

Diplomacy World #147



Fall 2019 Issue

www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Fall 2019 issue. Historically the October 1 issue frequently seems to be the hardest to fill with material. I don't know if it's because the second half of the summer finds contributors too distracted to write, or if September's work schedules keep everybody too busy. There are usually face-to-face events that happen in the fall, and those make appearances in the issues coming up instead of this one. This is a **hobby** after all, and real life can and should always be more important. In the end, I try to be more thankful for the material I **do** receive than regretful about things that I don't.

With that said, I do think we've assembled a nice collection of articles for your perusal. Starting at the end, so to speak, there's the full End of Game report for the most recent Diplomacy World Demo Game. Here you'll find some of the thoughts and ideas that led to the twists and turns of the games, straight from the players themselves. And, of course, our trusty commentators include their views on what happened and why it happened. Don't worry, though...the next Diplomacy World Demo Game is now secretly underway, and you'll

likely see the 1901 results and commentary in issue #148.

Elsewhere, the newly-crowned DipCon champion Steve Cooley gives us the low-down on how he managed to deftly avoid all the exposed blades and find his way to the winner's circle. There's "Hobby Historian" David Hood on scoring systems...another great S&T article from Luiz L.S. Neto...and much more! Something for everyone, and if you look carefully, I bet you'll find multiple somethings you're interested in reading.

For whatever reason, I seem to be short on words this time around, so I'll just clam up and let you go enjoy the issue. I think whoever invented the expression "less is more" was probably referring to me.

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is January 1, 2020. 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!

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Robert Lesco - Off topic, but I noted with interest your Diplomacy World correspondent's request for games where a one centre power goes on to great success. Help is at hand by way of your archive. Everything... is a fine resource. I used it for a DW article a long time back concerning whether Germany has more success by taking three centres in 1901 or if this draws unwanted attention. I spotted a seventeen centre power who ended up being eliminated if I recall correctly and I would wager what your writer is looking for could be found there as well.

[[The Postal Diplomacy Zine Archive that Robert is referring to can be found at

<http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/>. The postal zine "Everything" was the last zine the Boardman Number Custodian would use to publish game starts and game results throughout the hobby (other zines had been used before that, but Everything was used for quite a number of years). By the way, yes, there still is a BNC: Tom Howell. I wish more of the hobby would go back to registering game starts and reporting game ends (including variants), as if helps to build a database of trends and – especially for variants – which powers seem to be stronger than others. It also allows people looking over the data to discover new places to play Diplomacy, whether it's a zine or a website.]]

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

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Selected Upcoming Conventions

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://diplomacy.world/> and at <http://petermc.net/diplomacy/>

I am trying to locate additional sources for Upcoming Conventions.

PLEASE, if you have an event coming up, notify me, and why not make up a one-page flyer for inclusion in Diplomacy World?

Tempest 2019 – Friday October 11th – Sunday October 13th - Washington DC – <http://www.ptks.org/>

Federal Australian Capital National Tournament – Saturday October 26th – Sunday October 27th – Canberra, Australia - <http://daanz.org/dip-tournaments.htm>

Carnage 2019 – Friday November 1st – Sunday November 3rd - Killington VT – <http://carnagecon.com/>

Cascadia Open – Saturday January 25th 2020 – Sunday January 26th 2020 – New Westminister BC, Canada – Cascadia.open@gmail.com

Ask the GM

By The GM

Dear GM,

My wife says she won't put out for me unless I promise to get her into Belgium. Isn't that cross gaming?

Sincerely,

Cuckooed Husband

Dear Husband,

Clearly, she is too much woman for you—please send me her name and I will show her how a real man plays Diplomacy.

Your pal,

The GM

Dear GM,

I have lost interest in playing Diplomacy unless I am reduced to two centers or less, what do you suggest I do about it?

Sincerely,

Less is More

Dear More,

Sign up to play in every game I am in as I can use allies like you.

Your pal,

The GM

The Waterloo Opening

by Luiz L. S. Neto a.k.a. Enriador

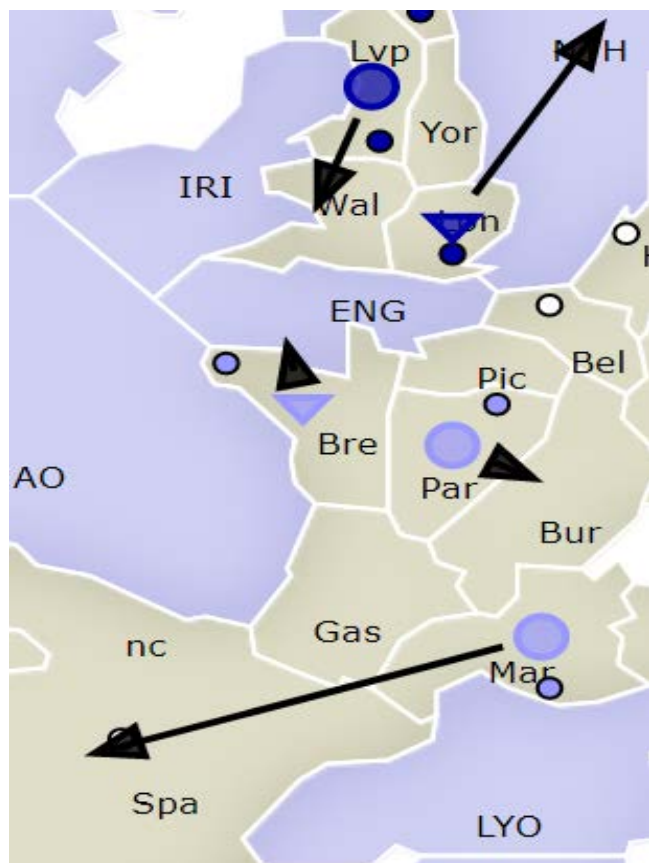
One of the most famous battles in History, the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 heralded the end of an era and the start of another, marked by further revolution, industrialization and massive changes in all aspects of society. As the decisive stage of Napoleon's "Hundred Days", the quiet Belgian town won worldwide fame.

A century later, the fields of Belgium would be the ground for another Hundred Days, this time as part of the Great War. France and England, the mortal enemies of yore, joined forces to push through the German lines towards victory in 1918.

Inspired by this past of conflict and cooperation, I would like to present an unusual Anglo-French opening, putting the Entente Cordiale on a furious swirl against Germany right away in 1901. The opening starts simple in Spring 1901:

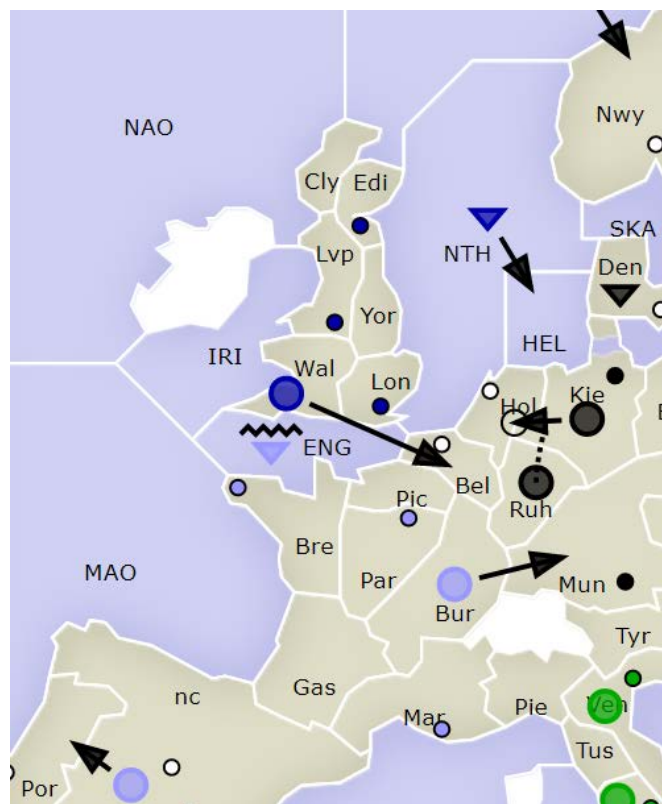
As far as I can tell, neither of these openings have been properly named. The English opening is a Welsh variation of the Northern Opening, and doesn't really make sense by itself. The French opening is a variation of the Manche Opening, being somewhat similar to the English Maginot (A Mar S A Par-Bur, F Bre-ENG). When writing to Germany, England should declare a primary interest against Russia in Scandinavia (a bounce in Sweden would greatly benefit this opening), while France states their intent to hit England hard and grab Belgium with a supported attack.

The lingering question is how exactly sending a French fleet to the English Channel can be of any mutual advantage to England, especially if the idea is to attack Germany. Well, here's where our alliance's secret, seemingly innocuous weapon - the army in Wales - comes to bear in Fall 1901:



France: F Bre-ENG, A Par-Bur, A Mar-Spa

England: F Edi-NRG, F Lon-NTH, A Lvp-Wal



France: F ENG C A Wal-Bel, A Bur-Mun, A Spa-Por

England: F NRG-Nwy, F NTH-HEL, A Wal-Bel

As England seizes Norway and Belgium while advancing onto Heligoland Bight, France captures Portugal, cooks Spain for the next year, and grabs Munich for a massive

headstart against the Kaiser. As with every Diplomacy opening, this set of moves depends on the right context and diplomatic footwork - France must strongly stress to Germany its intentions of using the French fleet to support the army in Burgundy to Belgium, cleaning up the unsupported conquest of Belgium by the convoyed English army, and Munich by the lonely French army.

With two builds each and advanced positions against a (likely) 4-center Germany, the Entente Cordiale can radically up the tempo of the game and solve the Western Triangle as soon as 1903 if lucky. For the truly

devious, England can also send F NTH to Denmark instead (the "Waterloo Whirlwind" variation), especially if in league with a Russian fleet intending to bypass Sweden in order to enter the Baltic Sea. Fun fact: it's the only possible way for England to get three builds in 1901.

