

Diplomacy World

Issue 98

www.diplomacyworld.net



**“Diplomacy Teach” Movies:
Edi Birsan Goes Hollywood**

Notes From the Editor

Welcome back for another issue of Diplomacy World. As this is the second issue since my return as Lead Editor, I expected a little bit of a sophomore slump, so to speak. Recalling my experiences the last time I was Lead Editor, you generally get an initial flurry of activity when you announce your new position. Many hobby members are glad to help out and submit articles, especially when they feel assured that those articles will actually see publication in the not too distant future. You can also shake the tree and get some hobby friends to contribute something, even if they haven't been doing it much in the past.

When the next issue comes up, however, the trouble begins. It can be a minor struggle to maintain your enthusiasm, as you can't hit up all the same sources again and again. So instead you search for new writers, and not everybody who promises something winds up coming through. It isn't that they don't **want** to; it is simply that they don't get around to it, as real life has a nasty way of intruding on hobby activities!

My original hope was to have this issue out by the end of July. The plan was that I would print out ten or twenty copies and have somebody bring them to World DipCon for people to read and (hopefully) enjoy. If nothing else it would give them something to bring to the bathroom! For a while it looked like we wouldn't make the deadline, but at the last minute enough material arrived to put together a decent issue. I know that there are always a number of people who attend these face-to-face events that may have no knowledge of Diplomacy World's existence. If you're organizing a face-to-face event and want some copies, feel free to print them yourself or contact me to try and arrange something.

The point, as always, is that this publication lives or dies by the articles it receives. Believe it or not, Diplomacy World has quite a wide audience. When your article is printed, it reaches literally thousands of people. In fact, Diplomacy World #97 was downloaded from my web site over 4,000 times since we released it! And that doesn't count anybody who downloaded it from the Yahoo group, or got their copy elsewhere. Now that we have a more name-friendly domain, I expect even more people will access our future issues.

That brings me to the announcement that **we now have a web site dedicated specifically to Diplomacy World**.

My personal Diplomacy (and other stuff) site at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/> is still there, but over the next few issues that site will focus mainly on my other hobby activities. Instead, you'll be best served by downloading Diplomacy World directly from the Yahoo group or <http://www.diplomacyworld.net>. I've even been able to access my old Compuserve site and

put a link on it to the new web site, so all the old, out-of-date search engine listings will still allow you to find your way to the current information. The more people we can direct to the site, the more vast an audience we'll have for the zine, and the stronger the health of the hobby will be...if for no other reason than it helps bring fringe players in contact with elements of the hobby they may have no knowledge of.

Now that I have this web site set up, the next question is what else should we do with this site? I currently have one thing I ***want*** to do, and one I am thinking about doing.

The **want** is to scan more old issues of Diplomacy World and add them to the web site. The problem there is I don't have any older issues in my possession! What I am hoping is that some of you old timers out there would be willing to either mail me photocopies, or else mail me originals which I can copy and mail back to you. Wouldn't it be something to get a majority of Diplomacy World issues ever produced available for download in pdf format? Not only would that be a true taste of hobby history, but it would also help expose Diplomacy players to a larger array of ideas, opinions, and tactical options. If you happen to have any issues prior to #73 on hand, please consider getting in touch with me to arrange getting them posted there.

The other idea for the site is to add a Diplomacy World blog. The purpose of that would be to post simple entries about current hobby events, including convention results, upcoming face-to-face games, newly-released Diplomacy zines, and other Diplomacy news items all in one location. This would give people a reason to stay in touch with the web site, and through RSS syndication the blog could reach individuals not yet associated with the general hobby. The only catch to this idea is getting people in the habit of sending news items to me for inclusion here. I don't mind spending the small amount of money needed for the blog, but I'm wondering if people would make use of it.

I'd love to hear feedback on both ideas. Please feel free to let me know what you think, and if you have additional ideas for the web site please send me an email! **Also, if you'd like to get in touch with the authors of any of this issue's articles, you can do so by sending me an email as well, to [diplomacyworld "of" yahoo.com](mailto:diplomacyworld@yahoo.com).**

I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is November 8th, 2007. I'm getting married on October 31st, so if you contact me around then you may not hear back for a few days. I'd love to hear from you, whether it is through an article submission, a letter for print, or just feedback on this issue. See you in November, and happy stabbing!

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Contributions are welcomed and will earn you accolades and infinite thanks. Persons interested in the vacant 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.

“Diplomacy Teach” Movies

by Edi E. Birsan

[[Edi Birsan has created four short movie files explaining the basics of Diplomacy. In the article below he explains his history of teaching Diplomacy, his motivations for creating the films, and what he hopes they will accomplish. All four of his movies are now available for download on the Diplomacy World web site. Visit <http://www.diplomacyworld.net> and click on the “Diplomacy Teach” Movies link on the left-hand navigation bar.]]

