Diplomacy World #135
Fall 2016 Issue

I had to attack you; I was running out of lies.

www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Fall 2016 issue. It seems more like six months since the last issue (to me, anyway) but we continue to churn these things out on a regular quarterly schedule. I do believe that is an important feature of Diplomacy World. There are many places to go for articles about or somehow relevant to Diplomacy and the Diplomacy hobby these days, and I encourage you to read ALL of them. It isn't a competition. But I also like people to have the knowledge that every three months they can expect another issue of Diplomacy World to find its way to the web.

As always, some issues are going to have more material youre interested in, and some will have less. Despite the changing directions our hobby may head towards, there will always be a need and a desire for a vast range of material.

One of the things you realize about this hobby the longer you are part of it is not just how it changes, but how the people surrounding you change. Some come and go, some leave and never return, and some remain steady as Gibraltar. Life takes precedence over hobby all the time, in positive and negative ways. New job. New marriage. New child. Divorce. Depression. Illness. And, sadly, death as well.

It is always a little tricky discussing the death of a hobby member. Because Diplomacy has been around for more than 50 years, a whole generation of players has reached the age where death or serious illness are frequent concerns. And when someone many of us have grown to regard as a good friend passes away, it is only natural to want to pay proper respects to them in Diplomacy World. But at the same time, a lot of younger hobby members have no idea who these individuals are

(through no fault of their own). The last thing we want to do is turn Diplomacy World into a quarterly obituary column. So while we have to be very selective in who we write articles about. It isn't a choice based necessarily on who was more important to the hobby, or who was older…it usualy is just based on who one of knew the best, and therefore feel qualified to write a decent article about who they were and what they meant to us. You'll find one such article in this issue, but the subject was far from the only empty chair we have added to our table in the last three months.

If you enjoy variants, this issue is a bit tilted in that direction. There are two new variants within, as well as some detailed designed notes and playtest comments on one of them. I know both designers would love to get some feedback from the Diplomacy World readership.

We're also fortunate enough to have a few convention reports, including one from new World Champion Chris Brand. I won't reveal what sort of blackmail material I had to use to get Chris to write his article, but let's just say it required a team of skilled private detectives to put together. I hope you feel it was worth it!

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is January 1st, 2017. Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com! See you in the winter, and happy stabbing!

Diplomacy World Staff:

In This Issue:

Knives and Daggers - The <u>Diplomacy World</u> Letter Column

Larry Peery - A lot of dots have flowed under the bridge since DW Issue 102 was published in April 2009 when Nemanja Simic joined the staff of the zine as an original artwork contributor. Since then Nemanja has contributed 33 (more or less) covers that have helped make DW what it is, the hobby's flagship publication.

I remember my first reaction to seeing the name on the staff roster. Like others I'm sure I wondered where the artist came from, although the Balkans seemed a good bet. Then came the challenge of figuring out how to pronounce that name. That's still a bit of a challenge. And then, last but certainly not least, there was the question "is the artist a male or female"? I watched Doug's notes and the covers carefully for clues that might enlighten me, but I never found any. Then, in an email to Doug, as I recall, I referred to Nemanja as a "she." It didn't take him long to correct that. Mystery solved.

Since, thanx to Doug's kindness (Yes, he does do kind things occasionally although he tries his best to hide them), I have a complete printed set of his issues of DW. Over the years I've had reason to go through them looking for this or that, but one thing I inevitably noticed were Nemanja's covers. They always caught my attention. One thing I've seen over the last seven years is Nemanja's development as an artist. You can see it for yourself as you see the progression in his colors from the fairly simple earliest ones that often had a bit of humor in them to the more profound later ones that contained more than a bit of pathos. Nemanja was growing older and his artwork was maturing along with the magazine and the rest of us.

I started to go back and pick out my favorites of his covers but I found that was an impossible. There were just too many of them and it was impossible to pick out one or even a handful of favorites.

As he moves on with his art I wish him much success. He's a very talented artist. I also hope he'll find it possible in the future to contribute to DW. The 'zine will miss his work and so will I.

It's probably too much to hope for but I'd love to see a retrospective of all of his covers in DW. To see them all at once in one place would be something marvelous, especially for the newer DW readers. Perhaps somebody can make it happen.

In the meantime I have my hard copies and memories to keep me content.

Thanx Nemanja.

Thaddeus Black - The longest Diplomacy game on record has recently ended in a four-way draw, Summer 2005 (game year).

http://webdiplomacy.net/board.php?gameID=93086

The longest decisive Diplomacy game remains a Turkish solo, Winter 1964 (game year), completed in 2005 (real year).

http://www.floc.net/observer/USTR/vgnp4127/vgnp4127.pdf

Larry Peery - First, a tip of the hat to Joshua for his delightful story and a deep bow to whomever did the editing of it. There's nothing harder than trying to prepare an extended conversation for publication. I try to avoid it like the plague. In fact that's one of the reasons I invented Peeriblah. So, well done.

Second, #134 was a good issue --- perfect for a mid-summer's reading while dreaming about DipCons yet to be won. To go with it I suggest a bottle of Cava, Lambrusco or a rose from the Loire. Oh, and a bowl of fresh strawberries and cream from Wepion, Belgium if you're close-by. Forget those poor cousins they serve at Ascot and Buckingham Palace and the paper mache ones they sell in the USA that are grown in Mexico.

It's a nice summer day here. I have the doors and windows wide-open and the AC running on low. I like to watch the artificial plants move in the artificial breeze. Gives me a real feeling for summer.

Tomorrow's the 4th of July and, as always, my neighbors all arranged to be gone so they'll be missing my Fiftieth Dip Blast! The highlight will be a simulcast of Robert Russell Bennett's Victory at Sea, Beethoven's Wellington Victory and Tchaikowsky's 1812 Overture --- complete with special sound effects! Last year I got a call from the Marines at Camp Pendleton wanting to know if the Arguello Gang had invaded from Mexico.

Larry Peery - As one of those who "beat the drum" for Meetup early in the game I thought I should make you aware of the following. On September 28, 2016 Meetup sent out a brief email to their organizers and perhaps others. Here's what it said:

Download on the App Store & Get it on Google Play

"Meet the new Meetup
"Organizers are the heart and soul of Meetup. You inspire us every day so we want you to be the first now about our new app. It unlocks the best of Meetup by getting you more of the right members.
"What's new
"A better fit
Smarter, more personal recommendations send the right members to you.
"Simple to use
"It's easy for people to join your Meetup, and keep the conversation going.
"Bold new look
"A beautiful, modern design makes your Meetup stand out."

There's also a link to a "Learn more" page but it doesn't say much.

As those of you who use the various Meetup Diplomacy sites have probably noticed some of them are dead and many appear to be on their last legs. Even the ones with 100+ members have a hard time getting a single board together on a regular basis. I suspect that's true of many different Meetup sites. The questions are: 1) has Meetup's time come and gone, or: 2) Can this change revive Meetup and give it a new lease on life? Only time will tell.

Chris Brand - Back in 2007, Vancouver BC hosted the Diplomacy world championships. It's time we had another Diplomacy tournament in BC.

Location - Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 15808 104th Ave, Surrey, BC, Canada

Timings:
Round 1 registration will be noon on the 28th January. Games will go on until somebody wins or until all surviving powers agree to a result.

Round 2 registration will be 11am on the 29th. Second round games will be time-limited to ensure that everyone can get home

Cost - $0 (Cdn)

Scoring system - Games will be scored using sum-of-squares

Winning - Winner will be the player with the best total score of two games. Ties will be resolved by comparing the best individual game score.

Prizes - There will be a prize for the overall winner and 7 "best country" awards

Tournament Director - Chris Brand

Accomodation - Rooms are available in the hotel for $95Cdn/night.

Other activities - We'll book space at a local restaurant for a meal Saturday night. Other activites will depend on when people arrive and what they're interested in. Feel free to combine with house-hunting, skiing, shopping, or other non-Diplomacy activities.

Peter McNamama - You can find links at http://petermc.net/diplomacy/

October 7-9: Tempest in a Teapot, DC area, USA.
October 22-23: Milano DipCon, Milan, Italy.
October 29-30: possible dates for French NDC, France.
November 4-6: Carnage, Killington, VT, USA.
December 2-4: PoppyCon, Melbourne, Australia
December 17: Winter Origins, Columbus, OH. USA.

2017:
January 28-29: Cascadia Open, Vancouver, Canada.
February 24-26: TotalCon, Marlborough, MA, USA.
July 7-9: WDC in Oxford, UK (facebook group)
TBA: EDC in Verona, Ialy.
2018:
TBA: WDC in Washington DC area.

Selected Upcoming Conventions
Find Conventions All Over the World at http://diplom.org/Face/cons/index.php
Also see Chris Brand's & Peter McNamara's letters at the end of the Letter Colmn

Tempest in a Teapot - Friday October 7th 2016 - Sunday October 9th 2016 - Silver Spring, Maryland - Website: http://tempest2016.com

Winter Origins - Saturday December 17th 2016 - Columbus, Ohio - Website: https://www.thecogs.org

Cascadia Open - Saturday January 28th 2017 - Sunday January 29th 2017 - Vancouver BC, Canada - Contact: Chris Brand (chris.brand "of" shaw.ca)

World DipCon – Thoughts from the Champ
By Chris Brand

Since winning WDC in Chicago a couple of weeks ago, I've been showered with congratulations and requests to "write something". The sponsorship deals are apparently all stuck in the post somewhere. So here's some writing – but what on Earth can I tell people that they don't already know ? I guess the obvious reason to ask me rather than anyone else (although I have little doubt that a lot of other people were indeed asked too) is that I actually won the thing. So here are some thoughts about how I did it and how you can do it, too.

By way of background, the 2016 WDC took place in Chicago 24th – 26th June. Jim O'Kelley and the Windy City Weasels hosted an excellent tournament in the Roosevelt University building close to the waterfront. 93 players, 52 boards, lots of former World and North American champions. They even laid on pub trivia and karaoke (sadly, they kicked us out before my song came up). If you don't know the Chicago folks, you're missing out. They're the best organized in North America, have lots of players, regular games, are extremely hospitable, and know how to run a world-class tournament. Jim is such a nice guy that he'll give up his bed for you if you need it (no need to ask, even!).

Without further ado, here's my recipe for winning any tournament with a top board:

1. attend the tournament
2. get onto the top board
3. win the top board

That may seem obvious, but I do think it's worth breaking it down like that, because those are very different activities each with their own challenges.

There are thousands of people playing Diplomacy in a setting that's organized and competitive enough that they appear on the World Diplomacy Database (http://world-diplomacy-database.com/php/commun/index.php). The largest

WDC ever had less than 200 players, and none has had more than 100 in the last decade. So the vast majority of people who are capable of winning the championship are weeding themselves out at step number 1. The more tournaments you attend, the better your chances. This was my ninth WDC – my first was Vancouver in 2007, and I only missed Milan last year since then. Of course not everyone has the same ability to travel that I do, but there are ways to cut the costs fairly dramatically and TDs are usually very helpful if you get in touch with them and tell them that you'd like to attend but are having difficulties funding the trip. Worst case, you may have to convince somebody local to host a tournament – doing that would also be good practice.

The second step is where you need to actually be able to play the game, and to be able to play under FTF tournament conditions.

There are a number of different abilities that help when playing Diplomacy at FTF tournaments –knowing the adjudication rules well, reading the board, managing time, communicating well with everyone, playing the board as it is rather than as you thought or hoped it would be, and probably others I haven't thought of. For any of those, I can point to people who are better at them than me. A friend who I've played a lot of Diplomacy with over the years told me on the Sunday evening that I'm certainly not the best at any of the various skills that matter, but that I also have no real weaknesses. I suspect that's true of most of the really good players out there, and it's certainly worth working to improve any weak spots you may have. So read Diplomacy World (http://www.diplomacyworld.net/) and The Diplomatic Pouch (http://www.diplom.org/), listen to DiplomacyCast (http://diplomacycast.com/), and of course nothing beats practice (ideally FTF tournaments, of course, but house games or online play will do).

It's also vital to know how people qualify for the top board at the particular tournament you're at, so make sure you understand the scoring system in use, how many drop rounds there are, etc. At DipCon in 2010, I learned never to leave points on the table – I'd agreed to a draw in my game only to see Eric Mead do well enough in his game to get slightly ahead of me and take the title. On the other hand, you do have to be careful not to push too hard – most of my points in the first four rounds of WDC this year were from my solo in the third round, which I owe primarily to John Gramila who was playing England to my Italy. He was rightly concerned that his solo in the first round wasn't enough to guarantee him a place on the top board and so was pushing to improve his position. In doing so, he annoyed

France, Germany, and Russia enough that I was able to get the solo and earn myself a place on the top board.

The other thing that's important is to keep track of the scores of the other players. I personally feel that keeping results secret tends to give an advantage here to the players who know more other attendees – the talk between games tends to result in the people who are in with the right crowds knowing exactly how many points the leaders have and thus what they have to aim for, while other players are left in the dark (yes, there's an argument that keeping scores secret encourages socializing between games, but I'm pretty confident that it has a negligible effect on that aspect). The main point, though, is that you need to do your best to know who has what score because this is how you'll know whether you can afford to play conservatively in the later rounds or whether you should take more chances that may or may not pay off because you need a big result to make the grade (side note – never approach your penultimate board and announce "I need a big result here if I'm going to make the top board" to your opponents).

Different people have different approaches to WDC. Some are extremely focused – they're there to win, and everything they do that weekend is because they think it will help them do so. I'm a competitive person, and in previous years I'd tried to figure out why I had a number of second and third places in tournaments but no actual wins. At WDC in Chicago in 2012, I actually tried playing more aggressively than I normally would, ending in the middle of the pack, so I rejected that approach. This was the first WDC since 2007 where I didn't actually go with the goal of winning – I went with the goal of hanging out with my friends and playing the game I love. I'd also finally come to accept that I am good enough to win tournaments, and that it wasn't a lack of ability that had prevented it so far. Ever since my first FTF tournament in 2004, people have seemed to have a higher opinion of my skills than I had. I was more relaxed than I've been at any WDC for sure, even on the top board.

Looking at my performance in the first four rounds of this year's WDC, it was nothing to write home about. A solo is always nice, of course (that was my fourth tournament solo, and my second as Italy), but my other results were mediocre to poor and you're probably better off with four good board tops than a solo in most tournaments (as noted above, though – don't leave points on the table by holding back from a solo if it's there).
So you've got some good results, and you've been tracking the other players so you know that you've made it. The top board. You've improved your odds from 0.01% to 1% to 14%. The bad news is that some of the skills that got you here aren't as useful here, and some things are very different.

First of all, it's become common to let the top board players choose their countries, often with the French method whereby you first choose what order to pick your

country. This is a whole game in itself, and one that only seems to be played for top boards, which makes it difficult to practice (perhaps there's a need to expose more tournament players to it). The goal in the first part is to find the right balance between flexibility/availability of countries versus the power to win ties. Then in the second part you're trying to end up with the players in the countries that work best for you. Here it definitely helps to know the other players – reputation and prior results helps, but there's a big advantage to have experienced their styles of play too.

At WDC, I qualified in seventh, so I had no control over the order of choosing countries (in fact, I was in the bathroom when my name was put on the table – another important skill for North American FTF tournaments in particular is to be able to fit your body's needs around the game). I ended up with a choice between Italy and Turkey, which worked very well for me. This was my third WDC top board (for the superstitious amongst you, 3 is a great number - 9 WDCs, 3 top boards, 1 win), and I'd previously played Austria and Turkey, both with less-than-stellar results. On the other hand, I'd already soloed as Italy once this tournament. So it was an easy choice to pick Italy, leaving Turkey for Dave Maletsky. The people who chose earlier had to weigh up eastern versus western powers, looking at which were already assigned and who had yet to choose, trying to assess who would likely pick which powers after them and which allocation was likely to be better for them. I was spared all of that.

A top board does play differently to most games, even other games at tournaments. First of all, everyone's absolutely playing to win and able to do so. In other games, it's often important to identify the weaker players as early as possible and to figure out how to use them to your best advantage. There are no weaker players on the top board. Play tends to more dynamic (than North American games, at least), with rapid changes to the alliance structure. It's rare for anyone to truly conclude that they no longer have a shot at the board top, and so it's difficult to get other players to help you get - or stay - ahead. Some aspects are easier - you won't have to spend a lot of time explaining what specific moves are required, people won't generally take offense if you tell them that you don't have time to speak with them, and everyone else in the game will be wanting to talk to you, too. Where you may be able to force your way to the top of other boards, on a top board you're more likely to need to be the "person fewest people object to" in order to win. Of course it's also the last day of the tournament – people have been on an emotional rollercoaster, gotten too little sleep, and the end is in sight. At WDC we also had that little thing where the game has a set ending time but the players only know roughly when it is.