Next time you get either England or France to play and you find a friendly diplomat on the other side of the Channel, try pulling up the Waterloo - at the very least you will laugh at everyone's reactions on that fancy Welsh convoy.

iDiplomacy: The Classic Game in the Internet Age

by Tyler Waaler

Diplomacy has aged well since its release more than 50 years ago. Known as a favorite game of John F. Kennedy and Henry Kissinger, Diplomacy grew popular through mail-order play, and gained an active following in hobby magazines. Diplomacy tournaments sprung up in the 1970s, after which Avalon Hill bought the rights to the game, publishing the classic board we know well today. The game adjusted well to the advent of email in the 1980's and peer-to-peer tournaments increasingly became a part of the hobby's landscape, as evidenced by the popularity of the World Diplomacy Convention, an international tournament that has since 1988 annually selected the games world champion- the most recent being Andrew Goff of Great Britain.

However, for all its success internationally since its inception, Diplomacy has seen striking stagnation in the age of the mobile device and computer gaming. The earliest known Diplomacy computer game was published by Avalon Hill in 1984 and was described from the start as a "flop" by Computer Gaming World in 1984. Undeterred, strategy game publisher Paradox released a computerized version of Diplomacy in 2005 that received similarly poor reviews. Both games suffered from a lack of voice chat for peer play, poor computerized opponents, and critical initial reception.

Modern platforms have attempted to rectify the void left by the failures of Avalon Hill and Paradox. Conspiracy, an Android app, is an example of tireless work by passionate developers to bring Diplomacy to mobile devices. Backstabbr, a popular website with a clean interface and small dedicated community, is the same. Still other platforms include vDiplomacy, webDiplomacy or playDiplomacy, online platforms that have attempted to bring the Diplomacy community together over a shared platform. However, these platforms generally suffer from the same ills- a proliferation of disengagement and a sometimes hostile or unforgiving culture. These characteristics are not surprising in a

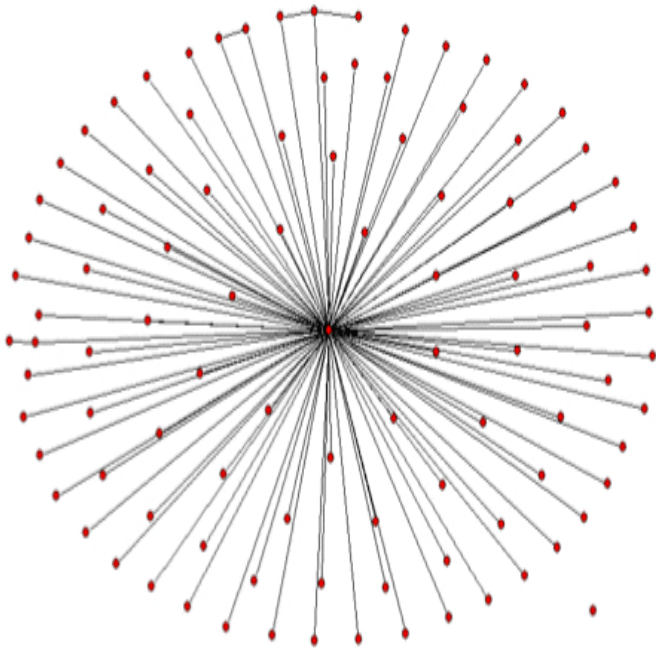
highly competitive and stab-happy environment, but a turnoff to newcomers nonetheless. One only has to be stabbed by a veteran "mentor" to experience real anger and disappointment with Diplomacy, something Chris makes quite clear in his Diplomacy review on Flock of Nerds. A game loved by thousands of players around the world can be found only in niche pockets of the internet.

It is surprising that Diplomacy has fared so poorly online, where it seems almost built to thrive. A player can experience the thrill of the perfect stab without the guilt that comes with their opponent confronting them in-person after the fact. Online chat communication can be more direct than face-to-face confrontation, and players can hold multiple text conversations simultaneously. Games can be set as long or short as one wants, allowing for a variety of styles of gameplay- sometimes at the same time. Both Backstabbr and Conspiracy provide features that make games customizable and engaging. WebDiplomacy has worked hard to address my complaints about fracturing community, disengaged players, and unwelcoming atmosphere. Why then does the greater community remain so fractured?

In the absence of a singular Diplomacy platform beloved by traditional face-to-face players and younger online players, the Diplomacy community has consolidated into regional groups and online factions which rarely mix. There is little crossover between web and app platforms, and many online players don't know that their platform is an adaptation of a board game, let alone that it is played in face-to-face groups around the world. Siobhan Nolen, the newly appointed North American Diplomacy Federation (NADF) president, has made it her goal to expand the hobby towards online players, and diversify participation within the hobby, and I welcome those efforts. However, a centralized presence would do well to bring online and board players together, to become a

repository for the Diplomacy community, and to assure the game's future.

The Diplomacy Nexus is attempting to become that centralized presence. Started as an online tournament hosted on chat app Discord across a variety of online platforms including Backstabbr, Conspiracy, and WebDiplomacy, the Nexus has begun to expand outward into the face-to-face realm, petitioning regional groups for tournament scoring and scheduling information on their website. Their efforts, if successful, may provide both online and face-to-face communities with a foundation off which to build the hobby's player base. The Nexus has actively sought to bring more players under its wing, reaching out to Diplomacy communities around the nation and to high school and college board game groups.



Competitive play has always been core to the Nexus, first manifest in its seasonal tournaments which run biannually in the Spring and Fall. Players are invited to play a total of four games, the top three of which are scored via the Sum-of-Squares system. The top 7 players by the end of the 3-month season qualify for the top board and the winner of this final round receives a

grand prize of \$50 and platform commodity bonuses from online platforms like WebDiplomacy. After more than a year of internal hosting, the Nexus is seeking to expand beyond the parameters of its Discord server. It has reached out to regional United States tournament directors, and is developing a database to track player performance, hoping to become a centralized database for competitive tournament play in the United States.

I can still remember the honeymoon days of my relationship with Diplomacy. I learned how to support an attack, how to convoy a unit over the North Sea through the Diplomacy rulebook. Still later, I studied the Eastern and Western triangles and stalemate lines through Diplomacy Archives. Eventually I met a wonderful face-to-face community through the Diplomacy tournaments listed on the World Diplomacy Database. Today, the strategies and communities that Diplomacy players crave have been pushed to the corners of the niche hobby world. By the time this issue is released the Nexus will have grown to more than 700 players in a little more than a year of existence and may be the centralized answer to what many see as the fractionalization of the Diplomacy community. Diplomacy may remain a niche board game, but even in the Internet Age it won't die of tepid stagnation. It makes sense- what Diplomacy player has ever given up a game without a fight?

[[Editor's Note: It has long been my opinion that one of the easiest ways to build crossover between platforms and forums is to create a consistent game start and game end reporting function within each, which could then be uploaded or emailed to a more automated and modern Boardman Number Custodian and Miller Number Custodian website. The mere act of compiling game start and game-end results for Diplomacy and variant games, and then releasing them monthly or bimonthly, would attract number crunchers to look for patterns and trends within game play. This would also allow players to browse through such results looking for players, places to play, etc. As noted in the letter column this issue, the old postal zine Everything is still a valuable resource when looking for specific rare game results (a one center power winning a game, etc.) even if the information is quite dated by now.]]

Speechless in Seattle

By Steve Cooley

I'm sure, dear Reader, that many of you have no idea why a guy would get choked up about winning DipCon. It's probably one-part psychology and several-parts "always the bride's maid" feeling. When Nathan announced Chris Brand as the second-place finisher, I finally accepted that I *may* have won. I'd been close before—really close. When my dear friend, Hohn Cho, won in 2006 in Charlottesville, I finished second. He won the tournament on the very last possible turn.

I'd also finished third, fourth, etc. I was a good bet not to win. In fact, I recalled in that moment of realization that I'd won, how the late Larry Peery used to make his DipCon picks. He would set odds on particular players mentioning Martin, Hood, other players, and me. If I recall correctly, he once referred to me as "boyish." I smirked as I thought of that—those days are long gone.

I remember the fourth-place finish in San Francisco. That was the Con I maybe should have won and am glad I didn't. I played to a 17/17 IT draw in a game Andy Bartalone delicately termed "The Abomination." (That still makes me laugh) But, by not winning the game I had a special memory: Turkey in that game was the late Don Williams. I think Don finished 6th in that tournament. He was delighted. He told me that I was used to finishing on the top board (a slight exaggeration), but for him it was an affirmation that he was a good player.

As I walked up to greet Nathan, I also thought about the late Jim-Bob Burgess, just about the nicest guy in the history of the hobby. I remember telling him, as we were walking to lunch on a beautiful Connecticut afternoon, that I thought he had the perfect temperament to be the Tournament Director at a Dipcon.

It was no accident that I mentioned Larry, Don, and Jim-Bob in my brief remarks. I miss them all—and our hobby is poorer for their deaths, and those of others who were memorialized at DipCon 50.

I also talked about my long-suffering wife, Janet. She always asks if I've won—in a way that just assumes I would. I have always said, "No," then explained why I didn't (as if she really cared about that!). It was pretty overwhelming to be able to tell her I had won. In fact, I didn't even let her get the standard question out before I blubbered that I'd won.

What's amazing is that I had a perfectly pleasant and relaxing weekend in Seattle. In fact, it may have been among my two or three favorites. To explain why

(besides the obvious), I'll have to start from the beginning.

I arrived at SeaTac before noon. My son (who lives in Seattle) picked me up and we went to some fancy burger place (two burgers, fries, and soft drinks were like \$50).

