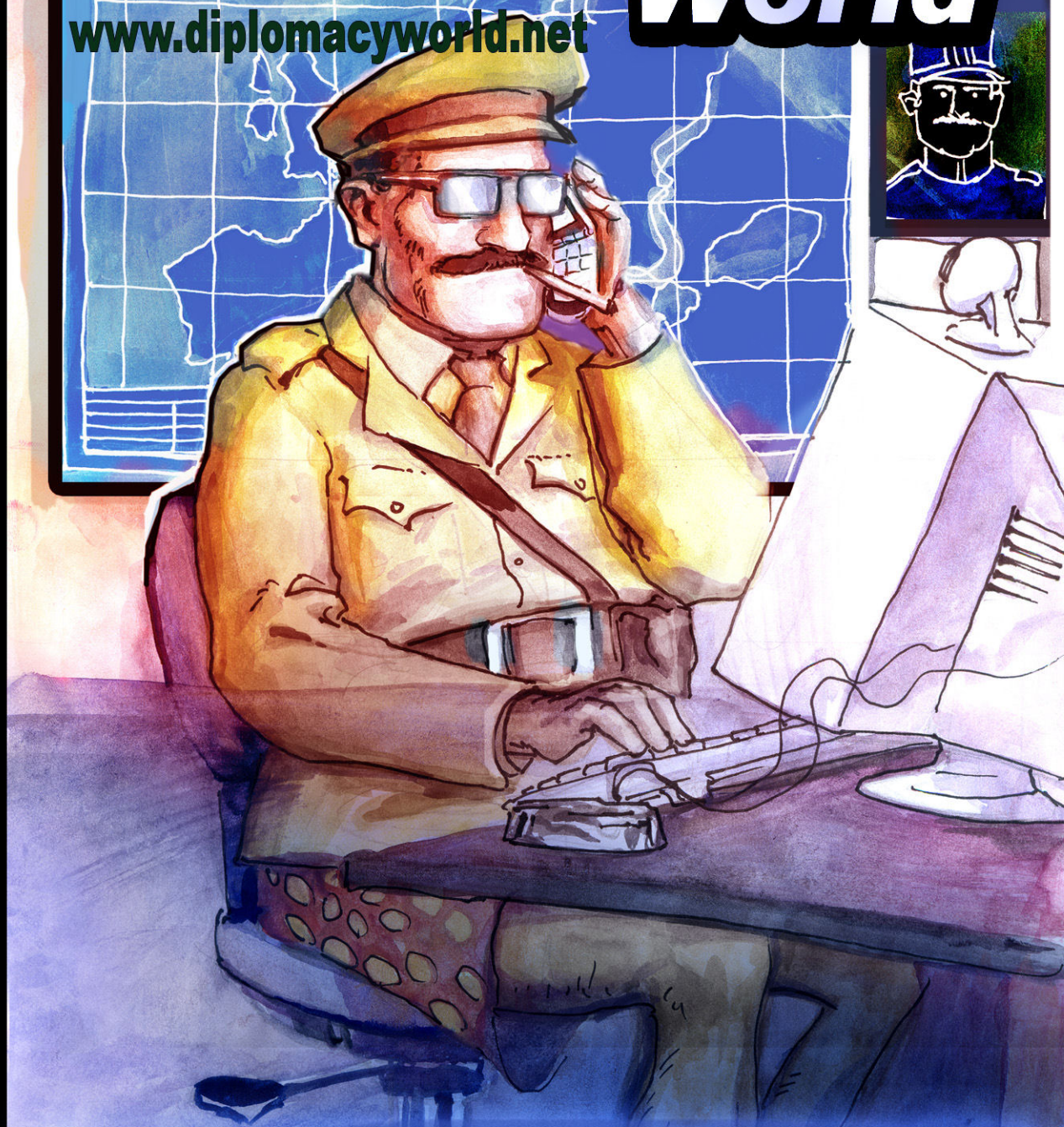




Diplomacy World

Issue #111 - Fall 2010
www.diplomacyworld.net



INTERNET DIPLOMACY

SN 2010.

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to another issue of Diplomacy World. This was one of those issues where I didn't seem to have any real direction. I did my usual job of bugging people, begging for articles and material...and it seemed to work. But there wasn't any particular focus to my actions; in some ways I was simply going through the motions. I think the issue came out rather well anyway, but it does concern me to feel less enthusiasm for my work as Lead Editor. Hopefully it is just a passing phase. If not...well, then it will be time to begin giving serious consideration to looking for a successor.

We are making a few changes with Diplomacy World. The biggest of those is that we are dropping the idea of planned theme issues, at least on a regular basis. Perhaps we'll schedule a theme issue once every three or four issues, but the idea has run out of steam. At first the themes seemed to inspire some new contributors to submit something. Now it has reached the point where it is a problem finding ANY material that fits the theme. I'd rather people write about what they WANT to write about...so after the next two themes have been used, the idea will be tossed by the wayside. Back in my first stint as Lead Editor, I'd decide what the cover story should be very close to the deadline, based on what I had on hand and what I enjoyed personally. In the post-postal age, I don't even know if that is necessary. Nemanja Simic has been designing colorful and often humorous covers for us, and I am sure he can continue to do so without a theme or a "cover story" to guide him. Since each issue contains a wide variety of material, I don't see a reason to focus on one article over another.

This leads me (sort of) to the results of the Diplomacy World Survey that appeared in last issue. I had hoped for more responses, but in truth we received nearly 40. As a percentage of the number of times Diplomacy World is downloaded per issue, that's miniscule. But compared to other reader-participation ideas I've tried over the last few years, it's a veritable landslide. So I'll gladly look at that glass as half full.

I can't say I was surprised by the survey results. The general consensus from the **Diplomacy World** readership is: there isn't a general consensus. Most of you really enjoy the Strategy & Tactics articles, but a small group of respondents list them as least favorite (mostly long-time hobby members). Others are devout variant fans, while some listed variant material as basically useless to them. Clearly, we have a wide range of readers, with a similar wide range of interests.

I did learn a few things which were interesting. One, which those of us on staff have been saying for some

time, is that Diplomacy World needs more face-to-face material. One person even suggested we dedicate space to particular clubs or tournaments in each issue. That isn't really necessary; the fact is, if you run a game at your house and want to write about it, send it in! I've been begging people to write about their ftf experiences, whether it's about international conventions or simple house games. Likewise, if you have an internet site where you play Diplomacy and want to write something about that, feel free to do so. There's no need to dedicate particular space for each club or website...we'll just deal with that we receive on a per-issue basis.

One other comment I noticed on a few surveys is that **Diplomacy World** is simply too long. One person mentioned they are hesitant to submit any articles because they think with issues being so big, nobody will read it. If you take the other surveys as a guide, nothing could be further from the truth. So many responders mention they read every single page...so don't be intimidated! But when it comes to length, it is true that the last few issues have been quite long. The Known World Demo Game has been a primary factor, but that section is coming to a close this issue, which should lighten the load quite a bit.

Another comment that appeared on some survey was the idea that **Diplomacy World** should actually come out more frequently, either 6 times or 12 times a year. While I'd like to accommodate all the ideas and requests, *that* one is simply not going to happen...not while I am Lead Editor, at any rate. Quarterly issues are about all I can handle, and almost every issue the majority of material arrives in the two to three weeks prior to the deadline. Back when **Diplomacy World** started under Walter Buchanan, I believe it came out every two months. But that isn't something you can expect any time in the near future. Quarterly issues have been the standard for quite some time, and that's the way it will stay.

Thanks to all of you who took the time and trouble to submit a survey. And I am happy to report that the Dirk Knemeyer was randomly selected as the prize winner. I really appreciate all the feedback, folks!

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is January 1st, 2011. Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com! See you in the New Year, and happy stabbing!

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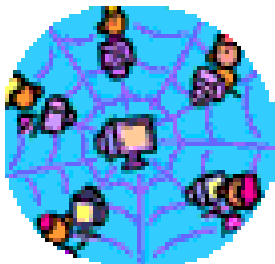
Contributions are welcomed and will earn you accolades and infinite thanks. Persons interested in the vacant staff positions may contact the managing editor for details or to submit their candidacy or both. The same goes for anyone interested in becoming a columnist or senior writer. Diplomacy is a game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

Themes for Upcoming Diplomacy World Issues:



Diplomacy World #112: Russia – Surviving War on Multiple Fronts

Deadline for #112 Submissions – Jan. 1, 2011



Diplomacy World #113: Using Social Networks in Diplomacy

Deadline for #113 Submissions – Apr. 1, 2011

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The Top Board at World DipCon

By Peter McNamara (Photos by Laurent Joly)

There is a saying in poker that goes along the lines of "If, after the first twenty minutes, you don't know who the sucker at the table is, it's you." Well this saying holds true in Diplomacy too, as I discovered on the top board of WDC 2010.

So on Sunday morning at World DipCon XX, it just so happened that I found myself playing France on the top board in a bid to become World Champion. Alongside me striving for the same goal were Xavier Blanchot in England, Igor Kurt in Russia, Fabian Strauss in Italy, Gwen Maggi in Germany, Chris Brand in Turkey and Frank Oschmiansky in Austria. The game was to end after eight game years, the person with the most centers being declared champion; in the case of a tie, the person who chose his country last would win the tiebreaker.

Against this consistently high quality of opposition, all aspects of play immediately become much tougher. Offensively, it is harder to find openings in an opponent's defense to capitalize on, while on the flip side, one is not able to get away with as many errors as is possible against weaker opposition. On what was my first top board experience, I found that under ever-increasing pressure, I was making mistakes throughout the game. This started out with minor errors, such as a misplaced fleet here or there, building up to major blunders that form the subject of the rather interesting last few turns.

The game started out rather sedately in the north, as I maneuvered in an ultimately fruitless manner, attempting to find a nonexistent opportunity to profit at the expense of one of my neighbors. Eventually, in an attempt to create some movement in the north, I allowed Xavier's F NTH-ENG to succeed in order to allow Gwen's German fleet into the North Sea.



Top Board at World DipCon

But then all of a sudden, I had lost Marseilles to Fabian's Italy and found myself in a Western triple. This triple, together with some surprise Italian misorders, allowed

me to regain sole control of Marseilles and Iberia, and propelled Gwen's Germany to outright favoritism, with the most likely challengers appearing to be Fabian and Frank in Italy and Austria respectively.

Fast forward now a couple of years to 1907, where Fabian has unilaterally pulled all of his forces east to allow myself and Xavier to put some pressure on Gwen's Germany, turning what was threatening to be a cakewalk into a contest. And we come to what was undoubtedly the most talked about stab of the tournament, in Fall 1907. (Remember, this is a full year before time is called).



Igor, Chris, and Peter

A lot has been made of the fact that on this turn Xavier showed me one set of orders, and had secretly compiled another set of orders which he ultimately submitted. From my point of view, the really disappointing thing was not Xavier's party trick with the two sets of orders, but that I had allowed myself to be talked into a situation where I was submitting such an odious set of orders that facilitated the possibility of an English stab. From a diplomatic perspective, I felt that Xavier had gotten stronger and stronger as the game progressed, while my own play took the opposite trajectory. Under the pressure, I had wilted to the point where I was agreeing to things I would not or should not normally agree to, and I felt I was stabbed in a setup that was reminiscent of some of my earlier tournament experiences when I was a tournament beginner that was stab-able with ease.

And now we get to the aftermath... 1908, the final year of the game, where the world champion is crowned. I have only three centers left, and it has become mathematically impossible for me to win the title. I have read others thoughts on the topic of how everyone on a top board goes into the game with ambitions of winning, but come the latter stages of the game, when one is no longer in the running, then one can tend to choose a favored candidate amongst those still alive based on their conduct throughout the game. For me I was

thinking that "Yes, I want to win. But now that this is not possible, I want the winner to have genuinely earned his title." Above all, I don't want to be considered to be the fish on the board whose weak play unbalances the board, determining the winner.



Peter and Xavier

In 1908 Xavier's England has come back from the dead, is suddenly on six centers going on eight, and I feel a responsibility to the rest of the board for allowing this to happen. My aim now is to see if Xavier can be prevented from winning, but the prospects for this look bleak. So in the final move of the game, out comes the big move - I

order PAR-BRE, BEL-RUH(!) and PIC S (German) HOL-BEL. With Gwen gaining Belgium and winning a guess in Scandinavia, he also goes up to eight centers, which ensconces him as the new world champion by virtue of having the advantage of the tiebreaker.

And finally, one little twist at the end. Fabian's Italy also managed to get to eight centers, and he also had the advantage of the tiebreaker over Xavier (but not over Gwen). That this occurred came as a complete surprise to me. I had only taken a cursory glance at the southern half of the board, but it didn't look to me that there was anyone there who would be able to muster the required number of centers to win. If I had known that Fabian was also going to get to eight centers, then I would never have walked out of Belgium. The gifting of centers isn't the way that I play, nor is it the way I think the game should be played. It just happened to be the only solution I could find to the problem I faced at the board.

Congratulations must go to Gwen, who did play a fantastic game to win, and many thanks to Frank Oosterom and his helpers for making the whole event a success. Now on to Sydney in 2011!

Peter McNamara....so close to the trophy, and yet so far. Better luck, and sharper knives, next time!

Playing Two Countries

By Mark Stretch

Diplomacy in the UK had been declining, but over the past year, the corner seems to have been turned, with a few new events springing up, and numbers increasing at existing events. However, what do you do when the numbers don't divide by 7?

We had exactly that problem at ManorCon recently, when 19 people signed up for the Saturday round. The solution we went for was for two of us (Dave Norman and me) to play on two boards at the same time. You might think that playing two boards would give us a disadvantage, without attentions distracted, yet between us we posted 3 of the top 4 results of the day. So, why did this happen? There are a number of possible reasons:

Perception: Everybody knew our attention would be distracted and thus we seemed to be a soft touch and loyal ally. We weren't going to cause lots of fireworks with 2 games to worry about, and thus would be sought after as an ally.

Experience: Dave & I have both been around the

diplomacy block a few times (at the last count 120 events between us). Thus we knew what we were doing.

Chance: This certainly played a part. I had a quiet Turkish corner position in one game that didn't require huge amounts of time/attention for the first few years. It could therefore grow quietly whilst I focused on the other board. I was then able to agree a draw on that board and return my attention to the Turkish game when things became more interesting in the mid game.

The result of it was 17 centers for Dave (16 & 1) and 23 for me (14 & 9). I can't help feeling it will be sometime before I reach 23 centers in a single round again.

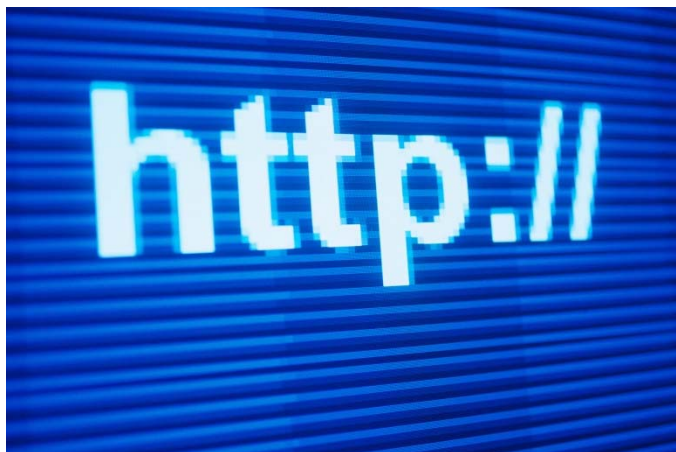
The solution to the problem – we need a few more people along next year so that we get a multiple of 7. See you all in Leicester next July – more details on www.manorcon.org.uk

Mark Stretch is a fixture in the UK Diplomacy community. Visit him at ManorCon!

Press in Internet Diplomacy

By Joshua Danker-Dake

What's the biggest difference between internet Diplomacy and face-to-face Diplomacy? *Communication*. The basics of good communication are still the same: be a good listener, be a compromiser, don't lie unnecessarily, don't overplay your hand, and so forth. But in internet Diplomacy, the nuance is gone. Things like tone of voice, body language, and eye contact are all removed, replaced by plain, simple, emotionless black-on-white text.



It's tempting to try to read and re-read between the lines of every press you receive. The paranoid mind (so key for a good Diplomacy player) may analyze each missive with every tool short of the Rosetta stone, often to no avail.



But who can blame you for that? An internet Diplomacy exchange can range from a simple, "Can you support me into Rumania? I'll support you into Bulgaria on the next turn," to a three-page master plan that your

neighbor spent two hours writing.

The short presser will say, "Look, I must be telling you the truth – if I were lying, surely I would dress it up to make it more believable." Meanwhile, the long presser will say, "Look how much effort I put into writing this – surely it means I'm telling the truth" (it may just mean he doesn't have a social life).

So is long press better or worse than short press? Well, neither. The key is to be consistent. Let's look at it from the other side: I've received just about every sort of press imaginable. If a player who's sent concise presses the entire game all of a sudden sends me a big, long message, or if a player who always sends lengthy messages all of a sudden just says, "Yeah, okay, let's do that" to a complex plan I've suggested, I get ready for a stab which is more than likely coming.

Granted, the players who get flustered when they try to lie over email are probably the worst liars on earth. But the ones who say, "I'm about to stab him, so I don't have to put in the effort to communicate about plans I have no intention of following," are just lazy.



Don't be lazy. This is Diplomacy. The best stab is the one your opponent can't recover from, and that's usually the one he never saw coming. Press is a major tool in your internet Diplomacy toolbox, and getting sloppy on press can be as disastrous as getting sloppy on tactics. Stay on top of it, and keep smiling.

Joshua remains our esteemed and Titan-like Strategy and Tactics Editor.

Late Arrivals at the Diplomacy Players Ball

by Richard Walkerdine

Well the orchestra has now finished tuning its instruments and many of the guests have already arrived. But there are still quite a few to come and in fact I can see several entering even as I speak. Let me see if I recognise them.

Yes, there are Mr and Mrs ASTOPOL and their son SEB, Mr and Mrs TERN-MEDSEA and their son WES, Mr and Mrs BURGH and their son EDDIE N, Mr and Mrs ENNA and their lovely daughter VI, Mr and Mrs LESIA and their son CY, Mr and Mrs Garia and their wrestler son Adam who seems to have built up a lot of muscle (that must be why they call him Big 'BULL' GARIA), Mr and Mrs SEE and their daughter IRIS and Mr and Mrs Bain (though why isn't their son AL BAIN 'ERE?). Goodness that was quite a rush.



And now the orchestra has started playing the first dance (though I don't know what the TUNIS) and even more guests are arriving. There is the famous Swedish actress LIV HERNIA (who seems to be in a bit of pain), the American feminist novelist NORA PHREAKER, the well known Australian cricketer Gary Coney (known to his mates as 'GAZ' CONEY), Mr and Mrs KARRA and their daughter ANN, Mr and Mrs ANIANSEE and their son TERRY and a very good looking French couple, 'BEAU' HEMIA and 'BELLE' JUMME. The dance floor is filling up quite quickly now.

Oh isn't that nice? Sally Tugal has been kind enough to buy a ticket for her impoverished younger brother 'POOR' TUGAL. And just behind them I see Lady Bia and her husband SIR BIA, closely followed by Mr and

Mrs TIN-OPAL and their beautiful daughter CONSTANCE and two American visitors, AL BANIA and BUD APEST. Excuse me for a moment while I sip my cocktail, my throat is getting quite dry.



That's better. And still the guests are arriving. I can see the famous duo of nude go-go dancers 'BARE' LYNNE and 'BARE' ENTSEE accompanied by their bodyguards DEN, MARK and CLYDE (I'm afraid I don't know their last names), all the way from Russia we have the RIATIKSY family including their son ADE and from the circus we have the lady with the enormous tooth 'TUSK' ANNIE. The place is beginning to get quite crowded now, I hope the refreshments don't run out.

But still more guests are arriving. I can see Mr and Mrs MEND-STATEMENT with their daughter GAY, from America we have Mr and Mrs MINATION with their son E LEE, behind them is the well known actress MISS A JUDY KAYSHUN and the famous Spanish bullfighter Eduardo Torial (better known as EDDIE TORIAL). Surely all the guests have arrived now?

But no, there are still some more late arrivals. There is an elderly French couple, MA SAY and PA RISS, Mr and Mrs VOY and their son CON and - goodness, I do believe that is the Chinese ambassador, LEE PAN TO. They are followed by Mr and Mrs Order and their daughter MISS ORDER (I'm afraid I don't know her first name), Mr and Mrs DOFF and their son STAN and, finally, Mr and Mrs TOR and their son EDDIE.

I think that's all. Yes, the doors have been closed.

Richard Walkerdine lives in a universe all his own.

Olympia: Large Scale Fantasy War Gaming -- For Free

Adapted by Tom Droeshout (from a piece by Greg Lindahl)

The Play by E-mail industry offers a few things which are hard to find in face-to-face gaming: a large number of opponents (150-300), and the ability to play whenever you have time. Olympia is a game which does even better than most Play by E-mail games: in Olympia, you are immersed in a fantasy campaign in which you can play with (potentially) hundreds of other players for years.

Moreover you can handle everything (turn reports, orders, diplomatic email) through your Smartphone, netbook or tablet.

The basic unit controlled by a player is a human nobleman. Each noble will generally be accompanied by a number of commoners, namely soldiers and workers and so forth. Commoners are basically faceless property who must accompany a noble at all times, and can even be traded among players.

There are two basic currencies in the game: gold and noble points. Noble points are used to buy new nobles and a few special skills, such as magical skills. Each faction starts the same number of noble points, and gradually acquires more as they grow older. New players get the same benefits when joining later.

Gold is used to recruit troops, pay for their upkeep, and buy things at markets.

Nobles can study a large number of skills at cities. They can also research and learn hidden skills. Difficult skills such as black magic require both noble points and lots of time to learn. A large number of different schools of magic and religion exist, and most mages will know spells from several of them. My favorite school of spells is weather magic; these spells allow a mage to summon storms, which last many turns and be slowly flown around the map. Starting safe havens permit the new players to start at ease and explore the game.

Nobles and noble points reinforce the role-playing aspects of the game. As a player, you are actively playing the 3-10 nobles in your faction. You can choose to use your noble points to recruit a large number of nobles and go into economic activities and exploration, or recruit a smaller number of powerful mages, or some combination thereof. If you lose a war, you might lose all your gold and commoners, but you will retain your noble points, and can rebuild your faction. Powerful factions will most likely not have enough noble points to carry out as many different missions as they'd like, so they will hire other players to help. And that's where the diplomacy comes in.

The world of Olympia consists of a series of islands (cf the map). The map is a large one in the sense that there is enough room for a new player to sail off to the ends of the world and carve out their own little empire. Or, they can stick to civilization, or try to take over someone else's empire. Ships and structures such as castles and towers can be built by players. Castle owners can levy taxes, and a noble with enough power can become king of their island.

The economics in Olympia are relatively simple. Every economic aspect of the game has some sort of limit which allows steady growth, but not runaway growth. For example, only a limited number of peasants can be recruited in every province every turn. City markets buy and sell some goods, but only so many items per turn, to be sold or purchased on a first-come first-served basis. Armies cost a lot of gold to maintain, so players are unlikely to keep their maximum-size army around all the time, and will frantically attempt to mobilize more soldiers as the enemy approaches.

The noble points are capped too, so that makes the game more even between players.

The game lacks a GUI, but then again making complex orders is an art in itself. It makes the distinction between good and mediocre players.

Much of the realistic feel of the game comes from simultaneous movement. Each weekly turn represents one month of game time, which is divided into 30 game days. All players' orders are executed in lock-step, which means that everyone's orders for day 1 are processed, and then everyone's orders for day 2, and so on. Most large open-ended games process each player's orders for an entire turn at once, which can lead to strange effects depending on whose orders get processed first. I don't think "OK, I'll escape the pursuing forces if my turn runs first, but I'll be caught if theirs runs first." Games which process each player's orders separately also make it difficult for players to interact with each other during the turn.

Olympia has no such problems, and offers a large number of orders which can be used to synchronize movement among nobles of the same or different factions. For example, a noble can move to a location, rendezvous with nobles from a different faction, and then, if the other noble is accompanied by the promised number of soldiers, proceed to attack the enemy. Although these orders can be somewhat complicated to use correctly, they offer an easy way to work with other players, security against screw-ups, and security against the occasional betrayal.

A few things about Olympia are quite nice and deserve special mention. First off, like any all-email game, all of the other players are an email message away. Second, a mail-forwarding system is provided which allows players to send a message to any noble they've seen at any time, even if you have no idea who the owner is.

Third, the all-email nature of the game allows much more player input than you normally find in a normal strategy pc game. Thanks to the connectivity of smartphones, netbooks and tablets, the game can be played when you have spare time and immediately.

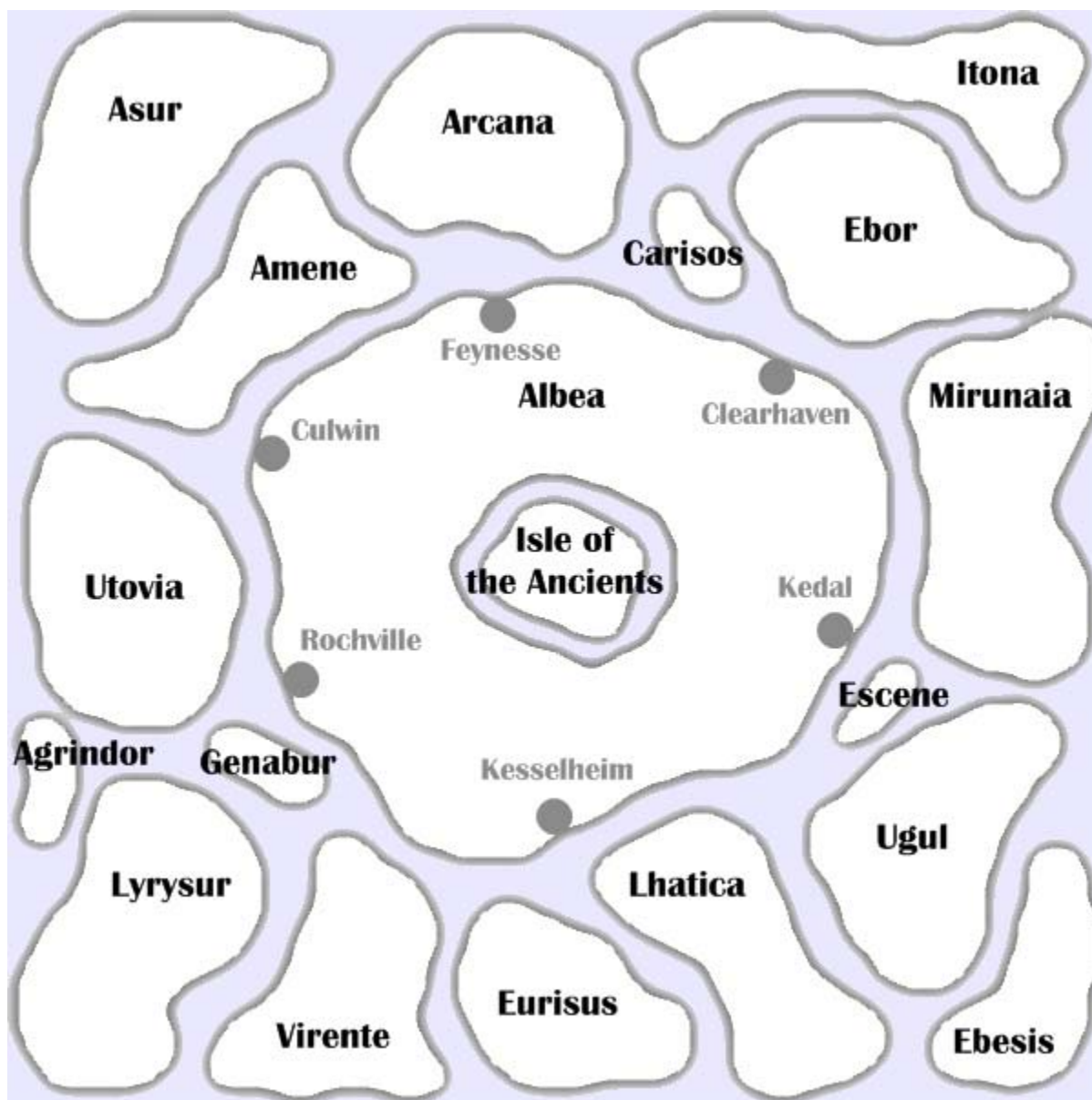
Finally, there are skills which a noble can use to hide which faction they are loyal to. This provides the opportunity for a player to be a staunch pillar of the community while controlling a vicious gang of thieves out

raiding his friend's caravans. If the thief leader isn't caught, then the true owner is safe.

So how much does it cost to play Olympia? Olympia is completely free, it has been made open source by the game designer in 2009 (after being dormant for some years). Game 3 has been re-launched by former players as a service to the community.

Game 3 counts 153 players on turn 4. Olympia is like Diplomacy writ large. Enjoy ...

Olympia (Game 3) can be found at <http://olympia.v-labs.be/g3/>. Anybody who gives it a try on the basis of this article, we'd be interested in your opinion. Send a Letter to the Editor (diplomacyworld "of" yahoo.com)!



Tournament Report: 3rd Annual DiplomaticCorp WinterBlitz!

By Dirk Knemeyer

"63 players. 17 Boards. 7+ Months. 2 Rounds. 1 Winter Blitz Champion."

The 3rd Annual Winter Blitz at www.diplomaticcorp.com concluded this week (on Monday, August 23). Loaded with highlights, the tournament featured both DiplomaticCorp (DC) regulars and some talented assassins from other sites, who came in to claim the title for themselves. New players and old, solo artists and those just having a good time, it was an intense 7+ months of Diplomacy goodness.

First things first: an online tournament? Generally an oxymoron in the Dip community, most online games are "just games", whereas tournaments dominate most organized face-to-face play. Indeed, most of the face-to-face players I've talked to and played with turn up their nose at online play of any kind. It is a shame. While online Dip loses some of the immediacy and intensity of old-school play, it ably replaces that with that most precious of resources: time. Time to really work people diplomatically. Time to dissect the board and prepare a great strategy, failing tactically because of mistakes - not a lack of time. That is not to say online is better; just different. Sometimes steak, sometimes sushi: it all depends on the quality of the food and what mood you're in. For those of you who eschew online games the Winter Blitz is a great way to translate FTF Dip into online.

Now, the tournament basics:

- One full year of game play is completed each year. Spring orders are due Monday, Summer Tuesday, Fall Thursday and Autumn+Winter Friday. It's a brisk pace, one that appeals greatly to me as a hybrid Dipper but might also work well for FTF'ers who don't relish the idea of Dip games that last six months.
- No replacements. Online Dip has a reputation for player abandonment. In reality it is a nuisance more than a problem but, in this tournament, the original player for each nation finishes the whole game. Or, if they drop out, their pieces simply hold. While this might sound destabilizing in theory, no meaningful result in the entire tournament was decided by an abandonment. Quality games at quality sites like DC retain players.
- Spotlight Seeding. Top finishers from Round 1 are going to find themselves against better players in Round 2. To win Winter Blitz you're going to need to beat opponents who actually, y'know, win.
- Scoring. You play two games, add up your score from both, and the highest score wins. Points are given solely

by the game's end position, not one's center count throughout. A key difference from most online tournaments, this approach rewards aggressiveness and going for wins, as opposed to some of the turtling strategies to amass points common in FTF tourneys.

The first round started in early January; the second round kicked off in April. The guns stopped firing in late August. In between a lot of excellent games were played.

ROUND 1

dc291 - GM (Cory Burris/coryfucius) - 2-way England (Nathan Deilly/ndeilly/11 SC) and Turkey (Dirk Knemeyer/dknemeyer/11 SC) draw in Spring 1910. Austria (Laurence Granier/paetunya/6 SC) and Russia (Michael Thompson/psychosis1973/6 SC) survived. England and Turkey jumped out to strong advantages in their respective spheres and engineered this draw with the other two survivors, systematically taking out the other players to maximize center count. This would prove important in the overall tournament, as everyone eliminated - France (Jonathan Nicol/quozl/0 SC), Germany (Nigel Phillips/Nigs/0 SC) and Italy (Marc Peters/Gozilla/0 SC) all had excellent second rounds and could have competed for the title.

dc292 GM (Sam Buck/samnuva) - 3-way Austria (Michael Werner/grimlock/13 SC), France (Anthony Stevens /FLTeacher/8 SC) and Russia (Warren Fleming/alwayslured/13 SC) draw in Fall 1913. Germany (Mike Barnes/wiley/0 SC) - thanks to Italy (Brian Lam/briankingfox/0 SC) - and Turkey (Scott Ellis/crimson_93/0 SC) - thanks to losing the eastern triangle - never really got started. England (John Robillard/bunwarpgazoo/0 SC) was outflanked by surging France, while Italy's untenable north-south deployment was exploited by the eager Easterners. There would be no survivors in this bloodbath.

dc293 GM (Adam Martin-Schwarze/AceRimmer)- 2-way Russia (Chris Morse/Corrino/15 SC) and Turkey (Jeffrey Krause/JeffreyK/12 SC) draw in Spring 1910. Why do people fear the Juggernaut? See dc293 for Exhibit A. Working with Italy (Jean-Luc Granier/phantomas/0 SC) in the early game to slice-and-dice Austria (David Harrison/Stepper/0 SC) they wasted little time in devouring their erstwhile ally and steamrolling surrounded Germany (Jeremiah Lee/jeremiah/0 SC). England (Eric Marr/ericjmarr/4 SC) and France (Joe Payne/billyjoebobfred1/3 SC) must have been sated by simple survival under the circumstances, with 4 and 3 SC respectively.

dc294 - GM (Christine Stoy/notasb) - 3-way France

(Joao Queiros/jlqueiros/10 SC), Italy (Sam Buck/samnuva/16 SC) and Russia (Bruce Ray/raybrucea/8 SC) draw in Spring 1915. One of the more exciting first round games, unlikely Italy seemed poised for a solo before the veterans manning France and Russia formed a stalemate line and forced an unpalatable draw for the Italian. Austria (Bret Pollack/bret_pollack/0 SC) was never able to get started as Italy and Russia worked with Turkey (Matthew Jones/lord_granite/0 SC) to jettison him in 1902. Unlike in dc293 Turkey was the odd man out of this game's Italian-amended eastern triangle (square?) and followed in 1906. In the west early Anglo-French fighting and slow progress by Germany (Andrew Cassese/landru428/0 SC) bogged down that side of the board. By 1906 France had England outflanked while Germany found himself smack in the middle of the three eventual winners, the easterners being newly freed to push west with the elimination of Turkey. Both England (Scott Troemel/packrat/0 SC) and Germany would fall in 1910, leaving the victors to finish out.

dc295 - GM (Michael Boutot/vegas_iwish) 3-way Austria (Hamish Williams/chota_catsfather/11SC), Italy (John Reside/untitled36/11 SC) and Russia (Daan Schrama/Daan/11 SC) draw in Fall 1912. It always makes me smile when Austria AND Italy make it into a draw! The western powers continue to struggle in this one. Austria took the middle, Italy the south and Russia the north. The early game was relatively ambiguous with France (David Cross/Meme/0 SC) and Turkey (Max Victory/pieandmash/0 SC) struggling the most, being on the outside of their respective triangles. They both departed in 1905, followed by Germany (Mikael Johansson/m_don_j/0 SC) in 1909. The AIR steamroller rolled on in what appeared to be an engineered result, ending with 11 each and allowing England's Greg Olson/evapollo88/1 SC) survival.

dc296 -GM (Fredrik Blom/z93blom) - 3-way Austria (Dan Dzikowicz/ddz999cat23/7 SC), France (Charles Welsh/ConradW/11SC) and Russia (Fabrice Essner/demainlesdauphins/15 SC) draw in Fall 1911. Italy (Joshua Tag/sanjat312/0 SC) and Turkey (Maria Montes/MMGreenwich/0 SC) were never able to get on track and were the first two out. In 1903 Russia had but four centers and was under a withering attack from England (Mark Utterback/MDemagogue/0 SC); indeed, by Fall 1904 England garrisoned Norway and St. Petersburg, owned Denmark and had a fleet in the Barents Sea. By the end of 1906 Mother Russia was fully sovereign, England was on his heels, and the end game was beginning to become clear. Germany (Frank Bielschowsky/bielf11/1 SC) was the only survivor with 1 lone army in Munich, humorously surrounded by enemy armies in all of Burgundy, Belgium, Holland, Kiel, Berlin, Silesia, Bohemia and Vienna. Not to mention Paris, Poland and Vienna for good measure!

dc297 - GM (Darryl Good/dipknight) - German (Joe

Hackett/jhack16/18 SC) Solo in Fall 1913. 1901 looked like trouble for the winner as England (Eric Hunter/Dip_Power_915/1 SC) and France (Joe Babinsack/chaosonejoe/0 SC) teamed up to attack the German. However in 1902 England flipped sides and France would be fully eliminated by 1907; England would eventually survive with one center. In the east Russia (Derek Eyler/derekthefear2/0 SC) got off to a fast southern start with assistance from both Austria (Will Fleming/Mr. Smiley/15 SC) and Turkey (Douglas Fresh/Douglas_E_Fresh/0 SC). However, a stab of Austria proved short-lived and, in alliance with Germany, Austria grew into a major power while the other easterners were eliminated. Italy (Michael Penner/Viper/0 SC) benefitted for a time from the eastern conflict and French vacuum but was also victimized.

dc298 - GM (John Reside/untitled36) - Russia (Nick Powell/DrSwordopolis/21 SC) Solo in Fall 1922. The longest game in Winter Blitz history. Incredibly, no players were eliminated until 1910 - Austria (Matt Ruhlen/mruhlen/0 SC) was the first to go. He was followed by Germany (Dale Grantham/dgrantham/0 SC) and Turkey (Gregory Bim-Merle/Tirendil/0 SC) in 1911. Britain (Rob Bristol/chknbrstl/0 SC) would also be eliminated at the very end. The early leaders were England and Italy (Alan Farrington/AlanRFarrington/9 SC) along with France (Clark L/cl2849/4 SC) . England and France remained powerful into the second decade before England's decline. Only then did Italy and Russia - both of whom started slow - with Russia down to a mere 2 SC from 1904 - 1906! - ascend and set up the FIR end game. By 1914 it seemed apparent the game would end a draw or Russian solo; it is impressive that Russia saw it through.

dc299 - GM (Alan Farrington/AlanRFarrington) - 3-way Austria (Tim Crosby/fencertim/13 SC), England (Ross Webb/rodtheworm/10 SC) and Germany (Paul Russell/PARussell/7 SC) draw in 1913. This game featured a fascinating opening: at the end of 1901 France (Jason Koelewyn/Githraine/1 SC) had an army in Piedmont, a German army was in Tyrolia, Italy's (Paol Hurup/hurup/3 SC) two armies were moored in Venice and Apulia, hanging on for dear life, and Russia (Eric Brown/PeaceWithHonor/0 SC) had armies in Bohemia and Galicia. Turkey (Dan Huck/Colonel_Mustard/0 SC) had navigated his fleet out to the Aegean, as well. But the eventual victors had the best starts, each earning two builds and with superior strategic position. When the dust settled Russia and Turkey were eliminated while France and Italy were battered, but with their sovereignty somewhat intact.

Unfortunately, Rounds 1 and 2 overlap, so in real-life some of these games were happening at the same time as Round 2 contests. Pretending for a moment they were fully sequential, coming out of Round 1 the top players to watch in Round 2 had to start with Nick Powell

(DrSwordopolis). His taking an early 2 SC Russia to a convincing 21 SC solo was impressive. The other solo start from Round 1, Joe Hackett (jhack16) also stood as a clear threat to take the title. Of the draw winners, Sam Buck (samnuva) nearly getting a solo as Italy and finishing with 16 SC certainly deserves attention. The other real star performer from Round 1, Fabrice Essner (demaillesdauphins), who took an almost conquered Russia to a skillful 15 SC draw, did not continue to play in Round 2 leaving us to imagine, "What if?!"

Let's take a look at Round 2 in the order that games completed, and/or saving the games that finally decided the title until the very end. A handful of player dropped out of the Winter Blitz between rounds so this was an 8 board round instead of 9:

dc315 - GM (Alan Farrington/AlanRFarrington) - 4 way Austria (Jonathan Nicol/quozl/5 SC), England (Derek Eiler/derekthefear2/16 SC), France (Maria Montes/MMGreenwich/7 SC) and Turkey (Dale Grantham/dgrantham/6 SC) draw in spring 1913. The other three players were eliminated. The highest tournament finisher from this group was Eiler, in a modest 28th place.

dc316 - GM (Cory Burris/coryfucius) - 2-way Italy (Eric Brown/PeaceWithHonor/11 SC) and Russia (Marc Peters/Gozilla/14 SC) draw in Spring 1907. England (Michael Penner/Viper/6 SC) and France (Matt Ruhlen/mruhlen/3 SC) survived, with the other three players eliminated. Peters was the top tournament finisher from this group, in 17th place.

dc318 - GM (Fredrik Blom/z93blom) - 2-way Germany (Eric Marr/ericjmarr/17 SC) and Italy (Joe Babinsack/chaosonejoe/15 SC) draw in Spring 1909. Turkey (briankingfox) survived with 2 SC while all other players were eliminated. Marr was the top tournament finisher from this group, in 14th place.

dc317 - GM (Darryl Good/dipknight) - Russia (Nigel Phillips/Nigs/18 SC) solo in Fall 1912. Thanks to a first round elimination Phillips' solo - one of only three solos in the tournament - held his finish to being a tie for 10th place. Skillfully executed, Phillips orchestrated the elimination of Austria and England, then Turkey before pressing onto the rest of the board and securing a relatively easy solo.

Because the tournament essentially "re-seeded" to out winners against winners and losers against losers, the top nine finishers all came from the four games dc311-dc314:

dc312 - GM (John Reside/untitled36) - 3-way Italy (Charles Welsh/ConradW/6 SC), Russia (Anthony Stevens/FLTeacher/7 SC), Turkey (Poul Hurup/hurup/7 SC) draw. This had a lot more game left in it, with only Austria eliminated and a 7 SC England (Alan

Farrington/AlanRFarrington) and 5 SC Germany (Daan Schrama/Daan) surviving losers. However the big story from dc312 was the end of France's (Joe Hackett/jhack16) tournament chances. After his exceptional solo in the first round Hackett suffered a withering attack from England, later followed up on by Germany. He survived with 2 SC and would have only had one if the vote happened after the winter. When the game ended early in 1906 Hackett was the tournament leader in the clubhouse, but it seemed clear his lead would not hold and it didn't. He would ultimately finish in fourth. Welsh and Stevens finished in sixth and seventh, respectively, while Austria (Nathan Deilly/ndeilly) followed up his first round 2-way draw with the only elimination here. Was there metagaming happening here, with the lower rated players targeting the leaders?

dc313 - GM (Sam Buck/Samnuva) - 4-way England (Joao Queiros/jlqueiros/5 SC), Italy (Jeffrey Krauss/JeffreyK/8 SC), Russia (John Reside/untitled36/4 SC), Turkey (Tim Crosby/fencertim/17 SC) draw. A thrilling game! Krauss took the lead in 1907 and peaked at 13 SC in 1908. At that point he was the clear tournament favorite given his position and strong 2-way draw in the first round. However Crosby quickly countered and made an exceptional solo run, thwarted only by the combined efforts of all other players. Notably Querios, who again had only a handful of centers in a seemingly unimpressive draw, was integral to blocking this solo and that of Sam Buck in the first round. His cagey play arguably decided the tournament. Krauss, the leader in the clubhouse, would ultimately finish in third place while Crosby's near-miss solo left him in ninth.

dc314 - GM (Adam Martin-Schwarze/AceRimmer) - 2-way France (Michael Thompson/psychosis1973/10 SC) and Italy (Chris Morse/Corrino/16 SC) draw in Spring 1914. This was a "mix" game, the only one that blended first round winners and losers. England (Sam Buck/Samnuva) who made a solo run in the first round was eliminated in 1905 here. As this game got toward the endgame it became clear that, barring a collapse, Morse would be the tournament leader and likely champion by the time this game ended. He did, but the question remained: would he be able to hang on? Notably Morse certainly could have soloed but allowed his Russian ally draw participating instead. Would he live to regret the decision?

dc311 - GM (Christine Stoy/notasb) - 3-way Austria (Bruce Ray/raybrucea/11 SC), England (Dan Dzikowicz/ddz999cat23/8 SC) and Germany (Dirk Knemeyer/dknemeyer/13 SC) draw in Spring 1921. This was a see-saw battle. Early on an EG crippled FR, while Austria took down Italy single-handedly while neutering his eastern threats. England and Germany turned toward Austria when England stabbed Germany, shifting the board to AG vs. E. An Austrian stab of Germany shifted the game back to EG vs. A. While it appeared EG was

going to overrun Austria alliance mistrust led to the three-way draw. By the time this ended all three of the eventual draw-ers would have needed a solo to surpass Morse and it was clear they were determined not to allow a solo come through. With the final draw vote and end to the longest second round game, Knemeyer took second place in the tourney, Ray claimed fifth, Dzikowicz earned eighth and Chris Morse, with his two 2-way draws, claimed the title of Winter Blitz Champion!

The tournament was a great time to play. Thanks to all of the GM's for doing an outstanding job in the rapid format.

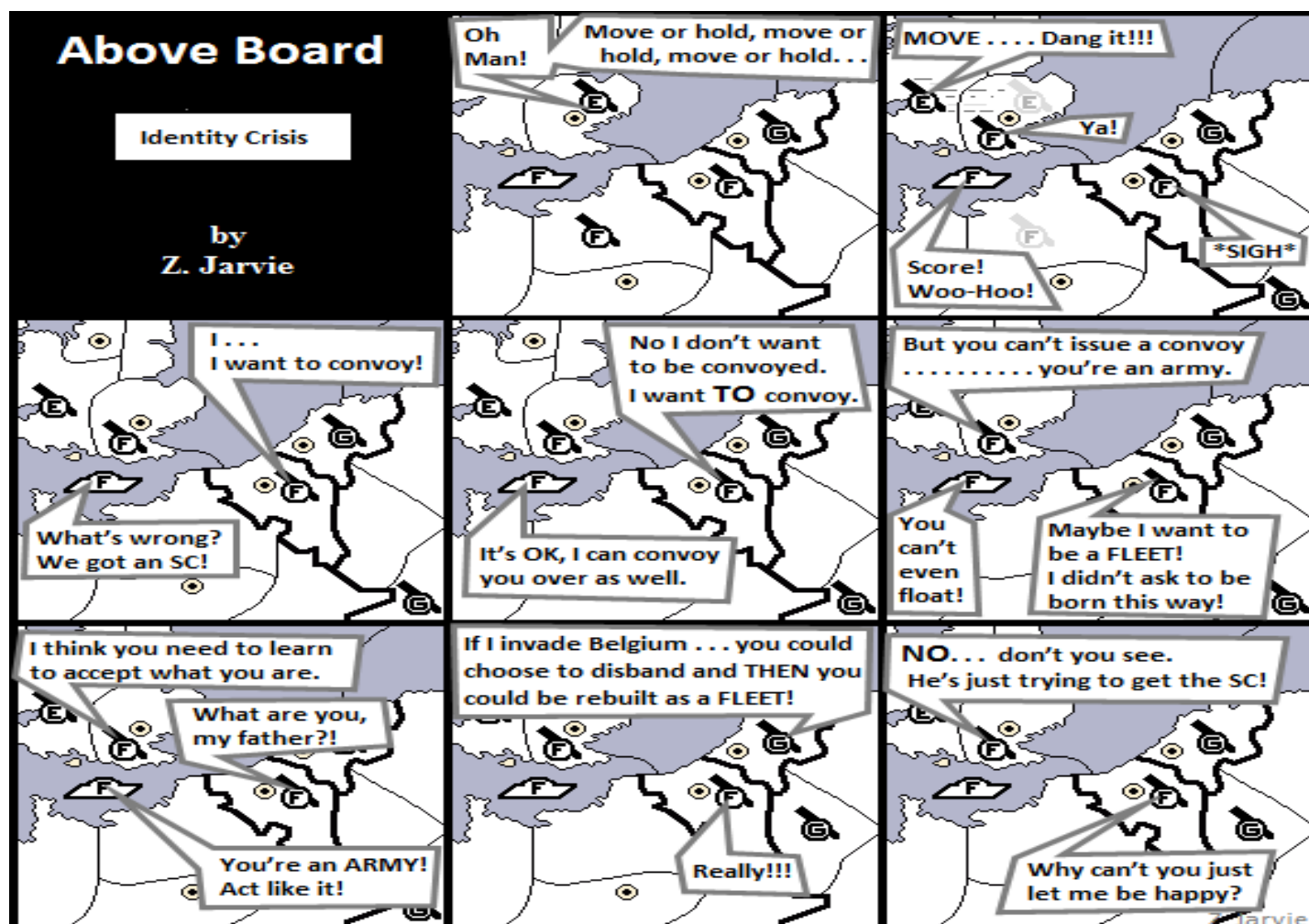
The FTF community's perception that these sort of online events are poisoned by NMR's and abandonments is simply erroneous. All of the critical games were decided on the boards, alive with bold, creative and very capable play. For those of you out there who did not participate in the third annual WinterBlitz do yourself a favor and sign up for the fourth annual version - which begins in January! - at www.diplomaticcorp.com. I hope to see you there.

Here is the final leader board in total:

3rd Annual Winter Blitz Standings

Total Score	Rating	Player	RD 1 Score	RD 1 Game	Seas	SC	Ctry	Player Result	RD 2 Score	RD 2 Game	Seas	SC	Ctry	Player Result
33.1	1304	Corrino	16.5	dc293	19	15	Rus	2-Way	16.6	dc314	27	16	Ita	2-Way
29.4	1206	dknemeyer	16.1	dc291	19	11	Tur	2-Way	13.3	dc311	41	13	Ger	3-Way
27	1200	JeffreyK	16.2	dc293	19	12	Tur	2-Way	10.8	dc313	25	8	Ita	4-Way
26	1275	jhack16	21.8	dc297	26	18	Ger	Solo	4.2	dc312	12	2	Fra	Surv
25.9	1303	raybrucea	12.8	dc294	29	8	Rus	3-Way	13.1	dc311	41	11	Aus	3-Way
25.7	1187	ConradW	13.1	dc296	22	11	Fra	3-Way	12.6	dc312	12	6	Ita	3-Way
25.5	1206	FLTeacher	12.8	dc292	23	8	Fra	3-Way	12.7	dc312	12	7	Rus	3-Way
25.5	1284	ddz999cat23	12.7	dc296	22	7	Aus	3-Way	12.8	dc311	41	8	Eng	3-Way
25	1200	fencertim	13.3	dc299	26	13	Aus	3-Way	11.7	dc313	25	17	Tur	4-Way
23.8	1358	Nigs	2	dc291	16	0	Ger	Elim	21.8	dc317	24	18	Rus	Solo
23.8	1200	DrSwordopolis	21.8	dc298	44	21	Rus	Solo	2	dc311	14	0	Fra	Elim
23.5	1226	untitled36	13.1	dc295	24	11	Ita	3-Way	10.4	dc313	25	4	Rus	4-Way
23.5	1200	jlqueiros	13	dc294	29	10	Fra	3-Way	10.5	dc313	25	5	Eng	4-Way
21.1	1230	ericjmarr	4.4	dc293	19	4	Eng	Surv	16.7	dc318	17	17	Ger	2-Way
20.6	1220	psychosis1973	4.6	dc291	19	6	Rus	Surv	16	dc314	27	10	Fra	2-Way
18.5	1196	chaosonejoe	2	dc297	14	0	Fra	Elim	16.5	dc318	17	15	Ita	2-Way
18.4	1200	Godzilla	2	dc291	12	0	Ita	Elim	16.4	dc316	13	14	Rus	2-Way
18.1	1200	PeaceWithHonor	2	dc299	26	0	Rus	Elim	16.1	dc316	13	11	Ita	2-Way
18.1	1192	ndelly	16.1	dc291	19	11	Eng	2-Way	2	dc312	8	0	Aus	Elim
17.6	1200	Daan	13.1	dc295	24	11	Rus	3-Way	4.5	dc312	12	5	Ger	Surv
17.3	1217	chota_catsfather	13.1	dc295	24	11	Aus	3-Way	4.2	dc311	41	2	Tur	Surv
17	1193	hurup	4.3	dc299	26	3	Ita	Surv	12.7	dc312	12	7	Tur	3-Way
15.6	1203	Samnuva	13.6	dc294	29	16	Ita	3-Way	2	dc314	10	0	Eng	Elim
15.3	1219	alwaysshunted	13.3	dc292	23	13	Rus	3-Way	2	dc313	22	0	Aus	Elim
15.3	1200	grimlock	13.3	dc292	23	13	Aus	3-Way	2	dc314	16	0	Tur	Elim
15	1221	rodtheworm	13	dc299	26	10	Eng	3-Way	2	dc314	6	0	Aus	Elim
14.7	1248	PARussell	12.7	dc299	26	7	Ger	3-Way	2	dc311	16	0	Rus	Elim
13.6	1223	derekthe feared2	2	dc297	12	0	Rus	Elim	11.6	dc315	25	16	Eng	4-Way
13.5	1200	demainlesdauphins	13.5	dc296	22	15	Rus	3-Way	0					
12.7	1200	MMGreenwich	2	dc296	16	0	Tur	Elim	10.7	dc315	25	7	Fra	4-Way
12.6	1175	dgrantham	2	dc298	30	0	Ger	Elim	10.6	dc315	25	6	Tur	4-Way
12.5	1200	quozl	2	dc291	14	0	Fra	Elim	10.5	dc315	25	5	Aus	4-Way
10.3	1219	MrSmiley	5.5	dc297	26	15	Aus	Surv	4.8	dc314	27	8	Rus	Surv
9.6	1213	AlanRFarrington	4.9	dc298	44	9	Ita	Surv	4.7	dc312	12	7	Eng	Surv
8.9	1200	evapollo88	4.1	dc295	24	1	Eng	Surv	4.8	dc317	24	8	Ita	Surv
6.7	1183	Douglas_E_Fresh	2	dc297	22	0	Tur	Elim	4.7	dc317	24	7	Ger	Surv
6.6	1213	Viper	2	dc297	17	0	Ita	Elim	4.6	dc316	13	6	Eng	Surv
6.6	1244	paetunya	4.6	dc291	19	6	Aus	Surv	2	dc313	14	0	Fra	Elim
6.4	1253	cl2849	4.4	dc298	44	4	Fra	Surv	2	dc314	24	0	Ger	Elim
6.3	1200	mrhulen	2	dc298	30	0	Aus	Elim	4.3	dc316	13	3	Fra	Surv

6.3	1200	billyjoebobfred1	4.3	dc293	19	3	Fra	Surv	2	dc315	10	0	Ger	Elim
6.2	1236	briankingfox	2	dc292	16	0	Ita	Elim	4.2	dc318	17	2	Tur	Surv
6.1	1217	packrat	2	dc294	20	0	Eng	Elim	4.1	dc317	24	1	Fra	Surv
6.1	1216	bielf11	4.1	dc296	22	1	Ger	Surv	2	dc318	6	0	Aus	Elim
6.1	1209	Githraine	4.1	dc299	26	1	Fra	Surv	2	dc311	6	0	Ita	Elim
4.1	1200	Dip_Power_915	4.1	dc297	26	1	Eng	Surv	0					
4	1218	Jeremiah	2	dc293	14	0	Ger	Elim	2	dc317	12	0	Tur	Elim
4	1192	bunwarpgazoo	2	dc292	22	0	Eng	Elim	2	dc315	14	0	Ita	Elim
4	1285	m_don_j	2	dc295	18	0	Ger	Elim	2	dc316	12	0	Tur	Elim
4	1189	bret_pollack	2	dc294	4	0	Aus	Elim	2	dc318	14	0	Fra	Elim
4	1325	crimson_93	2	dc292	12	0	Tur	Elim	2	dc316	12	0	Ger	Elim
4	1200	lord_granite	2	dc294	12	0	Tur	Elim	2	dc316	6	0	Aus	Elim
4	1204	Stepper	2	dc293	6	0	Aus	Elim	2	dc318	10	0	Eng	Elim
4	1187	pieandmash	2	dc295	8	0	Tur	Elim	2	dc315	14	0	Rus	Elim
4	1224	MDemagogue	2	dc296	16	0	Eng	Elim	2	dc317	8	0	Aus	Elim
4	1191	phantomas	2	dc293	16	0	Ita	Elim	2	dc317	6	0	Eng	Elim
4	1230	landru428	2	dc294	20	0	Ger	Elim	2	dc318	16	0	Rus	Elim
4	1222	chknbrstl	2	dc298	40	0	Eng	Elim	2	dc313	16	0	Ger	Elim
2	1173	Colonel_Mustard	2	dc299	12	0	Tur	Elim	0					
2	1199	sanjat312	2	dc296	8	0	Ita	Elim	0					
2	1200	wiley	2	dc292	6	0	Ger	Elim	0					
2	1195	Tirendil	2	dc298	30	0	Tur	Elim	0					
2	1200	Meme	2	dc295	10	0	Fra	Elim	0					



The Epistemology of Strategy

By Richard Maltz

*"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." --
Sun Tzu, Military Theorist and Philosopher*

I. Introduction. Epistemology is the "theory of knowledge". It is that branch of philosophy that explores and illuminates the origins, nature, methods, and limits of human thought, perception, knowledge, understanding, and learning. In this paper, am going to tie Epistemology to the subject of Strategy, which I herein define as the science or art of combining and employing the means of war in designing, planning, and directing large military movements and operations in support of Grand-Strategy or Policy. I hope to demonstrate that sound Epistemology necessarily resides at the center of sound Strategy; and that the latter is impossible without the former. I will conclude with a brief discussion of how, in my view, this subject impinges on that of "Defense Transformation" broadly.