It always helps to have played with people before, and I was lucky enough to have played with everyone on the top board at some point in the past. We're a small

hobby, and it tends to be certain people who travel to tournaments. This is good because I count many of those people as very good friends, even if I only see them once every few years, but it also definitely affects the games themselves – a game with a mixture of regular travelers and people who don't know the other players will be different than the same game would be if the players were all new to one another. Of course there are a number of factors at work – the travelers may be more experienced, there can be long-held rivalries or old grudges between them as well as friendships (the best of friends off the board may be unable to work together on it). One of the key skills to FTF tournaments is in fact the ability to quickly assess the other players, and the importance of that skill is lessened when it's a lot of the same crowd at all the tournaments. I think this is one of my strong points, actually, which is just as well because I have a terrible memory for other players and individual games – too many games start with me introducing myself to somebody and them replying along the lines of "yes, you were Turkey to my Austria in a game…" while I stand there looking stupid.

I'll leave the detailed analysis to those who can do it better (you can also follow Chris Martin's turn-by-turn review on YouTube), but this is what I was thinking as the game started:

> Austria – Peter Yeargin – very strong east coast player. Very practical. I can work with him.

> England – Adam Silverman – strong west coast player. Arguably one of the weaker players on the board, and probably the one I know best.

> France – Nathan Barnes – another strong west coast player. I see him more than any of the others, but it's mostly been when he's organizing rather than playing. Hosts DiplomacyCast. Very good knowledge of the game. I'd normally expect him to try something bizarre, but that feels less likely with the title at stake.

> Germany – Doug Moore – one of the strongest east coast players, particularly as Germany. Lots of experience playing at this level. Became World Champion at my first WDC. I have a feeling that Doug and Adam have a history of not working well together.

> Italy – me – strong west coast player. Definitely not as strong as some of other players on the board. Nevertheless, no reason why I shouldn't win.

> Russia – Andrew Goff –the strongest Australasian player, I believe (and there are some great players down under). Two-times World Champion. I feel like we generally both do well when we play together, though, and Italy and Russia are fairly natural allies.

> Turkey – Dave Maletsky – one of the strongest east coast players. But. Likely the least disappointed if he doesn't win. Enjoys having an influence on the board, even if he doesn't have many dots.

[The "west coast/east coast" thing is just because it's significantly easier to travel up and down the coast than between coasts, so players from the same coast likely know each other better than players from opposite coasts]

The game itself is a bit of a blur – I'm going to have to go through some of the online coverage to really appreciate it. Nathan and I agreed to go our separate ways, and we never did quite come to the point of bashing walls of fleets against each other. I mis-ordered in '02 (failing to take Trieste), which I thought at the time was enough to put me out of the running. Dave was taken down to two fleets in '04, and was then happy to give me strategy advice, which I was happy to listen to. The war between Adam and Doug did indeed come to pass, with Nathan being the big winner. I stabbed Peter and let him live. And did it again. And again, maybe ? Let Adam and Goffy contain Nathan when he got too big. When 2 o'clock rolled around, I had pulled a bit ahead of Nathan. I had a stalemate line in the Med and he'd backed off to fight Adam. Dave, Doug, and Peter had been put out of their misery. I clearly remember saying to myself "all you have to do is hold this for another 90 minutes and you've done it. You've got a line against Nathan and can push forward and take dots from him if you need to. The main risk here is a stab from Goffy" and then realizing that Goffy had somehow managed to get a build and that it had to be in Sevastapol. Then Jim was shaking my hand and announcing that I'd won. Joy, amazement, pride, relief, exhaustion – all at the same time. Yes, I had tears in my eyes.

Having go that far, it's easy – graciously accept the accolades of the other players, do some interviews, accept the award(s), thank your hosts, write some words of wisdom, then sit back and wait for those sponsorship deals to roll in.

So now that you know all my secrets, your chance to take the title from me is Oxford, 7th-9th July 2017, where the inimitable Dan Lester will be your host.

Mark Fassio: a Personalized Obituary of One of the Great Diplomacy Players of the 1980's/1990's Era

By Jim Burgess

Like most of us, I expect we all have a short list of the players in this hobby that we admire the most, usually since there are seven players in The Game, we think in terms of seven of them. Mark Fassio has been in my top seven for at least 25 years, I loved his style, his attitude, and above all his intensive personality. Fourteen years ago, we lost Kathy Byrne Caruso to cancer, in what was a great surprise to all of us since Kathy wouldn't tell us what was going on, so we only found out when she passed on. Unfortunately, since then I have had way too many others of my very closest Diplomacy hobby friends lose the battle with cancer, especially including Don Williams a few years ago. As most of you undoubtedly know, I am battling cancer myself, and unlike Kathy, Mark was incredibly generous with his time, energy, and prayers in supporting me in my battle (I just came home from my first operation yesterday, Mark went through SO many more struggles than I did and his attitude and approach has been incredibly inspiring to me and others). Yet, despite what always seemed to be a limitless energy for battling what started for him as appendix cancer, that finally ran out on him and the race got ahead of him and the battle ended on August 8th, leaving his wonderful wife Margie and a large set of family and friends in a state of loss and mourning.

Mark's official obituary with more of the details of his family, military career, including his time teaching at West Point, and the rest of his life can be found at: http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/triblive-valley-news-dispatch/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=181029457. My purpose today is to remind all of us what a fascinating and unique person Mark was to our hobby. I'm going to start with his relatively limited participation in the Face-to-Face hobby, including three of our big DipCon tournaments in 1994, 1998, and 2003. Then where he really shined was in the Postal Diplomacy hobby of that period, and I'll tell you more about his style, attitudes, and some stories about some particular games that you can find on-line, also one exceptional one in the E-Mail Judge system. And then finally, I will end with the very deep personal relationship that Mark and I had with Don Williams and tell you a story of my most difficult encounter back and forth between the three of us, since I now am the only remaining living witness. I'm sending this to Mark's wife Margie who coincidentally this very week asked for these types of remembrances about Mark. I hope what I write here is up to what Margie is looking for. I know I have been writing way too many of these for Diplomacy World, but it seems like something that we need to have in our permanent record of the hobby. Writing these is a great way for me to go back through everything and remember…

So, as noted, Mark was not especially active in the Face-to-Face tournament hobby, partly because of the nature of his job. He appeared at three DipCon's and also went to one small tournament that Ric Manns organized in 2007, that I don't really have anything to say about. I met him only at the 2000 World DipCon, where Mark actually was not able to play since he had to leave for a family illness. And then he played in the 1994 and 2003 DipCons as well as the 1998 World DipCon. We will start with 2000, the only time I met Mark briefly in person. Mark, I think, would have been the 150th participant in what was one of the greatest hobby gatherings in history, in Baltimore in 2000 for World DipCon. We had made extensive plans for the Team tournament for that World DipCon, building a team that was supposed to include Mark called "Malice in Underhand". Since I can't name anything to save my life, this of course was Don Williams' brainchild. We all had nicknames and T-Shirts, I was "Alice" and the "Boob" with a picture of Alice holding a knife. We all met Thursday night, but then Mark's Dad was admitted to the hospital and Mark had to leave. Luckily that particular episode for Mark's Dad was short. But luckily, the whole team did get together for dinner Thursday night at the Outback near the airport, Don Williams (Duck), Steve Emmert (Judas), me (Alice), and Faz. What I remember of this dinner is how completely wacked out our interactions with our waitress were. Don always was a trip with ANY waitress, but Don, Mark, and Steve really went after Miriam this time. Mark and Steve were trying to convince Miriam, despite the fact she said she had a boyfriend, that she had to go home with Don. This lasted right up until the Tip time when we left it to Don to decide on the tip and from what he SAID was miscalculation tried to seriously undertip her!!! Faz and Steve jumped in and corrected this and completely lambasted Don, as he so richly deserved. Unfortunately, though, except for a brief discussion as Mark was leaving these were my only in-person times with Mark over 30 years of knowing each other. Yet, like with so many of you, I still always felt incredibly close to Mark, and of course also respecting his play deeply.

Probably the less said about Mark's appearance at the 2003 DipCon at the Tempest in Washington the better, and of course I wasn't there, so that's all I'll say about it, except to say Mark primarily was a player of the 1980's and 1990's. So, his first tournament was the 1994 DipCon at DixieCon in North Carolina, where Mark finished 25th and won one of David Hood's "Death with Dignity" awards. Faz always had dignity above all!!! So with all of that one would wonder when or how Faz ever

showed his Diplomacy skill in the tournament format, well it all came together at the 1998 World DipCon VIII also at DixieCon. This was a very interesting World DipCon, the one where the estimable Chris Martin won HIS championship by a whisker over John Quarto vonTivadar, but Mark Fassio finished a very close third. Chris and John each had solos while Faz had two two-way draws. DixieCon has not posted details on line I could find to get too much more than that, but in the game of the three he played where Faz lost, Melinda Holley's Turkey bested his Russia. While in the two ways, one had him doing the Artificial Intelligence alliance (AI) as Austria with Michael McMillie's Italy. In the other one, as France he shared the two way with Manus Hand's Italy. Just from the nature of those alliances, the IF probably was destined to be a two way after all the other powers were bested, but if he had found a way to stab McMillie's Italy, I'm sure he could have had a World Championship to his credit as well.

None of these details of his FTF career, though, get at Faz' personality in games. This was best shown in his postal play and brilliant press. So I strongly recommend following Pete Gaughan's brilliant GMing job in Arsenic going from http://diplom.org/Postal/Zines/TAP/DPS_01.pdf to http://diplom.org/Postal/Zines/TAP/DPS_15.pdf in his subszine *Dead Poets Society*. The game had the following stellar lineup: Kathy Byrne Caruso as Austria, Flash Faz, Mark Fassio, as England, the humble me as France, Steve "Judas" Emmert as Germany, Don "Duck" Williams as Italy, the underestimated Bob Slossar as Russia and Jim "Chum" O'Kelley as Turkey. The subszine picks up the game in Fall 1902, and also has the infamous GMS (Daf Langley) as one of the press writers. This is an especially good game to look at, of course, because guess who wins in Fall 1908? That would be correct, Flash himself! I'm not going to write a blow by blow on the game, there's plenty of press and you can follow it quite well through all fifteen issues (I presume you all know how to count…). I underestimated Steve Emmert badly in worrying too much about Faz, who I always thought was one of the best players I ever faced, and I went down like a ton of bricks. Judas survived (barely) to assist Flash's victory with some of the best back and forth stabs and play I've ever seen, and Don spent most of the game knocking Chum back, but not fast enough to get back and stop the English victory. The big thing was the extraordinarily wide ranging press. Pete is a master at weaving press, and he also had Daf to help him.   Pretty much everyone spent their time berating my press… well, that was the way things were. But Faz had some of his best ever press in this game. Estimable entries like "Uncle Marky's Story Hour" and "Radio Flash Reports" are classics of all time in the hobby. I think this game perfectly illustrated how Mark knew better how to control a Postal Diplomacy Style game better than just about anyone.

Another game where you can get EVEN more deeply into the game, and introduce some of you perhaps to these games that often get forgotten, is the Showcase series of games. I GM'ed ghodstoo there, http://diplom.org/Showcase/ghodstoo/ on the Judge platform. But ALL of the press is recorded for you to read. Unfortunately the PHONE calls were not recorded and transcribed and there were a fairly large number of phone calls, especially from Edi, as you might expect. Still, you could spend days going through all the written press, which also engaged some brilliant Observers. The lineup was:

Austria: Edi Birsan
England: James Dreier
France: John Barkdull
Germany: Pitt Crandlemire
Italy: Cal White
Russia: Mark Fassio
Turkey: Hohn Dennis Cho

But it ended after a LOT of back and forth in an England/France/Turkey draw. Faz did not necessarily play his best game here as it ended in 1911 and Mark was the first one out in 1906. But that dramatically understates a wild game that was dominated early on by Edi Birsan's proposal for a "quadripartite alliance" that pulled Italy, Austria, England together with Faz's Austria to attack everyone else. Pitt had issues medically that led to him not doing well, but otherwise it was Hohn Cho and John Barkdull that benefitted from this. Edi's approach was demo game demagoguery, surprise, surprise, and it really made Faz nervous. Edi also kept vacillating, so eventually Cal White and Faz stabbed Edi, but it didn't turn out well for all three of them, mostly just helping jump start Hohn Cho's dominance.

Since this is *Diplomacy World*, I should note that even more recently Mark participated in one of our DW demo games, "Rotary Phones and 8 Track Tapes" that tried to bring back some players from the past together. The original lineup for that game was:

Austria: Steve Cooley
England: Bill Quinn
France: Buz Eddy, later replaced by David Hood
Germany: Mark Fassio
Italy: Melinda Holley
Russia: Don Williams
Turkey: Vince Lutterbie, later replaced by Gary Behnen

It lasted through to DW #119, and Mark wrote a brilliant (and very long) endgame statement in that issue beginning on Page 56. I want to quote a few things from him and then we'll move to my last story.   He wrote a stream of how the game progressed and prefaced it with this: "I am pretty blunt in what I say and how I feel. That comes from commanding troops and being in a career field that prefers directness to BS. Combine that with me wearing my emotions on my sleeve, and some of my

words may raise an eyebrow or two. If it offends anyone, it is what it is, and I'm not apologizing for the truth or how I feel. Jim Burgess' description of me in issue #110 was spot-on – I'm a predictable and easy 'read,' and it will indeed probably haunt me throughout this game. If it's also visible in this diary, so be it; as the title says, I'm looking at shattered reflections and broken glass, so the verbiage in here will also be sharp, pointed, and (to some) a little bloody. Just wanted to state that up front." I will just say that I never saw that predictability as a problem, indeed he often used it to good effect to create and maintain alliances.

Then here is a statement of his thoughts on how and why he played our great game: "I have played Diplomacy, primarily by mail, since the mid-70s – the Golden Age of Dip. I LOVE(d) this game. I would even phone in orders during my weekly 5-minute "morale call" to my wife when I was stationed in Russia or Iraq, so she could pass on the moves to my GMs after we talked; how's *that* for fanatically loving a game? I was the Strategy and Tactics editor for DIPLOMACY WORLD magazine in the 90s, and won "Best Player" and "Best Writer" awards in that era, after copiously bribing the judges (or maybe it was primarily for playing Turkey in games, I don't know). Over the years I went through some brownouts and burnouts, and had some disagreements with friends over moves and outlooks (completely stupid ones, in retrospect; such actions always are [stupid] when a game with wooden blocks is involved…why, I can remember when I was 3 ½ and…well, never mind…). Anyway, those brownouts and disagreements – coupled with the death of my Dad in 2002 and some new job/relocation issues at the same time —pretty much ended my active Dipping." Note that I did fail to give you a guide to some of the GREAT articles that Mark wrote for *Diplomacy World*, especially the aforementioned ones in the 1990's, you can look

those up, I didn't re-read them for this, preferring to review the games I've talked about.

Also, about ten years ago, it is pretty well understood that Mark did a brilliant fake parody of John Boardman's szine. Fakes of szines are another great hobby tradition that is so gone. You can read the rest of what Faz said about the DW demo game, but he partly (this was just as the cancer was hitting him) just felt that the world had passed him by in the Hobby for The Game. I think we all feel that way sometimes. It is different in the 21st Century. But I still look to the friendships, the renaissance of the tournament FTF hobby, and all the energy on Facebook and the more modern social media platforms as indicative of a new kind of hobby, and it's still one I want to be part of.

Finally, I want to end with a story that I am now the only one left to put together, a situation that almost destroyed my relationship with Mark Fassio for a bit of time. And it showed both Mark's immense sense of justice and fairness and his stubbornness. I sort of put the details out of my mind, but it was an old Fiat Bellum game that I can't seem to find sometime in the 1990's where Don Williams was the GM. Anyway, I was really busy and not responding to messages, and gave Mark the feeling that I was going to NMR. I think Don contributed to that impression, not in any way that was intentional though. Mark ended up deciding to submit orders for that turn anticipating my NMR, but I did submit orders, and I submitted orders that anticipated he would submit orders that I thought he would make given that he expected me to NMR. A classic set of "up the level of the game" moves. But Mark went ballistic at both Don and me for unfair tactics and deceiving him. It took us years (literally) to calm him down. As you can see from some of the above (GMing, getting him in demo games, the team at World DipCon, etc.) we worked it out, but it almost destroyed a great relationship. Being completely honest, did I KNOW I was manipulating Faz up that chain? I admitted to Don I didn't honestly know, I ***THOUGHT*** I was being honest in dropping hints about NMRing, but did I really just plan it all subconsciously? I couldn't be sure. I think most of all of us who play this game are really good at forgiving nearly any kind of deception within the game. And I know I trust lots of you in real life at a FAR deeper level than anyone else in my life as a result of it. But you always have to balance it against going too far.

Rest in Peace, Faz. I miss you most intensely. And I still look to you as an example. In diplomacy forever.