After lunch, I checked into the hotel (the Sheraton on the opposite corner from the WAC) and was surprised to see dozens of people sitting and standing in the lobby. It took only a few seconds to see they were all communicating in sign language. It just so happened that the weekend of DipCon was also a meeting of the DSA (Deaf Seniors of America). All weekend, I saw these folks in the lobby of the hotel or near it. I was particularly touched when I saw a couple very close to one another. The wife was "talking" to the husband, her hands on his hands just in front of his chest. He was not only deaf but blind. All that I saw of the DSA underscored the human need to communicate, to be heard, to be understood. It just felt so right in the context of playing Diplomacy, which is, I believe, ultimately about people communicating. Oh, sure, there's that whole "tactics" thing, but if you can't communicate, tactics alone won't win you anything but a gunboat game.

I met my son (Steve Jr.) and daughter-in-law (Jennifer) at the Cheesecake Factory just around the corner for dinner. She works for Amazon and had just returned from a trip to Singapore, so we talked a lot about that. Friday afternoon, we met at the Amazon sphere's (or biodomes, or whatever they're called). By the time we had our first board call that evening, I was totally relaxed. I was having a great time and I hadn't even started playing yet!

Round 1: Multi-time DipCon champion Chris Martin pulled the "CruiseCon" system out of the bowl, which meant it was a draw-based system with a minor bonus for supply centers. I drew Austria, which I'm not afraid to play (inside joke for Dan Lester, who probably won't read this anyway). Peter Yeargin was England and Adam Silverman was Turkey. After some early jockeying, and when I fully understood no one was willing to go after Turkey, it came down to AT v. E. Peter topped the board at 13, I had 11, and Adam had 10. The highlight for me was when Peter, who is excellent (as is Adam) said, "I'd forgotten how much fun it is to (work) with you." If this was, ultimately, a weekend of affirmation, it was off to a good start. I didn't know it, but my game tied me for 10th place, which would not have fired me up too much. It was a "professional" game, but not a thrilling result.

More important than the game was this: JT (Jerry) Fest was Germany on our board! Less than a year ago, he had a pretty serious stroke. To see him there, and to see him play, was a thrill for me. He had an aide there to write the orders, but JT was in command! I know it meant a lot to him too. He has worked hard to recover from the stroke he calls "Manni" and I believe he is going to continue to improve. I'm sure the result was not what he would have wanted, but he did it! Sometimes playing the game is an accomplishment all by itself—and this was one of those times.

Round 2: The system was sum of squares, so the goal is to create a gap between you (as board top) and the other players while keeping as many of them alive as possible. I drew England and former World Champion (and eventual second-place finisher) Chris Brand was France. The board was pretty loaded, as it also featured Manus Hand (Austria) and Riaz Virani (who finished 6th

overall). Eventually, Chris and I settled into a pretty good partnership and we finished 14-14-2-2-1-1, with only Russia (Tommy Anderson) getting eliminated. That finish was good enough to tie for 2nd in the round. And during the course of one negotiation, Chris said something about how fun it was to work with me. If my self-esteem was lacking, I was getting some major booster shots.

Round 3: The scoring system was the WBC 2000 system, the goal being to get to 29 supply centers with a coalition willing to end the game. The votes of the other 5 sc's are irrelevant. I was Russia, which is my least favorite country to play (trade secret) because it requires so much work. This was also the black-tie round and I was on the board with the Mountie, Mike Moore. The players looked pretty outstanding. If you cut me out of the pic, you can see it for yourself. Hackenbracht in his dress blues? Jonathan Bashford in his dark blue tux? Brian Murdock in his kilt? It was quite the smashing table.



Things started well for me: AIR wiped out Brian's Turkey. I thought this would continue, but Craig Mayr (Italy) and the Mountie (Austria) decided to give me the shiv. It's generally not a good idea to stab a player for one dot when he will be building. That's what happened. Craig was apologetic the next turn, but only for a few seconds—such that I did not believe him. That put Craig and Mike (I and A, respectively) at odds. In the meantime, there was talk of a 3-way: EF with me as the buffer. What Mikey Hall (F) didn't know was that Hack (E) seemed very interested in stabbing Mikey after I turned over Stp. Sure enough, here came the stab! It was pretty good—not enough to win, but England was all over France. They decided on a draw vote. We were at 11 (Hack, E), 10 (Mikey, F) and 10 (me, R). As I looked

at the board, I could see 3 easy dots for me—and maybe more if a protracted EF struggle ensued, which it virtually had to since they were so enmeshed.

I decided to vote against the draw. Here the system made it difficult. The other players' votes would not stop the draw, so a veto identified either E, F, or R as the culprit. I didn't care. I thought I had an outside shot at soloing because Mikey was rightly upset. I voted no. The draw failed.

Immediately, there were some (a lot, actually) raised voices. England was pretty sure he had voted for it, but he was also feeling the alcohol a bit. Another vote was called for. I chickened out. I voted for the 3-way. I gave

the acting TD, Eric Mead, a little grief for agreeing to an immediate revote, but it was me: I chumped out. Even so, I tied for the fifth-best round, while Hack tied for the second-best round.

Sunday morning, I had no idea where I stood. The scoring system was good at keeping us all a bit in the dark. I think Doc Binder and Chris Brand told me they thought I was leading. As it turned out, I was. However, I think if I'd taken a zero in the third round, Chris would have come from behind to beat me.

Round 4: The system was "Regatta 2001," which put an emphasis on getting the smallest draw possible in the fastest manner possible. It also featured a lowering of sc's needed for a victory if a game went past 1907, which could play a part. I drew Austria, which I'm not afraid to play (again). However, before we started, Tournament Director Matt Shields came over and asked if I had already played Austria. I had. So, I was moved to Germany. Also, Mary Kuhner, a good local player whom I'd faced in a previous DipCon final board in Seattle, had previously played England. So, she traded with Edi Birsan, who was Italy. That meant the west was me in Germany, Edi in England, and Jon Saul in France.

I was all set to open with a nice, vanilla set of moves. However, Jon was adamant that he would not open to Bur or the Channel. With 40 seconds left in negotiations, I grabbed Edi and told him. He asked if I wanted to go to Bur while he went to the Channel. I said, "Sure." In the fall, we took Paris and Bre, respectively. I have to confess: Edi was confident I would walk into Paris, while I was leaning toward Gas. Jon took Bel, Spa, and Por, so he went plus 1 and built F Mar. He fought us for a few more turns, then offered to help us with his fleets.

Meanwhile in the east, we (EG) kept Turkey (Nathan Deily) and Russia (Brian Murdock) at odds. Then, suddenly, Murdock started working with Nathan. That meant I had to move on Russia. Done. In fact, nearly everything Edi and I tried worked, including getting France and Italy (Heather Jamieson) to convoy my army from Tus-Smy with support! That pretty much broke Nathan's spirit. We proposed a 2-way draw after 1906, which was about as high a score as one could get. In fact, Edi and I tied for first for the round. That game was about as much fun as I've had on a Diplomacy board. We just romped. I finished with 16 sc's and Edi had 11. Could I have soloed? Probably, but why? Under the scoring system, I would have received an extra half a tournament point for soloing.

After the game, Edi wanted to go get some lunch, which suited me just fine. I didn't want to think about winning the tournament. It was that unreal and overwhelming to

me. So, we went out, had a fine meal and talked about the real world.

While we were out, I received a text from my son. He said his schedule had changed and he was able to pick me up after the awards ceremony. Perfect. I'd get to go out and celebrate with family!

I still refused to believe I could have won. I'd been there too many times. Someone, somehow, must have passed me. But . . . they hadn't. A dream I'd chased off and on (I missed quite a number of DipCons) for three decades had finally been realized.

In retrospect, the scoring system was probably perfect for me. It kept everyone a bit confused and tended to reward all-around results and adapting to the different scoring systems for each round. Of course, it probably didn't hurt that Dan Lester, Andrew Goff, and Hohn Cho (among others) weren't there, but I won.

It's all a blur, but I remember Chris Martin, David Hood, Doug Moore, Chris Brand, Edi Birsan, Doc Binder, and others congratulating me. The phone call home was different too. Janet was, of course, thrilled for me.

I'm like everyone in the face-to-face Diplomacy hobby: a kid with an offbeat gaming jones who just wants to belong. I feel like I do. I know I do. And, for a time, I can actually say I'm the North American Diplomacy champion.



Ask the Hobby Historian: The Never-Ending Story of Scoring Systems

By David Hood

For this issue's installment of Ask The Hobby Historian, let's start off with a question: what is the longest-running debate within the Diplomacy Hobby? Perhaps some might argue that the fight over Dipcon's purpose is the answer (is or is not Dipcon supposed to be that year's North American Diplomacy Championship?) Others might vote for the topic of whether the hobby needs and/or can sustain an organizational body to help standardize and promote things. Certainly both of those subjects have been hotly debated in the Hobby since the early 1970s and will likely continue to energize our hobby debate teams.

However, I think the answer is that we really don't know what the point of this game is, if you cannot or do not get to 18 centers on a particular board. It's bloody hard to get 18, at least with competent players with you on the board. It also can be hard to explain to new players, or to your family members who ask you if you "won" your tournament game that day, that Diplomacy is a spectacular game which hardly anyone ever seems to win (except in Gunboat, perhaps, where the lack of negotiation makes it hard to lock down the stalemate line.)

This is an issue even when just playing a pickup game with friends, or some individual game online which has no official significance after it's over. In tournaments, though, this issue becomes critically important. One could have a tournament where the only results that mattered would be win or "not win", but that would be incredibly hard to score. It would also lead to every game taking many hours longer than most modern hobbyists are willing to devote to each individual game.

So, the answer traditionally has been to come up with some kind of scoring mechanic to allow us to compare results from one game to the other, with sufficient point bonus to a "winner" but also enough points or score for other results so as to encourage good non-win play as well as to allow for tournament rankings to be teased out of the overall results. Now, the point of this article is not to argue for a particular type of scoring system, but instead to explore the history of how we got to the debates we currently have in the hobby on this subject.