I have sought to express these matters in ways that both demonstrate their practical implications to the common warfighter, and which are readily accessible and comprehensible. I will demonstrate the relevance and criticality of this subject to warfighting; and I will try to make this discussion easy to understand and simple to apply in practice.

I regard this subject as being tremendously and profoundly important, but widely neglected, and only just now starting to emerge into our professional military consciousness. I will try to make the case for a practical, accessible Epistemology that can be consciously invoked by anyone, at any time, to help address practical, real-world, day-to-day challenges. It is my hope that if I present this case well, I may facilitate the practical routine application of this, and other branches of philosophy, in engagement, conflict, and warfighting.

"Our Central Challenge in adapting to the demands of the Twenty-First Century will be epistemological in nature."

II. Discussion. As we progress through this subject, we must come to grips with the challenge of "paradigmatic" change. Paradigmatic change is contrasted with the more commonly-understood incremental, topical, or transitory change in that it involves a comprehensive, fundamental, and relatively lasting change to the "paradigm", or basic understanding of the broad nature and order of things. Reality can change without our being aware of it; but the paradigm is how we appreciate and make sense of that reality. It is the expression of our thinking on the subject. It is therefore inherently and fundamentally epistemological in nature.

Our paradigms of engagement, conflict, and war, are steadily and speedily growing more complex and indistinct. We are moving increasingly away from predominantly mechanistic, kinetic, and pyrotechnic solutions to those that require us to take account of the complexities of the environment, its inhabitants, our adversaries, and most important, ourselves. Because we are concerned with their behaviors, we must undertake a deeper appreciation for the nuances of perception and motivation of all the parties concerned in real or potential conflict. This is both our greatest weakness and our greatest opportunity. One could argue, and I do argue, that whichever power achieves effective mastery of this dimension of human interaction first and most profoundly will likely be the next global hegemon.

The question of epistemology in strategy is a very broad one, inasmuch as all aspects of military activity, including Strategy, involve perception, thought, and knowledge. This includes every aspect of Policy, Culture, Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and even Facilities (PCDOTMLPF). This applies at all levels of war (indeed, all levels of human activity); but seems to apply more as one goes up the continuum of conflict toward Strategy and Policy, where strictly technical and mechanical concerns hold less sway.

Epistemology guides everything that we do (beyond the physically reflexive). Since we normally invoke Epistemology without any conscious knowledge of it, our work and productivity (to include combat effectiveness, which is a form of productivity) usually suffer. I offer my own experience as an example. I spent five of the past eight years as a Military Concept Developer. During that time, I had to contend with many "half-baked" ideas, and even entire "concepts", prominent concepts, and "Joint Operating Concepts", that contained no "Central Idea". In one instance, in the case of the "Major Combat Operations" Joint Operating Concept, I watched the original writing team of several retired senior officers from every branch of Service draft several dozen of pages of "boilerplate" for six weeks before the government lead thought to ask for an actual idea to animate the concept. In the absence of any sense of Epistemology, no one thought an idea to be important. To this day, in place of ideas, most military concepts contain lists of desired attributes or capabilities. Absent appreciation for and consciousness of Epistemology, few can tell the difference between an idea and a checklist. I tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade my chain of command that our problems were due primarily to poor Epistemology. In response, my boss asked me, "How often does anyone use Epistemology anyway?" I

explained to him that everyone uses epistemology, all of the time, but usually unconsciously, and therefore usually badly. He came to grasp this; but we both despaired of ever getting higher echelons to understand. Consequently, "Concept Development" remained generally half-baked, often offering limited value to warfighters; and it continues to enjoy a poor reputation among those whom it serves.

Indirect awareness of the importance of Epistemology is growing however; facilitated, in my view, by the setbacks and frustrations that we have experienced overseas in the past several years, which has shaken our complacency. Indications of recent progress can be found in several quarters, including the deployment of "Human Terrain Teams" in theater, myriad "Strategic Communications" initiatives, and many new programs throughout the services based on "Human-Centricity", "Human-Design", the "Human-Dimension", etc. where previously, it was thought that steel on target could solve any problem. Recently, General James Mattis, the US Joint Forces Command Commander, spoke of three principle imperatives: 1. "The character of war has changed - not its nature, which remains brutal and about bending the enemy's will"; 2. "To transform a military, YOU MUST start by clearly identifying the problem you want to fix."; and 3. "Building trust and harmonious teams among coalition members who are comfortable with surprise and the 'uncertain'" is the metric officers will be measured by." It is worth noting that all of these are epistemological in nature.

One might legitimately ask, "As long as we are drifting toward addressing epistemological issues anyway, what benefit derives from calling them that or even being aware of their epistemological nature?" This strikes at the core of my thesis. I would answer that the reasons for doing so lie in the blood and treasure that we expend wastefully or fruitlessly, while we gradually come to recognize the importance of these key issues. If, instead of slowly and episodically backing into our appreciation of these challenges, at great cost over several years, we instead approached them systemically from the outset with a consciously, deliberately, and coherently epistemological perspective, we could reach the same destinations much sooner and at much less human and material cost. I would go further, and suggest that we are still wastefully floundering about in a process of backward reasoning based solely and slowly on empirical experience, trial, and much error. There is still much blood and treasure that may be spared if we, even now, take the shortcut of an explicitly epistemological approach to identifying and addressing our challenges. In sum, taking a systemic, epistemological approach to problem-solving is much more effective, efficient, and economical than are any alternative approaches. This, I maintain, is the essence of strategizing.

"In some ways it was like the debate of a group of savages as to how to extract a screw from a

piece of wood. Accustomed only to nails, they had made one effort to pull out the screw by main force, and now that it had failed they were devising methods of applying more force still, of obtaining more efficient pincers, of using levers and fulcrums so that more men could bring their strength to bear. They could hardly be blamed for not guessing that by rotating the screw it would come out after the exertion of far less effort; it would be a notion so different from anything they had ever encountered that they would laugh at the man who suggested it."

-- C.S. Forester, The General

"Epistemology permeates and animates every aspect of Strategy"

III. Analysis. In spite of the fact that Epistemology touches everything that we do, limitations of space prohibit me from exploring these relationships more fully here. Accordingly, I will focus on what I regard as the most salient issues relating to the Epistemology of Strategy: Vision; The Cognitive Domain; and Culture, Productivity, and Combat Effectiveness.

"The United States does not really do strategy. Rather, it tends to jump straight from policy to operations and tactics."

-- Colin Gray, Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters, 2007

A. Vision. Strategy is a function of leadership; and leadership is based, most fundamentally, on vision, which, residing in the mind, is an epistemological function. Hence, Strategy itself is predominantly epistemological. It is a process of visualizing, solving problems based on that visualizing, visualizing how others, notably the adversary(ies) are also visualizing, how they will likely solve problems based on their visualizing, and how their visualizing and solutions can be rolled into our visualizing so that we may take proper account of how they will likely act in the course of our broader problem-solving. This should, of course, take proper account of their attempting to visualize our visualization and consequent actions, in endless layers and permutations. It is an inherently cognitive, and therefore inherently epistemological, function.

In all organizations, there are people with authority to make decisions on investments of time, money, and effort to be expended on achieving desired outcomes. These decisions must be based on something. A visionary decision-maker will envision the actual starting point, the desired end-point, and the means of getting from the first to the second; and will then design, plan, decide, and act in accordance with that vision. The soundness of their designs, plans, decisions, and actions will be largely determined by the soundness of their vision.

Very few people in general, or decision-makers in particular, are naturally visionary; and vision is not something that can be taught. Vision is not a function of intelligence, education, training, technical abilities, or virtue, labor, or dedication. It is an innate and ineffable quality, derived from undetermined sources. It may be honed where it already exists; but it cannot be created. Many people (possibly most) are so bereft of vision that they are often incapable of recognizing a good idea or a sound solution even when it is presented to them. They are without any relevant frames of reference; in effect, stumbling in the dark. Many do not even grasp the idea of vision.

In the absence of vision, decision-makers must exercise their responsibilities to plan and decide through other means, struggling to make decisions based on other factors. In order to justify their decisions, to themselves and to others, they must establish a decision-making framework based on considerations that seem reasonable. This framework is usually built upon "objective" criteria that the decision-maker believes (or hopes) are relevant to the decision(s) to be made. These criteria, in order to be deemed objective, must be widely understood, and must generally be quantifiable. They usually include factors such as: money, time, manpower, credentials, consensus, etc. Inasmuch as these criteria are selected based on personal predilection and cultural norms; by a decision-maker who, absent vision, has little if any understanding of the true issues at hand; their relevance to any particular decision is generally random; and any belief that their relevance is more than random could usually be characterized as "superstition".

Accordingly, most decision-makers make most of their decisions based upon such supposedly objective factors. This may make sense when dealing with simple, linear problems; but will likely be utterly irrelevant in deciding other values, where complexity and non-linearity impinge. Ultimately therefore, because of the scarcity of vision, most decisions end up being based on superstition, and necessarily yield random outcomes, few of them favorable or desired, even if they have generally come to be expected and tolerated. This creates tremendous institutional friction and waste, and explains why it usually requires so much to produce so little. This is sometimes known as "bureaucratic inertia" or "red tape".

This begs the question of how and why we (as a society, perhaps as a species) select and appoint decision-makers so routinely bereft of the single most important prerequisite for decision (and by extension, for leadership): vision. I think this is attributable to multiple complementary factors; chief among them the fact that decision-makers without vision are appointed to positions of decision-making authority by decisions of other decision-making authorities similarly without vision, in reflexive acts of self-replication buttressed by

objective criteria in the form of formal credentials similarly awarded based on other objective criteria similarly generally selected in the absence of any vision. This is a spiral of "the blind leading (and appointing) the blind".

Given the friction and waste generated by this method of allocating decision-making authority, and the increasingly competitive nature of the world as a whole, it behooves us to explore ways of making better decisions more reliably. This means finding ways to systemically identify individuals with sound vision, and to invest them with decision-making authority everywhere where we deem decisions to be important. This is likely to be the catalyst of the "Transformation" that we so ardently seek, the source of our (or, if we are not serious or careful, someone else's) next "Revolution in Military Affairs". These things must be derived from our ability to better harness natural human resources; they cannot be derived from contrivances based on machines or processes.

"The war was fought on many fronts. At that time the most important one was American public opinion. Military power is not the decisive factor in war. Human beings! Human beings are the decisive factor."

-- General Vo Nguyen Giap, former NVA CinC, on the Tet Offensive

B. The Nature and Importance of the Cognitive Domain. The "Cognitive Domain" is where perception, emotion, thought, decision, and will reside. It is intrinsically and completely epistemological. It is distinct from the "Physical Domain" where physical interaction occurs (such as killing people and blowing things up); and from the "Information Domain" where data is transmitted. These domains influence each other however; and the cognitive domain is shaped by its appreciation of what it observes in those domains.

The Cognitive Domain incorporates the Psychological and Sociological (or Cultural). These exist on multiple levels at the same time, extending from the individual (the Psychological), through various layers of group identity, consciousness, and affiliation, from the family thru the highest level of overarching identity - nationality, ethnicity, religion (the Sociological).

Culture is the most direct and powerful influence on human behavior, including in war. To the extent that these levels reflect layers of shared values, beliefs, and customs, they can be called cultures. These cultures therefore exist in multiple levels within each person and group of people. They define "frames of reference" through which everything perceived is understood; they similarly constitute the most direct and powerful driver of human behavior at every level. Culture is the key to influencing behavior; and it can only be reached in the Cognitive Domain. Conflict and war are contests of will

in the Cognitive Domain. Human conflict, to include war, is at its essence, a social activity; it is a contest of wills between two or more parties. Accordingly, decision in conflict (outcomes), and decisions made during conflict, and the will or lack of will to act, all reside in the Cognitive Domain.

The Cognitive Domain lies at the center of conflict and war. All strategy, design, planning, decision, and execution in the physical and information domains should therefore have desired outcomes in the Cognitive Domain as both their goals, and points of departure. Because outcomes in conflict and war are determined in the Cognitive Domain, the physical and information domains must be subordinated to it. Focusing all operations toward achieving outcomes where they are determined is more direct, and therefore the more effective, efficient, and economical than otherwise. Failure to do so, by attempting to achieve decision in the physical or information domains (our traditional approach to conflict and war) is often ineffective, and ultimately successful or not, is usually hugely wasteful.

The Cognitive Domain touches everybody, all the time. Target audiences for operations focused on the Cognitive Domain may include any combination of one's own forces (this is normally called morale), adversary forces, allied forces, neutral forces, populations and leaders in the area(s) of operations, the adversary polity or leadership, allied polities and leadership, neutral polities and leadership, and one's own polity and leadership (and anyone else you can think of).

The Cognitive Domain encompasses many critical aspects of conflict and war at different levels. At the highest and most fundamental level, there is the issue of "National Iconography" (some people call this "brand"). What do people think of us? Are they favorably or unfavorably disposed toward us at a visceral level. Related to this is the issue of "Narrative". What policies are we trying to promote or obstruct? As policies exist on many levels, so must the narratives that accompany them. The relationships between greater and lesser policies/narratives are fractal in nature, with each supporting, or providing a framework, for those above or below it. Examples of widely-recognized operations in the Cognitive Domain include Propaganda, Subversion, Psychological Operations, and "Strategic Communication".

"Political Warfare" is the best model for achieving victory in the Cognitive Domain. The best practical model of the effective fusion of all efforts in every sphere, dimension, and domain in support of achieving desired outcomes in the Cognitive Domain is that of Political Warfare, as practiced by Leon Trotsky during the Russian Civil War. The body of theory on this subject composed by Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci in the 1920's, is very instructive.

"Fifth Generation Warfare". The approaches theorized by Gramsci and practiced by Trotsky were further refined with great success by various Communist forces during the first and second Vietnam Wars, and by Arab insurgents in the Algerian War of Independence. Then, as earlier, combat operations in the theater of battle were incidental; the true center of gravity of operations was in the politics of the states involved. Outcomes were determined in the minds of decision-makers far distant, in Paris and Washington, DC; even when events on the ground suggested an opposite direction. Some theoreticians now call this approach Fifth Generation Warfare.

"Every war ... is a struggle between two or more learning institutions ... the course of events is shaped, even determined, by which side learns fastest and adapts more quickly."

-- Colin Gray, Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters, 2007

C. Culture, Productivity, Combat-Effectiveness: Learning and Adapting Under Pressure.

Emergent (indeed, all) behaviors are most directly determined by culture. The culture of warfighting determines if, and how, a warfighter decides to lift his weapon and place himself in harm's way. It also determines what a warfighter sees, hears, tastes, smells, feels, and thinks in response to any stimulus, individually and in groups. It does this to a greater degree than does anything else. Any stimulus that we try to convey in order to foster Shared Understanding will have meaning only in the context of the disparate frames of reference through which it must pass within the minds of those recipients. The same image, viewed by 100 people, may mean 100 very different things to them, unless we focus on how to shape their frames of reference to increase their predisposition to attain Shared Understanding. Shared "Warfighting Culture" must therefore be the ultimate key to Shared Understanding in the operating environment.

At each level, disparate lower-level cultures must be reconciled so that a common vision can be pursued at that level, in support of the vision at a higher level. The common culture formed at each level can be viewed as an overlay in relationship to subordinate cultures. With an adequate cultural overlay, each decision-maker will intuitively understand what their colleagues are likely to infer from the same information; and will similarly intuit their colleagues' likely responses, permitting "instinctive" "self-synchronization".

The practice of attempting to substitute the Situational Understanding of rear command elements for those of forward commanders is very old. During the First World War, it was called "Chateau Generalship". Now, some call it "Network-Centric Warfare". It has never worked as expected because it is based on techno-centric fallacies that do not adequately take into account immutable

aspects of warfighting and warfighters, and the primacy of warfighting culture, not machines, in determining actions in battle. It resembles other age-old technocentric delusions that continually disappoint, such as the notions that: airpower alone can reliably win wars; precision-engagement will destroy all threats; or elaborate Intelligence, Surveillance, & Reconnaissance will eliminate ambiguity, uncertainty, and deception from the operating environment. Our enduring infatuation with such promises illustrates the philosophical and theoretical poverty of our efforts in general; and deprives otherwise usually expert planning and execution of context, and sound "trajectory" along which to plan and execute, leading to random outcomes, and the systemic predisposition to expend infinite resources without any assurance of achieving desired outcomes.

Shared Understanding consists of multiple elements. Many reduce these to "Connectivity". Connectivity however manifests itself in two ways: "Technical" and "Perceptual". Technical Connectivity is the material network of sensor and communication grids that link users through mechanical and electronic means to acquire and share information. Perceptual Connectivity is a network of shared frames of reference within users themselves that enables them to make sense of the information transmitted and to intuitively understand what other users will infer therefrom. In the absence of reliable technical connections, it can help bridge gaps in communications through logical assumptions based on shared perspectives. Of the two types of connectivity, the Perceptual is superior. In its absence, the Technical Connectivity conveys only empty symbols, not meaning; but in the absence of the technical connectivity, perceptual connectivity can go a long way toward facilitating shared understanding and self-synchronization, even with very little data. Our culture embraces and invests heavily in Technical Connectivity; but cannot be bothered with the imponderables associated with Perceptual Connectivity. This too is a model for investing vast treasures in projects that can't deliver promised outcomes.

Building shared frames of reference is a daunting challenge; but success in doing so is not unprecedented. It requires a high level of socialization among the persons and forces involved. W. Edwards Deming's "Theory of 'Profound Knowledge'" illuminates the challenges here. An example of successfully implementing this in a warfighting organization can be drawn from the Prussian "Scharnhorst Reforms" of 1808. There, Gerhard Von Scharnhorst, applying lessons learned before and during the Napoleonic Wars, set in motion a process that culminated in 1917 under Erich Von Ludendorff as "Stormtroop Tactics", later evolving into the "Blitzkrieg". This was later emulated with great success by the Israel Defense Force; and our own Marine Corps has been assimilating it since the 1980's under the name, "Maneuver Warfare Doctrine". At their

core, all of these are "Post-Industrial-Age", "Third-Generation" techniques of warfighting that focus on strong shared cultural overlays as a means of consciously, systemically, and routinely unleashing latent human creativity, stimulating desired emergent behaviors, and facilitating self-synchronization, even in the absence of direct guidance and assured communication.

"If I had only 60 minutes to save the world, I would spend 59 minutes defining the problem, and one minute in solving it."

-- Albert Einstein, Physicist and Philosopher
"The needs of 'The Long War' will Define 'Defense Transformation.'"

IV. Conclusion. Epistemology and Defense

Transformation. An appreciation of Strategy as inherently epistemological is itself revolutionary and "Transformational". How we might best apply this appreciation to shaping useful defense transformation is the subject of this section.

According to DoD policy, to remain viable, the Armed Forces of the US, the Dept. of Defense, and the Defense Community must "Transform". The nature of that Transformation however, is far from clear. The late Admiral Arthur Cebrowski, the former Director of the DoD's Office of Force Transformation stated that "transformation is ultimately about -- new values, new attitudes, and new beliefs and how those are expressed in the behavior of people and institutions ... nations, states, and others who wage war, do so in ways appropriate to their culture and values." This suggests that transformation must be primarily cultural, linked to society's evolution from the Industrial-Age to an as yet undefined Post-Industrial-Age based on "Human-Centricity". This, in turn, requires a new appreciation of productivity, such as is reflected in the words of W. Edwards Deming: "Long-term commitment to new learning and new philosophy is required of any management that seeks transformation ... (that) can only be accomplished by man, not by hardware." Transformation is widely confused with mere change, and is usually misconceived as primarily technological in nature. Until these mistakes are corrected, we will never succeed in achieving lasting and practical advances. How might genuine and useful transformation be best achieved throughout our Defense Community? I would suggest that, of all its myriad attributes, it would likely possess the following key properties:

A. It will be bounded by three overarching aspects:

- **A Framework of: Continuous Global Shaping,**
- **A Focus on: the Cognitive Domain, and**
- **A Foundation of: a Third Generation (Post-Industrial-Age) Warfighting Culture**

The "Framework" of Continuous Global Shaping is not

explicitly epistemological; but I suggest that it provides necessary structure and context for the other two aspects.

B. It will be informed by the necessary foundations of all cognitive enterprise: **History, Theory, and Philosophy**. These are essential to provide context and the foundation for “designing” a sound “trajectory” along which planning and execution can be conducted to desired effect.

C. It will be designed to be oriented outward, toward the adversary, the environment, and the mission (as opposed to inward, toward perpetuating and replicating itself); and to systemically stimulate desired Emergent Behaviors, notably: **Synergy, Adaptability, and Opportunism**.

D. Every element of this effort will be consciously focused on enhancing the three transcendent values for any enterprise, enhanced: **Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Economy**.

This is a coherent structure for Defense Transformation. It incorporates Strategy and Epistemology in a useful synergy. It is “descriptive” rather than “prescriptive”. I have focused on what Transformation should be, as opposed to how to achieve it. There are many scholarly

works on the latter, notably by Trevor Dupuy, Edward Luttwak, Martin Van Creveld, Williamson Murray, Douglas Macgregor, & Donald Vandergriff. Such prescription is beyond the scope of this paper.

“There is nothing more practical than a sound philosophy.”

Richard Maltz is a retired officer in the United States Army with twenty-eight years commissioned service in military intelligence, counterterrorism, defense analysis, and leadership and organizational productivity enhancement. He is also the founder (in 1995) of the “Military Quality Institute”, a non-profit educational establishment dedicated to the fusion and application of cutting-edge civilian and military organizational productivity theories, and (in 2003) of the “Cognitive Domain Cabal,” an informal global network of defense professionals dedicated to fostering a “Cultural Revolution in Military Affairs”, and the proposition that the “Cognitive Domain” is the dominant domain in engagement, conflict, and war. He has worked for the past ten years as a Senior Doctrine Analyst and Concept Developer on various Service and joint projects. His writings frequently appear in various U.S. and foreign professional military journals. He may be reached at richardmaltz “of” cox.net.

Commentary on “The Epistemology of Strategy” by Richard Maltz

By Jim Burgess

Diplomacy World continues to seek to entice you with surprises and this probably is a surprise. We recognize that many famous Diplomacy players such as Mark Fassio and Benjamin Hester are military officers and Diplomacy is a “wargame” in some sense. But really, in my view, Diplomacy is a game of psychology, matching players trying to know themselves, know others, and more often than not fail miserably at both (well, most of us fail miserably at this game much of the time). Failure may be seen as not an option in real war, but learning how to engage failure is an important part of the game of Diplomacy and why it is an interesting game. Anyway, Richard Maltz approached us with this article and we thought it was really interesting, so we are publishing it. And as I read it, I had a number of reactions and comments that I thought some of you might find interesting as you read it. I hope you do, and I hope this attracts other military officers and diplomats to write these sorts of articles for *Diplomacy World* in the future.

Back in *Diplomacy World* #76, Tim Hoyt wrote an [excellent summary](#) of Sun Tzu’s theories for us and Richard Maltz starts with my very favorite Diplomacy

quote from Sun Tzu encompassing my view of what The Game is about. “The Epistemology of Strategy” is aimed at defining a new 21st Century look at how military strategic planners need to engage with reality that is becoming more complex and indistinct. To me, this plays to some of Diplomacy’s strength as The Game, and is where I would like to start my analysis. First, let’s define what I would mean by complex and indistinct (which may or may not be precisely what Richard Maltz meant by these terms). I really like my interpretation of Dave Snowden’s definition of situations that are complex, which differs from situations that are complicated, in that complex situations are highly resistant to modeling or reduction to simpler constructs. When complexity is fundamental, it requires different, flexible, and contextual approaches to decision making that do not have easy mathematical solutions.

The way Diplomacy constructs this complexity is by being a simultaneous movement game amongst seven powers. Game theory in the technical literature still does not exist for games of this complexity and The Game cannot be solved in tactical terms. We write about

openings and we write about endgames, but otherwise simplifying the game is mostly about removing players from it by eliminating them. In real life war, this sort of multi-player complexity, I believe, is part of what Maltz is saying is now happening. In a place like Afghanistan, there really are more than just two opposing parties, there are at least three and probably more since the al-Qaida and Taliban forces really are different.

Similarly, Maltz considers these parties becoming “indistinct” as being very important to such real life situations. We can think of the extreme of distinct warfare being the refined 17th/18th century lines of battle that almost had formal rules of engagement. While places like Afghanistan are so alien from that as to not even be able to call both “war” in the same sense. The indistinct nature of Diplomacy is less clear, but if it exists it is in the range of the psychology and issues upon which players play. It is possible to reduce the game of Diplomacy to a more distinct level, or it is possible to cross-game, multi-game, push on deeper psychological buttons or other things to try to make the game more indistinct. Of course, since it is just a game, these things can and are mostly falling into the realm of fun and war generally is not “fun”.



Next, I want to comment on the concept of “steel on target” as being part of a paradigmatic change in military thinking. The Diplomacy game equivalent follows from novice play toward expert play. Novices are caught up in learning the tactics of movement and how to achieve tactical targets, how to put the steel of armies and fleets on target. In this sense, all six other players begin as just being a distinct enemy. But as we move toward expert play, we take on more and more the goal character reported by Maltz as coming from General

Mattis (which in many ways may even apply better to Diplomacy the game): bending the enemy’s will (negotiation), identifying the problem (short term tactical goals), and building trust and harmonious teams comfortable with surprise and uncertainty (dynamic alliances). Moving to these higher levels of strategy and thinking about them philosophically and epistemologically. What do we know, and how do we know it?

So much of knowledge in these areas (war, diplomacy, and life) is tacit knowledge, knowledge that we cannot write down into a cookbook/manual. Maltz is very conscious of this problem, since the military wants to write everything down into a manual. No one ever has written a “manual” on how to play Diplomacy and I would assert that such a thing is not possible. Our military in places like Afghanistan faces this same sort of problem, many of the leaders and even the soldiers desperately want manuals to apply through the chain of command that can never be written as useful documents. Moreover, even if you COULD write such a manual, you never could get boots on the ground to absorb it and follow it, it would be too complicated. The famous “screw” story is a perfect representation of the effects of the need for levels of innovation and experience to gain effective conceptualization and action. We can conceptualize how the entire concept of a “screw” cannot be explained and is incomprehensible to a society who never has seen the concept, it can only be demonstrated. The game of Diplomacy also rewards the player that can twist the game into a previously unknown way of human interaction (usually in that context not something that has never been seen anywhere, but may or may not have been seen by other players in the context of a Diplomacy game – I’m thinking of things like filking [writing new words to a song]). It may be unknown in general, or more likely just unknown by the other players in the game as having been done in Diplomacy. I am thinking in the postal Diplomacy world, where we knew what FTF Dip was, and we were suddenly in this postal game, you could actually call someone on the phone, and HEAR their voice and recreate part of the immediacy of the FTF negotiation. I don’t know who the first postal player to make a phone call was, but with Skype, Google phone and other technological advances, I keep wondering why more internet Diplomacy players don’t engage voice as an approximation of FTF meat time in Diplomacy games to try to engage trust and commitment. And then to use it as a way to gain an advantage in negotiations.

Next, a few thoughts on the primary content areas at the heart of Richard Maltz’ analysis. First, the vision thing. The one major part of the game of Diplomacy that does not mirror real war is that all of our units respond to our orders without question, leadership does not require convincing our units (though it does require working with allies at times) to do what we want them to do. We could argue about whether vision can be learned or

taught, but almost every word of Maltz' extensive discussion of vision also applies to the problems of playing a good game of Diplomacy. Sound vision, I would assert, makes sound diplomacy (big D and little d).

Similarly, the discussion of the cognitive domain lies at the heart of the issues the expert Diplomacy player must contemplate to improve their game. The tactics are easy, the strategies are hard. They do depend on understanding the cultures and thought processes of one's opponents. Again, even though the "internal politics" of Diplomacy are simple, all of the issues Maltz raises are relevant. I would like to focus on the role of narrative. Maltz says: "What do people think of us? Are they favorably or unfavorably disposed toward us at a visceral level? Related to this is the issue of "Narrative". What policies are we trying to promote or obstruct? As policies exist on many levels, so must the narratives that accompany them. The relationships between greater and lesser policies/narratives are fractal in nature, with each supporting, or providing a framework, for those above or below it." Again, I think one of the fascinating issues in Diplomacy (relying on seven players being sufficient to generate enough narrative complexity) is how we choose the narrative structures on which to base particular games and how those narratives influence the processes of play and the outcomes of play. And I see processes and outcomes as different. Processes include such things as the frequency of negotiations (especially in E-Mail play where there are deadlines and large expanses of time between turns), the use of group communications, and the style of communications (all one liners, or long discourses that can range far beyond the strict limitations of talking about this game). Outcomes are the strength and duration of alliances on the board, as well as the actual outcomes of those alliances or tactics. The levels of narrative and knowing the policies we're trying to promote or obstruct are essential. And these must be reflected through the lenses of the players in our games.

The next section Maltz addresses is the question of culture, learning and adaptation. As we grow to understand the culture of our opponents, we must continuously adapt, sort of like a less technological version of the Borg adapting to phaser frequencies in Star Trek. Much of the detail of this section focuses on the military problem of getting the disparate units to operate in concert, which as we've noted is the one big simplification in the game of Diplomacy that has important consequences. One side note is that numerous people over the years have tried to craft variants that employ some element of this added complexity (having a "leader" who sits on top of the country, and also additional players who "control units" of the country) but these variants do not seem to gain much traction. I would assert that this is because the

internal vision issues are not clear and it does not really grab our interest the way the externally focused fundamental game issues do.

Yet, despite this seeming disconnect, the end of this section seems vitally important to Diplomacy players. First, Maltz seems to discuss "third generation" techniques that are aligned to thinking on "third generation knowledge management". Going back to Dave Snowden again, here is Snowden's definition of that, which fits even better to Diplomacy: "The third generation requires the clear separation of context, narrative and content management and challenges the orthodoxy of scientific management. Complex adaptive systems theory is used to create a sense-making model that utilizes self-organizing capabilities of the informal communities and identifies a natural flow model of knowledge creation, disruption and utilization." Allow me to deconstruct this a bit. This comes out of Snowden's sense of complexity, so scientific management of information and systems is based in modeling and simplification. If we assert that this is impossible, one must separate content, context, and narrative that comes out of communities/culture and figure out how to make progress toward goals. We then, within Diplomacy games or anything else, adapt over time while probing to make sense of the situations we find ourselves in. And then we take information about our environment and we can create, disrupt or utilize it in ways that move toward our vision or goals. Maltz ends with the famous Einstein quote that is a key result of this line of thinking, "If I had only 60 minutes to save the world, I would spend 59 minutes defining the problem, and one minute in solving it." To me the neatest thing about FTF Diplomacy, or boots on the ground warfare, is that deadlines in the case of Diplomacy and immediate events in the case of war preclude having the time to do this. BUT, in E-Mail/Postal games one can take more time to define the problem. This suggests that the two types of games are fundamentally different. I think I agree with that premise.

Finally, Maltz ends with a call for a re-definition of the transformation required of the military. I think that the last paragraph to me defines why the military is going to have a really tough time with this transformation, if they are even able to approach achieving it. I would be a bit skeptical about that and what the military does and how it does it REALLY matters. Our Game of course is just a game. But it can be a way for all of us to learn how to train our brains to think this way, since it focuses on the outward looking issues Maltz raises. I know it's why I still always will find The Game endlessly fascinating. Hope to have a chance to adapt with and to you in a game soon!

Jim Burgess is the Co-Editor of Diplomacy World. He's also the Interview Editor...which is odd, since he never interviews anyone.

Diplomacy World Demo Game

“Rotary Phones and 8-Track Tapes” – 2010B

The Players:

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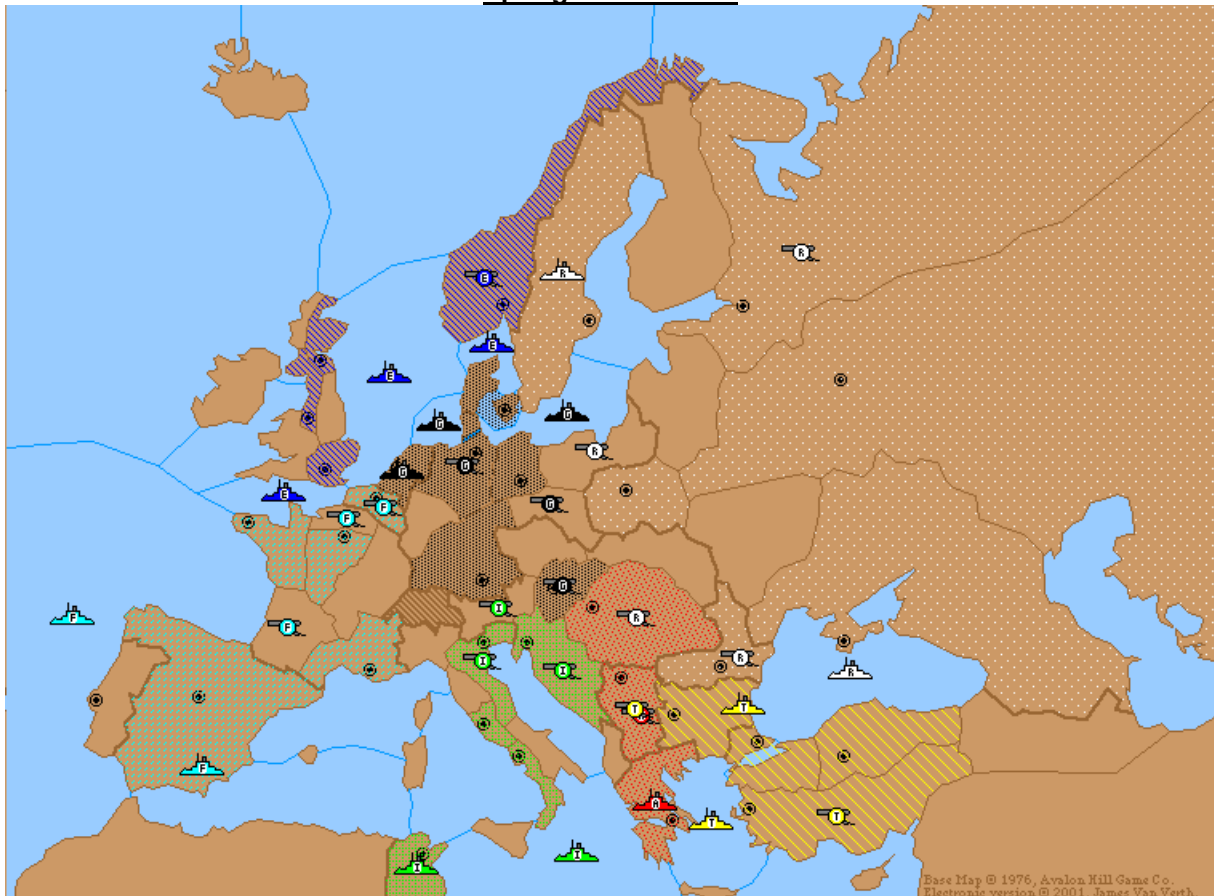
The Commentators:

Jim Burgess (**BOLD**)
Rick Desper (Normal Font)
Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

The GM:

Douglas Kent

Spring 1902 Results



Austria's valiant attempts to find an ally appear to fall flat. I sort of picture him as John Adams in "1776" singing "Is anybody there? Does anybody care? Does anybody see what I see?"

Austria: ~~A Budapest Supports A Galicia—Vienna~~ (*Disbanded*), F Greece - Ionian Sea (*Fails*),
~~A Serbia—Trieste~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Albania or OTB).
England: F Edinburgh - North Sea, F English Channel Supports F Edinburgh - North Sea,

F North Sea – Skagerrak, A Norway - Sweden (*Fails*).

France: A Belgium Supports A Paris – Picardy, F Brest - Mid-Atlantic Ocean,

F Marseilles - Spain(sc), A Paris – Picardy, A Spain - Gascony.

Germany: F Berlin - Baltic Sea, A Denmark – Kiel, F Holland - North Sea (*Fails*),

F Kiel - Helgoland Bight, A Munich – Silesia, A Vienna Supports A Galicia - Budapest.

Italy: F Naples - Ionian Sea, A Rome – Venice, A Trieste Supports A Galicia - Budapest (*Cut*),

F Tunis Supports F Naples - Ionian Sea, A Venice - Tyrolia.

Russia: A Galicia – Budapest, A Rumania Supports A Bulgaria – Serbia, F Sevastopol - Black Sea,

A St Petersburg - Norway (*Fails*), F Sweden Supports A Norway - Denmark (*Void*),

A Warsaw - Prussia.

Turkey: A Ankara – Smyrna, F Black Sea - Bulgaria(ec), A Bulgaria – Serbia,

F Constantinople - Aegean Sea.

PRESS

CARSON, CALIFORNIA: "Down to the basement?" the young boy gasped. "Gee...I went there once with dad, but it's pretty dark and scary. Mom wouldn't even go down the steps, she reckoned it would ruin her new Gucci shoes. Will it be okay?"

Merlin laughed again and patted Brooklyn on the shoulder. "It will be fine – I'm a magician, remember? I can make sure everything is safe, and I will. Come on boy, get some clothes on and come with me, your destiny awaits you."

The old man turned away, not wishing to embarrass the boy as he dressed.

Brooklyn quickly pulled on jeans, tee shirt and sneakers, but then stopped and looked up at the old magician. "You said 'destiny' earlier, and I told you I learned what it meant at school. Does it...does it mean I'm gonna play for dad's soccer team?"

Merlin looked down at the boy and smiled. He held him by the shoulders as he laughed. "Oh Brooklyn. So young, so full of young ideas. Yes, you may very well play for LA Galaxy in years to come, and maybe some of the big European teams too, like your dad. But first, you must fulfil your true destiny. Come, follow me."

The young boy held the hand of the old magician and they walked quietly down the stairs, and then down the steps into the basement of the LA Galaxy stadium...

(Berlin to London): Awfully sorry, old chap, but I've decided that my good friend and long-term game ally, Russia, needs the centers more than you do. Consider us at war, if only temporarily...just need...to....adjust things a little...bit....there...got it.

(Berlin to Russia): Enjoy the Fjords of Norway, the Chevys of Detroit, and the pests in Buda. Not bad—two centers in spring, wot? Oh, and please disregard the Baltic and Silesian units – they obviously had to go, um, somewhere while the rest of my forces were trying to help my good friend and long-term game ally. I promise they'll be gone soon...probably be sitting outside the box

somewhere.

(Berlin to Rome): No hiking in the Tyrolian Alps, please. Oktoberfest will come soon enough.

(Berlin to Paris): So, BuzSaw, where did you finally end up? My money's on you to be in the running this time...at least that's my intent.

(Germany to Turkey): Enjoy the ride!

(Germany to Austria): Race you to the bottom.

Bud-Vie: Yeah, I remember when I had my first Anschluss. I had some kind of hangover. Here's hoping yours is worse.

Judge, Jury and Executioner (a Maiku):

There's a slow train comin' up around the bend
Surely it will roll over you, can't say just when
Steam engines keep a chuggin'
While you keep a muggin'
Your time is surely comin'
And it won't leave you nothin'
But pain

Bud-Tri: How's that whole "learn a new language" thing going? You might want to invest in some additional languages, you know, if they offer bulk discounts.

Bud-Buz: Ever think about renaming a dot after yourself? That could be quite a lucrative business. Kind of like naming stars for loved ones. So, Budapest could be "Buzapest." Just a thought.

(Germany to Board): Has anyone seen my *Doctor Who* Life Knife? I seem to have misplaced it along with the faked copy of GRAUSTARK from April 1st....

Turkey: Apparently all communications are down. No one has attempted to reach any of my ambassadors for weeks now. No rings from Austria, so I must assume he has an ally or has crawled into a shell. Good luck Steve, whichever way you go. Maybe the lines and satellites

will be back up again in late June!

(Somewhere on a foggy mountaintop) - "Freaking teachers make things harder than they need to be!" The mountain woman muttered under her breath as she stepped onto the front porch, an open can of diet root beer in her left hand. "Final exams! They can take their final exams and..." The woman's eyes narrowed as she spotted the police car slowly rolling up the gravel driveway towards the shack. "Now what does that idiot want?"

The pot-bellied Sheriff wiggled out from behind the steering wheel of his police car then slammed the driver's side door before striding towards her.

The woman softly whistled the opening bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony then smiled. "Morning Sheriff Truck."

"That's Kluck! With a 'K'!"

The woman waved her right hand in silent apology. "Sorry, haven't had enough root beer yet this morning. What can I do for you?"

"Heard some talk you're keeping wolves out here. You can't keep wild animals as pets, you know." The Sheriff stared at her with self-importance.

"Well, of course you can't do that!" The woman indignantly agreed. "That's insulting to the wolves! Pets, indeed! No, they're my guests."

The Sheriff blinked a few times in confusion. Then his eyes widened when he saw two large wolves slowly appear at the side of the shack. "Wolves!" he screamed.

The woman glanced over her shoulder and grinned. "Morning, guys. Meet Sheriff Muck."

"That's..." The Sheriff swallowed his protest when both wolves stared at him.

"The silver one is Big Sexy," the woman continued.

"Trust me, he's earned THAT name from what I hear from the she-wolves. The other one is Bad Guy. He tries really hard to live that down. But you just can't change nature, you know?"

As the Sheriff slowly backed towards the patrol car, she frowned. "Guys! Where's Sixx?"

Surprisingly, both wolves looked away, attempting to look innocent.

The woman scowled. "He's out running with Chavo again, isn't he?"

Big Sexy shook his body as though shaking off water. Bad Guy smiled, showing his sharp teeth.

"Pups," the woman shook her head. "Just like kids." She turned when she heard the slam of a car door. She watched in silence as the Sheriff threw the car into reverse. Gravel flew from the tires as he floored the engine and sped off in reverse down the driveway. "Huh....that was kinda rude." She narrowed her eyes in thought. "You know, if you guys cut across the back of the mountain, you might get to Spencer's Creek in time to tell him goodbye."

Both wolves threw back their heads and howled their agreement to the morning sky. As one, they turned and ran off.

The woman raised the can of diet root beer to her lips and sipped.

The Wolfpac was on the hunt.

(Somewhere on a foggy mountain top) - The cabin door lay splintered in a hundred pieces as a frigid gale rushed through the emptied shell. What had once been a 32 inch flat screen television was now just debris covering the dead woman's body. The chipmunk and the dog looked at each other. Their faces moved into what appeared to be grins. Every dog and every chipmunk has his day.

Spring 1902 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

Let's start with the press: There is nothing that makes Mark Fassio more cranky than to think he is being ignored. As seems clear, he is writing the lion's share of the press, but not getting very much feedback. I believe Mark is also the "foggy mountaintop" commentator. This issue cannot help to accelerate as it infuses the actual negotiations going on. One needs to look at what Vince says as he notes in the press that he is being left out (as

Turkey) from all the discussion happening elsewhere, as people elsewhere on the board don't really care what Vince does. Of course, Vince COULD inject himself into discussions, but seems to have chosen not to, except that he and Don DO have an agreement (fleet to East Coast, Don's fleet to Black, army goes to Smyrna to set up convoy). Is this disingenuous? Of course!! Do we believe the accuracy of all the press we read?? Of course

not!!! More on the press below.

A very interesting move. We see that Steve has no friends whatsoever, as Don and Vince smell blood in the water and join in. But what will happen next? That's not so clear.

Vince seems to be doing so on his own, according to his press, but gets his marching orders from Don. And Steve hasn't been asking for help as he engages in the battle of wills and words with Faz. So, this is one of those games where Austria is out. Traditionally, this leads to RT Juggernaut success and forces the west to resolve quickly to oppose it. I do not expect traditional responses. Let's see what else we want to say?

The Northern three have accomplished mutual deception, as each has trusted the wrong guy and attacked the guy who was trying to work with him. Don's move to Prussia does little for him tactically, as he has to go right back to Warsaw. Bill has to view the German fleet movements with concern, and Buz has his fleets in a position where they could either go north or south (a common situation for France). I suspect they'll be going north, just from knowing that Buz really doesn't like an opening like Lon - Eng. But he could move south and try to poach Tunis.

So, to date there is no evidence of the West resolving itself (no surprise). I think Rick is dead wrong on Don's move to Prussia just having to go back to Warsaw. Note Faz's press about stashing Baltic and Silesia, this is just sleight of hand mind games. I think Baltic is there and Prussia is there for a convoy. Not sure where, but somewhere. Fall will see A Baltic convoy A Prussia to Sweden, Denmark or even Kiel! The set up is all here in the Merlin/magician stuff. Rick gives the standard analysis, we'll see what happens. Buz's head is no doubt spinning. I'm not sure where it will stop spinning, but we'll see in the fall from where the fleets go. If we see this as a GR strong alliance, with Turkey as the rump toady (and I think that is it), then France and England need to make up FAST. But Faz is trying to keep them at odds, and doing so well, they need to read the press and take the proper reverse psychology lessons from it. This is Silver Age press strategy at its finest, I just wish someone else were practicing it so you all could see what a game where SEVEN players are doing this is like. It's a mind twister.

With the collapse of Austria, this game will hit the mid-game in record time. But I shouldn't be so quick to view Steve as dead: his fleet holds the balance on whether Turkey achieves the Ionian, and his army could hit either Trieste or [Serbia](#) with multiple supports. The problem with a 4-way pig pile on Austria is that it happens so quickly that the next war starts almost immediately. And what is Don doing in the Black Sea? Gosh I hope the Sil/Pru nonsense is a fake war. If that's the case, the Fall move could be devastating. We could see massive Witch Hunts in both the East and the West. But double secret conspiracy theories rarely turn out to be justified.

Not so fast, maybe here we have the cards which call that play. And Steve does have things to say to TURKEY and ITALY, why isn't he saying them? I think again that Faz is blizzarding everyone with so much press that they don't have the energy to do anything else with anyone else. That's my thinking anyway.

Can somebody explain the bit about the wolves in the press? (At least among us..?) Who is Big Sexy and who is Bad Guy? Who is the dog and who is the chipmunk? ?

I'll give it a shot, but I suspect some of the code is provided in the PRIVATE press, this is the way one does these things.

The wolfpack is Don and Faz. I believe that Faz is Big Sexy and Don is Bad Guy, but it could be the other way around. Just stating facts, Don is relatively large (so maybe he is Big Sexy) while Faz is shorter and in better shape. Then Faz would be Bad Guy since they're playing Good Cop, Bad Cop on the rest of the players, and Faz DEFINITELY is playing the Bad Cop. But again, it could all be misdirection (as I think it is) and Faz is the Big Sexy and Don is Bad Guy playing the Good Guy. But I'm 99% sure they are the wolves. You figure the other part about the Creek (think Baltic Sea as Spencer's Creek, perhaps? Though there must be some obscure connection that makes that so.

It's nice to be commenting on a lively game for a change. 😊

Who knows what happens next, but we will progress into a midgame status very quickly.

SPRING 1902

by Richard Walkerdine

General U'til was studying the recording of the unknown ship with his Science Officer, Lieutenant B'des. "I have never seen the like, never!" he

muttered, his upper tentacles waving in exasperation. "And where did it come from? Our probes have scanned this part of the galaxy several times, as they

have in all areas within a few hundred light years of the Empire, and apart from Earth there is no civilisation worthy of the title! I do not like this Lieutenant, I do not like this at all. This is supposed to be a simple training mission in a rather backward corner of the galaxy, and with a crew of young officers and trainees we are in no state to fight space battles."

"Sir," replied the young Lieutenant, "I am sure the whole crew will be ready if the need arises."

The General laid a tentacle on the shoulder of his Science Officer. "My apologies B'des," he said quietly, "I meant no disrespect. I have no doubt that you and all the ships company will fight bravely if it becomes necessary."

"That we will Sir," came the reply, "and for the greater glory of the Empire!"

"Good man Lieutenant," said the General, "I never doubted you." But in his mind he knew full well the difference between raw youngsters and battle hardened warriors.

"So," continued the General, "what of your sensors Lieutenant? Have they picked up any useful information?"

"No Sir, I'm afraid not," was the reply. "Their shields are like nothing I have ever seen, even in the archives at the military academy on Homeworld. My sensors could not penetrate at all. Here Sir, look at this close up view. You can actually see the shields giving off an eerie glow, with those little points of light winking on and off. It almost reminds me of the tales I heard as a child, of the goblins and witches and the other strange creatures of the underworld." He paused. "Sorry Sir."

General U'til laughed. "That's alright Lieutenant, but I fear this is no children's tale. This is real and very serious. Continue with your analysis, anything could be of importance. I will rejoin you after the next briefing."

He quickly made his way to the briefing room, where the trainees were talking excitedly about the recent

events. They fell silent as he took his place on the podium.

"Hail Fndili," he cried with crossed tentacles.

"Hail Fndili," replied the trainees.

He looked at them for a moment before beginning the briefing. 'So young,' he thought, 'and with so little experience. Ah well, may the Goddess preserve us.'

"Gentlemen," he began, "you are all aware of the unknown ship that attempted to attack us and we are still analysing the recordings. I will of course keep you fully informed of any new developments. But this is a training mission and our studies must continue. Let us see what has occurred in Europe."

"We start with England, who appears to have no allies. They might be able to take Sweden, but not if Germany continues in alliance with Russia. And those allies must surely have been in touch with France to suggest a three way attack on England that would certainly guarantee its demise."

"As for France there is clearly an understanding with Italy, why otherwise would the fleet in Marseille have stayed out of the Mediterranean? And of course there is still the need to defend against England. Perhaps the fleet in the Mid Atlantic will now enter English waters, now that would be interesting. I feel sure that Germany and Russia will have suggested this."

"And so to Germany. Clearly continuing an attack on England, and with all those fleets what else could they do? The fleet in the Baltic however is interesting. On the face of it we would assume support for the Russians in Sweden, but it is also nicely positioned if the alliance with Russia breaks down."

"The Italian moves are very interesting. Is the alliance with Germany at an end? The army in Tyrolia will enable Italy to take Vienna unless Russia offers Germany some support, but even that would not work if Turkey intervenes. And Italy seems to be looking north at present."

"As for Austria, alas poor Austria. No allies and no hope. I think we can eliminate them from any further significant contribution to our studies. We will wait for the next analysis but if it develops as I suspect then those of you who have Austria as your speciality nation will be switched to another of the Great Powers."

"So next to Russia. It will need the German alliance to continue if it is to face both Turkey and England, but the Italian moves might suggest otherwise. Is there now an alliance with Italy, perhaps to eliminate the annoyance of Turkey and concentrate on the bigger threat from Germany? The fleet in the Black Sea is a huge advantage if this is the case."

"And finally Turkey. I begin to fear for Turkey. Russia seems to be advancing and, if Italy has the intentions of turning north it will want to be rid of any Turkish interruptions as soon as possible, and it can only do so with Russian help."

"So in summary gentlemen, as before I regard Austria, England and Turkey as being in the greatest peril and France and Italy as being in the best positions. But the situation of Germany and Russia is very interesting, and full of imponderables."

