

Diplomacy World #149



Spring 2020 Issue
www.diplomacyworld.net

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World, the Spring 2020 issue**. This is a very unusual issue to produce, as I am sure many of you can understand given the strange state of the world at the moment. I'm hoping you are all hanging in there, staying sane and maintaining your health the best you can.

I find spending too much time watching the news or reading posts on social media greatly increases my anxiety. There's way too much information out there, much of it conflicting. Every person is suddenly a medical expert, and there are fifteen new projections and predictions an hour. Most of them are dire, worst-case scenarios. And that's not the kind of stuff I want to hear. Nobody really knows what is going to happen, how long things will be locked down, or what the final impact – socially and economically – will be. As long as we all do our part to try and minimize the spread of the virus, that's not a lot more we can accomplish individually.

All I am doing is trying to post a few sne, calming messages in the local Facebook group that many residents of my city use. Reminding them to be kind to others, to limit trips to the store whenever possible, to avoid panic, and to use common sense. Yeah, I know, being thoughtful and positive isn't exactly a fit with my public Diplomacy personality...but there are many sides to my twisted mind.

In this stressful time, I know Diplomacy is not the first thing on your mind. But it can provide a welcome distraction, and create some social interaction. Assuming you don't have enough players in your household, there's a number of ways you can play remotely. First of all, there's the obvious websites. Plenty of those you can choose from, but I don't want to mention any myself for fear of leaving one out and offending someone. Many of them have been mentioned in prior issues, or just do a web search.

But if that doesn't excite you, there's also the idea of playing a game remotely that you organize between friends or fellow hobby members. This issue has three articles on that very subject: Tanya Gill, Andy Harris, and George Linkert each recount their experiences playing a game remotely, including both the positives and the negatives. Adapting to the current situation takes some work, and obviously there are lessons best learned by trying and improving as we gain experience.

I'm also happy to report that we have a new art contributor: Lady Razor. You can find her work sprinkled throughout the zine, and on the cover of this issue as well. I even had her draw a few custom things for an article by Dr. Sigmund Schadenfreud. Yes, contributors using aliases has become much more common in **Diplomacy World**. Despite my personal preference for real names, given the way pseudonyms are more and more common because of the way Diplomacy websites work, I understand why some people prefer to stick to the name they're known under instead of the name they were given.

Oh, by the way, I was interviewed in Episode 62 of the Diplomacy Games podcast. It's entirely likely you get enough of me between this publication and my gaming zine Eternal Sunshine, but if you want to hear me blather on for way longer than anyone wants you can do so at <https://diplomacygames.com/doug-kent-from-diplomacy-world/> ... or just go to <https://diplomacygames.com/> to see all the episodes and your various listening options.

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is July 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 summer, and happy stabbing!

Selected Upcoming Conventions

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

Check Out the NADF Grand Prix Schedule on Page 4

A lot of upcoming events have been cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic; be sure to contact organizers for the latest updates

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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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NORTH AMERICAN DIPLOMACY FEDERATION

2020 Grand Prix Tournament Schedule

JAN	Cascadia Open cascadia.open@gmail.com	Vancouver, BC	Chris Brand
FEB 21-23	TotalCon randy.lawrencehurt@gmail.com	Marborough, MA	Alan Levin
APR	Whipping whipping@bayareadiplomacy.org	Bay Area, CA	Siobhan Nolen
APR	WeaselMoot warweasel@windycityweasels.org	Chicago, IL	Bryan Pravel moot.windycityweasels.org
MAY 22-24	DixieCon davidhood@dixiecon.com	Chapel Hill, NC	David Hood www.dixiecon.com 3 rounds + Carolina BBQ
JUNE	Boston Massacre randy.lawrencehurt@gmail.com	Boston, MA	Randy Lawrence-Hurt
AUG	Liberty Cup william.hackenbracht@gmail.com	Philadelphia, PA	Bill Hackenbracht
OCT	Tempest in a Teapot jimdozz@aol.com	Washington, DC	Jim Yerkey ptks.org
NOV	Carnage dmaletsky0@gmail.com	Vermont	David Maletsky 2020 World Championship & 2020 North American DipCon

Please contact organizers for updated information, as many events have been cancelled or rescheduled

Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Simon Langley-Evans - I would now like to offer everyone a new venue to play Diplomacy games, as I am launching a new venture called Last Orders!.

Last Orders! will be a monthly-ish publication which has the main objective of running Diplomacy games with a turnaround of about 3-4 weeks per main turn. It will include Standard 7 player games and also Intimate games which I don't think are offered by any other venue at the moment.

If you would like to take a look and maybe sign up as a subscriber or player, then the first issue of Last Orders! is available here:

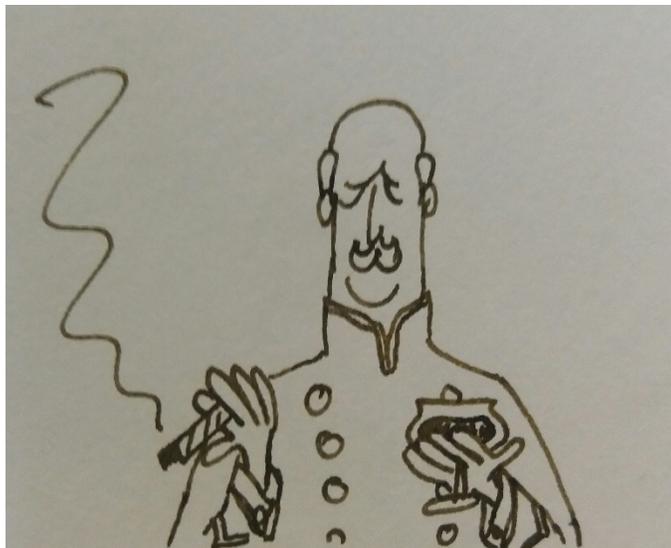
<https://sway.office.com/FDpAl3mAe9sxXcWM?ref=Link>

[[Issue 5 was actually released a few days before this issue of Diplomacy World. You can find it here: <https://sway.office.com/ABdozGmxNHGIlQ5b?ref=Link> nk]]

Comments on Douglas Kent's A Year of Online Play

By Lewis Pulsipher

I read Doug's thoughts on a year of online *Diplomacy* with great interest, not from the point of view of a player (I haven't played *Diplomacy* in a long time) but from the point of view of a game designer.



Doug talks about how few online players actually bother to negotiate. It's been evident to me for many years that the willingness to negotiate is disappearing from the boardgame hobby at large. That's partly from the influence of video games, which rarely include negotiation even when they are for more than one player, and the influence of Eurostyle boardgames. In the latter there is very little player interaction, and opportunities to help or hinder another player are rare. In those circumstances there's no reason to bother to negotiate. Add to that, Eurostyle games tend to be dry as dust and actively suppress emotions, quite the opposite of a hotly contested competitive *Diplomacy* game, and you can see why people who are accustomed to playing that kind of game are wholly unaccustomed to negotiation, to the point where they don't think to do it even in a game where negotiation makes sense.

I always thought *Gunboat Diplomacy* was a perversion of the game, because *Diplomacy* is about negotiation. But it is much faster than playing with negotiation, and I suppose for many modern game players who are

accustomed to relatively simple games, the game system of *Diplomacy* is complex enough without negotiation. Maybe many online players are just fundamentally lazy, because negotiation is a lot of work.

I confess I'm surprised that players are so willing to vote for draws even when someone appears to have a chance for a solo win. But keep in mind that in video games you really can't lose, while in Eurostyle games winning is subordinated to polite ways of playing, to the point that players often help one another to solve the puzzles that are at the heart of many Eurostyle games. So, winning is de-emphasized in favor of being polite to one another.

The dropout rate may reflect play by Millennials. While generalizations about generations allow many exceptions, the general notion about Millennials is that if things become difficult, or even just uncomfortable, they tend to quit. It's the Age of Comfort, people are taught that they should never be uncomfortable. In video games this can reach the point where players blame the game if the player is not successful, and some studios urge their developers to avoid any negative consequences in games. (That's also a characteristic of many contemporary boardgames.) Boredom is the kiss of death for an F2P (free to play) video game, and F2P is what most video games are nowadays.

Anonymity is a very common characteristic in online video game play, so it isn't surprising that it's become so common in online *Diplomacy* play. Much of the toxicity in online video game communities comes from anonymity of the commenters. The "Greater Internet Fuckwad Theory": anonymity + online + audience = Fuckwad.

I agree with Doug, I much prefer to know who the person is that I'm negotiating with in any game involving negotiation. Anonymity also makes it easier to drop out when things aren't going your way. Moreover, as shown in experiments related to the theory of games of strategy, when players are anonymous and consequently you don't know their previous history, the players are much more likely to be uncooperative: in *Diplomacy* terms, back stabbers and liars.

Diplomacy in the Time of Corona

By Tanya Gill

Refresh. I hold my breath. *Refresh.* My jaw drops. I quickly put my mic on mute, thankful that no one is around to see my utter devastation. Turns out being stabbed is just as painful when you're playing over voice chat and backstabbr as it is in person.

Before I begin, I hope you and all your loved ones are healthy and safe in this strange and lonely time. And that you have found many ways to entertain yourselves from the onset of cabin fever, whether it is through playing diplomacy online or some other hobby.

All things fun are cancelled. The annual Diplomacy Whipping event is cancelled. Whether future summer Diplomacy events will be run is currently a gigantic question mark. Life appears to be slow and desolate, and the little joys we take for granted are being missed. With the majority of us quarantined in the (dis)comfort of our homes, we seek different mediums to entertain ourselves.

Now, online Diplomacy is great and all, but we all crave our face-to-face fix. So, when the well-renowned-world-championx2-god-of-diplomacy Andrew Goff posted on Facebook advertising a live game he was running, I immediately jumped at the opportunity to participate.

The game was to be played using the Discord app voice chat function, with moves being entered into a Backstabbr game that Andrew would be the game master for. There was a main voice chat group where everyone could talk together, and there was also the option to privately call or message other players (or groups of players). The turns would be 15 minutes long, unless you could successfully beg Andrew to give you a few extra seconds to enter in your moves. The game is best played on a computer/laptop, although someone managed to do it using only his smartphone.

We were a mixed group of players with Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America all represented on the board. Some players were familiar to me, others not so much. The level of experience varied from world champion to "this is my third game of Diplomacy" and everything in between. The skill level was still incredibly high despite this diversity.

I rolled Austria. My worst country. The game was clearly already off to a *great* start. Using the Discord application to have conversations with people proved to be slightly tricky at first. I must have tried calling Russia around 10 times before he managed to answer my call via Discord. Sometimes I would have to join the main group chat in

order to get people to talk to me. Without visual cues it was hard to signal people that you wanted to talk to them, especially if they decided to ignore their notifications. People generally got better about using text to reply as the game progressed.

There were a few hiccups due to lack of communication or mis-communication. For example, I conveniently managed to get into Galicia when Russia did not talk to me for an entire phase. This is nothing new compared to what happens in Face-to-Face games (in fact, one can argue that this should be better avoided online where you have the convenience of texting while talking to another player). Once people develop a familiarity with Discord (or whatever app they choose to use) this problem can be easily avoided.

The game eventually turned into a rather predictable-and-quite-boring western triple with no one willing to stab the other (the only real stab in the game was Turkey's last-minute *understandable* stab on me) and all players surviving to the end. It may be harder to convince someone to stab, change course, or to know what they are planning to do without seeing their facial expressions and body language. Regardless, vocal cues can still give you a fair number of hints on what a player will do. And what can be successfully done in-person can also be done via text or voice call.

I think what the game managed to do best is that for a few hours we all collectively forgot that there is an ongoing pandemic. The game served to be a lovely distraction in a time that is rather distressing for a lot of people. For a few hours, I was just a player on a Diplomacy board trying not to be eliminated; nothing else really mattered.

I highly recommend everyone to get a game of live online Diplomacy going while this pandemic forces us into social distancing. Once you figure out the platform(s) you want to use, the rest becomes quite easy. We even had spectators hanging out in the group chat enjoying the shit show and entertaining Andrew while the rest of us were off negotiating. This can be a good opportunity for the face-to-face community to grow stronger despite the forced distance between us. At the very least, it promotes a type of togetherness that we would usually get from events like Whipping.

I look forward to hearing about your own Diplomacy experiences during this time, and of course, to playing a game or two together until we can meet again at some tournament in the future.

“How to Win at Diplomacy” - A Review

By Bob Durf



it can be so divided. The first part is a barely organized collection of topics--playing environment, scoring systems, fundamentals, and some other editorials. The second part is the meat of the book, seventy-seven mistakes commonly made by players. The final part of the book is opening theory with some of the more popular openings listed.

The first part of the book is difficult to fully review, because it is the most 'incomplete' of the three.¹ The organization of this section (from "Environment" to "How to Make it Rain") is the first issue a reader will probably encounter. With van Mechelen's headings, you would expect them to be organized vaguely as so:

1. Why there is still no game like Diplomacy (the hook to get you reading)
2. Fundamentals
3. Notations
4. Opening Theory (the last part of the book in his organization)
5. 77 common mistakes (the second part of his book)
6. And then all the other topics spewed forth at the start of the book.

Instead the book starts with "Environment," i.e. the various advantages and disadvantages of online, face-to-face, or mail play, which is a defensible place to start; but then goes right into scoring systems in *Chapter 2*. If a book is intended for new players, or even intermediate players, putting scoring system discussions in the front is confusing and almost irrelevant to those groups of players (there are very few of us who participate in face-to-face tournaments, unfortunately).² And we do know this book is intended for new to intermediate players, from the author himself.³

Coupled with the poor organizational decisions, right off the bat the reader encounters the central issue of van

rulebooks over the years--the rule book explains you win by gaining 18 supply centers. Later, he thanks Calhamer for leaving the rules on scoring "delightfully ambiguous"--again, missing the point of the original Diplomacy rules.

³"My name is Erik and I'll be your guide on this Diplomacy journey. Whether you are a new player entering your first few games face-to-face or online, or simply hoping to step up your game to an intermediate level, you've come to the right place!"-- "How to Win at Diplomacy," p. 23.

I first was going to write that I would never want someone to review my own hobby articles written for Diplomacy World. However, I was reminded of a review I wrote years back for a separate board game. It was a negative review, and I received a response that critiqued it and brought forward new arguments. It was brilliantly done, and it was a great opportunity for me to reassess my initial opinions and present at the least a caveat to the counter-arguments made--many of which I later came around to and agreed with.

With that, I find it appropriate to write a review of "How to Win at Diplomacy" by the inexhaustible Erik van Mechelen. Mr. Mechelen suggests a price to purchase the book at, which suggests the book should be open to a review so that others may determine whether it is worth their money or even their time. With that, I read the book, as I read his previous work on his personal page, and am now here to render judgment. To be concise, my judgment could be summed up in three words.

Take. A. Breath. But, I unfortunately am not concise, so I will continue. The book is divided into three main parts, if

¹Van Mechelen has disclosed both on the purchase page and in the book which sections are incomplete, so I will not fault him nor cover those particular sections. I will also not fault him nor cover grammatical issues, though his use of parentheses as stand alone sentences with periods inside the parenthetical is grating.

²Van Mechelen suggests such a discussion is necessary because the various rulebooks do not provide enough information about how to score draws--but that is because you only win Diplomacy if you solo. For casual players, a scoring system is completely unnecessary, especially in the various

Mechelen's work--he does not take a breath. He plows energetically from topic to topic with scarce a thought of explanation for much of what he has to say.

"Environment," chapter one of the book, is probably the most fleshed out (and consequently the most interesting) part of the work. Van Mechelen's passion for organizing and growing the face-to-face play of Diplomacy is crystal clear, and the chapter is an enjoyable eagle-eyed view of the various ways to play in the hobby, with a clear preference for face-to-face. Given the trend towards mail, then e-mail and online play, such a perspective is refreshing and energizing.

Unfortunately, the pace of the chapters grows more rapid without a pause to explain any of the topics brought up to any great extent (or at all in many cases). For example, the section on Scoring Systems brings up just three systems--Draw-Size Scoring, which is given two sentences; Sum of Squares, which is not explained in the short paragraph; and the Janus scoring system, which *is* given two pages in discussion, but is never in fact explained in the book. Now, I knew how the Sum of Squares and Draw-Based systems worked. I didn't know how Janus worked. I still didn't after his two pages of discussion on it, because van Mechelen fails to actually explain what Janus is adequately before beginning his discussion on it.

This is really the central flaw of "How to Win at Diplomacy." We all hated showing our work in Math class. We all hated being forced to come up with three pages of discussion in a persuasive essay in English. Yet when writing a book on game theory and strategy, you have to show your work. First, because if you are publishing a book, and suggesting others spend money on it, it must be able to stand on its own as an independently understandable work. If one writes an article in Diplomacy World, it is acceptable and understandable that one does not begin the article with a ten-page explanation about the rules of Diplomacy and basic tactics. If one is writing a *book*, one should not have the chapter on "Fundamentals" begin and end as a one-page series of hyperlinks to other sources. So you need to put in the work, because you owe it to the readers, especially when you are aiming the book at new to intermediate players. This goes beyond Diplomacy concepts that a new to intermediate player may not know. Van Mechelen brings up Bayesian theory at least twice but fails to even summarize what that may be for us readers less adept at statistics or mathematics (which I assume it is from a quick perusal on wikipedia).

