have to see. Russia could be crushed or could expand, and is unlikely to stay static. Thus, I support taking a bit more of a risk in Scandinavia this turn or at least next Spring.

*If Russia retreats to Slavonia, he could always get support into Dalmatia.*

*I don't think Russia need worry about Kiev. He's got two armies to defend it.*

I agree he CAN defend it, but will he? And is that where Khazaria will lash out in his death throes? As you say, Russia has been consistently well managed tactically and I would expect him to be so managed again here.

**I still don't understand why Byzantine keeps supporting Rome. Of course, he has his eyes on it for himself, but he will get it in any case when Spain falls. Why not let Spain take it, if he wants to, and concentrate on taking the two Egyptian centers in the boot and Dalmatia/Onoguria.**

I agree, I think the Byzantines missed an opportunity last season and now, with some aggressive Egyptian moves this season could leave Byzantium in a bit of trouble. If I were the Egyptian, I'd give up the homeland and keep striking north. That won't be good for Byzantium. Byzantium's fortunes also lie with Russia, both could be overwhelmed pretty quickly if the little powers focus on annoying them instead of holding off the big guys. This is a frequent problem in the game. You would think that

the smaller powers would ally against the larger ones more readily, but the game dynamics tend to push most players the other way. We could debate why that is a bit more next season if the Egypt/Khazaria moves turn out as I expect they will.

*Byz must have some major issue with Spain. Supporting Rome has never been a good idea. He even let Egypt take Taranto, just to keep Spain out of Rome!*

*Let's see if he takes Taranto in the Fall. He really needs the build.*

**France is advancing prudently in Spain. He took the time to kick the rogue Spanish army back south. Still, he has gained Valencia and Cadiz (with Wagadu support!) and will certainly get Cordova in the fall. He also avoided a Spanish convoy to Lombardy, which would have been a nuisance to deal with.**

Yes, slow and steady wins the race here. The outcome has no doubt and the French still have the Germans/Danes cowed so that once Spain is gone he can turn on them. How the pincers hit Russia/Byzantium vs. Germany/Denmark is mostly just a matter of tempo. Some of that tempo depends on whether Spain keeps his fleets on disbands and whether Spain tries to defend the last of the Spanish territory (unlikely), tries to push into Africa or focuses on keeping the two African centers (also unlikely), or keeps fleets in the Med and pushes East (more likely). France needs to get Lower Burgundy open for a fleet build, so Spain supporting Helvetia to Lower Burgundy while trying to steal Sicily might be an interesting move if he doesn't think he'll get Rome this time.

*Slow and steady? This has been a quick, efficient slaughter!*

**It looks like his next step is to get involved with the war against Russia, although he still has the potential to stab Germany hard, whenever he wishes.**

Yes, I think the question will be whether to just hit Germany and Denmark together or go at one of them first. Unfortunately for Germany, he is the more likely first target.

**Spain is going down fast, predictably. The rogue army behind the French lines was a bad idea. However, the convoy to Lombardy would have been fine, if it worked.**

*The convoy to Lombardy meant that five of his seven orders were wasted. A convoy to Valenica would have been far more useful.*

*I wonder if he'll bother to defend any of his SCs in the Fall? He's already losing three to France - will he care*

*about the African holdings? I have no idea.*

I think Spain could survive for awhile moving east, not sure if he will, but opposing France directly is pointless.

*Defending himself would not have been pointless.*

Without someone else attacking France, he only would be delaying the inevitable, this is a failure of Diplomacy, not of tactics, all I'm saying is that he survives longer focusing somewhere else. I doubt Spain will live very long though.

**I'm beginning to wonder why the strong players in the east -- Arabia and Axum especially -- haven't been making an intense diplomatic campaign towards France's neighbors. Or maybe they have, to no avail.**

**Wagadu is heading up north, to make sure that he gets the two North African centers as his share of the Spanish booty. He is also prudently keeping his border with Axum covered. Not much in the way of growth options, but he is not likely to get knocked out easily, either.**

Correct, I think it is unlikely that Spain will focus everything on keeping those two African centers, but if he does it is bad for Wagadu.

Wagadu has to get those two centers quickly and then determine the next direction for him. Best would be moving the fleets into the Med instead of France and being the "Mediterranean sea power", but he may not be given that choice. Essential is taking out those Spanish centers quickly for any hope of longer term interesting outcomes. While Suzanne is right that perhaps no one will attack him quickly, it is pretty boring to just sit around and wait until people have time and resources to come after you.

*Wagadu, like everybody else in sight, appears to be committed to making France grow absurdly large. I expect he'll get those two African centers eventually.*

*After that, does he push into the Med? If not there, then where?*

**Egypt is going down slowly, but surely.**

Egypt does have some very important choices regarding the manner of his death that affect other powers. The Balance of Power move would be to ally with Byzantium, but I expect the opposite, attacking Byzantium for all he is worth.

*Egypt didn't try to move a single force there. I expect he's mailing it in at this point.*

**So, it is Axum who gets Alexandria, and probably**

**Barca, too. Wagadu is probably right to keep the border covered.**

Precisely, this is the deal with Arabia. Axum will go after Wagadu as soon as Egypt is completely disengaged from the African continent. That will not be long at all, especially if Egypt chooses to focus north.

*That could happen.*

**Ah, Arabia has finally taken Balanjar. Maybe he'll get another Khazarian center. (Tamantarka, probably)**

I disagree, in Matt's benevolent largesse preventing a stop-the-leader alliance from forming against him, it appears to me as if he has agreed to stop at Balanjar, to stay out of the Mediterranean, let Axum have Africa, and focus on wiping out the Eastern Juggernaut, which frankly is not now much of a Juggernaut. The long term result in a Matt view of the world would be to wipe out the two Eastern powers and then to choose between sweeping back East with the Samanid and Axum or attacking one of them.

**I don't have any idea whether Arabia will get another Khazarian center or not. But I don't see any signs that he has agreed to stay out of the Med. In fact, the Euxine (Black) Sea gives on to the Med, and that is one logical way for him to go.**

**However, I certainly can't imagine his sweeping east against China and/or Indonesia. Encouraging Samanid, certainly. Maybe also encouraging or lending a helping hand to Axum if the latter is inclined to attack Indonesia; why not? But I would see him heading west, first towards Byzantine and then, who knows? perhaps finally trying to rally whatever is left of France's neighbors to a campaign against his chief competitor.**

**He's keeping Axum happy by helping him grow in Egypt.**

Right, and needs Axum help to sweep East.

**And lastly, Arabia seems to be trying to hit the Indonesian center in southern India, or perhaps just maneuvering to get the last Indian center.**

I think that the combination of the weak Chinese front and lack of imagination in the East means that they can crumble the Indonesian center tactically, eventually.

**Still advancing, even if the pace is slowing down.**

And patience here really is good, I think the plan is to leave the other powers alone to oppose France.

*Arabia seems to be following my general rule for large variants: triple alliances rule. His immediate gains are*

*not that clear, other than the dot from Khazaria, but he's setting himself up strategically to expand into other areas of the map. Still the best power on the board.*

**Is there such a rule for large variants? Perhaps, although I can think of a number of exceptions off-hand.**

**At any rate, I certainly agree with the last sentence.**

**Khazaria has given up on Balanjar, but maybe he'll fall back on the neutral Pechenga. He can hang on another couple of years or so, but the outlook is still as bleak.**

Right, I discussed the Khazarian options up with my discussion of his threats to Kiev/Russia. There essentially is no long term prospect for the Khazar, but there are choices that matter. I vote on him trying to take down Kiev/Russia with him. That may even succeed.

*I doubt it would succeed. He might take Pech. If that move works, he could then possibly poach Cherson from Byz.*

That is possible as well. I was going on the idea that Russia and Khazaria have opposed each other from the beginning, especially to the detriment of Khazaria. The Game Designer may be looking to see if he can take Russia down with him. Taking Pech and moving on Byzantium is likely to be more fruitful. We'll see which he decides. Maybe he'll redesign the variant to improve Khazaria's prospects in future games... ;-)

**Samanid is starting his slow slog eastwards, thanks to the builds from Khazaria and the Chinese defensive play. He might still have another one coming (Sarkel), but that source is nearly finished.**

Maybe, I'm not sure who gets Tamantarka. It appears it could be the Samanid. And the slow slog will be slow and relentless, but it also will be successful. I see no line or defense on which the Chinese can stand, the only chance is getting someone to hit the Samanid from the other side, and there are just NO options for this.

*China had the opportunity to move West, but didn't.*

*Now the Horde will invade from the North and West. There are too many weak points; China cannot possibly hold for long.*

*It may seem like a slow slog now, but once China starts losing forces, it will accelerate greatly.*

**India is still hanging on; no one even touched his remaining center this season!**

Why bother? Clearly they haven't offered the Indian unit anything to do, but neither is it in the way yet. Knj may even want to support Var to hold so that China/Indonesia don't take it. Right now Var basically divides the two fronts tactically and no one is motivated to change it.

**Very defensive moves from China. He needs to be more active if he's going to stop the Samandia advance.**

I must go so far as to call it acting unintelligently. These moves are a death sentence. I think China has given up.

*Mailing it in. See above.*

**Indonesia is still keeping to the same tack, maneuvering around southern India and keeping up the line against eastern Africa and Arabia. No change of plans in view.**

Agreed, he needs to break the Samanid/Axum/Arabia alliance or the long slow slog eventually means death to him too. I am wondering if the way to do it is to let Axum

advance into his rear, prevent Arabia from advancing and stabbing his Chinese ally. Anyone else think that is the way to try?

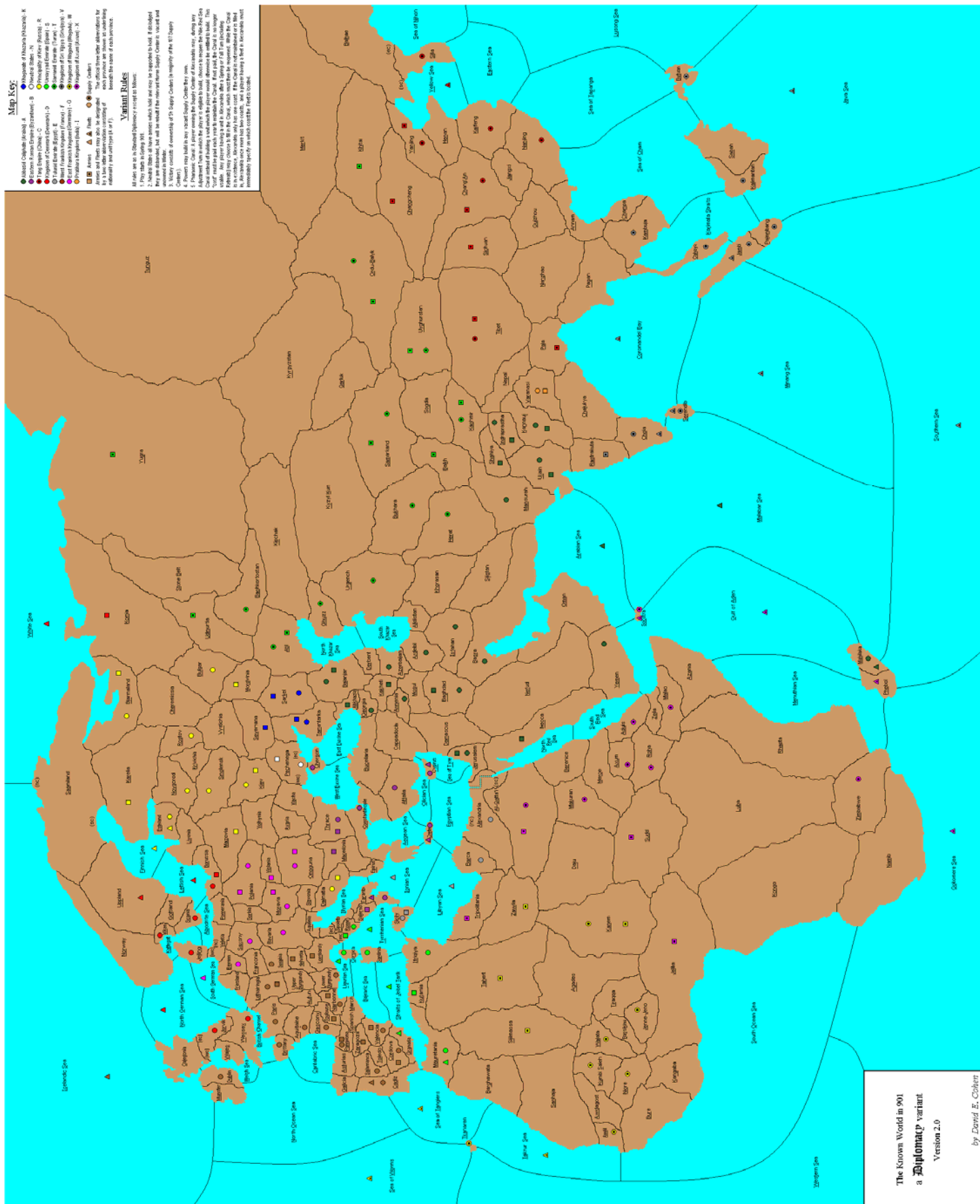
*No. The way to go is to wait for Samanid to make gains in the North and then try to work with him against Arabia. Letting Axum into the rear would be foolish.*

OK, but this is that "surprise everyone" approach to the game that sometimes can be used to shake up otherwise unbreakable alliances. I grant that Rick's position is the more classic, but the Samanid may just refuse at that point. The choice will be made if/when we see the Samanid building Pacific fleets. Pacific fleets pretty much only can attack Srivijaya.

#### **Limericks – by Greg Duenow**

You never promised him Warsaw  
He's lied to you 3 years in a row now  
your relationship with him  
would be better with gin  
because then you both could roll on  
the floor like two wart hogs

## Summer and Fall 905





## Retreat Adjudications

Egyptian A Ale retreats to Bar  
Russian A Ono retreats to Sla  
Spanish A Tou retreats to SpM

**PRESS (Umayyid)**

[illegible]

A daring young Moor far from home  
decided to set sights on Rome  
For he could not remain

alive long in Spain  
With the Franks all over that terrain

Said he, though I have been in grief  
I do feel a sense of relief  
for we can build and grow  
without Spain, you know  
so there's cause for continued belief

[illegible]

## Fall Adjudications

Arabian A Bal S A Geo - Abk  
Arabian A Geo - Abk  
Arabian A Ind S A Knj  
Arabian A Jer S A Ale  
Arabian A Kak S A Bal  
Arabian A Knj S A Ras - Chl \*Cut\*  
Arabian A Mec S A Ale  
Arabian A Mos - Bag  
Arabian A Ras - Chl \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\* \*Disbanded\*  
Arabian A Sha S A Blk - Kas  
Arabian A Ujj - Ras \*Bounce\*  
Arabian F Ars S F Mas  
Arabian F Mah S F Mas  
Arabian F Mas S A Ujj - Ras \*Cut\*

Axum A Ale - Tri  
Axum A Aqa - Zaw \*Bounce\*  
Axum A Lub - Jel  
Axum A Sud S A Lub - Jel  
Axum F Gad S F Mas  
Axum F Phe S F Zim - Gos  
Axum F Soc S F Mas  
Axum F Zim - Gos

Byzantine A Mac S A Sla - Dal  
Byzantine A Slr S F los - Tar  
Byzantine A Thr - Ono \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Cre - Cis \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Cyp - Cis \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F los - Tar

Chinese A Cha S A Chn - Yan  
Chinese A Chn - Yan  
Chinese A Nep - Tib  
Chinese A Pal S A Nep - Tib  
Chinese A Tib - Sic  
Chinese A Uyg - Chn  
Chinese F Kai - Yes

Danish A Bor S A Sor - Pol  
Danish A Saa - Kom

Danish F Les - Upp  
Danish F Liv - Les  
Danish F Whs C A Saa - Kom  
Danish F Wsx - Nqs

Egyptian A Bar - Scl  
Egyptian F Eggs - los  
Egyptian F Lis C A Bar - Scl  
Egyptian F Tar S F Eggs - los \*Cut\*  
\*Dislodged\*

French A Gas - Pam  
French A Hel - Bav \*Bounce\*  
French A Lbu - Lom  
French A Lot H  
French A Nar H  
French A Sal - Cor  
French A Tou S A Nar  
French A Val H  
French A Zar S A Val  
French F Cad S F Sta - Sjt  
French F Ics H

German A Dal S A Ono \*Cut\*  
 \*Dislodged\*  
 German A Mor - Bav \*Bounce\*  
 German A Ono S A Dal \*Cut\*  
 German A Sor - Pol  
 German A Vis S A Ono  
 German F Sqs H

Indian A Var - Knj \*Bounce\*

Khazar A Sev S A Srk  
Khazar A Srk S A Ati - Bal \*Void\*  
Khazar A Tam S A Srk

Russian A Bja S A Kar  
Russian A Kar S A Bja  
Russian A Maz - Pol \*Bounce\*  
Russian A Mrd - Srk \*Bounce\*  
Russian A Sla - Dal

Russian A Vol - Kie  
Russian F Est S F Fis  
Russian F Fis H

Samanid A Ati S A Mrd - Srk  
Samanid A Bas - Udm  
Samanid A Blk - Kas \*Bounce\*  
Samanid A Kas - Tib \*Bounce\*  
Samanid A Khi - Yan \*Bounce\*  
Samanid A Kip - Yug  
Samanid A Orb S A Sog - Uyg  
Samanid A Sam S A Orb  
Samanid A Sog - Uyg

Spanish A Kut S F Mau  
Spanish A Spm - Rom  
Spanish F Gra - Sjt \*Bounce\*  
Spanish F Lgs C A Spm - Rom  
Spanish F Mau S F Gra - Sjt  
Spanish F Sjt - lfr \*Bounce\*  
Spanish F Tys S A Spm - Rom

Srivijayan A Chl - Ras  
Srivijayan F Cho S A Chl - Ras  
Srivijayan F Cob S F Cho  
Srivijayan F Jam S F Mis - Sus  
Srivijayan F Jas S F Mis - Sus  
Srivijayan F Mis - Sus \*Bounce\*  
Srivijayan F Ser - Mas \*Bounce\*  
Srivijayan F Sus - Gos \*Bounce\*

Wagadu A Aga - Sij  
Wagadu A Jel - Kan  
Wagadu A Tah - Ifr \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu A Zaw S A Tah - Ifr \*Cut\*  
Wagadu F Sta - Sjt \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu F Swo S F Tas - Sta  
Wagadu F Tas - Sta \*Bounce\*

Neutral A Pec H  
Neutral A Rom H \*Dislodged\*  
\*Disbanded\*

## Retreat Possibilities

Arabian A Ras is destroyed (no valid retreats)  
Egyptian F Tar can retreat to IIS, Spo or disband  
German A Dal can retreat to Aqu, Epi or disband  
Neutral A Rom is destroyed (neutral)

## Summer and Fall 905 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

*Now Denmark is completely out of position. He did the convoy to Komia while blocking any Russian convoy to Uppland with his fleet. But...so what? Is there some path from the current Danish position to one that's respectable? I don't see it.*

**Denmark did convoy the Saa army to Komia, and continued the slow trek against Russia. In the process, he left not only the Scandinavian front vulnerable, but also the British Isles completely open. Very trusting on his part.**

I think this was relatively predictable, but too bad that Russia didn't also try to slip behind the Danish lines. In fact, on a turn where Russia probably needed to take some risks, he played it safe. The Danes are taking the huge risk of letting France have a completely open array of centers to threaten. I don't think Nigs will go after them right away, but some time he will.

**Luckily for the Danes, the movement surprised the Russians, so that the situation that Rick imagined didn't happen.**

*What situation was that?*

Right, Russia could have given up on Bjarmaland, with extraordinarily little long term danger, and tried to take the battle to the Danish home centers. Viken would have fallen for sure in the fall if Lettish Sea had not defended. I think Denmark expected this. It is possible that Russia did not do this since he suspected the defense, but then he should have bounced the Komia move. Lettish Sea being in Uppland now is a good defensive location, but is out of the attack this turn on Bjarmaland.

The Danes had very little choice, though, the long term prospects are poor. They can throw Germany under the bus and that will be somewhat helpful in diverting French interest once France decides to attack.

*Maybe if we ignore all of those French builds, they won't bother us. Germany loses the guessing game in Dalmatia. Was the bounce in Bavaria arranged? We should know soon enough. If it wasn't, Germany should disband the retreating army and rebuild something that would provide at least a modicum of defensive value.*

*The only real question here is whether France hits Germany first, Denmark first, or both at the same time.*

**Germany took Ono but lost Dalmatia. Onward and upward. Helped by Denmark into Polonia, thus approaching the Russian front. A little less trusting than Denmark, though: he bounced with France in Bavaria and kept the South German Sea front in place, thus providing some protection to his centers.**

*We'll have to see what France does.*

Right, so the bounce in Bavaria almost surely was arranged and Denmark is betting that this more difficult stance Germany is taking will mean that when France really attacks, Germany will be the first target. In many ways, the British Isles are going to be the far easier target, readers will want to think about what they think Nigs will do and see if they prefer Denmark's or Germany's approach. I usually do what the Danes did and I usually get stabbed badly when I do it.