I was prompted to write this particular history piece because of how the 2019 Dipcon in Seattle was scored. As a fun retrospective for the fifty years of Dipcon history being honored at the tournament, the decision was made to put a bunch of scoring systems from past

Dipcons into a hat and then have someone pull one out before each round to serve as that round's system. It was kooky fun, but afterwards we all realized one drawback that limited the diversity of systems drawn out – most Dipcons in the past used some form of Draw-Sized Scoring, thus resulting in DSS being the primary component of three of the four systems used over the weekend. If the idea is used again, I think there was general consensus just to pick four completely different systems for use and then just randomly decide which is used at the beginning of each round.

That did cause many to realize just how different scoring philosophies were back in the day. In the modern tournament scene, really only my Dixiecon uses a Draw-Size mechanic as the primary scoring driver, and in our case we also have a place-based points system that makes Dixiecon a bit of a hybrid. (Many folk have never figured that out and still play the system incorrectly – it can make more sense, points-wise, to take a shot at winning and lose out to another winner, so long as you still have a lot of centers at the end, versus taking something like a low-center four-way draw, but I digress.)

Where did DSS scoring come from? Honestly, from the inventor of Diplomacy himself, Allen Calhamer. From the early days of the hobby, scoring for postal play as well as tournaments was sometimes done using "Calhamer Points." The rulebook says that the two possible results are win or draw. So he suggested the system whereby a rulebook or conceded winner gets 1 point. Failing that, all survivors at the end are equal partners in the resulting draw. So 2 folk at 17/17 each get .5 points, 3-way participants each get .33, etc. There were no additional points for total center count, although some variations occurred later which did that. As different as that system might sound to y'all today, it really did rule the roost for a while into the 1970s and even beyond, at least for postal rankings.

Now it should occur to you that one significant difference between then and now was what we used to call "DIAS", which means Draws Include All Survivors. A fundamental shift in thinking about scoring occurred as the 1970s progressed, and particularly into the 1980s, when it began to occur to folk that one could take a vote and allow SOME of the players to be in the "draw" while leaving others as "survivors" but not draw participants. I distinctly remember at my first Dipcon in 1986 someone trying to explain this to me when we were voting on a

draw and me just, frankly, not getting it. How could a draw not include everyone still alive on the board? Seems so obvious now, but young folk can be stupid.

At any rate, when non-DIAS became the norm, the focus became how to score the difference between a win, draw, survival and elimination. There were many such theories, no way to cover them all here, but let me mention just a couple. In issue 60 of *Diplomacy World*, our late great Jim Burgess suggested a variation of what was otherwise the common theory of the day – a modified Calhamer Point system where a winner got, for example, 100 points and then in a draw that same 100 points would be divided equally between the number of draw participants. Most of the time, players also a point per supply center, allowing you to differentiate between survival and elimination. Jim's idea was to subtract from each draw participant a number equal to the difference between that drawer's supply center total and the center total for the lowest draw participant. This would discourage early finishes and encourage keeping the game going to eliminate or force players from the draw.

By the way, this is a good time to mention that the prevailing ethic throughout the North American hobby for most of its existence has been to encourage the elimination of players from the board, to prevent them from sharing in a DIAS draw or from voting down a non-DIAS draw, and also as "cover" to allow someone secretly trying to win the game to justify not ending the game until such-and-such person has been killed. This is in contrast to the prevailing European ethic during a lot of the same time period which frowned upon eliminating players, and focusing instead of having more supply centers than the rest of the board at a certain fixed end time. That difference in ethic still exists today to some degree, but back in the days of DSS it was more stark.

In *Diplomacy World* issue 76, another old-time hobby luminary Fred Townsend took a stab at changing Draw Size Scoring – he suggested giving draw participants in total a lesser number of points than an outright winner would get. In the above example, if a winner got 100 points, the two persons in a two-way draw would get 48 points each (not 50) to reflect the fact that a win is really better than a couple of two-way draws results put together. This kind of thing became the big topic in scoring debates – the extent to which a draw was or was not truly a good result when compared to a win. Of course then we got into issues where if you make the scoring so disproportionate, you could encourage folk not to care much about stopping a win because their result as survivor to a win was not much better than a lower-level draw result. Math is hard.

At some point in the 1990s, and even more into the first decade of the new century, some Dippers began to think that DSS was not the bomb, actually. There were some

attempts to reform DSS, such as Manus Hand's declining center requirement for wins that he used in Denver for the 2001 Dipcon and the 2003 WDC, which was designed to promote "wins" instead of just draw-based thinking. Others opted for ideas which have, now, coalesced into two main alternatives to DSS – the center-spread systems and the place-based systems. In the former, a popular version of which is called Sum of Squares, the point of the game is to have a large spread between you and the other players in the game when it is called. This is similar to how some European systems worked back in the day. So a "draw" might still matter under such a system, or not, but the primary point is to get way out ahead of the pack. Some believe this discourages alliance play, encourages dot-grabbing, discourages stalemate line analysis, encourages keeping smaller players alive, and all sorts of other things. I'm not arguing anything good or bad about any of this, but it is certainly true that it promotes different thinking than DSS does, particularly if you don't think you can get to 18 on a given board.

Place-based systems focus mostly on "topping the board" (as do center-spread systems) but the difference between one place and another in terms of raw supply center total either does not matter or matters very little. A popular example is the Carnage system under which a board topper with 12 centers gets 7012 points while the second-place person with 11 centers gets 6011 (so the supply center numbers as between those two scores are pretty much irrelevant.) While wins are still rare under any system, the idea of "topping" the board can be promoted and measured under both of these newer models, while still reserving the outright or conceded win some level of outsized significance depending upon how the particular variant of each such system is designed.

Alright, let me just leave it there. There are other systems that have been designed over the years which don't fit neatly into any of these three overall categories, for sure, but I think for most systems that lasted any period of time, the three categories are pretty useful. As I said earlier, the point of this article is not to argue for one over the other (I got tired of those discussions in about 1992 or so) but instead to point out that history, as always, tells us a lot about why we are where we are. The rulebook mentions wins and draws, so that was the primary mode of thinking until the non-DIAS revolution occurred. Now the thinking has changed again – a "draw" originally had to do with setting up a stalemate line against a win, and DSS proponents will tell you that is a point of their systems. The two newer categories are less focused on that issue alone, but designed instead to allow folk to focus more on raw center count versus board position as a measure of success.

Whatever system is used, I encourage folk to try to keep an open mind and just try to have fun regardless of

which system is used. You could also just treat the game the way Brian Ecton and others have done over

the years – just win each bleeping game, and treat anything else as at least mildly unsatisfying!

Credibility and Reputation

By Bob Durf

I recently started a new position, and I was told by my boss something that has stuck with me as I have been adjudicating the diplomacy games in my house zine. Working in the legal profession can often require negotiation, and I was told one of my first days on the job that “once you lose your credibility, you don’t get it back.” Weeks later, I was assisting a co-worker in court, during which I overheard her state something along the lines of “my reputation is not worth any single case.” It has led me to consider the two concepts and how they interplay in Diplomacy--because while they are closely related to each other, they mean different things, and you should seek different goals in building each.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary gives two definitions for credibility. The first is “the quality or power of inspiring belief.” The second definition is “capacity for belief,” so we’ll stick with the first definition for purposes of this piece.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary gives several definitions for reputation, the one I will use is “overall quality or character as seen or judged by people in general.”

First, credibility is a key quality for a successful Diplomacy player, arguably *the* key quality. Diplomacy fans often write about the importance of convincing your opponents of this and that, and being convincing is important as part of the turn to turn flow of the game. Your credibility is what makes convincing others of plans and alliances easier or more difficult. If each negotiation is lifting a stone and moving it closer to the goal line, credibility is the wheelbarrow that can turn a task from difficult to easy. Consider the fairly benign and routine negotiation between France and England to demilitarize the English Channel on Spring 1901. A player with greater credibility may be able to just suggest that and get an agreement.

A player without credibility may have to spend time convincing the other before an agreement is reached--in both cases an agreement is reached because the issue is not unusual, but the energy, time, and effort is greater in the second case. In face-to-face Diplomacy, expending more time on negotiations creates two by-products--you lose time you could be spending on other matters, and there may be inferences drawn by other players regarding lengthy negotiations you wish to avoid.¹ In email or online games the negative by-products of wasted time are muted, but you still may not have the time or energy to waste given any sort of deadlines save the most generous.

Credibility (unlike, I would argue later, reputation) is something you always want to be cultivating in a positive direction. How do you do so? While we have a firm definition for what credibility is, it can be difficult to parse out how that definition can be used to instruct us about how to improve it. Rather than try to figure out how to be credible from its definition, I think it is more useful to take one of many articles available online about *qualities* that build credibility and extrapolate helpful qualities in a credible Diplomacy player from that.² It does not help that the most obvious path to building credibility is also one that is at least partially foreclosed on by the nature of Diplomacy--be truthful and trusty. You want to be truthful as much as possible in negotiations, but the power that a good stab presents is too good to pass up if you want to actually win. So yes, be truthful, but there are other ways to build credibility.

A more useful quality that helps to build credibility is sincerity, which is similar to truthfulness, but not quite the same. Consider negotiations I had in a face to face game recently--I was France, and I was eager to stop Turkey from building on what was already a powerful base in the Mediterranean. At the same time, Italy had vacated Tunis, and I was in dire need of a build. I moved into Tunis, despite heavy negotiations between myself

¹ An example of this second point would be Turkey and Russia negotiating over the Black Sea--such discussion is key in 1901, but spend too long hammering out a deal in face-to-face play and the other players will draw a conclusion regarding a Juggernaut formation, which is not a great conclusion whether you are forming one or not.

² For this article I'm using <https://www.inc.com/lolly-daskal/10-powerful-ways-you-can-earn-credibility-in-your-industry.html> but there are many such lists online that offer variants on the same topic (see, I snuck variants in here somewhere).

and Italy to not do so. I still needed him to help buttress Europe against the Turks, so I was still hopeful an alliance would hold. During the next turn's negotiations, I told him I did not want to move into Tunis in violation of our agreement, but I had to, given pressure on other fronts (obviously paraphrasing). Had I been truthful? No, otherwise I would not have agreed to leave Tunis in his hands the turn before. But my sincerity in my explanation for taking it maintained credibility, and we were able to keep the alliance moving forward. Often sincerity is what can make or break a relationship post-stab. Many players will say "I had to stab you," but fewer say "I *had* to stab you," in a sincere way that matches the words said.