You also need to show your work to not only explain basic topics so your book stands on its own, but also to prove your case. Probably the most infamous one from "How to Win in Diplomacy" has to be the 'Modern Borders' strategy van Mechelen seems quite fond of. This strategy, which apparently has Italy taking Trieste in 1901 from Austria, is never actually explained, despite van Mechelen mentioning it six separate times. All I know from the strategy is Italy takes Trieste from Austria, a sort of abortive Key Lepanto. For a reader who has not read the underlying arguments for such a strategy, it seems idiotic to let Italy go from bordering one home center to bordering the other two, plus Serbia. Van Mechelen states in his discussion of Austrian opening that he likes the 'Modern Borders' concept.⁴ With the little I know of the strategy from his book (that Italy takes Trieste), it seems like a ludicrously dangerous opening to prefer as Austria (though now I'm looking forward to arranging a game and playing van Mechelen as Italy...).

Austria gets some more claims made about it that don't stand up without the proper arguments. Van Mechelen states "I'm unafraid of the apparently lopsided alliance with Turkey, understanding that if needed Italy can spare me a fleet or two to assist in bringing down the Turk once the Turk and I have crippled Russia."⁵ I don't think I've ever witnessed an Austrian player serious about winning behave so flippantly in regard to a power that can be nearly impossible for the Austrian to destroy, even with a 'spare fleet or two' from Italy if Russia is out of the picture. I need more argument to convince me.

There are some more assertions put forward throughout the book that come across as bizarre absent any explanation or argument for the assertions made. Van Mechelen states memorably that "France doesn't have the dynamism of other powers," with no argument to back up that claim. At another point, the author writes that "tournaments are my favorite version of the game of Diplomacy."⁶ He then in the next line states "Most Diplomacy games are frankly too short and don't allow the majesty of the game's design to develop sufficiently."⁷ This comment is odd, not just because of the line prior, but because in his first chapter he states:

"For my money, and more importantly, invest of time and attention, face to face is aces. It is both the most immersive and also carries the advantage of being time-bound...even if a game goes six hours, I will not have to correspond with players across days and

⁴Not only that, it seems to be his second favorite opening as *AUSTRIA*. See page 62.

⁵P. 61.

⁶P. 24

⁷P. 24.

weeks of time nor live with constant anxiety of missing an order due date or forgetting to build while on vacation away from my computer.⁸

There is no explanation for this pile up of contradictory statements (he has a clear preference for tournament and club games and then complains most Diplomacy. If there was, the reader may be able to understand his thought process for these lines of arguments. Another example is when van Mechelen writes that opening to the English Channel is a mistake if you are going to get bounce--but if you know the other Power is opening to the E.C. you should do so. Again, the statements seem contradictory absent an explanation (that 'chapter' also includes another amusing reference to the charming Modern Borders theory).⁹



Finally, when writing a book, you also should show your work, because that is often where the reader can get a more enriching enjoyment from your arguments and topics. This unfortunately is the greatest failure of "How to Win at Diplomacy" -- because inside the book are so many interesting topics that are breezed through far too quickly. The 77 Mistakes portion of the book is begging to be three or four times as long as it is currently. I can pick nearly any of the mistakes and say that more could have and should have been said. Number 37, Missing Non-Verbals, is one line: "The human body communicates."¹⁰ Well, yes. But let's hear more about it as it relates to mistakes new players make in Diplomacy. My personal favorite example of this lack of discussion is Number 52, the Inability to Make Someone Believe You: "When you can say something in such a way as to make someone believe you, then in key moments you'll be able to secure a much-needed support from another player."¹¹ That would be like me asking my boss how to win a trial, only to have him say "persuade the jury" and walk away (never mind that my boss actually could respond like that). I won't, though I could, run through almost every one of the mistakes and point how they could be expanded. It would turn the book into a deep and interesting dive into face-to-face Diplomacy.

I recognize this review has come out extremely critical, but I do not want to give off the impression I am savaging or attacking van Mechelen out of malicious enjoyment. In fact, it is eerie to see the similarity in how we first started playing in the Aughts--creating clubs in high school, playing some StarCraft on the side, and progressing in the hobby from there. Van Mechelen has been lucky enough to find and help cultivate a thriving face-to-face community in the midwest, whereas Atlanta-Athens Georgia is surprisingly bereft of one. Really, I hope the author takes these criticisms not as a demand to cease writing, but the opposite--to write more, a lot more. What is there in "How to Win in Diplomacy" is enjoyable to read, with some humor and zeal (at least I hope the sections on eating and showering are intended humorously). Most of the issues I see really can be solved with writing more, by taking the structure of what could be a great book and actually filling in the parts that would make it great. As of now, I cannot recommend anyone spend money on "How to Win at Diplomacy." I hope I can recommend such a year from now, should he choose to take what he has created and make it something special.

⁸P. 2.

⁹P. 45-46.

¹⁰P. 49.

¹¹P. 44.

Doctor's Note

with Dr. Sigmund Schadenfreud



Good mother - I mean morning - dear reader. This week's I shall be discussing something that any dummkopf with 3 PhDs can spot: Overcompensating. My patient in this case study is a perfect example of what we professional psychoanalysts call "Überkompensation-meinzabiggerschaften"; and I am one of the only people who can pronounce such an impressively long word.



In our sessions, Patient "R" exhibited all the traits associated with overcompensation. Firstly, he had to begin every game with more supply centres than any other power. Second, he ensured he visibly took up half the board, leading to an inflated sense of ego (a super-ego, if you will). Third, when challenged by anyone about his potentially dubious ability to lead his power to victory, his purpleness would retort that his power was like playing two compared to the one of everybody else! Such delusion was terrible of course but great for conversation around the wasserküler at the Institute for the Diplomatically Deranged.



Patient "R" often imagined himself as an Octopus when it came to opening moves (even overcompensating for his average amount of limbs!) but the desire to grow bigger, better, harder, faster, dafter, punker, was often sadly his undoing. He believed another patient, "T" (an abnormally stubborn and very sick man) that together they could form what is known as a Jüggernaut, a supposedly impressive combination often just based on puffed-up self-belief and misplaced trust. Upon revelation of the moves the feeble-minded patient "R" was badly afflicted with Yellow Fleets in his Black Sea, and a severe case of "Watzehell-Uagreeditwasadee-em-zee-itis", a.k.a. You Turkish Swine Flu.



Thus was the vast purple boil lanced and swiftly deflated, reduced to begging for Sweden from patient "G" - another lunatic who had the grandest of all delusions of grandeur. But that's a case for another time.

This is Dr Sigmund Schadenfrasier, wishing you guten tag und guten psychische gesundheit.

Interview with Mark Berch, Editor of the *Diplomacy Digest* Postal Zine

By umbletheheep

One of the recurring sections in the [Diplomacy Briefing](#) weekly email is a postal strategy section. I've enjoyed getting to know this time in *Diplomacy* history and the many great zines from this period. The *Diplomacy Digest* has become a favorite of mine. I was curious about its founding so I reached out to its editor Mark Berch. Below is our interview.

How did you get started playing Diplomacy?

When I was a grad student at MIT, one of my fellow students told me about a game called Diplomacy. People at Harvard got together, dressed up in tuxedos, negotiated away. Some of my friends pitched in and we bought the set from Avalon Hill. We agreed --- last person to leave MIT would keep it (a tontine). I ended up getting it because of how long it took me to get through graduate school.

I then moved to Washington and one day in 1976, I put up some notices looking for diplomacy players. I learned about the Dipcon tournament. When I went there I was astonished. I didn't play but watched the games. I learned about the play-by-mail hobby only a short time before the Con and had one issue of Diplomacy World. Shortly afterwards I joined my first game, 1976EN.

The postal era of diplomacy is by in large over with the advent of the internet. What was the unique strengths of the postal hobby compared to online diplomacy?

The advantages of online diplomacy are so great that I'm not sure it's worth mentioning any of the strengths of the postal game. With letters delivered by mail, it's easier to lie. "Oh your letter arrived too late or didn't arrive at all or I couldn't get ahold of the GM to change my orders." "Or, I misread what you wanted because of your crummy handwriting, a line I used once successfully."

The risk of course with electronic communication is that you write in anger sending it off too quick. That's less of an issue in PBM. I can't compare the two hobbies because I know so little about the online hobby itself.

Why did you decide to start the Diplomacy Digest and why did you decide to make it a zine without games?

I knew that I was too error prone to be a good GM and was way better at analyzing and discussing GMing. As

for the specific idea of Diplomacy Digest, at the first Dipcon I went to someone suggested reprinting recent articles to give these a wider audience. This appealed to me because I could comment on these if I wanted. I thought it should be older stuff, to give the material a new audience.

In 1977, I was able to obtain the archives of some Canadian publisher and that got me started. Then Doug Beyerlein gave me what was left of his archives which he had accumulated from being the Boardman Number Custodian. Walt Buchanan, one of the founders of the postal hobby, liked the idea of my zine and gave me the duplicates of Hoosier Archives. I then had enough to go on indefinitely.

As I've become more familiar with the hobby during the 70's & 80's, I've realized that there was a lot of drama and big personalities in the postal scene. What are some moments that you especially remember?

The feud between Bruce Linsey and Kathy Caruso was immensely time consuming and was emblematic of the time. The drama and the disputes of the time seemed a lot more important at the time than these actually were. A tremendous amount of time was spent hurling charges which were for the most part unsubstantiated, as well as trying to get people to actually prove what they were alleging. There were attempts to sabotage some hobby institutions, but these efforts generally failed. These conflicts did drive some people from the hobby, and these consumed too many pages in dipzines. There were many articles I never got to write because I opted to pen some point by point rebuttal to this or that accusation.

One problem that did occur was that Rod Walker turned over the editorship of Diplomacy World to Kathy Byrne. He assumed that she would leave her feuds out of that role which simply didn't happen. This ended up causing all manner of problems.

I had been Strategy and Tactics Editor for some time, and for substantial periods she would not accept mail from me. There were at least two pieces she did accept, but refused to publish, and I simply could not get her set forth what had to be fixed. One of these, a fiction piece about Shep Rose, I gave to Linsey for his fake DW #40, the publication of which was a fairly incendiary event.

Kathy would not give me the one constructive proposal I had to end their feud: a proposal that Bruce and Kathy produce alternate issues of DW. The energy of each of them and of their supporters (both of them had a raft of good writers in their camp) could be channeled into trying to top the DW issue that the "other side" had just put out.

Bruce told me he was intrigued, but he told me it wasn't worth discussing because Kathy had DW and the last person she would share it with would be him. Not all of Bruce's predictions turned out right, but this one was. She would not consider it and Rod would not push her on this. Alas, the idea went nowhere and the feud went on.

With some people I was able to patch things up and sometimes not. There were a few sad cases for me. One was Jack Masters, he put out a zine called *Black Frog* which made for good reading, but he got totally obsessed with Bruce and me. He put out crazy stuff about us and just would not back down. He would take some offhand thing Kathy had said, possibly in jest or when she'd been drinking and make a bid deal about it. I alas got nowhere with him or Steve Langley for that matter.

Keep in mind that not all feuds were destructive. Arguably the longest lasting hobby feud was between Rod Walker and John Boardman. It lasted so long because both parties enjoyed it. Their vitriol tended to be entertaining rather than damaging and others didn't feel like they had to choose sides. There was nothing they could do to each other, and I don't think they even wanted to. John ran the most reliable zine the hobby had ever seen, and Rod had no interest in disrupting that. Rod occasionally tried to end the feud, but John would have none of that. John, in fact was a fairly rigid person, which of course surely contributed to the reliability of his games and zine. Once he issued a criticism though, that was it. He would not let you reply in his zine, and he would never concede the point if events proved him wrong. Once he saw me getting along with Rod Walker, that was it for me. I was the bad guy. He had a somewhat disdainful view of much of the hobby's activities. He'd rail against fake issues of zines, for example, although most considered these good fun.

Another matter that I got involved with was definitely unmasking Bernie Oaklyn as Bernie Tretick. Tretick was a completely disreputable character who left the hobby in disgrace and came back under the Oaklyn disguise. When he came back, many thought he really seemed like Tretick. He not only denied it, but he vilified the people who made the allegation. He fabricated entire events, got into games, and then attacked the GM for unethical behavior. He also ruined games he was GMing. It was awful. I was able to show definitively that

the two were the same, and not long afterward he went back to using Tretick. I might add, this was the one and only time Boardman gave me any credit for anything.

It's important to remember however, these feuds had only modest importance in terms of the functioning of a hobby. What really mattered were orphan games being promptly rehoused and game endings being reported and published promptly. Could people quickly get a Boardman number for their game? Was there a reasonable balance between game openings and the number of people looking for game openings so that games fill in a reasonable amount of time? Were people voting in good numbers in the zine poll? Was there good attendance at the diplomacy conventions? Was there a solid novice package available to newcomers? Was Diplomacy World coming out regularly? Are new variants appearing to meet the needs of people who like to keep trying new games? Were new zines replacing the ones that folded? In the long run, these were the factors that mattered most.

Who would you count as friends from this time and why?

I had a lot of friends at the time, but these were tied to the hobby itself. When I left, these relationships didn't last long at all. During my time in the hobby, Rod and Bruce were my closest friends, and I found them both to be genuinely interesting people. I also had very interesting correspondences with others such as Francois Cuerrier and Randolph Smythe.

The vast majority of zines only lasted a few years, yet you produced your zine for close to 15 years. What do you attribute that longevity to?

I stuck to "Piggott's Laws of Fanzines."

1, Good fanzines are produced for the benefit of their editors. It provided an outlet for my creative self-expression. I had to keep it in that lane.

2. A good fanzine contains material which cannot be obtained elsewhere in the same form'. That was the reprints. These produced a successful zine and when you can see it's a success, then you keep doing it.

The other factor that helped was I did not face the time pressure of running games. The zine was priced by the issue so if I was late it didn't interfere with any game.

Anything else you would like to add?

One of the things that the hobby gave me was a chance to pick and choose the types of things I wanted to write about. I actually wrote a great deal about GMing. How to resolve disputes, adjudication problems, what should

or should not go into House Rules, and ethics for the GM and player interactions were all areas I enjoyed to write.

I was also greatly interested in tournament scoring systems. People created scoring systems based on their own personal values or theoretical notions without considering how the scoring systems affected play. We argued as to whether scoring systems should be public or secret and other aspects of the scoring systems.

I was not much for writing press but I did enjoy contributing to fakes. The subjects I enjoyed writing most about though were tactics, strategy and diplomacy. I believe that is what I was best known for.

If you'd like to peruse *Diplomacy Digest* look it up at the [Postal Diplomacy Zine Archive](#). Also be sure to subscribe to the *Digest's* online spiritual successor *Diplomacy Briefing* at <http://www.diplomacybriefing.com>.

The Diplomacy Jigsaw

By Heathley Baines

I was listening to episode 63 of the *Diplomacy Games* podcast. It was pretty interesting. It featured an interview by some fella called Doug Kent. Some bigwig in the world of the Diplomacy hobby.

Doug's been around the hobby for, well, a while, apparently. Longer than most, anyway. Rumour has it that when he plays the game, his fleets are driven by tiers of indentured oarsmen. I wouldn't know myself.

I listen to the podcast on my way home from work when I can. Not every night because my partner works in the building next door to my offices and we occasionally find ourselves travelling home at the same time. I'm not quite that boorish as to pop my earphones in and ignore her. Not anymore, at least; it was a while before those ribs healed.

It took me, then, three nights to listen to the whole interview. When I could have been writing yet another overlong post on my blog, *The Embassy* (<https://theembassydip.blogspot.com/>), that should tell you how interesting it was. If I like what someone else is saying more than I like reading my own opinions, that's something.

As usual, the interview ranged over a number of topics and, frankly, they probably hit a chord with me more because they went back to my early Dip-pings in the hobby. Postal play, Dip zines... ah, those were the days.

Well, actually, in terms of play I'm not sure they were. If you've never tried to predict what you'll need to retreat, where you'll need to retreat it, what you would like to build **before** seeing the outcome of your orders, then you're lucky. Waiting an extra few hours for your deadline to pass in an online game? You don't know how good you've got it!

One of the topics Doug commented on, though, was how the zines seemed to glue the hobby together. When

players subscribed to zines, possibly a number of them, and games were played by post - even when they were PBEM games - and they were given a game number, there was some "togetherness" in the hobby that doesn't exist today.

Doug pointed out the fractured hobby we all play in. It isn't as simple as face-to-face, play-by-email or playing on websites, the cracks are more numerous than that. He identified that the FTF community can be divided into localities, with local groups playing together without much knowledge of the wider hobby. And, if you play online, it's likely that you play most of your Dip on one website or another; it's not common to find someone who plays across multiple platforms. In fact, there is a traditional (if fading) rivalry between online platforms, especially between the two biggest, Playdiplomacy and webDiplomacy (a rivalry that goes back to the development of Playdip and one I'm not going into here).

Personally, I'm not sure that the early hobby was as united as many like to believe. In fairness, Doug doesn't suggest that it was a unified whole; he points out, for instance, that there has **never** been a centralising force and that, whenever one attempted to rise up, it failed.