*Solid tactics allow Russia to hold even while his attackers dig themselves in deeper. He orders Mrd - Srk and gets support from Samanid but not from Arabia, who unnecessarily supports one of his own forces moving northward.*

**Russia took the best retreat: it threatens the German front and gives him an option on Dalmatia.**

Agreed, at least on this front Russia was aggressive.

**Russia took Dalmatia, with a lot of help from Byzantium, who both supported him in and cut Ono. He did cover Kiev. It didn't prove necessary, but better safe than sorry, while Khazaria still has forces that could do some damage. He also cut Khazarian Srk, which helped Arabia/Samanid.**

I think Russia rationally had to expect Kiev would have been attacked by David. So on that front, playing it safe probably was right, but as I said above, I would have attacked Denmark more directly. Karelia would have gotten into Saamiland that way while Uppland was bounced. Perhaps that wouldn't have been so good for Russia, but this way, his long term prospects against

Denmark are not good. The alliance with Byzantium is strong and key to both Russian and Byzantine future prospects. These two must stick together to avoid being divided and conquered. But the long term prospects for both on the broader scale also are still weak.

Arabia/Samanid attacks are still possible and they have enough extra forces to be quite successful as long as the France/Germany/Denmark alliance stays together.

*Khaz passes on the chance to take Pech, but by doing so ensures that he holds onto Srk. Probably will be killed next year.*

**Khazaria didn't take Pechenga or try for Kiev, after all. Instead, he tried to support Samanid into Bal, which Arabia took last spring with Samanid help. Why he thought that Samanid would make a one-center stab on Arabia isn't very clear. In any case, Samanid obviously wasn't interested, logically enough. A wasted turn.**

*David appears to be in a no-negotiation zone. The unused support is basically the same as a hold. It's the kind of thing a dying power does out of desperation.*

*FWIW, it occasionally works.*

Agreed, this was a wasted move, I would have probably taken Pechenegs, just to have the honor of taking that last neutral. But all of this is symbolic; Khazaria will not survive for long.

*To keep score here a bit - while Denmark and Germany netted zero SCs this year on the Eastern front, France added three more Spanish SCs to his column. France now has 14, while the other two have a total of 12.*

*France can get away with attacking both of these guys at once. The only question is what he wants to do. He can build in Dublin and move on Jorvik and Wessex or, and I like this better, convoy to Norway and walk into Viken. I cannot for a second think that Denmark would cover that. Or he can build an army in Swabia and use the three armies already on the front, along with the army in Loth, to march into Western Germany. There are so many ways that this goes his way, it's just a matter of picking what he wants to do.*

*It's worth mentioning at this point that when you see a position roll out so much in one player's favor, that it often represents a lot of work by the player in question. To observers it seems obvious that France's neighbors are letting him get away with everything he wants to do, but a lot of work in negotiations must be going on to lead to this end result.*

**France has taken all of the centers in the Spanish mainland, and is now helping Wagadu use his fleets to take the Med territories. He went along with the**

**bounce in Bavaria. If he's helping Denmark against Russia, it's odd that the Iceland fleet just held, instead of following Denmark into Saamiland. Maybe he'll support Denmark's Uppland fleet there.**

*Or maybe he'll convoy to Norway? Hee hee. Seriously, unless France wants to move on Sardinia or Corsica, he's reached the point where he will break one of his alliances.*

I don't think so, remember that there is only ONE northern center to take. Maybe France doesn't want it to fall TOO fast? France is not threatened anywhere and has flexibility in deciding where the next front is. These moves suggest that he wants Wagadu to try to establish an African dominance and that France will join in more aggressively against Byzantium next, letting Germany and Denmark keep stable in centers, slowly absorbing their rear centers as they gain in the east. Nigs is playing a very cagey game toward the ultimate face-off against Matt's Arabia.

*Whatever. Spain picks up Rome but that doesn't compensate sufficiently for the loss of three Iberian SCs. Now what? He will hold onto Sardinia and Corsica for a while, I suspect. There's no real future here, but the war between Axum and Wagadu will put Spain in a place where he can survive for a while.*

**Ah, Spain has finally taken Rome. Apparently, Byzantine realized that he has better things to do than to continue to block Spain there. Better late than never.**

Right, Byzantium and Spain need to work together, not at odds. It probably is too late for Spain though. Does anyone see a Spanish way out? I don't.

**Spain also managed to hold on to the strategic Straits of Jebel Tark, while using his fleet there to bounce Wagadu in Ifr. He may even be able to build in Ifr, since he has gained a center (Rome).**

That's possible, but other centers are challenged in the fall, I would bet that he would not be able to make that build, unless it is to replace a unit dislodged and removed in the Fall.

**Still in all, not much more than survival.**

Right.

*These orders are not by themselves so interesting, though it is noteworthy that they have netted nothing from the war on Spain. France gets Cadiz and Wagadu gets attacked by Axum.*

**Wagadu is concentrating on taking the two North African centers from Spain. he should have been able to take Ifr -- but his support was cut by Axum, in**

**a surprising turnaround. More about that below.**

This is the beginning of a much bigger battle. The alliance level view is that Axum will be moving more aggressively on Wagadu now, France will let Wagadu turn back around and while cede all the African centers that he can to Wagadu. But will B. win out? Unfortunately, this is the one place where the French choices may not work out quite so well. I am not sure whether this is the high point of the game for Wagadu. But we will see, neither Axum nor Wagadu have all their units where they want them. More maneuvering should come in the Fall.

*Axum walks out of an Egyptian SC to get position on Wagadu. I don't mind the move on Wagadu, but I don't see the purpose of foregoing the build. Builds, really, as he could also have taken Barca.*

*Is Axum strong enough to get away with this attack? He'll probably net a few SCs quickly, but I'd have been concerned about the possibility of Wagadu helping Indonesia crack the stalemate line.*

*Axum is clearly tempted by the possibility of getting all of the African SCs, but I don't think he'll pull it off quickly enough to be a real player in the end game.*

**What is Axum up to? Here it looked as though he would get Egypt's remaining African holdings (Alexandria and probably Barca). But, after being supported into Alexandria last spring, and still receiving support to hold this fall, he marched right out of Alexandria into Tripoli. He also swung as many forces as possible into position for an attack on Wagadu next year -- telegraphed in advance. Wagadu was perhaps his logical next prey, but why not keep Alexandria, which would give him a build, and then turn against Wagadu in the spring? I don't understand the reasoning, either in terms of his own interest or in alliance terms.**

*Yeah, Axum has provided the baffling move of the turn here. What's particularly weird is that he apparently did this on his own, without consulting Arabia.*

I can only think that it is part of the arrangement with Arabia to let Arabia get a position in the Mediterranean. Note I said last time that he really did NOT have such a position. You disagreed with me a bit. I think you were right and now Alexandria may go to Arabia. The point is to get the jump on Wagadu. I'm not sure if this was the jump that will work or not. I don't think "telegraphing" gives up much since I think everyone knew that was the next front to open up. This gives B. a piece of tempo against Mikael and that is right for Axum. But WHY not tell your Arabian ally? This has the smell of a "we couldn't get time to coordinate and deadline is here" problem. I think they patch it up quickly and Arabia can support himself into Alexandria in the fall. If the slip was

intentional then one wonders what Axum will do without Arabia. That's why I think the answer is the more mundane one.

**He did manage to support his Zim fleet into Gos, just as Indonesia tried to break through.**

Right, this is another problem for Axum, the attack on Indonesia is not guaranteed and he needs it to succeed so he gets some centers down there in the near future. Good moves this season, though.

*Egypt is the big winner in Axum's decision to walk out of Alexandria. So now he's got Sicily and two Egyptian SCs. Presuming he doesn't mix it up with Spain, the two of them could clog up the Med for quite some time.*

**Egypt is maintaining his feud with Byzantium, and seems to be concentrating his forces in the Tar/Sicily region -- just when Byzantium has finally decided to recuperate Tar. Not sure whether Egypt was communicating with Axum there or not -- probably not.**

Agreed, I think this is just the Egyptian death throes. But Byzantium does not need the headache, it does matter for his long term prospects.

*Byz has the sense to retake Taranto, finally. If France hits Germany from the West, Byz and Russia should be able to solidify control of the Balkans. But he's still kind of biding his time waiting to be thwacked by Arabia.*

**Byzantium has reinforced his alliance with Russia, by helping Russia into Dalmasia and cutting the German support from Ono. He has also finally decided to let Spain take Rome and concentrate on his own interests by retaking Tar from Egypt.**

Right, the biggest problem for Byzantium is not the short term, it is the long term. Arabia doesn't think he needs Byzantium in the long run, though he isn't attacking aggressively yet.

*It's worth saying that I don't like the position in Tar. He's using two forces to hold one SC. That's probably not a great idea.*

*Arabia loses his toehold in Southern India. He supports Axum to hold in Alexandria, apparently unaware that the dot was there for the taking. Nets no new SCs this year, but with the disband, Arabia could build a fleet in the Black Sea. I think a build of F Geo would be a great idea here. After Khaz falls, where does Arabia go next? With a fleet build in Black Sea now, he could make a transition to going after Byz next. I like that idea better than trying to blast through India.*

**Looks like Arabia is going to take Tarantarka after all**



**-- and why shouldn't he? he is also continuing to help Samanid advance in China.**

Right. The only question for Arabia is about gathering his toadies against Nigs' toadies and whose toadies prevail.

**Otherwise, though, it was a frustrating season for Arabia. He used two units to support the Axum army in Alexandria, only to see that army move on to prepare an attack of Wagadu. If he had known, he probably would have taken Alexandria himself. He also continued to maneuver his forces in southern India, only to have a key support cut by the lone Indian army. There are seasons when nothing works right, even for the best of players.**

Alexandria still probably can be taken in the fall (see above). The lone Indian army has been generally helpful, but was not this turn. That may be a reason to finally take the Indian unit out, if he can. I think Matt was somehow busy or unavailable this turn.

*Hee hee. India wakes up from a nap to cut a support and thus cause an Arabian army to be destroyed.*

**India used his lone army to cut an Arabian support and help the Indonesian hold on to southern India. he must still see Arabia as the Big Bad Guy.**

This is finally making a choice? Is it too late? I'm not sure Indonesia's position is any more tenable in the long term this way, and certainly the Indian unit itself is not vulnerable. If I'm Arabia, I push to make sure China falls first.

*Sam takes Uyg to get a build. He should be able to crack Tibet next year, or outflank China in the North. China's line is crumbling, and that's what Sam wants more than anything. He needs to see this through.*

**Samanid continues his slow but sure advance on the Chinese centers.**

Right, no chance of it stopping, but it is going to be slow for a bit longer. Then it all collapses after another three turns.

**Up north, he seems to be taking Russia's side against both Denmark and what is left of Khazaria. He supported a Russian army into Sarkel, which might have worked but didn't. He also moved his forces up north, apparently to help Russia defend against Danish attack in preparation. But he also moved next to the unoccupied Bulgar. Does he get Bulgar in return for his help against Denmark?**

*Good question.*

Good question. I think eventually that Samanid attacks

Kiev, but the point is for the Samanid to gain.

*I don't know what to make of Sam's moves near Russia. Is he going to prop up Russia against Western invaders or see this as a possible route to expand? Hard to tell.*

*China's line doesn't look so bad until you remember that he has to yank one of these forces. He needs three to hold Chn, three to hold Tibet, and the fleet is needed to defend Korea.*

**Faced with Saminid's eastern movement, China is hunkering up in the east, adopting a purely defensive position. He's counting on absolute loyalty from Indonesia, something which he seems to have acquired.**

Yes, if Indonesia was going to attack, he would have already, although next game year is the last one of a stable Chinese front.

*If I were Indonesia here, I would be burning the diplomatic channels to get an opening. Wagadu in particular would be somebody I would be talking to a lot.*

*The naval battle with Arabia will be a stalemate for a long time.*

**Indonesia is still trying to break through the line on the east, entirely ignoring the Chinese SCs that are open to him. Is he talking to anyone in the west anymore?**

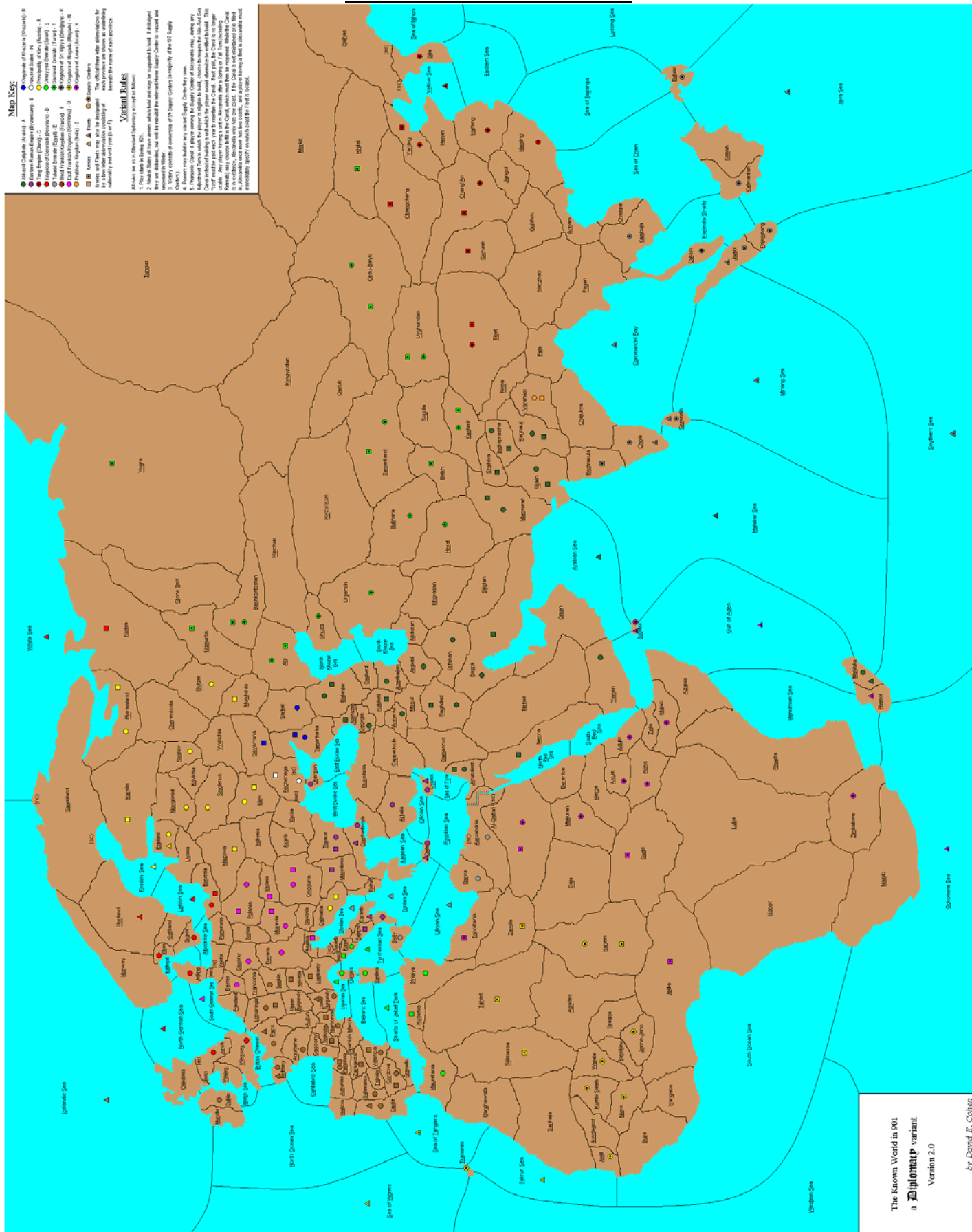
I doubt it, this is just a tactical battle. I'm not sure if Srivijayan efforts got India to lash out or not? That might have been his only communication other than with China this turn.

**On the other hand, he did a good job in defeating the approaching Arabian armies on the foot of India, getting China to help him cut a key support.**

*That's a big "so what?" though.*



## **Autumn and Winter 905**



## Retreat Adjudications

Egyptian F Tar retreats to IIs

German A Dal retreats to Aqu

## Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) builds 2 units, can build in Ard, Arm, Aze, Bsr, Geo, Isf, Man, Yem

Byzantine Empire builds 1 unit, can build in Att, Con, Chs

Tang Empire (China) disbands 1 unit

Kingdom of Denmark makes no adjustments

Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) disbands 1 unit

West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 3 units, can build in Aqt, Bri, Dub, Gas, LBU, Par, Sal, Swa

East Frankish Kingdom (German) makes no adjustments

Pratihara Kingdom (India) makes no adjustments

Khaganate of Khazaria disbands 1 unit

Principality of Kiev (Russia) makes no adjustments

Umayyad Emirate (Spain) disbands 2 units

Samanid Emirate (Turan) builds 1 unit, can build in Bas, Buk, Ghu, Her, Urg

Kingdom of Sri Vijaya makes no adjustments

Kingdom of Wagadu makes no adjustments

Kingdom of Axum makes no adjustments

Neutral makes no adjustments

Position	Power	Abb	904	905	Change	SCs changing possession
1	Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia)	A	14	15	+1	+Bal
2	West Frankish Kingdom (France)	F	11	14	+3	+Cad, +Cor, +Val
3	Samanid Emirate (Turan)	T	9	10	+1	+Uyg
4	Principality of Kiev (Russia)	R	8	8	0	+Dal, -Ono
5	Kingdom of Sri Vijaya	V	8	8	0	
6	Kingdom of Axum	X	8	8	0	
7	Byzantine Empire	B	6	7	+1	+Tar
8	Kingdom of Wagadu	W	7	7	0	
9	Tang Empire (China)	C	7	6	-1	-Uyg
10	Kingdom of Denmark	D	6	6	0	
11	East Frankish Kingdom (German)	G	6	6	0	-Dal, +Ono
12	Umayyad Emirate (Spain)	S	7	5	-2	-Cad, -Cor, +Rom, -Val
13	Tulunid Emirate (Egypt)	E	4	3	-1	-Tar
14	Khaganate of Khazaria	K	3	2	-1	-Bal
15	Pratihara Kingdom (India)	I	1	1	0	
16	Neutral	N	2	1	-1	-Rom

## Winter Adjustment Adjudications

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Bsr

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Man

Byzantine Empire Builds F Con

Tang Empire (China) Disbands A Pal

Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) Disbands F Scl

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds F Bri

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds F Lbu

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds F Par

Khaganate of Khazaria Disbands A Srk

Umayyad Emirate (Spain) Disbands F Gra

Umayyad Emirate (Spain) Disbands F Mau

Samanid Emirate (Turan) Builds A Bas

## Autumn and Winter 905 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

*Germany retreats to the Northern coast of the Adriatic rather than rebuild at home.*

*Egypt retreats his fleet to the Adriatic.*

*France still has a lot of flexibility. The fleet builds could be sold as necessary to make a serious move into the Med.*

*Or they could simply smack Denmark.*

*Or he could smack Germany.*

*Or he could smack Germany while smacking Denmark.*

*F LBU is not terribly useful.*

Finally, France builds three fleets, two on the north coast, one on the south. This is good for Wagadu, as France is signalling that once Spain is wiped up, the next target will be Denmark. Though Denmark may continue to reap the nights of 1000 small cuts.

**The northern French fleets look anti-Danish; the French armies look anti-German. The LBU fleet looks like it is holding on to his center while freeing his armies (for an anti-German movement). Or maybe he wants to have an option on the Med goodies, sooner or later, although one fleet won't get him far.**

**I agree with Rick: lots of flexibility. But I would bet on an attack on either Denmark or Germany.**

*Spain gives up on holding Gibraltar. Morocco is ceded to Wagadu. Perhaps an accord is reached?*

Spain also focuses on the mid-Mediterranean, removing his two fleets on either side of the Straits of Gibraltar. Will they (Spain and Egypt) get Byzantine help from the new F Constantinople, or will they be crushed from all sides?

**Spain is concentrating on his Med-island and Italian holdings. Obviously, France isn't going to chase on this region and Wagadu may be happy with North Africa, especially as Axum is heading his way. But Byzantine is certainly interested in Italy, and may want the Med islands, too.**

*Arabia appears to be committing to the Indian front. No F Geo :(*

Arabia builds two armies that could possibly stab upwards into the Samanid soft underbelly, but more

likely this just prepares to make a drive through India with convoys and moves once the front breaks in front of them.

**Surprisingly routine builds. As Jim-Bob says, he could use these builds to stab Iran (Samanid), but probably won't. Surprisingly, no fleets, either against Byz or what is left of Egypt.**

*The most flexible build.*

Will they (Spain and Byzantine) get Byzantine help from the new F Constantinople, or will they be crushed from all sides? Unfortunately, probably the latter, as the smaller powers are likely to collapse further this year.

**I agree with Rick here. Byzantine is probably going to try to take Sicily this year.**

*The fleets are more exciting. I wonder what's in store for them!*

Egypt removes Sicily, so perhaps finally he has allied with the Spanish and perhaps they will work more closely together this game year as Spain also focuses on the mid-Mediterranean, removing his two fleets on either side of the Straits of Gibraltar.