The Development of *1812 Overture*

By W. Alex Ronke, Variant Creator

Introduction

In the previous issue of *Diplomacy World*, David Hood gave an account of DixieCon 30, of which I was a participant. In addition to competing (albeit poorly), I was also the organizer for the convention's Variant Night. That evening, I assembled six players to playtest a face-to-face game of *1812 Overture*: a six-player, twelve-power, two-continent variant.
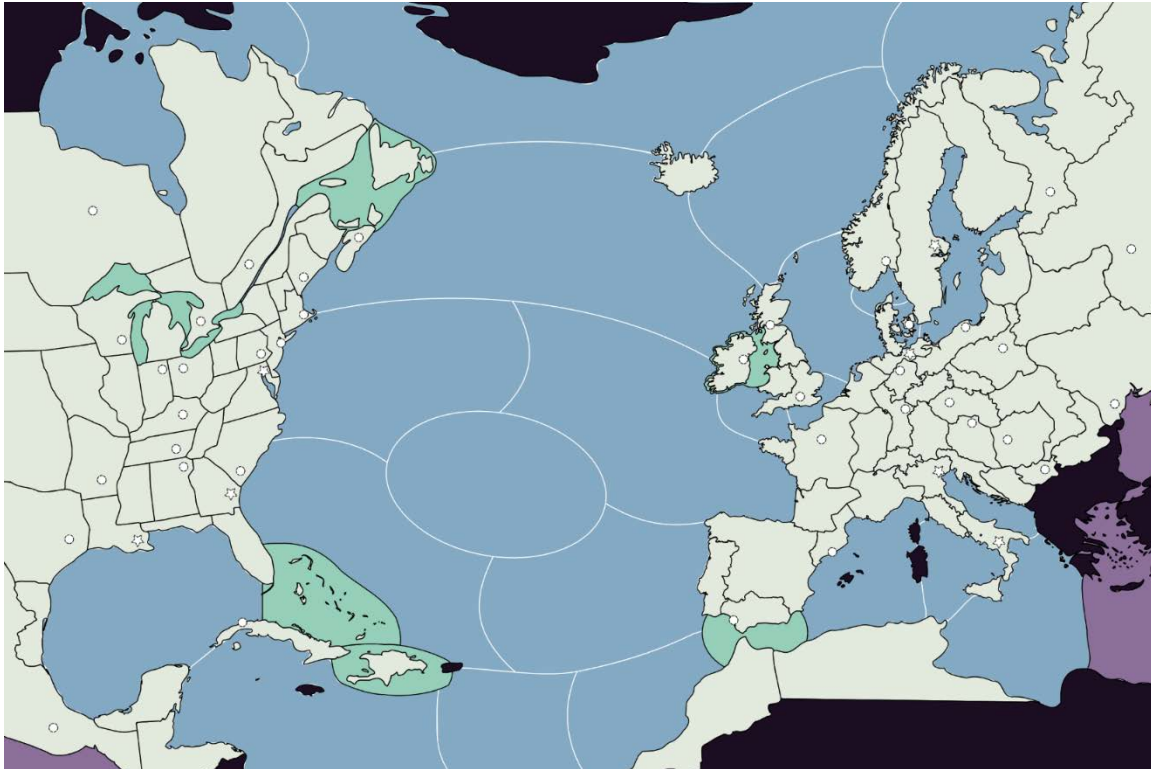

Figure 1: Simplified blank map of 1812 Overture

This article is about the development of that variant as well as the lessons learned from that and other playtests. A separate article in this issue of *Diplomacy World* will detail the rules of the variant and provide information for running your own session of *1812 Overture*.

About Myself

I am a software developer that currently works in online retail infrastructure, but for nearly five years after college, I worked for a video game company. I had always been interested in game design, and I was hoping to make a career in that industry originally, but like many video game developers, I burned out. Partly because one of my major projects was an online adaptation of a board game, I've continued to have an interest in board game design, and it's become my favorite creative hobby (rather than my paycheck).

I was introduced to *Diplomacy* around ten years ago, and in the last few years I've become quite interested in variants. I had seen maps for Youngstown and Root Z but was a little taken aback by their scale (and the length of time necessary to finish them). It was *1900* and *Versailles* that really sparked my interest: they both added interesting new dynamics to the game without turning it into a burden to finish. I mostly play these (and other) variants online, either in PBEM games with friends or anonymously via PlayDiplomacy.com.

Early Ideas & Goals

After playing a wide variety of the variants available on PlayDiplomacy.com, I began toying with making maps for several of my own variants. My experience in a game company taught me how useless ideas were without documentation and implementation, so I began making notes, charts, and lists to think through the variants I wanted to build.

A New Versailles

Martin Kennedy's *Versailles*, for those who haven't played it, is a variant where each player controls one

Major power (with 3-4 home SC's) and one Minor power (with only 1 home SC). The combination of these two powers can potentially be different each game, yielding 49 possible permutations.
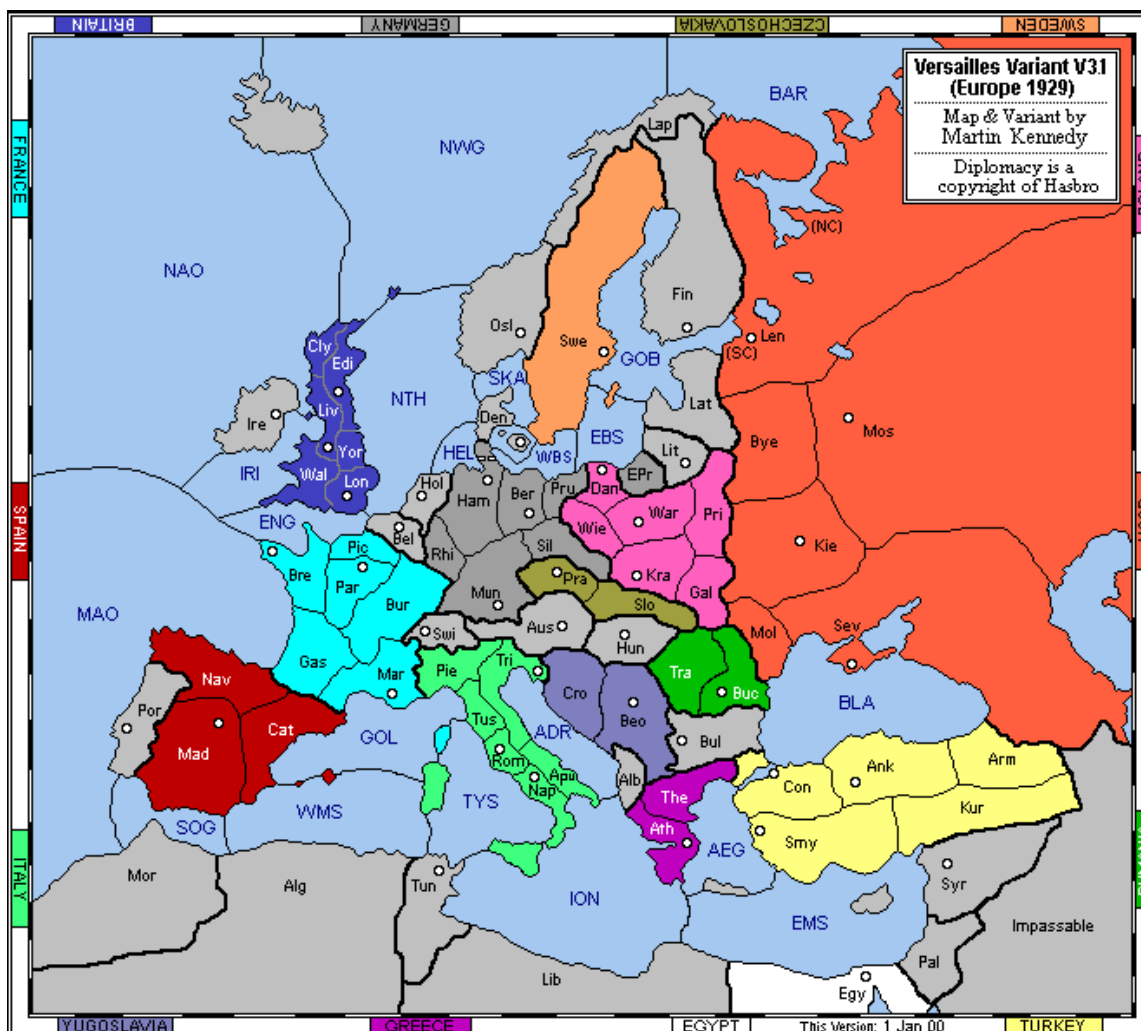

Figure 2: Versailles Variant Map, courtesy of DipWiki

I particularly liked playing this variant using PlayDiplomacy's "Age of Empires" option (start with just one center and build anywhere), since it allows either power to become dominant. In normal *Versailles* matches, unfortunately, the Minor powers are permanently handicapped and often quickly eliminated. I quite liked the idea of having two different powers, and I started cooking up a plan for a similar variant, but making each power somewhat more equal in strength.

Additionally, I wanted to make the variant appropriate for fewer than seven players. I'd found five-player variants (like *Ancient Mediterranean*) to be a bit too small, and many of my favorite sessions of classic Diplomacy had been with six players (and Italy in civil disorder), so I went with six.

Napoleon Bonaparte, C. S. Forester, & P. I. Tchaikovsky

At nearly the same time, I was attempting to come up with a historical variant appropriate to the Napoleonic era. I'd read all of C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower novels and thought the Napoleonic setting would be great for a variant. I was also intrigued by the two wars of 1812: the War of 1812 and the Patriotic War of 1812.

The War of 1812 was fought between Britain (via Canada) and the United States. This was the war that inspired our national anthem, The Star-Spangled Banner. It was also a rare event: a war on American soil that we (arguably) didn't start.

The *other* war of 1812, called the Patriotic War of 1812, was between France and Russia. This disastrous failed invasion of Russia was murder to Bonaparte's enormous imperial army, and it paved the way for his defeat and capture just a few short years after. This was the war that inspired Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" and all its cannon-filled musical adrenaline.
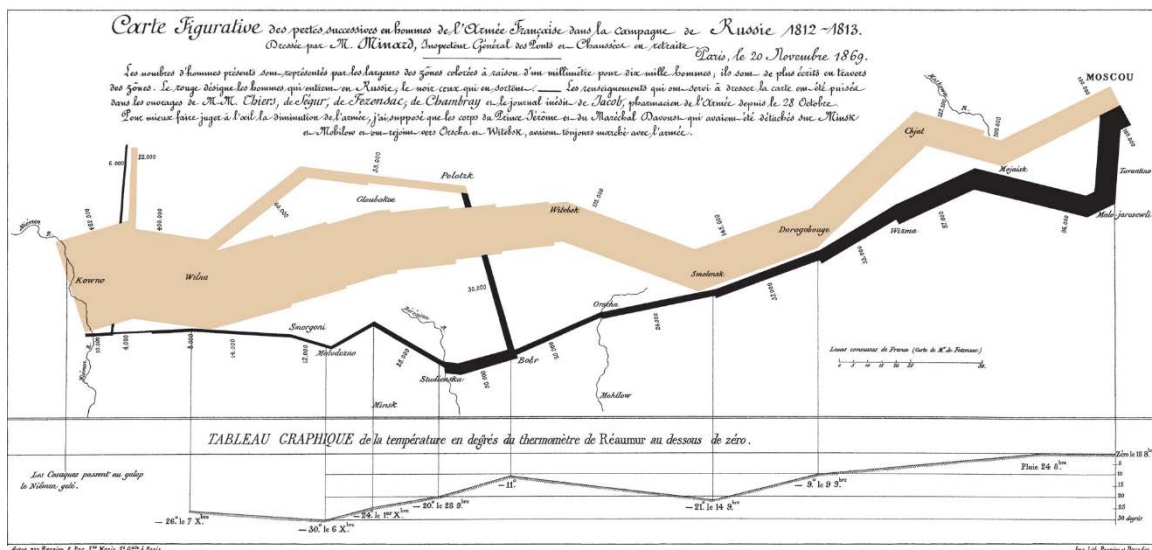
Figure 3: Charles Minard's infamous infographic of Napoleon's failed 1812 invasion of Russia

I wanted to tie these two wars together somehow, but I had a fundamental problem of historicity: even allowing for some fudging for gameplay's sake, how could a variant of that era reflect Napoleon's pre-invasion *Grand Armee* without making France grossly over-powered in comparison to its neighbors?

And would such an imbalanced variant even be fun?

Epiphany

At some point, I had a lightbulb moment. My two variant ideas needed to be *combined*. I could connect the two wars of 1812 using the two-powers mechanic. I could allow Napoleon to have an oversized force in Europe by putting both powers he controlled on the continent. Then I just had to make sure other players controlled two separate powers split between Europe and North America. That way, old Boney could be overpowered *locally* but roughly balanced *globally.*

After some further research, I'd come up with a plan for an asymmetric setup that would eventually become *1812 Overture*.

Six Players, Twelve Powers, Two Continents

One player, Napoleon, would control France and a vassal state of the French empire. I eventually chose the Rhine Confederation, a 19th century incarnation of Germany. That player's forces would start entirely in Europe.

The second player would mirror Napoleon's role, but in North America as the United States under President Madison. The third player would act as Britain, divided into a domestic force in the British Isles and Canada in North America.

I decided that the three other players would control one power in each continent, just like Britain, but those

powers wouldn't have to have any historical connection to one another. These three EU powers and three NA powers would be "detached" and paired differently each game (with 9 combinations possible).

For Europe, Russia was an obvious choice. After considering a number of options (including Prussia), I decided to also put Austria and Denmark-Norway as playable on the map.

As for the rest of North America, my delving through Wikipedia and other sources taught me about Tecumseh's Confederacy, a semi-religious anti-colonial movement that began with the Shawnee and spread to other tribes of indigenous Americans. I decided the Shawnee were a good fit, allocating Ohio and Indiana to them as starting positions and labeling those two regions according to their major Shawnee settlements (Wapakoneta and Tippecanoe, respectively).

Tecumseh had been an ally-of-convenience with the British in the War of 1812, so I also wanted to field an opposing force of Native Americans that had largely sided with the US instead. That turned out to be the Cherokee, a tribe that had made great strides toward assimilation. Principal Chief Pathkiller had even served under Andrew Jackson in 1812.

(Though, for all the Cherokee's efforts at being accepted by white America, President Jackson cruelly exiled them to Oklahoma just a few years later.)

My twelfth and final power would be New Spain, the colonial remnant of Bourbon Spain that objected to Napoleon's power-grabbing decision to put his own brother on the throne instead. There was a particular moment in Forester's *Beat to Quarters* that especially inspired this decision. In the novel, Horatio Hornblower

discovers, after completing a months-long secret mission to California, that Britain's relations with Spain via France had changed dramatically. The exiled Bourbon-loyal Spanish, including the Spanish of the western hemisphere, had become an ally to Britain, and Horatio would now have to somehow reverse the actions of his

own mission. I wanted New Spain to capture the feel of being a government-in-exile who could either commit to recapturing their homeland or set off on an independent path.

Figure 4: A diagram of Europe in 1812 that was a partial basis for my map (from Wikimedia Commons, user TRAJAN 117)

Map Design & Victory Conditions

I brainstormed map design with an ever-changing chart of nodes. For any given board game with some concept of place and adjacency, I like to plan those connections out in a mathematical node-and-path graph. For *Diplomacy* in particular, it helps identify potential trouble-spots, like central locations with too few connections (a source of overly trivial stalemate lines, like the MAO-Por-Iri blockade in classic).

I made several notes about the distances between players and neutral SC's, and I limited adjacent starting positions to Napoleon's eastern front in the Duchy of Warsaw. I intended the count of SC's in each continent to be equal (or nearly so). Even though historically the two wars were fought on vastly different scales, I wanted the continents to feel equally important gameplay-wise.
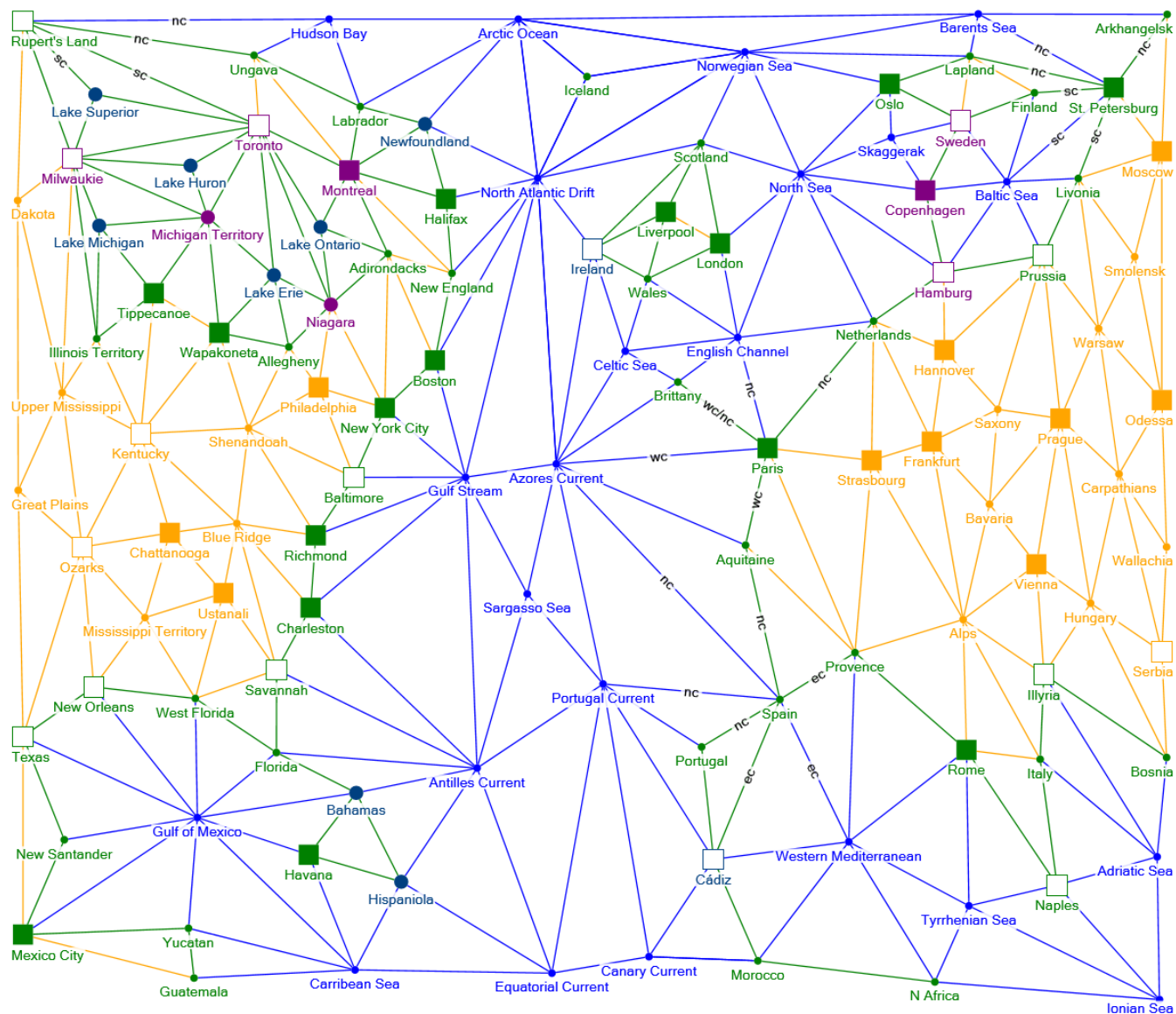
Figure 5: Node map from an earlier version of 1812 Overture (used in the first playtest)

How Many To Win?