Doug also regrets the loss of community within the hobby and this, in itself, indicates further divisions. He points out that people **knew** each other. Articles were written under the writers' names. These were real people and, regardless of whether players attended conventions and tournaments, you got to know them. In these days of Diplomacy websites and apps, when usernames encourage anonymity, this is being eroded from the very start. Who is "Duke_of_Marlborough"? He (or she) is Duke_of_Marlborough. He **isn't** Colin Sanderson from Richmond (with apologies to any Colin Sandersons who might live in Richmond, and anyone who sees themselves as England's greatest strategist).

As I was listening, though, and appreciating where Doug was coming from, even agreeing with him, I was also

questioning some of what he was saying. Perhaps that's because I play my Diplomacy online? Am I coming from a different angle? Am I more biased towards this wing of the hobby?

Well, yes, I am. This is where I've learned to love playing the game. Not that I didn't enjoy the period of playing postally, and that I didn't enjoy the postal zines, or even the online zines. I mean, I've just started my own, as a way of extending my blog: *The Embassy Journal* (<https://sway.office.com/CxVx9yBAPpyfllil>). But the online game doesn't take years to complete and I don't have to wait days for a reply or months for the next zine to come out.

There's no doubt that the fractures Doug describes are there. Playing online, I know that there are a **lot** of players who have no idea about the wider hobby, probably never played anywhere else but online. But I also know that these people are fewer in number than it seems.

A lot of online players come to the websites because they've played Dip face-to-face. It may have been in school or at university or somewhere similar. They're likely to have found that playing Dip FTF - getting seven players together who can take time out to play at the same time - is difficult. But they've been bitten and so, today, they search for a way to play online.

They may go to the websites, then. They may find one where games are played on the site, one where the site is a focus to organise human-GMed email games; they may find one of the apps (my experiences with apps isn't great but they suit some people); they may join a Discord group or find something on social media.

And it's likely that, while some will try different sites/apps/groups, they'll find a place to play that they like, and stay there. They become part of that host's community and that's where they play. Playing across multiple hosts means using different functionality and that just gets frustrating. *This one works for me; this is where I'll play.*

I've known players who have visited one host when they've been used to playing at another. Quite often *this* isn't as good, or *that* needs improving, etc. What they really mean is that **they're** used to one way of doing it and the other way doesn't suit **them**. What these people don't recognise is that it's their **expectations** that aren't matching up.

But there's nothing wrong with that. If you enjoy playing your Diplomacy where you play your Diplomacy, then play it there. There's no requirement to play everywhere, or play in a different format. You might be

missing something but it has to come down to **you** enjoying playing the game, wherever or however.

What this means, though, is that each format, and each host within that format, whether the host is a particular site, app or group, becomes a community in and of itself. The wider picture can become lost and the result is what Doug identifies: a fractured hobby or, at least, a hobby with deeper, more significant fractures.

I think that what we have today is a **different** hobby. Better? Worse? I don't think we can say. The modern hobby has evolved as technology has evolved. It is organised differently, runs differently, and is bigger (although also, arguably, less devout). Diplomacy now incorporates more people but less commitment, perhaps.

Look a little deeper, however, and the positive aspects of the early hobby are still there in some form. Not as readily recognisable, but they're there.

Community exists. Not the feeling of an overarching community, perhaps. Not the togetherness of people who subscribed to a number of different, possibly intercontinental zines, even. I wonder, though, how many people used to do that in reality? Certainly, those seeded in the hobby may have done.

But communities within the hobby exist. Local and national communities, as always, among the FTF players. Online communities on the various hosts. Increasingly, though, there is evidence of cross-host players, those who play on multiple sites or apps. They'll have their favourites, but it's there. And even cooperation. If webDip and Playdip can cooperate to host the Online Diplomacy Championship, then something is developing! Incidentally, the ODC also involved a number of players who more regularly play FTF and PBEM games.

The anonymity of modern Dip play is perhaps less conducive to building the types of friendship that grow out of knowing someone's given name. Having said that, there's a history of players participating in PBM and PBEM games using pseudonyms for humour, anonymity or more... nefarious reasons.

But I've made friends with people online, especially in games. Friends I'd stab, certainly, but friends nonetheless and it really doesn't matter whether I know them as NoPunIn10Did or Tony Foot. It's the person behind the name that counts. Tony Foot might be a complete idiot, after all.

There is also an increasing amount of shared information about events, whether remote or FTF. One place to get information is *The Diplomacy Briefing*

info@diplomacybriefing.com) which lists a number of events and is updated every week. I've also seen FTF events shared on Diplomacy website forums. Although this doesn't mean that everyone on the site takes notice, there are people **promoting** events. This raises the profile of face-to-face Diplomacy amongst those who may not, otherwise, know anything about it. And there's social media and places like MeetUp that advertise these events.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the fractures are healing. What is really needed is for people to be involved in getting the message that the wider hobby exists out there, and that it's brilliant, and that's down to those of us who know. There's no room for the 'them and us' attitude if this is something that needs to be addressed.

Doug is absolutely right when he says that things have changed, and things have been lost, as the Diplomacy hobby has evolved. In the post-PBM hobby (yes, there

are some games out there, I know, but still) the role of zines has changed and the consequences of that are as Doug has highlighted. But that simply makes the modern hobby different.

Something similar has happened before. With postal games, and communities, came scoring. With scoring came ideas like *topping the board* and *placing in a game* which have no place in Diplomacy outside of the context in which they're played. OK, let's be honest, they've no place in Diplomacy at all (see [Objectives Other Than Winning](#), Allan B Calhmer, 1974 IDA Diplomacy Handbook). And yet they became common concepts within the hobby.

The hobby will continue to change and evolve. In ten year's time, it will be different again, probably in ways we can't imagine. What's important is that we keep the greatness of the hobby, the richness of its history, in sight and celebrate every aspect of it.

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Playing Face-to-Face Diplomacy Remotely

by Andy Harris

The weekend of 14-15 March 2020 saw the third Macclesfield Diplomacy Convention take place in Macclesfield UK. I participated and played remotely from overseas in the game held on Sunday 15 March 2020 to make up the numbers.

My 'presence' at the game was in the form of a mobile phone connected to my iPad via face time. Any player wishing to negotiate with me had to find a quiet corner and take the mobile with them. I had a board set up my end so I could see what units were where, and negotiations were carried out much the same as if I had been present in person.

This method eliminated the possibility of trying to hold simultaneous discussions with multiple players via text message/WhatsApp, and also meant that players I had held negotiations with could not show WhatsApp/text messages of what we had discussed to other players.

When submitting orders, the Tournament Director confirmed when the other 6 players had submitted their orders, and I took a photograph of mine on my mobile, sending the picture to the WhatsApp group for the convention. We originally started with me verbally reading out my orders before other players orders were read out, but changed to photo submission of my written orders to ensure no written errors were made which would invalidate my orders. As it happens, this was a sensible move as I did mess up an order later in the game. Had I just verbalised my orders, this error would not have come to light and the move have been executed.

The challenges of playing remotely were as follows:

- 1) I was reliant on players I was negotiating with to inform me if any other players were within earshot. For all I knew, there could be another player just out of sight of the camera listening to everything I said,
- 2) Occasionally we had loss of signal / connectivity issues, but for the most part this wasn't problematic,
- 3) Prolonged use of facetime drained the batteries of the mobile phone quickly. Towards the end of the game we had to use other people's phones

as the Tournament Directors' phone had run out of charge,

- 4) The movement phase took a little longer, as at the end of each movement phase we would check that my board matched the board in Macclesfield in terms of where pieces were located,
- 5) When playing face to face, you can see other players around you and who they are talking to. You can also see their body language and facial expressions etc. People who are good at reading body language and exploiting people's emotions etc can take advantage of this. I only got to see whoever I negotiated with and couldn't look around and see other players,
- 6) When a player concluded their negotiations with me, the mobile phone connecting me via facetime was passed on to another player or put down near the board. Often headphones were left plugged in (if I was on loudspeaker it was difficult to prevent other players overhearing) so I had no way getting the attention of other players to ask if they would negotiate. I did try occasionally messaging players requesting they come and talk to me, but this was not always successful.

Despite these challenges, I found the experience of playing remotely enjoyable and didn't feel overly disadvantaged by the challenges listed above. Players were mindful of these challenges and were happy to accommodate, and it was a good game of diplomacy.

If ever you are short on numbers, I would consider this as a realistic option which could be used for games / tournaments. The method we used does not lend itself to more than 1 player playing remotely but all agreed that my playing remotely didn't impact negatively on the game and worked surprisingly well.

I am grateful to Garry Sturley, the organiser and Tournament Director for Maccon for making this possible and being so accommodating, and also my fellow players for minimising the challenges faced by playing remotely and making it such an enjoyable game and experience.

Broken Thoughts in 2020

By Fang Zhang

The Chinese Diplomacy hobby in 2019 was quiet. We met in Nanjing and played one game. Everyone had fun but I could feel the faded passion, especially from myself. After all, we have real life to deal with. The on-line diplomacy group was kind of silent as well. There were only a few new players who joined, and just one standard game played, with one player dropping out.

In one word, just like the economy, the Diplomacy hobby in China is going downhill. And we've got to realize that those times when we could spend as much time as we wanted playing games, recruiting, and lighting our passions can never come back. It's not a question of abilities but wills, which is truly sad to admit.

As the new Strategy and Tactics Editor of **Diplomacy World**, I failed to contribute enough articles, for which I should apologize. But I have confidence to perform better in 2020. At least I think I do?



In recent months, I have been thinking about the possibility of moving to Malaysia for the next 10 -15 years. I don't know if there is any Diplomacy hobby there, but if I manage to make the move in the next year or two, it would be more likely that I could attend some Diplomacy events in Thailand or Australia, given that I could change my role from an engineer to a freelancer.

It's hard to make the change, but I need to think about it seriously. If you get tired of cooperating with your ally in a game, what would you do: break up with him or keep the alliance going just to have one?

The pandemic is not good on one hand...but on the other hand, it is good for us to see the bloody truth of our society. It is when the conflicts break out between you and your ally that you can more clearly see your ally's real thoughts and the content of his character, isn't it? After dealing with the problem, you two either say goodbye or get even closer with each other. The Prime Minister of UK did a good job to keep his people at home without executive orders; he was so wise and created a sense of fear among the British people. In playing the game of Diplomacy, how to use fear - such as the fear to be left alone, to defeat your enemy or gain a friend without war - is really worth study. Belgium, Greece, Sweden...I would suggest you don't take those too early in a game, because if you do, you have to make up for your neighbor somewhere else. Why not take them later, which is much easier? If you could use Belgium, Greece, or Sweden to gain an ally, you are in a better position than just getting to 5 or 6 dots while being left alone.

Another good thing the virus brought to us is that there must be some people who are thinking about creating a new variant game based on it. I do have some initial thoughts but I can not promise anything.

By the way, I am planning to organize a small tournament in late October 2020 as part of the Bismarck Cup. Shanghai or a nearby city would likely be the place to play. We can reasonably expect one board, but two board would be a wonderful surprise.

Finally, let me wish every hobby member stays happy and safe.

TotalCon 2020 Recap

By Randy Lawrence-Hurt

TotalCon 2020 (and, more importantly, the Diplomacy tournament that took place within it) went off without a hitch from February 21-23 in Marlborough, MA. As usual, this was basically a local tournament, with a total of five boards over three rounds. Almost all the players were from the local Boston-area hobby (we consider Connecticut a suburb of Boston, and players from there

local, and will until such time as New York bothers to generate a hobby and claim them), though we did have David Maletsky in town as our token traveling player (he did alright too, as usual).

The festivities began for some of us on Thursday night, when David got into town and a handful of us met up for

a delicious Italian dinner in Boston's famous North End. Noodles were eaten, adult beverages were imbibed, and a general agreement was reached that this was the best Italian restaurant we had been to in the North End that night. (Speaking from experience, I can vouch for this restaurant being excellent, but a word of advice for anyone coming to Boston for a weekend; the best Italian place in the city is actually in Medford, a little place called Nappi's. I'll happily tell you all about it, and for much longer than you want me to). After getting some cannolis from the legendary Mike's Pastry, we went our separate ways for the evening.

The Friday night round kicked off at 7pm, with two boards of experienced sharks. As the TD, I ended up playing on two boards, which was probably a good thing as it minimized my chances of accidentally doing well at my own tournament (again). However, it somewhat unfortunately did obscure my memory of exactly what transpired on both boards. I know I was Italy on one and England on the other (and I definitely didn't just re-check the results on diplomacytv.com to confirm that...), and if I recall correctly my England didn't build in 1901... but beyond that my memory is rather hazy. Brad Blitstein was on my England board, though, so unsurprisingly he topped it (with France), though he did share that top with Bill Bloom, the Austro-Hungarian player. On the other board, Matt Langer and Hunter Katcher shared a top as England and Russia, respectively, with 9 centers each. The round ended shortly before midnight, allowing the player and TD to get some much deserved rest before the next day's game.

Saturday's round started around 1pm, with two boards again. An unexpected player drop forced me to play both games again, where I was dealt Austria and Russia, because sometimes fate has a sense of humor. My only clear recollection of my Russia game was lying to and stabbing the devil out of the poor German player, who had been kind enough to let me into Sweden in 1901. I do regret it, though at the time it certainly made sense (to me, at least). It forced me into a long-term relationship with Brad Blitstein in England, which never makes me feel good as a person (nothing personal, Brad), and ended with him topping the board with 10 centers. My Austria had a decent game as well, as part of a slow-but-steady AI which eliminated Turkey with Russia's forbearance, and briefly turned into an AR before the game ended with Dave Maletsky (as Russia) topping the board. Afterwards, I'm told, many other board games were played and good times were had; I wouldn't know, I went home to play shuffleboard at a local bar and go to bed early. Round three was

scheduled for 8am on Sunday morning, so I needed some beauty rest.

Round three actually kicked off closer to 9am the next day, with only one board; we were short a couple players, so I was forced to ask for volunteers to sit. Several players graciously stepped aside, and I of course didn't have to play, so our final board consisted of the leading players in the tournament at that point (minus Mat Langer, who wasn't able to make it). Sort of an impromptu "top board."

This board resolved into a solid RAT, with Alex Maslow, Brad Blitstein, and Colin Fulham (respectively) almost immediately beginning an inexorable roll towards the east. Germany (Hunter Katcher) and Italy (Lucian Gagliola) collapsed quickly, but a solid alliance between England (David Maletsky) and France (Stephen Mondak) was able to slow the behemoth. At a certain point, I observed that Alex Maslow actually had a shot at winning the tournament, despite his low standing to that point; if he eliminated Brad first, and topped the board, he would just squeak out a win. Apparently he did not realize this, though, because by the time he and Turkey together stabbed Austria (in an admittedly somewhat uncoordinated manner), it was clear that at least one of Italy or Germany would be eliminated first. Once that did occur, Brad's eventual tournament victory was all-but guaranteed.

Alex eventually topped the board and claimed Best Russia, but the lack of any last minute shenanigans or solos did mean that Brad, on the backs of strong performances in the first two rounds, ended up winning TotalCon 2020. Congratulations to Brad, thanks to all who attended, and we look forward to seeing you next year!

The Top Three and Best Countries were:

First Place: Brad Blitstein
Second Place: David Maletsky
Third Place: Alex Maslow

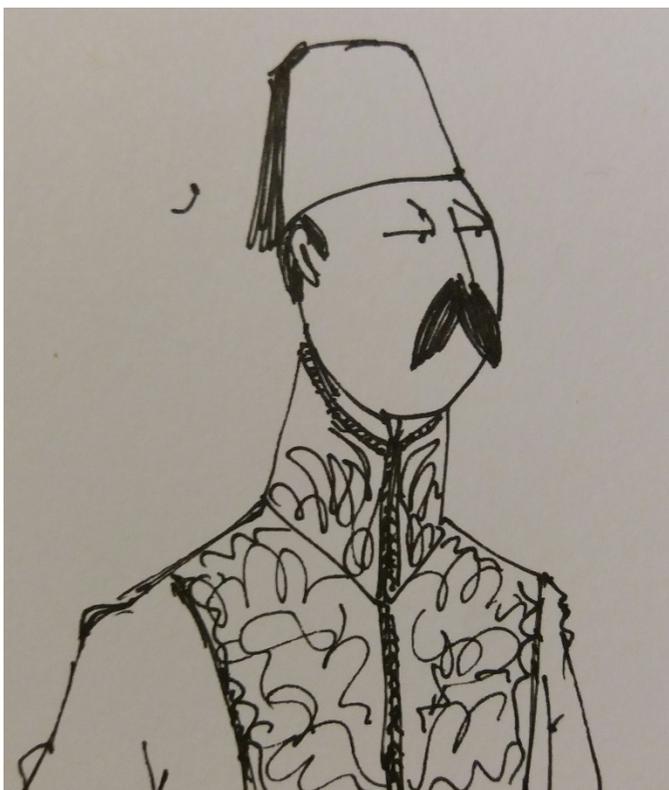
Best Austria: Bill Bloom
Best England: Brad Blitstein
Best France: Brad Blitstein
Best Germany: Lucian Gagliola
Best Italy: Robert Rouse
Best Russia: Alex Maslow
Best Turkey: Colin Fulham

Full results are available at www.DiplomacyTV.com.