**I agree with Rick; the fleets allow the maximum flexibility. This may be the start of a Byzantine-Spanish coalition.**

*The least useful of the three armies. Khazaris dies this year.*

Khazaria, who disbands Sarkel to make it easier for the Samanid to take that and signals death throes moving north against its perennial enemy, Kiev.

**It doesn't matter much what Khazaria discards. However, in his death-throes, he is continuing to butt heads with Russia, who really doesn't need that.**

*The Horde looks like it's invading Russia. Or is this build intended to push into Siberia while A Yugra moves East?*

Meanwhile the Samanid themselves build in their northwestern most location, preparing to finish off Khazaria, who disbands Sarkel to make it easier for the Samanid to take that.

**Samanid doesn't need another army against China, and he is continuing to trust Arabia. That leaves the northern border. Is he going to bolster up Russia or**



**invade? It's beginning to look more like an invasion.**

*Now the Southern front has a hole in it. Can Indonesia plug it? Seems unlikely. Holding Tibet will become very difficult.*

*And India looks doomed.*

China removes A Pala, signaling trust that the remaining Indian unit is on "his side" but it really doesn't matter, China will not survive too much longer once the Samanid break the main line, which could happen this game year.

**China gives up on supporting India. Once India falls, Tibet could be the next to go.**

#### **General remarks**

*The next move could be very interesting.*

*If alliances hold, it's Axum/Arabia/Samanid in the middle, China/Indonesia in the East, France and his two toadies in the West, Russia and Byz trying to hold onto dear life in the Balkans, Egypt and Spain living as Med*

*pirates, and Wagadu in deep trouble.*

**The Arabia/Axum/Samanid alliance seems to be holding together solidly, despite the lack of fall coordination from Axum.**

**China and Indonesia are also sticking together, but, if China starts to crumble, as looks likely, can Indonesia hold out alone?**

**If France hits one of his allies, what happens to the middle powers? If he hits Germany, that removes a thorn in the side of both Russia and Byzantium; if he hits Denmark, Russia breathes a sigh of relief.**

**Meanwhile the remnants of Egypt and Spain seem to find nothing better to do than to make life miserable for Byzantium, while Samanidia could well hit Russia.**

**Looks like it is a great occasion for the French to get together with or against the powerful middle alliance. I agree that the next season could prove very interesting.**

### **Spring and Summer 906**

*The Spring 906 season has been adjudicated. There was an impressive convoy of a French army from Lotharingia all the way north to Saamiland via fleets flying three different flags (German, French, and Danish). Hopefully this successful convoy will not lead to the dissolution of the Diplomatic Corps (sorry, an inside joke...).*

*That was not the only Danish coup this spring in the war against Kiev, as Trout snuck a Danish army into Cheremissia, where it now has a free shot at pillaging Rostov and causing general havoc in the Russian backlines. Staying in Europe, maybe the West Frankish army in Helvetia brought the wrong map, but it finds itself in the East Frankish supply center of Bavaria, indicating a possible stab. French armies continued on the advance in Rome, although Umayyid gained Sicily to stay level overall for now.*

*Turning to Africa, that rogue Axum army is now rampaging through the Wagadu homeland, and the naval battle has begun in full throat in the South Atlantic. Looking to Asia, the naval battle remains stalemated in the Indian Ocean, while the inexorable eastward movement of the battle line in the land battle continued. Finally ending in Central Asia, we could have a surprise first elimination of the game next fall (given that the*

*Pratihara Kingdom seemed surely the first to go), as both Khazar supply centers have been occupied in spring. We have two sets of press before the adjudication:*

#### **PRESS #1 (Umayyid Emirate)**

Umayyad emirs in exile  
continue to plot all the while  
though kicked out of Spain  
their forces remain  
intact, to continue their guile

So let machinations commence  
Umayyad won't sit on the fence  
we're down but not out  
and still have some clout  
though desperately lacking in "friends"

The trick, at this delicate time  
(on top of composing a rhyme)  
is to do more with less  
which requires finesse  
if out of the hole we're to climb

#### **PRESS #2 (Anonymous)**

We cannot keep the gold of yesterday;  
Today's dun clouds we cannot roll away.  
Crows sit all huddled, cries muted in soft spring rain,  
So to the watch-tower, cup in hand to fill and drink again.

Li Bo



## **Spring Adjudications**

Arabian A Abk S A Bal - Tam  
Arabian A Bag - Bsr  
Arabian A Bal - Tam  
Arabian A Bsr - Man  
Arabian A Ind - Nep  
Arabian A Jer S A Tri - Ale  
Arabian A Kak - Bal  
Arabian A Knj S A Ind - Nep  
Arabian A Man - Sha  
Arabian A Mec - Yem  
Arabian A Sha - Ind  
Arabian A Ujj S A Knj  
Arabian F Ars S F Mas  
Arabian F Mah S F Mas  
Arabian F Mas S F Ars \*Cut\*

Axum A Aqa S A Tri - Ale  
Axum A Jel - Nio  
Axum A Sud - Jel \*Bounce\*  
Axum A Tri - Ale  
Axum F Gad S F Mas  
Axum F Gos - Sos \*Bounce\*  
Axum F Phe - Gos \*Bounce\*  
Axum F Soc S F Mas

Byzantine A Mac S A Thr - Ono  
Byzantine A Slr S F Tar  
Byzantine A Thr - Ono \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Con - Aes \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Cre - Aes \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Cyp - Egs  
Byzantine F Tar S A Slr \*Cut\*

Chinese A Cha S A Chn - Yan  
Chinese A Chn - Yan  
Chinese A Sic - Gui  
Chinese A Tib - Sic  
Chinese A Yan - Blh  
Chinese F Yes S A Yan - Blh

Danish A Bor S A Pol - Maz  
Danish A Kom - Che

Danish F Les - Abs  
Danish F Ngs C A Lot - Saa  
Danish F Upp - Les  
Danish F Whs S A Lot - Saa

Egyptian F Ils - Tar \*Bounce\*  
Egyptian F los S F Ils - Tar  
Egyptian F Lis S F los

French A Cor H  
French A Hel - Bav  
French A Lom - Rom  
French A Lot - Saa  
French A Nar H  
French A Pam - Tou  
French A Tou - Aut  
French A Val H  
French A Zar - Sal  
French F Bri - Nos  
French F Cad - Sjt  
French F lcs C A Lot - Saa  
French F Lbu - Lgs \*Bounce\*  
French F Par - Brc

German A Aqu S A Lom - Rom  
German A Mor S A Ono  
German A Ono H  
German A Pol - Maz  
German A Vis S A Ono  
German F Sgs C A Lot - Saa

Indian A Var H

Khazar A Sev - Vya \*Bounce\*  
Khazar A Tam - Sev \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\* \*Disbanded\*

Russian A Bja H  
Russian A Dal S A Mac - Ono  
\*Void\*  
Russian A Kar S A Bja  
Russian A Kie - Vya \*Bounce\*

Russian A Maz - Kie \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\*  
Russian A Mrd - Bul  
Russian F Est - Liv  
Russian F Fis - Sms \*Bounce\*

Samanid A Ati - Srk  
Samanid A Bas - Ati  
Samanid A Blk - Sog  
Samanid A Kas S A Ind - Nep  
Samanid A Khi - Chn  
Samanid A Orb S A Uyg  
Samanid A Sam S A Uyg  
Samanid A Udm S A Yug - Kom  
Samanid A Uyg S A Khi - Chn  
Samanid A Yug - Kom

Spanish A Kut - Ifr  
Spanish A Rom H \*Dislodged\*  
Spanish F Lgs S F Sjt - Tys \*Cut\*  
Spanish F Sjt - Tys  
Spanish F Tys - Scl

Srivijayan A Ras S A Var - Knj  
\*Void\*  
Srivijayan F Cho S A Ras  
Srivijayan F Cob - Mas \*Bounce\*  
Srivijayan F Jam S F Sus  
Srivijayan F Jas S F Sus  
Srivijayan F Mis S F Cob - Mas  
Srivijayan F Ser S F Cob - Mas  
Srivijayan F Sus S F Cob - Mas

Wagadu A Kan - Jel \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu A Sij S A Tah - Mau  
Wagadu A Tah - Mau  
Wagadu A Zaw - Ale \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu F Sta S F Cad - Sjt  
Wagadu F Swo - Wts  
Wagadu F Tas - Sos \*Bounce\*

Neutral A Pec H

## **Retreat Possibilities**

Khazar A Tam is destroyed (no valid retreats)  
Russian A Maz can retreat to Smo, Vol or disband  
Spanish A Rom can retreat to Spo or disband

## **Retreat Adjudications**

Russian A Maz retreats to Smo  
Spanish A Rom retreats to Spo

## Spring and Summer 906 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

*One Danish army will conquer Russia! He's pulled his fleets back a bit. I guess he isn't willing to be completely open to a stab. But at this point, caution on the part of the Danes wouldn't matter. If France wants to sit on him, France will, and Denmark will lose.*

Yes, one wonders what the Danes should do? Since France is headed so aggressively to be the game leader, they really should organize a stop-the-leader on him with Wagadu and Germany and everyone else. But no, these moves won't really help when France descends on him. The other Danish problem is too many fleets. One could say you were doing this just now and was planning to abandon the Saamiland army with no support once it was convoyed and then dive whole heartedly into France. You might still lose, but at least it would be respectful. Unfortunately, it looks like more waffling in the face of Nigs' overwhelming diplomatic power and the convoy didn't work anyway, which Nigs could use as an excuse to press more.

**Now, that would be interesting, if the Danes were to turn around now, maybe in cooperation with the Germans and even the Spaniards. A bit late, but better late than never. However, I don't see it happening. It seems that Denmark and Germany are just too happy to have France joining them against Russia. (The convoy did work, btw; that was the correction GM Nick made with the spring retreat adjudication.)**

*Hey - the French are in the Med! Also, he's in Rome, which is an interesting twist, given the Spanish moves. And he's also in Bavaria, FWIW. So many easy targets, so little time. The convoy to Saa failed, which may have been part of the plan. What good is an army up there? Will a second army be just the tool to break through Russia faster than the Horde can? Seems unlikely. He got German support into Rome, and the fleet in LBU was more useful than I thought it would be. At this point, I think France will milk the cooperation of Germany and Denmark for as long as it's useful. But all those dots must be tempting.*

There is an old saying in Diplomacy. Count your dots as the ones you know you have now and can keep, and those you know you can get any time you want them. The challenge is to keep the ones you might lose and get the ones that you can't quite get now, and that's what you should focus on. Nigs is following that to a T. He is getting awfully close to a win here. He could eventually have the whole western half of the board and win unless some organized opposition arises. I agree with Rick on the specifics of which units are the most important to

keep gaining with. Germany and Denmark should have gotten an attack formed against France long ago. It now is likely too late, but they can stay around for a long time as long as they cooperate and are centers Nigs can get any time he wants them.

**You are probably both right here. There was an odd hesitation dance, when France seemed to move away from the Med last fall, and build most of his fleets in the North. The better to lull Spain into paying more attention to Byz and Egypt than to France?**

**If France installs any power in the Med, though, he might start coming into direct contact with the central alliance. Do you think that is likely to happen? I don't think that's in France's interest.**

*Germany supports the French into Rome, ignores the French incursion into Bavaria, and gets lucky in Hungary when the Byz and the Russians fail to coordinate properly. The Russian front finally appears to be cracking.*

Right, the Russians and Byzantines may not even really be allies in this. I think Nigs basically negotiates these moves forward. Bavaria was this year's German prize for not attacking yet further. Germany probably needs to gain Russian centers as fast as possible just to stay even.

**Oh the Russians and the Byzantines were working together against Germany for quite a while; they just seem to have coordinated badly for once.**

**Do you think that Germany accepted France moving into Bavaria? Perhaps he didn't realize that was going to happen, but there isn't much that he can do about it now, except perhaps refuse to cooperate further.**

This has been an on-going part of Nigs strategy, one of the downsides of not seeing the negotiation is not seeing if each of these sequential incursions have been negotiated or if Nigs just moves and then says "deal with the results". In some sense, it doesn't matter. Unless Denmark/Germany reach a boiling point.

*Spain walks away from France, who continues to walk towards Spain. He 1-dots Egypt, which would seem to imply that Spain has seized a spot on the Soon To Die List. Will be down to 4 or maybe 3 at the end of the year.*



Rick is right, I saw that coming last year. Spain has joined the mesmerized by Nigs crew. Egypt likely will go down quicker, but Spain is still zombie walking.

**Spain was one of the leading members of the mesmerized by Nigs crew; that's how he lost his home centers. That, and some odd tricks when it was clear that Nigs was invading Spain. He hasn't lost his flair for moving away just when France was moving in.**

*Wagadu takes Morocco, but has a problem with Axum armies. If he brought another fleet South, he could really screw with the Axum anti-Sri stalemate line. Does he have something better to do? Like defend himself against a possible French attack? That doesn't appear to be allowed in this game.*

I am pretty sure Wagadu is not going to be the first French ally to be carved up, so Mikael may be making the right decision for him. B. might have given Mikael a choice a while back "attack France or I'm coming after you", but at this point, B. is just attacking. I'm not sure who wins this tactical skirmish. Wagadu would seem to have the fleet threat as Rick notes and Axum so far is mostly annoying. Check back in the fall and let's see what happens next.

**Well, Axum looks like he will be making net gains this year, while Wagadu is simply staying even, so it looks like the advantage is on B's side. I still think that it would have made more sense for B to have kept Alexandria last year, then pounce on Wagadu this year in a surprise turn-around; but what's done is done.**

*Will Axum \_stay\_ in Alexandria this year? The world is abuzz with anticipation. He's also wandered into the core set of Wagadu SCs. Should get two more armies this year, and that should be enough to give him dominion over Africa.*

Rick is more convinced than I am that Axum wins this. I will wait to see one more season of guesses. And of course Axum keeps Alexandria, you have to keep those X's together!!

**I certainly hope that he does finally hang on to Alexandria. Either that, or take Bacra while supporting Arabia into Alexandria. That would be good for both of them, although Arabia's power might be beginning to worry Axum a bit.**

*At least, until France comes a-knockin'.*

Right, and France will come a-knockin' with Crusade like fervor through the Mediterranean. That will be sooner rather than later, with the Spanish front guard.

**Again, do you think that it is really in France's**

**interest to come into direct conflict with the central alliance? In any case, that doesn't seem to be his style; he seems more specialized in feints than in brute force against strong enemies.**

While I generally agree, this depends on endgame strategy for France. If he wants to consolidate in the west and declare an end to hostilities, that's right. If he wants to set a line against the Central Alliance further out, he wants to act now to lay claim to the current Byzantine and Russian centers. This seems to be the strategy in continuing to engage with Denmark and Germany.

*Russia really, really needs France to stab one of his attackers, or to really, really hope that the Horde is only massing armies to support him, or to really, really, really hope that Khazaria isn't vindictive.*

I think Darren loses on all three fronts and is trashed this fall. Unfortunately, Khazaria and Kiev sealed each other's fates early. Kiev doesn't survive too much longer.

**France seems decided not to stab Russia's attackers, as long as they are moving forward away from him. And I'm sure that Russia has no illusions about Khazaria. But Samanid and Arabia might be ready to back him up, with one or two centers as their price. They certainly don't want the Russian centers to fall to France and his stooges.**

**Although if Russia has to die, he might well prefer letting his centers fall to the central alliance, he did finally kill off Khazaria for him, rather than giving them to Denmark and Germany.**

*There's no territorial integrity any more. With blue, green, red, and purple armies driving towards Moscow, Russia is looking at a short straw. The tactics are very good, but at some point even a good general needs more troops.*

Yes, Russian tactics have been consistently excellent, but they won't help now.

*I'm expecting to see an attack on Kiev in the Fall, probably supported by the Germans. It'd be really neat if Russia ordered Kiev - Sev in the Fall, with support from either Arabia or the Horde. Such a move would eliminate Khazaria, even if Germany took Kiev. It's worth doing.*

Russia will do the move that eliminates Khazaria first. Believe it.

**Hard to say who Russia must hate more at this point, between Khazaria and Germany. Anyhow, Khazaria is already dead, even if survived one more year on German suffrage.**

*The Russians supported the wrong army to Hungary. Oops! Three wasted orders, and now the reinforcements will preclude a Fall capture. So far, Arabia doesn't appear to be hostile. If that lasts, the Byz may be around for a while.*

No one is really attacking Byzantium, but neither has Byzantium established a strategy for doing much. I think those centers are the ones Arabia thinks he can get when he wants to, and with French expansion that time may be coming very, very soon. Still, there are some good defensive positions here to exploit.

**No, Byzantium was fine tactically, but weaker on the diplomatic front. And now his diplomatic options are becoming more limited.**

*Remember that fortress in Sicily? You've been 1-dotted by a dying power. How does it feel? Could conceivably die this year. And really, deserves to die.*

Egypt also is in zombieland. Again, the Diplomacy by these powers was not good. Egypt needed to ally with Byzantium or someone else in a stronger way earlier. I thought long ago that the pan-African alliance would have been good. But either Axum and Wagadu weren't interested or Egypt never really proposed it. But one or the other, Egypt needed some allies somewhere and never seemed to have any.

**Egypt will die this year if Arabia and Axum cooperate to make it happen. If not, it's for next year. It doesn't really matter, he no longer has a role to play.**

*Arabia is not heading into Byz, which would have livened up the game, but has broken through in Asia, and will take the last Indian SC in the Fall. He's also snagged a dot from Khazaria. Good year.*

Arabia correctly feels that the logical end of this game has China and Indonesia out and Axum/Arabia/Samanid dominance back there. Getting that done quicker seems to be the priority.

**Arabia has enough power to be working with Samanid against China and getting into the Med. I'm still disappointed that he hasn't done so, especially as that would really help his ally Axum as well as providing naval power against France, when and if the latter moves into the Med in force.**

*Yeah, that Indian SC.*

Once China left, India now has no reason to be. And is gone.

**Right.**

*The Horde will take Tibet in the Fall, forcing another Chinese band. Also taking a Khazarian dot. I'm interested to see what happens when Khazaria goes. Presumably we'll see Arabian and Samanid armies moving into Russia. Will they do so as invaders or "for protection"?*

I see only invaders. China is falling slowly but surely. I'm not sure the Samanid need more armies there, I would focus on getting an Eastern fleet built as soon as possible.

**I don't agree that they will necessarily be invaders. It might be more intelligent to back Russia up against the Western crew, taking just enough to say have something to show for their pains.**

*Will the fortress at Pec ever fall?*

Why?

*I don't think there's a huge downside for Samanid to take Bulgar, for example. But he might want to get a few more armies into Russia before grabbing the dots. We'll see...*

I think Russia will be in VERY bad shape after this. Khazaria will be out, Russia will be out as soon as next year.

*Position is going nowhere. Half of the units dedicated to a strength four attack that fails. Writes a support for India that is ignored, but the writing of the order probably kills any hope for India, since now Arabia would presumably cut that support in the Fall.*

India is done, Indonesia is done, just waiting for the Executioner.

**India is certainly done, and China is going down fast. But Indonesia could hold on for a long while, if there are not many fleets against him.**

*This position reminds me of how I said at the beginning of the game that you need triple alliances. Indonesia has one ally, but that's not enough. Badly outmaneuvered on the diplomatic fronts. Still no sight of cooperation with Wagadu, which I would have expected to see by now.*

Yes, Rick, you said that above, and you're right. But I think long ago China and Indonesia gave up talking to the other side of the board. That is a mistake people make in "big games", you have to see the big dynamics. Another way it could have gone would be to have Wagadu AND Egypt attack Axum more forcefully.

**I see your point, Rick. But if the Juggernaut were more active diplomatically, a strong two-way alliance**

**and other alliances of convenience would work, too.**

*China's moves are futile. Loses another dot this year, removes a force, and pulls back to a position that itself cannot be held.*

Right, as said above, if I am the Samanid, I work at getting a fleet build. If I am the Chinese I oppose that at all costs and let them gain armies in Tibet. I think that is in the Chinese mind. Not that it matters THAT much, more to how long Indonesia survives once China is gone. No inkling that China will turn on Indonesia just to do something.

**One fleet build won't go very far. You need a number of fleets, to get anywhere against such a naval powerhouse.**

Of course, but one fleet build leads to another and another. First you need the Pacific Ocean building

center. To me both Samanid and China see this clearly, the Samanid moving to get it, the Chinese moving to oppose it.

*Needs a diplomatic shake-up to have any hope. I'm not expecting one.*

**I do agree with Rick here.**

Right, very relentlessly moving toward three powers in the endgame for sure (Samanid, Arabia, and France). Wagadu vs. Axum determines what else happens. Rick has made a call, I want to wait. And if Wagadu/Axum stalemates somehow, they both survive while the first three mop everyone else up first.