At some point I realized that I didn't want the game to drag on until one player obtained an outright majority of SC's across the whole map. I've always seen this as a negative for larger maps that operate in this manner. I did, however, want the player to obtain something that *felt* like a majority-based solo, to "win" one of the two wars of 1812. A single power of the player's choosing would have to "solo" just one continent, rather than the whole map.

This was the origin of what eventually evolved into the "18 & 12" victory conditions (21 & 12 for the first playtest). Instead of victory occurring from a majority (as in classic) or high plurality (as in *1900*), they would have to do *both*. The "18" requirement would be a combined total of that player's supply centers and a plurality across the board. The "12" requirement would be a *demi*-solo, with *one* of the player's powers obtaining the majority in *one* continental theater. This also meant that each continent would have to have either 22 or 23 supply centers total in order for 12 to represent a simple majority.

Abnormal Geography

After charting out the potential list of supply centers I wanted to represent, it was time to use a real world map to provide an outline for the game's actual map. Fitting both Europe and North America on one playable map, but still providing enough visual space to clearly display both continent's regional divisions, was a non-trivial task.

I discovered that many maps-to-scale were impractical. Using a standard Mercator projection would mean a small Europe, an abnormally huge Greenland, and a big unused piece of Africa. Other projections would also mean an enormous amount of wasted space, with the Atlantic Ocean taking up a majority of the middle. I also tried representing the game on two separate maps, but

that didn't visually serve my goal of connecting the two wars of 1812.

I ended up using two maps that individually covered the game-relevant areas of each continent, angling them accordingly, and putting one on each side of a rectangular map. Each continent's scale was slightly different, each had a slightly different direction for North, and they certainly didn't line up latitude-wise.

But despite all of these cartographic liberties, it ended up looking relatively good. Accuracy of scale simply had to be sacrificed for practicality, legibility, and aesthetics.

I was able to simulate some sense of distance in the Atlantic by arranging its subregion nodes in a roughly pyramidal formation. That way, intercontinental crossings in the south of the map, where the ocean was widest, would take more turns than those in the north.

The Double Win

One additional goal in the back of my mind was to create a satisfactory victory condition for multiple players. Those familiar with the board game *Dune* (or its reimplementation *Rex*) may recall that alliance-based victories are expected, though every added player in your alliance steepens the requirements to win.

I wanted to specify conditions for multiple players to win simultaneously, as in *Dune*, that wasn't just an agreed-upon draw. Draws certainly have an important role in Diplomacy, and I am no subscriber to the "soloist manifesto," but being part of a draw often feels more like quitting a game rather than completing it. I wanted there to be multiplayer victory requirements that *felt* equally (or nearly) as satisfying as achieving a solo.

This is what inspired the "Double Win." The "18 and 12" requirements were additionally calculated to ensure that two players could achieve them simultaneously. Particularly, since the "12" requirement was a one-continent majority, and there were two continents, why couldn't this mean a two-player victory (with one "solo" by each player)?

Achieving this type of victory would be much more difficult than a solo but (in theory) without the dissatisfaction or reputation of an agreed-upon draw. Additionally, working toward such requirements would likely present multiple opportunities for one of the two intended parties to shortcut the process and win-by-solo instead. Like any good alliance-based game, I wanted the players who push for a double win to be in close communication despite perpetual paranoia.

Playtesting

So far, there have been three playtests of 1812 Overture: two via email and one face-to-face.

The first session (a sort of "alpha" test with an earlier map) was played among several of my *Diplomacy*-inclined peers in North Carolina. It included an overly strong Napoleon, a coalition to wipe out the United States, and an overly trusting Britain. The Shawnee / Denmark-Norway player would end up getting a solo victory with the Shawnee controlling almost all of the American SC's.

I got solid feedback from my players and my observers. For instance, my first iteration divided the USA into two powers along North/South lines (with Baltimore as an SC for either). After observing this playtest, Baron VonPowell, designer of *1900*, suggested adding some historicity by using the political parties of the day instead, dividing territory between the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. Charles Féaux de la Croix, designer of *1648*, suggested that I rein in the SC total required for victory (originally at 21).

Baron VonPowell additionally noted that, while amusing, having Shawnee and Canadian troops invade Europe was a bit too much of a stretch on believability. The biggest problem with this was that in the 19th century, the size and scope of an "army" in the Americas was tiny compared to an "army" in the Old World. He suggested limiting intercontinental convoys to only those powers who would have had the resources in that day-and-age to mount a transatlantic invasion (possibly just France & Britain). This seemed a bit too limiting to me, as I intended the two Wars to be connected. I also didn't want to change anything about the core adjudication algorithm to reflect different army strengths: an army is an army is an army. It did, however, inspire the Intercontinental Convoy limitation, which requires a successful naval incursion of the opposite continent *prior* to convoying troops, thereby setting up a "base of operations" that could outfit an incoming army as appropriate for that theater.

This playtest also prompted me to make Warsaw a Supply Center rather than just a starting location for France. Napoleon's presence in Eastern Europe was intended, but the current incarnation of the map put Boney there with ample troops and nothing to lose. A coalition of *all* the other Euro power prevented him from getting near victory, but they couldn't completely eliminate Napoleon. Nor could they save Austria (eliminated) or Russia (1 SC at game-end). He finished the game with the second-highest SC total even with all other players hostile to him.
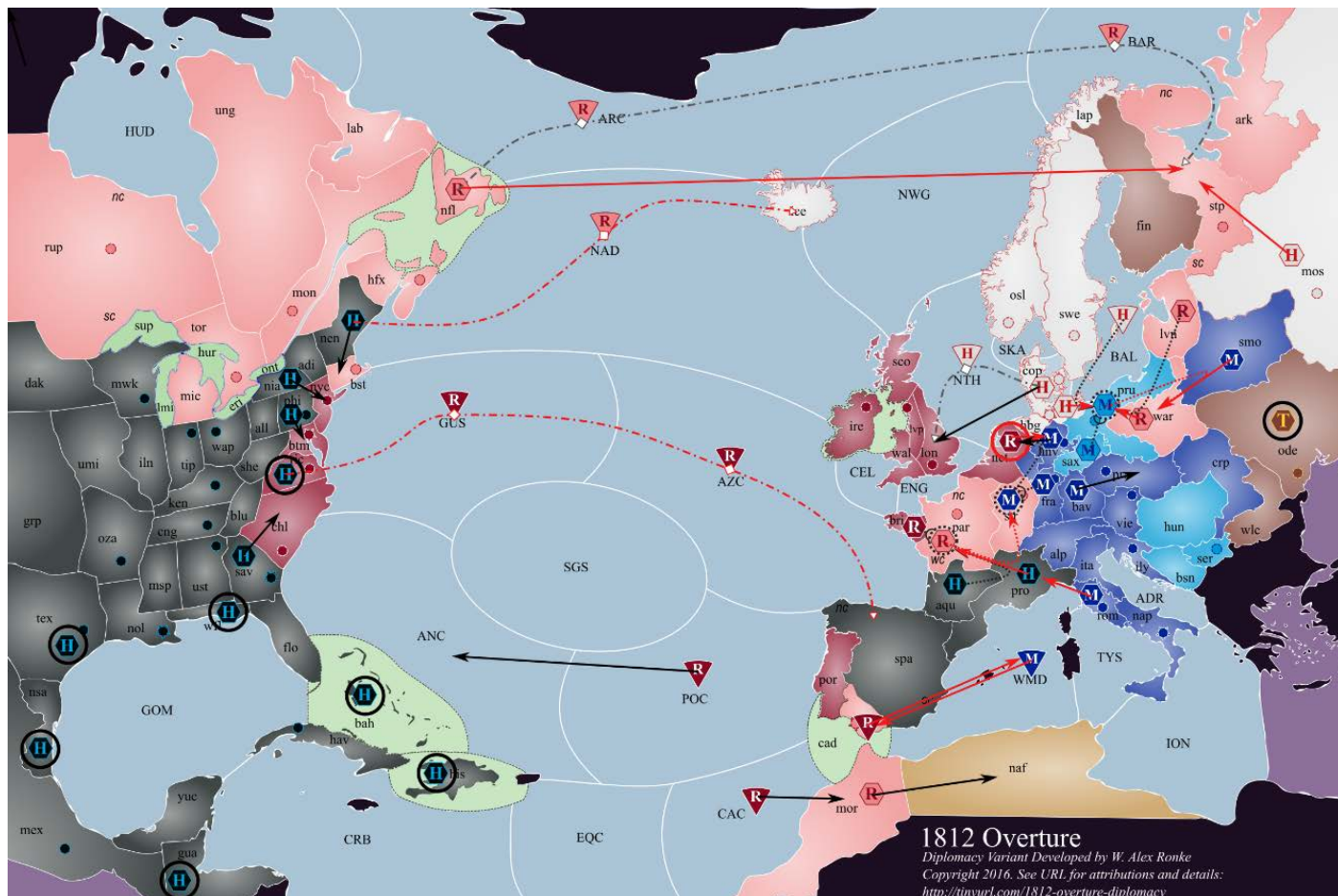
Figure 6: The end of Session 1, using an earlier version of the map: Shawnee/Denmark-Norway, the winner, controlled the black and silver units.

That was an interesting scenario, but it wasn't really good *Diplomacy*. The next playable iteration would adjust for this. I made this change along with a few others to the map, in the hope that Napoleon would still be a force to be reckoned with, but would not be such a juggernaut that he didn't need allies.

Session 2: PBEM, v1.2, May to August 2016
Session Album: http://imgur.com/a/mDxDk

Most of the players for the second PBEM playtest had been those I'd met while playing *College of Cardinals* (Powell & Hayward) via email earlier that year. Unlike my first group, all but a couple of this session's players had experience with testing variants before.

These opponents were seemingly more evenly matched, and the session had some unpredictable moments. The Russia/New Spain player started with an early lead and an alliance with Austria/Shawnee, but the four remaining players managed to establish a coordinated coalition and halt their progress fairly quickly. The two continental theaters eventually required two different styles of play, with stalemate-esque tactics holding Russia and Austria back from sweeping Europe and more open movement occurring across America.

As a French fleet slipped across the Atlantic to help destabilize the Gulf of Mexico, Russia/New Spain sent an ultimatum: break the 4-player coalition, or the United States will be shepherded to an easy victory. It wasn't entirely clear at the time whether New Spain was serious, or if the US actually was in position to win in that manner. Britain/Canada had a powerful spread of navies and armies, and I expected him to jump out ahead any moment.

With no change in the coalition imminent, New Spain followed through. The European theater remained largely locked in a tit-for-tat, but New Spain started pulling away from the fight in such a manner as to let Republican troops begin storming through the South. Our session's President Madison (who eventually became President Monroe) took full advantage of this, and a distracted Britain was caught unawares as Federalists began invading Nova Scotia and Montreal in 1817.

In the meantime, two convoys started to break the European gridlock. A chance convoy through the Baltic by Denmark-Norway took St. Petersburg and shattered the Russian section of the stalemate line. Napoleon also

made temporary headway by sending Rhine troops across the Adriatic to Bosnia and Serbia. Eventually this, and the imminent triumph of the USA, caused a devolution into chaos. Both indigenous powers were wiped out. Britain/Canada quickly dropped from first to last place.

Though Russia flailed, Austria almost doubled in size as France found his British allies unable to help. The Dano-Norwegians invaded the British Isles and, by the game's end, had created a Nordic-Celtic-Baltic hegemony.

And in the end, the United States received a Solo Win, with 19 SC's in 1819, at least 12 of which were controlled by the Republicans in North America.
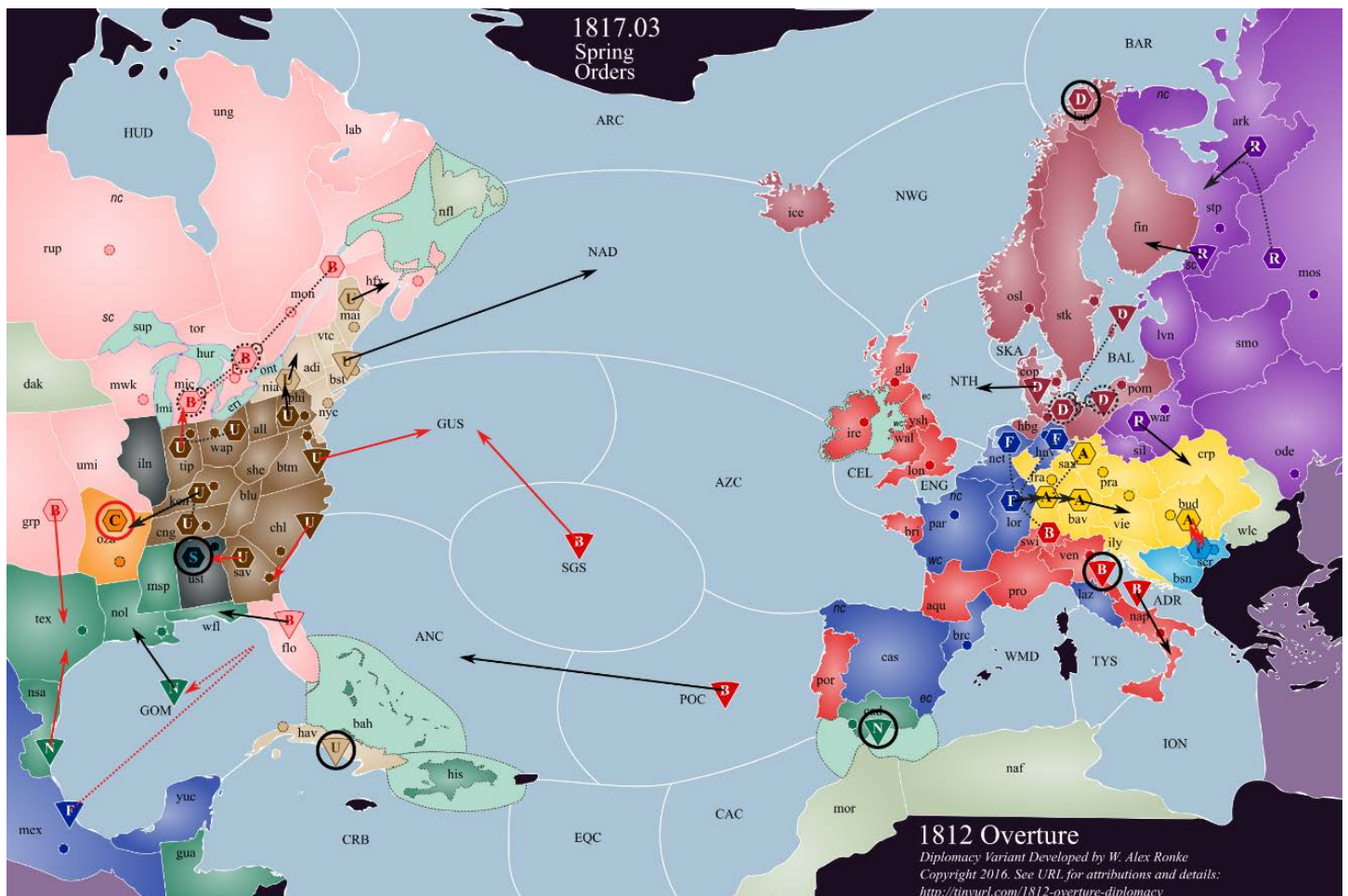