MN Diplomacy “Minnesota” game March 2020 - Turkey End of Game Statement

By George Linkert

[[Editor's Note – The MN Diplomacy Club recently held a 6-hour, 2-board, online Diplomacy session. George Linkert wrote up this end-game report after playing Turkey in one of the two games, documenting his experience. The game was played on Backstabbr, with Periscope used for the live stream. The game itself can be found here [My history with this club has been 3 or 4 games and ending with me being between 4th and 6th place. I've never been eliminated, but I desperately wanted to make a better showing.](https://www.backstabbr.com/game/MNDC-Game-30-2020-3/5825213130866688/replacement/invite/X6IM4F.]]</i></p></div><div data-bbox=)



Draw of Turkey. Meh. Eric S. is Italy?! Ok... he and I have played a couple games, but interacted very little. I looked forward to seeing how that would work.

1901 Early talks were positive with Russia and we set up the bounce in Black. Austria told me that Italy was moving to Trieste with his blessing. “Huh?!?” I told him (repeatedly throughout the game FYI) NEVER TRUST ITALY. After saying that, I did have friendly discourse

with Italy and the A/I alliance didn't scare me. With a friendly Russia, I moved armies west.

After the Key Lepanto was made clear (LAME) I didn't worry about it. I firmed up my alliance with Russia (who was apparently under attack by all his neighbors) and made the bounce in Serbia and sowed discord in a very shaky Austro/Italian alliance.

1902 Russia's poor moves, lack of build, and the appearance of everyone attacking him made him an undesirable Ally for me. Austria's poor decisions and equally poor early missives also made him undesirable... Leaving Italy to be my only alliance option.

I quickly made a pitch to Italy who I think saw the game in the same light as I.. We made terms (I would not build fleets, planned who gets which points tentatively), and this began our uneasy alliance.

We secured Greece, Serbia and the Black, and pushed north, while constantly debating what points were to be the object of our attack.

1903 Italy and I worked well together for the first year or two. Mostly discussing what points were "fair" and staying equal in points. We took Sev, Rum and Italy retook Trieste.

In the west, I started talking with Germany more to lay a potential alliance against Italy in the future.

Not wanting to antagonize Italy, I held off on a build purposely, allowing for a future fleet build if I needed it.

1904 England's huge growth is startling and cements in my mind to continue to pacify Italy in whatever way I could. As I saw the board, attacking Italy would be difficult, especially as Austria would assist him, and Germany was calling himself Italy's ally. I felt I needed to focus on taking what I could of Russia, put myself in position on Austria.

But negotiations with Italy was a lot of work. He never felt comfortable with me as an ally, as much as I tried coaxing him off the edge. He couldn't make up his mind, he told me he “misordered”. So I built my fleet in Smyrna.

1905 Italy kept talking about going west. He had taken Mars and Spain. He told me he wanted Greece, and that

I could take Bud "in the future". He was out of position with Austria. It was clear he wanted to play both sides, no matter how much I was trying to placate him. I had been talking with my natural Ally, England, regularly by this point. I figure he'd be going into the Med soon enough, and then Italy would have to trust me to stop an England victory.

I had guessed wrong on attacking Moscow. I'd get it eventually.

Kudos to Austria for really stepping up in the end, and playing some solid Diplomacy.

1906 Italy was taking FOREVER to reclaim Trieste, and I didn't have enough units to take Mos and Bud. Italy finally made a move to MAO, but it was too late to knock England down.

1907 Stupid "Sum of Squares" moves. I hate the game like this.

"Sum of Squares" - Some point system for the "Diplomacy" season, meant to represent how well players play games. So the last year of games are meaningless for the game you are actually playing, and everyone is just trying to claim centers. It's BS, and totally screws the "flow" or "tempo" of the game. Why is it better to have hangers on like Germany, France, and Austria in the game here, then to eliminate them?! It makes no sense in my mind.

The way the game should be played, in my opinion, is to go for the win. If not possible, get in a draw with as few players as possible. Score that, and BAM, I might be happy. Just don't try to explain it to me.

Slack - Slack worked very well. We discussed some improvements including getting players to change their name in the profiles at the least. I use voice chat with 2 players. I would like to try video, but didn't want to complicate things.

Notes about the stream

For some reason, when I had the stream on, it was unbearable to watch or have on during the play. Watching the stream afterwards was only a little better... Lots of choppiness and lag. And it wasn't just my home internet. Same experience on my phone 4g.

While I was on the stream, I had zero problems. I could see and hear fine.

I've watched most of the stream now. It was clear the adjudicators were busy. Erik did a good job getting the boards up to watch. At the end of the stream, he was using a view zoom on the maps, so moves could be clearly seen on the board. That should be employed more often. I would also mute mics of the adjudicators more frequently while they were busy running their games.

Seemed like Ben was there for color and did well. I think having him more focused on engaging the stream audience would help. As a viewer I felt abandoned at times. The bringing up memorable games you've played was good, and have more stuff like that on downtimes.

You should try to bring the eliminated players into the stream to get their feedback.

I'm signing up for the game next month, but am open to letting one of you play, and I'd be happy as a clam watching the games creating analysis for the stream ala Zach or Ben. I've got lots of old war stories to share!

Good job MN Diplomacy Club! This was a lot of work, that paid off big time in my opinion. You should ask players to make a \$10 donation or something to contribute to your efforts. Get a better streaming service, or perhaps help backstabb improve their interface.

See you again in 1901!

28 Days Later in Airstrip One

By Jon Hills

Hello and welcome from Airstrip One.

In early March – in fact about 28 days ago - I had to go to Holland.

Surprisingly, despite the numerous airport references in these columns, I am not a frequent flyer so this trip – there and back in a day – was something of a highlight.

It was a very simple journey. After leaving the house only slightly earlier than usual, I caught a train to my usual destination and hopped on a bus to the airport. Then about 3 hours later, I found myself flying almost directly over my own home. Before landing at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport.

The actual flight from London Stansted lasted less than an hour, even with a slight headwind. The return journey

was equally smooth and, with the benefit of what was now a tailwind and adjusting for time zones, I landed about 10 minutes before I had left.

Who needs a time machine when you have Easyjet!

Holland struck me as a nice place – very clean and tidy - and even flatter than I had imagined. Apart from stairs and escalators, the only slopes I encountered were motorway ramps. This was my first visit and the five hours or so that I spent there can hardly be considered representative. I will certainly be going back at some point and if you get the chance you should visit too. However, that won't be anytime soon as, like everywhere else, both Holland and the UK are in effective lock down as a result of the Corona virus pandemic.

Now, as I've said before, I try to make these columns as topical as possible and so write them as close to the submission deadline as I can get away with – much to Doug's disgust I'm sure. However, as I was travelling through these airports, I was thinking about my next article. As all the talk was of self-isolation and transport restrictions, I was contemplating a piece about the dangers of isolationism within games. There may even have been reference to zombie apocalypse movies like, "Shaun of the Dead" and "28 Days Later" (both cracking films that you should watch if you haven't already and part of the inspiration for today's title).

The UK had only a handful of confirmed Covid-19 cases at that point and there was much speculation as to whether we would be going the same way as Italy, which was starting to battle its own outbreak. However, as time went on and the scale of the pandemic worsened, I realised that this would not be appropriate. By now, we will all know at least one person who has been directly affected by this virus and before the outbreak runs its course, some of us may have lost friends or family to it. It is a serious matter and deserves to be respected as such. My thoughts and prayers are with anyone who has been affected in that way.

With that in mind, I felt that it would be more appropriate to give you an insight into "life under lockdown" - at least as it is being done in my neck of the woods.

At the time of writing I'm about to enter my third week of enforced home-working. Joining me at home are my wife, our children and our family dog. We are all well so far. I collected my son early from University last weekend to prevent him being stranded away from home and my daughter is now off school for the foreseeable future, being set work by her teachers to work on independently. National examinations – e.g. GCSEs, A-Levels and Scottish Highers - have been cancelled for this year, affecting about 500,000 16-19 year olds,

including my niece and nephew. Pretty much all sporting competition has been suspended.

Teachers are still working - some in school and some from home. Those in school are acting as child-minders for the children of parents identified as 'key workers' – that is, hospital staff, social carers, the Police and Fire Services, the Armed Forces and the like – to enable them to keep working. Everyone else is now restricted to only essential journeys away from the house – to buy food &/or medicine (we are encouraged to use delivery services where possible) or to care for the elderly and vulnerable, to travel to work – but only if working from home is not possible – or to exercise. Such exercise – which for me is mainly walking our dog since the local gym shut – has to be taken without social contact with people outside our home. We practice 'Social Distancing', where people avoid physical contact and maintain a gap of about 6 feet from others. Theatre, cinemas, cafes and pubs have been closed. The only shops open are food stores, Post Offices, banks and pharmacies. Doctors' surgeries and dental practices are only open by appointment. Some hospitals have even suspended chemotherapy for cancer sufferers – who have suppressed immune systems - in order to limit their exposure to infection. All non-emergency surgery has been halted.

By the time you're reading this, these restrictions will have become even tighter.

The measures have been introduced in a series of increasing steps which started just after my trip to Holland. They began simply enough with guidelines on hand hygiene and instructions to avoid shaking hands but over the last month it has been slightly surreal to see them steadily ratcheted down. Now, as I walk the dog around the local streets, it is eerily quiet. Traffic is down 90% on normal. I will perhaps see a handful of people and may say 'hello' from across the street but that's the limit of any interaction. It's normal to swap pavements to maintain a 'safe' gap (at least, that's why I think they are doing it!).

It feels as if life is slowly being sucked dry.

Of course, my experience is not so much different - and arguably less restrictive even - than what is happening in places like Chicago, San Francisco and other US cities, across Italy and Spain, South Korea, certain Provinces of China and various other places. India, for example, has closed all internal state boundaries, affecting the movement and livelihoods of more than 1 Billion people.

However, where the UK seems to have differed from the rest of the world, though, is in the rationale behind the restrictions. Taking Italy as an example, their immediate focus was on containment. Cities were placed into

immediate lockdown and, in time, this then became a nationwide embargo. Over here, there was only limited focus on this beyond the first few days of cases being reported. Instead, attention shifted towards trying to slow its spread through the general population.

The thinking behind this creeping barrage of restrictions is two-fold, Firstly, it is intended to relieve pressure on our National Health Service (NHS) to ensure that it always has capacity to treat those in the most need. The other hope is to limit the economic shock of a general shutdown. The UK economy had already been rocked by Brexit and the effects of a sudden stop to most economic activity (i.e. an immediate national lockdown) would have been catastrophic. It still could be yet.

There have inevitably been critics of the Government's approach and certainly it has been driven by a London-centric mindset. In terms of number of cases (and fatalities), the capital is about 2 weeks ahead of the rest of the country. Only time will tell whether this was the right approach. However, from my point of view, I think that it has been generally successful so far. How effective it remains will depend upon the compliance of the general population. So far we have been able to avoid widespread deployment of military or police checkpoints to enforce the restrictions, although that always remains an option.

Although there have been casualties from this pandemic – both human and social – it would be wrong to say that everything is doom and gloom. There have been some bright spots, not least the “Clap for the NHS” campaign last week, which saw hundreds of thousands of people across almost all communities nationwide, standing on their balconies or in their doorways to applaud the efforts being made on their behalf by our healthcare workers. An appeal by the Prime Minister to secure 250,000 volunteers to assist the NHS in caring for Corona virus patients received a fantastic response, with more than twice that many coming forward in less than 2 days.

These are undoubtedly challenging times for the country and for the world as a whole but it has been heartening to see businesses and individuals rise to the circumstances into which they have been thrown. With those challenges have also come opportunities. Learning to work from home full time has been an interesting experience for me and my family. Business continuity plans have been tested, and improved where necessary.

There will also be upsides to this crisis, whether that is from improved ways of working, greater acceptance of home working and improved focus on work-life balance, better air quality, reduced litter noise pollution (if only temporarily), reductions in crime rates; the list could go on.

There has also been a much greater focus placed on community and helping one another out. Even a smile from across the street can help lift the mood – and that, rather circuitously, brings me to *Diplomacy*.

As everyone has rushed indoors, so they have flocked to the internet which, to be honest, is where most of the *Diplomacy* community resides. And, yes, we are a community, whether or not we think of ourselves in that way or not. This means that we have a responsibility to look out for each other and to try to help where we can. Given our global distribution that is unlikely to be physical assistance but we can help to stave off cabin fever by keeping each other entertained, mentally stimulated and thinking about things outside our own front door.

So, how do we do that? Well, let me suggest a few ways.

Now is the time for us to be starting new games, maybe trying a new site or a different variant! Have you played against the WebDiplomacy AI bots yet? If not, give them a go. Otherwise, try out Albert – the original AI solution. The link is here <https://sites.google.com/site/diplomacyai/QuickStart>

Now is the time to start writing that piece for *Diplomacy World #150*; it's only three months away. It would be fantastic if Doug had to put out a special double-issue because of the volume of material received!

Now is also the time to be contributing to those Forum threads that you normally skip past; all opinions are valid, no joke too corny. The simplest response to another's post means another connection has been forged, knitting our community tighter together - just try to keep it respectful.

And now is the time to be introducing your non-*Dip* playing friends to our beautiful game. I mean, what else are they going to be doing with all this extra time on their hands? This pandemic gives us a great opportunity to try and expand our numbers. Most sites will allow you to set up a private game where the normal rules about playing with people that you know socially are more relaxed. Find six friends and a quiet afternoon and away you go.

Of course, one aspect of or hobby that well be taking a hit right now is the Face-to-Face game. The London Diplomacy Club (LDC) won't be able to meet for the foreseeable future and I'm sure that's much the same for the Windy City Weasels and others.

There's not much that can be done about that. Or is there?

How about playing a live "Woodrow Wilson" game, where all communication is open? You can do that on almost any social media service.

There is also a virtual tournament – CoronaCon - being organised by **Davide Cleopadre** and **Andy Harris**, taking place THIS WEEK – 4th & 5th April, starting at 14:00 GMT. Get your skates on and you can still be part of it. Register at <http://gioca.diplomacy.it/register.php> but you'll also need to e-mail Davide at fenix71@gmail.com.

Hopefully, there's something in that lot to tempt you to try something different.

Lastly, there's just time for a quick round-up of UK *Dip*-activity.

Garry Sturley and **Macclesfield Diplomacy** were able to host MaccCon in mid-March – you'll find full details on their website <https://maccdiplomacy.org.uk>. Numbers were understandably low but I gather that a good time was had by all. Congratulations to DIB on his(?) win. Presumably, he now leads the 2020 Tour of Britain!

On the subject of the Tour, the next fixture – and probably my only chance of taking part - is scheduled for 27th-28th June in Wood Green, London. Perhaps inevitably, there are some doubts over the precise arrangements but Garry has assured me that he'll do his best to get something organised "in some guise or another". He's a resourceful chap and I have every confidence that he will.

Finally, a shout out too for **Theo Cox Dodgson** for an impressive 11-centre win as Austria at LDC's last meet on 9 February.

And that's it.

Hopefully, you've found this episode interesting and possibly even helpful. As ever, comments, opinions and (constructive) criticism is appreciated. Send your brickbats to jon.airstrip1@gmail.com.

Until next time, stay safe and have a Stabby Easter!

Ask the Hobby Historian – The Flying Dutchman

By David Hood

Can you cheat in Diplomacy? This seems like a silly question to a lot of folk. Interestingly, though, this has seemed like a silly question, in a sense, for as long as I have been in the Hobby. However, when I started playing the game, it would have been a silly question because most people would have answered "of COURSE you CAN!" Now, it is a silly question because most players would say "of COURSE you CAN'T."

This is not a minor point. I really do believe hobby thinking has changed significantly over the past thirty-plus years, in a lot of ways, but certainly including what is acceptable behavior in a Diplomacy game. The recent adoption of a Code of Conduct by the North American Diplomacy Federation proves the point. It would have seemed odd, and heavy-handed, back in the 80s for anyone to tell anyone else what was OK behavior at a Dip event.

Before we go any further, perhaps we should define what I meant above by a "cheat." Obviously in Diplomacy one can be deceptive in negotiation and, according to the rulebook, one can attempt to overhear the conversations of others in a face-to-face game. No, cheating would be things like stealing another player's orders out of the box in a FTF game; calling another

player on the phone in a remote game, pretending to be someone else; sending a fake communication to another player, etc. And, of course, the subject of today's discussion – the Flying Dutchman.

Lest anyone think I am making things up, ALL of these things were being done in the mid 80's when I joined the Hobby. Indeed, there was not a small amount of panache in trying to get away with this kind of thing. The Flying Dutchman itself was the concept of having an extra unit on the board, more than the number supported by the number of supply centers you owned. It was typically accomplished by just forgetting to disband when you were supposed to, or by taking a build when not entitled to it. Sometimes, though, it was just literally slipping an army into St Pete or something when no one was looking. My buddy Morgan Gurley used to carry an extra fleet and army around just in case the opportunity presented itself.

Once it became the norm to have official supply center charts in tournament games, which happened in the 90s, this practice began to vanish at most tournaments, but was still alive and well in casual games for many years thereafter. It happened at some point in a Dixiecon back about 20 years ago, with the perpetrator sheepishly

admitted to being caught, and the complainant insisting that the player be expelled. This difference in reaction was due to the clash of culture I mentioned above, between newer players and those who had come of age back in the day when Dutchmen were not just prevalent, but a successful Dutchman placement was admired.