Competency is another way to build credibility without sacrificing the duplicity you'll need to be a Diplomacy winner. It is true that sometimes you can beguile opponents with seeming inexperience, and while underestimation can sometimes serve a player well, it usually is a fairly easy veneer to see through and leads to less credibility. By being seen as a competent player, others will be more likely to enter into good faith alliances or agreements, as a competent player is far more likely to be able to actualize a goal than a more incompetent but potentially more gullible player.³ Competency is an easy way to gain credibility, and most players reading this will be able to exhibit this quality.

A final quality all Diplomacy players can exhibit for credibility that I think is particularly appropriate is to be accountable. Turning back to the example above, not only was I sincere in my apology to Italy, I was accountable. I admitted to breaching our agreement and being at fault. Too often, situations like this can be observed in amateur to even expert games in my experience:

President Marc: So, we are allies, correct? Or at least we are friends.

P.M. Angus: I made no such agreement with you.

France, getting a bad feeling from that last conversation, moves to English Channel, bouncing out the English who attempt to invade it from London. France also manages to bounce England out of Belgium.

President Marc: Ha! I have fended off your stab beautifully.

³ Of course, this only goes so far, if a player is such a stooge that he will blindly follow any command by an ally, then a competent player will be the first to be

P.M. Angus: You attacked me and I consider this an act of war.

If it is not obvious from the (simplified, but true) example, England decides to avoid lying at such an early stage in the game and refuses to commit to an alliance with France. France then makes the logical choice to try to fend off a perceived English attack. England the next turn had two choices--admit that the maneuvers he executed were aggressive towards France, or spin and deny at least partial accountability for the strained relationship between the two. He rejected accountability, and the two had a long unproductive war, as what happens when a stab is foiled but the invasion continues. Stay accountable for your actions--once they are out in the open.



Credibility is then one facet of reputation, and building the two are not quite the same if you want to be a Diplomacy winner. With credibility, you always want to be building on positive qualities. "I allied with her because at least I could get stuff done on the board instead of allying with Joe." With reputation, you do not always want to be building on attributes players will see as positive for them. If you have a reputation as a competitive player who will do anything to win, that isn't a positive for the rest of the players on the board. If you have the reputation of a player who may do unorthodox things, that can be unsettling to others. Really, the key to a good Diplomacy reputation is that it must allow for *anything* you suggest, propose, or threaten to be *credible*. Put simply, others must always take you seriously.

Take this statement from Austria to France: "How about we blitz Germany? You help me take Munich this Fall, you get Belgium, Holland, and Kiel. I get Berlin."

eliminated by the leader and his stooge. But usually you are better off looking like you know what you're doing.

Picture that came from the mouth of a first-time player with no reputation to speak of. How would you treat that offer? You might assume it is serious coming from a new player's mouth, but without knowing anything about the new player, there would be almost no way an experienced player would treat it seriously, except to say "good luck, I'm with you all the way," facetiously while enjoying the ensuing fireworks if Austria actually goes for it.

Now picture it came from an experienced, intermediate player's mouth with a reputation as a solid conventional alliance style player. France will probably think "there is no way he suggested this seriously. He probably is trying to goad me into an obvious attack to throw me off. Why did he bother speaking to me?"

Finally, picture it from a Diplomacy shark, a player who wins far more often in the group than other players. He has the reputation as a cold-blooded winner. You fear him winning, but you fear being his enemy. France knows Austria is too clever to say such a ridiculous thing without at least there being a possibility...of something there. Austria has created a mind-game within France's head, whether he actually intends to follow through with such a crazy plan or not, because there is a possibility, given his reputation, that he could try it, and pull it off. A less ridiculous, but more realistic example would be Italy managing to convince an Austrian to pull off a Key Lepanto--and yes, it is sharks who don't deserve to have such plans work who convince others of such gambits far more than novices who attempt the same.



Remember, even when losing, your reputation is something that can always be improved upon. Take the

concept of *throwing or kingmaking*. It is a controversial concept, one that nearly every Diplomacy player has been on the bitter infuriating receiving end of. I contend there is a time and place for it, especially in a group or population of players where repeat play with players occur.

A bad or novice or bored player will throw a game out of spite or the pathetic pleasure a weasel gets out of ruining the experience for the rest of the players. His reputation will not improve from such a rudderless action.

A good player can *sometimes* throw a game, because while it may make others in the game mad at her, sometimes such an action must be done to ensure her threats have force behind them, that she must be taken seriously. Her reputation, while not exactly more positive in the other players mind, is nevertheless strengthened because future threats of willingness to throw it all away unless she achieves her desired goals will be credible. Obviously, there is a very thin line to walk here. She has to recognize during the game if fellow players are dispassionate and logical enough to learn the lesson in the throw. And she also has to be realistic in using such a threat very carefully and rarely. But it is an undeniably useful reputation to have in order to be treated seriously from beginning to end of any game.

In finishing, I'll wrap things up with a different comparison. I just finished watching the most recent episodes of the Great British Baking Show. The showrunners the past two weeks eliminated several older contestants who had not made obvious errors in favor of keeping on the show younger 'favorites' of a viewership that has trended younger and younger as each series has grown in success. The show has a reputation as a fun relaxing with heartwarming good-natured competition between a diverse set of people united in their love of baking. The show had credibility from two judges that were always expert in their knowledge in the subject matter. The show, *in my eyes*, sacrificed its credibility in pursuit of short-term popularity in the young viewership's eyes. Before, it had a reputation that any decision the judges made, however disliked by myself personally, was a credible one. With its credibility shot, its reputation is damaged too--for the rest of the season, should I choose to continue watching, I will be questioning each decision the judges make (or the decisions the producers instruct them to make). So, keep your eyes on your credibility, make sure you know what kind of reputation you want, and feed the two into each other until other players are so in awe of you that you can pull Italy and have everyone approach you first in Spring 1901 to negotiate.

True Confessions from Airstrip One

By Jon Hills

Hello and welcome back to Airstrip One.

As hinted at in today's title, there are a couple of things that I need to get off my chest.

Do you remember the 1993 film comedy, Groundhog Day?

Of course you do. Literally EVERYONE has seen it. It is so well known that children yet to be born will leap from the womb saying what a wonderful allegory for self-improvement it is and asking whatever happened to Andie MacDowell?

It is widely regarded as a comedy classic.

So my first confession, embarrassing though it is to admit, is that I only watched it for the first time this year. A couple of months ago, in fact.

I'm not sure why it took me so long. It was released 26 years ago, for heaven's sake. Still, I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed it and can appreciate what the fuss was about.

So why mention it now? Well, apparently confession is good for the soul but that's not it. Instead this is a tenuous segue into this quarter's column – which is not a million miles removed from the one that I posted last April (Diplomacy World #145).

As I said at that time, the news agenda in the UK was dominated by Brexit. Now, some six months further on, very little has changed. Certainly my news feeds have had a very repetitive look to them with very little new or fresh to enjoy; quite Groundhog-esque, in fact.

We do have a new Prime Minister, though - Boris Johnson - who's been talking very robustly about the UK leaving the EU at the end of this month but despite his rhetoric the fundamental obstacles to agreeing an orderly exit still remain unresolved.

Since taking office, however, Boris has delivered some very entertaining moments. My particular favourite was his being confronted by an angry parent during an official visit to a hospital. If you've not seen the footage, it is on YouTube. Boris gets button-holed by a man whose child is receiving treatment and takes the opportunity to harangue him about the state of our National Health Service. Quite obviously this chap was waiting for Boris to pass by and berating him for using the visit as a photo opportunity. However, after briefly glancing in the direct

of the assembled journalists & photographers Boris boldly announces "Well, actually, there's no press here".

It's pure comedy gold!

Back in April, I observed that some aspects of the Brexit process felt very much like a game of Diplomacy and I identified three key lessons that we could draw from it to help our game-play, namely;

- i) having a clear strategy,
- ii) keeping in mind what is realistic and achievable, and
- iii) maintaining an active communication with all interested parties, even our opponents.

So there it was, set out in print for all to see and [hopefully] benefit from.

Sadly for Boris, though, it appears that he is not a Diplomacy World subscriber and, as our strap-line says "if you don't read it, you deserve to lose".

As a result, he's not doing particularly well at the minute. He's held office for about two months now and in that time he has been defeated in six key votes in the House of Commons, has lost his parliamentary majority (which makes it much harder for him to drive his political agenda) and - just last week - the UK's Supreme Court ruled that his recent attempt to 'prorogue' Parliament – that is, to temporarily prevent Parliament from sitting - was unlawful.

The strong implication from the Supreme Court's decision was that Boris misled Her Majesty the Queen. Again, this is another lesson for the budding Dipper. As I have learned to my cost in games, nothing sets you up for a fall better than trying to deliberately mislead people. Although some misdirection is occasionally needed, it's generally better to deal in the currency of truth unless absolutely necessary or unavoidable.

However, all is not yet lost for Boris. Although I'm not a particular fan of his threatened "No Deal Brexit", this is only his position of last resort. He does still have a couple of weeks to try and agree a deal with the EU which he might be able to get through Parliament. Failing that, Boris is currently obliged to ask for a further extension of the Article 50 negotiation period from the EU.

So far, Boris has refused to confirm whether he will actually do this. His actual words were that he would

“rather be dead in a ditch”. If he doesn’t, then he will again have acted illegally, but at least the UK will be out of the European club. And he’ll have achieved what he first set out to do almost three years ago.

Frankly, you have to admire his tenacity, if not his working methods.

Of course, if Boris does seek that extension - and the EU agrees to it - then this whole pantomime will rumble for at least another season. In that event, we are likely to see a General Election before the end of the year and there is currently no way of knowing what the outcome or implications of that might be.