Figure 7: The Start of Britain's Downfall
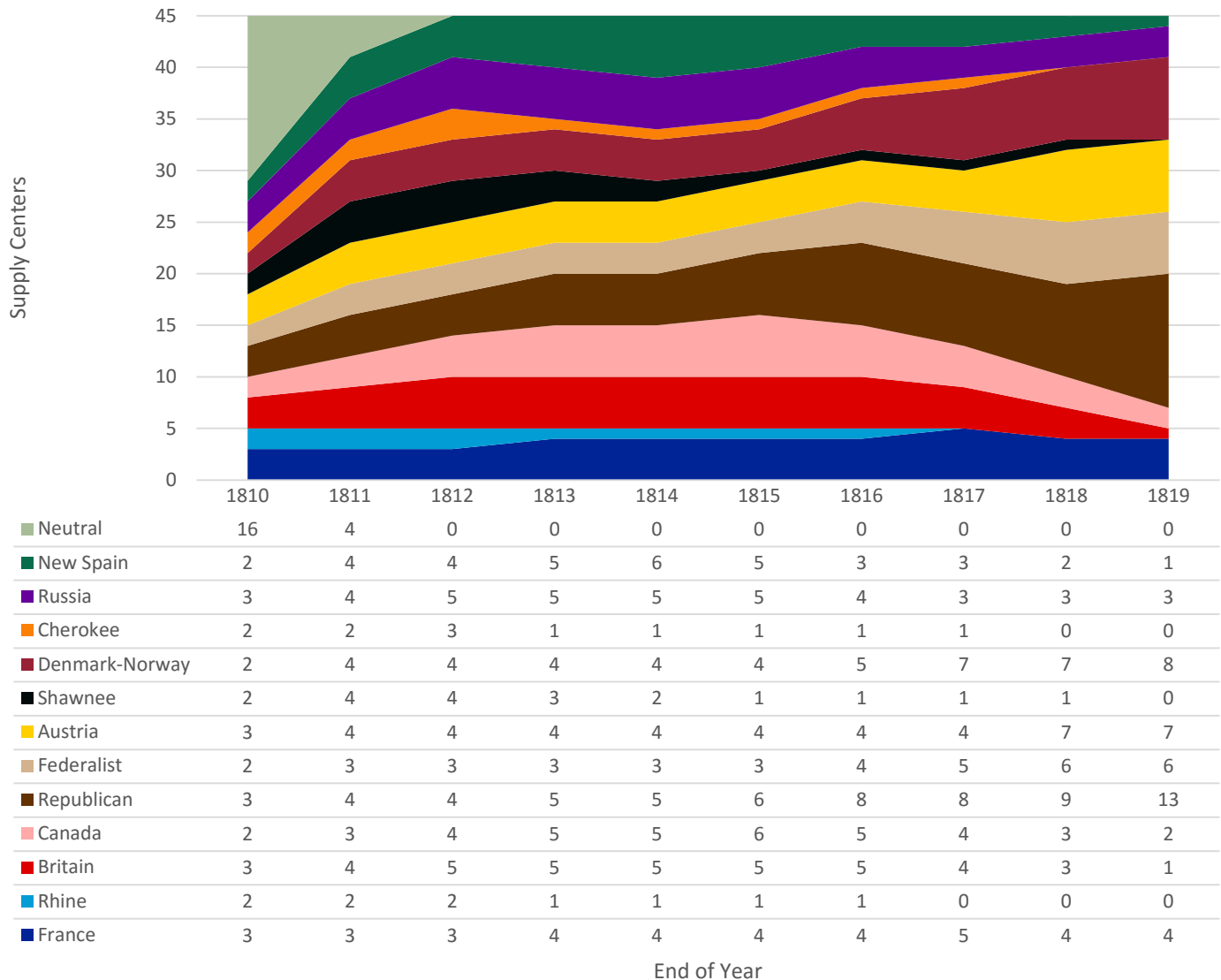
1812 Overture (v1.2): Session 2

	1810	1811	1812	1813	1814	1815	1816	1817	1818	1819
■ Neutral	16	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
■ New Spain	2	4	4	5	6	5	3	3	2	1
■ Russia	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	3	3	3
■ Cherokee	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
■ Denmark-Norway	2	4	4	4	4	4	5	7	7	8
■ Shawnee	2	4	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	0
■ Austria	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	7	7
■ Federalist	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	6	6
■ Republican	3	4	4	5	5	6	8	8	9	13
■ Canada	2	3	4	5	5	6	5	4	3	2
■ Britain	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	1
■ Rhine	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
■ France	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	4

End of Year

Figure 8: Supply center graph for Session 2

Session 3: F2F, v1.2, Dixiecon 30

Session Album (reproduced):
http://imgur.com/a/rg0yj

Session 3 started a few weeks after Session 2 but only lasted a few hours; it was played face-to-face instead of over email.

After hearing about Dixiecon in Chapel Hill, and realizing that I could commute there, I registered for the tournament and asked permission from David Hood to run an *1812 Overture* playtest as a side event. He was happy to oblige, and he ended up being one of my playtesters.

To prepare, I went a bit overboard. I ordered a 48 inch by 72 inch map (from http://www.printplaygames.com/), thinking that the larger size would make everything more readable. I designed custom game pieces (though still managed to leave some at home by mistake), and I printed several photocopies of 8x12 "conference" maps for easy player-generated notes.

I was not much of a competitor in the Dixiecon tournament, as it was my first time playing face-to-face with experienced players. Also, to be fair: I love *Diplomacy*, but I'm not very good at playing it. I made a total botch of the first round, enjoyed the second, and had to skip the third entirely due to a prior commitment.

But when Saturday night rolled around, we put together a set of six playtesters for *1812 Overture*. While it was

the only time available, hosting the playtest in the late evening turned out to be an unfortunate limitation. Some of the players had already completed an hours-long session for the tournament that morning, and no one had the energy to keep playing (or GM-ing) into the wee hours.

Figure 9: The absurdly oversized map used at Dixiecon

Figure 10: Early negotiations between the USA (Randy Lawrence-Hurt, left) and the Shawnee (Todd Craig, who also played Austria)

Despite the time constraint, however, it was fun to watch Session 3 play out. While Britain-Canada started the game by poking at its neighbors in the US and France, the three players with detached powers formed a triple-alliance that quickly overtook the board from both directions. A favorite moment in the game was when

Russia traveled through the Arctic to invade Canada,   capturing Montreal in the process.

Figure 11: President Madison throws a bipartisan Hail Mary in Cuba while the Czar sends his ships down the St. Lawrence River.

Four game-years in, cracks were starting to show in this mega-alliance of Russia, Austria, Denmark-Norway, Cherokee, Shawnee, and New Spain, but we didn't quite get to a point of full betrayal. With the victory conditions only allowing for 1-2 winners, I suspected that one player from the pack would have come out in front (quite possibly David Hood, Dixiecon's organizer, who played Russia & Cherokee). However, it was getting late, and like many *Diplomacy* matches, the players near elimination seemed to be having more frustration than fun. Everyone mutually agreed to end the game, granting a draw to the three-player detached-powers bloc.

One of the most important insights gained from this game was that I had over-corrected for Napoleon in my transition from version 1.1 to 1.2. It started when Rick Desper (Session 3's Napoleon) nonchalantly abandoned Warsaw in the first spring. I asked him why, and he remarked that it was indefensible. I didn't think this was the case, but after running some simulations at home, I realized he was right. My existing configuration meant that, even assuming all other players stayed neutral, Warsaw was completely helpless in 1901. A few simple moves from Russia would guarantee capture, and nothing Napoleon could do would stop it, short of some very atypical moves from an allied Austria.

I was fine with the idea of a Russian-Austrian alliance overtaking France's forces in the east, but no player should be quite so guaranteed to take another's home center in the first year.

Session 4: PBEM, v1.3, Currently Ongoing

This fourth playtest began in late September and is ongoing. If you would like to spectate it, please contact me, and I'll add you as an observer.

Version 1.3 of the rules (the most current version as of this article's writing) makes only one change from 1.2: it moves Russia's starting fleet to the north coast of St. Petersburg. It is intended that this will allow Napoleon's position in Warsaw to remain tenuous, but not defenseless. I've considered other changes as well, but my goal moving forward is to tweak only a little at a time, not basing my changes on any one game, until I arrive at a roughly satisfactory loadout.

Future Aspirations

I would love to see *1812 Overture* played over the internet. At the moment, being the sole GM of its PBEM games means that playtesting is a very long process, and I don't have the bandwidth to run more than two games at a time. I've kept my "programmer hat" on while designing the variant, with the intention of keeping rules changes limited to those that would be relatively easy to implement. With the exception of the convoy limitation, nothing alters the core orders-phase adjudication structure; almost everything else is a matter of victory conditions or build restrictions.

If there's enough interest, I'd particularly like to help bring *1812 Overture* to PlayDiplomacy.com or Backstabbr. They've been my favorite platforms for playing online, and I'd be particularly interested to see other non-traditional variant rules thrown into the mix (like Gunboat, Fog of War, or "Age of Empires").

Conclusion

I know I have the tendency to be long-winded, but I hope you have enjoyed reading about the development of this variant. I hope that it brings something new to the variant-playing community without departing too drastically from the core *Diplomacy* rules.

Please contact me via email (w.alex.ronke@gmail.com) if you have any questions about the variant. I would especially be happy to hear from people who want to either participate in a future playtest or GM one of their own. Though *1812 Overture* is not yet compatible with any automated interface, I am happy to help provide the resources (within reason) that will match your particular style of map-marking and play.

URL for "living" rules and attributions:
http://tinyurl.com/1812-overture-diplomacy

1812 Overture

Variant Rules Version 1.3
Formatted for Submission to Diplomacy World
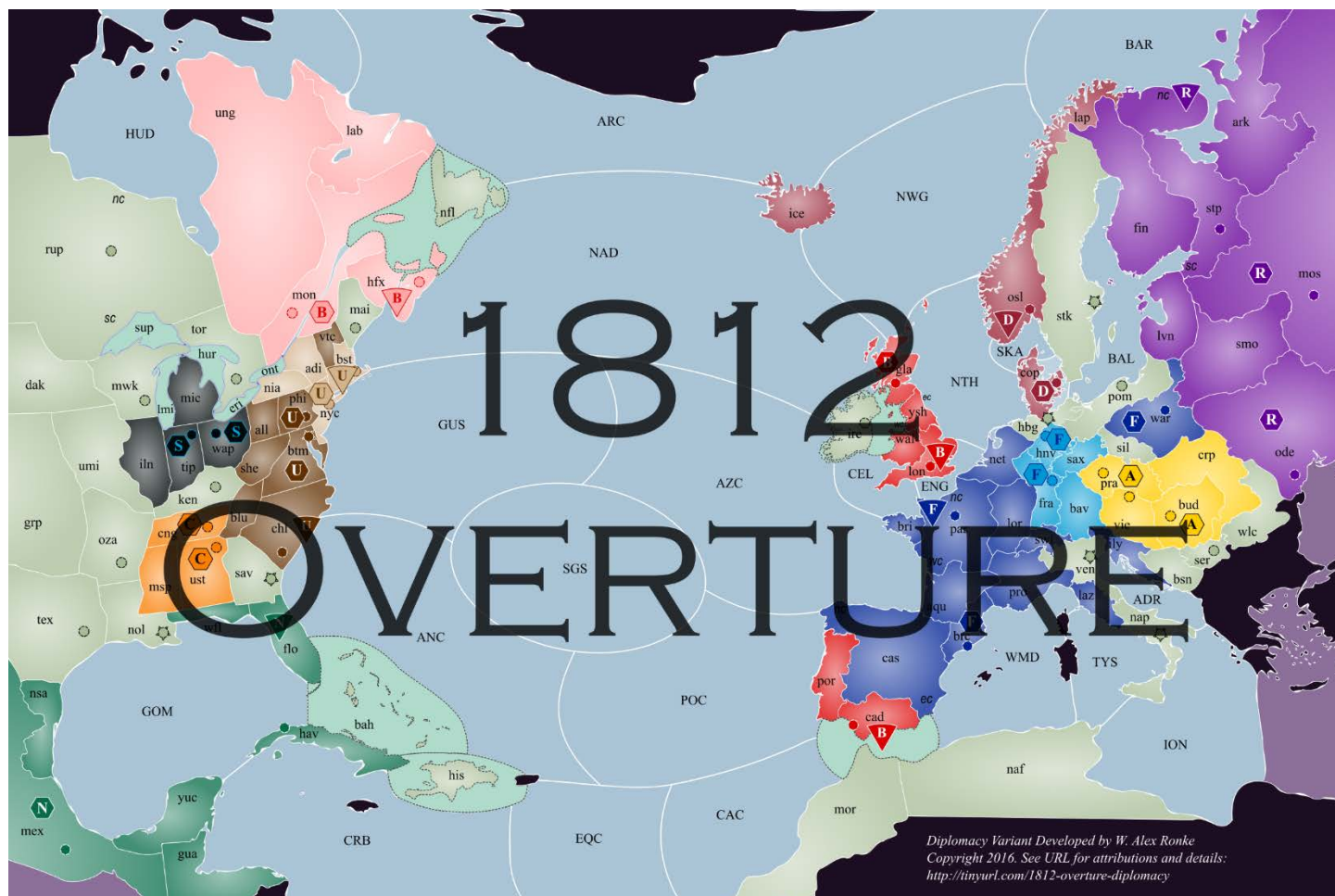
Diplomacy Variant Developed by W. Alex Ronke
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Boilerplate

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"Living" rules and attributions document: http://tinyurl.com/1812-overture-diplomacy

Full Rules

Overview
1812 Overture is a six-player variant of Diplomacy that's set in the Napoleonic era, with emphasis on:
- The "War of 1812" between USA and Britain/Canada
- The "Patriotic War of 1812" between France and Russia
- The "Peninsular War" between France, Britain, Portugal, and Spain
- Other conflicts and political instability circa 1808-1815.

Because an overture is what comes *before* the show, *1812 Overture* starts in Spring 1811 instead of Spring 1812.

There are twelve powers on the map, with each of six players controlling two of them. There are two theatres of combat, North America (NA) and Europe (EU), connected by the Atlantic and Arctic oceans. Five of the six players start in each theatre.

The game ends when a player conquers 18 SC's (total), but one of their two powers must also dominate at least one continent. Two players can simultaneously achieve these goals as well for a double-win. Further details are below.

Theatre / Continent Terminology
The terms "theatre" and "continent" will be used interchangeably in this document. No difference should be implied between the two terms.
- The two theatres are North America (NA) and Europe (EU).
- Bahamas (bah), Hispaniola (his), Havana (hav), and the rest of Latin America are all contained in the NA theatre.
- Morocco (mor), North Africa (naf), Iceland (ice), and the British Isles are all contained in the EU theatre.

Powers
There are 12 powers on the board. Each player will control two of them.

Attached Powers
Three players will have preset pairs of Attached powers:

French Empire
The French Empire, ruled by Napoleon, controls France and the Rhine Confederation (both in EU).
Default unit mark: F

France (Dark Blue)	3 units	3 SC's
Fleet in Paris (north coast)		
Army in Barcelona		
Army in Warsaw		
Rhine Confederation (Sky Blue)	2 units	2 SC's
Army in Frankfurt		
Army in Hannover		
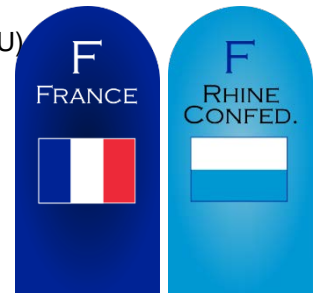
United States of America
The USA* is divided into two political parties for its two powers (both in NA), and regions are allocated to those powers according to their approximate party alignment.
Default unit mark: U

Republican Party** (Brown)	3 units	3 SC's
Army in Philadelphia		
Army in Baltimore		
Fleet in Charleston		
Federalist Party (Tan)	2 units	2 SC's

Army in New York City
Fleet in Boston

Several regions that were states or territories of the USA in 1811 have been deliberately labeled as neutral for gameplay purposes (like Savannah & New Orleans). Likewise for regions allocated to the Shawnee or Cherokee.
**Discussions of US History tend to refer to this Republican Party by the term "Democratic-Republican," as it is a distinct organization from the modern GOP.*

British Empire

The British Empire, ruled by King George III (and by Parliament), controls both Britain (EU) and Canada (NA).
Default unit mark: B

Britain	(Bright Red)	3 units	3 SC's

Fleet in London
Army in Glasgow
Fleet in Cádiz*

Canada	(Pink)	2 units	2 SC's

Fleet in Halifax
Army in Montreal

See special rules for Cádiz (cad) below, under the "Building" section.

Detached Powers

Three players will control a pair of one Detached NA power with one Detached EU power.
For GM's: Pairings may be selected either at random or via preference auction.