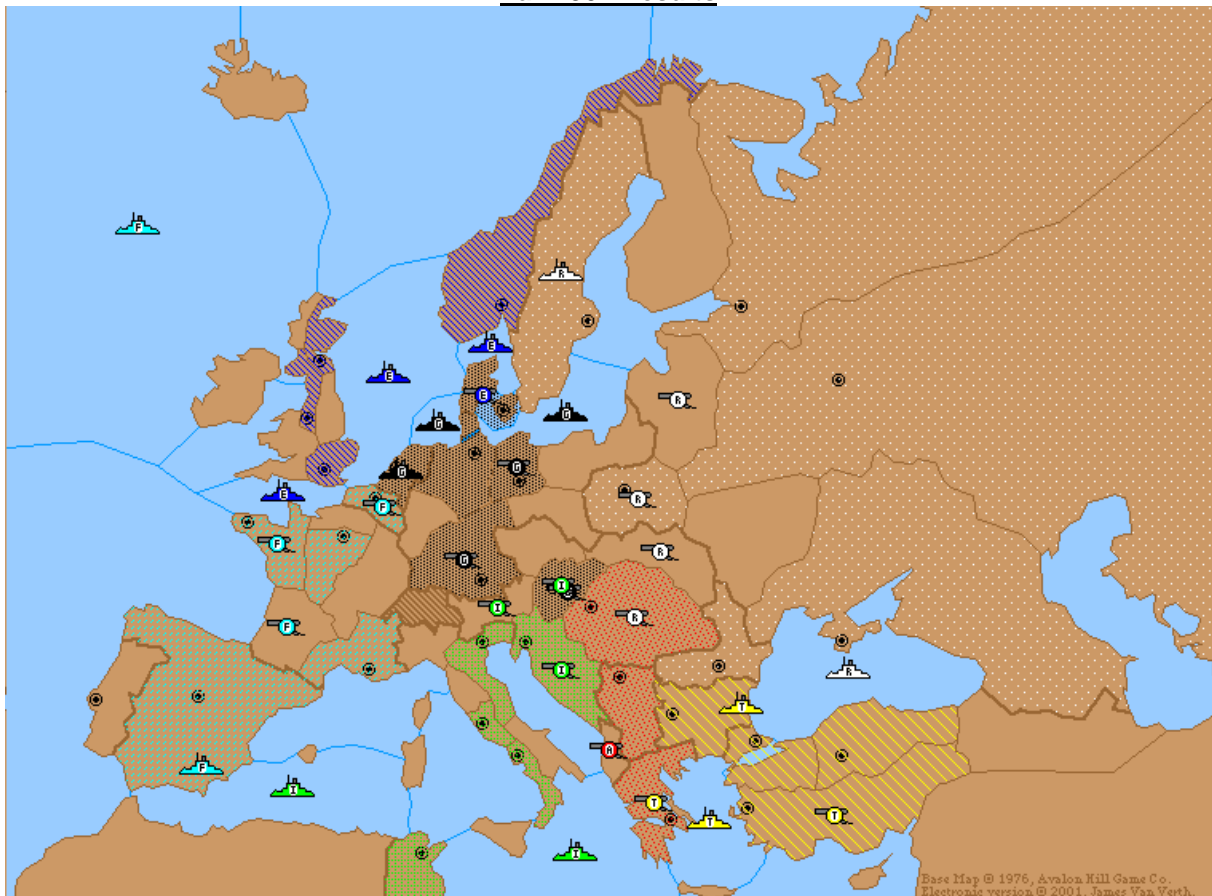
"As before, your views by midday tomorrow. Hail Fndili!"

The old General hurried back to the bridge to see if the Science Officer had made any progress.

Summer 1902 Results

Austria: Retreats A Serbia to-Albania.

Fall 1902 Results



Austria's will survive another year at least. Can he outlast one (or more) of the other nations? Germans are the only one with a retreat order to submit. And just WHAT is France up to?

Austria: A Albania - Serbia (*Bounce*), ~~F Greece - Aegean Sea~~ (*Disbanded*).

England: F English Channel Supports A Picardy – Brest, A Norway – Denmark, F North Sea Supports A Norway - Denmark (*Cut*), F Skagerrak Convoys A Norway - Denmark.

France: A Belgium Hold, A Gascony - Brest (*Fails*), F Mid-Atlantic Ocean - North Atlantic Ocean, A Picardy – Brest, F Spain(sc) Hold.

Germany: F Baltic Sea Supports F Skagerrak - Sweden (*Void*), F Helgoland Bight - Denmark (*Fails*), F Holland - North Sea (*Fails*), A Kiel – Berlin, A Silesia – Munich, ~~A Vienna – Budapest~~ (*Dislodged*, may retreat to Bohemia or OTB).

Italy: F Ionian Sea - Albania (*Fails*), A Trieste – Vienna, F Tunis - Western Mediterranean, A Tyrolia Supports A Trieste – Vienna, A Venice - Trieste.

Russia: F Black Sea - Rumania (*Bounce*), A Budapest - Serbia (*Bounce*), A Prussia – Warsaw, A Rumania – Galicia, A St Petersburg – Livonia, F Sweden Supports A Norway - Denmark.

Turkey: F Aegean Sea Supports A Serbia – Greece, F Bulgaria(ec) - Rumania (*Bounce*), A Serbia – Greece, A Smyrna Hold.

PRESS

Turkey to Austria: We've got them right where they want us.

Turkey to GM: As my fellow Thanksgiving relatives said, as their remains were stuffed into the refrigerator: "Foiled again!"

Dog Racing: Down home in backwoods Arkansas, the boys had graduated from dog fighting to dog racing. This weekend was to determine which of the prized pooches was to be the best dog of the season. Some were long in the tooth, and others were middle aged. There were no pups amongst them.

Early odds favored the German Shepherd, while the Russian Wolfhound and English Setter were also among the favorites.

As beer and chewing tobacco became consumed to the point where the boys could not remember whether to spit or swallow, the time drew down to where the race would commence.

Odds and comments were as follows:

The German Shepherd was a favorite for the early lead, but he seemed distracted by the French Poodle and seemed more interested in butt sniffing than in racing. The dog's dominant personality made him the early favorite despite this aggressive behaviour.

Next was the English Setter. The dog always ran near the lead and could be counted on to pace himself near the Shepherd, waiting for a chance to grab the lead in mid race. The problem with the Setter was that it had not raced in some time, and might lose its focus.

The Russian Wolfhound was being highly considered as well. He had a history of doing well against the other dogs and he rightly assumed he would be there at the end, either as a pacesetter, or as spoiler.

The next three were clumped together, as they were largely unknown entities. The Italian Greyhound was

snippish and the only female there, so even though she appeared fast, there could be some male domination. In fact, the Wolfhound was looking her over quite carefully. The Turkish Akbash was a new dog to the races, but appeared large enough and strong enough to finish the race, if he could manage to stay with the early leaders. The Poodle was largely discounted as being all fluff, but his size could not be discounted.

The Austrian Pinscher was the dark horse. He had been known to run smart races, but could get worn down trying to stay with the larger dogs, so he had to resort to wile and gamesmanship in order to succeed. He was seen as an 'all or nothing' bet, and today, at least, was given the worst odds.

Krazy Al, fresh out of the pokey for a run in with his wife and current mistress was normally the one to start the race with a .22 pistol, but his current mental state made the rest of the boys leery, so they gave him a well used handkerchief to drop instead. Krazy Al did not like this, but acceded.

The dogs were lined up and the handkerchief dropped into the sun heated dirt of the track.

The Shepherd darted into the lead, closely followed by the Poodle and the Wolfhound. There was a quick yelp and snarl, and the good old boys were amused to see that the Greyhound had bitten the leg of the Pinscher, causing him to limp noticeably as the dogs began their journey. The Greyhound quickly caught up to the others, but stopped periodically to gaze at the small pond of water that lined the inside of the track.

The Setter and Akbash seemed content to run just behind the pack, and as the dogs turned the corner, to go momentarily out of sight; the Shepherd was still in the lead, with the Wolfhound, and suddenly, now, the Setter in close pursuit. Surprisingly, the Poodle was making a strong showing as well. The Akbash seemed to slow down and check on the Pinscher, but was quickly rebuffed by a snap and a snarl, so the Akbash turned and seemed to gain a bit of ground on the pack. The

Pinsher was the last to turn the corner; limping and snarling as he tried to keep up.

The boys were betting again, as this never really stopped, and a few bets were placed on the Wolfhound and Poodle to gain on the Shepherd.....

Turkey: A messenger runs into the outer office of Commander Lutterbie: "Sir! The Russians have entered the Black Sea!"

"Quiet, you imbecile! Can't you see I am reviewing the 'Letters to the Editor' column in the most recent 'Hustler' that Tsar Williams has sent to me?"

"Sir", the messenger replied, "Surely this is just to take your mind off the fleet!"

"Actually, I believe they were getting well oiled shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico. I think they are just getting more food supplies."

"With battleships and subs?" The messenger goggled. "They have subs on the battleships? Maybe they won't grab all of the shrimp!" a clearly occupied Lutterbie asked.

"Sir! Will you listen to me?" the inept messenger pleaded.

"I'll grant you some time after I finish this, and the 'Playboy' that Melinda Holley sent me."

"Sir! She has ships moving our way as well."

"OK, OK, tell the French to send me a better magazine, and I'll try to read them all real fast, then we'll see who sent the best pictures."

"Oh sir," the messenger stumbled as he exited the room. "There is an important message from someone named Fez."

"Um, did you say Fez?"

"Faz sir, he says he has important messages for you from Germany."

"They probably messed up my order of 'Great battles won since the Ottoman Empire ruled' first day stamp issues. I hear that they are on vellum stock."

"I'll tell him you're in the rest room."

LATER:

The messenger runs in. "Sir, we have a missive from Steve Cooley!"

"Kew! What does it say?"

"It says he is better than you and that his knees hurt him at times."

"True on both points. Any return address?"

"Well, it is smudged, it looks a lot like grease!"

"That may be a clue! Do you think it is a clue?"

"Hmmm," the messenger pondered. "It MIGHT be." He scratched his nose as he left the room.

EVEN LATER:

"Do you think if I promote myself to General for life, that people will be more impressed?"

The messenger smiled, "I am sure of it sir! I mean GFL."

"Yes," Lutterbie mused, "I like it."

VERY LATE THAT NIGHT:

Messenger: Sir, we have received a message that Austria will be attacking in 1901!"

"Crap! What year is it?"

"1902 GFL sir!"

"Damn it, we missed the invasion....take a letter!"

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING:

GFL Lutterbie: "Man, I couldn't sleep!"

Messenger: "We're you worried about the Russian invasion?"

GFL Lutterbie: "No...but, maybe I should. Send for Chinese!"

Messenger: "This early?"

GFL Lutterbie: "You're correct. Make it Thai! Do they deliver?"

LATE MORNING:

Messenger: "Good morning Sir! How do you feel after starting a war with Russia?"

GFL Lutterbie: "I started a war with RUSSIA?"

Messenger: "Well, you attacked Rumania!"

GFL Lutterbie: "I thought I was just coming home to protect against the shrimp fleet and trading Serbia for Rumania."

Messenger: "Yessir, I expect Don will see that as war, sir."

GFL Lutterbie: "Would he have thought otherwise had he taken one of my centers?"

Messenger: "When he does that, he considers it 'liberating', I believe."

GFL Lutterbie: "Hmmm, maybe I could use that term."

Messenger: "It might be a good idea to come up with a plan, GFL, sir."

GFL Lutterbie: "A plan? Oh, yes, I suppose a plan would be nice. Or, we could just

surrender!" Hmmm...a plan....How long would it take to come up with a plan?"

Messenger: "It generally takes you less time than you would think, sir. Perhaps an hour or so?"

GFL Lutterbie: "An hour? Then I'd miss my diddling session...I mean... my tennis match with the Sultan's wife!"

Messenger: "There is good news, sir!"

GFL Lutterbie: "I'd like good news."

Messenger: "Steve Cooley is likely to survive. You may yet get that ring!"

GFL Lutterbie holds up the middle finger on his right hand, "I still have room for a ring on this finger!"

Messenger: "I would not suggest doing that in the presence of any Russian ambassadors soon."

GFL Lutterbie: "Maybe we could just cut it off and give the Russians the finger."

Messenger: "I believe you just did that sir."

GFL Lutterbie: "I'd like to become Sultan. I'd like to become the Sultan of Swat!"

Messenger: "It's been done, sir."

GFL Lutterbie: (Petulantly) "Very well then, could you grab a Baby Ruth out of the candy machine for me then? I need to work on my plan."

:::The harried man was darting from place to place behind enemy lines in Serbia::: He had posed as a missionary from the Gideons, but found that to be dangerous. Now, he was just trying to distribute his wares quickly and return to the 20 or so other infiltrators before being shot by some non-religious crackpot. He just had one more item to deliver. It was going to the home of an overlarge, overpaid, underworking member of the established political machine. It was a book entitled, "How to learn Russian in 2 Weeks." Attached was a note from Don Williams, which the the unfortunate deliveryman had read, "I suggest you learn this, instead of Turkish or Italian". Signed 'The Duck'. The man made his delivery through the front door's mail slot and hurried back to his rendezvous, only to find Don Williams sitting amongst the other 20 odd deliverymen. They were, unfortunately, quite dead. The Duckmeister grinned at the deliveryman and said, "You seem to have outlived your usefulness!" as he pulled the trigger of his AK47 (bought on the sly, during a recent trip to England).

CARSON, CALIFORNIA: "Gee, it sure is creepy down here Merlin," said Brooklyn as he gripped the old man's hand a little tighter.

"Don't worry boy, you are quite safe with me," replied the old magician as they slowly descended the steps into the basement. "But it's going to get a bit more creepy I'm afraid, because we have to go even deeper."

"Deeper?" gasped the eleven year old. "But how can we? I mean I came down here once with dad, like I told you, and this is as deep as you can get. I mean, these big blocks of concrete and stuff, these are the foundations of the whole stadium."

Merlin smiled down at the boy. "You know about foundations? I'm impressed, you really are learning well at school. Intelligent and brave, attributes that will serve you well for what is to come."

"What do you mean?" asked the young boy.

The old magician just smiled. "Remember what I said about destiny? All will become clear soon enough. Ah, here it is. He pointed with his wooden staff to a part of the wall. You see this gap between these concrete blocks? If we squeeze through we will find the tunnel leading further down. That is where we must go."

"Oh wow," gasped Brooklyn, all fears now forgotten and enjoying the adventure more and more.

Turkey: GFL Lutterbie woke from a restless night, turned over and saw that the bedside clock read 6:30 AM.

In normal circumstances, he would roll over and try for another 6 hours, but sleep was not to revisit him.

He had been having strange and restless thoughts. He wasn't sure of reality in his fog filled mind. He jumped into the shower to clear his brain. Once toweled off and sitting at the table with a bowl of Cheerios, he buzzed for his aide/messenger; the only staff he allowed himself.

Messenger: Yes sir?

GFL Lutterbie: Did I attack Russia a few days ago?

Messenger: I wouldn't call it an attack, sir, more like a gentle nudge.

GFL Lutterbie: Oh good! I must have had a bad dream.

Messenger: Yes sir. Ummmmm... was that Bobby Ewing coming out of the shower room?

(Somewhere in the foothills of Serbia)

A small statured man stumbles into, of all things, an Irish pub on the outskirts of Belgrade. He asks for some bitters and gets old tea.

He asks the barkeep if there is anyone capable of getting a short message through the Russian lines and to GFL Lutterbie, as he has heard that some in the Turkish army have fallen to the subversive wiles of the Donster of St. Petersburg.

The barkeep points to a lovely Irish lass, telling the old man that she looks harmless, but that she is reliable and ruthless.

The old peasant approaches her with some trepidation and asks what it would take to get a missive to the GFL.

She says that she is on her way to give the Sultan's wife a proper tennis lesson and may run into GFL Lutterbie afterwards.

The man asks if she'll take a verbal message and she agrees that this may be safest.

Here is the missive as it was related to GFL Lutterbie by the winsome spy:

Dear GFL Lutterbie. I am a big fan of your latest publication, "The Ottoman and Your Feet; a Marriage Made With Your Soles in Mind." The Russians are coming and so are the Austrians. Rev. Cooley has made a vow to retake Serbia and is working with either the Stupendous Don or the Winning Faz. Either way, your goose is down to the down. May I suggest sending your troops to Greece, where they will enjoy a safer existence, at least until the Papacy decides to convert the remaining non-Christians?

I am yours, probably in spirit only, by the time you receive this!

(Kiel) Germans in 1945 had a saying: "Better an end in horror, than a horror without end." For 1902 Germany in this game, the same operative phrase is in effect. So as we throw caution to the winds, let's tell the men to sling

GERMANY SINGS SWAN SONGS, THE BLUES, AND OTHER GENRES!

Franz: ... und Franz



Hans und Franz

Franz: Do I? *Natürlich! Ach*, those were the happy times. And our first song is especially nostalgic for the year 1900-1901, when **Germany** worked on the SWAT Plan with a great team:



Fassio military photo, 1999
happier times, 1901



Melinda, Don and Faz in

Franz: And for 1901 in this game, we had those SAME glory days once again. Germany and the other minds plotted world destruction (those zany madcaps!). Our country was at the top of the world. Meanwhile, across the Alps, this next song was rumored to have been sung by the **Austrian**, Archduke Cooley, as he felt the stab of every neighbor near him:



"I coulda been at 5 if not for those stabs"

Just one more morning
I had to wake up with the blues
Pulled myself out of bed
Put on my walkin' shoes
(~~Went up to the mountain~~) Walked out of the bunker
To see what I could see
The whole world was fallin'
Right down in front of me
You got me hung up
On dreams I'll never see
Oh, help me ~~baby~~ someone
Or this will surely be
The end of me....
(Allman Brothers Band, *Dreams*)

Hans: Franz, the beautiful thing about these songs – just like German history – is that they can be revised and made to fit new paradigms. We are hoping that the Archduke has also found new life with his new friends and is dealing out merciless, swift justice to those heinous interlopers who would do him harm.

Franz: I couldn't agree more, Hans! Death and destruction to his foes! *Gott*, it's such a beautiful thing to visualize!!

Hans: Let's not forget, Franz, that the Kaiser also goes back decades with King William of **England**, a country that has not *decayed* for centuries. King William is a ruler who *fills* his *crown* well, and who has *capped* a brilliant career in dentistry...nothing *false* about this ruler! Germany could easily sing these next lyrics over (and over, and over) to the ever-waiting King William – and it has!



"Give me SWE, or no Novocain"

If you search for ~~tenderness~~ an alliance

it isn't hard to find.
You can have the ~~love~~ team you need to live.
But if you look for truthfulness
You might just as well be blind.
It always seems to be so hard to give.

Honesty is such a lonely word.
Everyone is so untrue.
Honesty is hardly ever heard.
And mostly what I need from you.
(Billy Joel, *Honesty*)

Hans: Of course, Franz, things are not always as they used to be, and this next little ditty is dedicated **to Italy**, and how our Kaiser saw things regarding this lovely visage of womanhood:



"Is that a fleet in your pocket, or are you happy to see me? Either way, I want what you have"

~~He~~ Faz came from somewhere back in her long ago
The sentimental fool don't see
Tryin' hard to recreate
What had yet to be created once in her life
She musters a smile
For his nostalgic tale
Never coming near what he wanted to say
Only to realize
It never really was

No wise man has the power to reason away
What seems to be
Is always better than nothing
There's nothing at all
But what a fool believes
He sees ...
(Doobie Brothers, *What a Fool Believes*)

Hans: Sad, so sad. The Kaiser foolishly assumed he could relive the old days with loyal friends...*ach*, what a fool believes, indeed! Maybe if he played THIS next tune from The Boss, he'd feel much better!

I been watchin' you a long time
Trying to figure out ~~where and when~~ why you hide
We been moving down that same line
Time is now maybe we could ~~get skin-to-skin~~ ally side-

by-side

Don't know when this chance might come again
Good times got a way of comin' to an end
Don't know when this chance might come again
Good times got a way of slippin' a-way
Let's be friends, baby, let's be friends
(Bruce Springsteen, *Let's Be Friends*)

Franz: *Achtung*, Hans! These tunes are not just about the furtive hopes of working with Italy. How about the alliance dreams of also working with **Russia**? We have a couple songs dedicated to the Bear Formerly Known as the Duck, "Prince" Don. First, from Journey: *I'll be All Right without You*.



Prince Don of Russia, scheming like it's 1999

I've been thinking 'bout the times you walked out on me
There were moments I'd believe, you were there
Do I miss you, or am I lying to myself again?
I ~~do~~ did these things (it's all because of you)
I keep holding on, but I'll try (try not to think of you)
~~Love~~ Russia, don't leave me lonely

I'll be alright without you - there'll be someone else, I
keep tellin' myself
I'll be alright without you - oh, ~~love's~~ Dip's an empty ~~face~~
space, I can't replace

Hans: Oh, the poor Kaiser – such an honest man, simply looking for a fellow traveler to rule the board with an iron hand and a firm gaze, squashing lesser beings with impunity. Would that Prince Don have been so farsighted as to see the natural advantages to the G/R instead of such brutal strife! Instead, the Kaiser now sings *this* throwback memory for his present-day reality:

((Cue the theme from *SHAFT*, by Isaac Hayes))

Who's the (~~black-private~~) white-blocked dick
That's (~~a sex machine to all the chicks?~~) such a liar to all the hicks?
(~~SHAFT!~~) Duck!
Who is the man
that would ~~risk his neck for~~ stab the back of his brother man?

(~~Shaft!~~) Duck!
Can ya dig it?
Who's the cat that won't ~~cop-out~~ be true
when there's danger ~~all-about~~ thrown at you?
(~~Shaft!~~) Duck!
Right on
You see this cat Don is a bad mother--
(Shut your mouth)
But I'm talkin' about ~~Shaft~~ Don
(Then we can dig it)
He's a complicated man
but no one understands him like ~~his woman~~ Melinda
(~~John-Shaft~~) Don Williams



"Of course I'll support you; can't you see my sincerity?"

Franz: You know, Hans, one of the great commentators of our time, Jim-Bob Burgess – co-writer of countless tunes himself – correctly identified the Kaiser's weaknesses in these games, to include emotionalism overriding logic, and it truly spelled disaster for Kasier Fazdorf in 1902, *ja*?



Yeah, yeah, $E=mc^2$. Whatever. But let's see... if I double TAP's page count...remove one staple... and send it 3rd class post, I can save money, yet charge the readership three times the sub price... gads, I'll be rich!

Hans: Absolutely, Franz! The Kaiser unfortunately believed the continued pap of the Russian and his ridiculous self-justification as he tried to hide his traitorous lifestyle. And in the end, every honorable hot button on the Kaiser's manly body was pushed to its limit. To commemorate the correct "call" by *Der Boobenstein*, here is another Bruce Springsteen song describing **Germany in 1902**:

The times they got too clear
 So you removed all the mirrors
 Once the ~~family~~ German felt secure
 Now ~~no one's~~ you're not very sure
 Your own worst enemy has come to town
 Your own worst enemy has come...
 Everything is falling down
 Your own worst enemy has come to town
 Your flag, it flew so high
 It drifted up to the sky....
 (Your Own Worst Enemy, from the *Magic* CD)

Franz: Hans, we Germans are the Masters of boozy sad songs that bemoan our fate when things go wrong, and the Kaiser has a plethora of great selections to choose from in this compilation CD! Surely *no* collection of self-flagellating songs of woe would be complete without this gem:

Wasted away again in ~~Margaritaville~~ useless frontier dots
 Searchin' for my lost (~~shaker of salt~~) skills when I talk
 Some people claim the Hun Himself is to blame
 But I know
 It's really Don's fault
 Yes and, some people claim that this old German's to blame
 But I know
 It's not my damn fault!

Hans: Right you are, Franzie old chap! The Kaiser is, indeed, wasting away in Margaritaville, drinking himself into a stupor over what could have been, and what will become. Looks like he could be (snicker) "Buffet-ed" by storms on the horizon, oh ho ho!

Franz: Ha ha! Hee Hee, hyork...you slay me with your Teutonic wit, Hans.

Hans: Well, stick around Franz, and I'll do it again and give you THREEtonic wit, a ha ha ha!

Franz: Ha ha! It is simply too humorous for me...please, tone it down, Hans! I am wetting my *liederhosen* from all this gaiety.

Hans: Yes, I will return to my normal stolid state now—after all, we ARE trying to sell gloom and doom songs of German self-pity and *angst*, are we not? What's next on the disc, Franz?

Franz: Well, we have to address friendly nations as well as enemies, and because the Kaiser (snicker) only has ONE friend, this should be a short disc!

Hans: Now, don't YOU start ME laughing, you loon! Tell the audience what we're listening to.

Franz: *Nein*, Hans, let's let them guess this mystery tune, dedicated to Franz...oh wait, not to me...to

France.



Buz at a recent DipCon, after a particularly rough board

Did you ever have to make up your mind
 Pick up on one and leave the other behind?
 It's not often easy and not often kind
 Did you ever have to make up your mind?

Did you ever have to finally decide
 Say yes to one and let the other one ride
 There's so many changes and ~~tears~~ schemes you must hide
 Did you ever have to finally decide?

Sometimes there's one with big blue blocks, ~~eute~~ the guy
 is a dentist
 With ~~hair down~~ units out to here, and ~~plenty of money~~,
 you think he's a menace
 And just when you think ~~she's~~ he's that ~~one-in~~ foe of the
 world
 Your ~~heart~~ dots gets stolen by some ~~mousey~~ Italian little
 girl

And then you know you'd better make up your mind...
 (The Lovin' Spoonful, *Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind*)

Hans: I'm tearing up again, Franz; such a beautiful set of lyrics! It reminds me of the time we crushed countries who trusted us for longer than they should have, and we then obliterated them without mercy when their back was turned. Such nostalgia! France is truly Mr Honest, and the one hope to face the foe united as a team.

Franz: Yes, it does make one hearken back to better days for the *Reich*, Hans. We shall raise a stein of ale to *Die BuzSaw* as we listen to a rousing Swedish metal song in honor the Janissary in **Turkey**, who is now the second best friend for our poor beleaguered nation:



"OK, Vince...Steve and I will wear these damn things if you promise to ally with us"

...Look north, ready to fight
Enemies charge from the hills
To arms! Facing defeat!
There's no surrender! There's no retreat!

Time after time
Force their enemies back to the line
Call to arms -- banners fly in the wind
For the glory of ~~Hellas~~ Turkey
Coat of arms reading "Freedom or death!"
Draw some Blood ~~of~~ from king ~~Leonidas~~ the enemy!
(Sabaton, *Coat of Arms*)

Hans: Franz, wasn't that a rousing *hard-rock* song in honor of the brave Turks?

Franz: Sure was, Hans ... and with Turkey between a

"rock" and a "*hard* place," the song seemed appropriate! May they continue to fly their banners in the wind, and may these sons of Allah impale their enemies everywhere along the roads...compassionately, of course.

Hans: Well, Franz, the clock in the bunker is telling us our time is done.

Franz: And it seems like "we've only just begun."

Hans: Franz, please: no Carpenters lyrics here; that song is on our other commemorative CD, "GameMaster Easy Listening, Volume I." Remember, friends, you can only purchase THIS collection, *SS Reich*, through our exclusive in-house bunker offer. Simply send 200 *Reichmarks* (or, better yet, 3 square black wooden blocks) to:

Rescue Our Kaiser and Recover Our
Lost Lands (ROK and ROLL)
Kiel Harbor
Germany 867-5309
(yes, that's 867-5309, Jenny)!

Hans: And, if you order in the next Winter Build phase, we'll throw in, absolutely free, this easy-to-read one-paragraph dual autobiography: "Don and Melinda Reflect on Truth in Diplomacy." It's the companion volume to an earlier Top 10 bestseller, "Playing Without Emotion in Diplomacy," by Mark Fassio. Both make a great April Fools' gift or stocking-stuffers for that new Dip player on your board!

Franz: Act quickly, friends, this offer expires when the Kaiser does, which means it's a very, very short-lived event!

Hans: Why is the bunker shaking? Is that thunder outside?

Fall 1902 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

Well, I'll resist the urge to say Eye Tolloed Ewe Sew.

Why? You did, and I was wrong, wrong, wrong. I have finally learned some of the rules of punditry. You don't actually have to be right, that's not really your point. Your point is to entertain, raise interest, and have fun.

One of the reasons we prefer the standard board (the royal 'we', or myself and the cat, as you wish) is because the actions proceeds so quickly. Faz looked like he was in great shape. And just like that, he's knocked out of

Denmark and Vienna and is in terrible shape.

Yes, and these things especially tend to happen to Russia and Germany. Faz ordinarily is a great German player, this is the sort of thing that usually happens to me.

Buz passed on Portugal - looks like a misorder or confused set of orders.

There is considerably more sign of coordination between Melinda and Don than between either and Vince. I'm

going to assume Vince is in trouble, though the builds will be telling.

Right, Vince has been writing press like he is disconnected from the other players. This is dangerous. We all probably think Cooley is dead, and he probably is, but don't count him out yet.

If England had not taken Denmark, Lvp would be in deep trouble. But he did, and it isn't. If England is the third part of the I/R triple, then what does France do? I'm not sold on the idea that Italy would be fighting both Turkey and France at once, so let's just say this remains unclear. But I would be very surprised if she built anything other than a fleet. The move to Wes may have been intended as a purely defensive gesture, given that Buz had put fleets in Spain(SC) and MAO at the same time. That's the kind of combination that asks Italy to move to Wes.

I'm hoping that there's a lot left to this game. Faz is down but far from out. Steve is a bit closer to out, but "not dead yet!" Don could build practically anything in the current position and justify it.

Next year should be fun!

Agreed. Now here is some more commentary.

I've given the overview in responding to Rick's comments. This time let's start with the press.

As usual, Faz remains the overwhelmingly most active and inventive press writer. He is getting annoyed at the output of the others, that is clear to me between the lines. Vince continues lame negotiation in the press, like in these first two items. Faz breaks out a new set of Arkansas dogs in Dog Racing. This is so transparent with the nationality of the dogs that even Rick can figure it out. ;-) It is so straightforward that it might be Vince, but I think it's Faz.

And then we have this long Turkish note, finally Vince is winding up to be Vince. I never got a clear answer from Doug as to what the press rules are here, but presumably we have "Turkey" and other country names reserved. Besides the tone is Vince's.

But then.... 867-5309, Tommy Tutone and all the rest, what do Hans and Franz have in mind for us? All sorts of silliness. I liked all the filking here, But the Duck tunes (SHAFT!!! BRILLIANT!!!) and "wastin' away in useless frontier centers" were classics! So, yes, Fassio cannot play without emotion and drive, can he? He just cannot calm down and leave things alone. Melinda is a master at that particular issue, I'm sure the communication between Faz and Melinda is deteriorating brilliantly, with a light hand

on the tiller from Melinda. The pictures are perfect too, especially the artist formerly known as someone.

It still is very disappointing that Don and some of the others aren't engaging more in the press. Faz is either going to burn out and lash out on the board, or he will just ratchet the press level up and up and up until he drives all of them, and us, nuts. Remember, young boys and girls, since Faz is doing most of this solo, this is only the bare glimpse of what 1980's style postal press could be at its best. Those classic games also tended to have lots of guest press writers who weren't even in the game. I'm itchin' to jump in myself with my own Boobish classic style, but no, I shall sit quietly WAY off to the side.

Now, what, you mean there is a Diplomacy game hiding under this all? Oh, yeah, I suppose there is.... let's talk about that.

Austria: Cooley, man, what a screw job. They convinced Faz to walk into Vienna, torch the Anschluss, and kill you both. I know that curl of the lip that you have going right now over all this. I don't actually believe they will eliminate you until you do "something". I don't know what something is (Williams may want to have you convoyed to Denmark or something, but Bill Quinn is too logical to play along), but it will be something. As Rick said, Melinda will build a fleet and once it moves to Tyh and Buz moves to Mid, the setup for a long convoy is there. If not that, maybe something more direct, Melinda lets Cooley move through Trieste in the spring on the way north into Germany. Cooley will own a German center before he's done, mark my words. Rick can ridicule me if I'm wrong again.

England: The Bill Quinn that I used to know and love, was kind of a nerd and kinda logical as a player, until you got his dander up. He's also a brilliant tactician, and nailed the unwanted support to put Buz into Brest so Buz can't build there.... but wait, as Rick did note, Buz forgot to move to Portugal, so he won't have a build anyway. Still, feather in Bill's cap. And he also successfully convoys into Denmark. Yes, Buz is trying to go up his butt into NAO, but no worries. Bill is looking good.

France: Buz is playing a bit too confusedly to be successful. He really did want to take Portugal, didn't he? Well maybe now he can do it in a way that will get him his fleet Brest?

Germany is imploding but Faz loves this kind of game, I don't think he'll give up, even though he seems NOT to be taking Don up on what I thought was legitimate Russia/German warm fuzzies.

Instead, Faz is turning to annoy Bill. We'll see how that goes.

Italy: Well, c'mon Melinda, what are you going to do? Keep those options open, BoP, BoP, way to go! I wish you would build an army, but you'll build a fleet.

Russia: Don is in the kind of game where he should solo. He may or may not do it, but he should.

Turkey: Vince needs to find a way to engage the game more, does he attack Melinda? Don? Get pincerd between them? My bet is on the latter right now.

FALL 1902

by Richard Walkerdine

General U'til and Lieutenant B'des continued to study the recordings of the strange ship as the 'Further Glory' made its next timewarp, but to little avail. "I'm sorry Sir," said the Science Officer. "Our sensors were simply unable to penetrate their shields. There is just nothing we can learn."

The old General sighed and flicked his upper tentacles in frustration. "I feared as much Lieutenant after our first analysis. But what of their shields, have you learned anything of them?"

"Nothing of any value, Sir. Our instruments are incapable of analysing their structure or workings. The one thing I did discover simply makes no sense at all."

The General glared at him. "You discovered something Lieutenant? Tell me, you know that anything at all could be of value!"

The young Science Officer coughed to hide his embarrassment. "I'm sorry Sir but it's just so ridiculous. I noticed that the force powering their shields, whatever it is, was not constant. It fluctuated in intensity and had several brief pauses, in much the same way that speech fluctuates. So...well...so I ran it through the universal translator."

"Lieutenant," replied General U'til, "that was indeed clever thinking. Did the translator come up with a result?"

Lieutenant B'des sighed. "Yes Sir, it did, but it makes no sense at all!"

"Never mind that B'des, what was it?"

The Science Officer took a deep breath. "Well Sir, the fluctuating shield force was translated into the

phrase 'By the itching of my thumbs something wicked this way comes'." He looked up at the General and shook his tentacles in a sign of apology.

The General smiled at him and laid a tentacle on his shoulder. "Do not apologise Lieutenant, you have at least discovered something. Though by the Goddess I cannot imagine what it means. But that was good work. Continue your analysis while I conduct the next briefing."

He made his way to the briefing room and faced the trainees.

"Hail Fndili," he cried, with crossed tentacles.

"Hail Fndili," came the reply.

"Gentlemen," he began, "the analysis of the unknown ship has so far brought up no useful information, but I will of course keep you fully informed of any developments. But now let us continue with our studies."

"We start as usual with England, which has clearly been very busy on the diplomatic front. Looking to have no allies at all previously we now see active assistance from Russia in an anti-German campaign. The English diplomats have done well, although there is little sign of an understanding with France."

"And so to France, and the question here is what is the fleet doing in the North Atlantic? At first glance I would say this is very much anti-English, and perhaps Germany was involved, but surely a move to the Irish Sea would have been more effective? I am wondering about some Russian involvement here."

"As for Germany we see how quickly the military position can change. It reminds me a little of the time

the Kelman Alliance were taking one Fndili planet after another until, with some very careful diplomacy, we persuaded the Folorians that many of the Kelman planets were an obvious threat to their borders. It took more than two years to achieve, but the eventual victory was glorious! And in this case, from being by far the most successful nation, Germany now has Italy fighting in the south and England and Russia in the north. Do they have any allies? Well, remember that French fleet!"

"Next we come to Italy and, as expected, we see confirmation of the aggression against Germany. We also see no signs of any move against Turkey. Does this perhaps mean that France is the next target? The fleet in the Western Mediterranean suggests it might be, but it is no obvious threat at the moment."

"I think Austria can now be ignored. As I said at the last briefing those of you with Austria as their speciality nation will be switched to another of the Great Powers."

"And so to Russia. No real signs of aggression against Turkey, if we assume the standoff over Rumania was by agreement, and assisting England against Germany in the north. I would say that, at least for the moment, Russia is looking at a northern campaign."

"Finally we come to Turkey, which seems to be free to continue a slow expansion in the Balkans although with no active assistance from either Italy or Russia. The question for Turkey is where to go next and they need to be very wary of both their neighbours."

"So in summary gentlemen I would say the English position has greatly improved and the German

position greatly worsened. Italy and Russia continue a gradual expansion and Turkey needs to decide where to go next. As for France, that at present is an enigma."

General U'til paused for a moment and looked at the expectant faces of the trainees.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the briefing is now complete and I will of course expect your analyses by midday tomorrow. But I have one more thing to say. The situation with the unknown ship is potentially dangerous, indeed very dangerous. This is supposed to be just a training mission with no likelihood of any sort of conflict. But we are far from Homeworld, we are on our own, and we have an unknown aggressor. Although it is no part of your training brief I will be issuing each of you with instructions to learn from, and assist if necessary, the Weapons, Shields, Navigation, Fire and Medical Officers of the ship's crew. Extra training is never wasted and I ask only that you do your best. You may yet begin your military careers as experienced combat veterans. Hail Fndili!"

There was a pause as the young trainees looked at each other, only now beginning to realise just how serious the situation might become. Then they turned to face the General and, although military protocol did not require a response at the end of a briefing, shouted as one and shook their tentacles, "Hail Fndili!"

The General just smiled and nodded and then walked away, though his heart was bursting with pride.

Autumn 1902 Results

Austria: Retreats A Vienna to Bohemia.

Supply Center Chart

Austria:	Serbia=1, Even
England:	Denmark, Edinburgh, Liverpool, London, Norway=5, Build 1
France:	Belgium, Brest, Marseilles, Paris, Spain=5, Even
Germany:	Berlin, Holland, Kiel, Munich=4, Remove 2
Italy:	Naples, Rome, Trieste, Tunis, Venice, Vienna=6, Build 1
Russia:	Budapest, Moscow, Rumania, Sevastopol, St Petersburg, Sweden, Warsaw=7, Build 1
Turkey:	Ankara, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Greece, Smyrna=5, Build 1
Unowned:	Portugal.

PRESS

Turkey: The dogs were snarling around the post and as they cleared the hazy dust at the far end of the track and began coming into view, the good old boys roused themselves to a small semblance of sobriety and took note of the action. Odds were once again changing.

The German Shepherd was in a 3 way tie with the Wolfhound and the Setter. You could hardly tell them apart. The owner of the Shepherd began singing German war songs in an effort to goad his dog on, but it was a doggone tough job.

Somehow, the Italian Greyhound had jumped onto the back of the Poodle and was fruitlessly trying to bite his ears off, but at this point, the Poodle seemed unaware of anything except for the Setter directly in front of him.

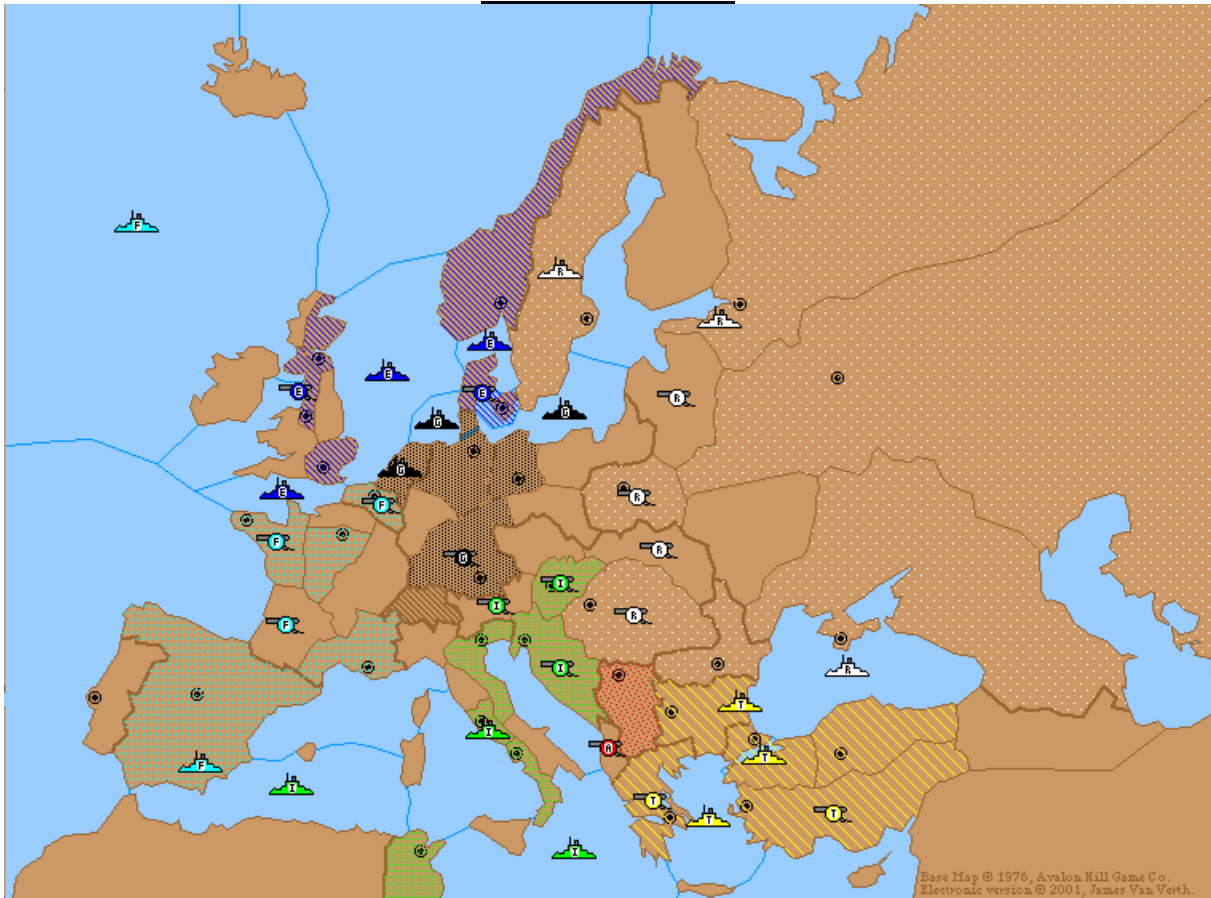
The Akbash was running smoothly, just off the pace and looking at the other dogs, but seemed most interested in where the Wolfhound and Shepherd were, and seemed to be following in their wake.

There were no changes as the pack ran in front of the spectators, in pursuit of their second lap.

The dust settled and the boys were reaching for another beer when the Pinscher appeared; he had almost been forgotten.

His owner screamed, "Would you git movin', fer Chrissake?"

Winter 1902 Results



Austria: Has A Albania.

England: Build A Liverpool..Has A Liverpool, A Denmark, F English Channel, F North Sea, F Skagerrak.

France: Has A Belgium, A Brest, A Gascony, F North Atlantic Ocean, F Spain(sc).

Germany: Remove A Berlin, A Bohemia..Has F Baltic Sea, F Helgoland Bight, F Holland, A Munich.

Italy: Build F Rome..Has F Rome, F Ionian Sea, A Trieste, A Tyrolia, A Vienna, F Western Mediterranean.

Russia: Remove German Player(Impossible), Build F St. Petersburg(sc)..Has F St. Petersburg(sc), F Black Sea, A Budapest, A Galicia, A Livonia, F Sweden, A Warsaw.

Turkey: Build F Constantinople..Has F Constantinople, F Aegean Sea, F Bulgaria(ec), A Greece, A Smyrna.

PRESS

CARSON, CALIFORNIA: Merlin and Brooklyn squeezed through the gap in the foundations of the LA Galaxy stadium and found themselves at the top of a rocky tunnel which sloped gently downwards into the darkness below.

The young boy looked up at the old man and frowned.

"But Merlin," he said, "we can't go down there, there's no light. We'd walk into something and get hurt."

The old man laughed and rested a hand on the boy's head. "I'm a magician Brooklyn, remember?" Then he struck his wooden staff on the rocky floor and the tip suddenly blazed with a bright white light, fully illuminating the tunnel ahead.

"Oh gee, that sure is neat," gasped the boy. Then he paused. "Er, Merlin, you're not gonna turn me into a toad or something are you?"

The old magician laughed again and patted the boy's shoulder. "No Brooklyn, I promise you won't be turned into anything you wouldn't like. All I will do is make sure you fulfil your destiny."

"Oh crikey," replied Brooklyn, "it's that destiny word again." Then he looked up into Merlin's eyes. "You're not gonna tell me what it is, are you?"

The old man looked down at the boy and smiled. "I'm sorry boy, but I can't," he replied quietly. "As I said before it will all be revealed soon enough, but it has to be at the right time. You do trust me in this, don't you?" Brooklyn smiled back and once again took hold of the magician's hand. "Sure Merlin, sure I trust you." "Good boy," he replied as he led him slowly down the tunnel.

London - Berlin: It was a poor idea to invite me to go Bear hunting while carrying a gun loaded for Lion.

London- Paris: Better run home. Melinda spares no one.

London - St. P: As I said to Il Duce last year...Let's play nice.

London - Rome: Race ya to the Mid Atlantic.

London - Serbia: Better to live for revenge than die for a Cause.

London - Constantinople: If I could watch your back I would!

Autumn and Winter 1902 Commentary

Jim Burgess (BOLD)

Rick Desper (Normal Font)

Richard Walkerdine (Comic Sans MS)

I don't have much to add about the Winter beyond what I said after the Fall moves.

Let's see..

Steve's only got A Alb. He could try to stay alive by squatting on Serbia for a while. There are three other powers also next to Serbia. Trying to guess how this will shake out is difficult. But you would think somebody would want Steve to stay alive.

Bill puts down an army in Liverpool, a choice made desirable by the French fleet in the North Atlantic. The German removals do not help him. He'll be hard pressed to take anything else from Faz by brute force. It's a position with a good deal of flexibility, but we've got to start seeing England taking charge of the diplomacy. In particular, the fleets in Eng and NAO are not useful to either him or France.

I still don't know why Buz isn't in Portugal. My read of the board would call for the Western powers to work together before I/R sweep past the stalemate lines. With

Austria having collapsed and Germany compromised, there is little to hold the West together. He's got a couple forces in useless places and in general needs to consolidate the MAO and move somebody to Burgundy. But does he like Italy more than he likes England? I'm confused.

Faz yanks his southern armies and has his forces in position to put up a line of defense at Belgium/Holland/Kiel/Baltic. He'll need serious help from somebody or Munich will fall to Italy this Fall. I suspect Don will be putting pressure on Berlin, too.

The East is hard to figure out. Both Italy and Russia appear to want to go West. But what will happen to Turkey? I/R could smack Germany or smack Turkey. I suspect they'll try to do both, but I don't have any inside info.

Melinda builds F Rom, a build that signals friendliness to Turkey and, combined with the move to Wes, hostility to France.

Don builds F StP(sc), which is about as anti-German as you can get.

Vince needs to do something I would think. He either needs to work with Don against Melinda or vice-versa. He could force the Black Sea and walk up to Armenia as a way to hit Russia, if Don moves his armies into Germany. Or if Melinda sends two fleets towards Iberia, he could put two fleets on the Ionian and force that. If he does neither, it's hard to see Turkey making it to the endgame. The build of F Con means it'll be hard for him to force anything in the Balkans.

Actually, a neat move for Turkey would be to take Bla from Bul(ec) and convoy A Smy to Bul.

Bill Quinn builds an army. Yes, armies as defense in the English homeland can be very useful. But Germany removed TWO armies to leave him with only one army and three fleets. EVERYONE else builds all fleets. This is BAD news for England, who must be a fleet power. This may not manifest itself instantly, as he has some good defenses against the three German fleets attacking him. But despite Don's "press move" calling for the German removal and his build of a fleet on the South Coast (rather

than the North Coast) it seems that sometime soon Russian fleets are going to be attacking England, not Germany. We'll see, of course.

Turkey's fleet can dislodge Russia's fleet from the Black Sea, or move west toward Melinda. Melinda's fleet Rome clearly signals the move west for her, though, so if that is a "deal", we can expect Vince to start hitting Russia.

Now for the press, I said before that I think Brooklyn is a production of Faz's, but it doesn't tell us anything this season. His destiny is, his destiny is.... well, we will find out soon enough. Otherwise, this is a winter placeholder. Then we have a whole lot of Bill Quinn press that unfortunately doesn't have anything to mix it with. The consistency of the players writing true Silver Age press is rather disappointing. There just isn't enough for Doug to work with. So, what does Bill say? Yes, he's worried about a Sea Lion? Though he built the army Liverpool, which is less anti-French than fleet Liverpool, he is just telling Buz to go back to oppose Melinda, pretty lame. So is the rest. Maybe it would have looked better mixed up with some other press.

WINTER 1902

by Richard Walkerdine

General U'til faced his young trainees before beginning the next briefing. "Hail Fndili," he cried, with crossed tentacles.

"Hail Fndili," responded the young potential officers.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I want to thank you for the extra training you have undertaken. As a result of your efforts we now have backup for all the most vital of the ships functions. You are all truly worthy to serve the Empire and I am sure the future of our Empire will be safe in your tentacles."

The young trainees muttered amongst themselves, clearly pleased with the compliment. The old General waited a moment and then coughed. The briefing room fell silent.

"However," said the old soldier, "this is a training mission and the training must continue. Let us therefore study the most recent events in Europe."

"The raising of a new army by England in Liverpool is clearly a defence against the French fleet in the

North Atlantic. But will it be needed? If not it must soon find itself on the mainland."

"No change for France which must now be getting more worried about the intentions of Italy. I think that Northern fleet may soon be heading south."

"Germany removes two armies from the east and clearly intends to continue fighting England. But it is now very vulnerable to both Russia and Italy. There was no choice of course, with reduced forces it has to be either a western or eastern campaign. There will need to be a lot of diplomatic activity with its eastern and southern neighbours if it is not to suffer further losses."

"A new fleet in Rome for Italy seems to be very anti French, which is why France must be getting more and more worried. Particularly as Italy has made no obvious moves against Turkey."

"Austria we can now ignore."

"The Russian raising of a new fleet in southern St. Petersburg can only mean a continuing fight with Germany in alliance with England and possibly Italy. But it now needs to be wary of its southern borders."

"As for Turkey, the building of a fleet in Constantinople gives it the option of advancing against either Italy or Russia, although I think not both. The Italian defences are far stronger however and Turkey is now in a position to re-take the Black Sea. That is why Russia will have to be very careful in the south."

"In summary therefore Germany is in deep trouble whereas England and Italy are both in the ascendency. Russia is also advancing but must be very wary of Turkey in the south, which is itself now well placed for a Russian attack. As for France it is a terrible dilemma."

"As usual gentlemen I will expect your analyses by midday tomorrow ship's time. Hail Fndili!"

He turned to leave the briefing and, as he did so, the alarm sounded. "General to the bridge, emergency! Craft has reappeared and is powering weapons!"

The General slapped his communicator. "On my way, shields to maximum and evasive manoeuvres!" he shouted as he hurried to the transporter booth. But as he entered the booth he heard a dull thump and felt the ship shudder. The old soldier knew only too well what that meant and quickly pressed the code for the bridge.

When he arrived just nanoseconds later he saw a scene of utter chaos. The hull had been breached and several bodies were on the deck oozing green Fndili blood, clearly dead. Two fires were burning at the navigation consoles and Lieutenant K'mak, one upper tentacle partly severed and dripping blood, was desperately trying to put them out. General U'til took in the scene and responded with all the speed of a battle hardened warrior, rushing to K'mak to help with the fires as he slapped his communicator.

"Trainees to the bridge, NOW! Weapons, navigation, fire and medical! This is not a drill! Repeat, this is not a drill!"

The young trainees arrived within seconds and began assisting the regular crew. General U'til turned to his Science Officer. "B'des, what happened?"

The Lieutenant looked to be in a state of shock. "Sir, they just appeared out of nowhere! We had almost no warning and our shields seemed to have no effect! And, Sir, they are turning for a second run at us..."

The old soldier had never been in a situation as desperate as this before, but years of experience and training left him in no doubt about what he must do. He looked around at his young and inexperienced crew and smiled. "Gentlemen, if they want a fight then by the Goddess we'll give them one! All weapons; laser cannon, photon torpedoes, and spread some Irillium mines all over their position!"

The young crew responded within seconds and the 'Further Glory' shuddered as the munitions were released. General U'til looked at his young charges and his heart surged with pride, what a tribute they were to the Empire! But then he shook himself, for this was not a time for dreaming. He looked across to his Science Officer. "Lieutenant B'des, how are we doing?"

The young Lieutenant took a deep breath and punched his keyboard. "Sir, they have slowed. We did them some damage, but not much. Their shields are like nothing I have ever seen!" Then he looked at the General and waved an upper tentacle in a sign of apology. "And Sir, that first attack means our shields are now less than fifty percent. They have the beating of us."

General U'til looked at his Science Officer for a moment and then smiled. "Perhaps so Lieutenant, but not without a fight in the true traditions of Fndili. Go to timewarp, take us out of here. We will assess and repair, and then we will show them what the Fndili are made of."

Lieutenant B'des looked at his commanding officer and saluted with all four upper tentacles, the ultimate accolade of a Fndili warrior. "Hail Fndili!" he shouted, and pressed the keys to slip them forward through the timestreams.

El Conquistador

By Bill McCullam

Recently, a half dozen issues of El Conquistador, a play-by-mail 'zine in the early 1970s surfaced and I sent them to Doug Kent for his amusement. They make interesting reading, and have sections on many of the wargame forms of that period. Among them was Fletcher Pratt's wonderful naval miniature game. I still have a dozen or so waterline ship models around at the 1/1200 scale, although it was played with 1/600 by some. This was a very entertaining wargame, featuring inverted red and white golf tees to mark the fall of shells. Someone once even adapted it to run carrier aircraft. This was a pre-radar simulation, so it works best for periods before 1941; while most WWII opponents had radar by then they didn't really trust it and were convinced their opponents had nothing like it. Most other miniatures have succumbed, like this one, to death or relocation of one's opponents, although I wonder in this modern age, how many still get together for matches. The problem with most of the internet based games seems to be that they require the player to accept the game's conventions, when there are so many others around.

In my own 'zine, J.J.P. we once ran an American civil war which was wildly ambitious with dozens of players on either side. Movement was blind, so opposing forces encountered each other in unforeseen places. We had a pretty complete set of US topographic maps of the 1860s, which would then be sent the players. One player

would be paired off with another local player who took the side of the remote enemy; (as, for example, one would be in Tennessee and another in Ohio, so the match would be played in Ohio with Ohio players), alternating, to, perhaps, Denver for the next battle. The games were played on the naval side with an Avalon Hill CW naval game, and for land battles with miniatures, and, if memory serves, also sometimes with some board game. The whole thing lasted only about 13 or 14 months by which time the super-aggressive Confederate players had exhausted all of their troops. I once played in a massive, I think European based, Napoleonic era miniature game.