All this talk of being in or out of Europe takes us nicely to my usual round up of recent UK-Dip action and a look ahead to what is coming up soon.

Well, the London Diplomacy Club (LDC) had two meet ups over the summer, on 6th July & 3rd August. At the first, James Ogley won a five-player game (not sure which variant was played) and then, at the second, Marvin Fried romped to a 14-centre win as Germany in a 7-player Classic.

(Incidentally, July also saw ManorCon XXXVII – the UK’s largest games convention - the program for which hinted at the possibility of a Diplomacy Tournament. However, I’ve been unable to find any record of a game actually being played. If anyone can shed any light, please let me know.)

And, of course, in August there was WDC in Marseilles, for which a handful of Brits took advantage of the EU’s freedom of movement rules to make the journey visa-free. I’m sure that will be amply reported on elsewhere.

Looking forwards, though, there are some cracking events coming up between now and the end of the year.

Next week, on 5th-6th October, Macclesfield Diplomacy will be hosting the second MaccCon, the Autumn Turn, at The Copper Room, Macclesfield (frankly, it would be a surprise if it was anywhere else!).

They are looking to build on their successful Spring Event which saw two full boards playing over two days. Although it’s short notice, if you fancy it, details are on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/maccdiplomacy>)

Also coming up is MidCon - 8th-10th November - at the Hallmark Hotel, Derby. This will be the UK Diplomacy Championships with current champion, Garry Sturley, acting as Tournament Director. Rumour has it that the MidCon committee may even be supplying a trophy! You can find booking details at www.midcon.org.uk .

However, as I mentioned at the start, I had two confessions to make.

I’m given to understand that this MidCon Tournament will be the final round of the 2019 Diplomacy Tour of Britain. My second admission, therefore, is that I was completely unaware that this competition was still live. I thought that it had died a death a few years ago but I’m happy to be proved wrong and will endeavour to find out more about the Tour, its participants and venues, for future editions.

Finally, hot on the heels of MidCon, there will be the European Diplomacy Championship in Amsterdam – 23rd-24th November. I’ve included this not because it’s a UK event but because I know that at least some members of LDC will be going.

They are looking forward to a bumper competition with two confirmed boards already and potential for up to six! This event will also be the Dutch National Championship. Again, you’ll find details are on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/events/353500512223312>)

Here’s hoping that those brave souls aren’t caught out by Boris’s “No Deal Brexit”!

Hopefully, you’ve found this entertaining and possibly even useful. As ever if you disagree or have better information to share, please let me know at jon.airstip1@gmail.com. I’ll look forward to hearing from you.

Happy Stabbing!

DIPLOMACY CASCADIA OPEN

WHEN

January 25th-26th
2020

WHERE

The Heritage Grill

447 Columbia St. New Westminster, BC, Canada.
The Heritage Grill offers food and drinks and is very close
to public transport into Vancouver

ACCOMMODATIONS

The Met Hotel 411 Columbia St. New Westminster,
<http://www.themethotel.com/>

Arundel Mansion 48 Begbie St. New
Westminster, <http://www.arundelmansion.com/>

The Inn at the Quay 900 Quayside Dr. New
Westminster, <https://www.innatwestminsterquay.com/>



COST

\$25 dollars CDN
Paypal to
Cascadia.Open@gmail.com

SCORING

Sum-of-squares

TD

Chris Brand
Ask him questions @
Cascadia.open@gmail.com

PRIZES

"7 best countries" and
Overall winners

BOARDS

Round 1: 10am on Sat 25th
Round 2: 6pm on Sat 25th
Round 3: 10am on Sat 26th

Diplomacy World Demo Game "Eclipse" – 2017A

The Players:

Austria: Nicolas Sahuguet
England: Edi Birsan
France: Andrew Goff
Germany: Conrad Woodring
Italy: Chris Brand
Russia: Doug Moore
Turkey: Tanya Gill

Commentators by Typeface:

Rick Desper
Christopher Martin
 Jack McHugh

Prior to Fall 1907 – E/F/G Draw Passes

End of Game Statements and Report

"Eclipse", 2017A, Standard Diplomacy, Zine: Diplomacy World, GM: Douglas Kent									
England/France/Germany Draw, Fall 1907									
	01	02	03	04	05	06			
Austria	5	5	5	5	7	5	Nicolas Sahuguet	SURV F07	
England	5	6	7	8	8	8	Edi Birsan	DRAW F07	
France	5	5	6	8	5	6	Andrew Goff	DRAW F07	
Germany	5	5	6	6	7	8	Conrad Woodring	DRAW F07	
Italy	5	5	4	2	2	2	Chris Brand	SURV F07	
Russia	4	3	1	0			Doug Moore	OUT F04	
Turkey	4	5	5	5	5	5	Tanya Gill	SURV F07	
Unowned	1								

The Players:

Austria (Nicolas Sahuguet): « A Western Triple and many guessing games »

This game was organized in honor of Jim Burgess. I have to admit that I did not know Jim very well. I just met him once at WDC XXII in Chicago. We did not play but

we talked a bit about our other common interest. Jim was a distinguished professor of economics at Boston University and I am also teaching economics at the university in Montreal. Jim was specializing in health economics and some of my colleagues happened to

know him and appreciate his wits and his generosity. It is always funny when different worlds collide.

So even if I did not have much time to focus on an internet game, I accepted to play in this game. I have to admit that the wonderful cast of great players in this game made it an even more interesting prospect.

The game was a bit strange in the sense that I was surrounded by three players with very different communication modes. Chris is used to internet play and uses e-mail. He likes to get his moves in early and you can expect some early emails. Tanya, the new young kid on the block, does not use 20th century technology and immediately requested to negotiate using Facebook messenger. She is also a procrastinator and usually was only negotiating the evening before the deadline. Doug (with other real-life commitments) adopted a silent diplomacy that is so different from his face-to-face behavior where he usually takes charge of the game and always comes up with plans before you can even think about another one. And as his plans are usually good, you end up doing what he wants. With also limited time an energy on my part, this lack of good communication with my neighbours led to a mediocre game where I could never really get things going.

S01

I opened in a very standard way hoping to get my two builds and then see where to go from there. Chris and Doug were talking about killing Turkey. I thought that it was a bit rough for a demo game, but why not? The only other strong message from the rest of the players was Edi mustering the board for an anti-Russia crusade with a "Death to the world champion" battle cry...

F01

After a bad surprise with Chris opening to TYR and VEN, I had to cover VEN. Doug had already understood that he was under heavy pressure. With hindsight, I committed a big mistake this turn. A few hours before the deadline, Tanya asked me among other things if she should bounce Doug in RUM. Without thinking too much, I said yes. I figured that a war between my neighbours could only benefit me. And I know Doug to be quite resentful against players who attack him. If I had realized that the theme of the game was to be an unbreakable Western Triple, I would have lobbied for Doug getting a build.

S02

After another Italian army appearing on the board, I was still far from happy with my western neighbour. I took RUM with Turkish help. Once again, I could and maybe should have played with Russia giving him RUM in the spring and taking BUL in the fall. But our inability to communicate made the prospect of allying with Doug

bleak. And the last hour messages from Tanya convinced me to go for an AT.

F02

The board is a mess and the Western Triple looks to be developing fast with Italy playing a strange game. I decided to go on with the AT alliance. But to keep things interesting, I decided to let Tanya take GRE but making it look like I was not really happy with that grab. I thought that this would allow me some diplomatic flexibility, and I was also making sure that she would not stab me and build an army. If you can get a center and keep an ally, it looks better than take the center and lose a potential ally. In any case, my position is not very good with armies all over the place, and the board position is even worse

S03

The guessing games are starting. I figured out that Chris was playing with Goffy and I managed to set up a decent defense. I bounced Chris in ADR and cut the support from TYR. I thought that the deal was to give Chris a build... As a good Turkey, Tanya does her thing and makes progress both against Russia and in the med. Even if I wanted, I am now stuck doing what she wants, or I am as dead as Russia.

F03

I try the same defense as in the spring but this time they take the 100% move and Goff takes VIE. After lengthy discussions, I manage to convince Tanya that we need to get our act together and that we need armies and that lending me BUL is useful. We manage to take ION and we make some progress. But right now, it is 4 against 2 with Doug on the verge of death. Not the way to win a game.

S04

Chris reopens communication after his retreat to EAS and wants me to betray Turkey. I am playing along hoping to stabilize the position in my home country and if Goff kills Italy, things could still be interesting with the Western Triple having nowhere to go. Goff is selling me that he is attacking France but needs to keep VIE to have the numbers. I don't really believe him but give him a chance. Getting another ally would definitely allow me to turn this game around. Of course, he keeps attacking me. If I had taken VIE and puffed his army, the game would have turned out very differently. I am not playing well and he is 3-times world champion.

F04

Good defense by Goff. A lost guessing game that will be very costly. Tanya finally got rid of the Turkish fleet but we have been completely overrun by German and English armies in Russia. Chris finally got stabbed hard by Goff and writes to me and Tanya with a plan to get to a stalemate line. The three of us finally manage to

coordinate and we will try our best to set up some resistance to the Western Triple that does not seem ready to break up.

S05

A good spring turn with VIE, VEN and NAP going back to the good guys but we get a position with more guessing games on GAL, RUM, VIE and SEV.

F05

Not a bad turn with VIE staying Austrian but we are losing SEV. Goff has to disband two units and Edi is in the channel. But his disbands show that the Western Triple is not breaking up. He opens up to a massive EG stab on him and keeps the pressure on us.

S06

I spent a lot of time deciding what moves to play and convincing Tanya to coordinate. I end up changing my orders at the last minute from the optimal set of orders that would have saved everything and taken GAL to a bad set of orders. Game over... No chance to get to a stalemate line now.

F06

Tanya is still believing that we can defend even if our lines in Austria/Russia are full of holes. However, Chris and Tanya never managed to get the communication going this turn and despite our good spring moves that should solidify our position in the med, Chris ends up supporting Goff's fleet in ROM. Tanya was pretty upset and if I still believed that we could defend the other front, I would have been too. But I already thought the game was over. Chris just wanted the game to stop.