Detached NA Powers

New Spain	(Green)	2 units	2 SC's, one vacant

Default unit mark: N
Army in Mexico City
Fleet in Florida (not an SC)
Vacant in Havana

Cherokee	(Orange)	2 units	2 SC's

Default unit mark: C
Army in Chattanooga
Army in Ustanali
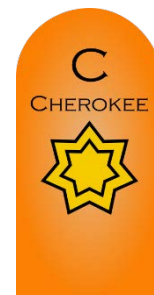
Shawnee	(Black)	2 units	2 SC's

Default unit mark: S
Army in Tippecanoe
Army in Wapakoneta

Detached EU Powers

Austria	(Yellow)	2 units*	3 SC's, one vacant

Default unit mark: A
> Army in Prague
> Army in Buda
> Vacant in Vienna

*Austria begins 1811 shorthanded, as if a player had forgotten to submit a build order in the last turn. The vacancy in Vienna represents the need to rebuild after the recent occupation by Napoleon in 1809.

Denmark-Norway	(Dark Red)	2 units	2 SC's

Default unit mark: D
> Army in Copenhagen
> Fleet in Oslo

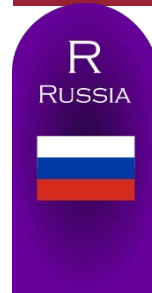|			
Russia	(Purple)	3 units	3 SC's

Default unit mark: R
> Fleet in St. Petersburg (North Coast)
> Army in Moscow
> Army in Odessa

Objectives & Supply Centers

On the map, there are a total of 45 supply centers, with 22 in North America and 23 in Europe.
For all objectives that reference "total SC count," this refers to the addition of SC counts for a single player's two powers.

Solo Win (18, 12, & Highest)

To achieve a solo win, a player must meet three objectives:
- 18:
  - A player's total SC count must be 18 or higher.
- 12:
  - One of the player's powers must "win the war" in one theatre of combat, controlling 12 SC's on that continent (NA or EU)*.
- Highest:
  - A player's total SC count must be the clear highest of all players, with no other player's total SC count equal or greater.
  - Additionally, the conditions for a Double Win (below) must not be in place.

*For the "12" objective, it is not required that the power started on that continent. Canada could hypothetically win the EU war, though with some inherent difficulty (see Special Convoy Rules).

Double Win (18x2, 12x2)

A double win is granted to two players, but it is not the same as a two-player draw. To achieve a double-win:

- 18x2:
  - Each player must individually have a total SC count of 18 or higher.
- 12x2:
  - Each player must "win" the war in one theatre of combat (one player in each), controlling at least 12 SC's on that continent with a single power.
- It does not matter if one player's total SC count is higher than the other's.

As with a Solo Win, a Double Win occurs immediately when these conditions are met. *i.e.* Even if one/both players want to try for a future Solo Win instead, but the conditions occur for a Double Win, the game still ends. They get no say in the matter.

When scoring a game (with whatever system), the points for a Double Win should be much higher than for a two-player draw. The points should be slightly less than those for a Solo Win.

Example
- Player A controls Britain and Canada. He has 18 SC's.
  - Britain controls 13 SC's, 12 in EU and 1 in NA.
  - Canada controls 5 SC's, all in NA.
- Player B controls New Spain and Austria. She has 20 SC's.
  - New Spain controls 12 SC's in NA.
  - Austria controls 8 SC's in EU.
- Players A and B receive a Double Win.

Draw (2-6 players)
As with regular Diplomacy, the remaining players on a map may declare a draw to terminate the game. By default this should include all non-surrendered players that still control at least one Supply Center (DIAS), but house rules may dictate otherwise.

Building
Building units at the end of a turn-year works similarly to normal Diplomacy except where as follows.

Build Limit
Each power may build no more than 2 units per turn-year.
Because each player controls two powers, hypothetically up to 4 units may be built by that player.

Each Power is Separate
Your two powers don't share build locations or unit counts.

Your two powers will transfer ownership of SC's if a unit from one ends up in the other's SC at the start of the Build phase, just as if they belonged to separate players. This is also true for "home" SC's. Accordingly, one of your powers can hypothetically eliminate the other one from the map.

(Likewise, your two powers can also cut each other's support and dislodge each other's units.)

Major Harbors
The seven starred locations on the map (4 in EU, 3 in NA) are Major Harbors.

Venice	(ven)	
Stockholm	(stk)	
Naples	(nap)	
Hamburg	(hbg)	
New Orleans	(nol)	
Savannah	(sav)	
Baltimore	(btm)	*(Starts as Republican possession)*

These SC's, once captured (and vacant), may be used as build locations by whoever currently possesses them.

Native American Powers (Cherokee & Shawnee)
These powers build Armies only. They may not build Fleets (even at Major Harbors). However, these powers may build from any vacant SC they control in the North American Theatre (chaos build).

The Cherokee and Shawnee are at a technological and financial disadvantage compared to the European and Colonial powers, but these Native American confederations are able to rally other indigenous groups to their cause.

European and Colonial Home Locations

These starting locations are considered the "home" SC's of European and Colonial powers. Other than captured Major Harbors, they are the only legal build locations for that power.

  France
    Paris (par)
    Warsaw (war)
    Barcelona (brc)

  Rhine
    Frankfurt (fra)
    Hannover (hnv)

  Britain
    London (lon)
    Glasgow (gla)

  Austria
    Vienna (vie)
    Buda (bud)
    Prague (pra)

  Denmark
    Oslo (osl)
    Copenhagen (cop)

  Russia
    St. Petersburg (stp)
    Moscow (mos)
    Odessa (ode)

  Republican
    Philadelphia (phi)
    Charleston (chl)
    (Baltimore is a Major Harbor rather than a Republican-only "home" location.)

  Federalist
    New York City (nyc)
    Boston (bst)

  Canada
    Montreal (mon)
    Halifax (hfx)

  New Spain
    Mexico City (mex)
    Havana (hav)
    Cádiz (cad)

Special Information on Cádiz (cad)

Britain starts with control of Cádiz (cad), but it is not a British home location. It is instead a Spanish home location. If New Spain can recapture Cádiz, they can use it as a normal build location, just like Havana (hav) or Mexico City (mex).

When Napoleon put his brother on the Spanish throne, supporters of the prior Bourbon regime fled to Cádiz and set up a government-in-exile. They allied with Britain, who had a naval blockade in nearby Gibraltar, and with Portugal (whose troops were led by the British Lord Wellington). The Viceroyalty of New Spain nominally served under this government, but in practice, it ran itself independently. 1812 Overture *posits that firmly re-establishing a presence in Iberia will enable New Spain to help reestablish Bourbon Spain as a power independent of Bonaparte.*

Special Convoy Rules

The rules regarding convoying troops are the same as normal Diplomacy with one exception:

Limitation on Intercontinental Convoys:

No Army may be convoyed from its power's home continent to the other continent unless the destination is either an SC controlled by that power or a region adjacent to such an SC.

Because what constitutes an "army" is very different in North America than in Europe, it is intended that a power use its fleets to first establish a "base of operations" in the other theatre before sending its troops to invade. That base of operations effectively "outfits" the arriving army, converting it to the appropriate size and munitions required by the theatre.

Clarifications:
- This means that a power must capture an SC in the other theatre using a fleet first.
  - Only then will it be allowed to start convoying troops into or near that SC.
- A move order that violates this rule will be considered an invalid and voided.
- Any SC controlled by the power at the beginning of the turn-year (or any region adjacent) is a legal destination, even if that SC or region is currently occupied by an opponent.
  - An SC controlled by that player, but not the same power, does not satisfy this limitation.
- The fleets that participate in the convoy are irrelevant.
  - Any power's fleets can be given an order for a trans-continental convoy as long as the moving army and its final destination meet the requirements.
- A convoy that moves an army between two locations within the same theatre is unaffected.
- A convoy that moves an army back to its power's home theatre is unaffected.
- Because they cannot build fleets, and therefore cannot perform a naval capture of an EU Supply Center, neither the Shawnee nor Cherokee will ever be convoyed into the European theatre.

Water and Terrain

The rules regarding water and movement are nearly the same as normal Diplomacy. Some differences and clarifications are listed below.

Split Coastlines

These work just like split coasts in vanilla Diplomacy.

Five provinces have split coastlines.

St. Petersburg	stp	nc/sc
Castile	cas	nc/ec
Paris	par	nc/wc
Rupert's Land	rup	nc/sc
Yorkshire	ysh	ec/wc

Make sure to specify the coast when providing Fleet-related orders.

Note: Brittany (bri) borders both the North and West coasts of Paris (par). Glasgow (gla) borders both the East and West coasts of Yorkshire (ysh).

Canal Zones

As with vanilla Diplomacy, these regions allow fleets to treat the entire region as a single coastline. This means that ships can move into the region from one side during one turn, then freely move to the other side during the next
.
Fleets in Canal Zones may not convoy troops.

The following are Canal Zones:

Stockholm	stk
Copenhagen	cop
Hamburg	hbg
Montreal	mon
Toronto	tor
Milwaukie	mwk
Michigan Territory	mic
Niagara	nia

"Hybrid" Zones

Hybrid Zones are like Canal Zones. They can be occupied by Fleets or Armies. They don't have split coastlines. They don't split other regions' coastlines. However, unlike canals, **Fleets in Hybrid Zones may convoy troops**. For players of the variant *1900*, Hybrid Zones are similar to Gibraltar.

Note: Cádiz sits adjacent to the coastline of Castile, which is split by Portugal. Fleets in Cádiz may move to Castile's east coast, but not its north coast. Fleets in Portugal may move to Castile's north coast, but not its east coast.

The following are Hybrid Zones:

> The Great Lakes (lmi, sup, hur, eri, & ont)
> > *See section below*
>
> Newfoundland   (nfl)
> > Connects ARC, NAD, lab, mon, & hfx
>
> Bahamas (bah)
> > Connects ANC, flo, GOM, hav, & his
>
> Hispaniola (his)
> > Connects ANC, bah, hav, CRB, & EQC
>
> Cádiz (cad)
> > Connects por, POC, CAC, mor, naf, MED, & cas (east coast)
>
> Ireland (ire)
> > Connects AZC, CEL, wal, ysh (wc), gla, & NAD

The Great Lakes

Many battles in the original War of 1812 occurred in the Great Lakes region.

1812 Overture also gives the opportunity to players to have battles in the lakes region.

Note: Some geographic inaccuracies and anachronisms are part of this map, but I feel it makes for a more straightforward setup.

In this region, all five lakes are Hybrid Zones, but they do not directly connect to each other.

Either Fleets or Armies can occupy the lakes:

> Lake Ontario (ont)
> Lake Erie (eri)
> Lake Huron (hur)
> Lake Michigan (lmi)
> Lake Superior (sup)

Flavor Note: If this makes you scratch your head, assume that the armies are occupying the lake by using small craft like merchant vessels, rowboats, or canoes.

Passing from one lake to the next requires entering one or more of the nearby Canal Zones first.

> Toronto (tor)
> Milwaukie (mwk)
> Michigan Territory (mic)
> Niagara (nia)
> Montreal (mon)

Toronto (tor) acts as a hub. It connects to all of the other nearby Canal Zones. It connects to four of the great lakes (sup, hur, eri, & ont).

Montreal (mon) connects to Lake Ontario (ont) and is the only water route back to the ocean. This region contains the St. Lawrence River. Fleets that wish to travel between the lakes region and the coast (nfl, hfx, & lab) must at some point pass through Montreal.

The rest of the region's connections should be easy to interpret from the map, keeping in mind that Milwaukie (mwk) and Michigan Territory (mic) also connect.

Maps

SVG-Based Map

All of the maps and units depicted in *1812 Overture* were generated using Inkscape, an SVG editor. I also use Inkscape as a GM tool to depict orders, recolor regions, and show unit positions as the game progresses. GM's interested in using the original SVG-based maps to run their own PBEM sessions of *1812 Overture* should contact me at w.alex.ronke@gmail.com for details.

Hypertext Map for the Seeing-Impaired

I have also produced a text-based map index in simple HTML that should be more accessible to seeing-impaired persons using JAWS or other screen-reader software. I plan to eventually host it online, but for now, please contact me at w.alex.ronke@gmail.com for a copy.

Map with Full Names of Regions

Hosted externally: http://i.imgur.com/YV3AdA1.png
This image displays the full name of each region. It colors SC's in a slightly different manner than the map's starting state. Cádiz, for example, is colored green for New Spain even though it starts as a British possession, while Baltimore's SC (a major harbor) is not colored at all. This is because this image was created for a physical printed map, and the color corresponds to the specified home/build locations assigned to each power rather than only the starting position.

Simplified Blank Map

Hosted externally: http://i.imgur.com/XJlxNXK.png
This map might be useful for GM's who do not have experience working with SVG and would prefer to edit maps in Paint, Photoshop, or an equivalent.

Grayscale Printable Map

Hosted externally: http://i.imgur.com/1Cwct6V.png
This is a blank, printable map appropriate for making notes on a standard 8.5x11 sheet of paper.
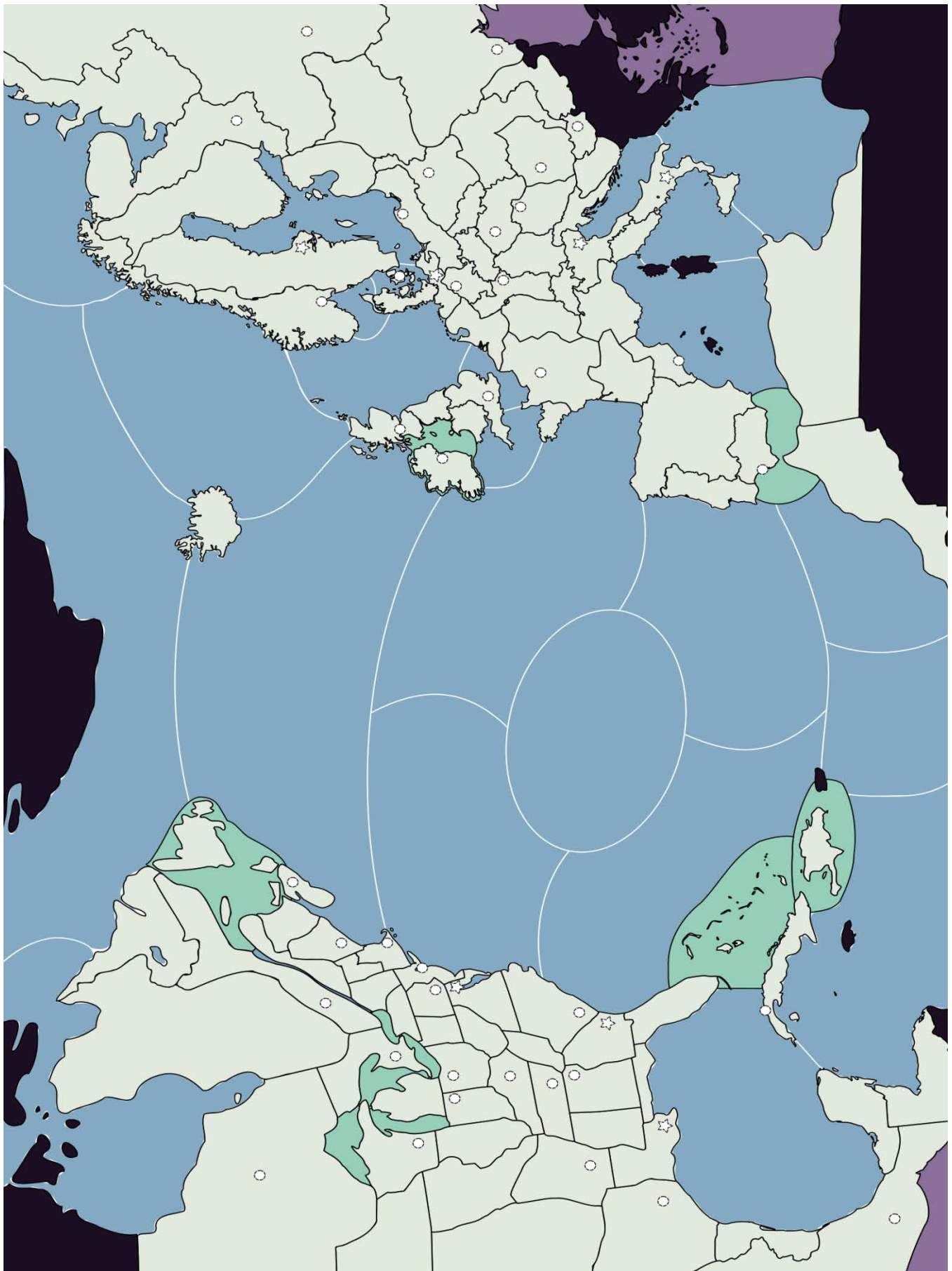
1812 Overture