**I still think that it is in Arabia's interest to move in on the Med, hopefully with Axum, before France manages to get there in force.**

## Fall and Autumn 906

*The Fall 906 season has been adjudicated, and what a season it was. First, let's bid adieu to our eliminated player, Egypt played by Ian Moes. Byzantine v Egypt is an evenly-matched war of attrition, and once Arabia and Axum put some pressure on the Egyptian backlines, it was only a matter of time. Thanks for playing Ian. Khazar has also been eliminated.*

*In other news around the map, we had our first breakthrough in years in the Asian naval war, with Sri Vijaya taking the Malabar Sea. Also, there was some action in the German Sea / Atlantic region, with the German fleet in the South German Sea dislodged.*

*But the big news is the paradigm shift in Asia, with Arabia once again pulling off a spectacular move, this time a stab of Turan, taking two supply centers and positioning himself to take more. With four total gains this year, Matt*

*solidified his position as the clear board leader. Presumably, this also means a respite for the Tang Dynasty, which perhaps has an opportunity to venture outside its turtle shell now.*

### PRESS #1 (Russian)

Tsar Dadon could ill endure  
Such reverse. He wept in rage,  
Lost his sleep, and for a sage,  
An astrologer and seer,  
Sent at last in hope and fear

### PRESS #2 (Anonymous)

The year is ending, and it only adds to my age;  
Spring will come, when I must ride West to the war.  
Alas, that the trees in this eastern garden,  
Without me, will still bear flowers.

Su Ting

## Fall Adjudications

Arabian A Abk - Bal  
Arabian A Bal - Ati  
Arabian A Bsr - Sjs  
Arabian A Ind S A Nep - Kas  
Arabian A Jer H  
Arabian A Knj H  
Arabian A Man - Her  
Arabian A Nep - Kas  
Arabian A Sha S A Nep - Kas  
Arabian A Tam S A Abk - Bal  
Arabian A Ujj S A Knj

Arabian A Yem - Man  
Arabian F Ars C A Yem - Man  
Arabian F Mah S F Mas  
Arabian F Mas H \*Dislodged\*  
\*Disbanded\*  
Axum A Ale S A Aqa - Zaw  
Axum A Aqa - Zaw  
Axum A Nio S A Sud - Jel  
Axum A Sud - Jel  
Axum F Gad S F Mas

Axum F Gos H  
Axum F Phe S F Gos  
Axum F Soc S F Mas

Byzantine A Mac S A Thr - Ono  
Byzantine A Slr S F Tar  
Byzantine A Thr - Ono \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Con - los \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Cre S F Con - los  
Byzantine F Egs - Bar  
Byzantine F Tar S F Con - los

\*Cut\*

Chinese A Blh - Mer  
Chinese A Cha S A Yan - Chn  
Chinese A Gui H  
Chinese A Sic S A Cha  
Chinese A Yan - Chn  
Chinese F Yes H

Danish A Bor - Liv  
Danish A Che - Bja  
Danish F Abs - Jln  
Danish F Les S A Bor - Liv  
Danish F Ngs S F Brc - Sgs  
Danish F Whs S A Che - Bja

Egyptian F Ils - Tar \*Bounce\*  
Egyptian F los S F Ils - Tar \*Cut\*  
Egyptian F Lis S F los

French A Aut - Lot  
French A Bav - Sla  
French A Cor H  
French A Nar H  
French A Rom H  
French A Saa - Kar \*Bounce\*  
French A Sal S F Nos - Cad  
French A Tou - Aqt  
French A Val - Gra  
French F Brc - Sgs  
French F lcs H  
French F Lbu - Lgs \*Bounce\*

French F Nos - Cad  
French F Sjt - Sar \*Bounce\*

German A Aqu S A Rom  
German A Maz - Smo \*Bounce\*  
German A Mor S A Ono  
German A Ono H  
German A Vis S A Ono  
German F Sgs H \*Dislodged\*

Indian A Var H

Khazar A Sev - Pec \*Bounce\*

Neutral A Pec H \*Dislodged\*  
\*Disbanded\*

Russian A Bja H \*Dislodged\*  
Russian A Bul H \*Dislodged\*  
Russian A Dal S A Thr - Ono  
Russian A Kar - Ros  
Russian A Kie S A Smo  
Russian A Smo S A Kie \*Cut\*  
Russian F Fis - Kar \*Bounce\*  
Russian F Liv - Fis \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\*

Samanid A Ati - Mrd  
Samanid A Chn - Khi  
Samanid A Kas S A Sog - Tib  
\*Cut\* \*Dislodged\*  
Samanid A Kom - Bul

Samanid A Orb S A Chn - Khi  
Samanid A Sam - Uyg \*Bounce\*  
Samanid A Sog - Tib  
Samanid A Srk S A Ati - Mrd  
Samanid A Udm S A Kom - Bul  
Samanid A Uyg - Chn \*Bounce\*

Spanish A Ifr H  
Spanish A Spo S F Lgs - Rom (wc)  
\*Void\*  
Spanish F Lgs - Rom (wc)  
\*Bounce\*  
Spanish F Scl H  
Spanish F Tys - Sar \*Bounce\*

Srivijayan A Ras - Knj \*Bounce\*  
Srivijayan F Cho S F Ser - Mas  
Srivijayan F Cob S F Ser - Mas  
Srivijayan F Jam S F Sus  
Srivijayan F Jas S F Sus  
Srivijayan F Mis S F Ser - Mas  
Srivijayan F Ser - Mas  
Srivijayan F Sus S F Ser - Mas

Wagadu A Kan - Jel \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu A Mau H  
Wagadu A Sij - San  
Wagadu A Zaw - Tah  
Wagadu F Sta - Tas  
Wagadu F Tas - Sos  
Wagadu F Wts S F Tas - Sos

### **Retreat Possibilities**

Arabian F MaS is destroyed (no valid retreats)  
German F SGS can retreat to Bre, Fri, Vel (wc), Wsx or disband  
Neutral A Pec is destroyed (neutral)  
Russian A Bja can retreat to Kom or disband  
Russian A Bul can retreat to Che, Vya or disband  
Russian F Liv can retreat to Est or disband

Samanid A Kas can retreat to Blk, Sog or disband

### **Retreat Adjudications**

East Frankish Kingdom (German) disbands F Sgs  
Russian A Bul retreats to Che  
Principality of Kiev (Russia) disbands A Bja  
Principality of Kiev (Russia) disbands F Liv  
Samanid A Kas retreats to Blk

### **Adjustments**

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) builds 5 units, can build in Ard, Arm, Aze, Bag, Bsr, Geo, Isf, Yem  
Byzantine Empire builds 1 unit, can build in Att, Cyp, Chs  
Tang Empire (China) disbands 1 unit  
Kingdom of Denmark builds 1 unit, can build in Bor, Jor (ec), Jor, Jor (wc), Sca, Vik, Wsx  
Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) disbands 3 units  
West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 1 unit, can build in Bri, Dub, Gas, Pam, Par, Rom (ec), Rom, Rom (wc), Swa, Val  
East Frankish Kingdom (German) builds 1 unit, can build in Bav, Bre, Pol, Sax  
Pratihara Kingdom (India) makes no adjustments  
Khaganate of Khazaria disbands 1 unit  
Principality of Kiev (Russia) makes no adjustments  
Umayyad Emirate (Spain) disbands 1 unit  
Samanid Emirate (Turan) makes no adjustments  
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya makes no adjustments  
Kingdom of Wagadu makes no adjustments  
Kingdom of Axum builds 2 units, can build in Adu, Ale, Ale (nc), Ale (sc), AQa, Axu, Mak, Mal, Roh, Zim





Position	Power	Abb	905	906	Change	SCs changing possession
1	Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia)	A	15	19	+4	+Ati, +Her, +Kas, +Tam
2	West Frankish Kingdom (France)	F	14	15	+1	+Rom
3	Samanid Emirate (Turan)	T	10	10	0	-Ati, +Bul, -Her, -Kas, +SrK, +Tib
4	Kingdom of Axum	X	8	10	+2	+Ale, +Nio
5	Byzantine Empire	B	7	8	+1	+Bar
6	Kingdom of Sri Vijaya	V	8	8	0	
7	Kingdom of Denmark	D	6	7	+1	+Bja
8	Kingdom of Wagadu	W	7	7	0	+Mau, -Nio
9	East Frankish Kingdom (German)	G	6	6	0	
10	Principality of Kiev (Russia)	R	8	6	-2	-Bja, -Bul
11	Tang Empire (China)	C	6	5	-1	-Tib
12	Umayyad Emirate (Spain)	S	5	4	-1	-Mau, -Rom, +Scl
13	Pratihara Kingdom (India)	I	1	1	0	
14	Neutral	N	1	1	0	
15	Tulunid Emirate (Egypt)	E	3	0	-3	-Ale, -Bar, -Scl
16	Khaganate of Khazaria	K	2	0	-2	-SrK, -Tam

### Fall and Autumn 906 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

**Denmark is trying for the role of chief French stooge, and apparently succeeding. He helped France into the SGS, giving France a fine position to stab Germany next year. He's beginning to take precautions, though, he moved a fleet back into Jelling.**

If France does walk into Bremen, and I agree that is likely, this eliminates the possibility that Germany can build a fleet there. I think this follows the "step-by-step" plan that France has followed with both Germany and Denmark to date. It is possible that Denmark is a more "real" ally, or that they stay together longer, but I'm not convinced. The fleet in Jelling is helpful to a defense. Note that Germany essentially has NO defenses against France.

*I'm not convinced either is a "real ally". I think Nigs started the game thinking locally, but when he saw the developments in the East, he decided he needed some allies who would work with him to expand beyond Western Europe. But this is worth considering: as I was reading the above, some people on NPR were discussing the story of the frog in the pan of boiling water. Germany may not be losing SCs immediately, but he is losing power. His position is totally compromised and his future existence is entirely dependent upon France's whim.*

*Denmark's build will allow him to get another army moving inland. But he may be in trouble anyway...*

**Against Russia, he took Russia's northernmost center, but lost position for the future. At any rate, he badly needed a build, which will probably be a much-needed army.**

The army is likely for two reasons, first if France and he have worked out a deal to cut up Germany, Denmark needs another army to get a decent share, and second, there it is hard to build a fleet while retaining the French alliance. Building in the British Isles is confrontational, and as stated already, Denmark moved into Jelling already. Borussia is possible to continue to outflank Esteland, but I agree that an army seems right.

*It's hard to see what a fleet build would accomplish. If Denmark ever wants to throw off the French yoke, he'll need a couple more builds.*

**No German - Khazarian cooperation after all. Germany simply hit Smo, not sure why.**

I think three reasons are possible. First, to cut support of the possible move of Finnish Sea-Livonia with Smolensk support. This is most likely, it makes sense. Second, there was supposed to be some Khazarian cooperation but it didn't materialize. And third, Germany

was just frustrated and trying to do something, with little hope of success. It increasingly is looking like Germany is to be squeezed completely out very soon.

*Not much else to do with A Maz. Khaz was busy trying to take Pec.*

*Germany's best hope now is to become a blob of armies in Europe while France ignores him for a while. What's the next German SC? Dalmatia? Then what?*

*Germany's utility to France is not all that high.*

**Apparently France moved through Bavaria by agreement, thus placing another army in the Dalmatia/Hungary situation. At any rate, Germany seems to have believed Nigs, as he continued to support Rome.**

Right, I do think that this is wishful thinking, but Germany is not going to be the first to break the agreements. These moves are mostly very closely coordinated.

**Maybe the popping of the SGS fleet was by arrangement, too, to permit Germany to build another army, maybe to protect his rear (or is that just wishful thinking?)**

*Germany's rear is toast whenever France wants to spank it. Having a French army in Slavonia doesn't help that problem.*

**Effectively, Germany disbanded his fleet, quite rightly. An army is much more useful for German defense.**

**France exploded the German fleet, with Danish help; and also moved his army through Bavaria through to help control the Dal/Ono situation. Is that against Russia/Byzantium, or is it prelude to a new stab of Germany? Check in next year and see.**

Right, but as I said last season, I do think Russia and Byzantium are both dead here, the movements of Arabia may give them a slight chance at life, maybe even an alliance, but mostly they need a strategy to grow somewhere and I don't see it.

**The other moves were more routine. He covered Lot to make sure that there wasn't an untoward German retreat, made a supported move into Cad, as there was still a stray Wagadu fleet in the Sea of Tangiers, and started making token moves in the Med, to make sure that Spain didn't entirely forget him.**

I agree, Nigs is trying not to call too much attention to himself while he maneuvers to be the dominant endgame power. I think Nigs has played a brilliant game throughout.

*There is a limit to how much France can do without attacking Denmark, Germany, or Wagadu. Apparently he wants to take down Spain entirely before making a move on another front. From the strategic standpoint, it certainly is worth it to establish French as a major Med power. I suspect we'll see a fleet in Valencia.*

*The stab by Arabia may open up France to be more stabby himself. If he doesn't have to worry about the mega Arabia/Axum/Samanid alliance, he may think that he'd be better off taking out one or both of his European partners. I don't think he'd go after Wagadu. He's not well-positioned to move into Africa.*

**Russia did what he could, but there is not that much to do when you are surrounded by enemies or over-protective "friends". Luckily, Khaza finally opted for Pechenga, a year too late. He lost the least possible ground from the Danish-French-German attackers. Bulgaria may have been an agreed-upon price for Samanid intervention. At least he had another, very unexpected stroke of luck, in that Samanid and Arabia will be otherwise occupied for the next few years. That leaves him and Byz alone against the Western alliance.**

As I said above, agreed. If the Samanid/Arabia war explodes, then there is possibly a place for Russia. BUT, we do not expect the Western pressure to subside. I do not see a tactical success against that, maybe again a reprieve if Germany is taken out along the way, but not success.

*Again, Russia really needs France to stab Germany and/or Denmark. He may be able to cut some kind of deal with Arabia, but if all of the Western triple comes at him, he won't last long.*

**Russia is bringing his armies together to a compact defense unit, except for the army in Dalmatia.**

Agreed, and with the excellent tactical skills he has displayed, he will stay in the game for quite awhile longer, I think.

**Spain tried to recuperate Rome, but, thanks to the German support, France held it. Why was the support from Spo marked void, btw?**

**Otherwise, nothing much to note. He's no longer running from France, but he's not advancing, either. He at least got Sicily out of the Egyptian debacle.**

Yes, I thought he should have allied with Egypt, or Byzantium, or someone, but he's just going down when Nigs wants to take him out.

*He's not running from France because he's run out of running room. France is still gunning for Sardinia and Corsica. But if Byz helps him out he can be a useful*

*block for a while. But only guessing will allow him to hold on for very long. I expect France to have four fleets going after him next year.*

**Wagadu is doing what he can to defend against Axum, but he still has too many fleets and too few armies to defend his home centers adequately. In that situation, he would be best off sending an army to Daju, for example, to put B back on the defensive.**

OK, so last time I said this was a key season, it was. It signals that Axum (keeping allied with Arabia) eventually will win. In the short term, it matters what France says and does about this. Does he support Mikael, or drive the dagger in. I think the former, but we will see. I think Wagadu needs to have an aggressive defense, both in armies across Africa and coming around the Horn.

*Wagadu is going to lose his core of inland home SCs. He doesn't have enough armies and I don't see how France could usefully help him. I like the idea of convoying down to Kongo to cut support of F Zim (which I'm presuming is one of the Axum builds) and helping Indonesia break the stalemate line.*

**However, he is bringing down his fleets to throw the naval line in pieces. Do you think that he and Indonesia are talking now? Could be. In any case, it's high time.**

Right, Gokomere Sea is now toast if the Wagadu cooperate with Indonesia. I think that just has to happen right now.

*Right.*

*Remember that Axum can build F Zim.*

**Axum takes one center from Wagadu, and puts himself into position to take others. He didn't seem to worry about the possibility that Wagadu would come and threaten his own centers; and in fact was right to gamble on Wagadu's playing defense.**

Arabia surely will stick with Axum now for awhile, so that is where that is going. B. was very aggressive and made the right plays.

**If GoS falls, it's not very good for either African, but he seems to figure that an energetic attack makes more sense than defensive play here. It seems to be paying off.**

But, what happens when Indonesia and Wagadu meet up? Does the African continent start rolling up or does Wagadu lose centers to Axum too quickly. THAT is the remaining tactical question. Or can Axum confuse the wires between the Wagadu and Indonesia? I wouldn't count on Gokomere Sea falling, but it sure should.

*Axum should hold Niore and get at least one more Wagadu center next year. If things go well, he'll get two. I suspect he just doesn't care all that much about Indonesia.*

**I think that we've all said everything there is to be said about Egypt.**

I don't believe Egypt has actually been talking to anyone since it seems that there are opportunities to make minor deals, especially with the smaller powers, but he hasn't been making them. A reminder to the peanut gallery reading through this with us, one always plays out games to the end, with full effort if one wants to support good game play. All games are improved by this. You really do screw up the game for others by giving up (including just sending in orders). Not to say that Egypt is more or less guilty of this than anyone else, but just that he had some opportunities that he hasn't taken. And now all is done.

*At the start of the game, it really looked like Egypt's plan was simply to blast into Asia Minor. I'm sure I said at the time that he was getting too involved in the fleet race. With as many players as this variant has, you really need to do more than tactics.*

**It was Byzantium who took the last Egyptian center. Poetic justice, he suffered long enough from Egypt's attacks.**

Right, yes, and not productively for either. In these large games getting stuck in pitched battles where easy victories are not obtained are just so damaging to one's future.

**This time Byzantium and Russia coordinated on their attack against Ono, but, as Rick predicted, there was no too much western support for the attack to work.**

I am wondering whether Byzantium has anyone to talk to seriously except Spain? I would suggest the Samanid, but I am not sure if there are any real opportunities for Byzantium/Samanid cooperation. Still I would try.

*I had been thinking that Byz was liable to be the next target of Arabia and Axum. The moves of this Fall suggest to me that Byz may have been enlisted as the Med power of the Arabia/Axum alliance. And yes, Byz certainly needs to talk to Spain.*

*I would not be surprised at this point to see a build in Cherson.*

**Byzantium must have had a big sigh of relief at the correction; both Pec and his undefended Cherson are safe.**

Correct, not that it improves the long term prospects any,



though.

*I am considerably less pessimistic about the long-term prospects. Unless we're just going to pencil this in as a France/Arabia/Axum draw. Byz is in a crucial board location and could do well, if he cuts a good deal with Spain and/or Arabia. And certainly Arabia cannot afford to go after him now!*

**End of story for Khaza, too. Enough already said on the subject.**

We say so long to the Game's Designer.....

*So long.*

**Arabia has put all of his efforts into stabbing Samanid and getting into position to stab further. Which, as a side-effect, allows a respite for the one-dot Indian. Other, more important side-effect : the naval line against Indonesia falls, since he used one of his fleets to convoy an army from Yemen to the new battle-ground.**

**Why now? Why, at this point, after something like five game-years of solid support, and now that China was finally losing ground?**

**Perhaps that was just the explanation. With the fall of Tibet, Samanid was now completely between China and Arabia (with India's center on the Arabian side of the divide). Was there finally some discussion between Arabia and the China - Indonesian juggernaut (or at least with China)? It certainly looks as if that might have happened. I suppose that we will only know definitively with the EOGs, but a dialog with China may well be part of the explanation.**

**Another secondary reason could be a disagreement about how to treat Russia.**

**At any rate, it seems that the stab was decided during this turn, since Arabia had originally agreed to support khaza into pec, then changed his mind during the turn. That's another mystery, but he probably wanted to be able to concentrate on Samanid, without unnecessary distractions.**

**As a result, Samanid is certainly a big new source of centers for Arabia. Also, judging from Samanid's initial performance, perhaps not a particularly dangerous one.**

**Will China get part of the loot? Maybe, but if so probably not much. China's part of the deal is certainly survival.**

**What about Indonesia? Will he now be in position to advance towards the west? Maybe, but it doesn't**

**look certain. Madagascar is the only center even slightly at risk. Of course, this falls badly now that Wagadu has brought fleets down south to break the southern part of the line. But does it matter? Not so sure, at this point. Besides, if Indonesia started seriously moving fleets west, he could end up out of position himself before he could make any gains. Rick, Jim-Bob, what do you think?**

*Arabia's stab is vicious and thorough.*

*Arabia had the middle position in the 3-way. The most obvious problem of being the middle power is that you're liable to be squished by the other two. That wasn't really a risk in this game, given the board configuration. The second biggest problem is that your avenues of growth may get choked off. To continue along with Axum and Samanid, Arabia would have had to be going after Byz next. But that's really not a path where he can gain a lot, nor does he have the best access to it. I see about four or five SCs that he would take before running into the Western alliance.*

*OTOH, the stab of the Horde basically gives him all of central Asia. I see four more SCs that should fall next year, so even if he loses one in India somehow Samanid will be totally gutted. He's unlikely to lose control of the Arabian Sea anytime soon, so he can largely ignore Indonesia while he grabs the dots. China should see some kind of recovery, but Arabia has a huge head start getting to the vulnerable SCs.*

*The more I look at this, the more impressed I am by the stab. It's certainly not a mistake. It's the most impressive stab I've seen in quite some time.*

**One last comment: this doesn't seem to validate the theory of three-power alliances for big variants. Axum must be feeling a little bit jittery, too.**

*On the contrary, I suspect Axum is relieved that he's not the target. It does shake up the diplomatic situation quite a bit, but it should make it easier for Axum to negotiate with France or Indonesia, if that's what he wants.*

*As for the validity of the three-power theory, let's look at the scorecard. Of the top four powers, three are in this triple alliance, even after the stab. On the other hand, the only visible two-power alliance has been immobile since the second year of the game. Clearly the three-power alliance has done much better than the two-power alliance. And yes it's true that it didn't last forever, but alliances don't do that for the most part. I would still contend that this alliance has worked for Samanid.*

*He just made a serious error by leaving himself as vulnerable as he did. The question in his mind should have been "Where is Arabia going next?" There was a limit to how much Arabia could do in India. And if he*

*were intending to go West into the Med, Arabia should have certainly build a fleet in Georgia last year instead of so many armies close to the Samanid front.*

Here are my takes on this. I agree that Arabia decided "now was the time", but hadn't necessarily planned "this season" for very long. I think that a major part of the impetus here must have been France in some manner or form. The game is starting to move more quickly to focus around those two powers standing above all the others. No other power on the board is safe from France and Arabia. It is possible that France and Arabia are doing this fully in concert. The main evidence for that is how careful Arabia has been to stay out of the Mediterranean. France could have drawn that line. Or, Arabia could have seen that the center gravity train was about to start drying up and thought that getting lots of centers from the Samanid now was the right play to keep up with France.