I guess the immediate question for many of you reading would be, why in tarnation would anyone ever have thought that was good play? (Well, most of you would not use the word "tarnation", but still.) Doesn't this kind of cheating just screw up the game for everyone?

As some famous bloke said one time, more or less, I am not here to praise the Past, but to bury it. Flying Dutchmen are probably not going to make any reappearance anytime soon. Instead I want to point out where the practice came from, and why that source is still important to some hobby thinking today.

First of all, if you want to blame anyone for Dutchmen, it would be Allan Calhamer himself. The practice was happening, believe or not, WHILE HE WAS ORIGINALLY PLAYTESTING DIPLOMACY! He wrote a piece for the Dip magazine Diplomania way back in August 1966 in which he named the thing, described how it worked, and what the general rule was on how to deal with it once it came to light. (Indeed, the rule that the piece would be removed when discovered, but that past moves would not be altered, was still the prevailing rule when I joined the Hobby.) His article did not criticize in any way "throwing a little Dutchmen around" (that's what we used to call the practice in my own CADs group.)

More important than Calhamer, though, was the influence of Rod Walker's Gamers Guide to Diplomacy, which was published in the early 80s. Many hobbyists (including me) bought the Guide at the same time, from

the same store, as one's first set of Diplomacy. Rod described, with glee, several ways to cheat and how fun it was when you got away with it. When one is a young, impressionable guy with a new game, don't you see how an expert's seal of approval would be influential? It almost seemed wrong in those days NOT to try slipping a Dutchman here or there.

Alright, fine, so we've now gotten past all this Dutchmen and cheating business, right? Yes, I would say so. However, I believe the influence of the Guide on Diplomacy play is still visible. The RT alliance that is now sometimes called the Juggernaut was mentioned in the Guide, although he may have called it a "Steamroller" or something. Some of the older members of the Hobby are still more sensitive about that alliance emerging early than perhaps is warranted, in relation other powerful combinations. The reluctance to enter into early alliances like AT and FG that some folk experience comes from DNA planted, I believe, by Rod in his strategy sections, because you could tell from his language that he did not favor those alliances.

Lest you think that when the Guide itself began to disappear that this spelled the end for Rod's opinions, remember that when Avalon Hill released Deluxe Diplomacy in 1992, all of Rod's strategy guides for playing each country, and much other material from the Guide, was incorporated INTO THE RULEBOOK ITSELF. A new Gamer's Guide, compiled and published by Rex Martin at Avalon Hill with the help of me and others, took the place of Rod's product but did not extinguish the ongoing influence of his ideas with respect to the West v. East dichotomy, the interplay between strategy, tactics and negotiation, and yes, Flying Dutchmen. This is why I think a publication like Diplomacy World has so much value – ideas have consequences, so let's publish some good ideas in places like DW. OK?

To Whom Tribute is Due: The Next Step in Scoring Systems

By Brandon Fogel

All Diplomacy players agree that the primary objective of the game is to solo—gain control of at least 18 supply centers. There is not widespread agreement on secondary objectives, however, i.e., what one should aim for if a solo is not possible. Because most games do not end in a solo, this is a serious problem. If the secondary objectives are not well-defined and they are needed regularly, then the game is not well-defined enough for typical play.

Scoring systems were invented to solve this problem. By placing point values on various outcomes, scoring

systems define which ones are worth pursuing and in what proportion, i.e., what the secondary objectives are. It is commonly thought that scoring systems are needed only for tournament or league play, but they are really an integral part of the game's definition. Different scoring systems define different versions of Diplomacy, with significantly different incentive structures that can result in dramatically different styles of play.

Consider how people play the two most common scoring systems, draw-size and sum-of-squares. In draw-size, there is strong incentive to find a good ally quickly and

stick with the alliance the entire game. In sum-of-squares, there is significant incentive to break an alliance in the mid-game and go for a large center count. The most consequential decision in Diplomacy, whether to cooperate or try to dominate, depends on the scoring system.

Unfortunately, there is no consensus on a fundamental or primary form of Diplomacy. Some in the hobby think that a solo should be considered the only result of value. Others think that ending the game with the most centers is a good result, and the more the better. This leads to disagreement over what it means to “win” a game of Diplomacy. As I discuss in Part 1, even the published rulebooks (all 7 of them) do not speak univocally on the matter.

Debates over scoring systems can be highly subjective, largely because we lack objective means of comparison. Yet the hobby has shown clear preference for certain systems over others; sum-of-squares has replaced draw-size as the most popular system in the North American hobby because many players think it promotes a more exciting and rewarding style of play. Thus the various opinions about scoring are not merely arbitrary or whimsical, despite the vagueness that has plagued the debate about their merits.

In Part 2, I offer some objective analytical tools for comparing scoring systems. I do this by identifying certain general incentives that are desirable or that are widely valued throughout the hobby (or both) and then providing quantitative, combinatoric interpretations of them. There is still subjectivity in the choice of incentives, but I think there may be reasonable consensus on those. Nearly everyone values staying alive and acquiring supply centers, for example. In any case, debating the value of general incentives allows for a deeper, more sophisticated discussion than debating the scoring systems directly.

I conclude in Part 3 by introducing Tribute, a new scoring system that follows somewhat naturally from a straightforward implementation of the chosen incentive measures. There may be no perfect scoring system, but I believe Tribute is a step forward, offering a unique balance of incentives with an emphasis on dynamic gameplay.

1. To Win or Not to Win

1.1. A Little History

Starting an argument among Diplomacy players is not a difficult thing to do. One surefire way is to ask them to define “win”. For many, a win is a solo and nothing else. For others, a board-top is enough. For the solo purists, a board-top is merely a draw in which everyone either wins or loses equally (the choice depending on the level of

misanthropy in the room). The debate can quickly take on a religious tone because there is no definitive way to resolve the question.

Those hoping for a textual resolution to the “win” question will be disappointed. The various published rulebooks are notoriously and even hilariously opaque on the matter. Calhamer’s original self-published text (1959) says that whoever gets a majority of pieces (not supply centers) is the winner. Absent anyone achieving a majority, the game is a draw, he writes, without indicating whether that should constitute a shared win. However, he is perfectly clear on who deserves to be shamed: “Those losing all their pieces lose in any case.”

The first Games Research Inc. rulebook (1961) removes mention of a draw, advises players to set a time limit for a “short game”, and then stipulates, “the player with the most pieces on the board at that time is the winner.” The second Games Research rulebook (1971) switches the criterion to supply centers, not pieces, and says that players may agree to end a game before anyone controls 18 of them, in which case all surviving players “share equally in a draw.” Separately, if a previously agreed-upon time limit is reached, the players “may agree to regard the player who has the most pieces on the board at that time as the winner.”

The text remains unchanged through all Avalon Hill editions until the most recent (2000), where the language about time-limited games is simply omitted. The wonderfully obtuse “share equally in a draw” survives.

Of course, the hobby has long ago left the cradle offered by the board game publishers, so even if the rulebooks were clear and univocal, it wouldn’t matter much. For years, the various Diplomacy communities have experimented with different variations of the rules and found reasons to prefer certain elements over others. The differences are most prominent with win conditions, but there are others (e.g., whether draw votes should be anonymous, which no official rulebook addresses).

1.2. Value and Scoring

The specification of win conditions has dramatic consequences on gameplay. Players pursue very different strategies to top the board versus merely surviving to a draw, and the entertainment value of the game varies considerably as a result.

The typical way to specify win conditions is to assign point values to each possible result. Such a set of rules is known as a scoring system, although it might be better referred to as a system of values, since the system defines what results are valuable and in what proportion. Value provides incentive to select certain strategies over

others. Without a complete system of values, the game of Diplomacy is not well-defined, since the system of values defines what the players should be aiming for.

A common misconception is that a scoring system is only needed in tournament settings, when player performance is being compared across multiple games. Scoring systems do facilitate this, but the need for a system of values is fundamental to the game, even so-called “house games” (one-off games not part of a tournament or league). People approaching a house game with the idea that a solo is the only worthwhile result are employing a specific system of values, which we can refer to as “solo-or-bust”.

Specifying that the house game is to be played under draw-size scoring or sum-of-squares is perfectly reasonable and will result in different styles of play. For this reason, the scoring system should be made explicit, even if it is solo-or-bust. If different players were to play under different systems of value, they would not actually be competing against one another, at least not in a meaningful sense.

Imagine a game of Scrabble in which one player thinks that in order to win one must have the most points and score above 400. Another thinks only that one must play the Q, X, and Z in order to win. The mechanics of their two versions are the same, drawing tiles and making words, so they can go through the motions of playing together. They may even think they are playing the same game. But they aren't, and at some point the difference will manifest in some unpleasant way. Perhaps one player thinks the game is over once the Q and X have been played by different players, or the other claims the game is a draw even after being outscored 350 to 200. The result is a failure to engage in meaningful strategic competition, because there was not agreement on how possible game results should be valued.

The analogy with Diplomacy under different systems of value is precise. In order to play a meaningful strategic competition, there must be an agreed-upon system of values. If one person thinks a board-top is important and another doesn't, they aren't playing the same game, even if they are both negotiating and writing valid orders.

Why isn't this a pressing problem in Scrabble? The official win condition—have the most points once all the tiles are in play—is straightforward and nearly always results in a victory for a single player. Not so with Diplomacy as originally conceived. Calhamer's idea was that the natural win condition is total domination, and that every game would achieve this result if played long enough. The majority-of-pieces condition was meant to reflect a tipping-point, after which total domination was inevitable. One can quibble about whether majority-of-pieces is a good proxy for total domination, but that is

independent of whether total domination is what should be valued. What matters is that for Calhamer, and probably most early players, a game failing to end in total domination was only a matter of inconvenience, a consequence of players living lives outside of the game. Most of today's players don't think about Diplomacy this way, although we do accept that most games get cut short of a natural ending point (without the game being ruined for it). Scrabble would not be able to get away with this.

2. Incentives as Analytical Tools

2.1. The primary incentives

To answer the question of what should be valued in Diplomacy, I will offer a mix of subjective and objective considerations. My views about what makes a good strategy game are subjective, of course, although I believe most enthusiasts would approve. The selection of incentives to focus on is also subjective, although I have tried to select those that I believe are valued collectively by the hobby. The quantitative measures of incentive in the different systems are objective.

A good strategy game forces players to make difficult decisions between competing strategies. Diplomacy provides a wider set of viable strategies than most games, and this is one reason it is almost endlessly playable. Systems of values, or scoring systems, can promote certain strategies over others, sometimes strongly, with considerable effects on the difficulty of the game.

In order to evaluate the relative merits of different scoring systems, it is useful to look at the incentives they promote. To do this, we must first specify the incentives worth paying attention to. My goal is to identify incentives that are widely valued throughout the hobby as well as those that promote challenging and exciting gameplay, in accordance

with the views about strategy games articulated above. I have thus chosen the following incentives:

1. Board-Top Incentive: How valuable is having the most supply centers?
2. Survival Incentive: How valuable is avoiding elimination? How much do small powers have to play for?
3. Growth Incentive: How valuable is gaining more supply centers?
4. Dominance Incentive: How valuable is continued growth after taking the lead?

5. Balance of Power Incentive: How much more valuable is fighting the leader than fighting other powers?

The board-top, survival, and growth incentives are natural. Supply centers are the only elements of intrinsic value in Diplomacy, so acquiring and protecting them must be a core part of the goal of the game, however that is understood. And whether the scoring system in use values finishing with the most centers, most people appreciate doing so, even those who value the solo above all else. Likewise with survival; even with sum-of-squares scoring, where finishing with 1 or 2 centers has almost no value, players are still glad not to be eliminated.

The dominance incentive can be similarly justified. A football game won by a score of 49-14 is generally more impressive than 28-27. A Scrabble game won 300-100 is generally more impressive than one won 250-240. The interpretation of "dominance" in Diplomacy is less straightforward, since the competition is not binary and there is a zero-sum competition for the elements of value (supply centers). Generally players in the hobby are impressed by the overall size of a power rather than the margin of victory over the second-place player, although sum of squares scoring has encouraged attention to the "delta" between the top two powers.

The balance of power incentive is more esoteric but is perhaps the most interesting of all; I value it for its effect on gameplay, which is to promote second chances. If there is strong incentive for everyone to pull the leader back to the pack, then the game should be more dynamic, offering everyone a greater chance at succeeding even if they've fallen behind. In most scoring systems, smaller powers gain more by fighting each other than the larger powers, which actually helps the leader. This creates a snowball effect, leading to games that get quickly tracked into irreversible paths when one player gets an edge (e.g., Risk), which can reduce entertainment value. A strong balance of power incentive counters such snowballing and can promote dynamic games with dramatic changes of fortune.

The other incentives can also have desirable effects on gameplay. A strong board-top incentive makes unbreakable alliance play less appealing; alliances will buckle under the weight of their own success, as allies gain incentive to stab each other. Similarly, a strong dominance incentive should encourage more risk-taking and less playing-it-safe, which will lead to more spectacular (and entertaining) rises and falls. A good

survival incentive gives smaller powers a continuing stake in the game, meaning less janissarying and metagame dot-throwing.

2.2. Quantifying the incentives

To facilitate the analysis of scoring systems in terms of incentives, I offer the following "next-dot" interpretations:

1. Board-Top Incentive: How much does taking the lead improve one's score?
2. Survival Incentive: How much more does a 1-center power score than an elimination?
3. Growth Incentive: How much does taking a center increase one's score?
4. Dominance Incentive: How much does taking another center improve the leader's score?
5. Balance of Power Incentive: How much better is taking a center from the leader over taking one from the other powers?

These values can be calculated over the set of all possible changes on all possible relevant board configurations (i.e., the set of all supply center count distributions where the largest count is less than 18). Without good reason to do otherwise, I take each board configuration to be equally likely.

2.3. Existing scoring systems

These are the systems currently in widespread use:

- Draw Size (DSS): All surviving players split points equally.
- Sum of Squares (SoS): Players score in proportion to the square of their center count.
- Carnage: Players score in proportion to their rank plus a tiny bonus for center count.
- C-Diplo: Players score in proportion to their center count plus 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place players score a fixed bonus that is shared equally on ties.

In all of the analyses that follow, the total scores awarded in each scoring system are normalized to 100. The score of 7.1 (half of 1/7, the average pregame expectation for the average player) is marked as a measure of substantial score.

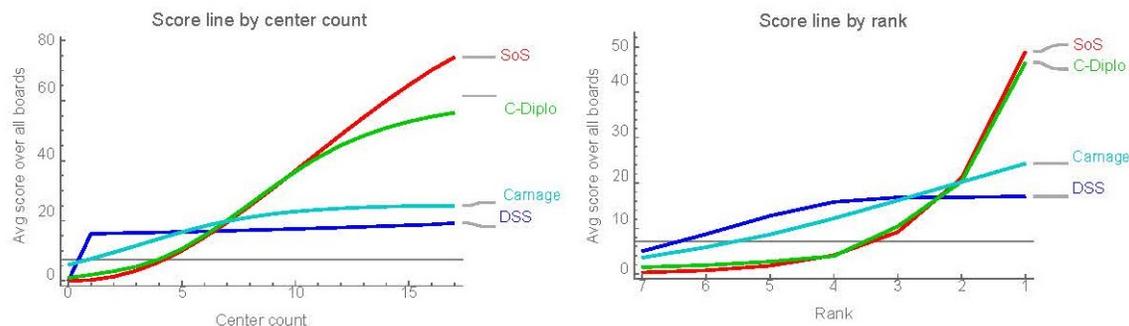


Figure 1: Average score over all possible boards as a function of center count and rank for the most common scoring systems. Survival and growth incentives can be read off the chart.

Figure 1 shows the average score over all possible non-solo boards, first as a function of center count and then of rank. A few things are evident from the score lines. Carnage and DSS are fairly flat, whereas SoS and C-Diplo regularly award big scores. Survival incentive can be read from the low end, especially the difference between center counts of 0 and 1. DSS gives the highest reward for survival, as expected, since survival is the only result of value in the system. Carnage awards points to small powers, but on average a 1-center power doesn't get much more than an eliminated power, so the survival incentive is fairly small (Carnage is alone among major systems in awarding a substantial amount of score to eliminated players). SoS and C-Diplo provide almost

no survival incentive. This is a common criticism of SoS; once a power is pushed down to 3 centers or fewer in the midgame, there is little to play for, and players often turn quickly to janissarying or metagame considerations. The growth incentive can be read from the slope of the curve at any given point. (For charts of all possible scores for each system, not just the average score, see the Appendix.)

The score lines by rank show that SoS and C-Diplo usually award significantly more points to 2nd place than 3rd and below. This means that a "good 2nd place" is possible, which has the effect of encouraging alliance play.

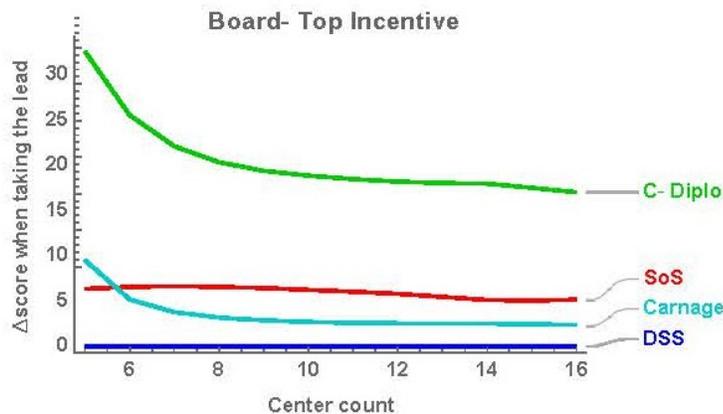


Figure 2: Average score change when taking the lead as a function of center count.