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1811.01
New Year
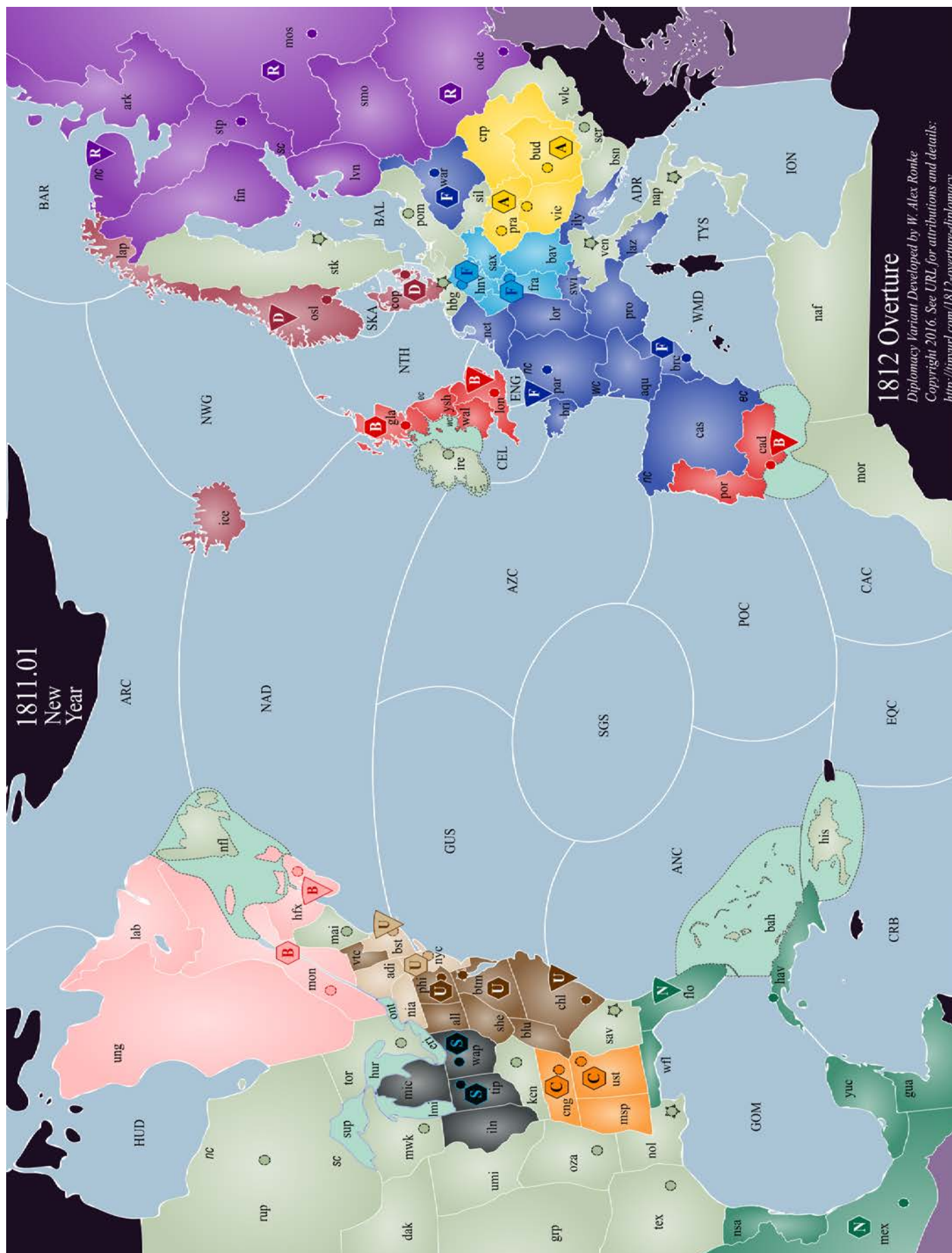
Report from Boston Massacre
By Randall Lawrence-Hurt

The 2016 Boston Massacre was a resounding success. After two days of struggle (Sept. 24-25), featuring a total of eight boards and twenty-one players, the two-time World Champion **Andrew Goff** emerged victorious. He narrowly edged out two local players, **Andrew Katcher** and **Nicholas DeLateur**, who respectively finished second and third. The full results are available at www.BostonMassacreDiplomacy.com.

The Boston Massacre, first conceived by Melissa Call, ran for several years until its organizers moved out of Massachusetts. In its stead, **Alan Levin** founded the Boroughs Diplomacy Tournament in Marlborough. After a two-year run there, the Boston hobby rejuvenated, and decided it was time to bring the tournament back home.

The tournament was hosted at the Marriott Hotel in the heart of Cambridge, which everyone agreed was about as convenient both to public transportation and excellent food and drink as possible. The rounds were Saturday morning and afternoon, and Sunday morning, and in an appeal to popular opinion (and over the good-natured objection of the TD, who insists that the only pure scoring system is draw-based) the Carnage scoring system was used. The games were intense and well-played, but with a notable absence of any real verbal altercations or other unpleasantries. Despite tournament Diplomacy having the reputation of causing, at the very least, strong emotions, all the players demonstrated through their behavior their acknowledgement that this was a game, and we were there to have fun.

Speaking of fun, the tournament's actual start as far as I was concerned was the Friday night gathering just down the street from the venue, at the Cambridge Brewing Company. Numerous out-of-towners gathered with a number of local players, and over dinner and beers (and beers, and beers), stories were told, favorite stabs relived, and camaraderie abounded. A few of us then staggered back to the hotel through the refreshing September rain, and prepared for the next day's deception with several games of Avalon (and, of course, hotel bar cocktails).

Every board has its story, and every player will have some favorite moment; I encourage those who weren't there to talk to someone who was, as I'm sure they'll encourage you to attend next year (and yes, there will absolutely be a next year!). But my personal favorite moment (of the games, at least) came in the Saturday afternoon round. My Austria had been doing well, but now it was Spring 1905 or so, and here came the enemy; things didn't look good when my erstwhile Turkish ally convoyed a French army (controlled, of course, by the dastardly **Andrew Goff**) from Tunis into Albania. Tactically, my position was in trouble. But the best way to deal with trouble is to mock it, I always say. So, that very Fall turn, I convinced the Turkish player to convoy my army from Bulgaria… to Tunis. While shortly thereafter that ended as you would expect, it certainly made my subsequent fall from grace much more entertaining.

And after all, isn't that why we play this game?

One Chair Short Diplomacy
By Hugh Polley

Y0.00 One Chair Short Diplomacy Credits

Credit: Created by Hugh Polley in 2012. Anyone may use or reproduce these rules so long as he retains this credit notice!

Play tested in Nov. 7, 2015, at Stratagem. First winner: James Istvanffy.

Y1.00 One Chair Short Diplomacy

This Diplomacy Variant is a way to play a game when a full slate of players is not possible. This Variant is also a way to help new players learn the game because it a simple variant which gives each new player a crack at playing more than one Country.

Every two years in this Variant, players change countries by moving two countries along the control bar of sect. Y6.00, left to right. For example, before Spring 1903, the Austrian player stops playing the Austrian pieces and starts playing the French pieces; then, before Spring 1905, the same player stops playing the French pieces and starts playing the Italian pieces; and so on.

Because you have fewer than seven players, at least one country will have no player at the game's start.

Optional: The Engineer Diplomacy CD rules can be used by the players to bid for neutral country unit moves.

Players can voluntarily trade countries one year before the two-year deadline arrives. No one may however trade at that time for a country that lacks a player. Example: Before Spring 1906, the Italian and Turkish players may voluntarily trade countries. If they do, then, according to sect. Y6.00, before Spring 1907, the new Turkish (former Italian) player changes to play the English pieces.

The game uses an accumulated point system to determine the game winner(s). Betting a bottle of beer for each player point spread is not encouraged! If your country is eliminated while you are its player, then you are sitting on the short chair and are out of game.

Y2.00 Even Year Switch Point System Determines Winner

At the end of 1902, of 1904, of 1906, of 1908, and so on—each even-numbered year—players earn Switch Points. If the country a player has been playing has gained supply centers under the player's control, the player earns as many points as the country has gained centers. Similarly, if the country a player has been

playing has lost supply centers under the player's control, the player *loses* as many points as the country has lost. For example, if Austria, beginning the game with three centers, has five centers at the end of 1902, the Austrian player earns two Switch Points. Then, changing to play the French pieces, if France, having at the beginning of 1903 six centers, falls to one center by the end of 1904, then the French (formerly Austrian) player loses five Switch Points, leaving him with a total of negative three (–3).

Players who have voluntarily traded countries earn Switch Points according to centers gained or lost while a country was under their control. Thus, continuing the example, if the French player (having –3 Switch Points at the end of 1904) takes over a four-unit Italian position to start 1905, wins one center for Italy during 1905, trades Italy for a three-center Turkey to start 1906, then loses one center for Turkey during 1906; then, at the end of 1906, the player in question earns zero Switch Points for the two-year period (going +1 for the Italian year, but –1 for the Turkish year), leaving him with a total again of –3 at the end of 1906.

If, at the end of any even-numbered year, the player with the most accumulated Switch Points leads his nearest competitor by two or more, that player wins a solo victory, and the game is over.

Y3.00 You Can Trade Countries

The wise player is will use diplomacy and strewed moves to avoid moving into a one- or two-SC country at the end of an even-numbered year.

For this purpose (or for any other purpose), two players can trade their countries at the end of an *odd*-numbered year. The country for which a player trades becomes his new country from that time, with one exception: if the country traded away is eliminated during the year following the trade, *the trade is reverted.* Thus, in the example, if the Italian player has traded for Turkey at the end of 1907, and the country of Italy is eliminated during 1908, then trade is as it never happened: the former Turkish player scores for Turkey (both years); the former Italian player is on the Short Chair and thus is eliminated, and it is the former Turkish player (not eliminated), who proceeds to play the English pieces to start 1909.

Y4.00 Operation of the Country Control Bar

As already explained, players shift two places along the Country Control Bar of Y6.00 at the end of each even-numbered year. However, if the country shifted to has

been eliminated, that player shifts further along the Country Control Bar to the next uneliminated, available country. For example, at the end of 1910, if the French player has changed to Italy and Germany has been eliminated, then the English player cannot change to Germany (eliminated) and cannot change to Italy (unavailable), but changes instead to Russia (assuming that Russia is uneliminated and available).

Countries unassigned after this procedure become *neutral countries* for the following two-year period.

Y5.00 Creating Civil Disorder Moves (See Engineer Diplomacy)

Optional Rule! Neutral Countries in this game are considered to be 'NMR' Countries. You can mortgage one of your Country's unit moves to bid for a possible Neutral Country Unit move. The 1971 Rule Book for Diplomacy clause XIV3 CIVIL DISORDER states, "If a player leaves the game, or fails to submit orders in a given Spring or Fall season ... His units hold in position, but do not support one another."

The above situation is often referred to by Game Masters as 'No Moves Received' or in the abbreviated form 'NMR'.

Instead of moving his own unit, a player can move units of a neutral country. For example, if Turkey, a neutral country, has a fleet in the Black Sea, Italy can move this fleet by ordering "CD Ion (F Bla-Sev)." This puts the Italian F Ionian Sea in Civil Disorder (it holds), moving the Turkish fleet, instead.

Y5.10 Solution for bidding wars

It may happen that two or more players order the same neutral unit. If it does, you have a *bidding war.*

1/ For each Area with a Unit in Civil Disorder, the number of exactly the same orders for the unit, gives a bid value for that order.

2/ The largest bid value is used to eliminate all order bids the same or smaller than the largest bid.

3/ After 2 has been done for each CD Area, any bids which are left are the winning bids and their sponsoring units are in CD for that season.

The proper Form for a Civil Disorder Bid is

[CD {existing unit location} (Move required for Unit in Civil Disorder)]

Example. Ordered Units in Fall or Spring:

RU: F StP-Nor, A Mos-Sil

AH: A Vie-Tri

IT: F Ion S A Nap, A Nap H

Turkey's lone unit in Civil Disorder:

TU: F Bla

Civil Disorder Bids:

Russia:

CD StP (F Bla-Ank)

CD MOS (F Bla-Ank)

Austria:

CD vie (F Bla-Ank)

Italy:

CD Ion (F Bla-Sev)

CD Nap (F Bla-Sev)

The result is 3 Bids for (F Bla-Ank) and 2 for (F Bla-Sev); so (F Bla-Ank) would happen and mortgaged units StP, Mos, Vie would be ordered to Hold *while units Ion and Nap would execute their original orders.* If Austria did not submit a CD order then it would be 2 and 2, so all units would execute there original orders and F Bla would be unordered.

Y5.20 The need for Civil Disorder moves

Why move units in Civil Disorder? After a game goes beyond year one finding Player replacements can be a pain. Why should a player dropping out cause undo delay or stop a game from continuing with its original players?

Often in later stages of a game, a player will stop sending in orders because he can not see a way to win or has lost interest in the game. This can cause an allied player to lose a winnable game, CD orders give him a fighting chance.

With Civil Disorder moves NMR positions become a mediated hazard of the game. Jockeying for Control of these units then becomes part of the game's power structure.

Y6.00 Country movement control bars

WT02   AEFGIRTAEFGIRT

WT04   AEFGIRTAEFGIRT

WT06   AEFGIRTAEFGIRT

Resolving Badly Written Orders
By Matthew Shields

Diplomacy players make a lot of mistakes. Sometimes the mistakes are mistakes and sometimes they are "mistakes", but in either case it often falls on some poor GM or a nominally neutral third party to adjudicate orders that are unclear, opaque or just plain confusing. While something of a common practice has evolved about how these situations are handled, the rulebooks offer less help than we might think, often ruling based on bright lines that often don't really exist on a player's order pad.

This article isn't able to offer definitive answers, but hopefully by exploring the problems GMs face and the limits of the rules' ability resolve those problems, we can offer GMs with some guidance about what factors to consider when making these tricky decisions.

The Printed Rule
This rule that we're interested in appears identically in the 1976, 1982, and 1992 Avalon Hill Rules, as well as previously in the 1971 Games Research Rules. It appears with only the most minor (and in my opinion entirely stylistic) differences in the 1961 Games Research Rules, and the 1959 Calhamer Rules.

Section VII, subsection 4 "Mechanics of Writing Orders":

> *Each player writes their "orders" on a slip of paper, usually keeping them secret, and these orders to the armies and fleets are all exposed at once. Each player reads their orders while the others check to be sure that they are reading what they actually wrote. An illegal order is not followed, and the unit so ordered simply stands in place. A mistaken order, if legal, must be followed. An order which admits of two meanings is not followed. A badly written order, which nevertheless can have only one meaning, must be followed.*

At first blush this rule seems straightforward enough. If a player writes an entirely illegal order, it is converted to a hold for adjudication. And we specify that a player can't "take back" their orders by claiming that an otherwise legal order was a mistake. (E.g. they accidentally wrote down the wrong province). If an order has "two meanings" it is "not followed", but notice that the rule does not explicitly say that the order is reduced to a

hold. Many and perhaps most GMs seem to believe that any order that is "thrown out" at this stage is adjudicated as a hold order but it's debatable if this is what the rule actually says.

But what does it mean exactly to say that an order "admits of two meanings" vs. an order that has only one meaning? Although the rules don't say so, resolving this comes down to a GM making a judgement call about what interpretations of an order set are "reasonable" and what are not. What factors should the GM consider in making this determination?

The 1999 Hasbro/AH rules are very similar but with some differences that might raise eyebrows. I've underlined the relevant change for emphasis.

"How To Play", Section 2 "Order Writing Phase":

> *Each player secretly writes[1] "orders" for each of their units on a slip of paper. All players then reveal orders at the same time. Each player reads their orders while others make sure that what they hear is what is written. A legal order must be followed. An order written by mistake, if legal, must be followed. An "illegal" or <u>ambiguous order or an order that is judged to be unsuccessful</u> is not followed. A unit that is given an illegal order (or given no order) must stand in place. (The unit holds). A poorly written order that has only one meaning must be followed.*

This rule set introduces a couple of new terms. The term "ambiguous order" presumably just refers to the "order which admits of two meanings" that was referred to in the older rules. This does not seem to be a rules change but just a change in terminology.

But what is "an order that is judged to be unsuccessful"? Remember that this section of the rules it not dealing

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[1] Here we see a second change in this section of rules, but one that's not really the subject of this article. Previously the rules stated that orders were written down and usually kept secret. The 1999 and 2008 rules instead say that "each player secretly writes orders". Taken literally, this phrasing would seem to say that writing your orders in secret is not merely good practice but is actually a requirement. Does this imply that showing another player your orders pre-adjudication would be a violation of the rules? Though I've never heard of the rules being interpreted in this fashion, that seems to be what it literally says.

with how to adjudicate orders. This section is addressing what to do with orders that may be unfit for adjudication at all. We're addressing the "inputs" that go into our adjudicator and come out resolved on the other end.

That being the case, this reference should probably not be understood to refer to attempted moves that failed on account of the other orders, but somehow to an attempt to write an order that was itself unsuccessful. It's not clear what sort of an order this is, but perhaps it's meant to capture some of the more poorly written orders we examine below.

The 2008 rules are similar to the 1999 version, but with two differences, one probably minor and one potentially quite large:

> *Each player secretly writes "orders" for each of their units on a slip of paper. All players then reveal orders at the same time. Each player reads their orders while others make sure that what they hear is what is written. A legal order must be followed. An "illegal" order or an order that is judged to be unsuccessful isn't followed. A unit that is given an illegal order (or given no order) must stand in place (the unit holds). A poorly written order that has only one meaning must be followed.*

The first change is the elimination of the sentence that had existed in some form since 1959 stating that mistaken but still legal orders are followed. This sentence was likely considered redundant since we're already told that all legal orders must be followed, so this should not be seen as a rule change.