*Interesting speculations. And I agree that France and Arabia have been dominating this board from the start.*

As I've said before, France really has a clear path to taking the entire Western part of the board. Arabia is trying to move to do the same thing to the East. I think it is possible, or at least likely, that Arabia does this in concert with Indonesia and China. If so, Axum really also is thrown under the bus, just not attacked directly yet. I mentioned when the builds happened that they set Arabia up to attack the Samanid and that's just what they did.

**Samanid lost three centers to his former ally: Atil, Kasmir and Herault (which I believe was one of his original home centers). He made up for it by taking Tibet, Sarkel and Bulgaria. But he stands to lose a lot more. In the immediate, Sarkel, his original home centers and Ghuzz are very much at risk. The rest of his centers are dispersed, and can be squeezed between Arabia and China in the east, Arabia and Russia in the north. Not a very good outlook.**

*Bulgar, not Bulgaria, FWIW.*

The Samanid are going to collapse amazingly fast, really stunning actually, a problem with how much force was needed to take control over China.

**Asmanid retreats to protect his home centers. As good a choice as any.**

I am not sure what I would do here. One model, especially in a variant where you can build anywhere, is for the Samanid to finish off China, just as he had been planning and cede his homeland to Arabia for survival. I really might choose that course here. It is not clear how Balkh really protects anything. The Arabian armies plus builds are going to be overwhelming. We must always raise the idea of a true stop-the-leader alliance, but the

Samanid have likely seen that train leave the station long ago. It is not clear what the Samanid have to offer to anyone now. I would live to fight another day, I think.

*Samanid's got a huge problem. He's basically got four armies in Russia and four in China, and only two in Central Asia. If Arabia puts a fleet on the Caspian Sea (and I hope he does) he'll get smashed. Also, due to Indonesia's force allocations (only one army), it'll be hard to make any effective counter-attacks. Certainly China is far more likely to retake his SCs than to coordinate against Arabia.*

*I really think that, in one fell swoop, Samanid has gone from a board leader to one of the also-rans. This position is hopeless, unless he immediately becomes a complete slave to Arabia.*

**India says "oof!"**

India now does have a unit to sell and possibly something to do with it. But he probably will just hold.

*Yeah, India lost interest in the game long ago. Who else can he outlive?*

**China's moves are still essentially defensive, but he is turning around to face Samanid, which suggests some cooperation between China and Arabia.**

I think that is a key question here. Srivijaya and China have worked in lockstep since the beginning, they surely are still in lockstep. But HAVE they allied with Arabia to the detriment of both the Samanid and Axum? I suspect the answer is yes. But we should see very, very soon.

*That seems very speculative to me.*

*China would be very well-advised to make a deal with Samanid to let him cut his losses in return for a couple SCs. But at least in the near-term, he'll be trying to retake the Chinese SCs that have been lost. The problem is that his tactical situation is horrible.*

*We're going to have to look closely to see if Arabia works with him at all. I'd call that unlikely.*

**Indonesia made one huge effort to break the naval stalemate line, and finally succeeded -- due partly to Arabia's use of one of his supporting fleets for a convoy. This seems to indicate that Indonesia wasn't in on whatever discussions were held between China and Arabia.**

*If there were any.*

I do not agree. Remember that Srivijaya did not necessarily trust Arabia. Perhaps he'd even said he would stab earlier and then didn't. I think doing the massive supported attack is STILL what you do, even if

you have heard what Arabia is doing. And also, perhaps, Arabia is just planning to use fleet builds in Basra and Yemen to push back. But I doubt it. I think this is part of a deal.

*I am far more convinced of the existence of talks with Wagadu than of talks with Arabia. I don't see any incentive for Arabia to work with Indonesia at all. Axum plays a key role sitting between France and Indonesia.*

*Taking Malabar Sea really doesn't do all that much for Indonesia. What can he do now? The Arabian Sea/Socotra/Gulf of Aden/Madagascar line is very solid.*

*On the whole, I don't like this tactical position at all. I think Indonesia has to have a larger presence inland to be of any interest. Indonesia and China may make the draw, if there is a draw, simply because rooting them out would be ridiculously time-consuming. But this still isn't a position that's going anywhere*

## **Winter 906**

### **Adjustment Adjudications**

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Ard  
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Bsr  
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Geo  
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Isf  
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds F Yem  
Byzantine Empire Builds A Chs  
East Frankish Kingdom (German) Builds A Pol  
Khaganate of Khazaria Disbands A Sev

Kingdom of Axum Builds A Aqa  
Kingdom of Axum Builds A Roh  
Kingdom of Denmark Builds A Bor  
Tang Empire (China) Disbands A Gui  
Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) Disbands F IIs  
Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) Disbands F Ios  
Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) Disbands F Lis  
Umayyad Emirate (Spain) Disbands A Spo  
West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds F Val

## **Winter 906 Commentary**

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

I'm going to do my comments with the center counts so in order of strength:

Matt has obviously made a major play for complete dominance of the game. He gained four this time and easily can gain at least four more this game year. Note that he built only one fleet (and he really needed that one for defense if nothing else), so Arabia intends on dominating Asia. The Samanid home centers are extremely vulnerable of course, and he can have the last Indian center whenever he wants it. I believe the fact that the build in Basra was an army indicates some kind of rapprochement (implicit or explicit) with Indonesia. Arabia is not threatening any Indonesian centers in the near future. He passed up an opportunity to build a fleet on the Khazar Sea, I would have built one, but of course once Arabia gets those Samanid centers the fleet quickly becomes pretty useless, and I'm sure that Matt didn't think he needed to move that fast. The risk? Can a coalition be assembled to oppose him? I don't see it. Matt is in a dominating position. As far as new alliances, I do think that Gregory has worked out something with Matt to work together. In that sense, I agree with Rick that Arabia still has a three person alliance, it is just that the Samanid are no longer the third person. Plus, if Arabia has some sort of agreement with Indonesia, that is not to the benefit of Axum.

*Gotta love this Arabian position. Like Jim, I wanted to see a fleet on the Caspian Sea, but I agree that it would*

*only be useful for about a year or two.*

*The Fleet in Yemen is not a surprise. He needs that fleet regardless of what he wants to do. The fleet in Madagascar can be popped too easily.*

*It makes for an interesting exercise to try to figure out the best Arabian moves in Asia. He can pick up two SCs in the Spring (Srk and Urg) and I think that's his best move. He's got a wall of armies coming East that Samanid will not be able to counter.*

*I don't know how he'll deal with the resurgence of China, though I wouldn't be surprised if there were some secret deal in place with Indonesia. By the time China gets moving, Arabia will have more armies in Asia.*

*I don't know if he'll take the time to knock out the Indian, but I think it's worth doing.*

**Arabia has been dominating the board for all of the game, and he's going to make sure that he will continue to do so. But he's not playing for a solo, because he's never tried to contest France's dominance in the west. He's playing for the top place in a draw, where he can pretty much control who is and who isn't part of the draw. True, a solo is \*very\* difficult with this large a board, but I don't think that he is even trying for one.**



I agree, he really seems to have a deal with Nigs (France) that they won't bother each other as they make choices to create their own local hegemony. It must have been France that worked out with Arabia not to build Mediterranean fleets.

**He doesn't really have to worry about a Chinese resurgence; China is small change in the east from now on.**

For sure, and I think China will still be taken out by the Samanid.

**I don't really see any evidence that he has a deal with Indonesia, but it doesn't matter. Deal or not, he can use Indonesia, Byzantium or even France if Axum poses any problems to him, not that I see why Axum would do so. Axum will probably get most, if not all, of Africa, and then he blocks any French expansion in that direction.**

If one is looking for a three way right now, I'm not looking for it yet, but if I were, B. would be the odds on favorite, along with Indonesia to take that position. That is why to me the most interesting war in the reoriented board is the one between Axum and Srivijaya. This follows after Mikael's failed war against Axum (that I think he could have won).

**I'm not really convinced that Byzantium is replacing Samanid as the third ally. If he is, that is certainly the end of the Byzantine-Russian alliance, so we'll see rapidly enough what happens there. Arabia will certainly have to make sure, one way or another, that Russia is does not end up feeding France; so an alliance with Byzantium could make sense. Logical or not, I see no evidence that this is in the works.**

We'll see. Gregory hasn't been doing much so far, but he is a brilliant tactician and patient. We should wait to see what he has up his sleeve.

Nigs is being a little bit more slow growing, but I do not believe any less dominant. There are many centers which France could have taken this year, but didn't. The number one question is whether Nigs will see Matt's accelerating center counts as a spur to make similar gains. If he decides this, Germany is obviously in big trouble. Otherwise, Nigs has been making the Tortoise moves all game. We may see shortly whether the Tortoise or the Hare is going to prevail. Nigs could keep growing and still be 10 centers behind Matt in two game years. France also has to worry somewhat about a collapse of the Wagadu and Axum moving north, or the Srivijaya breaking around the corner of Africa. These are not serious concerns, but could keep Arabia growing faster.

*For me, the question is what he's got in mind beyond taking Corsica and Sardinia. I predicted the fleet build in*

*Valencia (if 'predict' can be the word to describe a build that took place 8 months prior). He's definitely gunning for Spain, but what else?*

*He's run out of excuses to keep his fleets in the North, so if he wants to stab either Denmark or Germany, now is the time. There are so many ways he can stab either of them, it's hard to see why he wouldn't.*

**I agree with Rick here that it is really time for France to cash in on some of his virtual builds, and that there is not reason for him not to stab one of his "allies". But it has to be as efficient as the massacre in Spain was, because he will need not only to decimate the victim, but also to grab most of the Russian centers, with the help of the remaining ally, while Arabia is busy finishing off Samanid.**

Right, which is why Germany is that logical next target, but it could be Mikael.

John must be feeling that "man, what could I have done differently" feeling now! But the Samanid must not look backward, but forward. I think that they need to keep attacking China and give up their homeland, even if he ends up with a split clusters of centers. This surely is a debatable point, but opposing Arabia, who will take at least 3-4 of your centers no matter what you do, is going to be a disaster unless you gain some Chinese centers. To me, the only alternative is building an anti-Arabian coalition. But where does it come from? I just don't see it. Get a defensible northeast corner position, start building some fleets and convince Arabia that he needs to oppose France in Europe and leave you alone in China.

*This is really a terrible position. He's got four armies in Russia defending three SCs, not two of which are next to each other. Those might be able to do something in coordination with Russia or England, but what? He's going to lose one of the SCs in Russia right away.*

*In China, he's got three armies squatting on SCs and an army positioned uselessly in Khi.*

*If those armies pull out, those SCs become Chinese. So what to do?*

*I would try to do whatever would hurt Arabia the most. And that would mean getting the European powers into Asia. France can convoy into Yugra (!) and the armies in Russia could work with Denmark and German to take out Russia completely. There's no future in trying to patch things up with Russia and/or China. It'd be the honorable thing to do, but it's hopeless.*

**I agree with both Jim and Rick that he has to find a new strategy for survival quickly, and not simply make a hopeless attempt to save his home centers. I like Rick's suggestion of working with the western**



**powers. :) But I wouldn't bet on that happening, somehow -- unless the western powers take the initiative.**

Axum can't feel too good about the Arabian decisions (both the stab and only building the one fleet). And then Axum itself, B. built only two armies, and not a fleet Zimbabwe, so I think he has decided not to try to stop the Wagadu and Indonesians from hooking up. I would think if that happened they would team up against Axum. But Axum seems to have the upper hand against Wagadu, after some good tactics, so this could work. But the whole board is about to become MUCH more dynamic. One option for Axum would have been declaring peace with the Wagadu, but the builds indicate that is not going to happen. I don't think Arabia is going to stab any time soon either, but Axum needs to cleanly establish itself as the third most powerful nation on the board. That could happen this year.

*If Axum moves Gulf of Aden to Menuthian Sea, F Yemen can take its place and Axum will still have some defense of Zimbabwe possible. If there's a deal in place for France to hit Axum from the other side, it'll go down fast. The army builds ensure that Axum will get the core inland SCs.*

*I'm not terribly sanguine about the endgame, though. I preferred the African triple over the way this has worked out. Axum is in a decidedly worse position than France or Arabia, and has apparently never bothered to negotiate with Indonesia. If Wagadu goes, he'll be smack in the middle of the three of them. And those three will effectively be unable to fight each other.*

**I don't think that there was ever an African triple, just a realization that each of the African powers had better to do in the beginning than to get locked up in a long drawn-out war among themselves.**

**Zimbabwe is just one center. If Axum takes out Wagadu rapidly enough, it's hardly worth worrying too much about any Indonesian/Wagadu hook-up. True, an all-African Axum would be in the middle, but if he didn't try to advance any further than that, he has as solid a position as Indonesia.**

Gregory has been hanging around and hanging around, but now must make a play to occupy the space between Arabia and France. The Army Cherson CLEARLY indicates an agreement with Arabia. That army is useless unless it can be supported to finally take out Pechenegs. It is possible Russia is the one supporting him, but I don't think so. Russia has his hands full already. The Eastern Mediterranean is finally pretty open, and Gregory chose not to fill another fleet in there. I wonder if those fleets he does have there move west and try to oppose Spain or if Axum is friend or foe? We shall see.

*I think the army in Cherson will get into Pech somehow. Byz and Spain can split Spain in half pretty quickly. Will they? F Con can move directly into Ion and pressure Sicily. Or it could go into the Black Sea if Arabia is too busy to offer support into Pec. It's an interesting position. In the near term it has the advantage of not being vulnerable to either France or Arabia. But that could change quickly, esp. on the Arabian front.*

**Do you mean Byz and France can split Spain in half?**

**True, it's an interesting position, but it needs lots of diplomacy as well as tactics. So far, Byzantine hasn't been very active diplomatically. He has to make a drastic change there in order to survive.**

This is the thing I look for next. Byzantium has been absent in the diplomacy (at least as it has been playing out on the board), that must change now to keep the game moving. It is for survival now. Indonesia has some options now and might even grow this year. Patience has willed out here and he finally got Arabia's stab. It will be interesting to see if there is now some direct cooperation or just safety so Indonesia can try to gain an African foothold. This game year will make it very clear what the possibilities are.

*My complaint here is that we've seen no sign of any agreement with anybody other than China. His problems tie a lot into the geography of this board. This map has a ton of inland SCs and the sea spaces just serve as bottleneck points. (I don't think it's a particularly strong global variant.) Everywhere you look there are more coastal provinces than sea provinces. A fleet-only power cannot do anything here.*

*Even if he gets into GoS, there are so many guessing games that he'll have huge difficulties holding onto MaS while trying to attack Madagascar.*

*Overall, I don't think he got enough from the attack on India to justify the move.*

**I agree that a fleet-only power doesn't have enough room to grow, although it is safe enough, at least unless two or three mixed powers build enough fleets to make inroads on the Indonesian centers. Probably not worth their while, at least while there are easier centers to take elsewhere (Spain, Russia, probably Byzantium). If Indonesia wanted to grow, he had to start building some armies, and probably should have stabbed China a while ago.**

France actually let Denmark grow. I was a bit surprised by that. Nigs had been keeping both Germany and Denmark stuck on 6. But now Denmark was allowed to build, it was an army. I thought he really needed a fleet to outflank the Russian fleet, but Nigs probably insisted. The tactics against Russia are pretty interesting, lots of choices, but Darren is a unit short, so it won't go well for

him.

*I'm intrigued by the move of the second Danish fleet back to Jelling. If he hadn't done that, France could have beaten him up badly. I still don't see much of a strategy here. If the Western triple takes down Russia, Denmark is still in a terrible position.*

**Denmark and Germany both have to be hoping that they are France's real ally, and get some of the centers from the eventual victim, as well as from Russia. I can't imagine both Denmark and Germany surviving**

The Wagadu had better be cooperating with Mike Morris in Indonesia to crunch Axum, or he is in big trouble. Axum could take three Wagadu centers with his armies this year, so opposing that will take some help and luck to get Zimbabwe this game year. France has a host of units now not doing anything in Spain. They could turn on the Wagadu and if they do, then poor Mikael is going to be dead very fast. I think this is more than a whisper of a probability.

*I agree that France might target Wagadu, I just think that Axum will smack him too quickly for France to get a substantial piece of it.*

**Wagadu is probably more trouble for France than it is worth. I agree that Axum is likely to get most of all of the Wagadu cake. If he loses Zimbabwe, he'll be able to have enough fleets to recuperate it.**

So, we think that Arabia and France have a long term deal, what is France saying to Axum? I think France is saying, you can have the Wagadu centers, but then let's take out the other smaller powers. This is the deal that gets Axum to a game ending three way.

Poor Russell, he didn't build again. This time, the Arabian stab could lead France to realize some of those German centers that are wide open. Two centers could be taken easily. I think the promise France made was to keep Germany at 6 and that is where he is most likely to end this game year. I think he can keep it going. But it is far from guaranteed. Germany is more likely to persist and hang on if Nigs decides to stab Wagadu and expend most of his energy there.

*Germany also has to worry about the possibility that Denmark and France take him out jointly.*

*What is his best-case scenario? He somehow takes Dalmatia back and gets Kiev and Smolensk out of the attack on Russia. He's still smack in the middle, waiting to be eaten.*

*And for this he pulled his fleet??*

**Do you think he had any real choice about pulling**

**the fleet?**

Probably not, but ya gotta get some stones some time!

**I think that either France and Denmark will take out Germany or France and Germany will take out Denmark, and the former looks easier. And, as usual, France will get most of the booty, while his ally will have to start eating away at Russia.**

Losing two was tough and going off the board and not choosing to drop the rogue army in Dalmatia was strange. That army might well have no impact this year, unless Byzantium helps to prop him up, and even then they can take Dalmatia from Onoguria, while bouncing Thrace out of Onoguria. I think Darren will have a very rough game year again. But at least Denmark didn't build a fleet, so maybe the fleet in Finnish Sea can still work some magic.

*The army in Dalmatia is self-sufficient. Maybe he owes it to Byz?*

*The removal of the annoying Khaz will make it easier to put up at least a semblance of a defense while begging France to stab somebody.*

**True, it would have made more sense for Russia to drop Dalmatia. But Byzantium is his only ally, and it is worth his while to work with whoever he can. If France and Denmark stab Germany, Russia might end up with some of the German centers -- at least for now.**

**The long-term lookout is bleak, however you cut it. I still think that Russia was out of luck in this one.**

China really depends on what the Samanid decide to do. As I said, if I were John, I would keep beating China up. China can try to ally with Arabia now which might be possible if Arabia puts a lot of stock in getting the Samanid out quickly, but Lynn still has very, very little to do.

*China's position is much better than many of the players with more SCs. I think we can assume that Indonesia is not going to stab him in this game.*

**China's position depends on what first Samanid and then Arabia decide to do. If Samanid wants to keep going after China, he probably can -- unlikely but possible. And Arabia could keep on going east once Samanid is wiped out, although it might not be worth his while. China's best hope is just that : it might well be that no one will bother taking him out, especially since he will certainly have Indonesian support.**

I think Spain is playing out the string here. France will make slow progress and if Byzantium joins in with a

push west, then Spain collapses pretty fast.

Exactly.

Maybe, now that Egypt is gone, he can work with Byz somehow? We'll see.

**I don't really see any power that has interest in keeping Spain alive, unfortunately for him.**

**There was bad blood between Byzantium and Spain; it is more likely that Byzantium will grab a Spanish center or two than that he will try to help Spain.**

I might try to do something, but I don't expect Andy to do anything but wait until someone finds it worth taking him out.

*He's mailing in hold orders and ignoring the game. Indonesia has been trying to get him to care, without much luck.*

**Is there really anything he could do, at this point?**  
I think Pechenegs FINALLY goes with Arabia supporting Byzantium in.

*And Neutral outlives Khazaria and Egypt!*

*That's got to be particularly humiliating for Khazaria. Why again was it more important to keep Russia out of Bulgar than to get himself into Bashkortostan in 901?*

*Fitting that Egypt and Khazaria were the first to die. India didn't dig his own grave in the same manner as these two did.*

## **Spring and Summer 907**

DC229: This season saw the fall of the last holdout neutral army in Pechenegs. Congratulations, Cossack-forebears (?), for your determined resistance.