Board-top incentive is shown in Figure 2. C-Diplo provides strong incentive to take the lead, SoS provides some incentive, Carnage provides small incentive, and DSS provides none at all. This result may surprise proponents of SoS, since its principal feature is supposed to be that it encourages players to go for big center counts. But SoS also usually gives substantial

reward to 2nd place, and this lowers the differential value of taking the lead. (One may wonder why the board-top incentive for C-Diplo is not 38; this is because jumping from 2nd to 1st is worth 24 points, while breaking a tie for 1st is only worth 12; the average for all boards is around 20.)

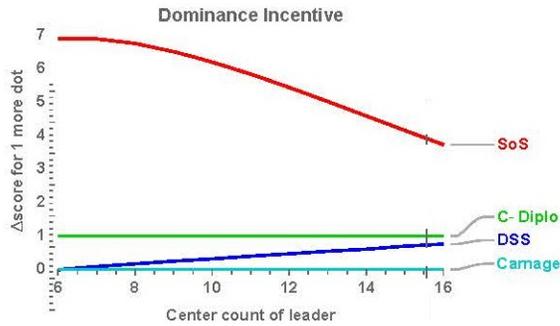


Figure 3: Average score change for the leader when taking a center from any other player.

SoS is the only system that provides any substantial dominance incentive (see Figure 3), although it decreases with overall center count, perhaps a surprising result. With C- Diplo, once a player has the lead, further centers are only worth 1 point. DSS

provides a small incentive to continue growing, because doing so will sometimes mean eliminating another player. Carnage provides only miniscule scoring incentive for the leader to keep growing.

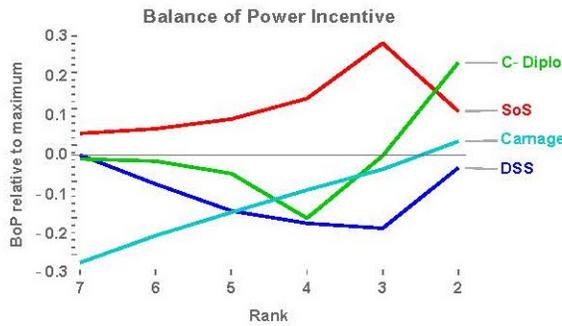


Figure 4: Average difference in score change when a player takes a center from the leader versus another player, as a fraction of the theoretical maximum, as a function of rank

The balance of power incentive (Figure 4) measures how much better it is for players not in the lead to take a center from the board leader rather than another player. The theoretical maximum for this differential is about 2.6 points (on average) for each rank except 2nd place, where it is about 15 points. To reduce skewing between these ranks, it is useful to look at these differentials as fractions of the theoretical maximum. What stands out on the chart is that most of the systems provide negative incentive for most players. In DSS, Carnage, and C-Diplo, it is almost always better for smaller powers to

fight each other rather than join against the leader. SoS fares a little better here but is still fairly weak, especially for the lower ranks.

While alliance play is too complex to admit a single incentive measure, the board-top, balance of power, and dominance incentives taken collectively may be a suitable proxy. SoS has a clear advantage over the other systems in these incentives, although C-Diplo gets notice for a large board-top incentive. Still, neither is strong on all three measures.

There are other considerations that are not easily quantified. A scoring system should be simple, easily understood and able to be calculated on the fly. DSS and Carnage do well here, C-Diplo does fairly well, and SoS does poorly.

Other features are often valued, although with less consensus. For example, DSS where surviving players can agree not to participate in the draw generally leads to shorter games than other systems, since alliance structures tend to remain static once established.

Players typically agree by 1905-6 that the outcome is clear. Some players may consider such speed a virtue of DSS, others a drawback.

3. The Tribute Scoring System

Is it possible to construct a system that promotes all five of the incentives discussed in Part 2 while remaining fairly simple? The answer is yes, as will be shown next.

3.1. Implementing the incentives

To promote the board-top incentive, a system should award a bonus for topping the board, and the award should be substantially higher than any bonus awarded for a shared top. Awarding a bonus for 2nd or lower places will decrease the board-top incentive and should thus be avoided.

To promote survival incentive, a system should award a bonus for survival. Any points awarded to eliminated players will decrease survival incentive and should thus be avoided.

To promote growth incentive, a system should provide higher scores to players with more supply centers.

To promote dominance incentive, a system should provide a bonus to the board-topper that increases with the size of the power, the margin of victory, or both.

To promote balance of power incentive, a system should put the survival bonus in competition with the board-top bonus. The better the leader does, the worse the survivors do, and vice-versa.

3.2. The new system

To help locate a well-balanced implementation of these incentives with maximal simplicity, I enlisted the help of fellow Weasels, in particular Jake Trotta, Bryan Pravel, and Chris Kelly. Together we landed on the following system.

Games ending in a solo award 100 points to the soloist and 0 to the other players. For all other games:

- Each player gets 1 point per supply center (Growth)
- All survivors split 66 points equally (Survival)

- Every surviving player pays 1 point in tribute to the board-topper for every center he/she has over 6 (Board-top, dominance, balance of power)
 - o A player cannot give more than his/her share of the survival pool
 - o Shared toppers split the tribute equally

The name Tribute has been chosen for this scoring system to emphasize the payment survivors must make to the board-topper. This is the key dynamic aspect of the system; it forces all players to always have a stake in what the board leader is doing.

The choice to exempt the board-topper's first 6 centers from the tribute is due to the fact that 6 is the smallest possible center count that a board-topper can have. Thus, the board-topper is only rewarded for performance over the minimum.

To generate sufficient survival incentive (on average at least half the pregame expectation value), the survival pool should be roughly twice the size of the center count pool. Since 100 is a nicer number than 102, we chose 66 rather than 68 for the survival pool. 60 would simplify the mathematics, but the convenience of having the total number of points add up to 100 is too great to pass up.

The net result of these choices is that most scores in Tribute can be easily calculated without a calculator. At the very least, it's easy to see how scores will change based on transfers of supply centers. If you take a center, you gain 1 point; if the center is from the board-topper, you gain 2 points; if you take the lead, you gain a lot more points (1 plus the number of players left in the game times your center count above 6, to be exact).

A sample calculation:

Power	Centers	Survival Bonus	Tribute	Total
Austria	9	11	-4	16
England	3	11	-4	10
France	0	0	0	0
Germany	10	11	+20	41
Italy	5	11	-4	12
Russia	4	11	-4	11
Turkey	3	11	-4	10

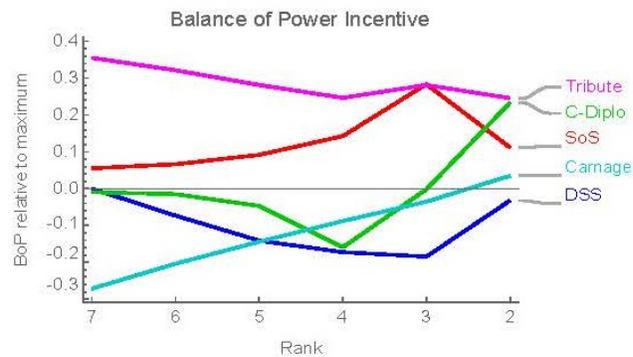
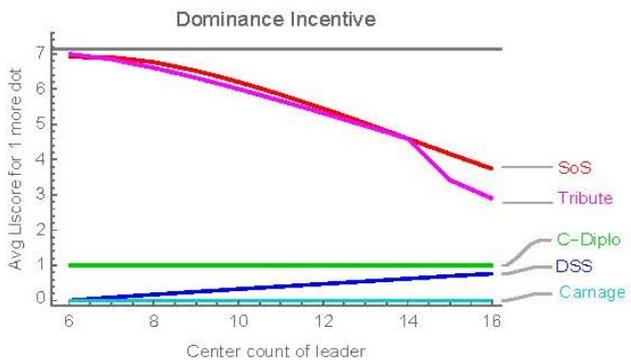
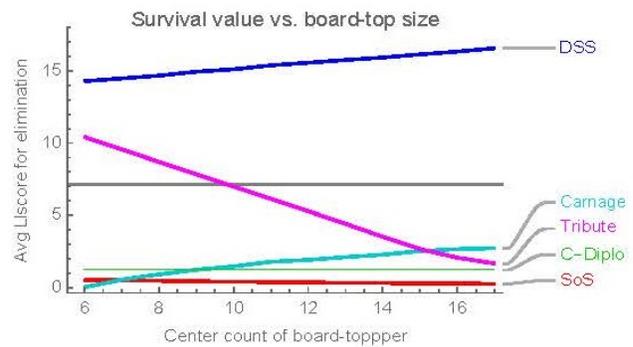
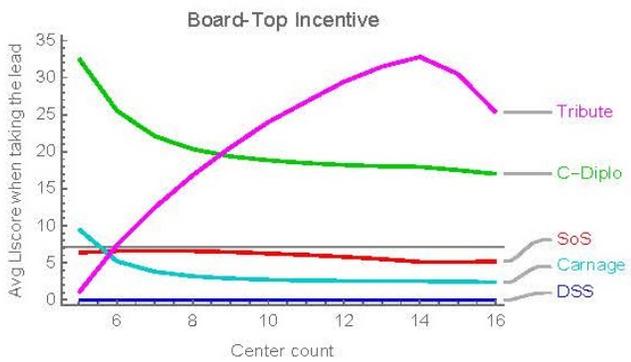
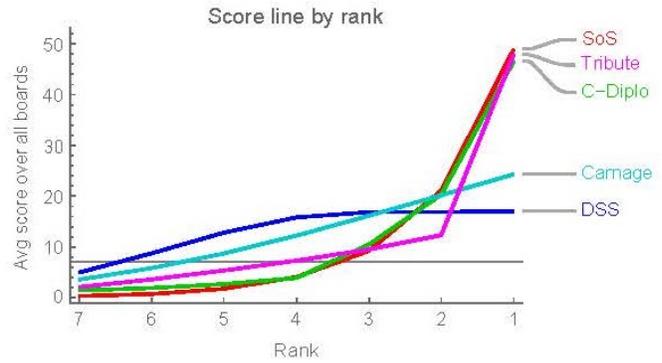
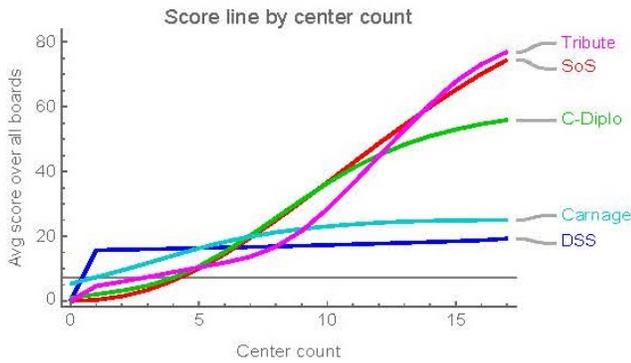
Tribute's incentive structure can be boiled down to these simple slogans: Survive, grow as big as you can, top the board if possible, otherwise keep the board-topper as small as possible.

For those who worry that adding a survival incentive will mean that players will focus on eliminating others, thereby leading to unpleasant gameplay (a common criticism of DSS), note that in Tribute there are two

counterbalancing incentives: 1) the board-topper has incentive to keep smaller powers alive in order to collect more tribute, 2) non-toppers have to maintain focus on the board-topper in order to avoid paying less tribute.

3.3. Comparison to other systems

Tribute is compared to the major systems in the following charts. It does well in all 5 incentives.



With strong dominance and board-top incentives, and a good balance of power incentive, Tribute should discourage unbreakable alliance play. 2nd place generally scores significantly lower than in other systems, so the notion of a "good 2nd place" should be

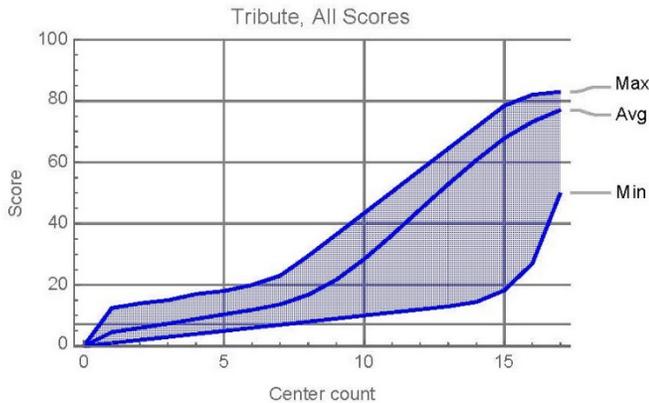
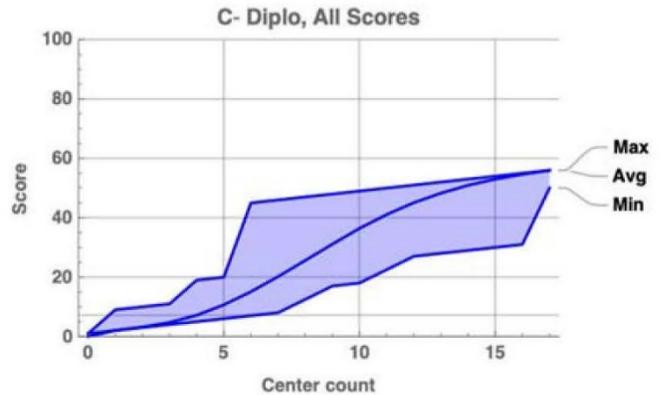
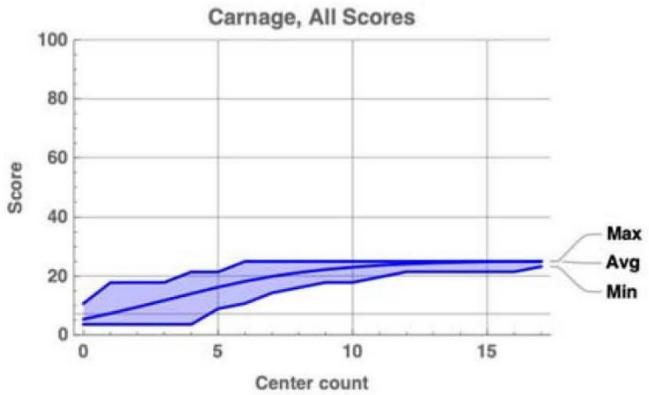
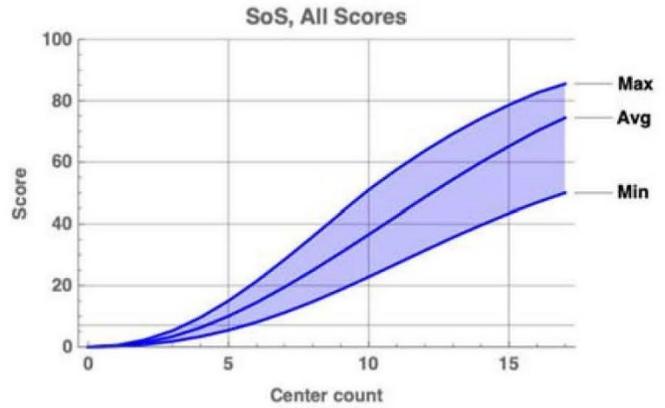
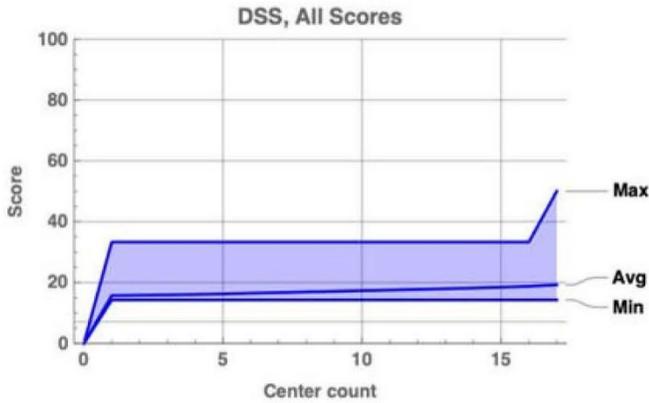
less enticing. With a decent survival incentive, Tribute should encourage smaller powers to stay engaged in the game. And with a good balance of power incentive, smaller powers have reason to focus on the bigger

powers rather than each other, hopefully leading to more dynamic games with bigger reversals of fortune.

Tribute should provide all powers, small and large, with a bigger set of viable strategic options of varying risk and reward than other systems; I take this to be a hallmark of

a good strategy game. It is our hope that, by emphasizing multiple competing incentives, especially board-top, survival, and balance of power, Tribute will help enhance Diplomacy both as vehicle for entertainment and as a measure of strategic and diplomatic skill.