1907 Draw finally.

Conclusion: The Western Triple is a pretty good opening when no one wants/need to top the board or go for a big result in terms of supply centers. And the Western Triple really has an easy time when the rest of the board does not coordinate immediately and efficiently. Congrats to Edi, Conrad and Andrew for a demonstration of a well-run Western Triple.

England (Edi Birsan): The game's country assignment put me in a straight off northern campaign as I felt that it would be the easiest to marshal support for an anti-Russian/Moore opening given his recent victories and knowing his predilections in play style. I also figured that France/Goffy would not go straight for me so I had time to work the north with Germany *(Conrad).

Talking about a Baltic opening (F Kie-Bal, Ber-Kie, Mun-Ruh) followed when France said he was up to try the Western Triple. As England my role would be to make sure it worked and as a demonstration game I figured it would be worth to put on a blitz.

Well the Blitz did not quite work out as France made some of the oddest series of moves in the south while Italy's sudden campaign into Germany really caused a major challenge to the alliance. However, Russia went down like I had hoped.

What followed was a bunch of embarrassingly sloppy moves, and I was not immune to it towards the end that I do not want to get into for the shame of it all. Having had maybe 2 miss orders in face to face games this century, to have two in an email game was enough for me to consider Prozac with my evening tea.

Nevertheless, the pieces around the board prevailed over the pieces on the board as in the case of most high skill games. There was a time when I thought that Italy/Chris was going to supplant one of my western allies in a triple but that faded quickly as I was able to strengthen the alliance bond in the face of central center loses. A good reminder that in all Western Triples it is England that must hold the alliance together and not succumb to temptation or duplicity when it deals with reverses in the German area.

The tactical discussions and strategic - diplomatic psychological discussions with Goffy and Conrad were the most fun part of the game for me and I totally encourage the next generation of Twitter Minds to put aside their limitations in word count and to delve into real review and analysis of both the pieces: the countries and the people, if they want to be in a World Class Elite category of play.

France (Andrew Goff): Well, that adhered to one of the strongest rules in Diplomacy: put seven excellent players on a board together and you get a dull game of Diplomacy.

That's what we had here. Massive credit to Tanya and Nicholas for stopping the play... sadly we will never know if the fireworks would have come later between the EFG. I hope not.

It's easy to pretend post-game that it was all in for the EFG from the get-go but it wasn't. A critical missed bounce in Western Med left me without options and Edi's already good proposal was locked in by misadventure. I tried a few times to mix it up but Edi and Conrad are too good (and probably the same in reverse); everything was kept in balance.

The tactical grind is probably rich material for intermediate players to analyze, but for an end game statement there isn't much to say about it. I think the importance of negotiating was shown as Italy's position was "fragile" and convincing Chris which side he had the best chance of survival on was important. For the record I think Tanya did have every intent to smother him once

she was in position to do so, but then again who would blame her!

I don't have much more to say. I dislike EFG alliances precisely because they lead to games like this and I dislike allying with the best players because it leads to error-free (and thus opportunity-free) play – but on a board as strong as this there was little other option.

Thank you all for the game, thank you to Doug for keeping us in line, and to everyone else for their ongoing support of Diplomacy World!

Germany (Conrad Woodring):

General

I am a face to face player. I never have and never will be much of a fan of online play. I find it too slow. Being in the younger generation (I am in my early 30s) I simply do not have the attention span that perhaps my more senior peers have (aka Edi). Face to face is fast paced and intense. You give your full attention to it from start until finish and then usually I need a nap, or a drink, or both. I was excited to do this game because it's with a group of people I know and like. I have played with everyone in this game face to face before, some quite recently. So I thought this could be fun.

At the same time, I started this game, I started playing on PlayDiplomacy.com and I must say, I quite like having Diplomacy compartmentalized in one area that I can access when I like. The many many emails got mixed in with my other emails and was generally all a bit of a mess. True I could have fixed this, but I didn't. Perhaps as a suggestion to Doug, it could be better to use a client, or the Judges (I must admit I have never used the Judges so I am not sure about that).

Life got in the way and I got pulled into a long drawn-out real-life chess match of a negotiation that totally drained me for several weeks during this year long game. So throughout the game most of my moves were the easy set, that didn't require much thought. I mostly felt like Edi (England) was calling the shots, then Andrew (France) would sense check with each other if we really wanted to go along with Edi's plan or not. As you can see from the conclusion of the game we usually thought that yes, we should go with Edi's plan.

The last thing that hung over this game was a general apathy. Being a group of face to face players I think we all had trouble staying engaged. One of us was on a very very long summer holiday at one point. I believe someone had a riotous bunch of students under his tutelage. Another changed jobs... the list of real-life infringements on the world of online Diplomacy is of course no surprise to anyone reading this magazine.

However, and I can only speak for myself, I am particularly ill-suited for managing it.

The Opening - 1901

I had the usual generally nice chats with everyone but pretty quick out of the gate Andrew, Edi and I hit it off. We weren't getting a whole lot of chatter from the East except for Doug in Russia, so it only seemed logical as we were the chattiest in the lot that we should work something out. The opening to Baltic I knew would make Doug quite angry but I didn't care. My approach to this game was to do something interesting and something different so I did it, and after I did it I said yes, I am coming for you and I think Edi is going to help me so I think it's a good move. Because I was so up front about it, Doug needed to do something drastic to avoid succumbing to the attack. So he went to Baltic, and sent units to the middle, likely in conjunction with Chris (Italy).

Me not covering Munich was a big mistake. There is a phenomenon that happens when you're not terribly good. When the turn is taking forever and you are bored but want something to happen, you decide to do something more risky because that will be more exciting. (or at least that's how I operate). So instead of covering Munich, as I had told Edi and Andrew I would (note that Andrew decided not to go to Burgundy because there was no way an Italian unit would be in Munich) I changed my mind, about five times, and eventually went for the big opener with three new builds.

In hind sight that was a mistake, yes. And as Andrew made it very clear to me, in multiple emails, he did not like that I changed the move. I believe at one point he had assumed that Edi and I had had further conversations without him and had decided together to move as I had done.

1902

This year was not a good year for me, but if you think of it in terms of the alliance (also in terms of my ally's perspective) it was a good year. I had essentially drawn all the units to me. With the two Italian units mucking around in Germany, Chris would need armies to hold those gains and advance on that front. Italy's gains in Germany was, as they always are, unsustainable growth. That meant no new fleets which worked with for Andrew's fleets swinging south especially with Andrew not having a built, this was particularly important. Edi's army in StP and my army in Prussia really meant that the mess in the middle would dissolve next year.

I'll note that at this point in the game I was starting to lose interest and had more or less stopped paying attention to the eastern half of the board. I do not recommend this to anyone that would like to do well in their Diplomacy games. You should talk to everyone all

the time. Play the whole board because every move impacts what everyone else is doing!

Oh, and at some point in the first four moves Andrew sent a very fun very aggressive email to Edi making very strong demands. I don't think Edi had even thought the points Andrew was bringing up were ever in question, so it was resolved rather quickly.

1903

I think some guesses went our way (Edi and mine) this turn. With Doug pulling his southern unit in the end of 1902 he was defenseless from Tanya's attack in the south. Edi got Moscow, Andrew Vienna and I Berlin. Plus one all around.

I will highlight what everyone was probably thinking; yes I was bloody nervous that Andrew and Edi had a bunch of pieces sitting around not doing a whole lot. I didn't see a lot of options at this point Andrew and I were both uncomfortable with Edi and seemed to get on well between each other. In my mind we were insurance for each other. If Edi tried to take me out, Andrew would back me up and vice versa. In reality Andrew is a shark and probably would have jumped on the train... as would I.

This is the point where I fairly well checked out. Russia was wiped out, albeit not so much because of my successes, and the east was generally a bit of a mess. In the west we got the impression that they were not so engaged and thus not coordinating very well. It of course didn't help that Chris decided to sabotage the whole thing by supporting Andrew to Vienna but then again Chris is a... what was that brilliant bit of press I saw?

1904

Opportunist! That's what Chris was according to the press. And thus he took Smyrna. Unfortunately all the French units moved in on him at the same time.

Sadly, just as it looked like I was going to grow beyond what I consider the basic centers in Germany's orbit (Hol, Den, Swe, Kiel, Ber and Mun) Edi dinged me for Holland. He said we had agreed a bounce. The way this game was going for me I would have thought that entirely possible except for the benefit of email I was able to see that in fact no we did not. It was an easy conversation though. Edi would wave his builds and move out immediately. If he built anything I was going to turn completely and we'd likely have a big turkey very quickly.

At this point I voted yes to both draw votes.

Oh and the other players did some stuff.

1905

This was a wake up turn for us. We did not do well in the middle against Austria

My spring move to Norway was part of a plan to get rid of my fleet, my fall move to Holland was an accident.

1906

This was actually a fairly active turn for us. Where the game had been quiet and a bit dull up until this point, suddenly Andrew and I were communicating quite a lot on tactics. It was quite key that we start making the tough gains in the middle if we wanted to end this game anytime soon. After a bad 1905, we were looking in not such great shape. I actually had no interest in turning on Andrew. I don't think Edi did either because there was not side conversation about it at all. I saw that I could do a huge amount of damage to him, but just wasn't terribly interested in doing so. I was enjoying the conversations with Andrew, and his unwavering commitment to the success of our alliance, so why not keep going.

Although not immediately obvious taking Vienna back was a feat in itself, and the combination of regaining Rome and Vienna was huge. I waived my build to keep the alliance stable.

This was also the turn that Edi admitted to us that he is old, and not very good at this game, although I think the way he phrased it was "oops, I miss ordered Warsaw," but Andrew and I knew what he meant.