Other fun games were, of course, Gary Gygax' D&D, and A-H's Kingmaker, of which I also ran a p-b-m version.

Today Diplomacy is on-line and along with a few of its many variants....how many of you remember The Bourse, a neat currency changing simulation based on Diplomacy from the 1960s?

Yes, Bill McCullam has been around the hobby for a while...but I'm glad he's still here. Aren't you? Oh, and by the way Bill, I run a game of Bourse currently in my Dipzine Eternal Sunshine.

Selected Upcoming Conventions

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

Tempest in a Teapot 2010 - Friday October 15th - Sunday October 17th - Silver Spring, MD - <http://www.ptks.org/tempest.php>

Italian EGP Step, Milan 2010 - Saturday October 30th - 2010 - Sunday October 31st - Milano, Italy - http://diplomacy.cleosolutions.com/component/option,com_attend_events/Itemid,29/

Carnage Accords IX - Friday November 5th - Sunday November 7th - Fairlee, Vermont - <http://www.nedip.org/tournaments/carnage-accords/>

HessenCon 2010 / German National Diplomacy Championship - Friday November 19th - Sunday November 21st - Waldkappel, Germany - <http://www.diplomacy-bund.de>

MidCon 2010 - Friday November 19th - Sunday November 21st - Thistle Hotel, Birmingham City, United Kingdom, <http://www.fbgames.co.uk/Midcon/default.htm>

French Diplomacy Championship - Friday December 10th - Sunday December 12th - Paris, France - <http://www.championnat-de-france.org>

In Praise of Internet Diplomacy

By Joshua Danker-Dake

I love Diplomacy. I love internet Diplomacy. I broke in on internet Diplomacy. I cut my Diplomacy teeth on the Ken Lowe judge via the Diplomatic Pouch (www.diplom.org). And for my money (it's free), the internet is the best way to play Diplomacy.

I understand why a lot of people prefer face-to-face Diplomacy – the marathon sessions, the scheming, the thrill of lying to someone's face, the even greater thrill of watching that person's face as you stab him – there are definitely a lot of plusses.

And it's true that internet Diplomacy takes a lot of the nuance out of negotiations. You can't read body language or tone of voice, can't see how that bad player you've been allied with won't make eye contact all of a sudden. It's more of a challenge, more of a crapshoot.

But there are so many great things about internet Diplomacy. It's convenient in a lot of ways. Who can ever get enough people together to play a face-to-face game? It's hard! Okay, maybe you have six friends, but do you have six *Diplomacy* friends? And I don't mean friends that you twist their arms to sit down and spend two hours learning the rules, then slog through an unpleasant Diplomacy experience, and afterward make convenient and lame excuses the next time and every time you drop the D-word. Those folks are a dime a dozen.

And it's been hard, historically, to get enough players – that's why postal Diplomacy became so popular in the 1960s. Internet Diplomacy takes everything good about postal Diplomacy and makes it better: it's faster, it's easier, and you don't have to buy stamps.

But I don't know anybody who still plays postal Diplomacy, so let's move on to the other advantages internet Diplomacy has over face-to-face. For one, the time commitment is a lot more manageable. Even if you can scrounge up six Diplomacy friends, can you find a day that they can all come play for five, six, seven hours? With internet Diplomacy, you break up that huge block of time over a period of weeks. If you know what you're doing, you can do all your press and send in your orders in less than ten minutes each day (not counting the near-mandatory opening-move pontification everyone seems to love). It's there when you want it, and not when you don't – you don't have to sit there twiddling your thumbs while five-center France takes forty-five minutes to write his orders each turn. For me, Diplomacy in small doses also keeps the game fresh – a little bit each day, a little sniff, a little more build-up.

The suspense is magnified. You'll find yourself analyzing, wondering, doubting, and trying to reassure yourself throughout the day, and you'll lie awake in bed wondering if you should have moved to Rumania instead of Bulgaria. And there's nothing like holding your breath, opening that email from the judge, and scanning that turn's orders to see whether you got screwed and how badly, or whether your masterly invasion plan succeeded.

Another thing I particularly like about internet Diplomacy is the ability to use an adjudicating and mapping program to visualize plans, run simulations, and check outcomes. If you're a Diplomacy genius who can run and adjudicate every conceivable scenario in your head, great – this is simpler, faster, and more convenient. It can give your tactics a solid boost.

Alas, all is not sunshine and bunnies in the land of internet Diplomacy. The key to a delightful internet experience is the pace of the game. Yet too often internet Diplomacy is plagued by poor sports, players who lose interest as they lose supply centers, and who then frequently get their moves in late. This unfortunate series of events often ends with an abandonment, bringing the game to a screeching halt.

As the game sits and waits for a good Samaritan willing to sign up as a replacement player and go through the motions with a two-center Austria, other players may move on or forget about the game entirely, resulting in a completely excruciating downward spiral of abandonments. If the game ever does resume, weeks later, nobody can remember what was going on, who was allied with whom, or what they were planning to do next. Maybe the two or three players in the lead have a solid enthusiasm for the game remaining, but the magic is gone. (You can also lose the magic when people go on vacation and set absences, but there's not a lot you can do about that.)

That's no way to go through life. Fortunately, you don't have to. Groups like Diplomacy Direct (for new players) and Dipsters (for veterans) are out there for you, working to separate the Diplomacy wheat from the Diplomacy chaff (you can find both groups at www.dipsters.org).

That's all I've got; see you next time.

Whenever I see Joshua's name in the byline I know it's going to be a good article...or better...

World DipCon

by Toby Harris

WDC2010 started for Adam and me with a night in Amsterdam ... just to get into the mood as it were. And come the following afternoon we made our way to The Hague for the opening reception. The location (a hotel chain "StayOK") was ideal; comfortable, budget-price and well-suited for a WDC with plenty of tables, a great bar area and places to chill out by the canal.

This year's WDC was really something special because of the balance of different nationalities. For example, if a WDC has 50 French players and two or three from ten other nationalities then the whole event becomes a bit lop-sided by a single nationality. This year there were something like 8-12 attendees from each of the main European nationalities: UK, Sweden, France, Germany and Italy. Plus a good smattering from the Netherlands, Belgium and the other continents (US & Australasia). All in all it made for the best possible mix of nationalities that a WDC has ever seen.

Organizer Frank Oosterom was nothing short of fantastic in getting everything as perfect as could be and thankfully he had plenty of "little bitches" to help out with the finer details, such as laying out the boards, helping with the scoring etc. The prizes / trophies were first class too. I remember one WDC where only the winner got a prize, where the runners up won stuff like bottles of mineral water. What a stab!

The scoring system created a few stirs from some of the players; isn't it funny how the high-performers never complain about scoring systems □

The Thursday evening offered three choices: play in the No-press (Gunboat) tournament, sit around and chat or go out on the town. I joined the latter, with a small crowd following Igor Kurt down various dark alleys for two miles as he proudly announced "guys, I know every city in the world ... you want a good time then follow me". So we all did, and somehow managed to find a town square surrounded by bars with communal seating in the centre. Beers all round until the place closed. As we made our way back even the red lights had been turned off as the night cleaners were sweeping and mopping up what mess remained in the streets. But the night continued outside the hotel, glugging from some spirit bottle or other until the birds began to sing the following morning. I went to bed.

Waking up towards the end of the first round of Diplomacy on the Friday afternoon it was clear this was going to be an uphill struggle to claim a WDC crown after 22 years of trying. There were four preliminary / qualifying rounds and I had just missed the first of them. In fact I didn't feel too great during the second round that

afternoon either, getting a bit of a pasting from fellow Brit Dave Wreathall and ending up with just 6 centers. Ho hum, another chance in tatters.

That night the party-crowd hit the town again whilst I stayed at the venue drinking a few beers and chatting with the other oldies that had opted for a quieter night. But at least it meant I was fresh for the Saturday morning game. Fresh wasn't the word – I kicked arse all day! 14 centers for the first game and 12 for the second; both table-topping results. So my gratitude and apologies go out to all those I stabbed, lied to, cheated rotten and double-ordered on.

It was then a few hours whilst we all awaited the results on Saturday night: who had made the top seven and had gotten to the final table? Eventually the results were announced; I was eighth, missing the final by just one point. So whilst those other eight-placers over the years have argued "if only I had taken that one centre" (which I had been given chances to) I also had the argument ... if only I had woken up and taken part in the first round. Poo!

Still a bit jaded from the first night, I hung around the hotel and moped, whilst some went out partying and others hung around the hotel too.

For the Sunday's Diplomacy I opted to take the game seriously and try to beat my previous WDC best of 4th place. All things started well as Turkey and I was soon looking like the board favorite. But Yann's Germany had a flying mid-game and I ended up behind him on 12 centers.

Top table was finishing and it had a nail-biting three-way finish on 8 centers between Gwen Maggi, Xavier Blanchot (fresh out of retirement and back with a vengeance) and Fabian Strauss. Due to the tie-breaker criteria, Gwen clinched it. He was gifted a center by Peter McNamara towards the end because he was the one player not to annoy or stab Peter; and that to me is exactly what the game is all about in a final ... Gwen played the best and got what he deserved.

With the awards announced (I just sneaked inside the top seven for a trophy) we all said our goodbyes and headed back to wherever we were going.

From about ten WDC's attended to date I would say this ranked up there with the best for me. A shame about the bar hours (not opening until 4pm each day) but other than that it was nothing short of a fantastic event. Well done to Frank.



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Register here: <http://www.daanz.org/wdc2011>

Discovering Diplomacy

By Patrick McManus

I first heard of Diplomacy when my cousin told me it was the thinking-man's Risk. I loved Risk, I played it all the time with my family and friends, I was very good at forming coalitions and strategizing with people, but of course I hated that superior force often fell victim to random chance. I actually didn't mind that much because I was somewhat famous for getting lucky dice rolls when I needed them. But I was still immediately attracted to the idea of Diplomacy.

The first thing I did was look the game up on Wikipedia. I was very interested to learn Kissinger and Kennedy were fans. Then I read the rules, looked up the map, and devoured all of the strategy articles that were online. The major problem was I didn't have the game or know anyone who did and I was itching to play. Unfortunately, the lowly unemployed high school student that I am, I couldn't afford to buy a board so I put it on my Christmas list and waited. Then I got tired of waiting. I went looking for a way to play online and quickly found webDiplomacy. I hope someone else will extol the virtues of that site because I don't feel qualified to describe it, suffice it to say it has been a staple of my daily Internet routine (check email, check Facebook, check webDip) ever since.

I developed a short pitch to give my friends emphasizing the importance of tactics and negotiation and the little time that would be required each day for a 24-hour phase game. It might be because my friends were the type that enjoy strategy games but it worked very well, and then I started recruiting people I was merely acquainted with from school and it got to the point where three games (with 21 unique players) were running at once made up of just my friends. Everyone was very fond of webDiplomacy. In fact, for a brief time I was viewed as a sort of Moses, as if I received Diplomacy from God on the mount, and if anyone had any questions they went to me.

One Friday night around that time, we went home early just to play a live game. The live games were a great way to interact without having to leave our houses, and we had regular conversations and posted funny links in the global chat. For a time Diplomacy was the way we related to each other. We sort of felt like losers, but we enjoyed the game so what did it matter?

But it turns out Diplomacy was just one of the many phases my group went through (Dungeons & Dragons, Pokemon TGC, and Sporcle were others) and many people just lost interest after a few games. It's true I think though that the convenience of webDip was essential in attracting these casual players at all. But there were some people, myself included, who remained

active on the site, although we had to mingle with the general population to avoid playing with the same people constantly.



Eventually Christmas rolled around and I got the board game. That rekindled the interest of many people and we played quite a few face-to-face games. The problem was that we were making a lot of mistakes in both the content and syntax of our orders; some people were utterly lost without the convenient drop down menus to tell us what we could do. We were also quite mean to each other about not letting mistakes slide. And we were constantly referring to the rules in order to correctly adjudicate the moves. At first we played frequently but it became harder and harder to get people to sit still and concentrate on a game for hours when they were busy getting jobs, girlfriends, and drivers licenses.

These days though we know our days together our numbered as we visit colleges and fill out applications, so we relish the days no one has to go to work or write an essay and on those days we play Diplomacy. Recently we played a game that ended in a four-way draw...because we were tired of yelling at each other and the Comedy Central Roast of David Hasselhoff was starting.

Patrick McManus is also known as "frito" on webDiplomacy. But ending a Dip game to watch a David Hasselhoff roast? Hmmm...I don't know.

Who else is a famous fan of Diplomacy besides Kissinger and JFK? We know Curt Schilling has played...any other names come to mind? Write in!

Finally, anybody designing an iphone or similar app for adjudications, to solve issues like the ones mentioned here?

My World DipCon 2010 Journey

By Dave Simpson

I set off from home at 8am and took my normal journey to work, leaving the motor in the office car park in Redhill. Steve Agg, our designated driver, was waiting for me just outside and we set off to Ashford International station to collect Mark Wightman on the way to the Channel Tunnel. After crossing over to Calais, we drove through Belgium and then up to Den Haag. It all went pretty well until we looked for somewhere to park in the city and wasted about 45 minutes driving around in circles trying to get around roadworks whilst being irritated by the TomTom not being able to keep up. Grrr!

Finally arriving at the StayOkay Hostel, we registered and got our rooms sorted, got a beer on and started some socializing. The Brits gathered together, collected some Americans and Antipodeans and time passed! Steve Agg, Grant Steel and I decided it would be good to go out after the Hostel bar closed and returned to our rooms at about 4am. That turned out to be a pretty normal thing to do – you don't get much sleep at a DipCon.

The next morning, pretty much the first person I saw was Grant and he looked about as bad as I felt. Steve was no better. Maybe not a good idea to stab myself like that before the games even started!

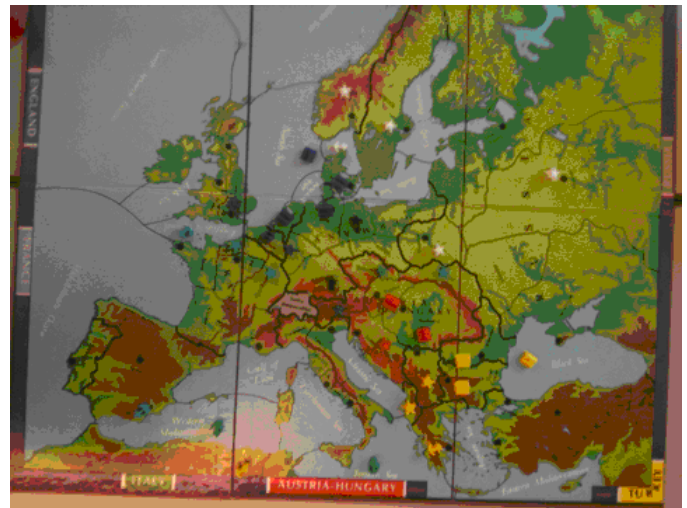
First Round: Board 5 – Turkey

Result! I could not have asked for a better draw for my first (hung-over) game as the first year's orders for Turkey generally write themselves, so I would have a bit of extra time to recover. I also had Dave Maletsky to my north as Russia and Steve Lytton as Austria, so my 2 closest neighbors both had a kind of English as their first language, which definitely helped. So did the terrace outside the game room, for talking in the fresh air! Sven von Bergen was France and Chris Band (England?) was in there too.

I was able to get my normal Bulgarian dot in 01, both Dave and Steve appeared friendly and things improved as I started to feel better. Steve and I both took time to get working with the Belgian in Italy and that got the 2 of us properly going as allies. Dave was talking about me popping his southern fleet ready for the 2 of us to march west, so another fleet appearing in Sev was a surprise! Fortunately, Steve believed me saying that was unexpected, so we attacked Dave and did indeed manage to remove the threat of Russian fleets in the south, as I grabbed Rumania and then Sevastopol, leaving Steve to walk into Rum behind. Dave was going well into Scandinavia though, so he was not too upset (I think!)

Things got a bit odd in the Med as an Austrian fleet supported a Turkish fleet in to the Atlantic, having driven out the English fleet that was previously in the Western Med, if memory serves me right. Steve was engaged with both Germany and Italy to the north, so it was only a matter of time before the inevitable stab from me, as Serbia and Greece were unguarded. (Did I get Tunis as well?) I got as far as Budapest I think, but there were ramifications to this, of course, and although I had the builds back at home, I had to remove the fleet I was hoping to get into Liverpool before the end.

However, I topped the board with 8 centers, which was a good start!



Second Round: Board 1 – Austria

I was the first name out of the hat for the second round, so I got to take the order sheets up to the gaming room. This board saw me next to one of the Brits I'd not met on the UK scene, the experienced James Hardy was Turkey. We had 2 French along too, Xavier Blanchot was England and Laurent Joly was Italy. There were also 2 Americans, Michael Binder as Germany and Matt Shields as France.

Things started off very cagey, everyone expected the national alliances to bear out, but James and I appeared to be attacking each other with no real gains, whilst France and Germany allied against England. Italy waited for Austria/Turkey to attack Russia so he could sail west, as part of a hopeful central triple, with Germany looking for Warsaw for himself.

Unfortunately (for me) France stalled against England just as James and I admitted our previous "squabbles" were all fake as we went fully after Russia. Italy went for France when I hoped he would fight England, so Xavier was off the hook and was able to grow faster than me as

France collapsed.

James and I attacked Laurent in the last few years to ensure James got a solid third place. Just as we set up a convoy of Bul-Apu, I had a brainfart of paranoia and changed an order to move Ser-Bul! It was a spring order though, so I was able to get away with it and move out again (and not in to Con, either). As it happened, had I remained there or moved to Con, I would have probably topped the board – and finished ahead of James in the final standings as well!

I finished one centre behind Xavier's 11 with Vie, Bul, Tri, Ven, Mun, Ber, War, Ser, Gre, Rum



At the end of the first day's play, I was overjoyed with my 2 results. Checking in with the Brits for a refreshment or 2 saw me guessing I had the best results of us all. David Wigglesworth had also had 2 great results with two joint top finishes. We later found that I was 6th after the first day, with David 7th. Possibly two of the unlikeliest British chaps to threaten the top board, but everyone loved it!

Friday night saw the Hobby Meeting in which Pete Yeargin put forward the Chicago bid for 2012, which we were considering opposing with our own Olympics centric bid, but in the end, we stated an intention to host the European based 2013 WDC instead, which seemed to meet with general approval. Steve Agg and I were introduced to the assembled masses by Toby Harris, who everyone knows, which funnily enough had the later effect of people I played thinking "This guy is a friend of Toby, he must be good!" Curses!

Third Round: Board 4 – France

In which Fabien Straub's Russia attacks everyone and gets away with it! Can't really fault that strategy as he made the top board. Jeremy Tullet was Germany, so I had another Brit neighbor, which was nice. There were a couple of Italians on this board, Davide Cleopadre as Italy, Marco Ferrari as Turkey.

France is one of my favorite countries to play. Guaranteed growth in 1901 unless everyone guns for you from the start, so I did my usual opening and put Mar into Spa, Bre into MAO and bounced with Jeremy in Bur to hide the fact we planned to hit England hard from the off. That worried the whole board it seemed (mostly put about by Fabien I would imagine!) so we had to be careful. Before long though it seemed evident that Jeremy and I would have to bury our differences with England and unite in a western-triple-of-necessity against the onrushing eastern waves. I sailed south to try to save Davide, which left me exposed when Fabien manipulated England and turned him against us just when England was ready to take St Pete. Of course, England's gains soon fell to Russia, so he then flipped back to "our side"

I managed to stop anyone getting out of the Med and had Austria blocked at Marseille, but Jeremy fell to Russia and I couldn't get in there to help him (or profit from his decline)

I finished on 4 centers, which was disappointing. From what I had learned to this point, I thought I should be more aggressive, looking to profit quickly and build up a core powerbase with an ally and then look to attack in one direction for more gains. I resolved to grow faster in the next game if I could afford to do so.



Fourth Round (The Team Round): Board 4 – Germany

I got back from lunch to find that I was already registered in this round and was part of a team called "The Sad Gits" – comprising of myself, David Wigglesworth and Steve Agg and named in honor of Steve's wife, who told everyone that Steve was off to a Sad Gits conference to play games with his Sad Git mates! I got Germany, which is one of the "shit or bust" countries, it can really grow well, but still seems to be in danger of total collapse until it gets in to double figures. It was time to try my new aggressive growth policy to see if I could get a good score for the team.

There were a lot of good names on this board. Luca Pazzaglia was England, with Young Swede as France. Manu (du Pontavice) was Italy and Frank Oschmiansky had Austria. André Ilievics was Turkey. Who was Russia? Thin faced guy in grey shirt.

As early diplomacy started, both England and France seemed keen to work with me. I sensed that an early rush on France was possible as there seemed to be an A/T/R conflict brewing, so I worked to make it happen. Things fell in to place about a minute before the off. I opened to Bur, put the fleet into Den to get the army over heading to Holland. Manu put an army into Piedmont and Luca got bounced in the Channel, so things looked bad for France. Luca agreed to go for Belgium on the understanding he could get bounced out by army Pic and get no builds, but as Pic could tap Bur, I had to ask Manu to support me in to Mar, on the understanding that he could have it later as he could use a fleet to get me in to Spain.

So I started 1902 on 6. I also finished the game on 6. Manu soon turned on me – partly as he could see me getting a big score and partly cause he knew that there was no way that Frank would stab him. Manu had Munich off me, then I took it off him again, then Frank had it whilst he was attacking me hard having seen off Turkey, with Russian help. I had a great understanding with Luca throughout the game, we trusted each other from the start – he let me walk into and out of Holland on my way to northern France and I left Scandinavia open to him later on when I fought off Frank. I went down to 4 at one stage, then I got a 5th and could not build, so played short. Finally all my units from France made it home via the low countries and I was up to 6.

My master plan was to get Munich back in the last turn, but in the end, it seemed better to give it to France, who had been fending off Manu for ages and was down to one unit. France finally left Paris and went to Bur (still defending Paris) but in the end my 3 armies put him into Munich so he ended up on 2 dots. Frank was desperately worried that this would put him out of the running for the top board, but in the end he finished 7th, so he was happy in the end. That said, had Toby Harris got up to play the first round and finished on his home centers or better, he'd have been 7th instead.

Fifth Round: Board 2(?) – England

England can be good or bad. Very bad. Especially bad when you have a Frenchman as Russia (Alexandre), a Frenchman as Germany (Yann) and a Frenchman as France (Arnaud). I as quite concerned! Jeremy Tullet featured on the board with me again as Italy, Pete Yeargin was Austria and Toby Harris was Turkey.

Toby and Yann could be said to be disappointed not to make the top board and were in a race to get a good

score to finish as high as possible. I was relieved when Yann offered to attack France with me at first. Jeremy got in on that action too as Toby and Pete got me to go for Russia as well. I was gonna put the army in Norway, but as I didn't trust those Frenchmen, I played it safe, changed my orders and did the fleet instead. That helped (I think) later on as I showed Russia the changed orders as part of a promise not to take Sweden from him. Upon reflection, I should have taken Sweden and worried about the repercussions later.



Yann was doing well from early on - he had Paris, Holland, Belgium and Denmark. I had Brest, Norway and St Pete, but then Yann bounced me out of Sweden – which would be to stop Russia falling fast (to Toby). Toby got Pete to stab Jeremy and then Toby took stuff off Pete in return. Yann then finally played the French card – putting France back in to Brest and Russia back in to St Pete, so I was done for. All I could hope to do was hole up in England and convince Yann of the fact that pushing France down helped his score most at the end – he was wise to that of course and took centers from all of his neighbors. I lost Edi and Liverpool, leaving me to finish on 1! On the other side of the board, Toby had seen off both Jeremy (with French assistance) and Pete, whilst Russia had fallen to Yann. Yann topped the board and I think the scores were Yann 15, Toby 12, Arnaud 6 and me 1.

At the end of the 5th round, I felt I was dropping down the score charts like a stone, but took some solace from the fact that I had not been eliminated in any of the rounds.

As it turned out, I finished 20th of 73, so I had a medal as a reward and a lot of new friends to keep in touch with. I was really pleased with that as my first WDC. I didn't completely suck, and I learned a lot. I'll be back...

It is gratifying to see so many articles on World DipCon, especially by new or rarely-seen contributors!

Rise of the Weasels

By Jim O'Kelley (Photos by Chris Davis)

In June of this year, the Windy City Weasels Diplomacy club played our 100th game of Diplomacy. Here's a look at how we got there.

The guy in the passenger's seat turned around. "What's going on in Chicago?"

He meant in terms of Diplomacy. I didn't really know him or the driver. We were on our way to the airport. It was October 2003, and the North American DipCon at Tempest in a Teapot in Washington, D.C., had just concluded.

"Nothing," I answered.

Back then, if I wanted to play face-to-face Diplomacy, I had to fly to a tournament halfway across the country.

"I got a college friend in Chicago who would probably play," the guy said, trying to be helpful. His name was Conrad Woodring, and all I knew about him was that he was a former Italian national champion.

"Where did you go to college?" I asked.

"Carnegie Mellon." Now I knew two things.

"You should be able to find assloads of players in Chicago," said the driver, Andy "Buffalo" Bartalone, turning the conversation back to Diplomacy.

Truth be told, playing Diplomacy was only part of the reason I had gone to DipCon. The main attraction was a "Weasel Moot" with three old friends from the postal hobby: Don Williams, Mark Fassio and Steve Emmert. We had first gotten together at the 1998 World DipCon at DixieCon in Chapel Hill. Later that fall, we mooted again at Gettysburg. Five years had passed. I went to see them again.

But I caught the face-to-face bug that weekend, and as I sat in the backseat listening to Buffalo and Conrad talk Diplomacy, I resolved to form a Diplomacy club in Chicago.

Alas, a funny thing happened next. I discovered PBEM Diplomacy, and that satisfied me for the next 21 months. It wasn't until I returned from my *next* Diplomacy convention, the 2005 World DipCon at Tempest in D.C., that I got serious about starting a club.

The first order of business was to find other players. After all, if I had six friends who would play, I wouldn't need a club. If you're interested in how I found other players, check out my article in the Spring 2006 issue of

the *Diplomatic Pouch* (diplom.org/Zine/S2006M). I won't go into great detail here, except to say I found them:

- ⇒ In the Diplomatic Pouch's Informal Gatherings page (which was stale even then).
- ⇒ In the old NADF player registry (which is gone but hopefully will be replicated at the NADF's new website, thenadf.org).
- ⇒ Among the subscribers of the postal Diplomacy zines Cheesecake and The Abyssinian Prince.
- ⇒ Through a board game club I belonged to at the time consisting of boardgamegeek.com users. ([Boardgamegeek.com](http://boardgamegeek.com) itself has been a disappointing source for Diplomacy players. I've mined their database three times, and my efforts have been completely fruitless.)
- ⇒ Finally, and most productively, I searched the member directory of DipWorld, the club where I was playing PBEM Diplomacy (diplomacy.ws/listm.asp).

After compiling a list of about 14 interested people, I successfully scheduled our first game for Sept. 10, 2005. I called our group the Windy City Weasels, an homage to my postal friends. Our first game was an unqualified success. More games followed, and the club took off. Here's a look at games played in our first five years:

Year	Games	Players
2005-06	9	27
2006-07	15	42
2007-08	23	60
2008-09	26	61
2009-10	35	63

In addition we've held two tournaments per year since 2007: the CODCon Open and Weasel Moot. Since 2008, we've held the Weasel Royale club championship game. We now have 35 paid members (our dues are \$25 per year) and a governing body called the Sneak, of which I'm the Prime Weasel. And at the World DipCon at the Hague in August, we won our bid to host the 2012 WDC at Weasel Moot VI.

These days, there's a lot going on in Chicago. I'm pretty sure I was the only player from Chicago who attended the 2005 World DipCon in D.C. At the 2009 WDC in Columbus, Ohio, there were 11 of us.

We've come a long way. What follows are my thoughts

on how we did it.

It's Good to have Options

In the early days of the club, flexibility was key. Initially, we wanted to play every six to eight weeks or so, but the list of interested players was small, and aligning schedules wasn't always easy. So, each time I wanted to play, I pitched at least four possible dates that fit my schedule. We'd play on the first one that filled with seven players.

After the first game, we played again Nov. 12, Jan. 21 and March 12. That last session was our first with two boards. It was also the last time we had to offer multiple dates to find seven players.

Since then, almost without exception, our hosts have been able to choose a single date that works for them, and their games typically fill within two weeks.

Seven is the Magic Number

As much as we all love Diplomacy, it's still just a hobby, and hobbies are generally trumped by real life. It's no exception with the Weasels. Players frequently drop out the week of a game for all sorts of reasons.

Through Aug. 31, we had played 108 club, or league, games (as opposed to tournament and premiere games). Despite numerous dropouts, we've only played once with fewer than seven players. That's because in our formative years, we had reliable, dedicated members like Greg Duenow and Thom Comstock who were willing to fill in at a moment's notice.

These days, our club is large enough to withstand dropouts. There's always someone who's ready to play. But we probably wouldn't have gotten to this point if it hadn't been for our willing and able standbys.

Building a Buzz

Matt Sundstrom, a postal player like me, was on our Yahoo list for 10 months before he came out for a game. But even though he wasn't playing, he was reading our game chatter.

In the postal hobby, where I've played games that lasted three real years, there's almost an expectation for players to share their thoughts at the game's conclusion. Email players do the same thing. The players in our club who have contributed endgame statements have helped to engage lurkers like Sundstrom. Now, he's one of our most active and successful players.

People don't know what they're missing until you show them.

Posterity Matters

In the postal hobby, every game has an identification number called a Boardman Number. And for many years (perhaps still?), every game result was recorded and

published in a zine called *Everything*. Of course I was going to keep track of our Weasel games. That's how it was done.

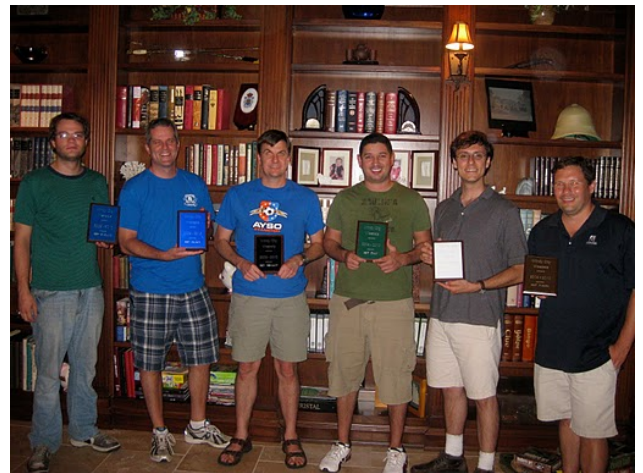
For our first game, I created a supply center chart in Excel. Admittedly, it seemed a little ambitious when I labeled the chart with Windy City Weasels Game No. 1, but now we have 108 charts and a record of every game.

We post our supply center charts online in a Google Docs folder linked to our website (windycityweasels.org). Like a baseball box score, a supply center chart only tells part of the story, but it gives interested people a rough idea of how the game progressed, and they sure come in handy when you're writing about a game.

We're Just One Piece on the Board

Recording our games made it really easy to share the results with the greater hobby's record keepers. In the early days, we shared results with Buz Eddy, the former dean of hobby service, who through his fledgling North American Diplomacy Federation, endeavored to rate face-to-face players and keep track of their master points.

From my perspective as a club-builder, Buz' rating system was great. We had players who were new to the game, and they liked seeing that they were part of a larger hobby. And of course, the fact that someone was keeping score motivated them to try harder. They paid attention to their rankings, and moving up was a source of pride.



Six of the seven Best Country winners from the Weasels' fifth season: John Gramila (from left), Jim O'Kelley, Pete McNamara, Peter Yeargin, Adam Berey and Matt Sundstrom.

Don't get me wrong. Plenty of our players could not have cared less about the rating system, but it was an asset for those who did care.

Just as Buz' efforts began to fade away, Laurent Joly of France introduced his World Diplomacy Database

(eurodip.nuxit.net/php/rencontre/index.php), which is an excellent repository for Diplomacy results. We post all our game results there.

The Holy Database

By the end of our first year, it was clear that we needed to track our players and games in a central place. So, Barry Johnson designed a relational Access database for our use.

Initially, we wanted to use the database for the purpose of club awards, which I'll get to in a moment, but its greatest value is as a player retention tool.

For example, 30 of our 2008-09 players did not play in 2009-10. The database helps us better understand that number. We know that almost 76 percent of those lapsed players only played once in 2008-09. Among those who played twice, only 42 percent lapsed. Meanwhile, only 15 percent of the players who played in three or more games lapsed.

Armed with this information, we look for players who have played only once or twice during the year, and personally invite them to upcoming games. They appreciate the personal touch, and we know that if we can get them back to the table, they're more likely to play again next year.

We've written more than 80 queries that we use for various purposes, many of which ultimately help us fill Diplomacy boards.

And the Weasel Goes to...

At the end of our first year (we call them seasons), we introduced club awards called the Weasels. At first, we offered three awards: The Weasel of the Year, the Biggest Weasel, and the Rookie of the Year.

The Weasel of the Year recognized the player with the best average draw-based result. The Biggest Weasel went to the player with the highest average center count. And the Rookie of the Year was a self-explanatory subjective award.

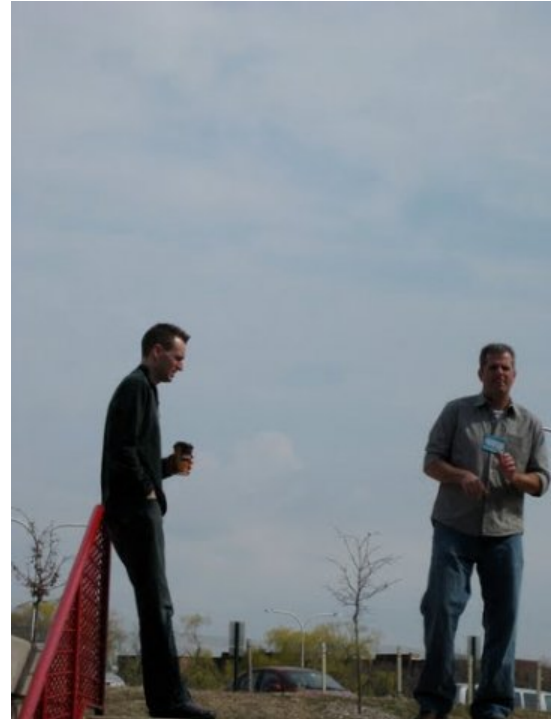
Both the Weasel of the Year and the Biggest Weasel required participation in a minimum of three club games. And that was the key. Yah, we want to reward good play, but what we really want is for people to play Diplomacy. These awards and the three-game requirement motivated people to play.

We've since discontinued the Biggest Weasel, changed the scoring for the Weasel of the Year, and introduced annual Best Country awards. All our awards are represented by plaques, which are completely funded by club dues.

In 2008, we established the Weasel Royale club championship game. At the end of each season, we

invite the top seven paid-up members to compete in the Royale. For the past two years, we've scored every game and published club standings based on each player's best three games. That has helped build excitement and interest.

In the last couple of months of our fifth season, some 10 players vied for the final two spots in the Royale field. When that many people are looking for opportunities to play, it means more games. Thirty-one of our 63 players in 2009-10 played in three or more club games; 18 played in five or more. They play because they enjoy the game, but they play as often as they do because competition works.



Weasels Jeremiah Peterson (left) and Jim O'Kelley, pictured here at the 2009 CODCon Open, actually met at DixieCon in 2006. They teamed up to organize the club's first six tournaments.

But it's Still Just a Game

At the BADAss Whipping in October 2006, I was talking to Eric Mead, an outstanding tournament player from Seattle, about our club-building efforts in Chicago. Reflecting on his brief stay in New York City, he mentioned that their group there played frequently at a bar.

I brought that idea home, and in March 2007, we organized a game for new players on a Thursday night at a game-friendly bar near Wrigley Field called Guthrie's Tavern. Our thinking was threefold:

1. Guthrie's is a popular bar, and people go there specifically to play games. Playing there could be great exposure for our group.

2. Giving up a Saturday or Sunday is a tall order for a lot of people. By playing on a Thursday night and promising to finish our games by 11 p.m., we hoped to attract some new players to the table.
3. From the outset, our goal was always to support the tournament Diplomacy hobby both by starting a tournament in Chicago and by exporting players. However, despite the emphasis on competition, a fair amount of our players were looking to the group as a social outlet.

Our Dip and Drinks experiment at Guthrie's was a huge hit. In addition to the seven players, three other guys showed up just to hang out.

Since then, the Guthrie's games have been a staple. We've played a total of 33 games there, including our 100th and 101st in June. Although we've attracted a lot of interest from patrons of both sexes, and I wish I had a quarter for every time a guy playing Boggle with his date looked wistfully at our game, we have yet to recruit a single player. On points 2 and 3, however, we've been wildly successful. These days, we typically field two boards at Guthrie's, and while we always finish our games no later than 11 p.m., most of us curiously don't get home till much later.



May Ling Chong and Grant Smith, the self-proclaimed Don of the Milwaukee Mafia, negotiate at the 2010 CODCon Open.

A Central Calendar

We try to hold Guthrie's games in two of every three

months, roughly. And each month, thanks to our many hosts, we'll hold at least one house game on a Saturday or Sunday. In our fifth season, 11 different people hosted games, and overall, we've had 18 different hosts. About a year ago, offers to host became so plentiful that we began scheduling games a few months in advance.

We email our paid members first to give them first crack at all game openings, and then two or three days later, we'll announce the game on our website and in Meetup. In almost every month, our players have at least two and sometimes four or five opportunities to play Diplomacy. The only exceptions are April, when we hold our CODCon Open, and whenever we're holding Weasel Moot. In those months, we typically don't offer any other games. We want people to show up at our tournaments for their fix.

Meeting New Players

We're always looking for new markets for players. While Guthrie's didn't pan out in that regard, we've had a lot of success on meetup.com, where we maintain a group at a cost of \$144 per year, again, paid for by dues.

Of the 149 players who have played in our league games, 57 have been friends of someone in the group. Our own players are our best source for new recruits. The second best source has been Meetup, which has yielded 25 players. Ten of them are now paid members. And the 25 have singlehandedly accounted for more than 26 of our 108 games.

Be Gentle with Them

In our third year, we developed novice rules to help us integrate new players. Edi Birsan was a huge help with this project. We ask our players to play the game that makes sense to them. If that means beating up on the new guy, then we ask that they at least not allow the new guy to sit alone at the table.

We also are more forgiving about their misorders. They tend to make eight common mistakes. In the first game, we'll forgive each one once. We always read their orders first to facilitate this. We also have a power selection protocol for new players.

Diplomacy isn't for everyone. A lot of players don't come back. But we think our novice rules allow for a friendlier introduction to the game and a more likely return for a second go.

Get Them Involved

Starting our club was surprisingly easy. Running it is a lot of work, but people want to help. It's important to let them.

The lowest level of commitment to the club is as a player. An easy way to elevate a player's commitment is to recruit him as a standby. When a player is willing to jump in at the last minute to ensure that a game goes

on, you know he's hooked.

A second way to deepen a player's commitment is to get him to host. We have one player, Dan Burgess, a founding Weasel, who actually prefers hosting to playing. He hosted three games last year and only played in one of them, out of necessity when severe flooding forced a player out on the day of the game.

Members can contribute in all sorts of ways. Greg Duenow came up with the annual Best Country awards and also used to write department heads at local colleges to promote Diplomacy and our club.

Eric Brown, another of our founding Weasels, doesn't have as much time as he'd like for Diplomacy, but one thing he does each year is open his beautiful home for our season-ending event. His Weasel Pyles are our oldest tradition. At Weasel Pyle V in August, we had four boards. Brown also co-authored our battle hymn. Yes, we have a battle hymn.

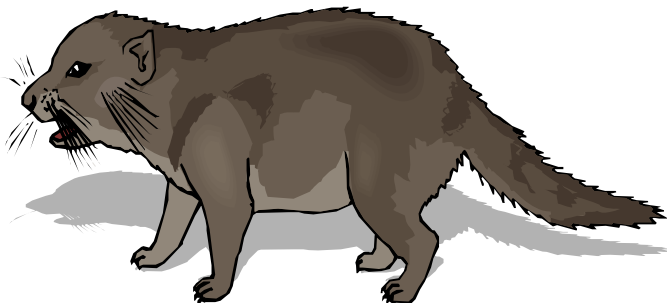
Mike Morrison designed business cards to promote the club. Christian MacDonald set up our bank account. Chris Davis drafted our proposal to host the 2012 WDC and also serves as our unofficial photographer. Kevin O'Kelly (no relation) redesigned our first website (which had been designed by Duenow), and then Peter Yeargin redesigned it using Joomla. O'Kelly also wrote our club's charter and by-laws.

Five of us serve on the Sneak, our governing body, and the same five, sometimes with one or two others, serve on our tournament committees.

To build a club, you need someone who has sufficient time and enthusiasm to be the cheerleader, but the more people you can involve, the better off you'll be.

Retiring from the Sneak, Jeremiah Peterson recently remarked, "I used to worry that the club would disappear with Jim, but I don't worry about that anymore."

He's right. The Weasels aren't a one-man show, and that's why we'll not just survive but thrive.



The Players are Our Greatest Asset

So, a lot of factors have contributed to our success, but none of them would matter if our players were a bunch

of jerks. They're not. They're a great bunch of guys (and girls). Matching wits with them over a board is a lot of fun, but so is hanging out at Guthrie's, getting dinner, traveling to tournaments, going to ball games and playing golf.

I started the Weasels because I couldn't talk six of my friends into playing Diplomacy. Now, I have assloads of friends who want to play Diplomacy.



The view from the balcony in Eric Brown's two-story library, where we played board one at Weasel Pyle V. Clockwise from bottom: Michael Bartlein, Bob Kramford, Jim O'Kelley, Bob Moore, Grant Smith, Martin LeBreton and Peter Yeargin.

Epilogue

Seven years ago, as I sat in the backseat on the way to the airport, I didn't really know Buffalo and Conrad. Today, I count them among my friends. I don't have to travel any more to play face-to-face Diplomacy, but I still do. I love tournament Diplomacy, and through it, I've met so many great people.

Buffalo was at Weasel Moot I in 2007, along with three other members of the Potomac Tea & Knife Society, which has been extremely supportive of our efforts. He brought a Diplomacy set with wooden blocks and presented it to us.

"Use it to grow the hobby," he said.

I hope this article helps you do the same.

Jim O'Kelley formerly was the Diplomacy World Club and Tournament Editor, and he has been greatly missed since he left that post. But, as you see, he hasn't abandoned us completely!

Trip to the World Diplomacy Championships

By Conrad Woodring

One of my favorite things about Diplomacy is the opportunity it provides me to travel to places I haven't been before, and to do so cheaply. In the United States I have played in Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, New York, Houston, Boston, Washington DC, Chapel Hill, Hunt Valley (MD), Pittsburgh, Columbus and there may be more that I have forgotten. During a period studying in Switzerland, and then working in Turkey, I played in Berlin, Paris, Nantes, Utrecht, Sion (Switzerland), San Marino and Milan. In each and every place, the organizers made sure that all travelers were able to stay comfortable and cheaply (some going so far as to provide free accommodations in Paris). Meet new people, play diplomacy, visit a place with people that live there, and even in some cases make a whole week vacation out of it, all on a shoe string; It has been fantastic!

This summer, I flew to Europe with an ambitious 17 day itinerary. The goal was to play in the Hague, Holland, at the World Diplomacy Championships, play in Paris, France, at the European Diplomacy Championships, and visit a bunch of friends in between. The mistake I made was letting a friend of mine from university talk me into climbing Western Europe's highest peak, Mont Blanc in France (4810m/15782 ft).

It started with an overnight flight direct from Houston to Paris. I am 6' 5" so I don't comfortably fit in the seats on an airplane, especially not when the flight is full. Without an exit row I did not sleep at all the whole way over. Landing in Paris on time at 7am, I was exhausted.

My friend, Jerome, was already in Chamonix preparing for our climb. I had a fair bit of climbing equipment with me (two big heavy bags), Jerome had the rest that completed our set. The thought of climbing one of the tallest mountains in Europe was exhilarating. During my January trip to Ecuador an ice storm prevented me from summiting mount Cotopaxi (5900m/ 19350 ft), so I was eager to prove myself on another mountain.

For the purposes of this story, that first Saturday morning landing in Paris will be day 1. Day 1 was spent doing nothing. The woman at the train station told me it was not possible to get a train to Chamonix (the town at the base of Mont Blanc) until the night train at 11pm. I spent part of those 15 hours in Paris trying to sleep in a park with a book on my chest (didn't want to get kicked out like a homeless guy). Heavy rain ruined that plan. I eventually ended up falling asleep in my chair at the train station's café – it became just impossible to keep my eyes open. The night on the train didn't quite help me

catch up on my sleep.

Day 2: From rain to snow

My friend met me in the morning of day 2 at the station and immediately wanted to hit the mountain. The climb to the summit takes three days, although it's recommended to climb it more slowly so that you can adjust to the elevation. Since I had a flight to Holland on day 6 (Thursday), Jerome wanted to move. We threw our non-essentials into storage bought some food and jumped on the train to the bottom of the trail.



I live outside of Houston, Texas, right on the gulf coast. I am outside a lot at work (I am a field engineer). I am not exaggerating when I say I need long sleeves unless it's over 90 degrees. It is hot as hell and super humid where I live and I am as used to it as a person can be. When we stepped off that train it was just above freezing, and raining. Five minutes into the six hour climb to the first mountain hut, I discovered that the jacket my cousin had lent me was not waterproof. Shortly thereafter, I discovered that my boots and my gaiters were also not waterproof. Halfway through that first day of climbing, I was already asking myself why the hell I didn't go with my original plan which was to go to one of the vacation islands off the coast of Spain.

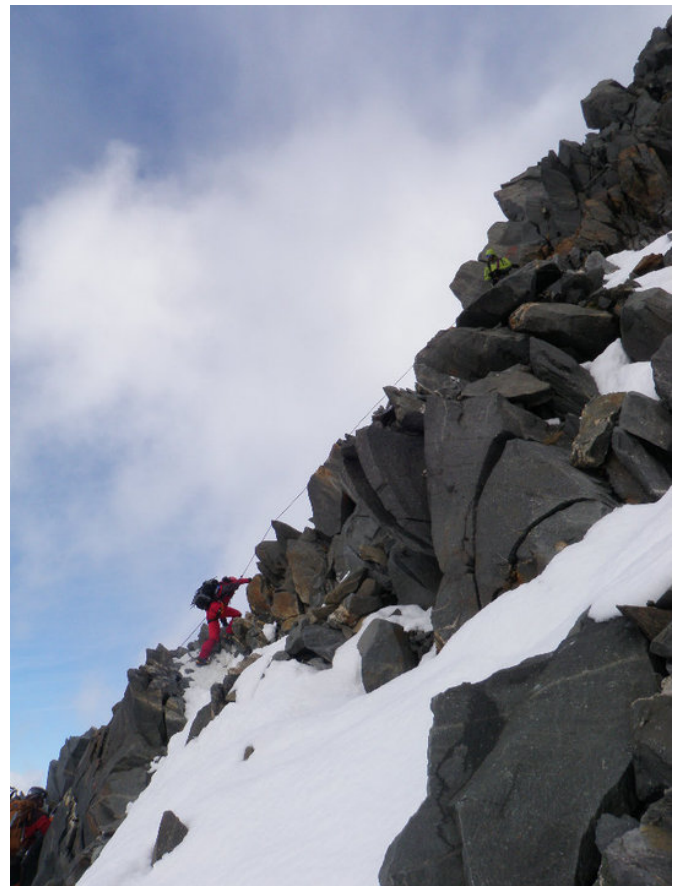


We learned upon arriving at the mountain hut that these huts are quite expensive: 117 for two people per night (breakfast and dinner included). Jerome's credit cards were blocked and he had managed to use up all of the cash in his bank account in the two weeks prior he had been travelling around France. I didn't have my cards with me, but I had a lot of cash. I was too wet, cold and tired to realize this at the time, but we would have just enough money to fulfill our plan of making my day 6 flight. There would be little room for extras.

Day 3: Climbing the ridge

Keep in mind that we started climbing above the tree line. Day 2 we climbed from 2100m to 3200m. The rain we started in quickly became snow as we increased our elevation. On Jerome's insistence we started Day 3 at the crack of dawn (I was so pissed I couldn't sleep in). Everything was still wet, and my boots, which could not come in the hut, were frozen solid. Being the first ones to head out that day, we had to blaze our own path through snow drifts that were at some points up to my arm pits. What should have been a 30 minute hike up to the really difficult section of rock and ice climbing, took us about 3 hours because of the deep snow. From there it was up a very steep rock ridge with no protection from the high winds and snow – A 700 meter vertical climb with ropes, harnesses, ice axes and crampons. To make matters worse, the dyamox we were taking for altitude sickness had the unfortunate side effect of making us pee every 15 minutes. On top of that, we both had been living at sea level and were having trouble breathing the further up we went.

We arrived at the Goutier Hut (el 3860m) barely in time to catch dinner. We had left around 8am and arrived just in time for 6pm dinner. I cannot tell you how the food was because I was so hungry and so tired that I think old cat food would have been good.



A shot from the nearly vertical climb taken on Day6 on our way back down



Climbing in the wind and snow, still wet from the previous day's rain

Day 4: Taking a break

Jerome woke up early to climb but I was too tired. Since it was only Tuesday we had an extra day planned into our itinerary just in case. I cashed that day in. I stayed in the Goutier Hut all day resting while Jerome joined a group of old Bulgarian women and made the summit. He ended up holding them back (yes they were in far better shape than he was) and they were not able to descend that same day so as a gesture of appreciation, he

offered to buy them dinner. As was stated before he had no money, so what really happened was I bought them dinner, for a grand total of 150 Euros.... And that was it, no money left.



At the nearly vertical section



Bathrooms at 3860m



The view from 3860m

Day 5: My bad decision

On the evening of Day 4, after Jerome had returned, I had pretty much decided to descend on Day 5. A group of Finnish guys convinced me otherwise so I joined a Norwegian father-son team. The weather report called for high winds until about sunrise, then a beautiful day.

We left at 4am and by 9am the winds were so high that one could barely stand against them. My group and about 15 people behind us decided to take shelter in an emergency shelter and wait out the high winds and snow.

The storm kept getting worse. It didn't take long for the relative humidity in the shelter to reach 100% and water to start forming on the walls. Much of our clothing was of course wet because of the ice melting on us as we rested and waited. For those of you that don't know this, 40F is cold. 40F with 100% relative humidity is impossible to get warm in. No matter what you do, the cold permeates all your layers.





A picture of the shelter (approx 4300m). One enters from the bottom so as to make it nearly wind proof.

Day 6: The epic descent

With no visibility and high winds all day, Day 5 we were unable to leave the shelter. Without a GPS, we'd be walking blind on the glacier and there would be a fair chance of falling in one of the crevasses. We would later find out that 4 people died on the mountain during the storm.

We were lucky to have spent the whole time freezing our asses off in the shelter with no food, eating snow. Jerome was in the hut, but as we had no money left, had to hide out and steal table scraps to feed himself. We had no way to communicate so he was needless to say worried.



The top

Exhausted and hungry we decided to not bother with a summit attempt. Instead we bolted down the mountain in what was the most exhausting experience of my life. In one day I went from 4300m to the train station at 2100m, and then took the train down 1200m. That's a 3km (2 mile) change in elevation in one day! From about -6 C

(20F) to 24 C (75F)



The train station

I talked one of the Finnish guys into dropping me at the airport in Geneva with the intention of sleeping there and catching the first flight to Holland. Day 7 was Friday, the start of the world championships, and I figured I could still make it in time to play.

That's when I realized I had lost my wallet and my cell phone. Thus we were stuck in Chamonix, and could not go anywhere. Jerome's card for whatever reason seemed to only work at the hostel we were staying at so we rested.

Day 7: The epic journey – Chamonix to the Hague

We had destinations: Rouen, France for Jerome, The Hague, Holland for me.

We had money: 18 Euros to be exact (in other words we had no money and were screwed)

We had Jerome's credit cards that didn't work

We had Jerome's ATM card for a checking account containing somewhere between 0 and 20 dollars.

We spent 10 Euros on food for the day (we bought wisely so 10 Euros got us a lot of food). We spent 5 Euros on a phone card and the last three we used at the Internet café to send out help emails. I spent most of the phone card trying to get emergency cash from my bank – Chase. They put me on hold and it was all for nothing. After the excruciating descent, I couldn't deal with the stress of our situation. We thought about trying to pawn off our climbing gear, begging, sneaking on the trains and hiding, living in Chamonix until one of our parents came and rescued us... everything went through our heads. We felt hopeless (it was more crushing than being stuck in the shelter in the blizzard)

Jerome bought train tickets online so we could at least get to Paris (it took us a while to realize we could do

this). I called a friend in Paris and told him when we would be getting in and asked him to meet me with money. We then proceeded to miss a connecting train, pushing our schedule back. My train into Paris was late so I ended up missing the last train to Holland from Paris.

On the up side I found my wallet and phone (it had fallen down into a pocket I didn't even realize I had) (yes I felt stupid). My alternative to taking a train was to rent a car. At this point I was determined to get to the Hague and play that Saturday morning round. There was one problem with trying to rent a car though. On the way to the airport in Houston, I stopped by the bank to get some cash, deposit some checks, etc. I left my driver's license there and didn't realize this until I was halfway to the airport already.



I begged and begged with the guys to let me rent a car with a scanned copy of my driver's license, which I had in my email. After telling them my story of nearly dying (I may have exaggerated a little), they agreed to let me rent. This is the moment that I found out that my credit cards were also blocked, and there was no way I was leaving there with a car without having paid.

Day 8: Finally Arrived

So I ditched that and I hopped on an overnight bus to the Hague. Once again however, things did not work out. The bus driver decided that since only one person was going to the Hague, he would skip that stop and drop me in Amsterdam, an hour's train ride away. He dropped me off in the train station in Amsterdam (along with everyone else). A train ride to the Hague cost 9.50 Euros. I had a 20 euro note which none of the machines would take

(and there was no change machine), and I had 8.70 in change. There were ATMs but none would give you coins for the ticket machines and it was too early in the morning for anything to be open. At this point, delirious with fatigue and extremely sore I just jumped on the train and didn't pay. This time luck was on my side.