The second change, is the elimination of the reference to "ambiguous orders" that was added in the 1999 rules, but without the restoration of the previous language about orders having two meanings. So strictly, the 2008 rules no longer address situations where an order could be read as having two meanings. We know that a poorly written order that has only one meaning is followed, but that does not necessarily imply that an order with more than one meaning is not followed.

Arguably, this change could be read as a shift from a per-se rule that orders with more than one interpretation are automatically not followed, to a rule that ambiguous orders should still be followed in some way. Is this saying that the GM should go to greater lengths to decide which of these multiple meanings was intended or is "most reasonable"? If so, this would be a significant change in how many GMs adjudicate, as generally any time multiple orders are submitted for a unit, or it's undeterminable which of two interpretations of an order applies, the unit is automatically considered to "hold".

In reality, I suspect that the editors of the 2008 rules had no such grand designs to change things, and likely didn't

appreciate the impact of the change in wording. Nonetheless, new players will pick up the game and try to apply the newest rules and may come to different conclusions. On some level, the written rules need to control even if they run counter to our belief about what was intended.

The Various Types of Unclear Orders
This rule hints at a couple of different problems that can come up, especially in live games where players are handwriting their orders, and even more so in competitive games where players may be under strict deadline pressure and more prone to errors. Unfortunately, in addition to the arguable conflicts between the different versions of the above rule, the rule does not provide much guidance about how we should understand terms like "illegal", "ambiguous", "unsuccessful" or "admits of two meanings".

There are two broad categories of problematic order -

The first are those where the words written on the order pad, while clear and legible, fail in some way to comport with the normal rules for writing orders. They might omit a word or symbol that would otherwise make the order clear. They might use terminology that is unorthodox or confusing (including using questionable names or abbreviations for provinces). Or they could contain an error that could be easily corrected by the GM who felt so inclined.

The other category is that where the orders themselves are difficult to read or illegible. Obviously in a case where an order set was *entirely* illegible the orders could easily be thrown out. But the more likely scenario is that in which the orders are difficult to read, but not entirely opaque. These include cases where the orders seem to say one thing, but could arguably be read to say another.

In both of the above cases the GM is forced to categorize the order as either a poorly written order that can have only one meaning (in which case it should be followed) or as illegal, ambiguous or having multiple meanings (or, perhaps, as "unsuccessful") in which case the order is "not followed".

Handwriting issues are actually a serious problem in tournaments that GMs have to deal with regularly, and it is not at all uncommon to encounter orders where you're not quite sure which of two (or more) things a person wrote down. The problem with applying the rule as written, is that the rule assumes that there exists a bright line between orders with can have more than one meaning and rules which can have only one meaning. In reality, the situation is never this clear.

Legible, but poorly written orders
Consider these Spring 1901 orders for Italy:

Army Venice -> Piedmont, Army Rome -> Venice, Fleet -> Ionian Sea

Italy has failed to properly identify his starting fleet in Naples in these orders. However, Italy only possesses one fleet and there's no reasonable interpretation of these orders other than that Italy intended to move Naples to the Ionian Sea. Under any version of the rule, this would seem to constitute a basic example of "a poorly written order that has only one meaning" and should be followed.

On the other hand, consider these Spring 1901 orders for England:

Army Liv -> Wal, Fleet Lon -> Ech, Fleet Edi -> Nor

This is a very classic situation of England using an ambiguous abbreviation that doesn't make clear where he's trying to move. "Nor" might mean Norwegian Sea or North Sea, and while North Sea is probably a bit more likely given England's other two orders, this seems to fall into the category of "an order which admits of two meanings" (1959-1992 rules) or an "ambiguous order" (1999 rules). In this case the order is clearly not to be followed. However, if you're playing under the 2008 rules, one could argue that the situation is less clear, since "ambiguous" orders are (perhaps?) no longer automatically to be "not followed". Do those rules expect the GM to resolve the ambiguity, and adjudicate accordingly? I don't personally think so. I think most GMs would agree with me that in this case Edinburgh must hold as the order was not written with adequate specificity to be treated as "having only one meaning". That said, the change to the 2008 rules does us no favors in our interpretation.

But what do you do with this more difficult situation:

England: Fleet London -> English Channel, Army Yorkshire -> London, Fleet Wales support Fleet -> English Channel.

France: Fleet Brest -> English Channel, Fleet Mid Atlantic support Brest -> English Channel

The Welsh fleet has failed to specify which fleet it's supporting to the English Channel. It seems much more likely that England intended to support his own fleet there than to support a French fleet, but supporting the French fleet would have been a perfectly legal order.

In a case like this, is it reasonable for the GM to assume that the intention of England's orders was to support the fleet in London to the English Channel? Or does the fact that there exists more than one legal order that could have been intended automatically put this order into the group of those not followed? Cases like this are the hardest for GMs because it's reasonably clear what was intended, and yet if one applies a more formulaic

analysis of the orders, it's hard to rule them unambiguous.

Similarly suppose "Holland support German army Berlin" when the sole German army is actually in Kiel. The order is clearly wrong, but also clearly intended to be a support of Kiel. By convention we'd call this a misorder because it's unambiguously illegal. But that said, I think there's a strong argument that such an order can have only one sensible meaning. How out of bounds would it be for a GM to say that such an order constitutes a "poorly written order that can have only on meaning" and read Berlin to say Kiel?

I'm sure you can see how we could continue to write more and more edge cases like the above where reasonable GMs might differ on exactly how much latitude to give the player in reading intent into unclear orders.

It might be nice to have some guidance for GMs who are wondering what information to take into account when deciding how to resolve these situations, and among these many reasons they are a problem in need of some guidance in resolution is this:

Players can and will (and do) write unclear orders intentionally.

They will sometimes intentionally write a character or two in a way where it could arguably say more than one thing. Or they will leave out a word or a symbol to create ambiguity where none should have existed. Intentional misorders are a long and storied part of Diplomacy, and this is just one occasion where they arise - albeit one that causes the GM more headaches than others

As we'll see in our next section, the reason it's important to discuss is because if we are not careful about what rules are applied to such situations, you can inadvertently create a situation where you permit players to write are functionally conditional orders. (E.g. if another player wrote a relevant support or convoy, that fact could be seen as evidence that my orders were intended to be X, but if they failed to write such an order I can argue that what I actually ordered was Y.)

Difficult to read orders

I hesitate to include a specific example in this section rather than just describing what I'm talking about because focusing on trying to decipher my particular handwriting is kind of beside the point. The important thing is to imagine a situation where a badly written order could have multiple interpretations, more than one of which might be supported by different parts of that player's or other player's orders.

So with that in mind, please consider the following hastily scribbled (and entirely fictional) orders, and ask yourself how you'd adjudicate Edinburgh in particular:
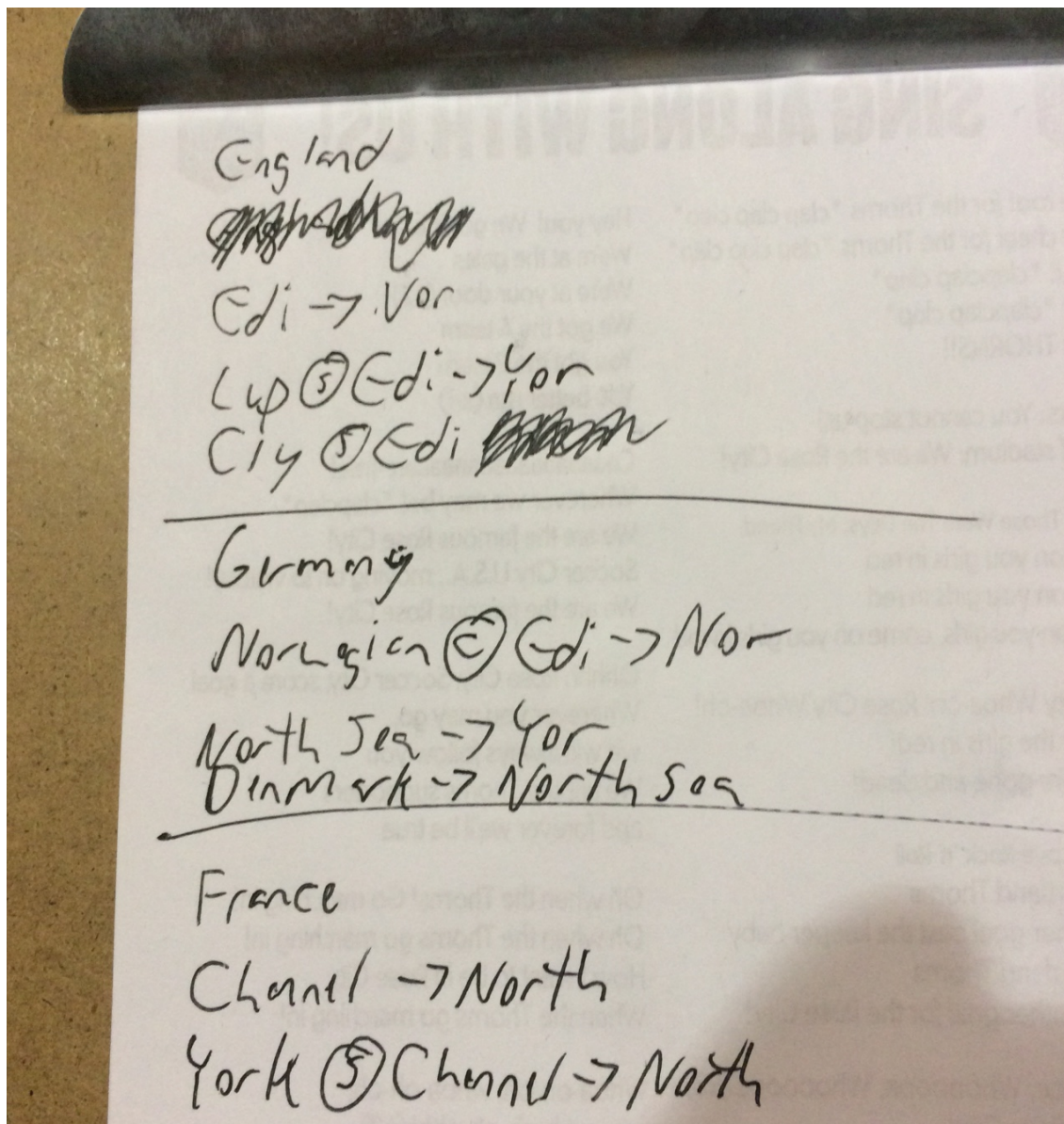
(And again, if you think that the above orders are clear and you're sure what they say, pretend instead that you aren't sure.)

The important questions in my mind are these:

- What information may/should the GM take into account when trying to decipher badly written orders?
- Can the GM look to other orders the player wrote, for example the apparent support of Edi -> York by Liverpool?
- Can the GM look to the orders other players wrote, for example the apparent convoy of Edi -> Norway by Germany?
- And what do we make of the Clyde order? What we ended up with was an order of Clyde support

Edinburgh, but it appears that what England wrote was Cly S Edi -> something and then he went back and scribbled out the "-> something". Does this make you think that England simply attempted to change his orders at the last second and messed it up?

- Is the GM allowed to consider the logic or lack thereof of a particular order in resolving the ambiguity? If I can plausibly read the marks on a page as saying two different things, one of which is a sensible order and one of which is a implausible one, can I give weight to my opinion of which order is more reasonable? And where do I draw the line between an order that is nonsensical and one which is merely tactically stupid?

In this example, you might say that the order is obviously intended to be to Yorkshire as that's where England supported it, and that you should disregard what Germany wrote. But what if there was no Liverpool order? Would that change your mind? Would the combination of Edi's scribbled order and Norwegian Sea's orders be "clear enough" to convince you that it was intended as a move to Norway? Would you simply say that the character looks more like an N than a Y and rule accordingly?

Or do we simply say, "VOR" (the most literal interpretation of the letters) is not a valid province and therefore the order is invalid and Edi holds? Does that mean that the support for Edi from Clyde is valid? It should. While Edi clearly attempted a move order of some kind, the rules specify that illegal orders are adjudicated as holds.

Now consider a slightly different situation: Suppose the Liverpool unit didn't exist and that Germany didn't actually write the convoy, but instead the German player orders North Sea to Edinburgh supported by Norwegian. Now we have a situation where it's to England's advantage for his own order to be ruled as a misorder, so that the support from Clyde is valid.

The question to ask yourself is this: Is your reading of the Edinburgh order different if you only consider the English orders than it is if you consider also the German orders?

If the German order makes you think that it's a convoy, but you'd have ruled it a misorder in the absence of that German order, then you're giving England the benefit of writing the order after seeing Germany's. If Germany writes the convoy then England will take it ride to Norway, but if Germany doesn't write the convoy then England gets the benefit of a supported hold order. Clearly that would be a problem.

Returning to our original example, the players can make (at least) three entirely plausible arguments to the GM about what the orders are:

- *"England obviously intended to move to Yorkshire. Even though the letter looks more like a V or N than a Y, we've got a very clear Liverpool support order to Yorkshire, and that is strong evidence that England attempted to write "edi -> yor" and just wrote his Y very badly. Bad handwriting alone shouldn't negate the order which it's obvious what the intent was."*
- *"England obviously intended to move to Norway. The letter looks more like an N than a Y, and Germany wrote the convoy to Norway, so clearly they had planned to move the army to Norway. Liverpool was probably intended to support North Sea -> Yorkshire to keep the French out, (or maybe he forgot to change it) but instead*

England misordered Liverpool and wrote a void support. Nonetheless, it's clear what Edinburgh's order was, and bad handwriting alone shouldn't negate the order when it's obvious what the intent was."
- *"Edinburgh's order is ambiguous and cannot be determined. "VOR" is not a valid province, and it's not clear whether he intended to write a different province or deliberately misordered it. Given this, the order must be treated as an illegal order and a hold, and therefore the support from Clyde is valid."*

And so on.

What factors should we consider in interpreting unclear orders?
So what information is it safe for a GM to take into account when resolving these situations, and what should she deliberately ignore? What follows at this point is really more my opinions than anything I can point to in the rules.

Should a GM consider the player's entire order set when interpreting a single unclear order? I personally would say yes. The other orders can offer useful context, especially in cases a word is simply very hard to read, but otherwise the orders are internally consistent. While some GMs might argue that interpreting unclear orders is only a matter of looking at the garbled text itself, I think that's an overly narrow viewpoint that's not supported by the rules. If an order is unambiguously illegal I'm obliged to treat it as a hold, but if the other orders supply enough context to breathe clarity back into an otherwise unclear order I'd err on the side of doing so.

Should a GM consider other players' orders when interpreting an unclear order set? I think no. The problem here is that the GM can't know what the other players knew about the misordering player's intentions. Their orders could match by pure chance, or the other player might have somehow been aware of the misorder and wrote their orders to match it. In any event, the GM can't assume which players are cooperating or fighting based on their past behavior. If you start looking at other players' orders, it's too easy for the GM to see connections where there are none, or let their own assumptions about what the players should do affect their judgment.

Should the GM consider how "good" a move is when determining what orders are reasonable. This is very difficult. A GM should not be assuming any particular level of competence on the part of their players when adjudicating orders. Moreover, even a very "bad" move might well have been ordered intentionally to serve some diplomatic or other purpose. It's generally quite dangerous for the GM to assume they know what's going on in the game and can't know for sure what players are trying to achieve.

All that being said, it's reasonable for the GM to insert a certain amount of common sense and not be overly formulaic about interpreting orders. If the Russian player orders Moscow to some location that looks a lot like Liverpool, but could plausibly be interpreted as Livonia, it's probably reasonable to assume the Russian wrote Livonia even in the absence of any support orders or other evidence. It's possible that the Russian was trying to misorder Moscow intentionally and was hoping the move would be ruled illegal, but I would personally prefer to err on the side of giving effect to sloppy orders than to throw out orders which are obvious but not clearly enough written. If the player's goal is to misorder, they should be careful to make sure they write their misorder clearly.

Should a GM talk to any of the players about the orders in an attempt to understand an unclear order set? I think this is dangerous to attempt, and beyond extremely basic questions about the current board state I'd advise against it. As in our example above, players come up with all sorts of arguments for why one interpretation is more reasonable than another, and many of these arguments will no doubt be self-serving.

Perhaps more importantly though, by engaging in the discussion the GM is essentially inserting themself into the diplomacy. Especially in face to face games, the arguments the players make are not just academic arguments about resolving an adjudication, but are also being performed in front of the other players and may be attempts to get a particular reaction. Players may support or oppose another player's argument in order to curry favor with a player, or to be seen as being fair or sporting. We've all seen occasions where one player misorders, and another player will say "Oh, just let him do it" even if tactically the move might have been bad for the player expressing support. Sometimes this is just good sportsmanship, but other times it's a calculated attempt to been seen as a nice guy.

It's not a good idea for the GMs to let themselves get used as a prop in such arguments, and in any case since these conversations have a real diplomatic aspect to them, the GM shouldn't be seen as taking a side.

Parting Thoughts
As we've seen, there isn't a perfect way to handle these situations. The most important thing a GM can do is to consider the rules in advance and decide what they believe the rules (and good sense) require them to take into account in parsing the kinds of poorly written orders we've discussed. Not only will this save time and anguish, it may also help allow the GM to make more consistent rulings and avoid allowing subconscious biases to affect their decisions.

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