1907

Last turn of the game. Had this been a tournament, I would have gone knives out before I voted for a draw like this. England on eight centers with only two fleets has to be as rare as seeing a unicorn. And France's nearest army to Paris was Piedmont! There was an opportunity here for me to cause a lot of damage and have a lot of fun doing it. With this crew of players there was no chance for a solo, but the comparatively novice Diplomacy player in me thought about having a go of it.

Conclusion:

This is proof that I am the best of the Woodring Clan.

Even the best players make mistakes

Remember not everyone is playing to win. I know that's the stated goal of the game, but winning isn't always everyone's objective.

Italy (Chris Brand): You know how some people tell you that their entire life was changed by one mistake? Well I look back at this game and see almost the entire game as being shaped by one mistake. Sadly, it was my mistake.

I wrote over 1800 words as the game progressed, to capture my state of mind and to be able to write the best possible EOG, but reading them and thinking back over the game the one thing that stands out to me is that after S02 Andrew suggested a bounce in WMed, and I agreed. Then after the fall results I got a very brief message from him – “What happened to our bounce?”. It seems that somehow I had completely forgotten about it and therefore failed to order it. That made it very difficult for him to turn on Edi, and more-or-less forced him into actually following through with the Western Triple. I'm quite confident that the game would have been much more interesting if I'd actually ordered that bounce.

Other than that, things started out ok for me. I got into Munich and seemed to be Doug's only ally. Nicolas and Tanya were both very reluctant to commit to anything. Doug also didn't seem to have the time to devote to the game (I believe he was buying a house) – there was at least one occasion when I had to make my best guess about how he'd move in Germany.

By 1903, I'd given up on my plans to take out Germany with Doug's help, and had suggested to Conrad that he dislodge me to Silesia and then support me to Warsaw. He followed through with the first part but not the second. By the end of 1903, things were looking bleak. As I wrote at the time “One dot down. Foreign fleets in Ion, Alb, GoL, and Wes. My only ally is France. The France who keeps inching fleets towards me. Well, I can't fight everyone. I probably don't need to fight Conrad. I feel like anything I get from Nicolas is probably deserved (I started it). Much less so with Tanya. If I end up having to pick one person to defend against, it's probably Tanya”. The first coverage of the game in DW came out, with much talk about the western triple. I retreated to EMed, determined to at least annoy Tanya.

There's a 13/14 center stalemate line that AIT could get to and hold, and towards the end of 04 I tried to convince Tanya and Nicolas that that was our best bet for breaking up the Triple. Tanya wasn't convinced, though. Nicolas was more amenable and told me that he wouldn't move against me, but Andrew said that he believed the intel he got from Tanya about Nicolas' plans over my own, and ordered to Venice, ostensibly to bounce with Nicolas. After that, the stalemate line was much less achievable, but that was when Tanya came around to the idea. We needed both AIT coordination and some luck. We managed the former. I also proposed an EFGT draw, mostly to keep Nicolas from trusting Tanya too much.

Ultimately, it was too late. We'd already been pushed back past the line. I didn't see any possible result other than an EFG, so I decided to speed it up by helping Andrew again.

So three key turning points, really – my failure to bounce WMed in 02 which limited Andrew's options. Tanya not being convinced by the stalemate line proposal until it was too late to actually achieve it, and finally my speeding things to a conclusion by helping out the triple, although I do think that really just saved us all some time.

Thanks to everyone for playing, to Doug for running the game, and to the commentators (it's fascinating to read how the game looks from the outside). One last apology to Doug for the times I was late with my orders, and to Andrew for not ordering that bounce.

Russia (Doug Moore): Uh, a western triple and a hostile Turkey (in league with Austria) means Russia goes bye-bye. Hey -- AT, perhaps you should think about the long-term? Maybe, maybe not. (But really, yes, you should give the result.) When you have literally no allies or even neutral powers as neighbors playing Russia... yeah, you are done.

Turkey (Tanya Gill): General thoughts/feelings impressions

Firstly, I failed to keep a log of my thoughts as this game progressed. This is all based off of memory many months later.

Secondly, I will admit I struggled with the whole email/2 week deadline aspect of the game. The issue with the deadline being two weeks long is that it was hard to keep up momentum for the game, and it was very easy to forget it existed and just send press at the last possible moment. I also suck at email so tried to get people to message me over fb... I don't think that was a good play on my end.

Thirdly, I am grateful to have been able to play with people much better than me 😊

Next time, I hope it is not 2 week phases!! Ahhh.

1901

I really enjoy playing Turkey on the internet. In face-to-face play it's a death wish, but on the internet people seem less keen for the whole “kill Turkey and move on” meta. I usually go for bolder openings like straight to Ankara in 1901 but I know face-to-face players like to play it slow and steady. I also had absolutely no desire to piss off Doug right off the bat in Spring.

That didn't last very long and I bounced him out of Romania with hope that this would incentivize Austria to work with me. What I did not anticipate in 1901... Or frankly, ever at any point until the very end... Is that

there would be a Western Triple that never broke. I have never seen that ever in any of the games I've played. However, I suppose as this was a demo game no one had the burning desire to win.

1902

I remember really struggling with decisions in 1902 because part of me wanted Russia gone and the other part thought that would really help England too much. I think all my continued push on Russia did was quicken the inevitable domination of the Western Triple. The shitty part about a WT is that you're a little useless against them as Turkey, and usually your neighbours don't like you and eliminate you while they fight of the WT. I think I got away with early survival on this type of board because of my Russia push. I built a fleet and had picked Austria as my ride-or-die. In all honestly, I have no idea what Italy was doing this entire game. One turn he was in Munich the other turn he was France's puppet. He supported my into Greece in 1902 but I had already arranged with Austria that it was going to be mine and told him about Italy's support. France looming in the Med didn't particularly make attacking Italy enticing either though. And attacking Russia at this point was also foolish. Agh! Western Triples suck.

1903

Don't remember much about this year. I have no idea why Italy decided to help France into Vienna. On my end, I saw the quick doom of Russia and took Sevastopol. I don't think it would have made any difference whether I helped Russia live or die at this point. England was getting into Moscow, and France was in Vienna, and this Western Triple had totally slaughtered us (other than Germany – Not sure what was going on in that mess of a centre)

I think I remember being annoyed that Austria's units were all over the place and that letting him take Bulgaria was counter-productive because it just moves his unit away from where it should be.... Don't know how he bullied me into giving it to him anyway. And yes, Italy in the Eastern Med while the WT remains unbreakable was my favourite thing.

1904

This is just more us getting our ass kicked. The best part is I started a group chat with Italy and Austria and we really just couldn't get it together. Oh yeah, England let me into Moscow and I thought for sure the goal was to pop my army. But then he let it back into Sev. That was interesting.

1905

This year looked a little more promising, and I started to have hope we could maybe do something about our WT situation. But with Edi in Sevastopol I think it was inevitable unless someone stabbed someone. I messaged all three of them and they seemed keen to finish the game as a Western Triple. When that's the case you kind of lose any desire and hope to continue playing. Germany said he had no choice, and England was very pro-WT.

1906+

The rest of the game was essentially Austria, Italy and I trying to work together and failing until Italy said fuck it and tried supporting France into Trieste and bounced me out of the Ionian in 1907. I guess this was his way of asking to just end the game. We drew after this.

Conclusion:

I had... fun. It was long and dragged out and no one in the WT stabbed each other so I guess it was kinda stale. Would have been more fun to have something dynamic for a demo game but here we are. I guess it can remain as a good example for what to do for a western triple, and maybe what not to do against one :')

Thanks to Doug for hosting and putting this together, Chris Martin for recommending I play, and everyone who took the time to give us commentary... And to all the other players for putting up with my non-email usage!!



End Game Commentators by Typeface:

Rick Desper
Christopher Martin
Jack McHugh

Christopher Martin: "A battle is often won when someone fails to make a critical mistake." This game could have

gone differently, but the opportunities were gone before they were seized. High level play often devolves into

this kind of a grind, which sadly isn't much fun. Very little more to add to the above; I had forgotten this game was in memoriam for Jim Burgess - and I'm writing this now having just learned of Larry Peery's passing.

Rick Desper: Starting with Nicolas's commentary: I see the East was about as disorganized as we thought. One thing that strikes me: he uses the phrase "playing with" to mean "coordinating with" while Americans tend to use it to mean "toying with" - a more negative connotation. Something I've noticed in the past playing with Francophones. I mean "gaming with". Ha hah.

Edi - seemed like Edi was driving the bus in this game, and the commentary backs this up. Goffy's commentary confirms the sense that he would have been happy to go for a big result. Conrad's account of the early game explains a lot. Also: "This is proof that I am the best of the Woodring Clan." Ha ha ha!

Chris: "What happened to our bounce?" **Bwa-ha-hah!** "I didn't see any possible result other than an EFG, so I decided to speed it up by helping Andrew again."
Chuckle

Doug: Yeah, you kinda got ganked there. I'm sure everybody knows that Doug is one of the best players around. Hope everything is going well out there. Hope we have more time to chat at some point this year.

Tanya: I think you played a very reasonable game but just happened into a game in which the Triple wouldn't break. I had a game like this from a

different perspective in Paris once: I was France and ended up being the big power in the West. But a big care-bear alliance between two Eastern powers (Russia and somebody else, I forget who) just ground through the middle. It was a C-Diplo tournament, and I didn't "get" why the one guy was more than happy to play second fiddle to his buddy. But he was. So if you play with a strategy predicated on the idea that everybody else is going to try to win, you might end up with a position that would be very strong if your assumption were correct, but ends up being rather weak because the assumption failed. That's what happened to Turkey in this game.

The end games really underscore how much communication is important. From the outside we saw an East that never organized, and the commentary makes that clear. Though Chris's decision to pour more lighter fluid on the bonfire to get things over already...was interesting.

Jack McHugh: So the game went pretty much as we saw it from the outside but there was a lot more discussion in the East that I would expected given how seemingly disorganized they were. This proves that the volume of communication is not a good measure of alliance coordination. A few short notes to the point with minimal back and forth are more indicative of a good alliance than constant communication which denotes friction rather than agreement.