I ended up playing in that Saturday morning round. I did poorly. I was too tired to think. Every ounce of my body hurt like hell. I couldn't move from a seated position to a standing position without wincing. It would take me two weeks to fully recover. I ended up missing the Diplomacy World Championships essentially. After the Saturday morning round my head hit the pillow and I slept and slept and slept. I did my best to socialize with the other players I had known from my time in Europe, but I was essentially a ghost at the event. It was really disappointing.

The following weekend at the European Diplomacy Championships in Paris, I earned one of two solos in the first round, getting to 18 as Italy in fall of 1918. It was an epic game and enough to push me to the top table where on Sunday I had the European Championships locked in. All my neighbors were at 3 or 4 centers while I was on 8 as Russia. I had an Austrian puppet doing my bidding, and the English player – two time world champion Cyrille Sevin – could not break the FG. All I had to do was do what Cyrille suggested and I would have been at 10, knocking the German from 5 to 3. I unfortunately had been out visiting friends in Paris until 4am every night for the prior three nights and thus I couldn't think clearly. I finished that year on seven instead. Then 5. Then 4. Then 3... I botched it. My father who was there couldn't bear to watch my fall from grace.

All in all it was a fantastic experience. Definitely I would never do it again. It was torturous and painful and miserable. It was just too much. But I had a great time in Paris with the other Diplomacy players. Having chatted with one of the Australians, I have decided to start saving for WDC next year in Australia. I will hopefully make a two-week vacation out of it. As a face-to-face Diplomacy player, I can think of nothing better than a whole country full of Diplomacy players I have never played with before.

If you would like to have a similar experience...seek professional help immediately. Then again, it beats being France and being greeted with F Lon-Ech, A Mun-Bur, and A Ven-Pie in Spring 1901. But just barely.

Your Star Signs and Diplomacy

by Richard Walkerdine

I am sure that most of us know what our star sign is (mine is Sagittarius) and have at some time looked at our horoscope in the daily press. In most cases only for amusement of course but there are a lot of people who actually believe in astrology and follow horoscopes avidly. Can we link this to the way we approach a game of Diplomacy?

Our star sign is actually correctly known as a sun sign because it relates to which of the twelve signs of the zodiac the sun occupied on the day of our birth. It is claimed by believers to determine our individual characteristics and personality. So let us see how each of the twelve signs might affect an individual's attitude to the game.



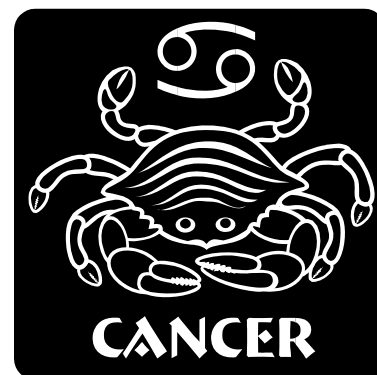
Those born under Aries (Mar 21 – Apr 20) will thrive on challenge and often feel that they must battle their way through life relying only on their own strength, intelligence and courage. They believe in being honest, true to themselves and their convictions even if it means standing alone and they will have no sympathy for any weakness of character in others. So be careful if you ally with an Arian because they will be self assertive and looking for quick results. They will also be courageous and their moves will not always be of the standard type. In correspondence they will be frank and open, but will usually betray a 'me first' attitude.



Players born under Taurus (Apr 21 – May 20) are steadfast and patient, capable of tremendous devotion, endurance and loyalty. Once their course is set they pursue it tenaciously until it is completed, stubbornly resisting any attempts to sway them from their objective. In Diplomacy terms they will make a superb ally although they may be stubborn and will need to be convinced of their security and will insist on clear guidelines in matters of policy making before an alliance is formed.



The sign of Gemini (May 21 – Jun 21) indicates, in some ways, an eternal child. Their mind is bright, alert, curious, flexible, playful and always eager for new experiences. But their attention span is sometimes quite brief. They grasp ideas quickly but once their initial curiosity has been satisfied they will want to move on to something else. So be careful with a Geminian. They will be adaptable and versatile but will always be making and breaking alliances.



If the sign is Cancer (Jun 22 – Jul 22) they will have powerful emotional attachments to the past, to family and childhood and to those places they associate with safety and security. Maintaining a connection with their roots and heritage is very important to them. They will be loyal, devoted and sentimental, tending to cling to whatever is most dear to them. In Diplomacy they are easily flattered and will make a very loyal ally, but if an

alliance is broken they can become very unstable and correspondence may verge on the sentimental.



Next we come to Leo (Jul 23 – Aug 22), which indicates a person who is proud and intensely individual, wanting to stand out and be the very best they can, recognised for their unique contributions. Doing something well and being respected for it is extremely important to them and they cannot tolerate being in the background or merely being 'one of the team'. They have to put their personal stamp on whatever they do and direct their own course in life. In a Diplomacy game they will be enthusiastic but outspoken and will expect to be the leader of any alliance. Moves will be planned on a grand scale because they are really not interested with the minor details.



Those born under Virgo (Aug 23 – Sep 22) are modest and humble and rarely strive to be in the limelight or in a position of power. They have a sharp analytical mind, a keen eye for detail and like to observe, dissect and study life from a distance. Although somewhat lacking in self confidence they can be relied on to be conscientious, careful and efficient and very thorough in their work. They will make a good ally in Diplomacy as they will analyse and evaluate tactics down to the smallest detail and make their moves with extreme care and precision. But you will need to be the leader of the alliance.

The sign of Libra (Sep 23 – Oct 22) indicates harmony and balance. People with this sign will instinctively understand the need to accommodate the interests and desires of others and are always willing to meet the other person half way. They are tactful, diplomatic and



have considerable social awareness, doing all they can to avoid conflict and discord. In a Diplomacy game they will much prefer to be a corner power rather than in the middle of the board and will often be found to be indecisive and lacking in confidence.



Next we have Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21), the sign of people who are quiet, deep, emotionally complex and intensely private. They are not at all easy to get to know and understand. Although extremely sensitive they seldom show it and allow only a very select few into their inner world. Like a wary animal they are cautious and mistrustful of those they do not know but can be very instinctive and intuitive, usually having an immediate gut reaction to events even though they cannot articulate why they feel as they do. In a Diplomacy game a Scorpion will be very analytical and keenly perceptive, but always highly suspicious. They will also have the ability to pull off the perfect stab.



The ninth sign, Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21), is the sign of someone who is a gambler and adventurer at heart. They love to take risks, to discover and explore new worlds and to take the untried path rather than the safe, reliable one. They are independent, freedom loving and often very restless. They need a lifestyle which provides opportunities for travel, movement and change. As a Diplomacy player they will be optimistic and sincere with good judgement. But watch out for their underlying restlessness, which could lead to the breaking of an alliance even when it seems to be at its strongest.



If the sign is Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19) the person will be serious, disciplined and quietly ambitious to drive themselves to achieve material benefits and success. Their work, their position in the world and their contributions to society are very important to them. They will persevere through enormous hardship and frustration in order to reach a goal they have set for themselves even when it means making personal sacrifices. In a Diplomacy game they will plan carefully and deliberately for the achievement of their target and, once started, almost nothing will stop them. This can however lead to a somewhat narrow-minded attitude for which they can suffer.



The next sign is Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18), which represents strong willed, freedom loving and independent-minded individuals who insist on living their lives as they see fit even when it means ignoring convention and tradition. In personal relationships they

cannot be owned or possessed and although willing to share themselves with another they do not adjust easily to the emotional give and take which is required. They will put intense energy into a Diplomacy game but can sometimes be tactless and dogmatic. Unconventional moves will not be uncommon.



Finally we come to Pisces (Feb 19 – Mar 20), the sign of someone who at heart is gentle, impressionable and receptive – a bit of a dreamer. Their world of imagination, feeling and intuition is as real to them as anything in the outer world although they may have trouble interpreting their inner experiences in a way that others can understand. They are mystical, artistic, musical and imaginative with a rich inner life. They will often appear rather quiet and unobtrusive as they prefer to keep themselves to themselves. In a Diplomacy game they will be easy going and rather impressionable but will be very dependent on others. A good ally if you can overcome their tendency to be impractical and rather gullible.

((Author's Note: Although I have no interest or belief in astrology or horoscopes I enjoyed putting this together and hope you will find it entertaining. Perhaps Doug could ask his readers for their sun signs so we can decide if it will help in your next game?))

How about it folks? Anybody want to see if Richard's astrological descriptions are accurate or useful? Send in a letter if you try to incorporate it into your next game!



Den Haag, August 19th - 22nd: A Time for the Brave

By Gwen Maggi

[[EDITORS' NOTE: Gwen Maggi blew away the field at the 20th Anniversary World DipCon in Den Haag (or as us Americans call it, the Hague) in August from the outcome of the Top Board game, winning over ten other players who also finished over 100 points. These 2-11th ranked players at World DipCon included such hobby luminaries as Igor Kurt, Xavier Blanchot, Nicolas Sahuguet, Toby Harris, Dan Lester, Peter McNamara, and Yann Clouet. This was a major accomplishment, as he only was eliminated in this fourth round game (or as Gwen terms them, qualifying games for the Top Board final) where he begins his story. The other four games, including the Top Board final round were exceptional.]]

4th qualifying game, Fall 1904

This is probably my last move with my remaining Austrian army in Warsaw. Not a big deal anyway, I'm used to being eliminated with Austria in *World DipCon*, fourth time in four tournament participations, I even played it a fifth *World DipCon* time as I surprisingly had to play it twice two years ago - in Austria. That really was my worst nightmare. So once again, game over.

Time to reach the bar! Or time to have a walk in the street not far away from there... OK, let's choose the bar finally. Let's think of doing something else or looking for somebody else, will I be on the Top Board? End of the story. We'll see later if there is a Top Board challenge or not, anyway I've done what I had to do, I can't change anything now, so we'll see.

Saturday, 9:30 PM

This evening again, we decided to go outside with a few friends, Fabrice Essner - who said I come as bad company? - Alexandre Godfroy - who is used to bouncing me in Holland - and Moritz am Ende - at least somebody who's reliable, but maybe not so much. Fabian Straub had also been asked to join the *French Connection*, but he declined as he was waiting for the announcement of which players qualified for the Top Board to be played tomorrow morning, which will be done at 10 pm.

Fuck the announcement, I joined my mates to drinks a few beers in the central place of Den Haag. There will still be time to know whether I am on the Top Board tomorrow morning and I'll sleep better, if I have time to sleep... For the moment we have what we need, to drink, to smoke and, hmmm, let's say that Alex was more convincing at catching girls than supply centers, even if those who took the greater advantage of the opportunity were Moritz and Fabrice.

And when it's a question of drinking beers, the Belgians are never far away... So it was not a big surprise to see

the Belgian triple suddenly bouncing on our table ((EDITORS' NOTE: presumably referring to Jean-Louis Delattre, Domitien Gillet and one of the other Belgians such as Laurent Dumont or Nicolas Ianiri)). And as the Dutch, the German and the Swedish are never the last to arrive when the time has come to be thirsty, another group headed by Frank Oosterom, André Ilievics and Andreas Ericsson also joined the table, so right now we are enough to play two diplomacy boards if we would have liked to but nobody really thought to do it.

I heard somebody behind me asking about something called Top Board and I also heard my name mentioned, but I couldn't yet say if there was a link between those two things, I even wasn't sure of what I heard, after a few liters of beer... Anyway, it was time to go back to the hostel while we were still able to walk, which maybe wouldn't be the case any more a few glasses later. So one stop to pee from the bridge in the canal and we managed to find our way back to the hostel at 3AM.

Sunday, 8:00AM

I wanted to sleep well, I slept well! Like a stone!

This time Vincent Dias de Almeida didn't lock me in the room on the last Sunday like he did two years ago in Austria... Great, I'll be able to play the last round.

And it is now confirmed that I'm allowed to play on the Top Board. I have to say that before being eliminated with Austria in my fourth game, while Dave Maletsky was brilliantly topping the board with his Germany (15c), I myself had topped the board for my three first games playing strong alliances as Germany (8c, 1st) with Philippe Dumay's Russia (7c, 2nd), as England (13c, 1st) with Peter Yeargin's Germany (11c, 2nd), and as France (12c, 1st shared) with Nicolas Ianiri's Germany (12c, 1st shared). Germany again, that country had a lot of success in the games I played in this *World DipCon*, lucky German!

True, lucky Germany...from which we managed to qualify three players for the Top Board. After having won their first *World DipCon* (2008) by Julian Ziesing and their first *Euro DipCon* (2009) by André Ilievics, it looks we are entering into a period of fortune for the German hobby.

Among them, there is Igor Kurt (1st), the clear leader of the tournament. He's exactly in the same situation as he was at *Euro DipCon* in 2008. Having a big advantage on the ranking, he's nearly sure to be on the podium and he's also ahead for being allowed the choice of his country. And as he's naturally – not only – relaxed, he shouldn't have too much pressure.

He also can count on his buddy Fabian Straub (4th), who is playing his second Top Board in a row in a *World DipCon*. And *this* Fabian Straub is not at all the same player as the one who began as Igor's wheel six years ago in Milan, he became a dangerous hunter, a fearsome fighter, who never gives up and who may weigh heavily on the entire map with his pragmatic diplomacy.

The third of the Germans is no one else but Frank Oschmiansky (7th), a regular Top Board player - two times in a row in *Euro DipCon* (2008, 2009). He gained a lot in stability in his play and he's now experienced enough to give his best in this kind of game.

From the three German trumps, the one I fear the most is Fabian according to his realistic style of play, which is most appropriate to being on a Top Board, while Igor is more sensitive and Frank more unpredictable.

Apart from them and me, there is another French player, Xavier Blanchot (3rd). He's a former European Champion (1994) and he's trying a – winning? - comeback after years of sitting on the sidelines. I met him a few times as he's been offering a full floor of his Hotel, *La Louisiane*, for the organization of the *French Championship* since 2007 – a year when a certain Gwen Maggi won the title as Germany on the Top Board – but I had never played *with* him. I nevertheless heard a lot about his diplomatic skills, he has been presented to me as an extremely dangerous player, opportunistic and sneaky, sometimes better to see dead than alive. I would like to avoid being his neighbor, because other players may think I would play with him as French, which is absolutely not my intention. But in that case, if people assume we are allied, I may be forced to ally, which would put me in an uncomfortable situation.

I don't really know the two other qualified players for the Top Board, mainly because they are non European. I have of course heard about Chris Brand from Canada (6th), who just finished second at the *DipCon*. He managed a great performance by qualifying two times in a row for the Top Board of a *World DipCon* in Europe as a non-European. I brought information about him to Nicolas Sahuguet, who describes him as very diplomatic, quiet and thoughtful. He may be one of my best choices for an ally on this board.

I know less about Peter McNamara (2nd), an Australian player living in USA. But I heard a lot about him in the last few days, having already qualified for the Top Board since the second round! I also brought information about him to Alexandre Godfroy who was playing Turkey (8c, 2nd) when Peter was easily topping the board as France (15c, 1st) round one. And he really left a strong impression, even not being so far advanced to take a solo...

First impressions of my future partners before the game,

Peter looks very nervous, pending the start, on the red couch in front of the registration table, quiet but nervous. I can easily read that into his behavior. On the contrary, Chris looks more than relaxed, this is his second Top Board in a *World DipCon*, what's already a great performance, and he really has nothing to lose. I find Xavier excited about becoming – maybe – the new World Champion. He tries to show to the others that he's relaxed, but he's not so much. The three German players are speaking together, not about the game of course - they had time to do it before, and I don't care for them.

And I myself sit quietly on the red sofa not far away from Peter. I have done my job, I meant to be qualified to be on that Top Board being one of the favorites, if not the first favorite. As I answered before the tournament, maybe I'm the favorite, why not, but the favorite to be beaten on the Top Board... And I have to admit that this Top Board is not really good for me, with these 3 Germans, Fabian and Frank with whom I have difficulties to work with in a game - I more easily drink with them than I play with them – Igor, who's not the most reliable player, Xavier, that has been presented to me as a henchman of the Devil, so my chances of salvation may pass through the two non European players.

Time to choose my country, time to write my destiny for some of us or only to try to do his best, that's my case, that's how I see this game. Choosing in 5th position, I can't hope to have the best country but at least I will avoid Austria, and I hope to pick a quite defensive country, waiting for my time to go out, why not Italy or Turkey which I have never played in the Top Board in big events (3 times in *Euro DipCon* and 4 times in the *French Championship*).

When Igor decided to pass his turn, I wasn't surprised to see Peter choosing France, typically the choice that I thought he could have made being so anxious, he picked the strongest defensive power, probably the best choice in his case.

Igor passed again and Xavier chose England, then Igor picked Russia in third position, having gained the time break in case of equality with France or England.

The choice is now to Fabian, and as a surprise for me, he picked Italy! I can't retain a "*Oh putaing con*" (O my fucking God) in my best accent of Marseilles, so I'm stuck by this choice which doesn't give me a lot of opportunities.

Because now, it is my turn which is coming up. Turkey is still here, but the problem is that Chris may then find refuge in Germany leaving me in the middle of the three German players as a piece of ham. Not really a good menu. But I don't really have much of a choice with picking Germany while Xavier is in England. These are the kind of things I wanted to avoid. But between two

evils, I had to choose the least.

I pity the choice poor Chris faces. Austria is sandwiched between three German players, he had already tried and paid for that choice two years ago, so he picked Turkey. At least something new. Time to pray.

And finally Frank received Austria in last position, what is not a bad draw for him, he may do well with Austria now that he has already played on the Top Board in *Euro DipCon* in Italy.

The show must go on!

How to do well in this game? I fear for Chris in Turkey and once Turkey is dead or very weak, I already see arriving from far away a kind of eastern triple directly in my face...

So, what to do? To have an alliance with Xavier, having heard about his style, isn't it - how to say it - like plunging into Hell head first?



Xavier and Gwen

1901

Hmm, anyway, I have to try something, it's Time for Braves, I'll open with my fleet in HOL – isn't it a nice country? - trying to leave Russia in peace in order to let him focus his units on the south of the map and maybe to lose time, trying to let the board think that he won't attack Turkey, which nobody will believe. This choice of powers with Igor in Russia and Fabian in Italy is of course something that had been decided yesterday evening, the two buddies having cleverly chosen not to be neighbors but to have an alliance at distance, killing first Turkey and then taking Austria in a Sandwich, and at the end seeing which one of the two could be World Champion, which is a good calculation, I think.

I also don't want Igor being pushed on north by an alliance he maybe might wait for - even if it absolutely is not my will - between England and Germany. So my move in HOL is obvious – *Das is ein Ewigkeit*. I even don't clearly say it to Igor, I didn't fear a move to SIL anyway, so better to let him discover the nice surprise.

On the contrary I had to let it be known to Peter and Xavier, the first has not so many reasons to be worried about that, the second more but as he himself said, we have to not show to the other that we are allied. He's right, anyway, we're not and he knows it at least as well as me.

This is the reason he argued to bounce me in DEN at fall, while I was supporting myself into BEL, Peter moving PIC-BEL, letting Xavier to decide whether to support a bounce or not.

Not a good thing to have been bounced in DEN and being forced to build F BER – that was no way not to build a second fleet with Germany in this kind of game - that's not great. And to keep Russia quiet, I had to negotiate a spring bounce in BAL. At the same time, England built F LON when France built MAR – You're right Peter, this is the best way to reach the Frioul Islands - when Italy had no build at all after having seen his convoy bounced in GRE even with the Turkish support BUL S APU-GRE, and when VEN and VIE bounced in TRI. Not a bad thing to see that Turkey is not yet the target of the three Germans; this gains some time for the western powers.

1902

A feeling I may have – bad – surprises from England that spring, I decided to move HOL-HEL to cover that area in case of NTH-HEL, LON-NTH. I also played KIE-HOL and MUN-KIE to strengthen my position in the north, as we still have a free TYR. I preferred not to take DEN in spring because it may be hard to defend, better to have a strong position around it.

The French moves POR-MAO and MAR-SPAsc – You're right, Peter, I'll invite you to the Frioul Islands later – they were a big dose of oxygen for me. Xavier had taken up places in SKA and NTH but misordered his F NWY to bounce in STP, which made Igor cautious towards him, fortunately for him, he's able to defend SWE thanks to A STP-NWY.

This is the moment Xavier decided to pull back NWY-NRG and SKA-NWY while NTH-ENG was an agreed bounce with MAO-ENG. At this time, I quietly took DEN from HEL and built A MUN, sharing at this moment the leadership with Russia, not really what I had thought before the draw – hoping to make a waiting game with Italy or Turkey - but I have to make do with the situation. For the moment I'm *only* a Germany with 6 dots in a good position F DEN, F BAL, A HOL, A BEL, A KIE, A MUN, no army in WAR, free BUR, free TYR, and a beginning of tensions between England and France. The only bad point is that Turkey should be attacked soon, Italy and Austria having logically made peace, but I really can't allow myself to be in a front war with Russia, so let's wait and see if Turkey can defend his best and if it can be good enough.

1903

The position is better than expected and I have to take my chance right now, if it happens, because it won't come back again. Especially when I'm in a good relationship with France, Xavier having both stressed us a bit too much with his aggressive diplomacy, I mean he's very demanding in support of his own position, and we both felt it.

The opening will come from a suggestion by Peter who proposed not to bounce in ENG like last fall and like negotiated with Xavier, but letting him move in while he would move in IRI and me in NTH for free, following with KIE-DEN, BAL S KIE-DEN and MUN-SIL having negotiated a bounce there to continue to make Igor quiet as I'm already in position to attack SWE.

Jackpot! Xavier pulled back again NRG-NAO and didn't cover NTH counting on the bounce in ENG, so I'm now in NTH and I have a free convoy to EDI, while Xavier has a lost fleet in SKA - he ordered NWY-SKA in order to bounce me as I told him I planned to move there, which I hadn't done.

L'OuzbeK est sorti du placard! I now have to take on my responsibilities and try to grow very quickly to then be strong enough to defend against the eastern triple, which will arrive sooner or later for sure.



Frank and Fabian

Xavier does not really have much choice in his situation to take the offer(s) I will make him, not to convoy in EDI is not an option, but while defending DEN with BAL I can also offer him DEN S SKA-SWE, to reduce Russia but also to keep Xavier under control, SWE being more or less a hidden German center that I'll take when I want. But surprise, Xavier managed to defend NWY by asking Igor to self bounce there!? When Russia should at least have played SWE H and STP H leaving NWY free for the retreat to SWE in case of English stab, which is what happened!

1904

Another army later, I'm now a clear leader with 7 dots, a fleet in NTH, an army in England and a strong option into

the Scandinavian area with SWE and NWY being under control. Meanwhile, on the other side of the map, Turkey has been strongly attacked and is down to 2, the German eastern triple I was waiting for is in no doubt any more. And we have reached the middle of the game, while for sure I will find the remainder of the time very, very, very long...

The good point in what happened – because it happened - I mean this eastern triple, is that France and England began to collaborate, but to collaborate in the south, so... far away from me, they let me defend against Italy, Austria and Russia.

In spring, I played NTH S SWE-NWY without saying it to England to avoid the agreed bounce SWE-NWY, STP-NWY and moved DEN-SWE and BAL-BOT. I needed one army more to hold the line in the south (+SWE?) and I made another good offer to Xavier asking NWY S SWE-STP to put an army in STP instead of a fleet, which means not taking SWE, that would stay English one year more.

In the south, things are going better for the German as Fabian managed to take MAR from Peter, and threaten to enter into MAO... What was needed was common actions from France and England. At least, they both are occupied by something other than thinking of taking my dots.

1905

Another army later, I'm still a clear leader with 8 dots now, France is defending against Italian fleets and England is under control. But this is *only* half of the game... I continue to make good offers to Xavier to force him to continue to lock up the south and help France against Italy, so I decided to give him back EDI for NWY, and also to have his fleet in NWY moving away from Scandinavia, which he, of course, accepted since this A EDI which was holding for 2 years was like a poison for him.

So I convoyed EDI-NWY while NWY-NRG and LON-YOR. At the same time, I successfully moved STP-LVN while BOT and MOS were bouncing in STP, which created a hole in the Russian defense. In the fall, I decided not to take NWY to advance NWY-STP with LVN S NWY-STP, taking SWE instead in exchange for YOR-EDI and while NRG-NAO.

So, I won't have any build next year, but the fact is that anyway I knew I would have nowhere to build, so the stab of England (NWY, LON) wouldn't have been good.

And better than a build, an Austrian stab on Russia, which will force him to disband.

1906

Igor chose to try a diplomatic sign to me disbanding -A PRU. I didn't refuse him my diplomatic hand, and

decided to move back STP-NWY and LVN-PRU when I could have taken MOS for sure. But I wanted Igor being able to defend against what was now a 6 supply center Austria with big potential.

This is the moment that Xavier chose to come back NAO-NRG, but was a tempo too late to save NWY. I was still in NTH. He also moved IRI-ENG and France moved F BRE-PIC after having taken back MAR from Italy last fall.

I didn't hope much that I would be able to keep BEL; this is obvious that I'll lose it even if, of course, Xavier continues to lie unnecessarily about that sort of thing. He even asked me to go away from NWY. He really fears nothing, even not being ridiculous. This was not serious, Xavier.

So BEL is lost but I take NWY and WAR, having moved there with the single army PRU while SIL was used to defend MUN, as at last I wanted to bounce the Austrian army GAL. Igor had asked me for a self bounce that I refused because I couldn't use two units to defend one of his centers when MUN was under pressure.

1907

Another army later, I'm still leading the game with 9 dots, but it's now clear that I'm more or less alone, France and England - following the clever pull back of Italian fleets - are now allied against me, Italy and Austria are still around MUN even if they don't have very many chances of being able to take it one day, only Russia is one power that is on my side. And I can still celebrate the fact that Chris is still surviving somewhere in Turkey.

Defense! There's now a French A BEL, England having obtained POR in exchange of his help having argued that he was losing NWY. As they can't expect to take anything that spring I decided not to defend MUN to try to lock RUH. It has been successful, MUN-RUH and KIE S MUN-RUH - letting MUN be empty with two enemy units around it - while BUR-RUH, BEL S BUR-RUH (France) TYR-MUN (Italy) and NTH-HOL (England) hoping to cut all supports, but I was expecting something like that, and I guessed right.

I still see in my mind Fabian saying during the adjudication of that spring 1907 that the move in RUH was successful as he cut MUN support. But MUN was moving there and not supporting, so everything bounced. I also moved WAR-GAL successfully with the support of Russian A UKR.

The situation is quite good at this point but I have been a victim of my own style, still trying to make good offers to my allies, still trying to play as clean as possible, so instead of defending GAL-WAR in the fall, to secure my 9 dots and probably the victory, I ordered GAL S UKR-RUM. But Igor stabbed UKR-WAR at the same time... the Devil had gone out from his box. Xavier first wrote a

secret set of orders and then wrote a second one with Peter, letting him see what he was writing. A few seconds before the dead line, he simply put this set in his pocket and gave the other one to the referee, moving MAO-SPAsc and LON-BRE. +2 dots with good options on MAR!



Gwen, Peter, and Igor

1908

The pack is coming dangerously close. I have led the race for a long time now, and I am running out of breath. 8 dots for me, 7 for Austria, 6 for Italy and England, 4 for Russia and 3 for France. Turkey just died after having – once again – lost nearly all chances at the draw of the countries. You won't always be so unlucky, Chris.

Spring

Builds and disbands for that last year were a nightmare, France kept A BEL, A RUH, A BUR, England built F LON, F EDI and the worst for me, Russia built A MOS.

Defense! Alone, but defense! I negotiated a bounce in STP between NWY and MOS with Igor who – of course - let me enter there to allow Xavier to take NWY. I had also written SKA-NWY to bounce in case of that kind of joke, but at the last second I changed it to SKA-NTH. I still don't know why.

When I saw the situation after the last moves, I have 5 safe dots and a guessing game not to lose either SWE or STP. So I still can be on 7. But England is now on 8 – what a fucking comeback from nowhere, he had one foot in Hell but he's now fighting for the victory - with NWY and MAR which can't be defended. What happened in the south is not clear from my German position, Italy is on VIE but can't defend it without the help of my army BOH.

One second, I thought it was lost. But I kept quiet to analyze the situation. Where to find an 8th dot? If not, England would beat me anyway. England... The one who fucked France very hard. The same French player with whom I still stayed fair from the beginning to the end. Let's see if Peter would be happy to see the henchman of the henchman of the Devil being crowned...

Fall 1908

Peter, this is Time for Braves! I'm the only one to be able to stop England from being crowned, but I need an 8th dot, and it can only be BEL. This is in your hands now. Do what you think is the most fair considering how the game has been run. I'll move HOL-BEL, I need you to go away to a safe place and why not even support me with PIC S HOL-BEL.

You'll decide my future.

Time for Braves, Peter! Time for Braves!

I still have to choose between defending STP in case of NWY S MOS-STP or SWE against NWY-SWE, and I only have SKA for that. I decided to defend SWE thinking that the *the Devil is not a sharer*.

René Van Rooijen, the intractable game master of that Top Board, collected the last order sheets.

Alea Jacta Est.

The final result

One word to Xavier: to say to him that I believed him to be greedy enough to have taken SWE. What he answered me with was a big smile that he also took NWY (which meant NWY-SWE, NTH-NWY, NRG S NTH-NWY). Right now he's pretty sure to have won, as he thought to have understood in my sentence that I attacked NWY to defend STP.

One second to give a look to Peter who imperceptibly answered me that he kept his word, and I know that I may have done it when at this moment everybody is waiting to know who from England, Italy or Austria will win.

First move to be read, England : NWY-SWE!

I'm walking slowly in the room, I'm calm and serene, I've done my best anyway, in very difficult circumstances and I have nearly played the perfect game, the only move I would regret is GAL-WAR in Fall 1907, but I have the defaults of my own qualities, to be a Care Bear or not to be, I decided to play my style from the beginning to the end of that *World DipCon* even if it's maybe not the more appropriate style in that kind of tournament but I'll die with my ideas, with my own ethic of the game.

My moves then. SKA-SWE doesn't disturb Xavier so much, he's still on 8 and anyway I can't be at more than 7. My last move is HOL-BEL. And that one doesn't let him stay so quiet. I heard him saying *ça serait moche si le français avait lâché un centre*. And what about the diabolic trick of showing your order sheet and giving a second one to the referee? This is not good either, boy!

Italian moves then. And surprise, it looks like nobody heard my BOH S VIE, nobody but Fabian! I decided to support Fabian there because anyway for me the victory was on 8 with SWE, STP and BEL and in that case I preferred to support Italy than Austria because in case of a tie I would win against Italy but not against Austria, so without knowing exactly what may happen in the south, it made sense to support Italy, which I wouldn't have done if Peter didn't promise me BEL, because in that case I had no more reason to help Fabian than Frank.

So with VIE and the Russian move CON-BUL with AEG support followed by SMY-CON, Italy is now on 8 too and he has the tie break on England ! Fabian knows it and he knelt on the floor, his head between his hands. He's World Champion!

On my side, I'm still quietly walking in the room from one side to the other. We still have a set of orders to read...

Last moves. France : PAR-BRE, BEL-RUH, PIC S HOL-BEL.

Peter kept his word! That's done! Even if for the moment nobody has understood what just happened.

The pack was back on the last right line, they passed me but I manage to stay on their wheel and I finally found a few forces to beat them at the sprint to the photo finish.

Time for Braves, Peter! Time for Braves!

One minute later, time to check once again the center count, René announced the result: **England 8, Italy 8, Germany 8, but - this time - the tie break is for me.** I'm World Champion.



[[Gwen Maggi has now placed a target on his back for the next year. But he is skilled enough as a Diplomacy player to overcome that!]]

Fantasy World Diplomacy

By John Biehl

Designer Notes:

I designed 'Fantasy World Diplomacy' in the mid 1970s (what particular year now escapes my memory) as my idea for an expanded regular type Diplomacy game. The rules are the same - the differences are in the map, the number of players and the start date. As in Colonial Diplomacy, I envisioned a world game with more than seven players. I believe I chose to make up a 12 player game based on the other Diplomacy variants that were circulating at that time - there wasn't a 12 player version published.

Since I am a student of ethnography I wanted to include the major geographic/linguistic/cultural/political entities of the late 19th century. These included (arbitrarily) the African, Arabic, Austronesian (Australia/Indonesia, etc), Chinese, English, French, German(ic), Indian (South Asian), Iranian (Asian Caucasian), Japanese, Russian and Spanish areas. The idea was to 'roughly' represent the entire world. All names were randomly chosen (they simply had to be in 'rough' geographical proximity).

The map design itself was a result of the desire, on my part, to have a western and an eastern hemisphere. The placement of the 12 'powers' and their geographic relationships reflects the real world (as much as was

possible during the 'free form' map design process). The map was created to 'mirror' as best I envisioned and/or researched the original Diplomacy map hence a 4 center power (Rajasthan) is included amongst other features. I did use statistical analysis (as best I understood it at the time) to 'copy' Allan B. Calhamer's design parameters. So, yes, I was trying to re-invent the wheel. As the map was created I designed into the starting positions a power starting with 2 fleets (Valparaiso) and even one with 3 fleets (Sakhalin). This is, obviously, a bit of an experiment on my part. Nevertheless, let us try it.

Due to abbreviations being used in postal Diplomacy games (I guess now internet games too) I checked my province abbreviations. Potential players will note there are no chances for abbreviated orders being misunderstood (so long as the obvious abbreviated spelling of the land/sea province name is used - check the map).

I chose the start date of 1889 to differ chronologically from both Colonial Diplomacy (1870) and Diplomacy (1914).

Good Planning and Good Stabbing to one and all.

12 Player FANTASY WORLD DIPLOMACY

The rules of the 12 player Fantasy World Diplomacy are identical to the Diplomacy rulebook copyrighted 1971 by Games Research Inc. The following insertions are to be substituted for those in the Diplomacy rulebook;

II. As soon as one Great Power controls 30 Supply Centers, it is said to have "gained control of the world" and that Great Power is the winner

V. Certain provinces on the board, 58 in all, are designated "supply centers"..... there may never be more than 58 armies and fleets

VI.3 « STARTING POSITION These units begin play, one in each home supply center, in the following positions

Arafura (Brown) A Babar A Serang F Davao
Hamra (Green) A Summan A Marzuq F Karet
Ishfahan (Grey) A Zahedan A Zarand F Dezful
Jylland (White) A Kassel A Thisted F Farberg
Kyushu (Red) A Shibata A Takada F Nemuro
Lugulu (Black) A Pagalu A Pebane F Eshowe
Ming-tao (Yellow) A Hanyin A Mingshui F Lintao
New Foundland (Tan) A Columbus A Albany F Washington
Orleans (Light Blue) A Rennes A Amiens F Charente
Rajasthan (Purple) A Shahpur A Nizamri A Tanjor F Jaipur
Sakhalin (Dark Blue) F Star F Sudzha F Usovo
Valparaiso (Orange) A Veracruz F Cartagena F Cordoba

VII.6. DATES. Orders for the "first move are dated "Spring 1889"; for the second, "Fall 1889"; for the third, "Spring 1890"; and so on.



Ask the GM

An Advice Column for Diplomacy World

Dear GM:

I don't like children but my fiancée wants to have a big family with at least 3 kids, what do you suggest?

Child-free player

Dear Child:

I agree kids are a pain but if you must have them than I suggest you have at least six children; if your future wife plays Diplomacy then just five children. At least this way you will have a full board of Diplomacy at home and be able to play Diplomacy whenever you want with live opponents.

If some of your children don't want to play, or would rather do something else, this is easily remedied by having more children. In fact, I usually recommend at least two more children so you have some standby players or if you want to play a larger variant. If you're a truly dedicated Diplomacy Dad you should try and fill out

a Youngstown or Imperial variant board.

*Your Pal,
The GM*

Dear GM:

How long is it before a zine goes from being "on hiatus" to being folded?

Misses my favorite zines

Dear Misses:

If you have to write to me about it, then it is folded.

*Your Pal,
The GM*

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

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Richard Walkerdine – Sorry to hear you've been struggling a bit with DW recently and believe me when I say I've been there (well, not with DW of course, but you know what I mean). I would guess the recent house move is partly to blame as that is always a hugely stressful time. Take a short break from Dip, even if only for a week or so, it will still be there when you get back with (hopefully) recharged batteries.

But please do not think about handing on the editorship. You are a really good editor, as I've mentioned before, as witnessed by some of the polite comments you've sent about a couple of my earlier articles which have resulted in a few changes and a much improved final result. That is the mark of an editor who knows how to do the job properly.

Of course, you are also single-handedly responsible for me starting to write articles again (and enjoying it) so maybe I shouldn't praise you too highly!

By the way, my article on 'War on Terror - the Boardgame' was 100% accurate and truthful, amazing though that may seem.

Please keep up the good work, it is appreciated.



Conrad Woodring – For those of you that think you love Diplomacy, and that you are hardcore, consider this:

I played at Weasel Moot IV this past weekend. I traveled there from Houston with another Houston player, Roland Cooke. Our flight left Houston around noon on Friday, putting us in our Hotel by around 3pm. We played all three rounds of Diplomacy and stayed up all night Saturday night until we left at 3am on Sunday morning for our return flight. Our flight took off at 530am. That puts us in Chicago for 36-40 hours, very little of which I spent sleeping. Despite getting really mad my last game at the fact that no one would negotiate with me, the event was as always great, maybe even my favorite this year. Congratulations to the Weasels for once again putting on a fantastic event.

(I invite those of you to add comments about how I am over the hill and not good at Diplomacy any more)

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)

915 Results

Spring

The Spring 915 season has been adjudicated. The headline this season is the breakthrough in Central Asia, with Arabia's northern front collapsing under attack from all sides. With this setback, the entire Caucasus and Khazar Sea region looks vulnerable, particularly when combined with the East Frankish capture of Attalia, indicating that Arabia will now face pressure on their western flank as well.

All endgame proposals fail. There are multiple proposals to vote on for next fall:

- 1) DIAS
- 2) 7 way draw (same combo as before, excluding the 1 SC powers)
- 3) 4 way draw (West Frankish Kingdom, Arabia, Tang Dynasty, Sri Vijaya)
- 4) West Frankish Kingdom solo victory

Before the adjudication, we have some press:

Anonymous

[illegible]

The New Moon walks a silent circle,
over hills, beneath the sky.

He whispers to me softly,
this one lives, and this one dies.

A shadow spans the chasm,
should I walk it, how to know?
Past dark hills, beyond pale ramparts,
lives a people forged in snow.

Li Bo

[illegible]

Spring Adjudications

Arabian A Arm S A Geo - Cap
Arabian A Ati S A Srk *Cut*
Dislodged *Disbanded*
Arabian A Bal S A Tam
Arabian A Bsr S A Dam - Nef
Arabian A Buk H
Arabian A Dam - Nef
Arabian A Geo - Cap
Arabian A Ghu H
Arabian A Her S A Man
Arabian A Kip S A Ati *Cut*
Arabian A Kyk H *Dislodged*
Disbanded
Arabian A Man H
Arabian A Sis - Isf

Arabian A Srk S A Ati *Cut*
 Dislodged *Disbanded*
 Arabian A Tam S A Srk *Cut*
 Arabian A Urg S A Buk

Axum A Aqa H
 Axum A Att H *Dislodged*
 Axum A Daj S A Zaw - Kan
 Axum A Kan - Aga
 Axum A Kus S A Sij - Wal
 Axum A Sij - Wal
 Axum A Sudd - Jeliba *Bounce*
 Axum A Wal - Nio
 Axum A Zaw - Kan
 Axum F Ars - Yem

Axum F Aza - Mes
Axum F Gad S F Aza - Mes
Axum F Mes - Zim
Axum F Nrs - Ale (sc) *Bounce*
Axum F Soc S F Gad

Byzantine F Aes - Att *Bounce*

Chinese A Blk S A Sam
Chinese A Kas S A Blk
Chinese A Kyr S A Qar - Kyk
Chinese A Orb - Qar
Chinese A Qar - Kyk
Chinese A Sam S A Qar - Kyk
Chinese A Tib S A Kas

French A Ale - Aqa *Bounce*
 French A Aqu - Rom
 French A Brg S A Mau - Sij
 French A Ifr S A Tah - Zaw
 French A Jer - Mec *Bounce*
 French A Kut - Tah
 French A Mau - Sij
 French A Mec - Nef *Bounce*
 French A Mrd - Srk
 French A San - Jel *Bounce*
 French A Sev S A Mrd - Srk
 French A Tah - Zaw

Russian A Chs H

Srivijayan A Ind - Sha *Bounce*
 Srivijayan A Knj S A Ujj
 Srivijayan A Sha - Man *Bounce*
 Srivijayan A Ujj S A Sha - Man
 Srivijayan F Bur S A San - Awl
 Void
 Srivijayan F Cho S F Mas
 Srivijayan F Gos S F Sis - Wts
 Void
 Srivijayan F Mah S F Phe
 Srivijayan F Mas S F Mah
 Srivijayan F Mis S F Mas
 Srivijayan F Phe S F Gos
 Srivijayan F Ras S F Mas
 Srivijayan F Sus S F Gos

Wagadu F Awl - Bur *Bounce*

Retreat Possibilities

Arabian A Ati is destroyed (no valid retreats)

Arabian A KyK is destroyed (no valid retreats)

Arabian A Srk is destroyed (no valid retreats)

Axum A Att can retreat to Buc or disband

Summer

Axum A Attalia retreats OTB

Fall

The Fall 915 season has been adjudicated. This season sees the final demise of the Byzantine Empire, now that Crete has fallen. After spending the entire game in first or second place, Arabia has dropped out of the "top two" after losing 3 SCs this year. There are two newcomers tied for second place: the East Frankish Kingdom and Axum.

All proposed draws fail.

*We have 3 sets of press before the deadline!
Thanks to all who submitted, including our now
non-anonymous Li Bo submitter.*

Press #1 (Tang Dynasty)

[illegible]

The vast hosts of wide forests,
Laid low by powers beyond them,
Lie scattered across the fields,
Piled in heaps round the garden gate.

Capricious winds contest for the fallen,
While the innkeeper's servants lie sleeping in shade.

Messengers come from the Son of Heaven,
Soon forgotten doors dim the maidens' laughter.

Li Bo

[illegible]

Press #2 (West Frankish)

[illegible]

Calling all warriors - The French Legion Etranger has opportunities to visit strange foreign lands, take long sea voyages, and meet new peoples. Generous wine allowances, and opportunities to meet peoples throughout the world. Why serve only in a single area when one season you can be in italia, the next in africa, and on to persia? For those who enjoy winter sports, we have previously held bases in siberia: future climbing opportunities in the himalayayas are eagerly anticipated.

[illegible]

Press #3 (West Frankish)

[illegible]

Up rode the Arabite, along with the Chinaman,
Down came the draws, DIAS, Seven way, three,
"Where's that jolly dot you've got in your tucker bag?"
"You'll come a-Diploming Matilda, with me".

Diploming Matilda, Diploming Matilda
 "You'll come a-Diploming Matilda, with me"
 "Where's that jolly dot you've got in your tucker bag?",
 "You'll come a-Diploming Matilda, with me".

Up jumped the Frank and sprang into the internet,
"You'll never catch me alive", said he,
And his ghost may be heard as you pass by that DC site,
"You'll come a-Diploming Matilda. with me".

[illegible]

Fall Adjudications

French F Con - Buc
French F Eggs S A Ale
French F los - Cre
French F Sjt C A Rom - Kon
French F Sta C A Rom - Kon
French F Sty S A Mec - Dam
French F Swo - Nos
French F Tas C A Rom - Kon
French F Tys C A Rom - Kon
French F Wsx - Wss
French F Wts S F Sos

German A Att S F Con - Buc *Cut*
German A Epi S A Thr - Con
German A Kie - Pec
German A Mac S A Thr - Con
German A Mrd S A Srk
German A Ono - Ava
German A Pec - Tam
German A Thr - Con
German A Vla S A Kie - Pec
German A Vol - Kie

Byzantine F Aes - Att *Bounce*

Chinese A Blk S A Sam
Chinese A Kas S A Blk

French A Ale S A lfr - Zaw
French A Brg - Sij
French A lfr - Zaw *Bounce*
French A Jer S A Mec - Dam
French A Mec - Dam
French A Rom - Kon
French A San - Wal *Bounce*
French A Sev S A Pec - Tam
French A Sij - Aga
French A Srk S A Pec - Tam
French A Tah S A Sij - Aga
French A Tri S A lfr - Zaw
French A Zaw - Kan *Bounce*
French F Bar S A Ale
French F Cïs S F Ios - Cre

Russian A Chs H

Srivijayan A Ind S A Sha
Srivijayan A Knj S A Ujj
Srivijayan A Sha S A Ujj
Srivijayan A Ujj S A Sha
Srivijayan F Bur - Sos *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Cho - Mas
Srivijayan F Gos S F Zim - Nam
Srivijayan F Mah S F Phe
Srivijayan F Mas - Ars
Srivijayan F Mis S F Cho - Mas
Srivijayan F Phe S F Gos

Srivijayan F Ras S F Cho - Mas
Srivijayan F Sus S F Mah

Wagadu F Awl - Bur *Bounce*

Retreat Possibilities

Arabian A Kip is destroyed (no
valid retreats)
Arabian A Tam can retreat to Abk
or disband

Retreat

Arabian A Tam to Abk

Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) builds 1 unit, can build in Ard, Arm, Aze, Geo, Isf, Urg
Byzantine Empire disbands 1 unit
Tang Empire (China) makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Denmark builds 1 unit, can build in Bas, Est, Jln, Jor (ec), Jor, Jor (wc), Nov, Sca, Vik
West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 3 units, can build in Ale, Ale (nc), Ale (sc), Aqt, Bri, Cad, Cor, Crs, Cyp, Dub, Gas,
LBu, Lot, Mau, Nar, Pam, Par, Rom (ec), Rom, Rom (wc), Sal, Sar, Scl, Swa, Tar, Tka, Val, Wsx
East Frankish Kingdom (German) builds 4 units, can build in Bav, Bre, Dal, Mor, Ono, Pec, Pec (ec), Pec (wc), Pol, Sax,
Smo, Thr
Principality of Kiev (Russia) makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Wagadu makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Axum makes no adjustments

Winter

Adjustment Adjudications

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds A Arm
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Builds F Urg

Byzantine Empire Disbands F Aes

East Frankish Kingdom (German) Builds F Thr

Kingdom of Denmark Builds A Bas

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Cyp

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Mau

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Builds A Tka

Standings

West Frankish Kingdom (France) 29
East Frankish Kingdom (German) 14
Kingdom of Axum 14
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) 13
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya 13
Kingdom of Denmark 12
Tang Empire (China) 10
Kingdom of Wagadu 1
Principality of Kiev (Russia) 1

915 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

France and his Allies :

The western alliance are still working together, although imperfectly (Denmark support Mrd, instead of the move into or out of Mrd, Germany didn't bother supporting France into Con).

I agree, but don't think it is anything serious. Nigs is letting Germany (especially, finally!!! Way to go?!) and Denmark grow and beyond that this is signaling that it's up to them to make their own luck and success a bit. The alliance is not a dictatorship. This actually is a GOOD choice on Nigs' part. If you are dictating to your allies it is much harder to read their reticence or readiness to stab. You want them communicating to you through their moves. And though they aren't coordinating perfectly, we see nothing to worry about for France.

All three of the western powers gained a center from

the northern Arabian holdings, which Arabia had won from Turan long ago. They are in good position to continue, although the way is narrow, and the eastern Juggernaut could end up making some of the gains.

This is true, but it does tell us what I've been saying for some time, that Arabia is toast and will be eliminated. The way towards that is starting to become clearer. One of the challenges is to consider if and when to possibly build inland seas fleets. This affects who gains and when.

The big deal that I see here is that France has gotten a fleet in the Black Sea region. Arabia is collapsing. France can afford to let his allies get a dot apiece. No need to think about stabbing when both Axum and Arabia are collapsing.

Agreed, though Axum will survive much longer than Arabia. I see now stopping line across Africa that Axum is set to hold on, at least not yet. And it still is possible for French fleets or their allies to make it around the Cape into the Indian Ocean. Not likely, not quickly, but possible.

As I thought, France supported Germany into Att and then moved a fleet into Con in the spring. However, Germany moved back into Con in the fall, liberating Thrace for a Black Sea fleet build, while France slipped his fleet in the Black Sea area next to Arabian territory. With two Black sea fleets and Pec, Russia is out next year. France also gained the last Byzantium center, Crete.

One Black Sea fleet would suffice to knock out Russia.

Yes, but they also may want to start convoying armies over to move more quickly through Asia. This is part of the "inland sea" problem though Black Sea isn't as landlocked as Khazar Sea. I think France is looking to use fleets there to speed the attack on Arabia to put him out.

What is notable in all this is that it is no longer France making the most gains, but the three powers advancing together. France maintains his advance, but it will be difficult to convert that advance into a solo, especially as Germany has become more difficult to stab.

Germany will still be easy to stab. France is the only power with fleets in the Med. When he wants to, he'll be able to hit Germany both from the South and the West. It'll be easy.

Oh, I agree more with Rick. The geography of the Danish lands makes him a bit hard to stab, but Germany is easy to stab, as long as France still keeps getting builds and Germany doesn't put defenders in his homeland.

The bigger point that Suzanne makes though also is true. Nigs is lulling his German/Danish allies with advances. I'm not sure if they've already agreed to let him solo or not, but they aren't looking for any excuses to slow him down yet.

In Africa, France consolidated his position in the north, but made no gains. He must have gotten some ether waves from Rick, as he did finally convoy to the south. However, Axum has moved a fleet nearby to limit the effects.

The convoy was the obvious chink in the Axum armor.

Agreed, so the convoy wasn't devastating, but it was the right move. Does anyone see any place for B. to set up a line?? I think France's consolidation shows some

arrogance in that he doesn't think he actually can be stopped, so is just going about it at a leisurely pace. I still think the main aim of the Western Powers is to eliminate Arabia and get lined up against China and find what I think IS a stalemate line there.

Axum still doesn't have a line. If France moves the army to either Jeliba or Luba, open dots are vulnerable. Kanem also requires support, and that ties up a couple armies. Is Axum going to block a convoy to Kangaba? If Tiraqqa doesn't support Walata, France could force that by attacking with two armies and using A San to cut support from Kumbi Saleh.

I agree with that analysis and have nothing interesting to add to it.

This position really could use a few helper armies. But yes, again, Indonesia just kept building fleets instead. I'll expect Axum to lose a little ground in year 916, followed by a bit more in 917 and a total collapse in 918.

That sounds about right.

Let's see...what else is going on...China has the sense to block Denmark out of the Eastern parts of Asia. It's an interesting question to see how exactly Arabia collapses. Do the Easties think they can hold off the Westies without propping up Arabia? I don't think they can.

No one shows ANY inclination to help Arabia stay around. Is that right? Probably not, but Lynn made the decision long ago and he won't change it.

**Axum :
Axum is still holding out in Africa and has consolidated his position. There is no longer evidence of cooperation with SV -- that could simply be temporarily suspended or there could be friction between them.**

SV really doesn't offer much. The battle is being fought inland. The SV fleets are mostly useless.

**Arabia :
Still defending well, but it's a losing battle.**

Axum lost the lone center of Att, predictably.

**The Eastern Alliance :
China and SV have gone back to stability. China attacked Arabia, without making any gains; he is simply helping the westerners advance. SV helped maintain a sea pressure on the Westerners, but to limited effect.**

The Juggernaut seems to be assuming someone else will stop France, but whom? There's no one else!!

Russia will be eliminated next year. Wagadu will stay alive as long as he is useful to France.

Agreed, both are simple and sure.

Builds : All of the gains are from the West. With the leftover builds from former years, the three powers have eight builds among them. Germany will certainly build a fleet in Thrace and Denmark will probably build an army in Bas, north of Arabian lands. There are no other useful places to build against Arabia that I can see.

Right, I see some withheld builds to set up later as the advance continues.

I wouldn't be surprised to not see a German fleet in Thrace.

Not thinking Germany will build a homeland defensive army, do you??? That will be shocking and could trigger a possibly already agreed upon attack from France.

Nigs may well be restricting locations for German builds.

France may build another army or two in North Africa, the Canaries or southern Spain to continue convoying to south Africa, but I would expect most of the builds to be waived.

Arabia lost three centers, but he had four armies popped, so that he has a build to help consolidate his defense.

You think that will help at all? Not that I see.

Arabia's position is even worse than Axum's. They are both doomed in the middle future.

That's right, when this game ends, if it ends in a French solo, it really will only have five powers of any substance left, the respective Western Triple and Eastern Juggernaut. Wagadu probably stays as is as a toady, but EVERYONE else will be out, I think. Maybe Axum will be barely holding on.

916 Results

SPRING 916

DC229: The Spring 916 season has been adjudicated. The West Frankish siege of the Axum holdings in West Africa looks to have turned the corner, with the captures of Walata and Kanem plus the landing of an army on the Gold Coast in Bure. The Arabs suffered further setbacks, losing Balanjar and Bukhara. Finally, the game looks likely to have one fewer player after the Fall season, with the entry of two Frankish fleets into the Euxine Sea to surround the long-time Kievan holdout army in Cherson. Before the adjudication, we have some West Frankish press.

West Frankish Press

[illegible]

Press :

Shock - "Mothra" revealed as Butterfree pokémon
Godzilla a vegetarian pacifist
Chroniclers today revealed that rumours of Axumite
"Warrior Monster Destructors" (WMDs) are completely
false, as both beasts are actually children's entertainers.
The Axumite leader Ardi Ramidus has resorted to
primitive deceptions, due to the cracks showing in their
defensive lines.