*The main story this season is the fallout from Arabia's paradigm shifting stab of the Samanid Emirate last fall. The tide of Samanid armies quickly receded back to their homelands from the Eastern shores, hotly pursued by Chinese armies eager to attack after years of defensive maneuvers. Being board leader tends to attract enemies, and Axum has now turned against Arabia, with (I believe) the first capture of an Arabian owned SC in Yemen. The fallout from this war has seen the frozen battlefield in the Indian Ocean thaw, with Sri Vijaya following up their capture of Malabar Sea last season with the capture of the Southern Sea this year. Axum pressed their advantage in Africa, taking Kanem with Jenne-Juno sure to follow.*

*In the north, the "naval convoy cannon" landed another French army in the frigid north, this time in Yugra. With the Chinese army in Tunguz, this is surely the first time that French and Chinese units have bordered each other in this variant. Following the destruction of their Dalmatian army, the situation is not looking promising for Kiev, who faces 6 (probably) hostile units on their frontiers. Finishing in the Med, it appears that a mop-up campaign is under way, with the Umayyids playing the role of "mop-ee", and the Byzantines are in position to either grab their share of the Spanish spoils or prop up the nomadic Umayyids for a while longer.*

PRESS #1 (anonymous):

Many a stream and many a ford,  
Peaks upon peaks shutting out the sky  
That's where we'll settle our accounts one day  
Across a bridge that spans cliffs like a rainbow.

Li Bo

### **Spring Adjudications**

Arabian A Ard - Ali  
Arabian A Ati - Mrd \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\*  
Arabian A Bal - Srk  
Arabian A Bsr - Man  
Arabian A Geo - Bal  
Arabian A Her - Urg  
Arabian A Ind S A Knj

Arabian A Isf - Kho  
Arabian A Jer H  
Arabian A Kas S A Man - Blk  
Arabian A Knj S A Ujj  
Arabian A Man - Blk  
Arabian A Sha S A Kas  
Arabian A Sjs - Her  
Arabian A Tam S A Bal - Srk  
Arabian A Ujj S A Knj \*Cut\*  
Arabian F Ars S A Ujj

Arabian F Mah S F Soc - Mas  
\*Void\*  
Arabian F Yem - Oma

Axum A Ale - Jer \*Bounce\*  
Axum A Aqa - Daj  
Axum A Jel S A Zaw - Kan  
Axum A Nio - Kus \*Bounce\*  
Axum A Roh - Sud  
Axum A Zaw - Kan

Axum F Gad - Yem  
Axum F Gos - Nam  
Axum F Phe - Gad  
Axum F Soc S F Phe - Gad

Byzantine A Chs - Pec  
Byzantine A Mac S A Dal - Ono  
Byzantine A Slr - Rom \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine A Thr S A Dal - Ono  
Byzantine F Bar - Lis  
Byzantine F Con - Epi  
Byzantine F Cre - los  
Byzantine F Tar - IIs

Chinese A Cha S A Sic - Tib  
Chinese A Chn - Yan  
Chinese A Mer - Tun  
Chinese A Sic - Tib  
Chinese F Yes S A Chn - Yan

Danish A Bja S A Saa - Kar  
Danish A Bor S A Maz  
Danish A Liv - Smo \*Bounce\*  
Danish F JIn S F Ngs  
Danish F Les - Fis  
Danish F Ngs C A Lot - Yug  
Danish F Whs C A Lot - Yug

French A Aqt - Par  
French A Cor - Val  
French A Gra - Kut  
French A Lot - Yug  
French A Nar S F Val - Spm

French A Rom H  
French A Saa - Kar  
French A Sal - Cor  
French A Sla S A Aqu - Dal  
French F Cad - Gra  
French F Ics C A Lot - Yug  
French F Lbu - Lgs  
French F Sgs C A Lot - Yug  
French F Sjt C A Gra - Kut  
French F Val - Spm

German A Aqu - Dal  
German A Maz S A Pol - Vol  
German A Mor S A Ono  
German A Ono S A Aqu - Dal  
German A Pol - Vol  
German A Vis S A Ono

Indian A Var H

Neutral A Pec H \*Dislodged\*  
\*Disbanded\*

Russian A Che - Kar \*Bounce\*  
Russian A Dal - Ono \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\* \*Disbanded\*  
Russian A Kie S A Chs - Pec  
Russian A Ros - Nov  
Russian A Smo - Liv \*Bounce\*  
Russian F Fis - Est

Samanid A Blk - Buk  
Samanid A Bul H

Samanid A Khi - Orb  
Samanid A Mrd S A Srk - Ati  
Samanid A Orb - Uyg  
Samanid A Sam - Kyk  
Samanid A Srk - Ati  
Samanid A Tib - Nep  
Samanid A Udm - Bas  
Samanid A Uyg - Sog

Spanish A Ifr H  
Spanish F Lgs - Bls  
Spanish F Scl H  
Spanish F Tys S F Lgs - Bls

Srivijayan A Ras S F Mas - Ujj  
Srivijayan F Cho S F Cob - Mas  
Srivijayan F Cob - Mas \*Bounce\*  
Srivijayan F Jam S F Jas - Sus  
Srivijayan F Jas - Sus  
Srivijayan F Mas - Ujj \*Bounce\*  
Srivijayan F Mis S F Jas - Sus  
Srivijayan F Sus - Gos

Wagadu A Kan - Jel \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\*  
Wagadu A Mau - Sij  
Wagadu A San - Kus \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu A Tah - Aga  
Wagadu F Sos S F Sus - Gos  
Wagadu F Tas - Sta  
Wagadu F Wts S F Sus - Gos

### Retreat Possibilities

Arabian A Ati can retreat to Kip, Udm or disband  
Neutral A Pec is destroyed (neutral)  
Russian A Dal is destroyed (no valid retreats)  
Wagadu A Kan can retreat to Tah or disband

### Summer 907 Retreats

Arabian A Atil retreats to Kipchak  
Wagadu A Kanem retreats to Tahert

## Spring and Summer 907 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

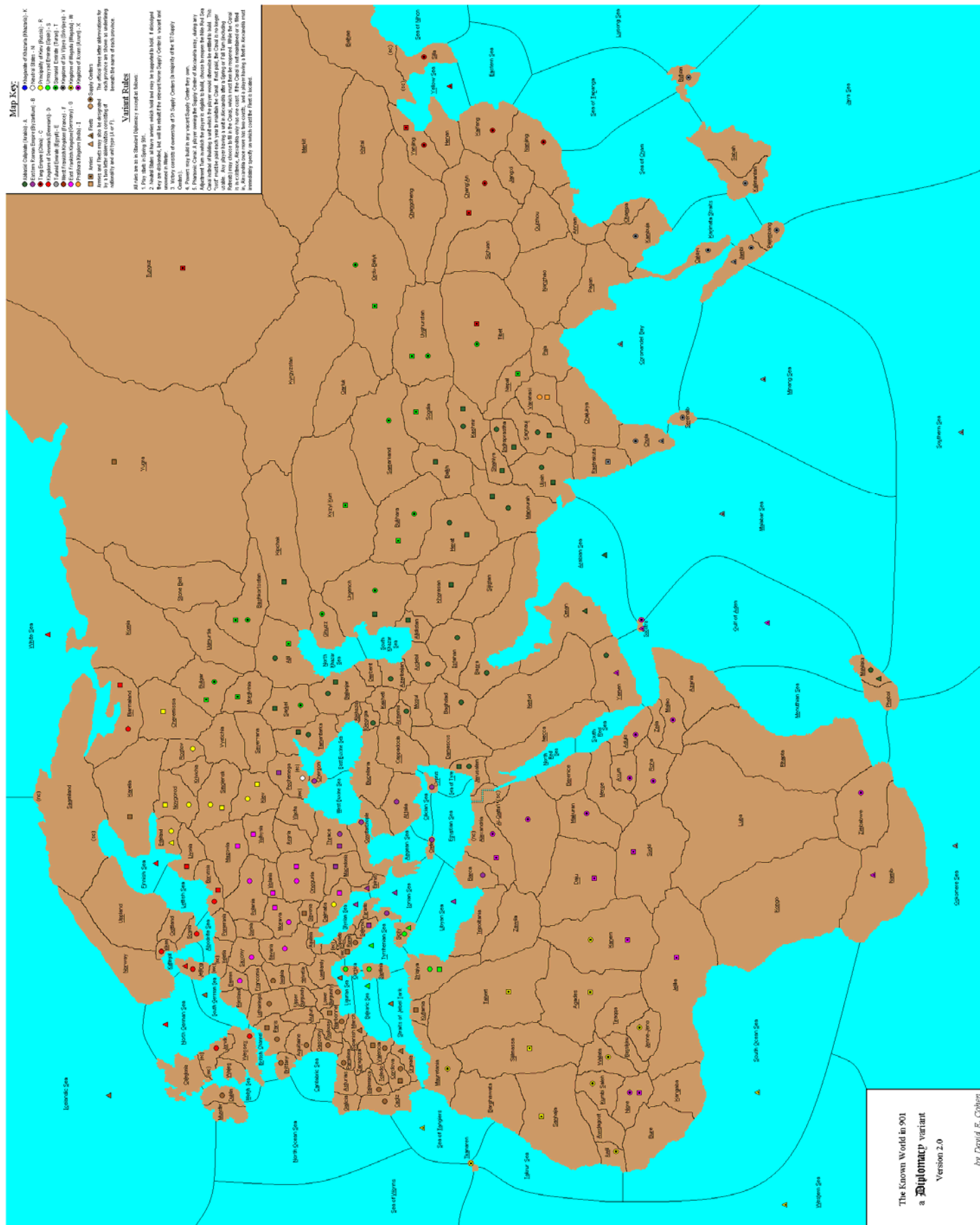
**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

Interesting, with Axum piling on a bit, the "everyone ally against Matt pigpile could be happening. If so, then perhaps the stab of the Samanid was ill-conceived. The way certainly is clear and possible to take Arabia all the way out. They are, after all, surrounded. This would be a tremendous boon to France who could sit back and keep growing slowly while everyone else focuses on taking down Arabia. But Arabia is very powerful and far from dead yet. The Samanid lose many centers (probably three? perhaps four?? though also could lose Atil) from Arabia, and those losses will be devastating, especially if China also gains one. Arabia loses from the Samanid decision to fight back with everything they have. But this can never be unexpected post-stab. You

have to anticipate the animosity and resentment.

*Just a complete disaster for Arabia. From the void support we see that Arabia was not expecting Axum to stab for Aden. Of course that could be a ruse. But I don't quite see why Axum would abandon the stalemate line so thoroughly unless he were abandoning the alliance.*

*After the retreat, Arabia has an army behind the lines that will help him cut support and make a little more progress inland. He can force Bukhara in addition to the two he took in the Spring. But after that can he force more than Ghuzz?*



The Known World in 901  
a **Diplomacy** variant  
Version 2.0

by David E. Cohen



*Basically, this stab has failed. The board didn't really want to see Arabia's lead grow any further.*

**I disagree. Obviously, Samanid is fighting back better than Arabia might have hoped, but that is certainly a possibility that Arabia took into account, and it doesn't make that much difference.**

**But mostly, I don't think that there was a real stab there. Perhaps a bit of mis-coordination, or perhaps that was arranged, so that the Aden Sea fleet can support Madagascar, which is what Arabia really doesn't want Indonesia to get.**

**After all, Axum and Indonesia are obviously \*not\* working together, so I think that Axum is still solidly with Arabia -- as long as he gets something out of it, too.**

Is this stab of Arabia the classic one-dotted, just grabbing a center, is it a deal with Arabia to feed Axum another center so Axum can dominate Africa, or is it the precursor to a bigger overturning of the game alliance structure. I am sure it is not the first one, and possibly is the second one, surprisingly enough, but I hope it is the third one. The Axum are pushing their advantage over the Wagadu, which is going to become decisive almost immediately.

*Wow. The Axum/Arabia/Samanid triple has collapsed completely. The lack of communication between Axum and Arabia that we saw about three moves ago has resulted in Axum deciding that he definitely doesn't like the way stabby Arabia has been behaving.*

*Or...*

*Arabia is throwing Aden to Axum to keep him happy. But I don't really think so.*

*I have to think Axum has worked something out with Indonesia. More on this in a bit.*

*The move to Nam guarantees that he won't lose Zim this year.*

**The Axum stab of Arabia is odd. It almost looks like a coordinated pretense of a stab. For one thing, why would Yemen move to Oman? If he was covering the Arabian Sea, he could perfectly well do that from Yemen. It's altogether odd. Equally odd is Alexandria hitting Jerusalem, which simply holds.**

**It smells like a fake stab, put together to get the maximum number of fleets in place and to let Axum have one center out of the grab-bag that Arabia will certainly get, if you add last year, this year and next year. Axum could use the extra build, if Indonesia continues to cooperate with Wagadu.**

**I agree with Jim-Bob's three possibilities, agree that it's not really a one center stab, but think that it is probably the second choice (a fake stab, designed to give Axum a tiny bit of the loot from Samanid, and to keep Indonesia wondering).**

I'm not sure why Gregory tried the doomed A Dal-Ono with two supports move. The Byzantines were not helped anywhere except for getting their Russian ally to support them to finally annihilate that neutral in Pechenegs. And the "sliding the fleets moves" worked OK in the south but not in the north. Byzantium needs some better moves or they are going to keep slipping away.

*Byz appears to be Arabia's last ally. Good job picking up Pec and he can also force Dalmatia. (That is, if they ever fix the map.) The diplomatic chaos across the board might help Byz move up the ladder a bit.*

**Do you think that Byz is Arabia's ally? It looks like Byz and Russia are still together, and still alone. It was Russia that supported Byz into Pec. The Dalmatia-Ono moves would have worked, if Germany had used anything but Aqu to move into Dalmatia. Byzantium moved his Con fleet into Epirus to be able to take Dalmatia in the fall. He can still do so, but Ono is lost, and so is the position Byzantium-Russia hoped they would have.**

The Chinese didn't know the Samanid retreat was coming, but it was a godsend to them. They are also lucky that John decided his annoyance with Matt outweighed his opportunities for taking the corner. The Chinese take Tibet and now COULD ally with their former Samanid enemies and deal Arabia a blow in India. I do not think that was set up as well as it could have been, if China and the Samanid coordinated Spring moves, but the opportunities clearly are there now to hit Kashmir jointly and take it if the move takes Arabia by surprise. China still has their ever loyal Srivijayan allies, so life is suddenly much rosier. I think it gets very interesting for China if Arabia goes all the way down over this. Not the most likely scenario, but can happen if Axum joins the fray.

*He's got Tibet back and, even better, Arabia is without allies in Asia. Now if only they could get India to do something other than holding...*

**And if China would move out of defensive mode...**

The Danish convoy another French army even farther. I think Nigs is trying to set the line much farther than anyone thinks he is. And this bodes very poorly for Arabia. So far Nigs is the biggest winner from Matt's stab. Otherwise, the maneuvering to take Esteland succeeds as expected and Russia also will belong to the Danish/German/French very soon.

*The cool move is the convoy. He also guesses correctly w.r.t. the Russian fleet. Is in good position to get a build this year.*

**Yes, Denmark came out well out of this. But the convoy is surprising. Why Yugro? Well, I'll save that for the French commentary.**

OK, so Nigs made a number of flanking moves. Let's assess each of them:

A Gra-Kut: this will take Ifriqiya unless Spain gets help from Byzantium. In the "the enemy of my enemy must be my friend" view of the world, Byzantine support is a no-brainer and then progress by Nigs slows down. The other thing Kut could do is to stab Wagadu in the fall for Mauretania, convoying to Kut as a diversion. But none of France's other moves suggest this is the direction he is going. Wagadu is falling and France is neither helping nor hurting the cause.

*Yeah, I tend to think support from Libyan Sea is obligatory here.*

**Logically, yes, support from Libyan Sea would be good play. But it's hard to tell whether Byzantium considers Spain or France his biggest enemy. He has no special love for either of them, and he might rather use Libyan sea to take Sicily himself, especially as he was cheated out of Dalmatia.**

A Lot-Yug: Wow, why Yugra? I see four or five possibilities. The one that is most damaging to the Samanid defense is that Yugra is there at Arabian behest to take down Bashkortostan. It could actually be attempting to shut off a flanking movement by China. It could be establishing the start of a French line that leads to victory (yes, really!). It could be setting up to support the convoy of the next army to Komia, but here there is no next army quite yet. A Paris needs one more move to get in position. It could just move to Komia now that it is there in Yugra with support of the fleet to ensure it gets in. This was bold, unexpected and the shape of more things to come.

*I don't think it's that complicated. It's just an incursion as far into Russia as possible. France doesn't need more dots, he needs strategic position.*

**That may be so, but I would think that Komia was a far better strategic position. Of course, there was an off off chance that Russia or even Samanid might have bounced him in Komia, but that was most improbable.**

**It looks from the other moves that the westerners have decided that taking out Russia quickly was a strategic priority, and Komia would have been better in that light.**

**However, kudos for the unexpected use of Aqu to take Dalmatia. It was the only move that could have worked, and everyone must have expected Germany to keep the Aqu army in place to support Rome.**

The attacks on Corsica and Sardinia. Nigs did a great job of setting up a complex series of options, he could convoy to both Corsica and Sardinia while supporting the convoying fleets to hold. He could dislodge Balearic Sea. Also, Ifriqiya is under attack. Spain almost surely loses at least one of these and is closer to being out, even if Byzantium supports him.

*Spain can cover everything if Byz is working with him. Or they could knock him out of Rome. Keep in mind that the fleet in IIs is adjacent to Rome (ec). Absent a stab, France might not be growing this year.*

**Agreed, if Byzantium and Spain work together, they can do very well. In the most logical of all worlds, that's what they would do. I'm betting that there is little or no cooperation between them.**

Unlike Matt, Nigs still has not stabbed his allies, he keeps moving forward. Is he going to take a position on taking down Arabia? I think it is better for France if Arabia is taken all the way out. We'll see if that's the way it goes.

*An added benefit of the convoy to Yug is that France has an excuse for keeping two fleets in a position where they can stab either Denmark or Germany. The Fall move should be interesting. Is Byz going to look to stop French expansion in the Med? (He should). If so, France could lose Rome. That's really not a huge concern in the short run, but it could mean that this strategy is not going to go much further. Byz can prop up Spain as a block in the central Med for a little while.*

*Is France going to regret not going for the dots? The Western triple is going to make ground against Russia, but how does that help France in particular? It remains to be seen. I particularly like that a French army borders a Chinese army in Siberia.*

**True, lots of question marks for the fall, for all the alliances. But I would bet that the Western alliance is simply trying to take Russia out rapidly without strengthening Byzantium, and also that Byzantium does not cooperate with Spain.**

We keep making fun of Russell, but he's in Dalmatia for a build that can be held.

*Only because the map is wrong.*

**At least Ono is finally solidly held. And Byzantium would have to use four units to take Dalmatia (three plus one to cut Ono). Is it worth it? It might be if there was suddenly close cooperation between**

**Spain and Byzantium, but otherwise maybe not.**

**I think that the Byz-Russian alliance was had by the ingenuous use of Aqu to take Dalmatia while keeping Ono.**

We see if France takes one from his rear to keep him even or not. Germany doesn't get more Russian centers this year, but the Russian position completely collapses next year and then they come face-to-face with Arabia.

*We'll see if he loses Bremen. What's his next dot? I still hate this German position. He's not even guaranteed to hold Dalmatia in the Fall. Byz can force a capture in the Fall.*

*(BTW, the map is wrong with respect to Epirus(Albania). I asked myself why the Russians had not retreated there, and the answer is that F Con moved there. There is no F Con. I wonder how long it took for somebody to notice this.)*

**Yes, I see now why you noticed the map error.**

**If the priority is on taking Russia out, stabbing Germany (or Denmark, for that matter) is probably on hold. Next year, when Russia collapses, will be time enough for France to stab.**

India almost surely survives another year, but no prospects for anything else.

*Something other than holding? Apparently not. Actually, if there were any Samanid/Arabia rapprochement, they could take out India as part of a peace deal.*

**Arabia will still probably take India's last center all by his lonesome, once he has swallowed enough of Samanid to have his hands free.**

The last neutral, who would guess it would be Pechenegs? I will say that Pechenegs is a weird province on this map. It is quite difficult for the surrounding powers to decide how it should be handled. It lasted until it made no more sense for it to last. And the Byzantines need that build.

*I would think that, in the ordinary course of things, it would go to Byzantium or Russia early. But both of them had hostile neighbors right from the start.*

**Odd, I remember Pech through several versions of this variant; and it was always considered a strategically neutral center, staying neutral for the longest time.**

Russia is down to four for sure this fall and then collapse next year. There is no reason now, with Arabia's struggles, for France to do anything but keep pushing forward with his German/Danish allies to take Russia out

and then decide how to intercede in the Samanid/Arabia battle. Russia could intercede at his own peril, but basically Darren and the game's designer took themselves out of the endgame long ago. I don't see any hope for Darren.