Appendix – All Scores



Diplomacy World Demo Game “Dirty Rotten Scoundrels” – 2019A

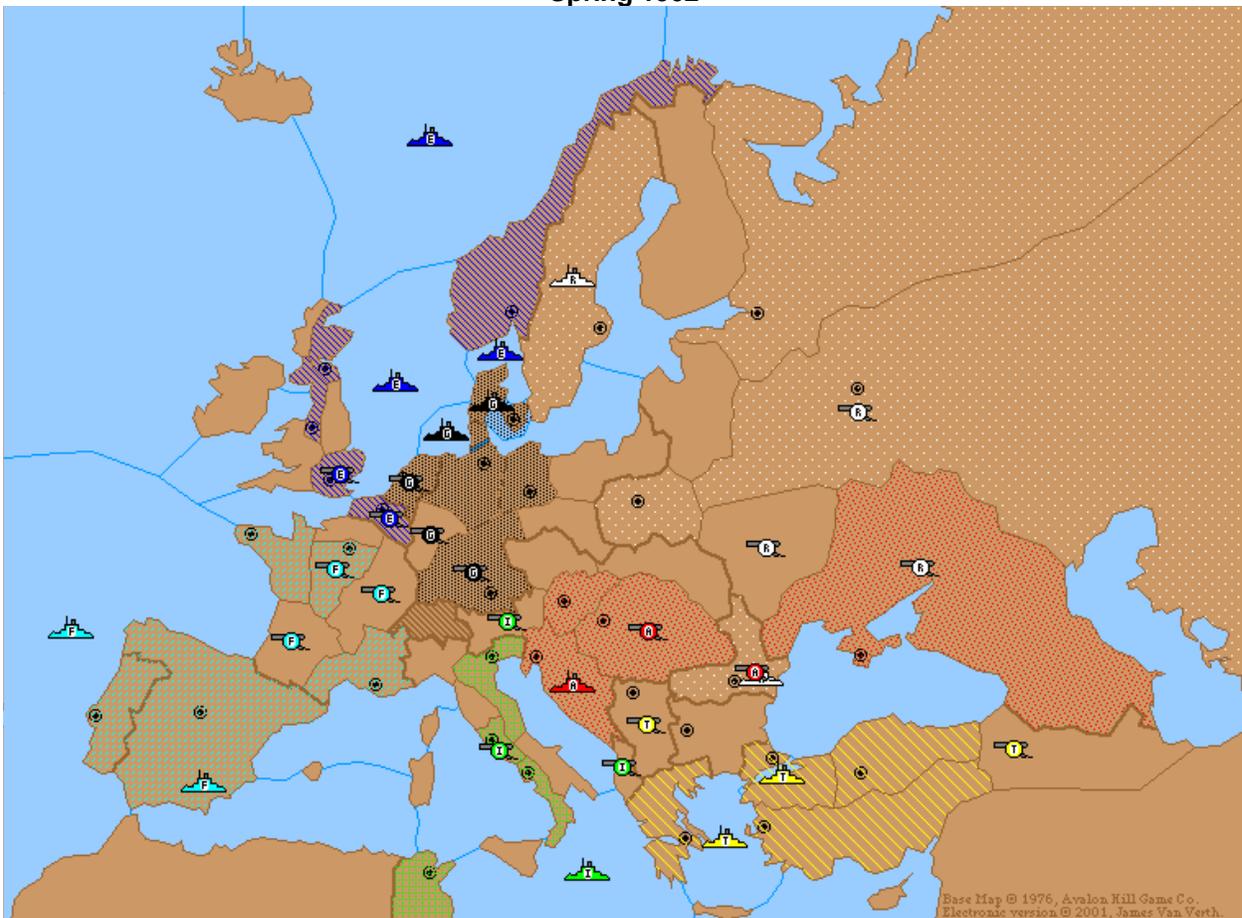
The Players:

Austria: Brad Wilson
England: Vick Hall
France: Steve Cooley
Germany: Dick Martin
Italy: Lance Anderson
Russia: Steve Nicewarner
Turkey: Stephen Agar

The Commentators:

David Hood
Rick Desper
Jack McHugh

Spring 1902



Austria: A Budapest Supports A Galicia – Rumania, A Galicia – Rumania, A Sevastopol – Ukraine (*Disbanded*), F Trieste - Venice (*Bounce*).

England: A Belgium Supports A Burgundy - Ruhr (*Cut*), F Edinburgh - Norwegian Sea, A London - Holland (*Fails*), F North Sea Convoys A London – Holland, F Norway - Skagerrak.

France: F Brest - Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Burgundy - Ruhr (*Fails*), A Paris - Burgundy (*Bounce*), F Portugal - Spain(sc), A Spain - Gascony.

Germany: F Denmark - North Sea (*Fails*), A Holland - Belgium (*Bounce*), F Kiel - Helgoland Bight,

A Munich - Burgundy (*Bounce*), A Ruhr - Belgium (*Bounce*).

Italy: F Ionian Sea Convoys A Tunis – Albania, A Rome - Venice (*Bounce*), A Tunis – Albania, A Venice - Tyrolia.

Russia: A Moscow Supports A Ukraine – Sevastopol,

~~F Rumania Supports A Ukraine – Sevastopol~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Bulgaria(ec) or Black Sea or OTB),

F Sweden Supports F North Sea - Skagerrak (*Void*), A Ukraine – Sevastopol, A Warsaw - Ukraine.

Turkey: F Ankara – Constantinople, F Constantinople - Aegean Sea, A Greece – Serbia, A Smyrna - Armenia.

PRESS

Trieste to Venice: I like that we're able to do this. My affections are growing. Is it too soon to put a ring on it? I think we could do great things together.

Venice to Trieste: I like you a lot. Any chance we could weekend in Tyrolia? We could have a glorious time in the mountains!

Trieste to Venice: One problem.

Venice to Trieste: What's that my love?

Trieste to Venice: I can't go to Tyrolia. There's a law against it.

Venice to Trieste: Sorry, but it seems it sucks to be you! See ya!

Anon: When the world is in flames, all you can do is watch (fire!)

Vienna: What is next? Who knows? Lunacy reigns in the Schonbrunn.

Serbia to Europe: Anyone trying to enter Serbia will be dealt with most severely. Serbia—free and sovereign, forever!

dateline berlin: it's true, all roads do lead to belgium!

dateline berlin: where is the wizard of wichita? the world wonders!

germany: oh i so can't wait to see the commentary on this game. it's gonna be sooooo wrong!

germany to austria: you know the greater balkan empire went down in flames, right?

Budapest: The wine flows, the coffee is sipped and the armies march.

Trieste-Constantinople: friends? Kind of?

germany to gm: what's the policy on picture press? (and no, i don't mean flooding you with lame internet memes)

GM – Germany: Picture press is permitted, either in a Word doc with the press or as individual file attachments.

West Side to East side: We are convinced. You guys are really that bad. We look forward to taking all your dots. Do keep them warm, won't you?

On a farm (with several newly-built structures), outside of Liege, Belgium: These Brits are a nuisance, Nicky thought, but he had learned to ply them with copious quantities of free cheese. Oh, those Englishmen and cheese!

Having members of the English general staff in his pocket had proven quite handy. Without them, Nicky could never have started acquiring other dairy farms at dirt-cheap prices. It was brilliant, really. By having the unwitting English make his cheese the only cheese that was legal to buy he had forced the other dairies into bankruptcy.

It was all coming together, Nicky thought. And, he hadn't even had to use force yet. The question was: where next? Sure, he had taken over most of the Belgian cheese market, but what could he do now? Was his success tied to England? He hoped not as he didn't really think England would get too far.

Summer 1902

Austria: Has A Budapest, A Rumania, F Trieste.

England: Has A Belgium, A London, F North Sea, F Norwegian Sea, F Skagerrak.

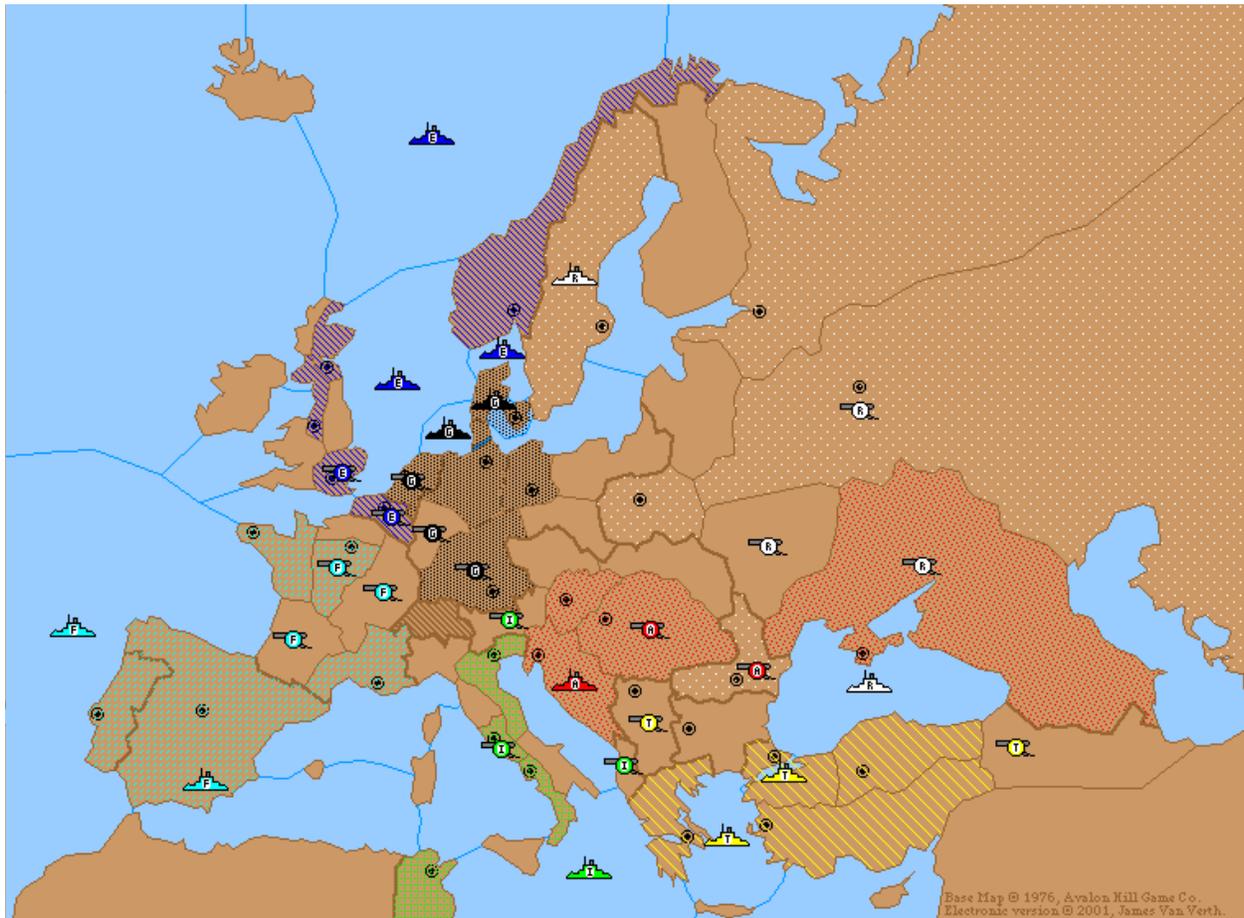
France: Has A Burgundy, A Gascony, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Paris, F Spain(sc).

Germany: Has F Denmark, F Helgoland Bight, A Holland, A Munich, A Ruhr.

Italy: Has A Albania, F Ionian Sea, A Rome, A Tyrolia.

Russia: Retreat F Rumania - Black Sea..Has F Black Sea, A Moscow, A Sevastopol, F Sweden, A Ukraine.

Turkey: Has F Aegean Sea, A Armenia, F Constantinople, A Serbia.



Spring and Summer 1902 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
 Jack McHugh

Well at least Brad has our undivided attention here! Watching him try to defend in all directions is kinda like watching a train wreck or something. There's a lot of stuff for him to cover, and he can't do it all. I suspect IT will coordinate well enough, but I did find the army move to Armenia interesting. If IT stick together, will they attack Nicewarner, or only put pressure on the French?

Lot of ifs here to guess about, but I suspect Russia will get hit. If Steve changes tack and tries to support Dick Martin's Germany instead of helping the English take him down, maybe that would be reason for IT to leave him alone, though. Could break either way - Turkey does have the extra fleet now, looking for something to do, so that may be an argument for him sending it west to help the Italians against France, or maybe use it to attack the Italians once Brad has been dismembered.

Looks like a straightforward EF attack on Germany for now, although I like Dick's defensive moves so far. As I mentioned above in my discussion of the East, the unanswered question for me is what Nicewarner decides to do. Obviously we don't know what negotiations are taking place behind the scenes but I suspect the play here will depend a lot on how the Russo-Turkish relationship goes, as that should dictate what Nicewarner does here. Just to finish off this turn in the West, it will be interesting to see the next moves EF try out here, given that the foray into Ruhr got foiled. Shot at Holland as a combined offense/defense move? Russia helps an attack on Denmark? Take another shot at Ruhr with support? We'll see.

Um, yeah, A-H is in big trouble here. If Italy and Turkey coordinate here, they can knock A-H down to two. The Turkish army in Serbia looks like it's in trouble, but keep in mind that Austrian A Budapest

has three different obligations: (1) defend Vienna from A Tyrolia, (2) provide needed support for F Trieste, (3) support A Rum - Ser. If Russia blasts away at Rumania then I/T can order Tyrol - Vienna, combined with Ser - Trieste with support from Albania and force A-H to pick his poison.

I'd love to see that Brad has some master plan that will get him out of this mess. I'm just not optimistic. Most of the time when it looks like a power is getting hammered, it's for real.

In the North, it looks like Germany is the odd man out. But his tactics are sound thus far and he's in far better shape than A-H.

France has a very flexible position that could try to back door England or sweep into the Med. I suspect he'll try to poach Tunis - but if I/T are working together they can put up a fight by ordering Ion - TyS and Aeg - Ion. France can move most aggressively by convoying an army to North Africa and sweep the fleet to Gulf of Lyon. I like that a bit more than a move to Wes Med. One has to be very careful on the F/I front. There's a lot of empty space there and it's easy to stray too far from home.

The German tactics are interesting. If Russia helps, England can force Denmark - but that risks the loss of Belgium. I hope England doesn't do the convoy move - armies in Denmark are so useless.

As for the retreat - of course the fleet goes to the Black Sea. Thanks to the disband, Russia can recover Rumania easily as well as hold onto Sevastapol.

Austria is often the odd man out in the Balkans and it looks like that is what is happening here. The best news for Brad is the obvious E/F alliance in the West--if they can get through Dick's Germany quickly then their move east will distract Russia and Turkey. Probably won't be enough to save Brad, it rarely is when Austria is attacked by all three of her neighbor.

Interestingly Brad was able to dislodge the Russian fleet from Rum and Turkey did move an army to Arm, although with Russia's move in A Sev.

In the West Dick valiantly fights off the Entente as England's invasion of Holland and France's invasion of the Ruhr both fail. Vick does slip a fleet into Ska so Germany will likely lose Den or Hol in the Spring.

Finally, Lance's Italy is still firmly looking east as he convoys his A Tun to Alb and moves from Ven-Tyr. The bounce over Ven could have been arranged as it as strong R/T would means Lance should be bolstering Brad, not tearing him down unless he thinks he has a deal with one of the Steves, either Nicewarner's Russia or Agar's Turkey.

From Steve Nicewarner's attempt to support the non-existent F Nth-Ska, it was actually F Nwy-Ska, it looks like Steve is trying to keep Vick's eyes on Germany and not Russia. It remains to be seen how far Russia-English cooperation goes.

Fall 1902

Austria: A Budapest Supports A Rumania - Serbia, A Rumania - Serbia, ~~F Trieste - Venice~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Adriatic Sea or OTB).

England: A Belgium Supports A Burgundy - Ruhr, A London - Holland (*Fails*), F North Sea Convoys A London - Holland, F Norwegian Sea - Norway, F Skagerrak Supports F North Sea.