[illegible]

Spring Adjudications

Arabian A Ali - Ard
Arabian A Arm - Mos
Arabian A Bag S A Arm - Mos
Arabian A Bal H *Dislodged*
Arabian A Bsr - Isf
Arabian A Buk H *Dislodged*
Arabian A Cap - Arm
Arabian A Ghu S A Kip
Arabian A Her - Blk
Arabian A Kak S A Cap - Arm
Arabian A Man H
Arabian A Nef S F Yem - Mec
Void

Arabian F Urg - Nks

Axum A Aqa S A Kan - Daj *Cut*

Axum A Awd - Nio

Axum A Daj - Mak

Axum A Kan - Daj *Bounce*

Dislodged *Disbanded*

Axum A Kus - Wal *Bounce*

Axum A Sud S A Tir - Jel

Axum A Tir - Jel

Axum A Wal - Aga

Axum F Gad C A Ujj - Rha

Axum F Mes C A Ujj - Rha

Axum F Nam - Kon
Axum F Nrs S A Aqa
Axum F Yem S A Nef - Mec
Void
Axum F Zim S F Nam

Chinese A Blk - Buk
Chinese A Kas S A Sha - Man
Void
Chinese A Kip S A Kyk
Chinese A Kyk S A Kip
Chinese A Kyr S A Kip
Chinese A Sam S A Blk - Buk

Danish A Ati - Bal
Danish A Bas S A Yug
Danish A Bja - Kom
Danish A Bul - Udm
Danish A Ros H
Danish A Stb S A Yug
Danish A Udm - Ati
Danish A Yug S A Bas
Danish F Bor H
Danish F Ngs H
Danish F Sos C A Tka - Bur
Danish F Whs S A Yug

French A Aga - Kan
French A Ale - Aqa *Bounce*
French A Cyp H
French A Dam S A Att - Cap
French A Ifr - Zaw *Bounce*
French A Jer S A Dam
French A Kon - Lub
French A Mau - Brg
French A San - Wal
French A Sev H
French A Sij S A San - Wal
French A Srk S A Ati - Bal

French A Tah S A Aga - Kan
French A Tka - Bur
French A Tri S A Ifr - Zaw
French A Zaw - Daj *Bounce*
French F Bar - Ale (nc) *Bounce*
French F Buc - Ees
French F Cis S F Att - Cap
French F Cre - los
French F Egs S F Bar - Ale (nc)
French F Nos H
French F Sjt H
French F Sta H
French F Sty S A Dam
French F Tas C A Tka - Bur
French F Tys H
French F Wss H
French F Wts S F Sos

German A Att - Cap
German A Ava - Thr
German A Con - Buc
German A Epi S A Mac - Con
German A Kie H
German A Mac - Con
German A Mrd S A Udm - Ati
German A Pec S A Tam
German A Tam S A Ati - Bal
German A Vla H
German E Thr - Wes

Srivijayan A Ind H
Srivijayan A Knj - Ras
Srivijayan A Sha - Ujj
Srivijayan A Ujj - Rha
Srivijayan F Ars S F Mas
Srivijayan F Bur - Sos *Bounce*
Dislodged
Srivijayan F Gos S F Bur - Sos
Srivijayan F Mah S F Mas
Srivijayan F Mas C A Ujj - Rha
Srivijayan F Mis S F Sus
Srivijayan F Phe S F Gos
Srivijayan F Ras - Cho
Srivijayan F Sus S F Gos

Wagadu F Awi S A Tka - Bur

Arabian A Bal can retreat to Abk,
Der, Geo or disband
Arabian A Buk can retreat to Her,
Urg or disband
Axum A Kan is destroyed (no valid
retreats)
Srivijayan F Bur can retreat to Kng
or disband

Spring Retreat Adjudications
Arabian A Balanjar retreats to Derbent
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) disbands A Bukhara
Srivijayan F Bure retreats to Kangaba

DC229: The Fall 916 season has been adjudicated. Our Russian Kievan player Darren Sharma has been eliminated after his good start was steadily reversed by the Frankish-Danish juggernaut. Thanks for playing Darren! Trout sends his apologies, in the form of press.

[illegible]

Once again the Trout is late
On GMs patience this must grate
And though excuses there may be
Its all just more lame-assery

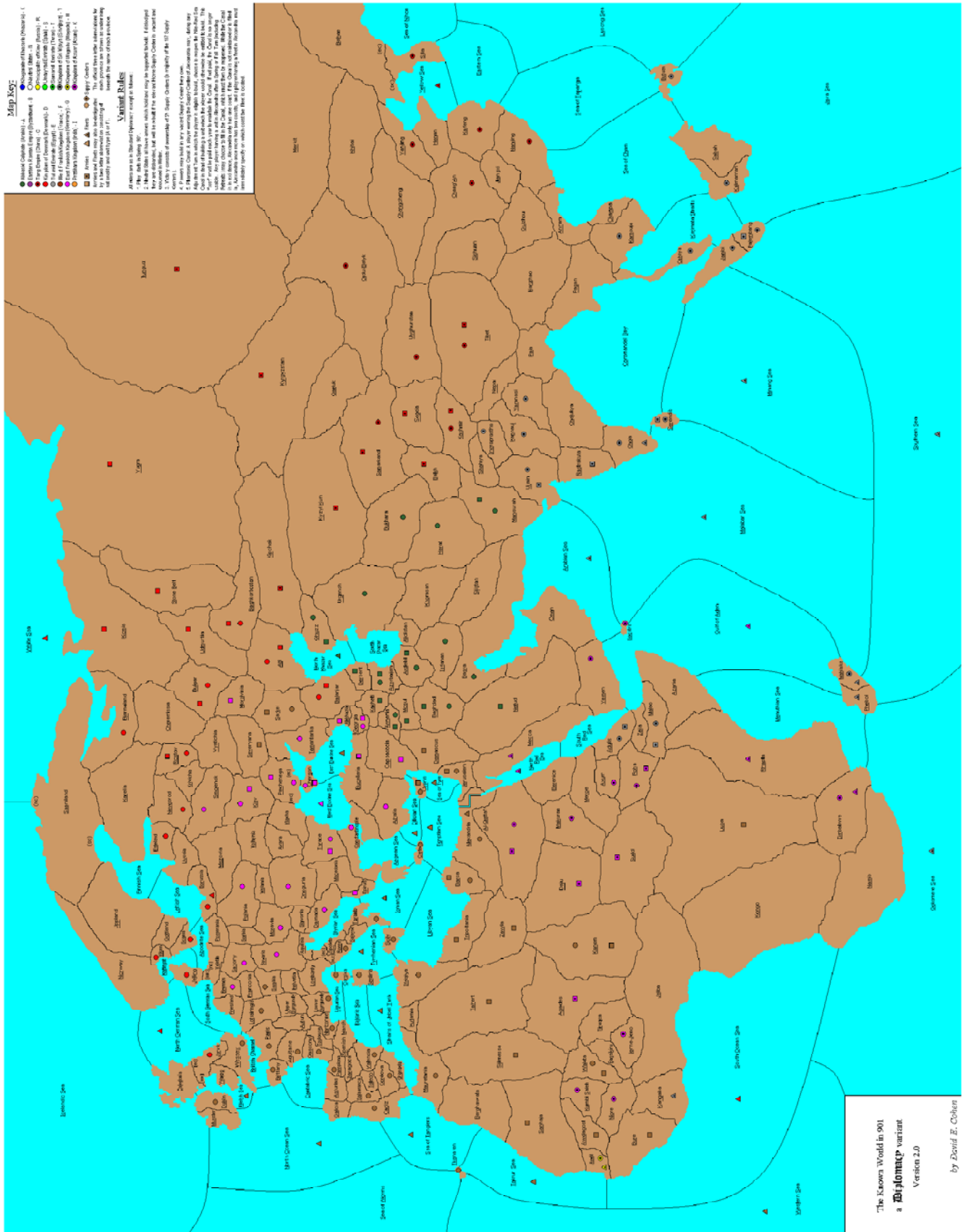
Though one thing of there I might speak

Twas in the boonies all the week
Deep in the muskeg for the work
Alas, net access was no perk

Thus no prelims could be sent
After Spring had took its bent
Though this does not excuse
Late orders and good will abused.

[illegible]

After Winter 916



Fall Adjudications

Arabian A Ardebil - Azerbaijan
Arabian A Armenia S A Kahketi
Cut
Arabian A Baghdad - Damascus
Bounce
Arabian A Balkh H *Dislodged*
Arabian A Derbent S A Kahketi
Arabian A Ghuzz S A Kipchak
Arabian A Isfahan - Ardebil
Arabian A Kahketi S A Armenia
Arabian A Mansurah H
Arabian A Mosul S A Armenia
Arabian A Nefud S F Yemen -
Mecca
Arabian F North Khazar Sea - Atil
Bounce

Axum A Agades - Kanem
Bounce
Axum A Al-Qatta'i S A Makuran -
Daju
Axum A Jeliba - Sudd
Axum A Kumbi Saleh S A Niore
Axum A Makuran - Daju
Axum A Niore S A Kumbi Saleh
Axum A Sudd - Roha
Axum F Gulf of Aden C A Ujjain -
Adulis
Axum F Kongo - Namib
Axum F Menuthian Sea - Rhapta
Axum F North Red Sea S A Al-
Qatta'i
Axum F Yemen - Mecca
Axum F Zimbabwe S F Kongo -
Namib

Chinese A Bukhara - Balkh
Chinese A Kashmir S A Bukhara -
Balkh
Chinese A Kipchak H
Chinese A Kyzyl Kum S A
Kipchak
Chinese A Kyrgyzstan S A
Kipchak
Chinese A Samarkand S A
Bukhara - Balkh
Chinese A Sogdia S A Bukhara -
Balkh
Chinese A Tibet S A Kashmir
Chinese A Tunguz S A
Kyrgyzstan
Chinese F Yellow Sea H

Danish A Atil S A Balanjar *Cut*
Danish A Balanjar S A Bucellaria -

Georgia
Danish A Bashkortostan S A
Yugra
Danish A Komia S A Yugra
Danish A Rostov H
Danish A Stone Belt S A Yugra
Danish A Udmurtia S A Atil
Danish A Yugra H
Danish F Borussia H
Danish F North German Sea H
Danish F South Ocean Sea C A
Ifriqiya - Bure
Danish F White Sea S A Yugra

French A Alexandria - Tripolitania
French A Barghawata - Sanhaja
French A Bure - Awdagost
French A Cyprus - Cappadocia
Bounce
French A Damascus H
French A Ifriqiya - Bure
French A Jerusalem S A
Damascus
French A Kanem S A Zawila - Daju
Cut
French A Luba S A Rhapta -
Malao
French A Severyana H
French A Sijilmasa S A Walata
French A Sarkel S A Balanjar
French A Tahert S A Kanem
French A Tripolitania - Barca
French A Walata H
French A Zawila - Daju *Bounce*
French F Barca - Alexandria (nc)
French F Cilician Sea C A Cyprus -
Cappadocia
French F East Euxine Sea S A
Bucellaria - Georgia
French F Egyptian Sea S F Barca -
Alexandria (nc)
French F Ionian Sea H
French F North Ocean Sea H
French F Straits of Jebel Tarik C A
Ifriqiya - Bure
French F Sea of Tangiers C A
Ifriqiya - Bure
French F Sea of Tyre S A
Damascus
French F Takrur Sea C A Ifriqiya -
Bure
French F Tyrrhenian Sea H
French F Welsh Sea H
French F Western Sea S F South
Ocean Sea

German A Bucellaria - Georgia
German A Cappadocia - Armenia
Bounce
German A Constantinople -
Bucellaria
German A Epirus - Cappadocia
Invalid
German A Kiev S A Vlacha -
Pechenega
German A Mordvinia S A Atil
German A Pechenega - Cherson
German A Tamantarka - Abkhazia
German A Thrace H
German A Vlacha - Pechenega
German F West Euxine Sea S A
Pechenega - Cherson

Russian A Cherson H *Dislodged*
Disbanded

Srivijayan A Indraprastha - Ujjain
Srivijayan A Rastrakuta H
Srivijayan A Rhapta - Malao
Srivijayan A Ujjain - Adulis
Srivijayan F Arabian Sea C F
Ujjain - Adulis
Srivijayan F Chola H
Srivijayan F Gokomere Sea -
Namib *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Kangaba - South
Ocean Sea *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Mahilaka S F
Southern Sea - Gokomere Sea
Void
Srivijayan F Malabar Sea H
Srivijayan F Minang Sea -
Southern Sea *Bounce*
Srivijayan F Phebol S F Southern
Sea - Gokomere Sea
Srivijayan F Southern Sea -
Gokomere Sea *Bounce*

Wagadu F Awlil S A Ifriqiya - Bure

Fall Retreat Possibilities

Arabian A Balkh can retreat to
Herat or disband
Russian A Cherson is destroyed
(no valid retreats)

Fall Retreat Adjudications

Arabian A Balkh retreats to Herat

Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) disbands 1 unit
Tang Empire (China) makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Denmark builds 1 unit, can build in Bja, Bul, Est, Jln, Jor (ec), Jor, Jor (wc), Nov, Sca, Vik
West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 2 units, can build in Ale, Ale (nc), Ale (sc), Aqt, Bri, Cad, Cor, Cre, Crs, Dub, Gas, Ifr, LBU, Lot, Mau, Nar, Pam, Par, Rom (ec), Rom, Rom (wc), Sal, Sar, Scl, Swa, Tar, Tka, Val, Wsx
East Frankish Kingdom (German) builds 5 units, can build in Att, Bav, Bre, Con, Dal, Mor, Ono, Pec, Pec (ec), Pec (wc), Pol, Sax, Smo, Tam
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya builds 2 units, can build in But, Cah, Ind, Jam, Kal, Kam, Knj, Plm, Ser, Var
Kingdom of Wagadu makes no adjustments
Kingdom of Axum disbands 3 units

Position Power Abb 915 916 Change SCs changing possession

1 West Frankish Kingdom (France) F 29 31 +2 +Kan, +Wal
2 East Frankish Kingdom (German) G 14 16 +2 +Geo, +Chs
3 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya V 13 15 +2 +Adu, +Mal
4 Kingdom of Denmark D 12 13 +1 +Bal
5 Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) A 13 11 -2 -Bal, -Geo
6 Tang Empire (China) C 10 10 0
7 Kingdom of Axum X 14 10 -4 -Adu, -Kan, -Mal, -Wal
8 Kingdom of Wagadu W 1 1 0
9 Principality of Kiev (Russia) R 1 0 -1 -Chs

WINTER 916

Arabia disbands A Herat
Axum disbands A Kus, F Nam, A Nio
Danes build A Bulgar
East Franks waive builds
Srivijaya builds A Plm, A Ser
West Franks open Pharaonic Canal, waive builds

916 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

As we recall, yes, Darren did put Khazaria out of the game, but one could actually argue that having the game designer (David Cohen) and Darren Sharma engage in this early battle allowed the Western Triple to gain their ascendance in the end. Darren never really had a chance after that.

I don't think that Darren ever had a chance in this game. He tried to get Arabia and Turin to attack Khazaria, but it was too late for him by the time it happened.

Arabia: For the first time in some game years, we have a major decision. Arabia seems to have (either implicitly or explicitly) reached some arrangement with China and SV around his centers. Though Balkh is attacked this turn, that's not an Arabian supply center, and though Nick autoretreated it to Herat (an Arabian supply center), Matt pulls it immediately. This leaves Herat, Bukhara, and Urgench wide open to the Chinese and Basra wide open to SV, while Mansurah is the only rear holding

unit. My cynical "French win" comments last game year need to shift to an evaluation of "finally we have the true end-game last stand". Arabia joining that battle means that the Khazar Sea may be the linchpin of an Asian stalemate line. Since Africa is still collapsing that doesn't mean this all locks up, but there is a chance here.

Let's now evaluate the Arabian moves and possibilities themselves. Ghuzz is supporting the Chinese Kipchak and that North Khazar Sea is cutting Atil support. So, this cooperation means the line north of North Khazar Sea is locked up as long as that arrangement between Arabia and China holds. The North Khazar Sea can only be dislodged by having TWO fleets put on it and while Denmark does hold Atil and Balanjar, both are occupied by his armies. In this fall turn, no effort was made by Denmark (and it would be difficult) to free up one center for a fleet. And then once one is observed, you would have to be able to free up the other. With F North Khazar Sea, Arabia likely can prevent this. With sliding

north along the west side of the Khazar Sea to Azerbaijan, the other eight Arabian units fully block in an area linking up with B's F Mecca. A Nefud is actively helping B. to get there and presumably to stay there and cannot itself be attacked. But there are guesses and questions across the intervening space between Nefud and the Khazar Sea. If China and SV leave Arabian units alone though, if there is any progress through that front (recall, the only place where Germany and Denmark have to gain in the alliance) it will be very, very slow.

As long as China and SV stick to their new policy of leaving Arabia alone, it looks as though French gains from Arabia will be blocked very very limited.

Yes, it does appear that Arabia is on board. Took them long enough.

I don't see that this should make a big difference.

On the other hand, while Mike Morris leaves the Arabian A Mansurah alone, permitting Arabia to set up this line and help B. into Mecca, Axum is still taking big damage from both sides as he loses two to SV and two to France. One wonders how much diplomatic communication is going on here as one would think this should be a solid alliance against the Frankish foe. And moreover, SV then builds two more armies, presumably to put them into Africa. This creates a dangerous calculation. France at 31 centers is still 23 away from victory and Axum has 10 left. If these are split five and five (all five to France on that side) then France will just about be at 2/3 of the solo center goal. Perhaps this then just becomes a six way draw (Wagadu has no standing)? But France has a major edge for stabbing Germany and could get there. But B. seems to be out of the consideration.

What did B. actually do this turn about this? Unlike most of the other powers on the board, B. tried to move (with some supports) everyone somewhere. He did move around Jeliba to Sudd and Sudd to Roha, but those moves were mainly to oppose the southern threat from the convoyed army now in Luba. And the French army actually ASSISTS the SV attack. So, B. is really completely screwed. They're all against him (except that Arabian support) and complete annihilation in 917 is possible if they all cooperate.

His reaction is to remove the doomed Kumbi Saleh and Niore armies that were each facing supported attacks next turn, and the fleet on the southern tip of Africa, pulling back toward the challenged core.

Axum's run is coming to a close. Now, if he agrees to attack the French holdings in northeast Africa, will SV hold off letting him have a go at it? Probably not, Axum's credibility has completely evaporated by now.

Axum is being hit on both sides. I don't quite see why Indonesia took two SCs from him. Has he intentionally abandoned his West African holdings? I would say that they had become untenable, but usually I prefer to see a player who has been stabbed to make the effort to put up a defense.

As previously noted, China does nothing essentially, except to dislodge an Arabian sitting in a non-supply center. Lynn is going along with whatever happens elsewhere.

China was *attacking* Arabia in the spring. He took Bukhara and tried to support SV into Mans. But either he had a sudden change of heart or (more likely) his ally SV convinced him that it was time to let Arabia defend against the Westerners, and he backed out of Buk even more energetically than he entered. So there finally seems to be a stop-the-leader movement going on in the east.

Yes, there definitely was a change in the diplomacy during the Summer.

The Danish gain what could be their last center of the game. Their Asian advance routes are pretty well blocked. The F South Ocean Sea continues to cooperate with the alliance. While others (both Germany and France) waive builds, the Danish do try to fill in units. It probably doesn't mean much unless the next step is a French stab.

There doesn't seem to be anywhere left for the Danish to go from here, but they would be difficult to stab.

I disagree. His position to resist a stab is terrible. Unless you mean that it would be difficult for Denmark to stab France. I would agree with that. I don't see much of a point to playing oneself into the mess that is the current Danish position. The Easties have finally gotten their act together and D & G are pretty much stalled.

If France does stab Germany, could the Danes do anything about it, either against France or with the French? Not very easily, the Danish forces are almost all in the east or in the high seas.

Right.

No rocket science tactics here, but the SV/French deal is starting to look more like a real three/three East/West stalemate/draw. The French have the canal open so that Alexandria is no longer north coasted. This costs a supply center, but France has loads to spare. The question will be, after B. is out (Nigs presumably getting five more Axum centers pretty easily next game year) does France build everything to attack Germany (easiest) and perhaps Denmark or are we done? This is

mostly a diplomatic consideration and we are not privy to these. But in these big variants (having played in them many times before), here's what the thinking is like. The power that might win has to consider stabbing people with usually VERY long working relationships, building up trust over many, many turns. The actual communication between the western powers has looked a bit spotty at times in recent years, but Germany gains and still waives and so does France. The immediate way forward for France is clear regardless. You say to people "this looks like we're done after B. is out" and you execute it. You then have numbers like 2/3 of the centers toward the solo (in regular Dip terms you only have like 12/18, you might also have 37/54 if you eliminate your Wagadu toady), your closest opponent (now SV with the rest of Axum's centers) at 20, a little over half of your total. SV is building armies to convoy to Africa, and still has also this boost of builds. So, your only alternative to taking this large draw is stabbing these allies. Your allies are pretty well stopped up, so your gains will have to be mostly against this other gaining power (SV). This holds as long as Arabia is now in the fold against you with support in the rear. Or you can try to play more whittling games. Arabia does NOT have the long relationship that either Mike and Lynn have or that you have with your two allies. Up until this game year, Arabia was not getting that support. BUT that support seemed to come precisely because people seemed to be agreeing to let Matt into the draw as well. It is not about that tactics, it's about what Nigs wants to do. These games also become draining. While I was betting on the solo for a long time, with this latest Arabian deal, I think the balance is tilting toward the six way draw. We'll see.

That might be what France is offering the Easties. But he can always stab for a solo. Why not? Where's the down side?

I don't think that Nigs had anything to do with the SV/China decision to let Arabia defend against the westerners. It looks more like an SV initiative, that and the African turn-around, which was really good for SV and less so for France, who will only gain part of the African centers, where he could have hoped to mop up all of them, given time.

If SV sticks to the new pro-Arabian policy and keeps China with him on that, France's only way to gain will effectively be to stab one or both of his long-term allies. Will that be enough to gain the solo? It looks pretty close.

Finally, finally, after all this time, Russ gets some real gains! But then he waives the builds (undoubtedly part of the deal for getting them) but he does for the moment vault into second place in center count. Mike will pass him next year with Axum centers while Germany faces the Asia Minor lock up.

Why waive the builds, whatever the deal? Does France have any way of enforcing this?

I guess he waives the builds to make sure it's easier to be stabbed.

As noted, that's it for Darren.

So, Mike and Lynn have agreed to stop attacking Arabia. Lines are forming. Axum is not part of the deal and he is getting cut all the way out. Mike builds two more armies to convoy into Africa to seal the deal. Given that SV has lots of fleets behind, it is likely that they can form a line across Africa that will be difficult or impossible for Nigs to cross. That must be the SV plan at this point. Could they also cut out Arabia? Yes, but then France would be inching ever closer to the solo count and I think they've all had enough. That's the way I see it. I can't see how SV then stabs China.

Neither can I.

I certainly don't see SV stabbing China. The danger would be getting impatient and attacking Arabia again.

I don't like the decision to take SCs from Axum. They really don't want French fleets in the Red Sea area. But if Axum actively decided to walk away from his West African SCs, they might have gotten tired of him. In any case, this does accelerate the endgame, and in theory it will put pressure on D and G to do something about France.

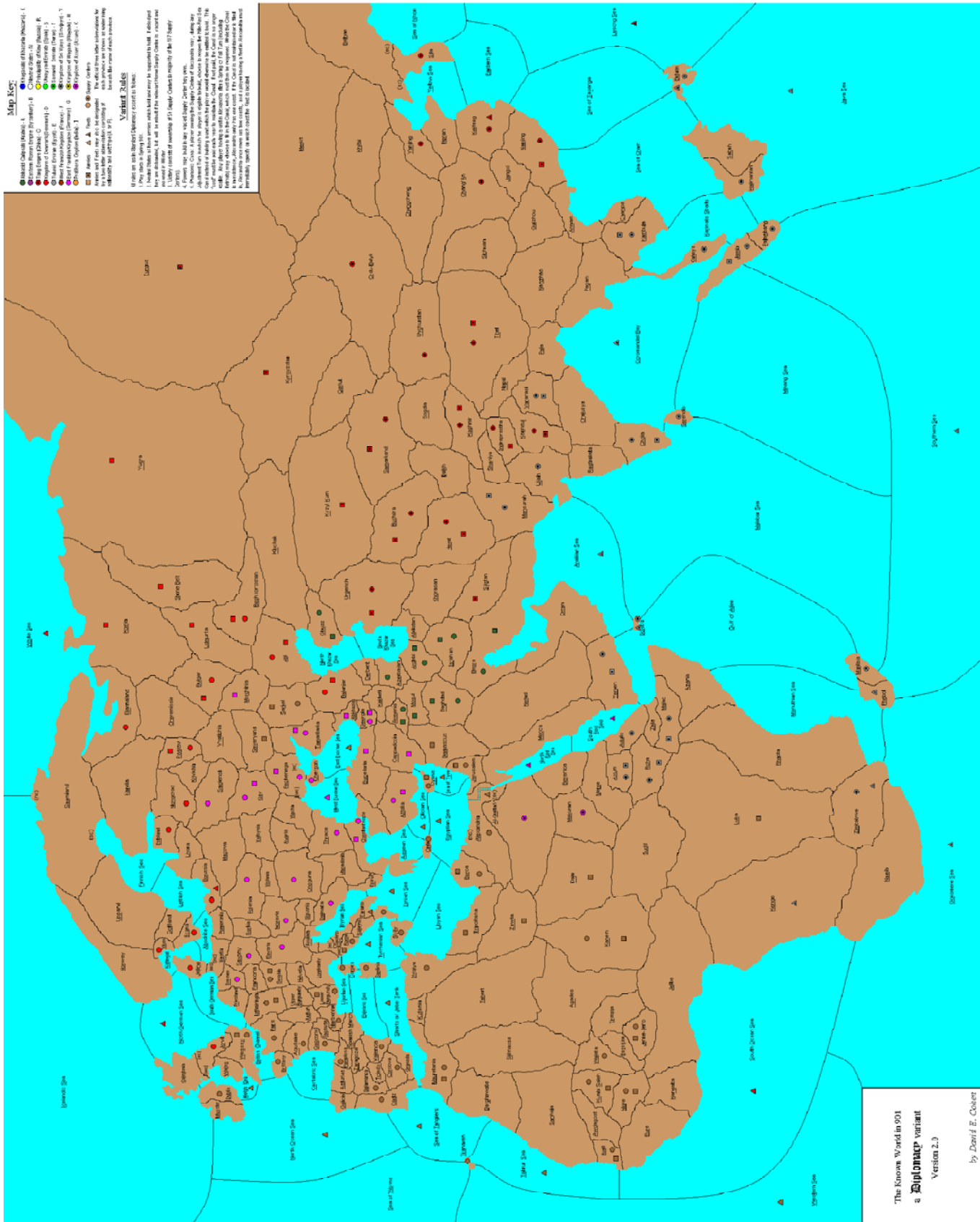
Not that they will.

Mikael must do as he is told, or he is out. I remain convinced that Nigs has likely guaranteed survival as long as this occurs.

Once he is no longer needed, I don't think that he will survive, do you?

He might. I like his odds better than Axum's..

917 Results



The Known World in 901
a **Diplomacy** variant
Version 2.0

by David E. Coherent

After Winter 917

Spring

DC229: *The Spring 917 season has been adjudicated. The game springs back to life! We will see how this momentous event plays out, but for now it looks like the Tang Dynasty has carried out a brilliant and truly unexpected stab of Srivijaya. The Chinese moved into Indraprastha, and look certain to take an additional Indian SC in fall. For the first time since 905, their Yellow Sea fleet has left its position, presumably en route to defenseless Butuan. Furthermore, Lynn took control of 3 Arabian SCs and could possibly take more in fall. This wealth of SC gains will surely be put to good use building a Tang armada.*

Orders were never received from Trout, so he has NMR'ed and all of Denmark's units held. This was not too consequential on the board though, aside from a failed convoy in Africa.

In Africa, the setup of stalemate lines continued, with Srivijaya and Axum working together to stop the West Frankish advance. It will be interesting to see what happens now that Srivijaya has far

more pressing concerns back home. In Asia, China advanced into abandoned Arabian territory, but perhaps Sultan Matt has a new lease on life with Chinese attention turned elsewhere.

And now some press before the adjudication:

Anonymous Press

[illegible]

Tried now will be the Son of Heaven,
The Great Wheel has begun to spin.
From mountain crest to sea's edge,
He will order all things to His own ends.

To be a Hand is to serve the People.
What is hidden below is revealed on high.
The Great Lord of Rum once crossed a river,
Did he have the New Moon laughing at his back?

Li Bo

[illegible]

Spring Adjudications

Arabian A Ardebil - Baghdad
Arabian A Armenia S A Baghdad -
Damascus
Arabian A Azerbaijan S A Kahketi
Arabian A Baghdad - Damascus
Arabian A Derbent S A Kahketi
Arabian A Ghuzz - Balanjar
Bounce
Arabian A Kahketi S A Ghuzz -
Balanjar *Cut*
Arabian A Mansurah - Basra
Arabian A Mosul S A Armenia
Arabian A Nefud S A Baghdad -
Damascus
Arabian F North Khazar Sea C A
Ghuzz - Balanjar

Axum A Agades - Kanem
 Bounce *Dislodged*
 Axum A Al-Qatta'i - Berenice
 Axum A Daju - Al-Qatta'i
 Axum A Roha - Sudd
 Axum A Sudd - Makuran
 Axum F Gulf of Aden C A Serendib
 - Azania
 Axum F Mecca - South Red Sea
 Axum F North Red Sea S A Daju -
 Al-Qatta'i *Cut*
 Axum F Rhapta H

Axum F Zimbabwe S F Gokomere
Sea - Namib *Cut*

Chinese A Balkh - Herat
Chinese A Kashmir - Indraprastha
Chinese A Kipchak - Kyzyl Kum
Chinese A Kyzyl Kum - Urgench
Chinese A Kyrgyzstan S A Kipchak
- Kyzyl Kum
Chinese A Samarkand - Bukhara
Chinese A Sogdia - Balkh
Chinese A Tibet - Nepal
Chinese A Tunguz S A
Kyrgyzstan
Chinese F Yellow Sea - Eastern
Sea

Danish A Atil H
Danish A Balanjar H
Danish A Bashkortostan H
Danish A Bulgar H
Danish A Komia H
Danish A Rostov H
Danish A Stone Belt H
Danish A Udmurtia H
Danish A Yugra H
Danish F Borussia H
Danish F North German Sea H
Danish F South Ocean Sea H

Danish F White Sea H

French A Awdagost - Niore
French A Barca S F Egyptian Sea
- Alexandria
French A Bure - Namib *Invalid*
French A Cyprus - Damascus
Bounce
French A Damascus - Mecca
French A Jerusalem S A
Damascus - Mecca
French A Kanem - Daju *Bounce*
French A Luba - Zimbabwe
Bounce
French A Sanhaja - Kumbi Saleh
French A Severyana H
French A Sijilmasa S A Tahert -
Agades
French A Sarkel H
French A Tahert - Agades
French A Tripolitania S F Egyptian
Sea - Alexandria
French A Walata - Tiraqqa
French A Zawila - Daju *Bounce*
French F Alexandria - North Red
Sea *Bounce*
French F Cilician Sea - Egyptian
Sea *Bounce*
French F East Euxine Sea H

French F Egyptian Sea - Alexandria *Bounce*
 French F Ionian Sea H
 French F North Ocean Sea H
 French F Straits of Jebel Tarik H
 French F Sea of Tangiers H
 French F Sea of Tyre C A Cyprus - Damascus
 French F Takrur Sea H
 French F Tyrrhenian Sea H
 French F Welsh Sea H
 French F Western Sea S F South Ocean Sea

German A Abkhazia S A Balanjar
 German A Bucellaria - Cappadocia *Bounce*
 German A Cappadocia - Kahketi *Bounce*
 German A Cherson - Pecheneg
 German A Epirus - Constantinople
 German A Georgia S A

Cappadocia - Kahketi
 German A Kiev H
 German A Mordvinia S A Atil
 German A Pecheneg - Tamantarka
 German A Thrace - Bucellaria *Bounce*
 German F West Euxine Sea C A Thrace - Bucellaria

Srivijayan A Adulis - Meroe
 Srivijayan A Malao - Luba *Bounce*
 Srivijayan A Palembang - Jambi
 Srivijayan A Rastrakuta - Ujjain
 Srivijayan A Serendib - Azania
 Srivijayan A Ujjain - Yemen
 Srivijayan F Arabian Sea C A Ujjain - Yemen
 Srivijayan F Chola H
 Srivijayan F Gokomere Sea - Namib

Srivijayan F Kangaba - Jeliba
 Srivijayan F Mahilaka S F Minang Sea - Southern Sea
 Srivijayan F Malabar Sea C A Serendib - Azania
 Srivijayan F Minang Sea - Southern Sea
 Srivijayan F Phebol S F Southern Sea - Gokomere Sea
 Srivijayan F Southern Sea - Gokomere Sea

Wagadu F Awlil H

Spring Retreat Possibilities

Axum A Agades can retreat to Walata or disband

Summer

Axum unit retreats OTB

Fall

DC229: The Fall 917 season has been adjudicated. First, Wagadu has been eliminated. Thanks to Mikael for his participation, and the elimination is a harsh outcome for a well-played game.

The stunning stab of spring has been followed up with equally shocking developments in fall. Axum ceded as many of his SCs as possible to Srivijaya, with the result that Srivijaya has

gained 4 SCs overall despite losing Indraprastha and Kannauj to the Tang Dynasty. This will help Srivijaya immensely in their defense against the Chinese armada.

Meanwhile, Nigel edged closer to victory with another 4 SCs (gained from Axum), bringing Nigel to 35 of the 54 needed SCs.

Also, please note the creative West Frankish orders for his holding units!

Fall Adjudications

Arabian A Armenia S A Kahketi
 Arabian A Azerbaijan - Ardebil
 Arabian A Baghdad - Isfahan
 Arabian A Basra S A Ujjain - Mansurah
 Arabian A Damascus - Mecca *Bounce* *Dislodged*
 Arabian A Derbent S A Kahketi
 Arabian A Ghuzz - Urgench *Bounce*
 Arabian A Kahketi H
 Arabian A Mosul - Damascus *Bounce*
 Arabian A Nefud S A Damascus - Mecca
 Arabian F North Khazar Sea S A Ghuzz - Urgench

Axum A Al-Qatta'i H
 Axum A Berenice S A Al-Qatta'i

Axum A Makuran - Daju *Bounce*
 Axum A Sudd S A Malao - Roha
 Axum F Gulf of Aden - South Red Sea
 Axum F North Red Sea S F South Red Sea - Mecca
 Axum F Rhapta S F Namib - Zimbabwe
 Axum F South Red Sea - Mecca
 Axum F Zimbabwe - Menuthian Sea

Chinese A Balkh - Herat
 Chinese A Bukhara S A Urgench
 Chinese A Herat - Sijistan
 Chinese A Indraprastha S A Nepal - Kannauj
 Chinese A Kyzyl Kum S A Urgench
 Chinese A Kyrgyzstan S A Kyzyl Kum

Chinese A Nepal - Kannauj
 Chinese A Tunguz S A Kyrgyzstan
 Chinese A Urgench H
 Chinese F Eastern Sea - Lusong Sea

Danish A Atil - Balanjar *Bounce*
 Danish A Balanjar - Kahketi *Bounce*
 Danish A Bashkortostan S A Udmurtia - Atil
 Danish A Bulgar - Udmurtia *Bounce*
 Danish A Komia S A Yugra
 Danish A Rostov H
 Danish A Stone Belt S A Bashkortostan
 Danish A Udmurtia - Atil *Bounce*
 Danish A Yugra S A Bashkortostan

Danish F Borussia H
 Danish F North German Sea H
 Danish F South Ocean Sea H
 Danish F White Sea S A Yugra

French A Agades - Kanem
 French A Barca S F Alexandria
 French A Bure - Awlil
 French A Cyprus chills out
 French A Jerusalem S A Mecca - Damascus
 French A Kanem - Daju
 French A Kumbi Saleh H
 French A Luba H
 French A Mecca - Damascus
 French A Niore H
 French A Severyana H
 French A Sijilmasa - Mauretania
 French A Sarkel H
 French A Tiraqqa - Jenne-Jeno
 French A Tripolitania - Zawila
 Bounce
 French A Zawila S A Kanem - Daju
 French F Alexandria H
 French F Cilician Sea goes on a holiday cruise
 French F East Euxine Sea is in a dead end
 French F Egyptian Sea looks carefully for atlantis
 French F Ionian Sea fishes
 French F North Ocean Sea

catches sardines
 French F Straits of Jebel Tarik
 wonders what to do
 French F Sea of Tangiers is a bit lost
 French F Sea of Tyre S A Mecca - Damascus
 French F Takrur Sea S A Bure - Awlil
 French F Tyrrhenian Sea H
 French F Welsh Sea H
 French F Western Sea S F South Ocean Sea

German A Abkhazia S A Georgia
 German A Bucellaria S A Cappadocia
 German A Cappadocia S A Cyprus - Damascus *Void*
 German A Constantinople - Attalia
 German A Georgia S A Cappadocia
 German A Kiev S A Pechenegs
 German A Mordvinia S A Atil
 German A Pechenegs S A Tamantarka
 German A Tamantarka S A Balanjar
 German A Thrace - Constantinople
 German F West Euxine Sea H

Srivijayan A Azania - Malao

Srivijayan A Jambi H
 Srivijayan A Malao - Roha
 Srivijayan A Meroe - Axum
 Srivijayan A Ujjain - Mansurah
 Srivijayan A Yemen S F South Red Sea - Mecca
 Srivijayan F Arabian Sea S A Ujjain - Mansurah
 Srivijayan F Chola - Coromandel Bay
 Srivijayan F Gokomere Sea S F Namib - Zimbabwe
 Srivijayan F Jeliba - Kongo
 Srivijayan F Mahilaka - Southern Sea
 Srivijayan F Malabar Sea - Socotra
 Srivijayan F Namib - Zimbabwe
 Srivijayan F Phebol S F Gokomere Sea
 Srivijayan F Southern Sea - Java Sea

Wagadu F Awlil S F South Ocean Sea *Cut* *Dislodged*

Fall Retreat

Arabian A Damascus retreats to Baghdad
 Wagadu F Awlil retreats OTB (eliminated)

Position Power Abb 916 917 Change SCs changing possession
 1 West Frankish Kingdom (France) F 31 35 +4 +Awl, +JeJ, +KuS, +Nio
 2 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya V 15 19 +4 +Axu, -Ind, -Knj, +Man, +Roh, +Soc, +Yem, +Zim
 3 East Frankish Kingdom (German) G 16 16 0
 4 Tang Empire (China) C 10 15 +5 +Buk, +Her, +Ind, +Knj, +Urg
 5 Kingdom of Denmark D 13 13 0
 6 Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) A 11 7 -4 -Buk, -Her, -Man, -Urg
 7 Kingdom of Axum X 10 2 -8 -Axu, -JeJ, -KuS, -Nio, -Roh, -Soc, -Yem, -Zim
 8 Kingdom of Wagadu W 1 0 -1 -Awl

Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) disbands 4 units
 Tang Empire (China) builds 5 units, can build in ChA, Kai, Kas, Nan, OrB, Sam, Sil, Tib, Uyg, Yan
 Kingdom of Denmark makes no adjustments
 West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 6 units, can build in Aqt, Bri, Cad, Cor, Cre, Crs, Dub, Gas, Ifr, LBU, Lot, Nar, Pam, Par, Rom (ec), Rom, Rom (wc), Sal, Sar, Scl, Swa, Tar, Tka, Val, Wal, Wsx
 East Frankish Kingdom (German) builds 5 units, can build in Bav, Bre, Dal, Mor, Ono, Pec, Pec (ec), Pec (wc), Pol, Sax, Smo, Thr, Chs
 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya builds 4 units, can build in Adu, But, Cah, Cho, Kal, Kam, Mah, Plm, Ser, Ujj, Var
 Kingdom of Axum disbands 7 units

Winter

For the third season in a row, we have a huge game development, with Nigel deciding it is time

to whittle down the membership in his alliance. Numerous army builds in Europe point to a stab

is likely to make the leader win. For some game years now, we have been parading forward knowing that at some point either Nigs would win or Nigs would get close enough to winning to have every remaining power on the board trying to stop him. Continuing on the merry way that we were before this game year, that was all heading toward taking a very long time. The events in this season, particularly the stab by Lynn, set in motion the events to hasten that. I honestly was somewhat surprised by this, at this time. Maybe Lynn was worried that he was falling behind Mike in the number of centers, as simple as that, it could have been a falling out over tactics moving forward, it could have been some petty frustration building throughout the whole game, Whatever it was, it was some sort of greed going on among the non-leading powers. Let's now go to the tape and the outcomes.

I love McZet's quote; it makes good human sense, for Dip and outside of Dip. But I don't really think that it applies to this case -- at least not to China. I understand that Lynn may have felt put out that his game-long ally SV was growing while China was forced to stagnate, but that hardly counts as "miserly treatment", and probably could be treated by normal diplomatic channels.

It is really hard to understand the Chinese reaction, unless China had some basic, inexplicable opposition to Arabia taking part in the draw -- which may in fact have been the case.

However, the quote could apply aptly to Arabia's reaction to the Chinese stab -- more on that below. But since it was submitted before the winter adjustments became public, I don't think that it had anything to do with that. It was more probably some sort of justification for B's own actions.

I'll let the authors of the press explain their thoughts if they want. But this is a classic "bad stab" by China. It might get him the title of "Biggest Loser" when France wins. (I've toyed with the idea of awarding a prize at a Diplomacy convention to the player who loses to a solo with the greatest number of SCs. The title "Biggest Loser" seems fitting to me.)

Through this season, Matt continues his valiant tactical defense still seemingly void of Diplomacy. This is an ultimate loser for him, though there is some hope with the upheavals on the board that his seven remaining centers may be allowed to be unharmed for a while. It would be interesting since Arabia IS in the middle of the board for Arabia actually to start negotiating with someone now. Who might it be? Well, the removals have Arabia hunkering down, giving up on Ghuzz for lost, and setting up to try to hold a central group of centers from Azerbaijan to Basra. Will this work? Not likely. Why not keep Nefud and at least try to join an attack on Jerusalem (closest French owned center)? I

don't know, Arabia may survive until the end of the game, but he doesn't seem to be engaged in it.

Arabia had apparently agreed all this year to leave his centers open to China and SV, and to make a stand against France. That is diplomacy, excellent diplomacy in fact. Probably SV initiated this turn-around, but Arabia seems to have been an active partner there.

Once he was rewarded by China walking into his open centers and therefore facing a probable elimination, why continue to fight France? As much as I was surprised and disappointed in his not moving into the Med much earlier, as we all have mentioned, I can hardly consider it surprising that he reacts to China's stab in this way.

Arabia lost this a long time ago, it seems. I was impressed when he seemed on board with SV and China to set up a line to stop the Westies. Indeed, that had such a line manned and ready. And then China undermined it - out of boredom?

I like B., I like the way B. plays. I like what he chose to do here. Throughout this game, as best we can tell, as France advanced it has been Axum that has TRIED to play stop-the-leader. Without seeing the diplomacy, it seems that it must have been B. who has been trying to change the dynamic. Now it has changed. And to some degree, it might have been B. badgering people that led Lynn to decide to go after Sri Vijaya. In any case, once it happened, B. decided to throw his centers to Mike. It is a move like I have done in the past. It was a bit shocking, it attempts to see if it can hasten the reckoning for moves that have been made. It allows Mike to defend against Lynn AND continue to oppose France in Africa. And B. was doomed anyway. I like the choice better than Matt's choices for Arabia. At least it adds fun and interest to the game. What WILL happen next?? Well, in the REALLY cool final blow, what does Axum keep? The two fleets to try to hold the Canal from French incursion. And what does Nigs do? He closes the canal. Boom! Axum will go out, but better to go out than to support a collapse that was happening anyway.

There was much to criticize in some of B's earlier switches, but here he does go out in beauty.

I don't like the way B plays, but this serves as a fitting coda to the game. Both of his SCs will fall in Spring of the next year, and there's nothing he can do about it.

And Sri Vijaya gets the builds he needs to oppose China without stopping the attack on France in Africa. What will others do about this??

France will get some more in Africa, but not quickly, instead.... well, the French builds will tell the story.

France will probably get the two remaining Axum centers...

..make that definitely...

...but SV can probably hold the rest of Africa.

If China were to leave him alone, SV could hold the Horn and the home peninsula of Axum. But it could get dicey. With China in hammerhead mode, it doesn't really matter.

So SV built where he is threatened, back home and in India. Nothing surprising here, that's the logical reaction to a stab. But it means that we are back to a game where each power is concerned with his own back yard, without any regard to the world situation. That leaves a highway open to France.

China takes Ghuzz for sure, can possibly make some progress against Sri Vijaya, but otherwise, not much happens from the big stab. Lynn has no influence on what happens against France, except for focusing on attacking those who are not France.

Right, Lynn is apparently uninterested in beating the solo, unless he has the predominant role in doing so -- something which never seemed to interest him before. Perhaps stopping the solo didn't offer him any special advantage, but he gained peanuts in jamming the effort. In fact, if SV and Arabia work together, they can take some centers from China.

Yeah, um, so what. His result is a loss. This is the kind of play that has really soured me on Diplomacy.

I'm sure we'll hear some rationalizations about how he took a course of action that would guarantee a loss, when another course would give him part of a draw.

OK, so the soft-underbelly of Germany finally takes it on the chin. 6 centers of these have long been easy pickings whenever France decided they were worth attacking. Similarly, Jorvik also is easily taken from Denmark. That makes seven centers easily and likely more like 10 eventually (even this game year) and this puts France to the edge of clear solo victory. So, does everyone put down their arms (especially Lynn) and see whether they jointly can stop France? Well, builds tell a different story, don't they? Germany and Denmark had no builds to state a preference, but everyone else (with the exception of B. perhaps who made a clear decision to block something that Nigs is now not going to bother attacking) made their selfish choices. And thus the path is clear to the French solo. This is not really new news, but with the breakdown of the alliance it now is a tactical exercise along with the diplomatic question of which of the other powers will help each other to stop him.

Yep, now that the French advance seems largely halted in Africa, France has finally decided to take the easy pickings from his allies that were open for so long. The gloves are off as far as Germany is concerned. The question is now, will any others work to help Germany and to stop France?

It doesn't really matter. France has 35 SCs. By my count, he needs 54 to win, right? Needs 19 more.

2 in Africa, 7 German in central Europe, Jorvik, 3 in Scandinavia, and Borussia make 13 that are easily taken. Thrace, Con, and Attalia cannot be held against the French position, which leaves a need of only 3 more. France will eventually be able to push more fleets into the Black Sea, which will result in the loss of Cherson. Without Cherson, Pech cannot be held. And that leaves Kiev or Esteland or Bjarmaland as the last SC needed. And that is based on the assumption that SV holds East Africa, which is far from a sure thing.

Denmark has only 3 Northern fleets. That's nowhere near enough to put up a fight. Germany is utterly out of position. France has so many targets in central Europe that it's not a question of which SCs he can take, but of which he should ignore for the time being while pushing forward as quickly as possible.

No, France is going to win this thing.

A few words about the fates here. It is unclear how much German tactical skill there is, others should try to help him if Nigs really has been writing many of the German orders for some time. What would I do with the armies and fleet in central Asia? Ultimately, you want to form a line somewhere that stops France. The starting point for that is cleaning up here. France does have the East Euxine fleet that is a problem. But Severyana and Sarkel COULD be annihilated as soon as this Spring with some creative orders and proper attention to that fleet. I would try to do this. Others might disagree. And then I would NOT try to defend the heartland of Germany at all, but try to build the line in Asia Minor. Once Severyana and Sarkel are gone, THEN you come back west and see where the line is.

I agree entirely that any line has to be drawn in central Asia -- although Denmark does have a couple of fleets (North German Sea, White Sea) that could protect his own centers and threaten some of the French centers, in the interim.

The lines in Asia describe at best a minority stalemate line. France doesn't have to cross the Urals. He doesn't even have to push into Arabia. He can win by mopping up the European SCs and taking just a small number in Africa.

Denmark's southern fleet is caught on the "other side", but I would cede this to Sri Vijaya right now and see

what can be done this year about the line in Africa.

Nothing. Right now there is a grand total of three non-French armies in Africa.

France is ONE fleet short here and that switch could be decisive in moving the line up the Atlantic coast a bit.

Nope. France only needs two fleets to hold this line, presuming he keeps an army in Awlil. F TaS S F WeS is an unbreakable line. Western Sea can only be attacked from two provinces controlled by SV. It doesn't matter that he's got more fleets clogging up the rear.

As I've been saying for quite some time, the war for Africa is fought inland. SV never bothered to show up for that war.

I do not think Nigs will seek battle here, just defense, but I would attack aggressively and see if something can be done. The likely outcome is no centers changing hands though.



In the north, I would support to Icelandic Sea and give up Jorvik. Here a balance between bringing units back and cementing the line for Germany is what needs to be done. I think keeping Nigs out of Icelandic Sea is more important than convoying, but we'll see what Denmark does.

It will be interesting to see whether Denmark decides to work with Germany in a joint defense, and tries to get Arabia and SV into the equation.

If they don't, they'll just lose faster.

Denmark can try for Icelandic Sea, but unless he's got a way to build a LOT of fleets fast, it won't matter much. He's going to lose Jorvik and with the collapse of Germany, we'll see a LOT of French fleet builds. He could build fleets in Dublin, Paris, Lothairingia, Brittany, and maybe Wessex, if that is desired. He's also got at least a couple fleets in the Med that could be swung

around.

If France plays optimally, he'll get a fleet in the Icelandic Sea by next Spring, and control over the Germanic Seas shortly thereafter. Can Denmark set up a line at Norway/Kattegat/Jelling? Maybe, but I don't think it would be enough.

Of course, a lot of my thinking here is "What would I do to stop France?" I don't think we've seen anything from Denmark or Germany that would approach the level of tactics that Nigs has shown.

About five different things would have to happen for this not to be a French solo in a small number of years, and I suspect that not one of the five will happen.

1) Denmark would need to be given a LOT of SCs to build a lot of fleets, IMMEDIATELY;

2) Axum would need to get a few more armies to Africa, IMMEDIATELY;

3) Germany would need to fight tooth and nail in Europe, walking away from all of his SCs just to stop France, even he'd probably die in the process;

4) Arabia would need to coordinate with SV, Germany, and Denmark to make sure the center holds and, above all...

5) China would need to stop moving all of his forces, while ceding lands to Denmark to let him build 5 or 6 fleets.

Well, maybe one of the five would happen. But the most important are 1) and 5) and I bet neither happens. It's not like the tactical situation in 918 will be so much different than it was in 917. If Lynn couldn't see that his moves in 917 would guarantee a loss, I doubt that he'd change his mind in 918.

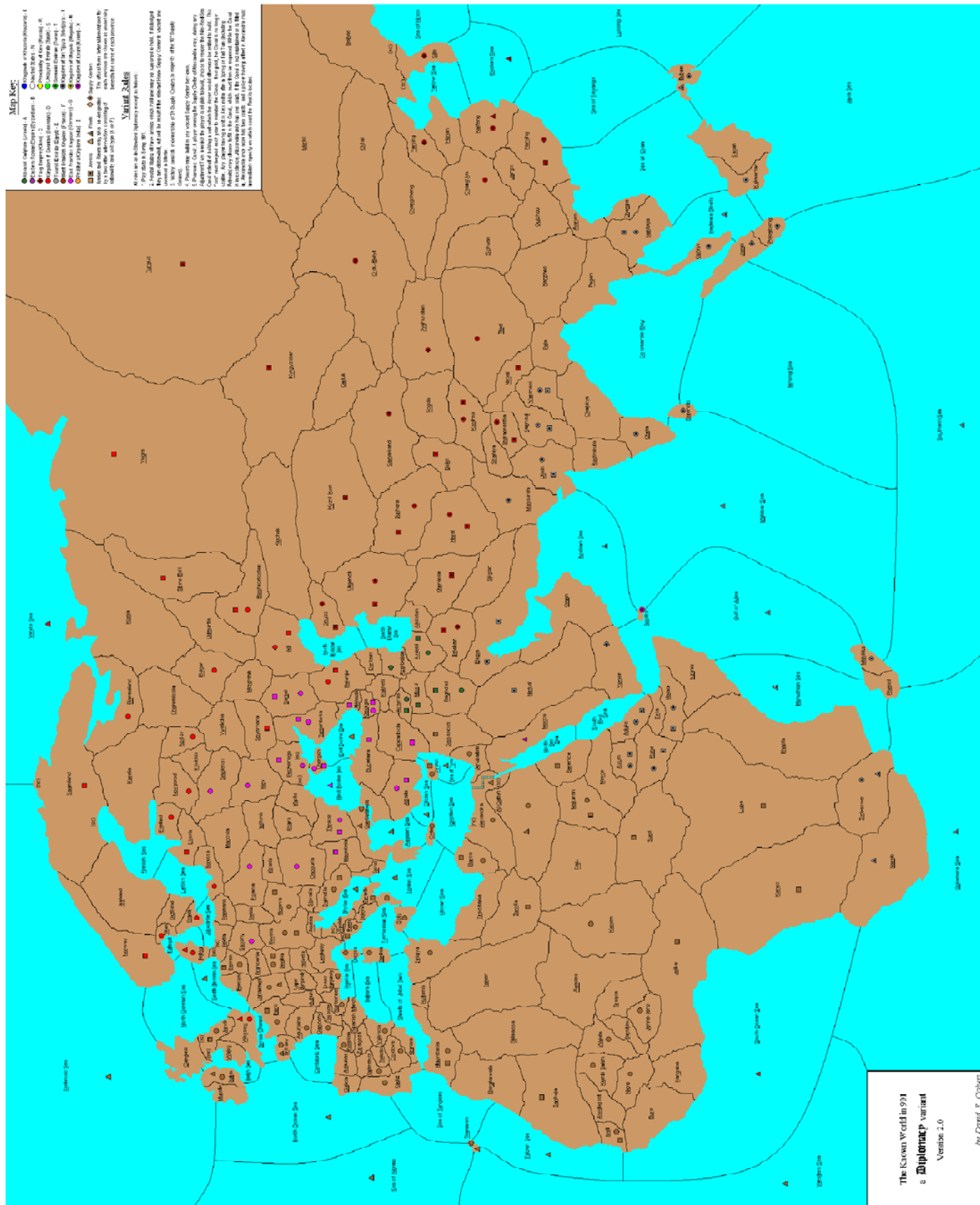
In sum, Nigs should be able to solo in two game years, but I do not think it is a forced solo, he can be stopped, but will he?

Certainly not if things continue the way they did this past game-year!

I don't know if it's a "forced solo". After all, France needs to grow by more than 50% from his current position. But the first 9 or 10 SCs are low-hanging fruit, so to speak. And he's taken the vital step of allying with players who aren't good enough to be able to stop him when he decides to go for the win.

Not that I think we'll see a real effort to do so. If we're lucky, France will take 10 or 12 SCs and the solo will be conceded.

918 Results



The Known World in 991
a **Diplomacy** variant
Version 2.0

by David E. Cohen

Spring

DC229: *The Spring 918 season has been adjudicated. The West Franks are off to a flying start on their push for the solo, with 4 SCs occupied, and more to follow in the Fall. Two of those supply centers were the last two Axumite centers, likely spelling the end for BH, unless one of his fleets can find a home in fall. The dynamic in Russia is changed greatly, with the remaining French units surrounded by Danish/German units, while other D/G armies pour west to meet the West Frankish armies. Despite the relatively friendly builds last winter, tension appeared to continue between the Tang Dynasty and Srivijaya.*

Before the adjudication, we have some press.