*Not a good season for Russia. The fleet retreat leaves him with little hope of holding Est. The Danish/French can pick which SC to take. Germany appears to continue to be hostile, even though it's a strategic dead end for him. The Asian squabbling kills any hope that cavalry will come to the rescue. He's not long for this world. As Jim says, "down to four for sure this fall and then collapse next year."*

*Russia, Samanid, and Wagadu are all in horrible position. In a more pressing way than, say, Germany is in a horrible position.*

**Russia was out of luck, and Byzantium out of luck with him. I don't think Russia played badly; he tried to make the diplomatic approaches he could. There are games in which nothing works, and this was one of them for Russia.**

I think John took the wrong path, still for the path he took it was well played. It is worth the diplomatic entreaties to France to ensure that Yugra is not there to hurt you. It also is worth trying to deal directly with Lynn in China to try to act in concert against Arabia. If everyone hits Arabia together, he is in trouble. If the attacks and defenses are piecemeal then I think Matt can stop them. The Samanid face another host of choices in the removals. I would give up the west and try to work with India to outflank Arabia across the Himalayas. But there also is an argument for giving that up and focusing on the west.

*The Samanid horde goes completely into kill the stabber mode. The move to Nepal signals that he's working with China - we can expect that Indonesia is also on board. If China exploits the position, Samanid will collapse quickly, but I expect they'll keep him around long enough for the Arabian position to be completely compromised.*

*The last think that France should want to do in Yugra is harm Samanid.*

**Do you really think that Samanid and China are working together? That would certainly be intelligent for both of them. But, if so, they aren't coordinating very well. China moved a useful army back to protect Yan, way on the coast, because Samanid had an army in Khi that could have tried to hit Yan; while Samanid was pulling Khi and everything else back west as fast as he could. Maybe that was a prelude to cooperation, but it certainly was an awkward one.**

**We'll see soon enough if Arabia is really under attack. I think Samanid is doing his best to defend**







### Fall Adjudications

Arabian A Ali - Urg \*Bounce\*  
Arabian A Bal S A Srk  
Arabian A Blk - Buk  
Arabian A Her S A Blk - Buk  
Arabian A Ind S A Knj

Arabian A Jer - Ale \*Bounce\*  
Arabian A Kas S A Tib  
Arabian A Kho S A Ali - Urg  
Arabian A Kip S A Urg - Ghu \*Cut\*  
Arabian A Knj H  
Arabian A Man S A Ujj  
Arabian A Sha S A Kas  
Arabian A Srk S A Tam - Sev  
Arabian A Tam - Sev  
Arabian A Ujj S A Knj  
Arabian A Urg - Ghu  
Arabian F Ars - Yem \*Bounce\*  
Arabian F Mah - Gad \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\*  
Arabian F Oma S F Ars - Yem

Axum A Ale - Jer \*Bounce\*  
Axum A Daj S A Kan  
Axum A Jel - Jej  
Axum A Kan S A Sud - Jel  
Axum A Nio - Kus \*Bounce\*  
Axum A Sud - Jel \*Bounce\*  
Axum F Gad S F Soc \*Cut\*  
Axum F Nam - Zim  
Axum F Soc S F Yem - Ars  
Axum F Yem - Ars \*Bounce\*

Byzantine A Mac - Dal  
Byzantine A Pec - Vla  
Byzantine A Slr - Spo  
Byzantine A Thr - Ono \*Bounce\*  
Byzantine F Epi S A Mac - Dal  
Byzantine F Ils S A Mac - Dal  
Byzantine F Ios S F Scl - Tys  
Byzantine F Lis S A Ifr

Chinese A Cha S A Tib  
Chinese A Tib S A Nep  
Chinese A Tun - Kyr  
Chinese A Yan - Khi  
Chinese F Yes H

Danish A Bja - Che  
Danish A Bor - Liv  
Danish A Liv - Est  
Danish F Fis S A Liv - Est  
Danish F Jln S F Ngs  
Danish F Ngs S F Ics  
Danish F Whs S F Ics

French A Cor - Gra  
French A Kar - Nov \*Bounce\*  
French A Kut S F Sjt - Ifr  
French A Nar - Lbu  
French A Par - Lot  
French A Rom H (a coronation to  
celebrate the Holy Roman Empire)  
French A Sla S A Dal  
French A Val H  
French A Yug - Kip \*Bounce\*  
French F Gra - Sjt  
French F Ics - Swo  
French F Lgs S A Rom  
French F Sgs - Brc  
French F Sjt - Ifr  
French F Spm - Bls

German A Dal S A Ono - Mac  
\*Cut\* \*Dislodged\*  
German A Maz - Smo \*Bounce\*  
German A Mor - Ono  
German A Ono - Mac  
German A Vis S A Mor - Ono  
German A Vol - Kie

Indian A Var - Knj \*Bounce\*

Russian A Che - Ros  
Russian A Kie - Pec  
Russian A Nov S A Smo \*Cut\*  
Russian A Smo H  
Russian F Est H \*Dislodged\*  
\*Disbanded\*

Samanid A Ati H  
Samanid A Bas S A Ati  
Samanid A Buk - Urg \*Bounce\*  
\*Dislodged\* \*Disbanded\*  
Samanid A Bul - Vya  
Samanid A Kyk S A Buk - Urg  
Samanid A Mrd S A Ati  
Samanid A Nep S A Var - Knj  
Samanid A Orb - Sam  
Samanid A Sog H  
Samanid A Uyg S A Sog

Spanish A Ifr H \*Dislodged\*  
Spanish F Bls - Crs  
Spanish F Scl - Tys  
Spanish F Tys - Sar

Srivijayan A Ras S A Var - Knj  
Srivijayan F Cho S F Mis - Mas  
Srivijayan F Cob S F Mis - Mas  
Srivijayan F Gos H  
Srivijayan F Jam - Mis  
Srivijayan F Mas - Mah  
Srivijayan F Mis - Mas  
Srivijayan F Sus S F Mas - Mah

Wagadu A Aga - Jel \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu A San - Kus \*Bounce\*  
Wagadu A Sij - Wal  
Wagadu A Tah S F Sjt - Ifr  
Wagadu F Sos S A Aga - Jel  
Wagadu F Sta - Cad  
Wagadu F Wts S F Gos - Nam  
\*Void\*

### Retreat Possibilities

Arabian F Mah can retreat to Phe or disband  
German A Dal can retreat to Aqu or disband  
Russian F Est is destroyed (no valid retreats)  
Samanid A Buk is destroyed (no valid retreats)  
Spanish A Ifr can retreat to Tri, Zaw or disband

### Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) builds 1 unit, can build in Ard, Arm, Aze, Bag, Bsr, Geo, Isf, Tam  
Byzantine Empire builds 1 unit, can build in Att, Bar, Con, Cre, Cyp, Tar, Chs  
Tang Empire (China) builds 1 unit, can build in Kai, Nan, Sil, Yan  
Kingdom of Denmark builds 1 unit, can build in Bja, Bor, Jor (ec), Jor, Jor (wc), Sca, Vik, Wsx  
Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) makes no adjustments  
West Frankish Kingdom (France) makes no adjustments  
East Frankish Kingdom (German) builds 1 unit, can build in Bav, Bre, Mor, Pol, Sax  
Pratihara Kingdom (India) makes no adjustments  
Khaganate of Khazaria makes no adjustments

### Retreat Adjudications

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) disbands F Mah  
German A Dal retreats to Aqu  
Spanish A Ifr retreats to Zaw

Principality of Kiev (Russia) makes no adjustments  
 Umayyad Emirate (Spain) disbands 1 unit  
 Samanid Emirate (Turan) disbands 2 units  
 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya builds 1 unit, can build in But, Cah, Jam, Kal, Kam, Plm, Ser  
 Kingdom of Wagadu disbands 1 unit  
 Kingdom of Axum builds 3 units, can build in Adu, Ale, Ale (nc), Ale (sc), AQa, Axu, Mak, Mal, Roh  
 Neutral makes no adjustments

Position	Power	Abb	906	907	Change	SCs changing possession
1	Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia)	A	19	19	0	-Ati, +Buk, +Ghu, -Mah, +Srk, -Yem
2	West Frankish Kingdom (France)	F	15	15	0	-Cad, +lfr
3	Kingdom of Axum	X	10	13	+3	+JeJ, +Kan, +Yem
4	Byzantine Empire	B	8	9	+1	+Dal
5	Kingdom of Sri Vijaya	V	8	9	+1	+Mah
6	Kingdom of Denmark	D	7	8	+1	+Est
7	East Frankish Kingdom (German)	G	6	7	+1	+Kie
8	Samanid Emirate (Turan)	T	10	7	-3	+Ati, -Buk, -Ghu, -Srk, -Tib
9	Tang Empire (China)	C	5	6	+1	+Tib
10	Kingdom of Wagadu	W	7	6	-1	+Cad, -JeJ, -Kan
11	Principality of Kiev (Russia)	R	6	4	-2	-Dal, -Est, -Kie, +Pec
12	Umayyad Emirate (Spain)	S	4	3	-1	-lfr
13	Pratihara Kingdom (India)	I	1	1	0	
14	Tulunid Emirate (Egypt)	E	0	0	0	
15	Khaganate of Khazaria	K	0	0	0	
16	Neutral	N	1	0	-1	-Pec

## **Fall and Autumn 907 Commentary**

Jim Burgess (normal text)

*Rick Desper (italics)*

**Suzanne Castagne (bold)**

For the first time in a VERY long while, the French allies build (completing the guaranteed takeover of Esteland for Denmark, Germany takes the Russian capital of Kiev) while France does not. The build can be in Bjarmaland and Russia can go out, possibly all the way out with some good attacks, in the coming game year.

**Yes, the balance among the three western powers is changing. Will France keep the control over his allies? He is still by far the strongest of the western powers, and the one with most possibilities, but they are no longer under his thumb.**

**Denmark has finally gained Esteland. True, Bja would be a good build for him. But whatever he builds, if the Dane and the French coordinate, Denmark gains Rostov and France probably gains Nov. I doubt that Russia would be completely eliminated next year, but there won't be much left of it. All the more as the westerners may have help from Samanid, since France cut an attack on a Samanid army.**

*A good year for Denmark, esp. since the French are slowly pulling away. I like the build flexibility.*

France may shift his main focus to the Mediterranean and Africa and if he does, it is possible that Germany and Denmark can be survivors into the endgame, whatever that will mean. I think Nigs will be more deliberate that Matt seemed to be when and if he decides to stab.

**The cooperation among the westerners is still imperfect. Denmark used two fleets to support France's Icelandic fleet, which headed south. Maybe that was a last-minute negotiation on France's part, but still, it must be irritating.**

*Denmark wasn't going to move the fleets, so he wrote meaningless and unnecessary supports. It means nothing.*

I agree, and France may have gotten a last minute hint that Wagadu was stabbing him and didn't really need to inform Denmark anyway.

Wow, I think that is the first time all game for this one, no adjustments by the leader. Oh, technically, Arabia has more centers, but not for long. France is set to gain against Spain next year and needs to decide about how to react to Mikael's one dotter. I think France descends

on Wagadu to help take them out. Valencia and Cordova aren't doing anything else, so they can take Cadiz back. The fleet in the Sea of Worms threatens other Wagadu centers. It is time for Axum and France to hook up and ally to begin sweeping the board. This does save the German/Danish allies though. Expect them to build to finish off Russia. Spain retreated (essentially) into Corsica and Sardinia, and while there are a few guesses, they aren't hard ones, and eventually they fall and France gets them. Rome is in short run trouble too, but Lower Burgundy isn't up to anything else and can come help out. Byzantium can't help defend everything.

**No adjustments by either leader, or practically. But the central alliance doesn't exist any more, and France has not (yet?) stabbed either of his allies.**

**I'm not sure what to think about Mikael's move to Cadiz. Spain did support France into lfr, and it was a critical support. Normally, I would think that the trade-off Cadiz/lfr was arranged, especially if the Cadiz fleet is the Wagadu disband. But France suddenly moved two fleets south, which leaves me wondering. That could be for Wagadu (the Canary islands, in particular, are completely vulnerable); or it could be a preparation for a Danish stab, the channel being an old point of contention between France and the Dane.**

**Of course, even if France agreed to lend Wagadu Cadiz in exchange for help in taking lfr, that doesn't stop from continuing against Wagadu anyhow.**

**Although France didn't gain anything this year, he still has lots of room to grow : finishing off Spain, a Russian center, perhaps Wagadu, and sooner or later probably at least one of his western allies.**

**Cooperation between France and Axum? Quite possibly. In fact, it may well have been France that encouraged Axum's stab (which was a real stab, as unlikely as it seemed to me). But Axum will want to get at least the vast majority of the African centers.**

**Also, for the first time France hit a Arabian army, cutting a support against Samanid. It looks as though France is trying to play the white knight to Arabia's former allies.**

*France has definitely changed his strategy for the better. In the early game, he was a dot-grabber, but at this point of the game he's changed his approach to be decidedly care-bearish. He's let Wagadu take Cadiz to keep as many Wagadu forces on the board in Africa. The fleet in Cadiz will be disbanded.*

That's an interesting take and may be the right one. I'll stand for the moment on France taking a stab from Wagadu, but it may have been arranged, we will see

with the Wagadu disband, which will be Cadiz if you're right. This also means if correct that the fleet moving south by France is to support and blockade.

BUT, it also means that it is not a France/Axum alliance driving the game right now, and I think that is what we have. Again, the Wagadu disband will be quite informative.

*Taking lfr is a big step forward - Spain will have to continually guess correctly to hold onto Corsica and Sardinia. It won't last too long.*

*France finally pulls the fleets back and lessens his ability to stab Germany or Denmark.*

A build for Germany, hurray! And I think he sticks with his French ally, so that build probably comes in Polania and more is coming with the collapse of Russia. Then, together, they push Byzantium back. Germany could make himself very useful here and prove me wrong as the relentless French growth slowed down this year. Germany should get two more next year and be harder to take out.

**Germany hit it lucky with Kiev. he hit Kiev without support. If the Russian hadn't moved out to take Pech, Kiev wouldn't have fallen. Too bad for the Russian, whose position is considerably weakened because of that move.**

Yes, I understand why Byzantium was feeling generous, but it isn't clear where there is a line for Russia to set up on, I think Gregory needed to jettison Russia if he wasn't going to move more emphatically to help him. Trading the capital of Kiev for Pechenega didn't really help.

**True, Germany is well situated both for finishing up the Russian and for continuing against Byzantium. However, if he does that whole-heartedly enough, he sets himself up for a stab. There's a delicate balance to find.**

*Germany in Kiev? I have no idea what Russia and Byz were up to there. Germany builds in Pol or Mor and continues to work with France and Denmark. It's not like he has other options.*

*Kiev will be hard to hold. Again, Germany is overextending himself.*

We will see, but I don't think so. France certainly can stab, but I don't think he will, and I think they will continue to make good progress against Russia and Byzantium. Luck is a good thing and it may ensure a longer term survival for Germany.

This was a good survival deal for Russia with Byzantium to keep to four. But it still doesn't help as Russia loses the home center capital. I don't know, does it matter?

**I think that Russia is finally losing his cool. It was generous of Byzantium to offer up Pechenegs, but Russia would have been better off staying put and supporting Pech for his Byzantine friend.**

*Terrible tactics. Why walk out of Kiev? The Germany army had nothing better to do than go there. Unless, improbably, Germany and Russia actually are working together here. I don't buy it.*

I like the idea of Spain keeping the rogue army and working with Arabia against Axum, but probably it goes. Spain is losing ground and has to guess extremely well just to hold ground. I would try to do that and not bother to threaten Rome.

**Spain doesn't have much chance of surviving more than another year, whatever he does. I think that he will probably concentrate on Sardinia and Corsica -- both of which will eventually fall to France. Sicily should fall to Byzantium, I think.**

*Completely outmaneuvered by France. I would not have believed it two years ago, but France has gone from having having no fleets facing a well-supplied Spanish navy to having four fleets kicking Spanish butt.*

Byzantium plays nice with his ally Russia and hands him the dearly won Pechenegs and wanders off to Vlacha. This keeps Russia even and doesn't affect Byzantium's center count. He does take what used to be Russian, the stray center in Dalmatia. It does appear though that France and Germany anticipated this and he cannot hold it for long, or at least there are guessing games over it. Again here, Byzantium almost never makes a tactical mistake, it will be a long slow slog against him. Otherwise, Byzantium does back up Spain, but seemingly not in a defensible long term way. France will slowly erode things. Spain has to disband one, and though the rogue army is in an interesting place, it is likely gone. But France can start picking at Corsica and Sardinia.

**Perhaps the long-term arrangement between Russia and Byzantium was that Byzantium would get Dalmatia when Russia recovered Ono. But Russia's erosion affects Byzantium as well, inevitably.**

*Outguessed by Spain. Byz can make an effective move towards Rome, I expect a build of A Con.*

*Byz really might want to think long and hard about joining with everybody else to beat on Arabia. Axum is a necessary ally to keep the Western alliance back, and there are a good number of SCs very vulnerable to Byz that would be hard for anybody else to get to.*

Right, if Byzantium is going to survive, Gregory needs to ally with France, throw his Russian dead man walking

under the bus and join the attack on Matt. If not, then Gregory may be Matt's only ally at the moment, and if so, one would think Matt would reward him more? We shall see.

Mikael only has to disband one instead of two, but was it worth it? Was it worth angering your only friend, France? No way. Now France has the excuse to get his before it is all gone and he will take advantage. Wagadu will lose four to go down to two this game year as a result, I predict. And after that elimination. Perhaps he can work with Spain against France, but I doubt it.

**I still think that this might have been a arranged deal : help with lfr in exchange for a very temporary home in Cadiz. Or at any rate, Mikael could always present it that way. But it doesn't look as though France will accept this, even if he had agreed to it. It looks like France wants to grab all he can get in the south, before he "revises" his current alliance.**

*I'm convinced it was an arrangement. And I bet we'll see the proof during the adjustment phase. Wagadu hasn't randomly decided to 1-dot Spain.*

And I'm not based on the logic of a France/Axum alliance at this point. Again, we'll see below in the next season.

OK, three builds for Axum and seemingly a clear path toward second place. There are some choices on the general move for builds here. Axum can try to set up an attack into the Arabian underbelly by building on the Red Sea. This nets Jerusalem pretty fast (unless the Spanish army turns into the renegade), but slower to the home centers. Or the advantage against Wagadu can be pressed with more inland armies, but it will take them SO long to get there, that I think not (he also can't build in Ale since there is a unit there....). I bet on the builds set to drive into the Arabian homeland. Watch out, this will be a race!

**I was wrong, there was apparently a real stab, although a surprisingly weak one. It is Axum who finally hooked up with Indonesia, after all, rather than Wagadu.**

**Obviously, Axum was tired of playing an also-run alongside Arabia, and he grabbed his chance, perhaps encouraged by France. But I don't see B as someone who will simply play stop-the-leader. He wants a bigger share than he had, a chance for first place, if he can work it. But he is certainly wary of France as well as of Arabia. Unlike Jim-Bob, I don't see Arabia collapsing : that would give too much room to France.**

*Axum has consistently been the stabbiest player on this board. I'm not sure he has a long-term plan. If France can get a couple armies into Africa*

*quickly, then the attack into Wagadu may flounder.*

OK, so Arabia is in some deep trouble now, but there still seem to be lots of communication problems amongst its enemies, so Matt has a chance. Yet he still needs to put some diplomatic pressure out there to get a friend, if it is even possible. Let's add it up move by move:

1) A Kip S A Urgench-Ghuzz (cut): We asked what France was doing in Yugra rather than Komia, and one thing they were doing was cutting this support. BUT, it didn't matter. Kip was supporting in the south, and the Samanid did not try Kyzyl Kum-Ghuzz to bounce that move (it still would have taken Urgench from the Samanid). Nor did the Samanid support the Yugra-Kip move with A Atil, that otherwise was unused. It would NOT have been cut and would have annihilated Kip. This suggests that the northern attack was not completely coordinated.

*Perhaps France didn't actually want to get to Kip? But it seems more likely that he just didn't discuss this with Samanid. Certainly Samanid would have wanted that army to be destroyed.*

2) A Ali-Urgench (bounce): Similarly, this kept Urgench in Samanid hands, but it is detached and dead, the opportunity was lost to keep Ghuzz and annihilate that A Kipchak and keep the Samanid connected. John R. should have been talking to Nigs on this one.

*Yes, if they'd worked together, they might have kept Arabia out of Ghuzz at least for now, and possibly for quite some time. A fleet on the Caspian would have changed the balance, but Arabia was a bit too overconfident and thought a fleet would be a wasted force.*

3) A Kas S A Tib: China didn't ask for this support, but Matt is trying to signal who he wants to be friends with. China will be loyal to Srivijaya, so this likely won't go anywhere. BUT Tibet just supported Nepal, this is possible that is what the Samanid asked for, since the Samanid tried a failed attack on Kannauj.

*Yeah, when you're using support orders for diplomacy, it's a sign that the communication channels are not working as well as you'd hoped.*

4) A Ujj S A Kannauj, A Indra S A Kannauj: If they all decided this was what they wanted (Kannauj for India!) then why didn't they wait until this Srivijayan fleet was in the Malabar Sea to cut the A Ujj support? That is now there, so this is possible in the spring, but the fall move was clearly to work together to take Kashmir. Again, Arabia is lucky, for the moment.

*They could have forced Kannauj, but the priority for F MaS was to keep Aden in Axum hands. The Indian front is going to collapse soon.*

5) F Ars-Yemen (bounce): Supported attack from Axum, balanced by supported attack from Arabia. The outcome? Axum gets to keep Yemen and this looks like much more than a one dotter.