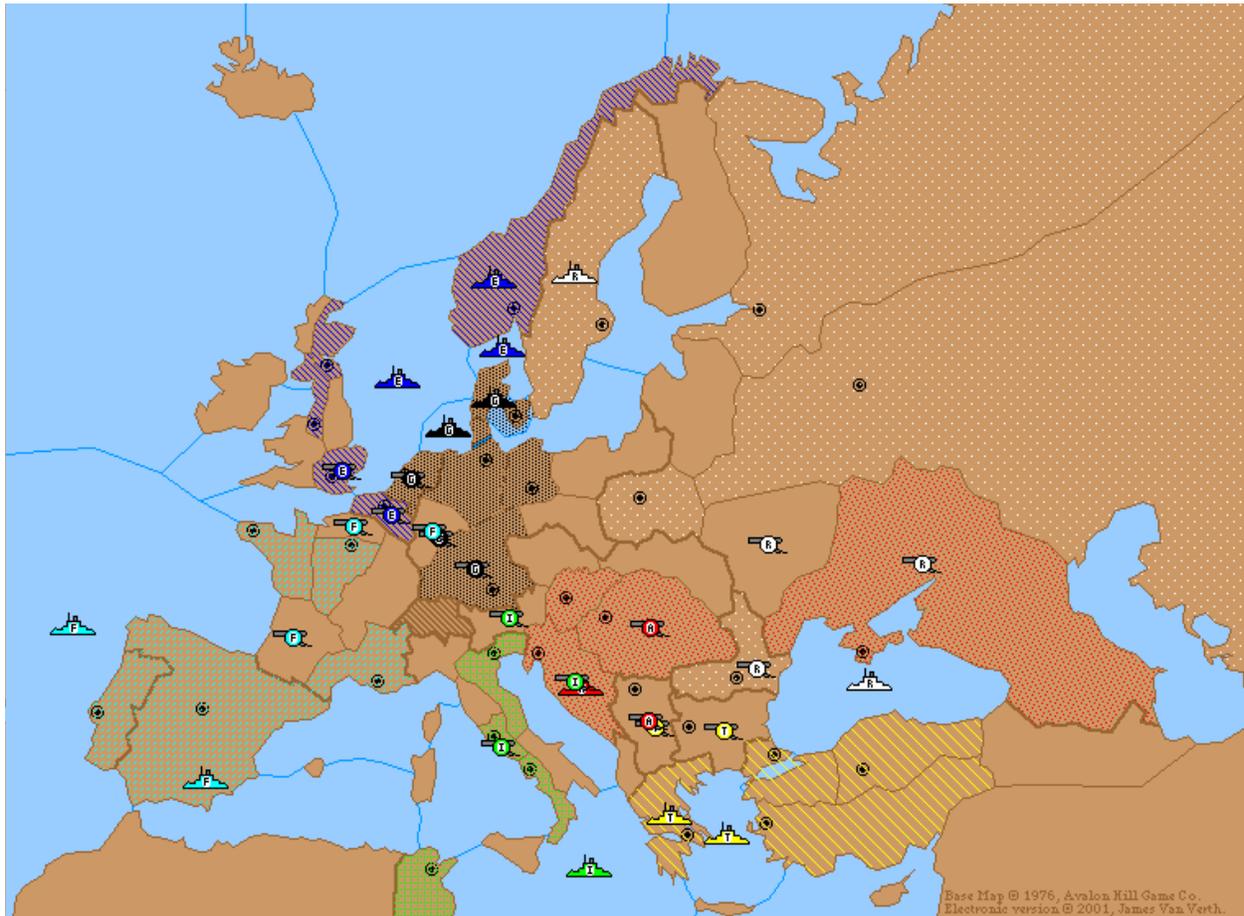
France: A Burgundy - Ruhr, A Gascony - Burgundy (*Bounce*), F Mid-Atlantic Ocean Hold, A Paris - Picardy, F Spain(sc) Supports F Mid-Atlantic Ocean.

Germany: F Denmark Supports A Albania - Trieste (*Fails*), F Helgoland Bight Supports F Denmark, A Holland Supports A Ruhr - Belgium (*Cut*), A Munich - Burgundy (*Bounce*), ~~A Ruhr - Belgium~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Kiel or OTB).

Italy: A Albania - Trieste, F Ionian Sea Hold, A Rome - Venice (*Bounce*), A Tyrolia Supports A Albania - Trieste.

Russia: F Black Sea Convoys A Armenia - Bulgaria, A Moscow - Sevastopol, A Sevastopol - Rumania, F Sweden - Denmark (*Fails*), A Ukraine Supports A Sevastopol - Rumania.

Turkey: F Aegean Sea - Greece, A Armenia - Bulgaria, F Constantinople - Aegean Sea, ~~A Serbia Supports A Armenia - Bulgaria~~ (*Dislodged*, retreat to Albania or OTB).



PRESS

Fake GM to So-called “Legends”: Hey, ye might want to mix in a little press in this game—oh, and some emails too. Dust off those keyboards, ye landlubbers! Who told ye it was gunboat?

BELGRADE: GBE forever!

Trieste to Venice: You left me, but my love for you is such that I could not bear the thought of another taking your place, so I blocked his way. Please return, dearest!

Tyrolia to Trieste: Baby, it was good while it lasted, but you need to move on. I would suggest almost anyone else, except Adriatic. The truth is you were just too possessive. I needed to be free.

Trieste to Tyrolia: Have mercy! You’re calling me baby? I don’t think so! Next thing I know you’ll be cueing up some Lynard Skynyrd. Take a hike, mountain boy!

Sevastopol: This morning, the last of the Lipizzaner stallions was loaded onto transports for shipment back to Austria. Local officials were at a loss for how several hundred prized horses suddenly appeared in the city

with full tack, but no riders. the Austrians are eagerly awaiting their return.

In other news, health officials have noted a sharp rise in the number of "can-can" girls in the city. They claim to have already seen a rise in prostitution and other crimes against social decency.

East Side to West Side: Oh, yeah. Whatever. It takes soooooo much cleverness to come up with the orders you 3 have come up with. It’s a veritable tactical tour de force! #snoozer

West Side to East Side: How long can you guys keep Bul open? Is that some kind of side bet?

Budapest: Well, that didn't quite go the way I hoped.

dateline berlin: what better way to spend the night before the deadline than rocking out with dave alvin playing with the reverend horton heat at the black cat in dc. dave hasn't written any christmas music so "johnny ace is dead" will have to do. brad, i owe you one! so long baby, goodbye!



From a recently obtained dairy outside of London: Things are going brilliantly! Not only have I duped the Brits into enforcing my cheese monopoly in Belgium, but they let me visit London on a “good will tour.” Losers! I found myself an English widow who owned a dairy farm. Yes, “owned” past tense. Let’s just say the dairy is under new management and the old management is, ahem, under the dairy. War is tough—and so is the cheese business.

I immediately rebranded the dairy as “The Plucky Belgian Dairy.” My cheese is selling so fast I have difficulty finding enough children to produce it. The people of London are thrilled to help a “poor Belgian.” The way I’m stacking up the pounds, I’ll be flexing muscle very soon here in jolly old England! If things go as I’ve planned, I’ll soon be controlling the PM. This almost too easy.

Peanut Gallery to Germany: Oh, I guarantee the commentary is going to be wrong! Have you seen who’s writing it?

Germany to Peanut Gallery: Point to you, Mr. Peanut! Nevertheless, your situation isn’t hard to sort out: you’re screwed.

GM – Germany: I should have said pictures are fine because that’s your best form of communication anyway. I’ve been watching you play for years.

Germany – GM: That was gratuitous. True, but gratuitous.

GM: Hey buddy, “gratuitous” is my middle name.

Dateline Switzerland, Autumn 1092: the small European country was concerned. It had recently seen movement of armies in all of it's 'neighbors' as well as military buildups in France, Germany, and Italy. The diplomats had reported an equivalent naval buildup in Russia, England, and Germany. Arms merchants had mobilized to support the eastern war in the Balkans between Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and Russia - now Italy was getting involved. Could war across the continent be far behind?

The Free People of Serbia to the Usurper from Constantinople (by way of Greece via Bulgaria): You were warned! Now, I’m gonna open a full case of fresh cans on you! None can truly hope to suppress the Serbian people!

Autumn 1902

Austria: Retreat F Trieste - Adriatic Sea.. Has F Adriatic Sea, A Budapest, A Serbia.

England: Has A Belgium, A London, F North Sea, F Norway, F Skagerrak.

France: Has A Gascony, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Picardy, A Ruhr, F Spain(sc).

Germany: Disband A Ruhr.. Has F Denmark, F Helgoland Bight, A Holland, A Munich.

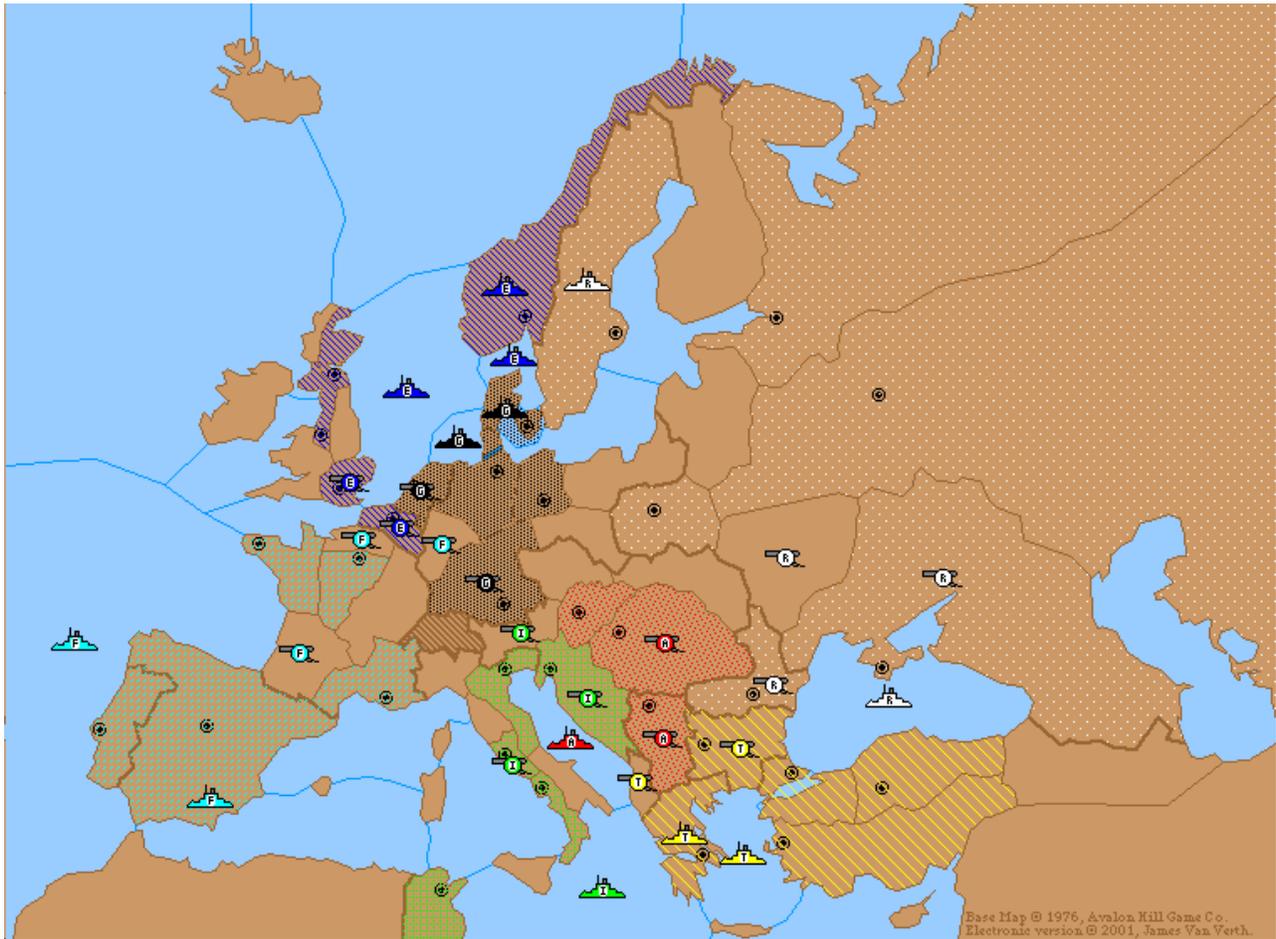
Italy: Has F Ionian Sea, A Rome, A Trieste, A Tyrolia.

Russia: Has F Black Sea, A Rumania, A Sevastopol, F Sweden, A Ukraine.

Turkey: Retreat A Serbia - Albania.. Has F Aegean Sea, A Albania, A Bulgaria, F Greece.

Supply Center Chart

Austria:	Budapest, Serbia, Vienna=3	Even
England:	Belgium, Edinburgh, Liverpool, London, Norway=5	Even
France:	Brest, Marseilles, Paris, Portugal, Spain=5	Even
Germany:	Berlin, Denmark, Holland, Kiel, Munich=5	Build 1
Italy:	Naples, Rome, Trieste, Tunis, Venice=5	Build 1
Russia:	Moscow, Rumania, Sevastopol, St Petersburg, Sweden, Warsaw=6	Build 1
Turkey:	Ankara, Bulgaria, Constantinople, Greece, Smyrna=5	Build 1



Fall and Autumn 1902 Commentary:

David Hood
Rick Desper
 Jack McHugh

My initial comment is that there is good play going on here, from virtually everyone on the board, given the situation facing each power. I like Brad's giving up Rumania in favor of Serbia, that was solid. I like Italy taking Trieste. I like Turkey being able to move its fleets forward into Greece and Aegean. I like the repeated assault into Ruhr by EF. It would have been awesome for Germany to have ordered Ruhr to Burgundy with support from Munich, but that's probably just 20/20 hindsight on my part.

To me the most interesting moves were both from Russia. The move to Denmark instead of support of Denmark tells us that Nicewarner is trying to be relevant to the English, presumably as part of a pitch to have England turn on France once Dick is reduced. England probably did the right move this turn, and set up to go either way into Sweden or Denmark while also protecting North Sea from any sneak attack, and still hitting Holland with the convoy, to cut support for Ruhr's move. Perhaps Nicewarner's overture is being rejected here,

but it was worth a shot I think. Since he is building from a gain in the south, and presumably will build in St Pete, the situation in Scandinavia is still fluid enough for negotiation with England or Germany to bear Russian fruit.

The convoy by Russian F Black Sea of Turkish A Armenia to Bulgaria instead of guaranteeing Rumania was the move of the turn, though. Not only does this fix up the RT relationship pretty well, it means really good position for RT units going into the next Spring. Two Turkish fleets to pressure Ionian (if that's the plan) plus an army in Bul rather than a Turkish fleet, makes the overall tactical situation way, way better for Agar.

As far as builds and Spring 1903 go, the most important question I have is how the EF tries to take down German stuff. Possibly an assault on Holland with Ruhr either moving there or cutting the support of whatever gets built in Kiel? At any rate, it should be interesting. France can still decide to pivot diplomatically here given that he has

not gone into the Med yet, so could turn on England if Dick Martin can be persuasive enough (maybe with Nicewarner promising to pressure Norway?) Of course, it's also possible that ER will work together against Denmark and so forth and then perhaps England is ready to jettison France. Doubtful, but possible.

In the East, I'm afraid Brad is a goner here most likely. Perhaps Italy will see that convoy to Bulgaria as really distressing and try to prop up Austrian units, but it seems more likely he would just try to push forward and get whatever pieces he can, maybe in coordination with Russia and/or Turkey under the theory that he can then work with one of them against the other. My money is on the RT sticking around for a while, though, depending on what Nicewarner does with that Russian fleet - often a source of instability in an RT alliance. If it heads to Con right now, it's probably either headed into the Med with Turkish blessing or headed into oblivion, to be dislodged and retreated otb to build north. Either way, bad for Lance. If that fleet heads back into port in Sev or something, that could give him some hope for the future

I agree with David that Brad's Austria will be out soon but I think Brad has done a good job with a bad hand—taking Bul from Turkey is quite a tactical coup for him. Things continue to look like an R/T in the East but it's difficult to be completely sure as Turkey only has one build and Russia is massing on the Balkans.

Steve Nicewarner's Russia is in the enviable position of being able to choose between Stephen Agar's Turkey or Lance Anderson's Italy. Theoretically, Austria and Italy could unite against Russia but the geography of the board as well as Turkey's build of a fleet in Winter 1901 make this unlikely, although not impossible.

In the West we see the continuing E/F alliance as England is openly supporting Vick Hall's England is openly supporting Steve Cooley's armies into Germany. Dick Martin has done a great job of attempting to remain viable and on the stalemate line. Germany does not need to retain more than Kie and Ber to remain a viable power as we saw in our last demo game.

The question is can Italy and Germany hold out long enough to become beleaguered garrisons on the stalemate line that neither the West nor the East can afford to take out without risking the allowing the other side to gain an advantage past the stalemate line?

Well, I/T could have kept Austria to two SC by forcing Austria to use Bud to defend Vienna while attacking Tri with Alb + Ser. But not really surprising they didn't. Players tend to prefer plans where they support themselves into SCs. The East worked out about as I expected it would.

Winter 1902

Austria: Has F Adriatic Sea, A Budapest, A Serbia.

England: Has A Belgium, A London, F North Sea, F Norway, F Skagerrak.

France: Has A Gascony, F Mid-Atlantic Ocean, A Picardy, A Ruhr, F Spain(sc).

Germany: Build A Kiel.. Has F Denmark, F Helgoland Bight, A Holland, A Kiel, A Munich.

Italy: Build A Venice.. Has F Ionian Sea, A Rome, A Trieste, A Tyrolia, A Venice.

Russia: Build A Warsaw.. Has F Black Sea, A Rumania, A Sevastopol, F Sweden, A Ukraine, A Warsaw.

Turkey: Build A Constantinople.. Has F Aegean Sea, A Albania, A Bulgaria, A Constantinople, F Greece.

Winter 1902 Commentary:

David Hood

Rick Desper

Jack McHugh

No surprises in the builds. Questions to answer in Spring 03:

1) Does France want to commit his fleets? No immediate success in Germany is likely, so does he jettison his English friend and attack north? Or does he head into the Med to either prop up the Italians or take their stuff? I suspect neither happen just yet, but we shall see.

2) Do RT armies overwhelm the Balkans now, or can Italy get in on that enough to then be able to pivot one against the other? I suspect RT sticks together and rolls, though.

3) What relationship will develop between England and Russia in 03? Probably the most important question of the three. If Russia helps against Germany, that