Press (West Frankish)

[illegible]

The saga of butterfree and barney

vast

areas of land have become depopulated - the explanation seems to be that the terrible Barney the purple lizard and Butterfree the death moth have eaten the neighbouring armies and fleets. Brave west frankish warriors have set out to claim these empty lands - it is clearly manifest destiny.

[illegible]

Spring Adjudications

Arabian A Ardebil - Alidistan
Arabian A Armenia - Damascus
Arabian A Baghdad S A Armenia -
Damascus
Arabian A Basra S A Mansurah
Cut *Dislodged*
Arabian A Ghuzz - Urgench
Bounce *Dislodged*
Arabian A Isfahan S A Ardebil -
Alidistan
Arabian A Mosul S A Armenia -
Damascus

Axum F North Red Sea - Mecca
Axum F South Red Sea - Gulf of
Aden

Chinese A Bukhara - Urgench
Chinese A Herat - Khorasan
Chinese A Indraprastha - Nepal
Bounce
Chinese A Kashmir - Balkh
Chinese A Kannuaj - Nepal
Bounce
Chinese A Kyzyl Kum S A Urgench
- Ghuzz
Chinese A Kyrgyzstan S A Kyzyl
Kum
Chinese A Nanjing - Annam
Bounce
Chinese A Samarkand - Bukhara
Chinese A Sijistan S A Mansurah -
Basra
Chinese A Tibet - Kashmir
Chinese A Tunguz S A
Kyrgyzstan
Chinese A Urgench - Ghuzz
Chinese F Kaifeng H

Chinese F Lusong Sea - Eastern Sea

Danish A Atil S A Balanjar - Sarkel
Danish A Balanjar - Sarkel
Bounce
Danish A Bashkortostan S A
Yugra
Danish A Bulgar - Vyatichia
Danish A Komia - Saamiland
Danish A Rostov - Novgorod
Danish A Stone Belt S A Yugra
Danish A Udmurtia - Komia
Danish A Yugra S A
Bashkortostan
Danish F Borussia - Abodrite Sea
Danish F North German Sea -
Icelandic Sea *Bounce*
Danish F South Ocean Sea -
Takrur Sea *Bounce*
Danish F White Sea C A Komia -
Saamiland

French A Awlii H
French A Barca H
French A Cyprus H
French A Daju - Makuran
French A Damascus - Cappadocia
Bounce *Dislodged*
French A Jenne-Jeno - Jeliba
French A Jerusalem H
French A Kanem - Sudd
French A Kumbi Saleh - Sanhaja
French A Lower Burgundy -
Helvetia
French A Lotharingia - Franconia
French A Luba S A Kanem - Sudd
Cut

French A Mauretania H
 French A Niore - Kangaba
 French A Rome - Aquileia
 French A Severyana - Kiev
 Bounce *Dislodged* *Disbanded*
 French A Sarkel - Tamantarka
 Bounce
 French A Swabia - Bavaria
 French A Tripolitania - Zawila
 French A Wessex - Jorvik
 French A Zawila - Al-Qatta'i
 French F Alexandria (sc) S A
 Zawila - Al-Qatta'i
 French F Cilician Sea - Aegean
 Sea
 French F East Euxine Sea - West
 Euxine Sea *Bounce*
 French F Egyptian Sea - Cilician
 Sea
 French F Ionian Sea - Epirus
 French F North Ocean Sea -
 Icelandic Sea *Bounce*
 French F Straits of Jebel Tarik -
 Sea of Tangiers
 French F Sea of Tangiers - Sea of
 Worms
 French F Sea of Tyre S A
 Damascus - Cappadocia
 French F Taranto - Illyrian Sea
 French F Takrur Sea S F Western
 Sea *Cut*
 French F Tyrrhenian Sea - Ionian
 Sea
 French F Welsh Sea - Wessex
 French F Western Sea H

 German A Abkhazia - Tamantarka
 Bounce

Srivijayan A Axum H
Srivijayan A Chola - Rastrakuta
Srivijayan A Jambi - Chalukya
Srivijayan A Kambuja - Annam

DC229: Sorry for the late adjudication, but it's a Friday night adjudication. Nigel has reached 41 SCs, with only 13 to go until a solo victory. The Danes and East Franks combined have 25 SCs, plus there are the 6 Srivijayan SCs in Africa and Arabian SCs in the Middle East, so 54 is certainly a reachable number. We'll see if Nigel can make these 9 (!) builds count. Axum managed to survive another year, finding a safe harbour in Socotra. In East Asia, there looks to be Chinese-Srivijayan peace, with both players focused west. Finally, I should note that no orders were received from Matt Kremer (Arabia), and so his units all held, consistent with an NMR.

Srivijayan F Socotra - Malabar
Sea
Srivijayan F Southern Sea - Java
Sea
Srivijayan F Zimbabwe S F Phebol
- Gokomere Sea

Arabian A Basra can retreat to
Nefud, Oman or disband
Arabian A Ghuzz can retreat to
Kipchak or disband
French A Damascus can retreat to
Nefud or disband
French A Severyana is destroyed
(no valid retreats)

Arabian A Basra to Nefud
Disband
Arabian A Ghuzz to Kipchak
West Frankish A Damascus to
Nefud *Disband*

Danish F South Ocean Sea Bangs
Head Against Western Sea Wall
Danish F White Sea C A Komia -
Saamiland

French A Al-Qatta'i - Berenice
French A Aquileia - Dalmatia
French A Awlil H
French A Barca - Alexandria
Bounce
French A Bavaria - Moravia
French A Cyprus H
French A Franconia - Bremen
French A Helvetia - Bavaria
French A Jeliba - Kongo
French A Jerusalem - Damascus
French A Jorvik H
French A Kangaba - Jeliba
French A Luba - Roha *Bounce*
French A Makuran H
French A Mauretania H
French A Sanhaja H
French A Sarkel - Tamantarka
Bounce *Dislodged* *Disbanded*
French A Sudd S A Luba - Roha
French A Zawila - Alexandria
Bounce
French F Aegean Sea S F Epirus -
Constantinople
French F Alexandria (sc) - Al-
Qatta'i
French F Cilician Sea - Attalia
Bounce
French F East Euxine Sea - West
Euxine Sea *Bounce*
French F Epirus - Constantinople
French F Illyrian Sea S A Aquileia -
Dalmatia
French F Ionian Sea S F Epirus -
Constantinople
French F North Ocean Sea S F
German A Constantinople retreats to Thrace

Sea of Worms - Icelandic Sea
French F Sea of Tangiers - Sea of
Worms
French F Sea of Tyre S A
Jerusalem - Damascus
French F Sea of Worms - Icelandic
Sea
French F Takrur Sea S F Western
Sea
French F Wessex - South German
Sea
French F Western Sea H

German A Abkhazia S A
Tamantarka
German A Attalia S A
Constantinople *Cut*
German A Cappadocia S A Attalia
German A Constantinople S A
Attalia *Cut* *Dislodged*
German A Georgia S A
Cappadocia
German A Macedonia S A
Constantinople
German A Mordvinia - Sarkel
German A Pechenega - Cherson
German A Severyana -
Pechenega
German A Tamantarka S A
Mordvinia - Sarkel
German F West Euxine Sea S A
Constantinople *Cut*

Srivijayan A Axum S A Roha
Srivijayan A Basra S A Sijistan -
Isfahan
Srivijayan A Chalukya - Kannuaj
Srivijayan A Kambuja H
Srivijayan A Malao H
Srivijayan A Rastrakuta - Ujjain
Srivijayan A Roha H

Srivijayan A Varanasi S A
Chalukya - Kannuaj
Srivijayan A Yemen - Nefud
Srivijayan F Arabian Sea S A
Basra
Srivijayan F Butuan H
Srivijayan F Coromandel Bay -
Malabar Sea
Srivijayan F Gokomere Sea -
Zimbabwe
Srivijayan F Java Sea - Southern
Sea
Srivijayan F Malabar Sea - Gulf of
Aden
Srivijayan F Namib S F Gokomere
Sea - Zimbabwe
Srivijayan F Sea of Cham -
Karimata Straits
Srivijayan F Southern Sea -
Gokomere Sea
Srivijayan F Zimbabwe -
Menuthian Sea

Fall Retreat Possibilities

Arabian A Damascus can retreat to
Armenia or disband
Arabian A Isfahan can retreat to
Ardebil or disband
French A Sarkel is destroyed (no
valid retreats)
German A Constantinople can
retreat to Bucellaria, Thrace or
disband

Fall Retreat Adjudications

Arabian A Damascus retreats to
Armenia
Arabian A Isfahan retreats to
Ardebil

Adjustments

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) disbands 2 units
Tang Empire (China) builds 1 unit, can build in Buk, ChA, OrB, Sam, Sil, Tib, Uyg, Yan
Kingdom of Denmark makes no adjustments
West Frankish Kingdom (France) builds 9 units, can build in Ale, Ale (nc), Ale (sc), Aqt, Bri, Cad, Cor, Cre, Crs, Dub, Gas,
Ifr, JeJ, Jer, Jor (ec), Jor, Jor (wc), Kan, KuS, LBU, Lot, Nar, Nio, Pam, Par, Rom (ec), Rom, Rom (wc), Sal, Sar, Scl, Swa,
Tar, Tka, Val, Wal
East Frankish Kingdom (German) builds 1 unit, can build in Kie, Ono, Pec, Pec (ec), Pec (wc), Pol, Sax, Smo
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya builds 1 unit, can build in Adu, Cah, Cho, Jam, Kal, Mah, Man, Plm, Ser, Yem
Kingdom of Axum disbands 1 unit

Position Power Abb 917 918 Change SCs changing possession

1 West Frankish Kingdom (France) F 35 41 +6 +AQa, +Bav, +Bre, +Con, +Dal, +Jor, +Mak, +Mor, -Srk, -Wsx
2 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya V 19 20 +1 +Bsr, +Knj, -Soc
3 Tang Empire (China) C 15 16 +1 +Ghu, +Isf, -Knj
4 Kingdom of Denmark D 13 13 0 -Jor, +Wsx
5 East Frankish Kingdom (German) G 16 12 -4 -Bav, -Bre, -Con, -Dal, -Mor, +Srk

6 Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) A 7 4 -3 -Bsr, -Ghu, -Isf
7 Kingdom of Axum X 2 1 -1 -AQa, -Mak, +Soc

Winter

DC229: First, sorry about any confusion with that e-mail that I sent earlier today. I was sending it from my phone, and my main concern was being able to use "reply all", and I selected the wrong e-mail to respond to, such that there was info about Winter 916. However, the e-mail itself was accurate: the retreat map was missing the retreated units, and the East Frankish unit retreated to Bucellaria (and not Thrace).

For this adjudication, I did not receive orders from Arabia, and so his units were disbanded according to the house rules. And now here is the Winter 916 adjudication, with the updated map (Nigel's builds listed as ordered, and then more formally):

Adjudication

Stormtrooper A Paris
Death Star F LotharingiaFrench
A Sarkel - strike me down and I will come back stronger than ever, is
mourned for its sacrifice across the Empire, and rebuilds itself in
Swabia (A Swabia) vowing to return to the steppes.
Imperial droid A Rome
Imperial F Brittany (armed with many spears)
Trade Federation/Mafia A Taranto
F Tatooine/Alexandria sc
F Tkarenen (their yellow, but usefully located)
F Alec Guinness/Dublin

Adjustment Adjudications

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia)
Disbands A Ali
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia)
Disbands A Kip

East Frankish Kingdom (German)
Builds A Thr

Kingdom of Axum Disbands F Soc

Kingdom of Sri Vijaya Builds A Adu

Tang Empire (China) Builds A Buk

West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds A Lot
West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds A Par
West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds A Rom
West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds A Swa

West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds A Tar
West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds F Ale (sc)
West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds F Bri
West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds F Dub
West Frankish Kingdom (France)
Builds F Tka

Standings

West Frankish Kingdom (France) 41
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya 20
Tang Empire (China) 16
Kingdom of Denmark 13
East Frankish Kingdom (German) 12
Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) 4
Kingdom of Axum 1

918 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

So, this is purely a tactical race now.

I disagree; first there has to be diplomatic recognition and agreement on the part of the entire board that France has to be stopped, and then creative discussion as to how to go about it. That didn't happen and doesn't seem about to change.

Whenever this happens I am reminded of the immortal words of the hard drinking Dale Bakken (his subszine was called "Bottoms Up!") in a game I was playing with him back in the early 1990's. Dale was playing Russia, and he had 12 or 13 centers, and he made a series of moves stabbing out for the solo. Suddenly all the

players who were squabbling and fighting with each other joined up to stop him and this became clear that he couldn't win he said: "You mean I didn't win?" No, you didn't win, Dale. Ah, those glorious hard drinking, hard playing MadCons (Madison, Wisconsin) in the 1980's....

Anyway, there are two primary considerations when you abandon all of your allies and blatantly go for the solo. First is the tactical situation, where are your soloing centers, and how can you get to them. The basic strategy is to focus your forces on the hardest ones to get first, since ones that are easier to get or behind your lines can easily be picked up later. Your opponents have to identify those targets and mass their forces to oppose you. This set of issues is pretty obvious and relatively easy to calculate. Second, of course, is the diplomatic situation. Nigs jumped as the "opponents were squabbling". The question is, can they set up to stop you? This splits into two considerations as well, what are their tactical skills relative to yours? Nigs is unparalleled in his tactical skills, but so are the opponents (especially as a group, you gain a lot by having people to bounce your ideas off of, and suddenly you lose that when you stab everyone). And second, can they stop squabbling and assemble to oppose you? My assessment going into this is that if they really do get together tactically, strategically, and diplomatically, they can stop Nigs. Will they? Let's see, by area.

If they were to get together and stop France, they all had to do it together from the spring of this year. They didn't; the board was a disaster of selfishness from those far away from the danger, mix-ups between Germany and Denmark and excessive timidity on the part of Denmark. There was obviously no general board discussion about how best to stop France, only limited discussions between longtime allies (Denmark/Germany, China/SV).

Denmark and Germany did both work to stop France, but individualistically instead of the idea of regrouping for a common cause. They each tried for Sarkel in the spring, then got together with the idea that Germany should take it in the fall. Since by tacit or active agreement, Denmark stayed carefully out of the German centers, which rendered many of his armies useless.

Rick has said that Denmark should be given the wherewithal to build fleets. Abstractly, that's a good idea, a mathematician's idea, in fact. However, on the board, Denmark would have to take centers from Germany and perhaps also from Arabia -- that is, from the other powers bordering France. He would also have to take Sarkel himself in the spring instead of Germany doing so, while Germany pushed the units he used for that towards his unprotected centers. If they were being perfectly rational and doing everything necessary to stop the

leader, there was probably some center-trading that they could have done, or even some German centers going to Denmark. Denmark could also have pushed his Balangar army southward to take Armenia or Azerbaijan from Arabia.

China and SV came to an agreement, deciding to take out Arabia together, ignoring the French situation entirely. One can just hear China explaining "It's someone else's problem. They're responsible for his growth; it's up to them to stop him."

Arabia had started out in the spring trying to be active; he took the strategic territory of Damascus from France and tried to support SV against China. But China and SV only saw him as a source of centers, although there was nothing useful that China could do with those centers and little that SV could do with his. Result : Arabia stopped bothering in the fall. Only Denmark, who really could have used the builds, didn't try to get something from Arabia's final fall.

Altogether, the most remarkable example of ignoring the problem that I've ever seen, on the part of everyone except France's ex-allies.

One minor exception : Axum and SV made an intelligent arrangement, whereby Axum took Soc from SV but disbanded that fleet, to keep a fleet in Mecca.

North Sea: Nigs managed to move forward into the South German Sea and start to surround Wessex, while building new fleets in Dublin, Brittany, and Lotharingia. F Lotharingia can support F South German Sea to hold, while the other fleets move up and take out Wessex. Wessex is dead and might be able to be annihilated, which will mean that Denmark doesn't have enough fleets on the south side of Scandinavia to stop Nigs. F Wessex to North German Sea with support of Jelling, while cutting Icelandic Sea support from White Sea might be Denmark's best Spring move, BUT Icelandic Sea-North German Sea, Loth S South German Sea, South German Sea support Icelandic Sea-North German Sea blocks that.... with the aforementioned fleets following up behind to take out Wessex in the Fall.

German Front: As I predicted last time (and this was the right thing to do), Denmark and Germany teamed up to take out French advance forces in Eastern Europe. The German home centers are toast, but there is a lot of space in Eastern Europe and time to try to set up a line. That will be the focus this game year.

Mediterranean: Here the NMR's by Arabia are telling. To stop Nigs, they need everyone, and they don't have Matt on board. This seems key, since with Matt helping, I think Nigs is stopped on this front.

Africa: Rick was right here last time and I was wrong, it was pretty simple for France to get an army in Awlil and then with the two fleets and that blocking unit, the Atlantic coast is pretty locked up. But similarly, Nigs can't break through into the Indian Ocean either. Could this front be locked up as well? Sri Vijaya has four armies in the Horn of Africa area and two fleets in South Africa. There are three SV armies in India, will China let SV convoy them into Rhapta and Azania? That seems to be a key question.

So, in sum, I see about half of the centers Nigs needs for a solo in easy pickings, the other half are more uncertain. And it COULD be that the south side of Scandinavia is the soft underbelly that determines it. Let's assess the other powers now.

Mike has to make up with Lynn here (some evidence in this game year suggests that has happened, and put at least two more armies into Africa. If he does that, is there a line there? I think there might be.

Lynn is in the classic "back of the line" area that he's been for awhile. When Germany and Denmark were on the French side, he had a front in the battle, but now, the key question is whether he sits back and allows the others to stop Nigs or not. We'll see. China needs to give Denmark two centers (or so), Ghuzz and Ordu-Balyk unfortunately may be the ones, so Denmark can build two fleets, or they need to annihilate some Denmark armies so they can be rebuilt. Some more effort could have been done along those lines last year, this year they are essential.

I think this is the key, an opportunity was missed by SOMEONE not giving Denmark a build (not at the expense of Germany, so probably at Chinese expense??) so he could build a fleet Viken. This game year, that MUST happen, or I think this is the seed of the collapse that will bring Nigs victory.

Building the army in Thrace was right, I think. It isn't clear yet where the line is around here, but there are some tactical options for slowing Nigs down.

Hello, Matt. Wake up? China could occupy time and units by pushing forward into the Middle East, SV can take Baghdad. But it would be better to use the Arabian armies to support Germany in Asia Minor and ensure that Nigs advances no farther here.

B. is one of the best tacticians of the group. In my opinion, leaving his one unit in the game and having him

help to organize the defense as a relatively neutral party is a good diplomatic plan. Since Matt and B. haven't gotten along since Matt's stab, that may preclude bringing Matt back into the fold, but it may organize everyone else. I'm most worried about making sure Russ gets good tactical advice as there are LOTS of choices across Eastern Europe. As said, I go with the "let France have the centers we know he can have and focus on setting up the line that you can hold.

I don't see much use talking about the possibility of an alliance stopping France. For one thing, we've seen absolutely no evidence that the players in the West can work with the players in the East. And we continue to see dot-grabbing by lots of people. I guess there's no interest in trying to bring Arabia on board. The problem is that this wastes time that the other powers don't have.

Denmark wasted moves using the fleet in White Sea for a convoy. He should have, instead, pushed for the Icelandic Sea. He has conceded both the Icelandic Sea and the North German Sea in pursuit of...Wessex? Also, somehow instead of building a bunch of fleets, Denmark has arranged to build zero fleets.

There's no hope here.

The fleet in Wessex will be hunted down and sunk. I can see a mini-stalemate line that protects Scandinavia with only three fleets in White Sea, Kattegat, and Abodrite Sea. But I don't see Denmark moving to that position. Well, he does seem intent on moving armies back, and the armies will be able to offer some defense of the SCs other than Jelling.

Tactically, France is romping through the center. Germany has made basically zero effort to defend his European holdings. The most important tactical move is the capture of Constantinople by a fleet. France can now start supporting himself to take the Western Euxine Sea. Germany can oppose this by supporting the fleet down to Con, but we've seen nothing that indicates that Germany is up to the task. In any case, Germany will lose at least three more European SCs in the coming year, and the resultant disbands will kill his Black Sea position.

There is no doubt left in my mind that France will get his solo. It's just a matter of time and pushing the pieces. Even if Denmark could put up some fight in the North, the center is so weak that it won't matter. France will eventually get control of the Black Sea and eat up all of the dots in the Ukraine and Asia Minor. That's enough.

919 Results

Spring

DC229: The Spring 919 season has been adjudicated.
Nigel's race to 54 continues, adding Wessex, Polania,

and Attalia to his list of conquests. There is also a
Concession to France to vote on.

Spring Adjudications

Arabian A Ardebil H
Arabian A Armenia S A Baghdad -
Mosul
Arabian A Baghdad - Mosul
Arabian A Mosul - Azerbaijan

Axum F Mecca - South Red Sea

Chinese A Balkh H
Chinese A Bukhara - Herat
Chinese A Ghuzz H
Chinese A Herat - Sijistan
Chinese A Indraprastha S A Nepal
Chinese A Isfahan S A Basra -
Baghdad
Chinese A Kashmir S A
Indraprastha
Chinese A Khorasan S A Isfahan
Chinese A Kyzyl Kum S A Ghuzz
Chinese A Kyrgyzstan S A Kyzyl
Kum
Chinese A Nanjing H
Chinese A Nepal S A Indraprastha
Chinese A Tunguz S A
Kyrgyzstan
Chinese A Urgench - Alidistan
Chinese F Eastern Sea H
Chinese F Kaifeng H

Danish A Atil - Bashkortostan
Danish A Balanjar - Atil
Danish A Bashkortostan - Yugra
Danish A Livonia - Borussia
Danish A Norway S A Yugra -
Saamiland
Danish A Saamiland - Uppland
Danish A Severyana - Vyatichia
Danish A Stone Belt - Komia
Danish A Yugra - Saamiland
Danish F Jelling S F Wessex -
North German Sea
Danish F South Ocean Sea -
Western Sea *Bounce*
Danish F White Sea C A Yugra -
Saamiland
Danish F Wessex - North German
Sea *Bounce* *Dislodged*

French A Awlil - Awdagost
French A Barca - Alexandria

French A Bavaria - Moravia
French A Berenice - Meroe
Bounce
French A Bremen - Veletia
French A Cyprus H
French A Dalmatia - Macedonia
Bounce
French A Damascus - Cappadocia
French A Jeliba - Luba *Bounce*
French A Jorvik S F North Ocean
Sea - Wessex
French A Kongo - Zimbabwe
Bounce
French A Luba - Rhapta *Bounce*
French A Makuran S A Berenice -
Meroe
French A Mauretania H
French A Moravia - Polania
French A Paris H
French A Rome - Aquileia
French A Sanhaja H
French A Sudd S A Jeliba - Luba
French A Swabia - Saxony
French A Taranto - Epirus
French A Zawila S A Barca -
Alexandria
French F Aegean Sea S F
Constantinople - Attalia
French F Als - North Red Sea
French F Al-Qatta'i S F Als - North
Red Sea
French F Brittany - British
Channel
French F Cilician Sea S F
Constantinople - Attalia
French F Constantinople - Attalia
French F Dublin - Icelandic Sea
Bounce
French F East Euxine Sea - West
Euxine Sea
French F Icelandic Sea - North
German Sea *Bounce*
French F Illyrian Sea C A Taranto -
Epirus
French F Ionian Sea -
Constantinople *Bounce*
French F Lotharingia S F South
German Sea
French F North Ocean Sea -
Wessex

French F South German Sea S F
Icelandic Sea - North German Sea
French F Sea of Tyre S A
Damascus - Cappadocia
French F Sea of Worms S F Dublin
- Icelandic Sea
French F Takrur Sea - Awlil
French F Tkanaren - Takrur Sea
French F Western Sea - South
Ocean Sea *Bounce*

German A Abkhazia - Georgia
German A Attalia S F West Euxine
Sea - Constantinople *Cut*
Dislodged *Disbanded*
German A Bucellaria S A Attalia
German A Cappadocia S A Attalia
Cut *Dislodged* *Disbanded*
German A Chs H
German A Georgia - Kahketi
German A Macedonia S F West
Euxine Sea - Constantinople *Cut*
German A Pechenega - Vlacha
German A Sarkel - Tamantarka
German A Tamantarka -
Pechenega
German A Thrace S F West
Euxine Sea - Constantinople
German F West Euxine Sea -
Constantinople

Srivijayan A Adulis - Meroe
Srivijayan A Axu S A Adulis -
Meroe
Srivijayan A Basra - Baghdad
Srivijayan A Kambuja H
Srivijayan A Kannuaj - Ujjain
Srivijayan A Malao S A Roha
Srivijayan A Nefud S A Basra -
Bag
Srivijayan A Roha S A Adulis -
Meroe
Srivijayan A Ujjain - Yemen
Srivijayan A Varanasi - Kannuaj
Srivijayan F Arabian Sea C A
Ujjain - Yemen
Srivijayan F Butuan H
Srivijayan F Gulf of Aden H
Srivijayan F Gokomere Sea S F
Zimbabwe

Srivijayan F Karimata Straits H
Srivijayan F Malabar Sea H
Srivijayan F Mes - Rhapta
Bounce
Srivijayan F Namib S F Zimbabwe
Srivijayan F Southern Sea H

Srivijayan F Zimbabwe S F
Menuthian Sea - Rhapta *Cut*

Spring Retreat Possibilities

Danish F Wessex can retreat to
Wales, Welsh Sea or disband

German A Attalia is destroyed (no
valid retreats)
German A Cappadocia is
destroyed (no valid retreats)

Fall

DC229: The votes are in, and Nigel has achieved a solo victory as the West Frankish Kingdom. Congratulations! All solos are special accomplishments, but this one is particularly amazing given the size of the board. I must admit that I thought it was virtually impossible to achieve a solo in this variant, and I am happy to have been proven wrong.

Normally I might comment at greater length, but 23 hours of traveling has left my brain barely functional, although I wanted to get this result out before going to bed. More importantly, as indicated by Douglas Kent, an end of game (EoG) statement is requested of each player, and it is better that those statements are produced free of any bias resulting from the GM's

Power Player

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Matt Kremer
Byzantine Empire Gregory Alexopoulos (elim 915)
Tang Empire (China) Lynn Mercer
Kingdom of Denmark Sanford "Former Trout" O'Donnell
Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) Ian Moes
West Frankish Kingdom (France) Nigel Phillips
East Frankish Kingdom (German) Russell Manning
(replaced Jack McHugh in 902)

Position Power Abb 918

1 West Frankish Kingdom (France) F 41
2 Kingdom of Sri Vijaya V 20
3 Tang Empire (China) C 16
4 Kingdom of Denmark D 13
5 East Frankish Kingdom (German) G 12
6 Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) A 4
7 Kingdom of Axum X 1

statement. In the EoG statements, comments about this particular game and the variant in general are welcome, particularly since it is a gametest. I'm looking forward to reading your thoughts (Mr. Hester will have a lot to say, I'm sure...).

Below I have included a list of our player roster, with their year of elimination (if eliminated). Additionally, I have included the final SC count. Finally, I have attached the History file in Excel for the game, which has the results of every season as well as various data summaries relating to the game. **[[This Excel file is available by request from me, just send me an email at [diplomacyworld "of" yahoo.com](mailto:diplomacyworld@yahoo.com)]]**

Pratihara Kingdom (India) Andy "The White Wolf" Jameson (elim 909)
Khaganate of Khazaria David E. Cohen (elim 906)
Principality of Kiev (Russia) Darren Sharma (elim 916)
Umayyad Emirate (Spain) Nathan Deily (elim 910)
Samanid Emirate (Turan) John Reside (elim 910)
Kingdom of Sri Vijaya Mike Morris
Kingdom of Wagadu Mikael Johansson (elim 917)
Kingdom of Axum Benjamin Hester

919 Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

Denmark continues to use poor tactics, while France is beating the snot out of Germany.

At this point, I'm primarily interested in the tactics in the Black Sea area and in Scandinavia. Nothing else matters.

France has done a clever move, letting Germany land his fleet in Constantinople. This fleet is now trapped and should be easy to sink.

The Danish fleet in Wessex is now retreating to a useless position west of England. Meanwhile, France can force Jelling. If Denmark had put two fleets in Abodrite Sea and Kattegat, he could have put together a line to hold Scandinavia. With what he did here, he lost Jelling and his fleets are in terrible position. He was about to lose not only Jelling but also Kattegat. And then Abodrite Sea.

And his fleet in Wessex was useless.

The board is now in a position where I could let Edi Birsan run everybody but France while I run France, and I could still force a solo. I'm not surprised that a solo was voted. There's no line here and no cohesion among the people who would have needed to work together several years earlier to stop the French solo.

As I looked more carefully, you're right, this spring season generated the "they can't stop him". But in this

spring, if China was handing centers to Denmark, and if China was backing off in India so SV could flip over the armies into Africa (was open), well, then maybe. But I do see why this spring season was crucial in voting the solo. Now there isn't any way in the fall for China to hand anything to anyone useful (even if Lynn were inclined to do it) and Rick is also right about the nefariousness in letting Germany's fleet into Constantinople. Once that is annihilated BOTH Denmark and Germany are short fleets.

End of Game Commentary

Jim Burgess (normal text)

Rick Desper (italics)

Suzanne Castagne (bold)

Editor's Note: The three commentators wrote their EOG Statements without the benefit of reading the players' EOG's. The players wrote their EOG's when the game ended, months earlier.

Jim Burgess

I went back and forth as I watched Nigs slice and dice his way through this game, fairly early on I became convinced that Nigs was going to dominate his end of the board. What was fascinating to watch was how he played everything so that a stop-the-leader alliance never formed. As we all know, when a solo happens, the credit goes to the winner. He made the choices, he decided when to move, when to talk, what to say, and assessed his fellow players on what they could and would do. A solo happens when you get enough of that right to work, and that any mistakes that you make (too many things are chance filled to get it all completely right) are not serious enough to rewire the result.

In these "large board" games, there are major three things that can happen that affect the nature of this equation over smaller games and all of them came into play here. First, the game is long and there are a lot of units on the board and people to talk to, so people can tire of the game and effort can flag. That certainly happened here where I think there was lots of energy early on, after the tenth game year that started to deteriorate. Second, alliances can last a long time where people get lulled into thinking they always will go on, after all there always are other possible pastures to plow. But here that happened numerous times where perhaps antennae would have come up sooner if there were fewer players on the board and fewer places to go. Early on, this was Matt Kremer's stabs. Later it was SV/China and then the big one where France stabbed Germany and Denmark, and that one was decisive. You can look at the record as Suzanne, Rick, and I evaluated the game season by season. Germany and Denmark didn't have a contingency plan for years and years and years in game terms. Nigs chose perfectly the chaos to use to drop the bomb. Third, the tactical situations are complex and

there are more units, more powers, more spaces, and more geography to master. Most all of us get easily to intermediate level skills at that on the original Diplomacy board. Since no one had ever played on this precise board before, people had to figure it out as they went along. Yes, there were stalemate lines for fleets in the south Atlantic, Cherson creates some weird things in the Euxine Sea, and the north part of the board in Asia gets pretty close to some stalemate lines in places. But the board did not seem to be littered with stalemate lines. I'm not a stalemate line kind of guy (I don't like analyzing them, I like to focus on inspirational tactics that confound them), but the game never really stopped up against some line where nothing was happening. Without people stopped on lines, the game just keeps going. Eventually, someone has the solo in their sights.

I like the board, I don't have any major comments for David as he ponders how to move the game around. In earlier versions of this board (as I commented early on) France was possibly the least likely player to solo. Did David tweak it too much so it was too easy for Nigs? I don't think so. Should there be more sea spaces in the Atlantic? I don't think so, this is the early Known World of the 900's. Ships didn't like to wander out far from land. It makes sense to have this barrier. Cherson/Sevastopol is this highly defensible position, would I change that? I don't think so. And Asia was just a big place with long travels between settlements. Again, here, I think the map is appropriate. So I liked the map and the powers and the choices. If anything, the big loser (and this has been tweaked a bit too) is Khazaria and I think Khazaria has more chances in the new board that David is using now for this variant.

The players here generally were excellent and persisted through a very long game, the only drop out was our

Variant Editor, Jack McHugh. In some ways, this was decisive as I think Russ Manning was in over his head at times trying to outthink Nigs. I'm not sure if Jack would have been more successful, but it would have been a different game. The only thing the players did not do was stop Nigs from winning. Remember that us commentators NEVER had access to any part of the negotiations, volume, content, context, anything, except for tidbits from our illustrious GM every once in a while. Nick Higgins was not perfect, but I've GMed these big variants a lot (only doing the GMing by hand of course....) and I was quite satisfied with the efforts and attention that Nick gave to this. Kudos to him. I'm not sure what you all learned from these players, but I would like to weigh in with a few last thoughts on each player, most of this I said before at various times and in various places.

Abbasid Caliphate (Arabia) Matt Kremer - Matt had the challenges that come from being in the center of the board, but early on he mastered them and led early. He was surrounded and that gave him lots of options, but I'm not sure the ones he chose were the right ones, surely they did not propel him upward, but was the beginning of the end for him. He clearly lost interest late (NMRs and such) and he would have been eliminated if they made Nigs play it out to the final solo in centers. I thought he squandered tactical chances to get back into the game, but perhaps no one would talk to him after things he said when he was ahead.

Byzantine Empire Gregory Alexopoulos - Gregory's strength is tactics, and his tactics were on display here in spades. A lesser player would have been eliminated five game years earlier. But again, Gregory missed chances to get other players to support him, in particular, I really thought (at the times when I raised it) that Gregory could have led a more effective anti-French alliance and gotten Germany to turn. But again, that was tactical, I don't think Russ and Gregory ever talked much from the evidence on the board.

Tang Empire (China) Lynn Mercer - Lynn was a party to some of the chaos that allowed France to win. Ever since Matt's demise as a leader, Lynn faced a choice that was unpalatable, does he contribute to a stop-the-leader alliance to his own detriment, or does he just push west and wait for the game to change or end. He definitely did not take any substantial actions to assist. I thought at the very end (Rick notes that after the last Spring season the deed was done, and I think he was right) Lynn had a chance to give centers to Former Trout that could have changed the nature of the outcome. Perhaps not, but I wish they had tried it.

Kingdom of Denmark Sanford "Former Trout" O'Donnell - Former Trout was the more experienced of the Denmark/German alliance, they had an obligation to stick together (and they did) but I don't think they ever did what really NEEDED to be done. As the

French/German/Danish alliance formed, the two junior powers have a strong obligation to keep the leading power honest in a couple of ways. First, they needed to be sharing information and building an independent relationship from day 1. I don't think it ever was there, and there was nothing to fall back onto when France stabbed them. I think all deals and marching orders funneled through Nigs. I'm sorry, but that doesn't work, and Trout's the one who should have been on the mark here. Again, I know these games are long, but still it is Trout's endgame statement that I am going to be studying the most closely. From early on, did he just not care if Nigs won? Or did he really think Nigs was never going to stab them? He KNEW that Russ and he were not going to be very effective fighting afterward. And then, even then, his choices after the Nigs stab were not good. As Rick has outlined, the defensive posture needed was clear. He needed either to convince Lynn to give him centers, or at least agree to get some units disbanded that he could build back east. Ultimately THIS was the game changer at the end. I think the Middle East otherwise, and Africa, could have been bound up pretty tightly.

Tulunid Emirate (Egypt) Ian Moes - Ian had a rough time of it. The players around him were strong, they gave him no quarter, and he wasn't able to deal with Matt, Nigs, or B. in any way that worked for him. I'm not sure if this was correctable, but the luck of the draw and the very earliest choices.

West Frankish Kingdom (France) Nigel Phillips - Nigs was very busy, I think, he dropped out of the next game of this variant that is on-going now. But he still played this game like a Stradivarius. It was fun to watch, mostly, until the end. Tactics, strategy, negotiations, he put it all together just perfectly to come out on top. Part of that was that I don't think he ever made a severe misstep in judging the measure of each of his opponents. What could they do tactically? What would they say diplomatically? What would they do when pressed or stabbed?

East Frankish Kingdom (German) Russell Manning (replaced Jack McHugh in 902) - It is REALLY hard to join one of these big variants late, I know I've just been doing it. For the most part, one of the winning strategies must be to set up early choices and alliances that push you into the midgame. If you're not in the midgame, you can't be in the endgame. I sort of think that if Jack McHugh had stayed, Nigs might have made the three way Spain/France/Denmark and taken out Germany. In that sense, the earliest things Russ did to change that were essential to getting him to the end. I'm not sure how much diplomacy-type game tactical experience Russ has, but I'm sure he learned a huge amount here from watching people like Nigs, Gregory, and Darren. He needs to propel that into other games where he can fare better. The other players needed to realize this and talk to Germany earlier. Somehow, at the end it

shouldn't have just collapsed the way it did. For any of you who find yourself on a large board with great players, hone your tactics! Use the fact that you can anticipate what "Nigs" (or whoever is feeding you orders) is going to tell you. Try to get better at predicting what that will be. Sharpen your ability to predict what others will say, even if you don't act on it in this game. You waste your time, and the opportunity if you just go with the flow. I hope Russ didn't do that. It definitely is one interpretation of what happened though.

Pratihara Kingdom (India) Andy "The White Wolf" Jameson - White Wolf lasted longer than he could have or should have. He did outlast the game's designer. But from early on, the Indian situation was bad. I'm sure that Mike and Lynn were in together from square one in ways that Andy could NOT even approach. When the game draw turns out that way, the way Andy played it is the only way you can play it. Try to play the two sides against one another, try to survive, and look for opportunities to change the game. Unfortunately they never came.

Khaganate of Khazaria David E. Cohen and Principality of Kiev (Russia) Darren Sharma - I need to discuss Darren and David together. I'm not sure what went on here. Some crossgaming I suspect from a previous game?? Something, they just hit this game attacking each other, never stopped and though Darren survived a long time with some excellent late game tactics, the way was dead for both from the very first game year. That is most definitely the most important lesson about how NOT to play these massive Diplomacy games with this many powers. It loses EVERY time.

Umayyad Emirate (Spain) Nathan Deily - I think Nathan hung by a thread here where early on it was possible for France to choose him instead of Germany to move forward. In this case I think it was a choice driven by the fact that Nathan was too good a player, too cautious a player, for the game that Nigs had in mind. Spain, from the tactical map board, could easily have been the major power instead of Nigs that emerged here. I'm sure Nathan is still kicking himself over it. The history is a bit far back for me to recall when precisely he should have done something different, but some time. And maybe HE should have talked Russ into the toadying role early on instead of Nigs? Hard to say, but once the hammer came down, there wasn't too much Nathan could do, especially given Mikael's moves.

Samanid Emirate (Turan) John Reside - John did not make a great impression on me, I said enough back with the seasons. I thought John benefited well early from the Darren/David antagonism, and the alliance with Matt definitely was the right choice at the time. But while second guessing is too easy, he needed to do something to stave off the Arabian stab, and I think John could have survived longer after that with different choices. But remember, these games are long, I'm sure

real life called and John just wasn't going to hang around not doing anything.

Kingdom of Sri Vijaya Mike Morris - Mike "finished second" and with that comes both praise and responsibility. Sri Vijaya never was seriously threatened in the game, he started moving west and ended moving west. In the end, to the extent that Mike set up the Arabian stabs that Matt tried, and the battle over India, both the Arabian stabs and the elimination of India happened later than Mike needed them to happen to win. I drew the analogy to the Juggernaut. He and China needed to be a more effective Juggernaut to do better. And then, at the end, the responsibility comes because Mike didn't facilitate a stop-the-leader alliance in that sense he lost along with everyone else. That is simple, yes, and I know there were a lot of stages to this game, but that's the bottom line as well.

Kingdom of Wagadu Mikael Johansson - Mikael needed to win his epic tactical battle with B. much earlier if he was to survive. France made some choices (good ones as it turned out) that allowed Wagadu to hang around an awfully long time, moving very slowly and taking centers very slowly. I think Mikael had to do it that way, but B. was too good a tactician to fold as quickly as Mikael needed him to do to get the centers to oppose France. After France stabbed, Mikael chose to toady rather than attack France; one must presume that was because of the nature of the earlier discussions with Axum. What tactically should have happened (Axum and Wagadu forming an African alliance) just wasn't possible diplomatically. Mikael also could have worked with Germany and Denmark earlier about a stab. If they had done so early on, then France probably would not have soloed. If that could have happened before Arabia's stabs, maybe those stabs would not have happened then (and the fact that B./Matt/John were allied and dangerous mitigated the apparent need) and then afterward it just never looked like the right time. I think Mikael played a good game, just was hamstrung by the circumstances.

Kingdom of Axum Benjamin Hester - I really enjoyed watching B.'s game throughout, from his first move to his last (the deal to survive). He almost never made a turn by turn misstep. He seemed to be the one who loudest and earliest warned of the French solo, but in the end he also was ignored. Since we saw none of the negotiations, I again will be most interested in what B. says about that. If I had guesses about the player who tried hardest to keep in touch with the most parts of the board at each stage of the game, I would vote for B. But again, though perhaps his personality polarized people away from his likely excellent advice, he must bear the blame as well that no one ever stopped Nigs. Not only that, no one ever seriously tried (making progress against him) in the whole game. I'm sure B. and everyone else second guessed themselves on this.

In the end, maybe this wasn't all the game that Diplomacy World might have asked it to be, but you need to thank the players for being willing to undergo the scrutiny. Remember that this scrutiny is not really directed at them, like all such commentary, our audience is all of you, the Readers of Diplomacy World. I hope

you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed commenting. Let us know what you think, on all levels, and let us know what sorts of things you want to see next. We're now into our new game with "old time postal players".

Rick Desper

There were a lot of problems with this game. The motivating idea behind this game was that it was simultaneously a play-test for a relatively untested variant and also a demo game to be published in Diplomacy World. In retrospect, this seems like a bad combination of ideas.

In my early comments about this game, I discussed the problems with larger variants. A good number of larger map variants are created by considering a map of a larger section of the world, and then extending the ordinary Diplomacy map to the larger map. Or, alternatively, to apply the same general topological concepts to a map of a different, larger area of the Earth (or some fictional map area).

Let me bring in a bit of mathematics here.

There is a branch of mathematics known as graph theory that works well for studying maps. Formally, a graph is a pair: a set of vertices (or nodes), and a set of edges (or links). The edges consist of pairs of vertices. This theory applies to maps in this manner: the provinces are the vertices, and an edge is said to exist between a pair of vertices if they are adjacent on the map. The degree of each vertex is the number of provinces it is adjacent to. Low-degree provinces (such as Portugal) make easy places to defend. High-degree provinces (like the North Sea) become battlegrounds where the accumulation of large numbers of forces determines control. The degree sequence of a map is simply a list of the degree of each province.

One more concept: a map is said to be "planar" if it can be embedded in a planar. For our purposes, this means that it can be represented on a sheet of paper with dots representing the provinces and line segments representing the edges in a way that no pair of the edges overlap. Diplomacy variants tend to use planar maps and that's important since it constrains how many adjacencies there can be. If you add too many edges, then the map can no longer be represented on a map. For example, the Judge variant "Pure" has seven provinces, one for each of the seven powers of the ordinary variant, and adds a link between each pair of them. In the world of mathematics, this is known as a complete graph, and no complete graph with more than four vertices can be represented in a planar fashion.

Now these concepts need to be adjusted a bit to allow

for the differentiation between inland provinces, coastal provinces, and sea provinces, but that transition should present no major conceptual difficulty.

While playing variants of several types over the years, I've noticed that the larger maps tend to share certain properties of the ordinary European map that are problematic as the number of vertices gets larger. Namely, they contain roughly the same SC/province ratio, and also have a similar low variance to the degree sequence.

The SC/province ratio for the ordinary map works well with that map because the number of forces fits that map well. But as maps get larger, it becomes easier and easier for powers to demilitarize large sections of the map to concentrate larger numbers of forces at the key battlegrounds. This happens both because powers need more and more SCs to win, and because alliances see the need to coordinate in greater depth to cross important stalemate lines.

The low variance to the degree sequence is problematic because low-degree vertices tend to form blockage points, or what I and others call mini-stalemate lines. The most famous mini-stalemate line in Diplomacy is at the Mid-Atlantic Ocean, which can be held from the North against any Southern aggression by three fleets as long as one is in Portugal. So if we want fluidity to the map, we need to have a reasonably large number of high-degree vertices, to protect against an over-abundance of mini-stalemate lines.

I have been making elliptical reference to stalemates. And, frankly, I think the preponderance of stalemate lines is the biggest problem with larger map variants. Mini-stalemate lines choke the lines of growth and lead to games grinding to a halt long before they can be determined solely as a function of the diplomatic skill of the players.

The Known World variant has a ton of mini-stalemate lines. There are choke points at the Caspian Sea in Asia, the Middle East, Cape Horn, and several other places. As I pointed out a few turns ago, the sea provinces around Africa are easily blocked from either side. Now one could argue that the stalemate line on the ordinary map is an essential feature of the game. But the ordinary map is drawn in a way to divide neatly into two 17-SC parts. The Known World Variant has

~40% of its SCs in Europe. And the map is drawn in a way such that there are many stoppage points that make it hard to invade Europe from the outside.

The ten-player Judge variant Youngstown (based on Youngstown IV? VII? VIII?) has similar map problems, but they are abated somewhat by the existence of "off-board boxes" that add extra adjacencies to the map. This variant also has a small number of Asian powers which often lets the victor in the East get a huge jump on the European powers.

So, basically, Known World is a map variant with a large number of mini-stalemate lines and a small number of separate theaters, in which it is very difficult for a power to move from one theater to another.

So what happened in this particular playing of Known World? Well, with the exception of France, the European powers played poorly. Well, I can forgive Spain for being the victim of France's first stab. But consider the other powers

- 1) Denmark and Germany let France get larger than their combined power, while running away from him as quickly as possible
- 2) Russia/Ukraine and Khazaria bickered from the very first move and never stopped fighting until both were dead.
- 3) Egypt attacked Byzantium right at the start and didn't let up even when he was critically stabbed by his African neighbors.

Oh, and one more thing

- 4) There is no Italy.

All of these factors conspired to allow France growth at an absurdly fast rate compared to everybody else.

Let's see...what else happened?

At the start of the game, I said that large map variants tended to favor alliances with three or more powers, since they could exercise their power collectively to move from one part of the map into other theaters in a

while that slower-developing two-power alliances could not. At the start of the game we had a two-power alliance in China/SV, but they were easily blocked by the larger three-power alliance Arabia/Axum/Samanid.

I had hoped to see a pan-African alliance, but first we saw Axum and Wagadu beat up Egypt, and then Wagadu was crunched between Axum and France. So much for that.

At that point, we had a large, centrally placed triple alliance (Arabia/Axum/Samanid), a weaker Western alliance dominated by France, and two Eastern powers that were both invulnerable and unable to move out of their theater.

What happened? The central powers squabbled while the Westies took over all of Europe and most of Africa. And then France stabbed all of his putative alliance partners to take a solo victory.

I could write at length about how the play by Denmark and Germany represented poor play of a common sort that I feel to be the weakest type of play. I don't feel motivated to do so right now. I've called them "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern" and I think any fan of Stoppard can appreciate the allusion. But they were not alone in pursuing short-sighted strategies that did nothing to prevent a French solo.

So, in summary, there were too major problems with this game. The first is that we were play-testing a variant that I think is seriously flawed. This is a problem that can be avoided in future demo games. We should stick to variants that we know and like.

The second problem is harder to avoid. We just had a lot of players that played poorly. Even in groups of well-respected players, you'll find that happens from time to time. I do think that the problems were particularly egregious in this game, but we cannot protect the 'zine against this problem, except to remind players that they are playing in front of a large audience, and that hopefully will be enough to induce good players to play up to their level of ability.

Suzanne Castagne

The game ended in 919 with a massive French solo victory (voted, but nobody could doubt that it would have happened effectively if the vote wasn't unanimous) after nearly a year of real-life playing time. The French predominance has lasted so long (over ten game-years or more than half of the game) that it has taken on the sheen of inevitability. Was it really inevitable? If we look back, nothing is less

certain.

Let's take a quick look at a few of the game-years.

902: The Eastern Juggernaut (China et SV) is already in place. Arabia and Samanid are working together in India under Arabia's leadership, but so far without Axum. France is fighting against Germany, with

Denmark apparently undecided. Russia and Khazaria are already butting heads, as are Spain and Wagadu. Egypt has already gone into the Med against Byzantium.

905: The Arabian alliance has the wind in its sails, with Arabia as the board leader (and Jim-Bob is talking about the pig-pile that is to form against Arabia. Samanid is making progress against China, as is Arabia against Khazaria and Axum against Wagadu. Arabia and Axum make inroads in Egypt. The Western alliance is also solidly in place. France is a close second, holding all of Iberia, while his allies have nearly met Samanid in Russia.

906: Dramatic turnaround, Arabia stabs Samanid, giving a new lease on life to China and letting the Westerners advance in Russia unhindered. Axum apparently as surprised as everyone else. It is this event which will cause the downfall of the Arabian alliance. The first French fleets have entered the Med.

910: France is the board leader and has fleets all over the Med. Axum has stabbed Arabia, then rejoined him. France has landed an army in Jerusalem. From then on, France's march forward was essentially unopposed. The only question left was whether he would solo or accept a DIAS. Nine game-years later we have the reply.

This synopsis raises three main questions:

- Why did these two players come out as early leaders?
- Why did one succeed and the other fail?
- Was the solo inevitable?

First, why these two players? Both are generally far-seeing, active, communicative players, but they are not the only good players on this board. Their talent at finding early opportunities and enrolling other players to join them was certainly important, but luck also played a role.

The eastern Juggernaut was also successful quite early, but while they apparently communicated very well with each other, they were much less outgoing with the other powers. Also, they had geography against them in the long run: too far to go to reach the majority of centers and to gain a world-wide momentum.

Three other pairs of players, sometimes very good ones, got stuck in suicidal fights without allies to help either one. The most dramatic case was Khazaria and Russia; but this was also true of Spain and Wagadu as well as of Egypt and Byzantium. In the latter two cases, the fight eventually broke off, but both powers were permanently weakened.

Why did one succeed and the other fail?

First, what were the differences between the two alliances?

For one thing, the western alliance was always deeply unequal, one strong, aggressive player allied to two weaker ones, while the Arabian alliance was much more egalitarian, especially between Arabia and Axum; this is largely a matter of luck, in which players you find as possible allies on the board. As a corollary, France maintained a strong position of dominance relative to his allies: Germany, for example, was initially a power he had fought against and finally let survive. Even though Arabia was clearly the leader of his alliance, there was less distance between leader and followers.

Geographically, there were two important differences. For one, France had an edge position, while Arabia was clearly a central power. That made little difference while the alliance was strong and growing, but perhaps hastened his downfall when the alliance fell apart. Secondly, France was in Europe, which, north and south together, has about 40% of the total centers on the board. (I counted for an earlier version of the variant, but I don't think that this has changed much.) Europe also has more powers than any other region, which compensates. A power which dominates Europe is very close to dominating the board. However, the same could be said for a power which dominates all of Asia (near and far east together). Frankly, I don't believe that either of these geographical differences was essential.

Perhaps the most important difference was the extraordinary, almost painful patience that the French player possessed. There were so many points at which he could have stabbed one or both of his original allies. He did, in fact, stab later allies (Wagadu, Axum). But he waited until he could expect no further growth outside the alliance and possessed enough centers that stabbing his allies would make the difference, before stabbing Germany and Denmark.

The crucial moment for Arabia came in 906, when he stabbed the weaker of his two allies prematurely. A good stab, as Dip stabs go, but ultimately a losing move. He gained several centers rapidly, but lost global position, destroyed his alliance and let players who were nearly conquered, like China, come back to life. Even more importantly, he lost position and momentum relative to France. I believe that it was at this point that he lost the game.

In 905, Arabia and Axum had taken Egypt's African centers. Both had fleets (and naval mastery) in the

Indian ocean, but for the first time, one or both could have started building fleets in the Med, a strategic region historically and in terms of Dip. We commentators mentioned this several times and hoped that Arabia would seize this opportunity. Personally, I hoped that he would deal with Byzantine, either in supporting him against eventual French incursions or in conquering him and taking his place (or the two successively, as France did on many occasions).

That never happened, but in a science-fiction sort of way, one can't help wondering how this game would have ended if Arabia had started building Med fleets and turning westward that year, instead of stabbing Samanid.

Was the solo inevitable?

Evidently, the final stab would have been much less fatal if Germany and Denmark had taken some elementary precautions: if Germany had build a few

armies at home, when he had several builds in stock and if Denmark had moved his fleets closer to home when they were no longer useful in Asia. But Germany and Denmark had been vulnerable for years and nothing had happened. Why would they suddenly take precautions and perhaps precipitate French retaliation?

Once France stabbed, his victory was difficult to prevent. Germany and Denmark were relatively isolated from the rest of the board, and France kept large military forces in all the other regions other powers might contest (Africa for example). But what was notable is that there was no real attempt to stop France on the part of other powers than his ex-allies. Arabia was completely weakened, but what attempts he made were blocked by China and Indonesia, completely incomprehensibly. Old grudges and old habits took over. There was never any universal effort to stop France's advance.

Under those conditions, yes, the solo was inevitable.

Players' End of Game Statements

Arabia (Matt Kremer):

Well this was definitely one of those games that shows how drastically fortunes can change in Diplomacy. At the beginning of the game, everything went wonderfully to plan. Despite my central position and many neighbors, no one chose to attack me. Instead of turning on one of my most immediate friendly neighbors I decided to attack India as I saw Man as a potential point of contention between three powers and wanted to nip that problem in the bud, and I wanted to increase my presence in the Indian Ocean and help B hold back SV, the power about whom I was most concerned at the start; the convoy worked very well as I gained Ujj and Man that year, and even though I worried that jumping out to a lead in such spectacular fashion might bring enemies, it did not, and I continued to grow in both India and the Caucasus, where I was benefiting from Khazaria being eaten by his northern neighbors.

It was around this time that I made my biggest mistake and stabbed John. My reasoning at the time was that he was about to cross the tipping point against China, and I was worried that he would net multiple gains and stab me by flooding the numerous territories we had vacated between us; I wanted to act before he did. Looking back, I absolutely should have let John complete his attack against China, for a few reasons. As other players have pointed out, my starting position was minimum two players away from any edge / corner of the map on which to lean; if I had allowed John to eliminate China, I would then have been only one player from that position. Also/alternatively, if John had been able to put fleets in the Pacific, SV would have fallen and our AXT alliance could have been very strong. So, as is often the

case in Diplomacy, one player's misplaced trust, in this case mine, shaped the whole course of the game.