*Very nice development for Axum. Axum should demand that he be the one to get a fleet in the Arabian Sea.*

6) A Jerusalem-Alexandria (bounce): Axum is ready to move on lonely looking Jerusalem (once builds come in) and the naked looking Arabian home centers. Spain retreating to Zawila from Ifriqiya is the only possible challenge. Can Matt make a deal with Spain to help fend off the Axum attack? Maybe Jerusalem can support Zawila-Alexandria and surprise B. a bit in Spring? Or maybe Spain just removes that army anyway?

That's enough of the specific moves. In sum then, Matt now looks completely friendless, but has the classic defender's advantage of being able to coordinate all the pieces. I didn't like the choices against Matt this turn, they could have gained more. But if they can avoid bickering, eventually Arabia is all the way out of the game. This really will be an amazing turn of events if it comes off. Let's talk for a minute now about how it happened. Arabia set up a nice stab of the Samanid. While it hasn't been perfect, it is going to be pretty successful. The real problem is Axum and the defenseless home Arabian centers. Once units plow in there, Arabia will fall. So, this is a classic problem of how to set up your ally for your stab of another ally. Once you reveal you will stab, your other partner (a) knows you are willing to stab and (b) sees you getting further ahead of them. Especially in Arabia's position you are BEGGING for an Axum stab, and B. is way too good a player not to oblige. Alternatively, Axum could have been brought into the plot, but then you still have (a) and (b) and how do you negotiate around it? In the end, it was great for us commentators, avoiding a really boring endgame, but the wrong move for Arabia. Oh yes, Arabia does have the one build and I think it needs to be a homeland protector that can help Jerusalem, A Baghdad, or more likely F Basra to try to hang onto the sea approaches. But he really needs both builds and doesn't have them.

**I think that Jim-Bob has hit the nail on the head, with the reasoning behind Axum's stab. Both (a) and (b) are true : the trust among the three allies is broken, even if Arabia has been supporting Axum; and B saw that Arabia, already ahead of him, would also be growing faster. Still, it was a surprisingly weak stab, which makes me think that it was a last minute decision last spring, probably in coordination with both Indonesia and France.**

**While B certainly wants to improve his position markedly, he must be looking with great worry at the French position. And he is certainly in contact with**



**both Germany and Denmark, and probably with Byzantium as well.**

**While he will certainly make some headway against Arabia, I doubt that the latter will collapse, especially if it looks like France will profit more than Axum does.**

*If I were Axum here, what would really have annoyed me was that Arabia did his stab of Samanid without any consultation of his other ally. (At least that's how it seems.) That development sends the message that Arabia is very self-interested.*

*I disagree about the question of who will profit more from this stab. While China and Indonesia will certainly prosper, Axum stands to gain at least eight more SCs from this - SCs that are not accessible to anybody else (with the exception of Byzantium, who has not indicated any interest yet).*

It is the mark of a good diplomat when one gets stabbed to be able to get your former enemy to sign on as your friend. Lynn plays that way anyway, and apparently so does John R., but in any case, the Samanid aren't completely dead yet as China could have taken more. As stated above, I didn't like the Samanid tactical choice if they knew France was helping them out. But the Samanid aren't as bad off as they could have been. The removals are tough though. I would expect to keep the ones most damaging to Arabia. Perhaps two of KyK, Uyg, and Bas are the ones to come off?? probably.

**Yes, John R. has been trying to totally reverse his position relative to China since the first stab last year. He has moved his eastern armies resolutely westward. China didn't seem to trust this at first. He is a little more trusting now, but I'm not sure that he is willing to really work with Samanid.**

**If Samanid disbands Urg, for example, and China simply moves in, Samanid will collapse even more rapidly.**

*I would speculate that Samanid would remove one army in Russia, the one in Uyg, and one other. A Nep is tempting, but it's right at the front already in a useful position. A second Russian disband would open the vacuum for German armies to move in.*

*Or he might just abandon Russia completely. Others will take care of that front eventually.*

Yeah, but this wasn't going to work for India, so why did they try it?? It can work in the Spring, will they try it again, or take Kashmir this time???

**Bad coordination with Indonesia, perhaps?**

*To see if it would work? It got two supports so this order*

*froze three of Arabia's forces.*

China is back into boring safety. He did bypass Samanid centers that he could be taking, so apparently this is an alliance. But I think they made the wrong choice of order of attacks this turn. This turn they should have taken Kashmir. But still, China is back to a Juggernautish position and will not be threatened again in all likelihood. He and Srivijaya are now going to be part of the eventual draw.

*The Army in Kashmir could have been supported by the army in Man or the army in Ind as well as the army in Sha. It wasn't a bad move to try to use a different set of orders. Arabia got reasonably lucky with his orders.*

**For the moment, China has a respite. But if Samanid collapses entirely, does Arabia then try to grab the Chinese centers? If he will be giving Axum some room for growth, he will want to compensate somewhere.**

*No. Arabia is not getting anywhere near the Chinese SCs. Arabia is about to get completely reamed.*

**Why did China move Tun - Kyr? A gut reaction to the French army in Yugra, or will he help explode the Kip army?**

*It expands his sphere of influence, and further indicates his opposition to Arabia. And there's no reason to let France be the only guy with armies over there.*

Srivijayan finally breaking through, and if the Wagadu remove a fleet, can start up the west coast of Africa pretty soon. India is a place to get centers too and finally grow a bit faster. If this all holds up, then there is an Eastern Juggernaut with China again and a Srivijayan place in the final draw is nearly assured.

**As Jim-Bob indicated, there was probably little or no coordination with France last fall.**

*No, right now there's a Western Alliance with four powers and an Eastern alliance with three powers (+ India). And we have Byz + Russia in the middle, along with Spain. I don't expect to see the Western alliance coordinate with the Eastern alliance.*

*Indeed, what France should do here is work with Arabia, not Samanid.*

**Axum let Indonesia take Madagascar, but it's not sure how much he will be willing to share in Africa. But if Mike M manages to get up to the west coast of Africa, that will be an incredible exploit. None of the naval forces have ever advanced so far, although some have certainly tried.**

*more SCs. The alternate plan is to resurrect India, and if I were Indonesia, I wouldn't be keen on that. Just snuff the guy already.*

[illegible]

The Known World in 901  
Diplomacy variant  
Version 2.0

by David E. Cohen



for Denmark's long term survival.

**I wouldn't expect a stab this year, not until most of Russia falls. But if Denmark gains big there, Germany would probably be the next to fall.**

**Neither Denmark nor Germany are in position to attack France at this point. If they were going to do that, it would have happened a long time ago. Even a stab of Germany would help France more than Denmark, but it would be good for both of them.**

*As I expected, the change of control of Cadiz was planned. France will quickly pick up Corsica and Sardinia, at which point further expansion in the Med should become more difficult. It'll be difficult to push past the boot. I keep wondering if/when France is going to stab one of his allies. In the near term, I wouldn't be surprised to see one or two more French armies convoyed to Africa. His presence in Asia is minimal and he's not well-positioned to bring more force there quickly.*

Rick was correct, this ensures that the idea France has in mind right now (given the adjustments of all three allies) is to stay strong in the Western Quadruple. In the north they keep moving (slowly) for some time, with Russian, Samanid, Spanish, and Byzantine centers to take. If we look at this quadruple vs. that one, there is no doubt which one eliminates the other. I don't think any of those four have a good chance of survival at this point. But, as Rick suggests, the Mediterranean expansion after Corsica and Sardinia is going to be slow. I think it improves once the armies move down from the north and they can build a fleet on the other side of the boot. That could happen as early as this next game year.

**You are including Wagadu in the Western quadruple? I'm not sure how tightly linked Wagadu is to**

**France. They will be working together to stop the Indonesian navy, but otherwise they don't have that much in common.**

**Also, if France and Denmark stab Germany, there would no longer be a European triple, but a Franco-Danish alliance.**

**I think that Jim is being optimistic about the Med. Byzantium has enough forces (and tactical skills) there to hold his end of the Med for a long time.**

*Ultimately, if France wants a solo victory, he'll have to stab somebody. And he's got to view the Eastern alliance as his primary opposition. With that in mind, he might want to coordinate moves with the Arabians.*

The Wagadu, despite this year's deal, still are #1 on that

option list, Germany is second, and Denmark is third. But if this season is right in how they approached it, this date got quite a bit farther off. They can attack Axum and Arabia who themselves are attacking each other. In fact, that threat could end the Axum/Arabia war sooner than later. I have some ideas about this, but let me comment on them with other countries.

**I think that France wants Wagadu active in Africa. He serves a useful purpose holding the Indonesian fleets at bay. One of his other original allies is more likely.**

*Germany might lose Kiev in the coming year, but he should take Smolensk to compensate. Aside from a recapture of Kiev (if necessary), what is there? Possibly Dalmatia. Thrace? Seems unlikely. In the long-term, Germany is completely dependent on Denmark and France. If they decide to cut him out, they won't lose much. He's not well-positioned to go after them.*

**This is correct, but I'm more optimistic about the short run for Germany than Rick. I think Russia goes out this year, and he retains Kiev. I agree with Rick that Gregory's tactical ability in the Balkans will make that a slow tough slog there though. I could easily see Germany going after Byzantium and what's left of Russia next year, and France and Denmark making a coordinated attack on his unprotected centers.**

*And I really don't like how far his forces have gone beyond the SCs that support the forces. For example, if he moves correctly, France could take four SCs away from Germany at once. So Germany's existence is totally dependent on alliance loyalty. Personally I've found that's a good way to get yourself killed in this game.*

This is correct, but as long as Nigs believes that Germany is his best and quickest approach to taking out Byzantium and advancing in the Med, Germany is safe, and I think that is the calculation for now. Germany's problem is that if it looks like things are stalemating, then he gets cut out. There really is no choice, advance and live or stall and die. If Germany can participate in taking out Arabia too, eventually, he can still be part of a final draw if it ends up taking out all the central powers. This is his hope.

**Maybe, but I don't really see him getting that far. It would become too tempting to take the German centers, and then go after Byzantium.**

*The Umayyad army is sensibly disbanded, and Spain's last stand will depend on how long he can outguess the superior French force. Personally, I think he should try to retake Rome, which might be easier to defend. But that would require completely giving up on Sardinia and Corsica.*

I think it would have been more fun keeping the Army, especially since the long run is still death. Sardinia and Corsica eventually are dead anyway, so I agree that Rome is the target that saves the Balkans for Byzantium, if Spain cares about that. He then survives until Byzantium is outflanked through the Euxine Sea (either by Arabia, but more likely by Germany. But that's why I would have kept the A Zaw. Oh well.

**Pity you couldn't talk to Mikael about it, Jim-bob. :) It might have appealed to his sense of humor, too. But I agree that was the logical disband, and also that Spain isn't in this for much longer. He was doomed already when he lost his home country.**

*It won't really matter much for long. Spain is doomed.*

Right and then with it, the whole Med becomes a French dominated lake, and Arabia has no fleets there to stop this eventual move on the Arabian heartland, the Western Quadruple's problem here is Axum vs. Wagadu.

**I think that you eliminated Byzantium a little too quickly there. The rich Western Med is dominated by France, but I don't think he goes much further.**

*The Wagadu disband that I expected. Wagadu is actually well-positioned to finally get his armies in place to rebuff the Axum advances. He might even be able to retake Niore this year. The ability to borrow a force from Cadiz is vital here. If, instead, France had defended Cadiz and taken Tkanaren, Wagadu would be collapsing.*

I agree, and I did not see it this way before. There is some chance of stabilizing Wagadu until France can pump some more armies into North Africa and perhaps this line can be held. Then, it matters what the reconstituted Eastern Juggernaut decides to do. The outcome of all this can be the eventual complete collapse of the center, and an eventual draw between the four Western and two Eastern powers. But if Axum is the one primarily to take out Arabia and stays allied with the Eastern Juggernaut it is difficult to see how Wagadu survives long term. But the center in Cadiz is locally decisive.

**I also thought that the loan of Cadiz was arranged. In any case, it is certainly Wagadu's best disband.**

*So now the question in West Africa is how many armies Axum can get over there before the French beat him back. Also, will he be able to roll up the Arabian peninsula? Ultimately not a great position, but probably a bit better than if he'd just let himself end up between Arabia and France. Certainly he's not going to get anybody to trust him much for the rest of the game.*

I disagree a little bit. While Srivijaya and Axum did butt heads, they do now have a common goal, stopping the southern half of the Western Quadruple and taking out Arabia. If they jointly accomplish both tasks and stick together B. is part of a final draw. I don't see how Axum actually makes progress into France itself. But Wagadu still can fall.

The build commitment looks like it is to attacking the Arabian homeland. Here the key is the Samanid defense. I have not liked the coordination (or lack of it) that I've seen so far from John R. Unless the northern powers get their act together this year, Arabia has enough builds to stop the Axum attack next year. Then the question is whether Arabia and Axum reach a rapprochement in order to stop the Western Quadruple or not. I think they almost have to, But we will see. The Samanid hold the key here.

**The Axum builds are flexible, but they certainly could be used to continue the attack against Arabia. Both Axum and Arabia are very active diplomats, though; so I would certainly expect them to come to an agreement before Arabia really risks collapse.**

**Axum doesn't have to get into France; what he needs is a more important place in the center. Actually, he good have a place in the Eastern Med, too, since he holds Alexandria and will hold Jerusalem; and if he continues to make headway he could invest in opening the canal.**





*The Byzantine build I expected. The main problems for Byzantium are a lack of a powerful ally and a route for expansion. While he's relatively invulnerable in the near term, in the long-term, his presence is not large enough to look good for the endgame. Not without allies.*

A key for Byzantium is whether he is Arabia's ally or not. If Arabia continues to move north and opposes the France/Germany/Denmark units after finishing with the Samanid, then Byzantium might be able to hold out for awhile, perhaps with one remaining Russian lackey. But if Arabia moves out of Severyana and allows Pechenegs to fall, then Byzantium folds up from the rear quickly. We should see the evidence of this this year. I don't see any possibility for any other allies except for the doomed Spanish and Russians. I would convince Spain to take Rome now though.

**I agree with Rick here; Byzantium desperately needs to convince one of the major powers in the region that his help is indispensable. I don't see that happening, though.**

*Russia can retake Kiev presuming that the squabbling Asians don't bother to help Germany. But the northern 3 forces are surrounded and in big trouble. Not much to say beyond that. Not going to last long, unless as a 1-SC enclave a la India.*

I was thinking that Russia is in more trouble than this, but I suppose he could try to retake Kiev. The best western alliance move to take out Russian centers is two center attacks on all three northern Russian centers including Kiev-Smolensk. A Smolensk-Kiev with two supports will trump that, I suppose. Through the process of writing this season's comments I guess I can see how Russia could end up with Kiev and Pechenegs after this next game year more readily now. But only quick resolution of the Samanid/Arabian war in Arabia's favor with Arabia's support can stop a successful outflanking move by the western powers.

**In either case, the medium term prospects for Russia are bleak, and the long-term ones probably null.**

*Somehow I also thought that Turan had to remove three SCs. He's abandoned two SCs that China can pick up at will. And he's kept a core group of four armies in Russia.*

He has, but the Samanid have not shown the ability to make good coordinated calls with Lynn in China. This game year is crucial for that since even with only two removals, he does not have enough centers to make a stand. I see the Samanid as being out of the game now in two game years unless....

*It might be clever for Samanid and Arabia to mend fences. But I'm not expecting it. The Samanid position*

*is so thoroughly shot that he has little incentive to try to patch things up. I don't see any real possibilities here. Figuring out the exact tactics and all of the permutations is daunting. If any new alliances arise, a lot of different things could happen.*

The Samanid declare the peace with Arabia, or they make an alliance with the western powers. But neither of these makes sense for Arabia (who needs the centers quickly to stop the Axum attack on his homeland and where I expect him to pick up the centers he needs) or for the west who want to outflank the Byzantines to roll up the smaller central powers. But Samanid needs another alliance change now, so when you need it, you need to do the work to negotiate it. We'll see.

**The Samanid player hasn't shown any signs of active diplomacy before. Obviously, he is trying to talk at least with the Eastern Juggernaut now, but I would be surprised that he came up with a miraculous solution. His centers are more valuable to his neighbors than he himself is, which is not a recipe for success.**

*I keep toying with the possibility that Arabia work with France and the Western triple. Once Russia collapses, the Westies could use help moving forward. And even while the 19-SC Arabia looks dangerous, the Axum-Indonesia-China triple would be even bigger. But what we saw last move was France helping Samanid by cutting a support.*

*The coming year should tell us how good a player Matt is. His primary goal has to be reshaping the alliance structure. If he can pull that off, he'll be in the draw. If not, his stab at Samanid will be his undoing.*

**I agree with Rick here; it's now up to Arabia to instigate a new vision for the central and eastern powers, most probably without Samanidia. That's probably good for the Eastern Juggernaut and it has to be at least acceptable for Axum.**

This is correct, there are three or four ways that the endgame could play out and Arabia is central to them all. Let's outline them here.

1) Arabia joins the Western Quaduple and we end up taking out all the remaining little powers and declaring an Axum/Srivijayan/Chinese/Arabian/Wagadu/France/Germany/Denmark eight way draw.

2) Arabia perhaps makes up with Samanid, or otherwise sets up with Byzantium and China to wall off the Western advance and forces the West to take out Germany and Wagadu and perhaps even Russia survives in a slightly larger draw. There are a number of subplots to this approach.

3) Arabia is actually eliminated, it is a question then

whether Axum survives, but we end up with the Western Quadruple and the Eastern Juggernaut meeting in the middle of the board, probably a six way.

*Arabia's build shows that he, just like Samanid, has decided that he wants to keep fighting in Central Russia.*

**Agreed, I was rather surprise at it. If he was worried about collapsing from the Axum attacks, he would have built in Basra or Baghdad. Which I think indicates that he believes a diplomatic resolution possible.**

Yes, and the question here is whether the Samanid and the Eastern Juggernaut will make the right tactical choices, talking to each other and working out the moves. Last game year really was a bit of a disaster on that score, they made the wrong choices about Kashmir.

*India may even grow this year. Or might be eliminated.*

In the long run, still doesn't matter. Arabia could use the unit, so could the Eastern Juggernaut, it is up to India to decide.

**Agreed.**

*Well, China will certainly take at least one of the two SCs being left undefended. If he's good, he'll worry more about getting the armies moving than about taking the dots immediately. I suspect he'll be moving to Nepal.*

With the French army in Yugra, China is adjacent to France. I think the most interesting long term game issue is about how they decide to work together. There is an argument for throwing the Samanid completely under the bus at this point. China could pick up a lot this year that way. If Lynn feels that John R. is not talking enough, then that is one possibility. Rick suggests the other possibility, support into Nepal try to correct the attack on Kashmir that should have worked differently last year. But this is slow slog country and how many Samanid armies will be removed this year? If the Samanid make up with Arabia, then China loses this momentum, if they don't they're dead and China quickly runs up against the Western Quadruple. If I am Lynn, I take the centers now, take out the Samanid as quickly as possible, and then see what we've got left (see the three or four options above, all of which have China in the endgame). It is up to John R. to convince him otherwise.

**I agree that China has little incentive to work with Samanid at this point, especially as Arabia is in trouble now, too.**

**China should certainly be one of the big winners**

**from the successive central alliance stabs.**

*In the medium term, he'll need to make sure that French army doesn't move further East.*

Agreed, so they talk. I doubt Nigs is trying to do much more than set the boundaries of the line.

*Finally, a second Indonesian army! A convoy to Chalukya should ensure that Kannauj falls into friendly hands. Indonesia should net at least four SCs before needing to rethink his strategy. In the mid- to long-term, this is a fabulous position. He's got a strong ally in China, a path to grow, and has edged across the first stalemate line at South Africa.*

**I agree that an army was certainly the right build; it's been obvious for so long that an exclusively naval power has severe limits. Also that he can mastermind the fate of Kannauj and the ultimate fate of India. But I'm not sure that I see the four SCs he will take.**

**Not all that fabulous a position. Too far from the center of things to solo or even be one of the major powers, although that is improving now. But a position very likely to be part of any draw.**

Agreed, the much maligned Eastern Juggernaut (by us) is now firmly in the reins for the endgame. What will be interesting in the endgame statements is to see how much they influenced the Arabian stab of the Samanid. Clearly Srivijaya especially is gaining from this while Arabian survival is on some queasy standing, so since it was SO clear that Srivijaya and China were the big winners they had to have some influence. The other question is what to do with Axum. I think the most likely scenario is that Axum stays in an alliance, but it is by no means certain. France seems to have ensured that the Wagadu fleets are staying put. But you can start funneling fleets up the west coast of Africa and then it gets difficult. The Western Quadruple needs a fleet in the Tadrar Sea. Let's see if the French get there by moving through Tkanaren in the spring. The correct tactics are:

Spring: F Sea of Worms to Tkanaren, F South Ocean to Gokomere, F Western support that (stops them trying to slide Srivijayan fleets up)

Fall: F Tkanaren to Tadrar Sea, F South Ocean to Gokomere, F Western support that again. Then you can afford to be bouncing advances of more fleets. It is not yet a stalemate line, but it is close enough to slow that advance. Then Srivijaya has to decide whether to support B. or attack him.