As would be expected my stab resulted in initial gains, but it benefited China and SV much more as their alliance experienced a resurgence that eventually turned back my gains. However, by this time the western alliance was becoming too huge and powerful to ignore, so the remaining 4 of us banded together and were just about to have a holdable stalemate line set when China stabbed (?) SV and me. I'm still not convinced that it actually was a stab of SV as they made up extremely quickly, but I quickly lost half of my centers. Lynn claimed that he wouldn't apologize for refusing to accept a 7-way draw, but the decision still baffles me given Lynn's otherwise well thought out moves up until that point. As B and I immediately predicted following this development, Nigel decided to go for the solo and, not surprisingly, succeeded. I really hope Germany and Denmark explain why they let French growth go so unchecked for so long as it baffled me and all of my correspondents all game long.

As for the variant, I would agree with those who have spoken before me in that center powers such as Arabia would have a very hard time soloing since it is so difficult for them to reach the edge of the map. That said I think all of the powers have good potential for growth and the ability to do well, which may be all you can ask for in a large variant like this. I'm still partial to WWIV, but I'd be happy to play this one again.

In any case thanks to all, especially Nick, for a very fun game to play and congrats to Nigel for playing the

tortoise to my hare and proving that adage true once

again.

Byzantium (Gregory Alexopoulos):

EOG summarized: Size matters.

EOG detailed: Warmest congratulations to Nigel. His game was well-designed and superbly executed. I recall a time right before we started fighting each other when I wrote to him saying I couldn't seriously support a "support the board leader" strategy – he wrote back to say he wasn't leading. To my surprise, he was right: his potential was evident very early on, so much that I thought numbers would support his "natural" leadership of the board, but it was some time until he actually got the statistics to admit he was winning this game. Once more, well done!

The game in itself was frustratingly fun. I'll start with the negative aspects: for a group of players this experienced, the lack of communication was disappointing. There were turns one could mistake this game for being no-press, and with a few brilliant exceptions (Ben and Darren mostly, with Matt, Lynn and David giving it a good try), I doubt I had frequent communication with anyone else. Nigel did communicate, up until we enter "death match" mode and so did Mikael, although I had little to offer to him. The odd mail from Mike or Nathan didn't compensate for radio silence from Germany or Turan. (sigh) Anyway, one has to play one's hand as it's dealt.

There is however a potential explanation for this: the board is huge. I mean, it's gigantic by any standard. It's the first game in ages I didn't bother to follow tactics in areas that I deemed as being too remote from my sphere of influence. I tried to interact primarily with my neighbors; since there were already lots of them! Looking back at the game, I ended up putting out one fire out after another – so, in retrospect, perhaps I should have worked more on diversions caused by my neighbors' neighbors.

I chose a central power, realizing the associated risk, and tried to follow a rather simple strategy: I decided to dominate the naval mass of the Mediterranean. With that, I was sure to have a core of centers not only defensible, but also easy to maintain, as I would be able to use convoys over a closed sea. In that strategy, I was expecting to compete with only two powers, Spain and Egypt, at least in the opening years. So, I worked to get a France vs. Germany fight going (wasn't too hard to achieve, Nigel wanted the same thing), spread mistrust between Russia and Khazaria and happily encouraged Arabia's intentions to expand east. Everyone was getting busy and I was hoping to collect several neutrals before actually being forced to enter a conflict. My two primary targets were either Spain or Egypt – my competitors for the Med. If I could get someone to attack one, I would be

happy to attack the other.

Life is what happens to us while we're busy making plans, someone once said (a man a lot wiser than yours truly). The African powers had no real intention to start the game by attacking each other; on the contrary a potential triple seemed to be under formation. I offered Ian a genuine way for an alliance between us to work – I believed in it so much that I went on and built armies to make him less worried. He ignored that and went on to attack me – I still feel he missed out on a great opportunity there, because my intentions were to secure European centers first before doing anything else. I was forced to ignore the Balkan centers, to allow Spain to grow at the expense of our agreement on the Italian spoils and dance a very difficult death waltz with the Egyptian navy.

Tactics worked. Eventually, I got some help and it took me longer than I wanted to, but they worked. Egypt was eliminated and my core centers secured. Meanwhile Spain grew, and Germany got replaced. This was a critical time for me: I was certain the new German leader would contact his neighbors and try to determine a strategy through the relevant negotiations. I was much mistaken: the new German leader decided to attack me, even though his centers were surrounded by French units, my dots were far away from his armies and there was obviously no need for such a conflict – all this BEFORE contacting me. Trying to bluff my way out of a mess, I sent an "angry" mail to Germany – I think it was the only time I got a reply from him and the main idea was "I've been playing diplomacy too long for you to tell me how to do it!". Given the complete lack of communication (not just with me), the reluctance to review followed strategies and the end-game belief that there was still time to stop the French – well, let me just say that we view the way the game is best played very differently.

At that point I started working closely with Russia (we were allies from the beginning, but around this time we actually started working together). I also contacted France, asking for a double alliance against Spain and Germany. Nigel agreed, but only in theory: it was quickly obvious that I was helping him against Spain, but he was using Germany as a puppet power against me. When I realized that, I also realized how the entire board was working in his favor. I quickly contacted both Spain and Germany, offering a truce and an anti-French alliance. Despite our past differences, Spain responded positively and the last turns he was in the game Nathan and I were working nicely together. Germany ignored me.

France finally broke through the line of defense I was

trying to build around Italy. Crucially, a dying Wagadu helped him, while a still promising Axum felt there were more immediate concerns around the Indian Ocean. Now, I've been amongst Mike's victims in other games and I can testify he's one dangerous diplomat, no matter what size his army is (or appears to be)! I also admit China was playing a very sound game up to that point, looking like a real contestant. However, as things point out, France aided by not just one but three loyal powers (Denmark was also helping him, although I still feel he was trying to find a tactically sound time to switch sides) was a sure winner. The last turns for me were an agonizing effort to postpone the inevitable – at some point, it just got easier for Arabia and Axum to get my dots than to negotiate with me over their use. I died. France won. End of story.

Congratulations to Nigel – once more, his game was excellent. Mike, Ben, Lynn, Matt were all up to a great standard, although what I felt was a necessity (in terms of strategy), aka stopping France, wasn't felt by anyone else until it was too late. Darren was a sound ally and a descent negotiator – which is no small achievement! David showed uncharacteristic paranoia in the early years of the game – and got uncharacteristically eliminated for that! Nathan, we had our differences, but did manage to work closely at the end. A word for Mikael: sorry man, I just never found the opportunity to do something positive for you!

China (Lynn Mercer):

I want to begin by thanking Nick for acting as the GM for this exhibition game. Congratulations to Nigel on his solo. Well played.

General Comments about the variant:

I am an avid fan of variants, have played in quite a few, and have played a small role in the history of a couple such *SailHo* and *1900*. Generally I tend to avoid the large-sided variants such as *Imperial* which are often, in my experience, marred by NMRs, resignations and delays. It is simply hard to find a sufficient number of dedicated players to keep one of these *monster* games moving smoothly. During the course of the game there have been a number of comments about potential changes. I have suggested to David that Japan be included and that the Mongols might be included as an Eastern power. I gather that the game might be split into its western and eastern halves for more manageable games. Since this variant seems to have been played only a relatively few times I would suggest that changes be kept to a minimum until the number of trials rises significantly. As several people have noted, player personalities and decisions seem to have had quite a bit of impact on the game's course and it seems to me that it is hard to separate these factors from intrinsic play balance at this point.

And a word for our silent comrades: ignoring negotiations is ignoring opportunities IMO. You may feel one does not need to adjust one's strategy during a game, but to me that's the essence of diplomacy. I feel the end result speaks for itself.

I'd like to conclude by a point on the variant (I still haven't read David's follow-up mails). The map is carefully thought of and the areas well designed. It is obvious David put a lot of effort into avoiding potential stalemate lines. However, central powers are too fragile in this one. Although the vast amount of neutrals and the positioning of players allows for shifting alliances (and therefore interesting games), in a game hit by silence to the point of stubbornness, that just doesn't work. Perhaps two or three impassable areas will allow more security for the central powers and thus better balance the game. The Himalayas and the Sahara come to mind. And despite the risk of stalemates, that will give more interesting possibilities.

Many thanks to Nick for GMing such a long, demanding game for us. He demonstrated exemplary patience, among his many GMing skills. Many thanks to all of you for the game, it's been sensational. And last but not least, hats off to our French player: he had us all where he wanted us!

John, Matt, and Mike have already commented on the course of events in the eastern half of the map. From my perspective the game broke down into these phases.

900 – 903 China's initial expansion:

The basis of my strategy for China was a long term alliance with SV. Mike and I have played together in a number of games, and have been both friends and foes. My assessment was that if I properly structured the risks/rewards in our relationship that a China/SV alliance would be stable and have a considerable potential for growth. I disagree with a lot of the commentary about the ease and strength of our alliance. All the early talk about steamrollers and the like seemed more than a bit overblown. I was careful to keep units positioned to guard my coastal provinces as I pushed inland. The Chinese-SV alliance is a delicate one. China or SV may find that they are blocked, at least temporarily, in their westward expansion and many players may be unable to find the patience to deal with the obstructions rather than simply turn on their partner at the first outside prompting. Gains also need to be balanced so that one of the two powers doesn't receive 2-3 unanticipated builds which can be used for a descent on the other.

904 – 906 China retreats before Turan's advance:

Relatively early in the game I found my westward expansion blocked by Arabia and Turan. Matt and John have discussed their perspective on this period. This was the most dangerous period for China. I gave up some ground and waited for Turan's eastern expansion to provoke an Arab attack upon his western possessions. I received frequent messages during the early years of the game from Ben, Matt, and John advising me to build fleets to attack SV. If I had done so I would likely have suffered the same fate as Turan.

907 – 912 Arabia attacks Turan, China's advance renewed:

I think that this period exemplifies the importance of patience. Arabia would have benefited from waiting until Turan was fighting his way into the Chinese coastal provinces to strike. As it was, Matt's attack ended the invasion of China and made a renewed Chinese advance much easier. John was gracious enough to deliver a number of centers into my hands to speed my advance on Matt.

913 – 916 China consolidates her gains:

During this period I made some minor gains in Central Asia, began to construct a sound defensive line across northern Asia and commenced more extensive talks with the major western powers: Nigel, Russ and Trout.

917 – 919 China renews her expansion:

Initially, I was willing to participate in the creation of Axum's *great stalemate line*. In the end I chose to renew my wars with Arabia. I took quite a bit of verbal abuse for this decision which I frankly feel was unjustified. I would have no problem with opponents saying whatever they thought was necessary to change my mind, but I consider much of this discussion to have been simply ill-tempered and childish. Some players simply cannot seem to see things from any perspective but their own.

I want to clarify my position on what constitutes an acceptable draw. Generally, I play to win, and if that is not possible, I will work for a draw to prevent anyone else from winning. If you have read Edi Brian's recent article, *Balance of Power*, in *Diplomacy World* #107 I tend to favor the European approach to Diplomacy in which it is everyone's responsibility to maintain the balance of power and to prevent a leader's solo. Under these circumstances, I feel that small incremental gains can constitute a recognizable margin of success. It is also my belief that in a game with experienced players that almost every game should end in a draw. In general practice I tend to act upon the additional value judgment that a smaller draw is superior to a larger one. I think that most Diplomacy players would find a three-way draw an acceptable result in Standard Diplomacy.

Generally I think that a 7-way draw is too many even for a large-sided variant such as this. I do think that a lot of players are too willing to accept a draw rather than work for a solo because they either a) fear a loss more than they value a win, or b) they are in too big a hurry to rush off to get the emotional rush from a new game start. I am aware that some players are willing to accept large draws because they feel that the smaller surviving powers played well and deserved to be included. I can sympathize with this viewpoint, and have benefited from it myself on occasion, but I generally feel that playing should be its own reward.

During this period I was upset by the evidence of what seemed to be declining player attention and interest in the game. The general intent seemed to be to wrap the game up as soon as possible and move on. I, on the other hand, thought that the game still had considerable interest and play value. I had extensive discussions with Nigel, Russ and Trout. All of us agreed that the draw could be reduced to five (the three of them plus China and SV). I had what seemed to be sufficient assurances from Russ and Trout that they were concerned about Nigel's gains and that they would work closely with C/SV to contain him. So my renewed attack on Matt was designed to do two things. First, it was my intent to see Wagadu, Axum and Arabia eliminated. Beyond that I intended to see the game proceed with the likely result being a 5WD, but with the potential for further Chinese/SV gains.

I did not discuss my attack on Matt with Mike in advance. Mike had made it plain that he was satisfied with a 7WD. My attack on Mike's centers in India was designed to have several effects. First, they were intended to provide me with a small insurance policy in terms of builds if Mike declined to see reason after the anticipated results of my attack on Arabia became apparent. My inclination was to believe that Mike would be reasonable about the matter and that the centers could be returned as they eventually were. I would not have proceeded with my plan if I had thought that Mike would react as Ben did.

By keeping Mike in the dark I gave him plausible deniability with Axum which proved to be quite useful. I had hoped that Mike would pull back from Africa and allow Ben to be overrun. This would both eliminate Axum and should have raised alarms in the minds of both Russ and Trout and convinced them that it was time to put the brakes on Nigel's expansion. To my delight Ben's response was to transfer the bulk of his centers immediately into Mike's hands. This was a great boon to me in as much as it reduced Axum to a one center power that could be eliminated at any time, and meant that my attack on Mike actually made him bigger and reduced any incentive for him to hold my little deception against me. Matt's response to my attack was to throw up his hands and not submit his next orders.

I thought things were going pretty well at this point, only to be stunned by Russ' decision to waive his builds and his failure to anticipate Nigel's invasion. Russ has accepted the responsibility for his error and you have to respect him for that. In retrospect I should have overcome my disinclination to try to micromanage others' orders and made a more strenuous effort to assure myself that Russ was going to follow through on his commitment to curb Nigel. After the disastrous

events of that spring there was really little that could be done. I tried to convince the other significant powers to continue the game and see if Nigel could be held short of victory. I still think that persistence and patience might have given us a chance to thwart Nigel's solo run, but the consensus was that the odds against us were such that it wasn't worth the time and effort. I conceded because success, under the circumstances, seemed unlikely.

Denmark (Sanford "Former Trout" O'Donnell):

Well, congrats to Nigel for the impressive solo. One for the books, that's for sure. My thanks also to Nick for running a stellar game - and of course to all you guys for putting up with me and my lack of attention span in this one. Nick had infinite patience with me, which I didn't deserve and for which I'm very grateful.

I can't say much about the way I played this one - you folks deserved a better effort from me. If I had known, at this time last year, the roads that life was about to take me the last twelve months, I doubt I would have signed up to play. I know countless emails sent to Danish Trout went unanswered, and I'm particularly sorry I never responded to a couple of them. (Thinking especially of you here, Benjamin.) In any event, I'm humbled even to be remaining on the board with you bunch - not to mention having played it out with such a great group.

The Danish position ... needs something. That's for sure. There seems to be a distinct buffer between it and the neighboring powers. Besides from the token quick easy grabs, the Dane has to work for any further centers a little harder than the next guy it seems. And by doing so, in shifting to move one way, the units are taken so far away that it's difficult to guard against attacks coming from the other direction.

In the mid-game, once strong alliances are formed, this is not a problem. But for those first couple of years where directions are still being decided, I felt Denmark was at a serious disadvantage. I definitely felt this impact when dealing with Darren in Russia over Borussia - and it led to the single most important impact that I had on the game.

In the early years, Darren wanted Borussia though I clearly identified it fell in the Danish sphere of influence. From our diplomacy, it was clear that he felt safe taking it without reprisal from me, since if I moved against him to take it back my backside would be completely bared to the French and the Germans. I felt completely backed into a corner, because strategically Darren was correct.

That decided it for me. With everyone assuming that it was obvious that Russ, Nigel and I would be duking it

out I figured I'd do my best to make the opposite occur.

Through some effort, I managed to get the three of us talking. (The ball didn't roll right away, since Nigel was currently in the process of attacking Russ somewhat enthusiastically.) However, since Russ wasn't too upset with Nigel having taken his centers, and the agreement that borders would stay somewhat fixed as they were, the three of us reached an entente and - I think - managed to completely surprise Russia and Byzantium.



To tell the truth, I was completely surprised it worked as well. We made some half-jokes early on about one of us stabbing the other - but the dreaded stab never materialized. We swept into Russia and Asia and at that point, I somewhat dozed off.

Folks have been talking about turning points or mistakes in the game. My biggest mistake was in not bringing up the fact that two out of three of our alliance shouldn't have been waiving builds. I built wherever I could - and tried to keep a token force behind the lines close enough to respond to any threat of stab. With the exception of Wessex, I felt that I could get enough back in time to defend my centers if required. (Except in the face of an opponent who manages to field nine or ten builds at a time...)

However, I saw the empty hole forming in Europe - thought about suggesting to my allies that they use those builds to offset each other - and then promptly forgot about writing and never brought it up. If I had brought it up even once, I'm sure Russ would have

plunked down those units and we wouldn't have ended the game in a solo. My regret, and my total bad there.

But as Morpheus says - 'what happened, happened, and could not have happened any other way.' Nigel, that was one hell of an impressive solo. I really did feel like an Ewok during those last couple of turns - and not the ones that manage to survive at the end either... Russ, you were a great ally and I'm glad it worked as well as it did for as long as it did. Nick, hats off to an excellent GM and thank you for running such an excellent game.

The press was wonderful. The Godzilla and Mothra jokes were freaking hilarious. And I sincerely hope we all meet on the next board to do it again soon.

Egypt (Ian Moes):

Remember Egypt? No, me neither ;-)

First congrats to Nigel, thanks to Nick, and thanks to all of you. This was my first game in a long while and I thoroughly enjoyed it while it lasted, despite my poor result, and perhaps even poor performance. Looking forward to getting into another.

The Egyptian starting position is awkward to say the least with limited possibilities for expansion, despite the central position. East into Arabia is really a non-starter. South-west into Wagadu is an awkward expansion route with difficult supply lines. Really my only options were the Med or south into Axum territory. I felt that to succeed in the position I needed to gamble early, find and trust an ally on one front enabling me to commit enough resources another front to gain an advantage.

Negotiations with B were promising and we explored the idea of an African triple which was very appealing. Negotiations in the Med went less well. I was keen to expand into the Med, not north into Byzantium, but early negotiations with Greg didn't seem to be getting anywhere. He repeatedly told me he saw himself as a naval power and that an alliance between us would require me being cast as the land general. And fleet builds in the Med from me would be unacceptable.

Ultimately, the majority of potential neutrals available to me were in the Med, and thus the greater possibilities for a strong position led to a decision to work with B and Mikael. I built 2 fleets on the Med to counter what I was sure would be a strong push from Greg into the Med, in an effort to gain a quick advantage. I still think it was the right move given the situation but a combination of excellent educated guessing from Greg, and what was probably over-guessing from me meant I was unable to push the advantage I had quickly enough.

B and I had been concerned even when forming the

western triple that Mikael had very few viable avenues for expansion and that sooner or later he would need to look at expanding in Africa. We were keen to pre-empt this threat, and with me not making gains in the Med as quickly as I needed to, I needed another source of centers to assist with the effort. I allied with Spain and B and I convinced Mikael to waive a build and move north. In the end, I stabbed, B feinted and then B stabbed me. Ce la vie. I knowingly opened myself up to that risk and did not feel particularly hard done by. I attempted to piece things back together with B but it didn't happen.

Meanwhile in the Med, I just couldn't catch a break. I would succeed in getting good position in the spring but would be out-guessed in the Fall by Greg (great work mate). The alliance with Spain looked promising, but he soon had bigger problems and our plans for the Italian peninsular didn't come to fruition. Things weren't helped in my campaign by an inability to communicate with the East Franks until they were replaced, by which time I had some success in getting help against Byzantium, but by then I'd been stabbed by Axum.

Following Axum's stab, I felt I had two choices: 1. retreat into my home centers and defend as long as possible and try to become someone's lackey; or 2. Try one last time to gain a dominant position in the Med and use that collateral to work a new agreement with Axum. I went with the latter, it didn't work and the writing was on the wall.

I think a lot of my thoughts on the variant have been echoed by others with regards to central positions. One thing I would add is that conversely, many of the edge powers only have 1 or 2 viable routes of expansion, which places further pressure on the centre powers. I know B and I were both swayed very much by this situation with SV and Wagadu.

Specific to Egypt, it may just be a reflection of the fact that I screwed it up, but I think the starting position is a

little flawed as it has too few realistic avenues for early expansion compared to the potential sources of trouble. Abandoning the Med would be disastrous yet this makes conflict with Byzantium difficult to avoid. Possibly making Jerusalem neutral and adding another Egyptian home center inland in Africa would help the situation, as it makes the Egyptian position a bit more defensible, makes the logistics of expanding into Africa more workable and it adds another neutral for Byzantium and Egypt (and Arabia) to negotiate over (more pie to share

will make for more alliances). Plus I think the limitations on the Egyptian canal in the early game are a hindrance more than a help. I would also like to hear Greg on why he saw Byzantium as needing to be a naval power, I think it's important to the variant that Byzantium and Egypt have viable potential for early alliance (my suspicion is that the historically accurate home centre in Italy is a big influence and perhaps needs to be reviewed).

France (Nigel "Nigs" Phillips):

Thanks to Nick for running it so well, and to David for the design.

I'm not convinced about any imbalance between central and edge starts, though obviously in this game edge ones did best by the end. Personally I'd say the hardest starting places look to be Wagadu and Denmark, India and Khazaria. I'd love to try playing again from a central spot, to see how I fared. The chaos building should allow someone to "acquire" an edge if they can defeat a neighbor (for example if Axum had conquered Wagadu before the France/Spain rivalry is resolved).

I suggest the winning target be lowered from 54 – takes too long to get there (at least 921 for me in this game if we hadn't agreed the draw, maybe 922). A target of say 40, perhaps with a minimum lead of 3 over the second country seems more likely to get a reasonable length game.



My starting strategy was just to sound people out – I'd played with Mikael before, and Trout had been my GM, everyone else was new to me. Initial relations with all my neighbors (East Franks, Danes, Ummayyads and Byzantines) were cordial, and in particular we avoided complications that would have prevented 2 builds. However, there was less communication with the East Franks, so in 902 I took the chance to go east, while the EF move towards remaining neutrals in central Europe. Getting the EF pressured by Danes and Ummayyads run in with Wagadu and Byzantium meant I could leave

the med alone and focus on land. 903 was more of the same.

The big shift for me was Trout's suggestion of a three way western alliance. Given the size of the map this seemed an excellent way to make good progress, particularly as having pushed Germany east, I had a secure homeland. I guess from Trout's point of view the two of them could balance me, and ensure I didn't swamp either of them individually. Once we got rolling, I made more rapid progress than Germany or Denmark, and planned to stick with it until the end. Hence the proposed three way draw later on. This alliance proved stable and far reaching, and provided each of us with opportunities.

In order to defeat Spain I was obliged to come into conflict with Byzantium, who wanted me to be fleet-free. That was no real hardship, and the growth in the med ultimately gave me enough dots to win. It also aligned me with the slow German/Byzantium conflict.

In order to try to open a second front and have some fun, in 907 I arranged with Trout for a long convoy to Siberia. Didn't work out that productive, but still fun. Getting into Russia with the second army convoy was more use, and helped tie myself Denmark and Germany together.

From there on, it was a slog across the med and Africa, until alliances solidified for several years. The ability to defend on the map seems huge (for example around the Axumite starting point). Several of us were unwilling to settle for a multi-player draw of 7 or 8. I considered several ways to break the impasse, including a mock war with Germany. Once Lynn stabbed SV, I had therefore already worked out how to take Russ on for real, as well as a subterfuge. BH chucking dots my way as well as to SV helped enormously: loads of builds, big gaps, and rapid conquest of Europe. A golden opportunity, and one I was happy to seize. Had Russ built at the right time, I guess we would have had a big draw, but fortunately he didn't. The end was fairly much unstoppable: so many targets, so little opposition.

One thing I tried twice was to establish a second base and use the chaos build facility to develop influence at a

distance from my main location. The expedition to Siberia came to nothing, other than some more extensive contact with Lynn in China. The second long convoy was more fruitful, leading to two armies in the Caucasus. This facilitated discussions with Russ and Trout about the attacks on Arabia there. Ultimately it was

also useful in delaying Russ's ability to move armies west to defend his Russian dots.

Not sure how often the establishment of a second location could be a major development, but it is an option for those with fleets.

Germany (Russell Manning):

I have a lot of respect for Nick as a player, a GM and a variant designer. I have also long been partial to large map variants; my favorite being Imperial. So when Nick asked me to join the game as a replacement, I was honored and jumped at the chance. Then I looked at the map.

I joined the game in Fall902 and my first thought was; "what the heck did I get myself into." I took over a position that was a 6 SC Central European nation. My forces are split 2 in the western part and 4 in the eastern part of my country. There were no more neutrals to my west but the east was loaded with them. Additionally, I had 4 West Frankish Armies in my face and Army Lothairingia dislodged by the West Franks that I had to retreat. Further, Denmark is to the north and looks like it is getting ready to move south.

It was clear I was being attacked by the West Franks. It also looked like Denmark was moving in such a way as to attack south. Honestly, I came to the conclusion I was in the game for maybe 6 turns. However, I was going to try my best to make it longer. I decided the first thing I had to do was get the West Franks to stop attacking me and keep the Danes from starting to attack me. I contacted both Trout and Nigel. Trout said he hadn't really made up his mind about which way to go and that he would keep an open mind. That looked good so I started to focus on Nigel.

Nigel seemed interested in at least not going any further east and through a series of email exchanges we came up with an agreement. I had already lost Lothairingia so I agreed to make no attempts to get it back and we would set the border as the Bremen to Lombardy line (at least that is how I remember it). However, something made me not really trust Nigel. Not sure what it was, my innate Diplomacy paranoia maybe, but I just had this sneaking suspicion that he wasn't going to stick to it. Therefore, I moved a little more defensively just to be on the safe side. Glad I did because Nigel didn't stick to the agreement. When I contacted him after the results came out, he made it pretty clear that he wasn't going to change targets.

There was no way I was going to be able to get the rest of my units moved west to fight Nigel without losing a couple more SC's. The resulting loss of units would mean I wouldn't be able to beat Nigel. I figured that meant Trout would jump on me to get his share of SC's

before I died. So I came up with the following plan. I was going to keep moving east. My goal was to pick up one eastern neutral for every SC I lost to Nigel. I figured one of two things would happen. Eventually, I would be consolidated enough to be able to mutually support myself. The other is that Nigel would move far enough East that he would come into contact with the Danes moving south. I was hoping that at that point Trout would be willing to actively ally with me in fighting the West Franks.

I also received emails from Kiev, Khazaria and Byzantium. Kiev and Khazaria wanted to work with me against Denmark and Kiev respectively. Byzantium wrote me to tell me to stay out of the Balkans. I wrote short notes back to Kiev and Khazaria to tell them that I would be interested in working with them as some point but that I currently had my hands full with the West Franks. I was a little more responsive to Byzantium. I tried to explain to Gregory my move East strategy and offered to split Onoguria and Dalmatia. He would get Onoguria and I would get Dalmatia. His initial response was no, he would be taking both of them. Therefore, I had my Army Slavonia support Onoguria to keep him from getting it. I figured if I showed him I was willing to stand up to him he would be more willing to negotiate. I made the same move in the Spring 903.

Things looked bleak for me after the Spring 903 turn. The West Franks were basically steam rolling me, the Danes had landed on the continent and looked about to join the steamroll, and Byzantium didn't really seem interested in working with me either. Sometimes I really hate being a replacement player. Then the miracle happened. Between Spring and Fall 903, Nigel offered a deal to me and Trout. Form a European alliance and take on the rest of the board. I jumped at the chance. After a few turns of cautious moves to show we weren't going to stab one another, the three of us started working very closely together. We each split the map up. Denmark would go north through Russia, West Franks would go south through the Spain and Africa and I would go east/southeast through Byzantium. Trout and Nigel were really able to explode at this point. I, on the other hand, had a real grinding war with Gregory. It was fall 906 before I got my first actual build since I took over.

I believe it was around this point the Benjamin contacted me about creating a defensive alliance with him and Trout against Nigel. Unfortunately, I didn't think I could

agree to it. I was basically in a war of elimination with Byzantium. I was pretty confident that Nigel wasn't going to be attacking me any time soon. I had just made my first really break through against Gregory so all my units were tied up there so if Nigel attack anybody other than me, there was no way I would be able to get them back to attack Nigel. Since I couldn't agree to do it and I don't really like saying I will do something I have no intentions of doing, I never responded to B. Sorry about that.

Around Fall 911 I started to waive my builds. I told my allies it was because I was stacked up 3 deep in the Balkans and Caucasus at the time so I didn't see the need become 4 deep. The real reason is that I was trying to give myself a strategic reserve against a possible stab by Nigel. This was around the time he really started to explode and I didn't want to be too tempting a target. By the time I got up to 5 waived builds, I was feeling kind of comfortable.

When the stalemate line started to form, I really didn't want the game to end so I started working hard on Lynn to get him to break it. I didn't want the game to end in a 7 way and I thought between Trout and myself we could keep Nigel from getting the solo. I always thought Nigel would probably go for it if he had the chance but I thought it would be too hard. It was my intention to build my 5 waived builds in Central Europe to keep him from seeing any opportunities. However, I didn't want to build them too soon and trigger a reaction from him that would get myself jumped.

I looked at the map in the Fall 917 and thought I should build this turn. I even typed up the email to build armies in Saxony, Bavaria, Moravia, Onoguria and Dalmatia. However, I changed my mind at the last minute. I looked at the map. Saw no units in Europe and most of the West Franks as being at least 2 turns away from being in Europe. I figured the chance of a stab wasn't there so don't upset the apple cart. Unfortunately, I neglected to look at how many units Nigel was building. To say I was surprised when the fall builds came out would be an understatement.

I still thought between Trout and I, we would be able to hold Nigel off until help arrived. However, after the Fall 918 turn when Nigel got to build 9 units, it was just a matter of time. You know how Matt said his one decision changed the game. I think my decision not to build was the same type of decision. If I had built in Fall 917 like I had planned, Nigel would have been stopped on my doors step.

I have to say this was one of the more bizarre games I have played in. I think the West Frank/East Frank/Dane alliance is probably one of the closest working relationships I have had in 20+ years of playing Diplomacy. It is also the first time I have been called incompetent and a disgusting collaborator in open press. I am not sure I can make any comments about the variant itself. I agree about the difficulties faced by the more central powers and I think 54 are too many for a solo. However, all in all, it was a good game. I had a lot of fun and would definitely play the game again.

India (Andy Jameson):

Yes, I actually played in this game. Hey, don't act so surprised - I made it halfway! I really expected Arabia and Turan to walk right over me, and they probably would have without China and Srivijaya at my back. Of course, having powerful allies at your back is generally only good for one thing - a knifing. In my case, while I was moving and Jorge Saralegui was standing in for me. In the words of one of those allies (who shall remain nameless but was the northern of the pair), "We didn't think you'd be coming back. Sorry." I respect the skill of all of my neighbors, and the superior diplomatic prowess that most of them possessed. I suppose I missed my calling in life, as a pincushion.

Congratulations to the West Franks, who were so far away that I never had any contact with them whatsoever. I'd like to think I contributed to the powerful stances of China and Srivijaya, first by teaming with them, then as a fertile feeding ground, then by providing a couple extra units on the front lines. My ultimate sacrifice, my final center, was more of a "command decision" on the part of my erstwhile ally than a donation.

I had a lot of fun, and I'd love to do it again (though not necessarily any time soon). This is certainly a time-consuming game!

Khazaria (David Cohen):

First of all, congratulations to Nigel on a great win. As is true with many solos, he would not have been able to win given more suspicion on the part of some of the other players, but was able to lull them to the point where a win was his for the taking. Great work! Thank

you as well to all the other players, for playing with skill and dedication. Finally, all praise to Nick. GMinig a very large variant is, I can tell you all, a lot of work, and the game flow and adjudications were smooth and well managed.

Regarding the status of the variant itself, the ongoing

progress of the playtest gave me valuable input for changes to the variant, which I think I have now, for the next version. That said, if anyone has any suggestions for improvement at this point, I'd be glad to hear them. I will send a map out to everyone with changes, and you can comment then, as well.

Onward to my EOG, a short, sad and simple story. Russia (Darren) may not remember, but I save all my emails. He had specifically agreed that I was to receive Bulgar. I based my negotiations with my other neighbors on this fact, and to get two builds in the first year, which I feel is important for the central Powers in this variant, I needed Bulgar. Basically at the last moment, Russia announced to me that he was going to take Bulgar instead. To change my plans around at this point, I would have angered several other neighbors, which I was not willing to do so early in the game. So I warned Russia, and pointed out his other options, but he was insistent. Well, so was I. This turn of events doomed us both, as it turned out.

All went well, other than the clash over Bulgar, and Russia was now my initial target. I made a mistake though in trying to finesse him, waiting for a player to hit him in the back, rather than to immediately go after him

full strength. I figured I could get at least one of Byzantium (Gregory), Denmark (Sanford) or Germany (first Jack, then Russell) to move on him, while Arabia (Matt) and Turan (John) were busy south and east, but while Arabia and Turan were busy, so were all my potential western allies. After a couple more turns, it became obvious that it would be a long slog for whichever of Russia or I would emerge victorious, and that winner would be behind in development. I tried to communicate this to Russia, and he to me, I suppose, but neither of us could convince the other to give in.

Unfortunately for me, things resolved in the east before they did in the west. Arabia and Turan saw an undefended back, and they acted on it. I kept pleading for help, but no one was available. Three on one, I was dead. The only question was how I was going to go. I resolved to stick it to Russia, and made sure his gains against me were time consuming and minimal, which I think, when the west finally resolved itself, contributed to his ultimate elimination.

Not my best results, and frustrating, but still fun. Certainly, I look forward to meeting everyone again, in a future game.

Russia (Darren Sharma):

Congratulations to Nigel on a solo which, like Nick, I thought was never going to be the outcome. Thanks to Nick for GM'ing a monster sized game. The game started a bit quietly, but then warmed up, so thank you to all my fellow players for making it fun with all the energy you put in.

900-902

My game as Kiev/Russia started with a failure to negotiate the fate of Bulgar with my neighbor Dave/Khazaria. He said it was key to his security. I felt it was pretty important to mine, and didn't fancy giving it away. Stubbornness led to us both fighting over it for years, while other powers expanded. It was a waste of time and energy, and doomed us both I think, but we couldn't find a way out. I tried offering Pech in its place, for example, but no deal. The commentary wondered if there was any bad feeling between me and Dave - let me lay that to rest now. Just two crusty old stubborn men. Design issue: are Kiev and Khazaria bound to fight over Bulgar? If so, let's have two Bulgar SCs.

903-904

I'm starting to feel pretty good here, as I've forced Bulgar, and Samanid/John and the Arabian Matt are attacking my implacable enemy Khazaria. Moreover, me and Byzantium/Greg are getting on very nicely indeed thanks. So old Kiev stretches out west, towards Borussia. I'm in touch with Nig, who persuades me that honestly he's about to stab Germany and/or Denmark. I

didn't know which way he'd go but I thought he's really got to stab one of them, and I don't care which, as I can join in the fun on either. But, Nigel/France has seen an killer opportunity in Spain. I tried to force the issue by getting in Denmark's way a little, stopping him taking Borussia. I thought that if blocking Denmark didn't tempt France in, it would tempt Germany to ally with me. I was emboldened by what I thought were a couple of easy SC's coming my way from the beleaguered Khazaria.

Here I should say that I have a lot of respect for Trout for taking Denmark as far as he did. I think it's a really weak power to play, spread all over the place. In fact, I would take the Kievan position over the Danish one (or for the same reason, Byzantine position) any day. I'm not buying into the view that edge powers have it easy party because of this and partly because all the edge players apart maybe from Srivijaya can be flanked by sea easily.

905-907

In this phase, Denmark and Germany attack, while Arabia and the Samanid take up what SCs I might have got from Khazaria. I was so tied up in the north that I left the Khazaria gimme SCs uncontested. It was really frustrating. The EOG statements have candidates for the turning point of the game. For me, this is it. If Arabia and the Samanid had left the me my fair share of Khazar SCs, I could have held off Denmark and, with Byzantium, Germany. I'm not sure that Nigel/France would have remained their ally, or that Arabia would have stabbed the Samanid if I had held off

Denmark. Kiev touching on all these conflicts is part of what makes this variant so great.

908 - 916

A slow but inevitable decline into decrepitude and then

oblivion. I watched the east risk and the west march on, but I was merely a spectator.

I'm ready to play again, starting tomorrow!!

Spain (Nathan Deily):

As many others have correctly pointed out, Nigs played an excellent game, and many thanks to Nick for running it quite well.

A post mortem of my own performance in this one is pretty straightforward - conditions on the board, and a couple of key missteps led to my exit in the midgame.

Conditions on the board - Nigs was quite coy from the beginning, and so I did a lot of reaching out without much success. I'm glad Trout's owned up to his lack of communication - that was a major frustration for me because from the beginning I felt no one was containing the West Franks - particularly when I saw the early and dramatic successes, and when the power changed hands, I figured the best I could do was cozy up to him and collaborate. This may ultimately have been a mistake, or at least ceding Pamplona was.

I'm still not sure why Axum and Wagadu didn't get into conflict sooner. I recognize landing an army in Africa early on antagonized Mikael, but I felt sure they would tangle over the central African centers and I tried really hard to encourage it. Ultimately, I think this would have been a better strategy for Mikael than getting into it with me - I really saw my future as a Mediterranean/Northern African one, and tried to communicate that to anyone who I thought it would benefit.

I also advocated early on for a "Muslim alliance" that I still wish we had tried to make happen - controlling the Med and Middle east with 3 or 4 strong powers would

have been a very interesting outcome, maybe even throwing SriVijaya in to complete the strategic effect. Alas, this never got any momentum.

Missteps - Clearly, giving Pamplona to Nigs was the beginning of the end, but at the time I thought I needed to secure peace in the north to deal with Wagadu and keep expanding in the Med. Things were going reasonably well.

Had I known Mikael would get so aggressive, I would have gone straight for him and left the Med centers for later, but I was concerned enough about the Axum/Egypt/Byzantium affair to want to grab my position as fast as I could, watching the Frankish situation unfold with quite a lot of concern.

Nigs' stab came just before I intended to really shore up defenses at home, so it was well timed. From there, it was just a matter of time as I clung to the island holdouts. Chaos builds do make the idea of keeping some portion of a power intact and able to rebuild an interesting aspect of the game.

As things got worse, the limericks got more fun to write. I'd certainly like to try playing again, perhaps with a central power. I agree the "edge" players had a bit of an advantage here, but Umayyas Spain a bit less so than some others.

Thanks to all. This game has definitely taught me a few things. Hopefully the lessons stick.

Samanid (John Reside):

This game started off all wrong for me. I knew I had to focus primarily in the southeast at the beginning, but had a terrible time finding a solid alliance. India was my first choice, but he could never seem to make up his mind who he was allied with and in the end this led to his downfall. China was cordial and we seemed to get along well, but tactically there was nothing we could do together unless he was willing to become the naval power to my land power. He was unwilling to do so, as he was in league with Sri Vijaya from the beginning. Sri Vijaya would have been an excellent ally vs. China, but I could not develop any sort of rapport, much less an alliance, with him. And frankly, he was probably better off sticking with China anyway. Khazaria and I had a

dmz kind of relationship, with the intent to perhaps attack Arabia down the road.

While I was struggling to found a stable alliance, Arabia began sweeping east and asked for my assistance. I felt like I was being set up for a stab, but I couldn't do much to stop it, so I played along. Arabia proved faithful, and we had several seasons of great gains together. With Matt's help, I managed to block off the Chinese with the possibility of gains against him, while simultaneously expanding north. Khazaria fell quickly to our stab, and then Russia began losing centers to us.

Then it all fell apart. Denmark (as I remember) convoyed an army into the north, and Arabia stabbed me. Thus China was able to get the upper hand in the east, and

my great nation collapsed, under attack from all sides. I knew Arabia was stringing me along until the time was right for him to stab me, but with my forces tied up in so many areas, I was never able to put the necessary units in place for defense.

In a game of diplomacy greats, I feel like I did fairly well for myself, all things considered. I was near the top of the rankings at the height of my power (#3 in center count, I believe).

Srivijaya (Mike Morris):

Sri Vijaya is an excellent place to start; corner location, no adjacent fleets or armies, neutrals within reach. However, the advantage can be lost quickly. There are three other nations with fleets bordering the Indian Ocean, and of course the key to SV success is control of that Ocean. So I needed to grab neutrals quickly, build more fleets, and do what I could to control the southern seas.

Fortunately, Lynn in China realized that his strength would be armies and that a early war between the two of us would doom each of us. So it was easy to put together an alliance with Lynn. We agreed on who would get which neutrals and on buffer zones/dmzs so that each of us could feel comfortable and expand without having to waste units on a large home guard. It turned out to be a very profitable alliance for each of us, even with the temporary tension caused by Lynn's stab (more on that later).

I also attempted to form an alliance with one of the African powers, but no takers. Ben, I did not see an inevitable conflict with you - if you would have agreed to build mostly armies rather than fleets and allow me hegemony in the Indian Ocean, I think you could have had a solid base to consolidate an African/Arabian empire. But of course you disagreed <G>. And Ben is correct, when I succeeded in taking a good share of India, conflict between the two of us was by that time inevitable. I made a considerable effort to convince Mikael that Ben would eventually stab him, but Mikael stuck with Ben even after the stab, it seemed to me. I think that a Wagadu/SV alliance could have benefited Wagadu greatly.

When Arabia started making gains into India, Lynn was all for helping Andy hold out. I was not, since I did not see any way I'd break into Africa. India appeared to be

Variant-wise, I don't have much to say. The edge powers seem to have the upper hand, and specifically China and SV seem a bit overpowered when they work together. In our game, though, this may have been partly the result of India's lack of decisiveness. I feel that if India and I could have mounted an offensive eastward from the beginning the board would have looked much different. Overall though, in my side of the world I have few complaints. A well designed variant, and a great deal of fun to play!

my only area for gains. So I paid lip service to the effort of propping up India and moved into place to take what I could. When I started the push, Lynn joined.

So by the mid game China and I had solid control of about 1/3 of the map. However, we couldn't really make any further headway. We decided to just hold in place, taking a pot shot or two when available, and wait for something to break in the west. Unfortunately, the western alliance help firm. All that appeared left to shoot for was a 7 way draw.

I thought Lynn was OK with that, but obviously he wasn't. His stab was a true stab; it was totally unexpected by me, hitting me by complete surprise. Lynn later told me he wanted to shake things up and hoped the stab would encourage one of Nigel's western allies to do the same. That didn't work. But at least the stab did shake things up to the point that Ben decided he needed to cede centers to me. Thanks, Ben! I don't know how far Lynn felt he could take the stab, but we really didn't have much trouble at all patching things up. All in all, I think it had little effect on the game, except letting me come in 2nd place in center count (not that that matters, if you lose, you lose <g>).

Regarding the overall design of the game, I think the edge powers do have an advantage at the beginning, but I don't think it is that great. Nigel didn't win by being on the edge - France is bordered by three other powers to begin with. I think Nigel won by building an early alliance that took over a solid corner position and expanded from there. I would love to try a central power in another game.

Thanks to Nick for GMing this very difficult game and thanks to all the players for helping to create a very enjoyable experience. And congrats to Nigel for his solo!

Wagadu (Mikael Johansson):

A lot has already been said, but perhaps my 2 cents will reveal a bit more!

Wagadu was one of my top choices; Reasonable growth and low risk for initial conflict. I quickly saw that an African triple alliance could work very well. I also

acknowledged the threat the China/Sri Vijayan could pose. Thus, Axum would be tasked with holding the seas (with a little help from me) while I dealt with Spain and Ian tackled Byzantium. It was a sound approach.

Year one went more or less the right way, though Axum not using Lub to take Zim was a bother. Benjamin assured me his intents were all good, and I believed him, for the moment.



The planning for the second year was well under way; I was to push north in general and by now war with Spain was unavoidable. Ian was communicating a little less than I would have liked here, but I believe he was moving so I didn't think of that as a problem. However, after spring 02, Ian and I started to disagree on how to best implement the attack on Spain. He even asked to 'borrow' Kan, which I of course rejected. Around here I also proposed that I'd be allowed to build another army (to counter Spain building in Mau), and Ian objected very strongly and Benjamin echoed his concern. I backed off and went as per their suggestion, pushing everything against Spain – getting a lucky break in taking Mau and getting a very good position.

Axum (Benjamin Hester):

Thanks to our tireless and dedicated GM Nick for an excellent game. I enjoyed it thoroughly. Typically I write an EOG with an analysis on each position, but as I had very limited insight on what was actually happening in the remote regions of the map, I'll choose a

Year 3 looked promising, I was set to start doing some real damage to Spain and Africa was wide open. The level of trust was high. However, Benjamin decided another army was needed; a big warning signal since he objected heavily towards me building another one in 02. Then, out of the blue, Ian stabbed me for Kan and Benjamin moved towards me as well – my position was instantly a LOT worse. However, I managed to turn Axum around (I'd like to think), so instead Ian found himself in quite a peril!

Somewhere around here I got hold of Nigel, and worked out a deal with him regarding Spain. This was crucial, since it later on allowed me to outlast way beyond my expected lifespan.

Year 4 went by without much notice, a lot of movement and shuffling but very little was accomplished.

In the fall year 5, Benjamin stabbed me hard...and this time, it was a lot worse. Ian's move could be contained, but this was different. I was set to lose at least 1 sc per season. I was most frustrated by this move since I saw no rationale. I pointed towards West France (whom was by now at 14 sc's) and how his move meant West Franks would be a lot harder to contain. I also outlined how things would transpire; unless he pulled away I would help West Franks until I died; thus wedging Axum in between West Franks, Arabia and Sri Vijaya. My sole hope was that Benjamin could see this as plainly as I could. He didn't. Thus I set about doing everything to hurt Axum; hence the support for Mike into Gos and so forth.

I continued to work closely with Nigel and Trout (to a certain extent), but I had slim hopes of surviving. My hope was to outlast Axum, which I very nearly did, and my fleet in Awl did play an important role for Nigel for a very long time. While my prediction didn't quite come true (I didn't expect Nigs to solo!), I think that Axum stabbing me was one of the key factors in Nigel winning. As Benjamin pointed out in his own EoG, it was a mistake that proved more fatal than it perhaps should have been.

All in all an enjoyable experience – thanks to all the players involved and to Nick for doing a great job as a GM!

chronological approach here, and focus on the theaters of the map that I was directly involved in.

At gamestart, my foreign policy was entirely driven by security concerns posed by the Sri Vijayan position. Mike and I made some small attempts at negotiations,

but it seemed apparent to both of us that our long-term interests were completely incompatible on this map. Certainly by the time India was removed, and his rejection of a land-campaign in Asia was evident, Mike and I seemed destined for conflict in the Indian Ocean. I adopted an African triple, and sincerely intended (at first) to play that alliance out as I attacked across the Indian Ocean to try and secure a corner position.

The opening phase of this game in Asia was dominated by Arabia. Matt raced out to an astounding early lead, but was ultimately (and I believe unavoidably) enveloped by the edge powers surrounding him. In any vector of growth for Arabia, there is a minimum of two rival powers between him and an edge of the map. Arabia is bordered by India, Egypt, Turan, Aksum, and Khazaria in the opening of the game. Whomever he chooses to attack, he benefits some other edge power more than he gains himself.



I watched in horror as Matt chose to take out Andy, and I was powerless to stop it. This was a sound strategy for him with John of Turan at his side) - but every dot he claimed only made the China and SV juggernaut that much more unstoppable. If he had attacked Egypt, he would have given Gregory and me the same benefit. If Turan, then Khazaria and China, etc. Had he simply tried (and it can be argued that he *did* try) to carve enough SCs out to solo right in the middle, he would be (and was) dog piled before he ever got close. That's just the nature of the map.

Some will say his attack on Andy in India was premature, or point to his stab of Turan or his abandonment of the Malabar Sea as ill-advised moves. Perhaps so. But everyone makes some mistakes - I certainly did - and the outcome would have been no different. Lynn of China and Mike (SV) had already locked down the Indian Ocean and Asian steppes, and could patiently and safely wait for someone to open a second front against the Arabian west. And so they did.

My situation was no different. From the beginning, it was abundantly clear that I would have to drive east or west immediately to reach a sustainable position. Stuck in the middle, I would eventually get dog piled and die. Given the African triple available to me, and the extremely threatening position that SV enjoys dominating the Indian Ocean, I chose to throw the kitchen sink at Mike, and allied with both other powers of Africa, and Andy in India. Andy was dog piled and eliminated before I could do a thing to help him. So Matt took his place against Mike.

Some will say I should have never abandoned the African triple offered to me. And I would agree - until Matt abandoned the Arabian Sea, and the SV armada pushed further forward, each step proving to be irreversible, supported by a wall of SV fleets behind the front. When it became clear I would never advance against Mike, with or without Arabian help, and that the Chinese/SV alliance could not be negotiated apart (at the time) - then I chose to turn and take the gains available to me on the African continent, while trying to steer Mike northwest against Arabia rather than against my shores.

This clearly only delayed the inevitable conflict with SV, and perhaps here I should have taken a page from Nigel's playbook and kept my alliance with Mikael, entrusting the security of my western front to him. Fair criticism - on the surface. But the truth is that I still had no other route to expand available to me. Attacking Arabia would have only made Mike's advance that much easier. The Mediterranean was a closed theater to me. (Note to David - consider easing the Alexandria canal restrictions - perhaps making it just like Kiel).

So ultimately, I learned from Matt's experience in attacking India and Turan, and chose to leave him alone to hold back C/SV as best he could, hoping that perhaps I could bring all of Africa under my sway and lock down the SW corner of the map for myself rather than the SE corner as I originally intended, finally becoming a corner power that needed only a thin line across the Atlantic and North Africa to secure that front, while focusing the majority of my forces east against SV.

(Nigel beat me to the punch as Mikael executed a picture-perfect lopsided defense, and you know how the story goes from there...)

The situation is the same as Matt's. No matter how good we did, every attack we made gave someone else greater relative gains than we received. In standard, no power has more than one rival to take out in order to reach a secure edge or corner. Thus the alliances can flex and bend in almost any configuration to adjust to the threat of an early leader, and anyone not starting with a safe edge or corner (AIG) can easily get one - which makes the Central Powers alliance so appealing.

But in KW, the entire core of the map (Byz, Egy, Axu, Khaz, Tur, Ara) would need to band together and push outward as one front for any one of them to really stand a chance of ever seeing 54. There is a huge advantage worth a dozen SCs or more in assuming one of the corner positions over one of the core spots in this variant.

So that all shaped my strategy through the mid-game. Ultimately, my plan to try and secure the southwest corner of the map failed due to Mikael's strong defense and Nigel's quick response to capitalize on the vacuum of Spanish and Wagadu forces at sea. To my utter amazement, the Danes and East Franks refused (in silence) to entertain any concept of a defensive pact in the event of a West Frankish stab. I'll never understand why. So in retrospect, the decision to take Wagadu out was my single biggest blunder in this game, though there was still a strong option for a large share of a 7-way draw as Nigel emerged as a threat to solo.

As we transitioned into the endgame, Matt and Lynn formed a solid line through the Asian landmass, and Mike and I (despite past conflicts) began the process of locking down Africa from Al-Qatta'i down to Zimbabwe. Just as that line was two seasons away from completion, the unthinkable happened - Lynn stabbed Mike. I will never understand what he intended to gain from such a move. Predictably, Nigel immediately engulfed the rest of Africa as Mike had to fall back from his positions supporting my line in Africa and respond to the Chinese stab. Faced with inevitable elimination, I fed as many of my dots to Sri Vijaya as I could to aid his counter to the Chinese stab, and assumed my role as a one dot janissary in Socotra. Alas, the damage was done, as Nigel then dropped his waived builds and new African plunder as builds in the heart of Europe to stab his allies. As of the writing of this EOG, the game is still active, but I believe the West Frankish solo is inevitable, so I'm going ahead and sending this to press. If I get proved wrong, and Nigel is somehow stopped, well then I'll eat crow, but I doubt very much that will be the case.

So -

Ian (Egypt) - through no fault of his own, I targeted him, mostly for positional reasons, though I had no love for

the war against Byzantium either.

Andy (India) - wish I could have done more to help you. I don't think enough people valued the critical role India plays in slowing the C/SV juggernaut. It's like Italy helping R/T take out Austria - good in the short term, but with some nasty consequences.

Gregory (Byzantium) - same story. Wish I could have done more to help you, but couldn't really build a significant presence of my own in the Med to do so.

Mike (SV) - well played throughout, I can't fault a single move you made. Your willingness to reconcile with me to face the West Frankish threat despite our previous conflicts speaks highly to your grasp of strategy. Your generosity in allowing me to survive will not be soon forgotten either.

Mikael (Wagadu) - Should have stuck with you. I don't doubt you would have remained a loyal ally to the end, and I openly admit I undervalued the role you played in containing the West Franks. The risks I assumed were not worth the potential payoff. You have my sincere apologies.

Matt (Arabia) - played an excellent game overall, but took some risks in the Indian Ocean that had far-reaching consequences unfortunately. We should have coordinated our moves more closely, and part of the fault for that rests with me. I think the decision to stab Turan was perhaps premature, as China reaped most of the spoils.

Lynn (China) - strong game in the opening and mid-game. The decision to stab SV was ill-timed at best though. Perhaps it would have been different if we had formed the line, waited for Nigel to stab his allies first, and then you made your move, but as it was, this stab handed Nigel the game on a platter.

Nathan (Spain) - Mikael left few opportunities open for a stab that would have allowed me to aid you sooner, a testament to his skill. By the time I stabbed Wagadu, Nigel and Gregory had all but eliminated the Umayyad dynasty, and with it, one of our best hopes for containing the West Franks.

I really had very little significant interaction with the rest of the map, so I'll end my EOG here. All in all, this was a very fun game, and I am very grateful to both David for designing the variant, and Nick for running it. Thanks also to Doug and the commentators; I eagerly anticipate reading your full analysis of the game, as the portions published in DW were extremely interesting to read. See you all again soon in DC...