I have spent years recruiting new players to the Diplomacy hobby, and teaching them how to play. I have done this on a one-on-one basis, or even in a classroom-type setting. Once I even introduced Diplomacy in a lecture hall to 300-some people, back in 1976 at Origins. Along the way I have made every mistake possible, but persistence and a total lack of ego (when it comes to critics anyway; as my Dad said “Concentrate on your vices, they’re more fun that way”) has allowed me to evolve my method.

I now have a fairly successful script and delivery which can be used to teach people in between 5 and 9 minutes, depending on the crowd. My one-page outline of Dip-Teach is available in English, French, German, Italian, Czech and Dutch somewhere. This contains the bare-bones minimum needed to play, and you can hand it to someone and they can scan it and off they go. The more detailed actual ‘Dip Teach Script’ is also out there in cyberspace, and is a fairly good line-by-line accounting of the patter that I go through when teaching. I do have to update it every now and then with some humor and one liners from the current events, be it “I am not a crook” (real popular to in the 70’s) to “we have to attack, they have weapons of mass deception.”



Edi Explains the Basics

time. After all, with the web and all that, I had visions of being able to teach thousands of people in a week rather than several thousand in the last 40 years.

When Paradox made its attempt at a PC game for Diplomacy, I tried desperately to get them to produce a 7 minute teaching script that teaches the basic game, and then go into the various mechanics of the computer game. However, like so many other great ideas in their ‘Beta Test’ group, it was never picked up...probably because the head of the on-line beta testers left the company several months before the project ended, and no one really took over the spot. So the veteran players

were ignored, talking to themselves about what should be done.

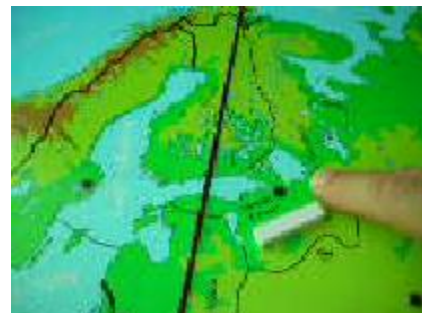
I then tried to get some computer/video people interested, and was even offering to put up to \$500 to help get the project done (which is not much by computer or video standards) but it was at least a way to thank people for their efforts. Despite several takers, the project never got going. Then the digital camera started to come along in the techno field, and became easier to use and less expensive. A major break was when I teamed up with a local B.A.D. Ass. player (Bay Area Diplomacy Association) Steve Ross, who had a digital movie camera. At last year’s Game Convention in San Francisco over Labor day we shot some sample runs of a teach session, in between (and sometimes over) the noise of planes taking off from nearby SFO. We had a lot of problems with focus and background noise.

We then tried it again at the Oakland tournament “The Whipping” at the end of October, and even did a session on The Lepanto Opening. It looked and sounded acceptable, however when Steve went back home and put it on a CD the format crashed (or became alien or whatever they call something that just does not work in Geek).

Meanwhile, there was a group in Vacaville (70 miles NE of San Francisco) that had a bunch of high school kids that were interested in doing the video as a school project, but it fell flat.

Likewise, several months ago while teaching Diplomacy (to a Church group no less, and inside an actual Lutheran church; no wonder Luther was excommunicated) I came across a fellow that does teaching videos for a living with the California State Colleges, only to have that effort fade out.

So in complete frustration, and with my computer server broken due to a network cable box failure, I decided to just grab my \$110 digital camera and do it myself while waiting for the installer to come to the house with another cable box (three blown out in two days). My idea was to break the teaching down into 3 or 4 files so that they



Edi Explains St. Pete's Coasts

were easy to download. The first run through of the introduction took 2 minutes and produced a file that was 45MB long, which was a heavy file size. It took me a little while, but I finally broke down my gender-specific resistance to read instructions. I looked up the camera manual for the first time since I bought it (a year ago), and found that I could set the pixel whatever thingee to a low setting designed for TV's as opposed to PC's, which was 3-4 times as byte intense.

So I re-shot the Intro and it came to under 20 MB, which I thought was cool. Then I did the next 3 sections: Basic Movement and Adjustments, Adjudication, and finally Special Areas. Admittedly, the picture quality is not exactly Ansel Adams material. I decided to use the board, and just have my hand show the various moves, to keep the cult of personality down. (Also this helps to protect the guilty and allows for deniability ...'not my

voice, I don't sound like dat, really I dunno what u mean?'). The voice makes me cringe and it is not as smooth as I would like, and it is totally devoid of any little special affects like fancy arrows and moving pieces on their own etc. I figure that it is at the lowest level that actually accomplishes the job of getting the basics across. My hope is that it is ugly and unprofessional enough that ANYONE with any skill level in a positive number range could be inspired to go out and do a better job. Then the Hobby can have something really really cool. However, until then, at least it is done!

Edi Birsan is not the hobby's answer to Steven Spielberg, but he's going to be appearing at the next Sundance Film Festival anyway. Go see the movies at <http://www.diplomacyworld.net/> and let us know what you think.

The Most Dramatic Move of Spring 1901

By Tim Haffey

You have set down to a game of Diplomacy with six other players and you consider your options. I pose the question: is there one single move that can change the entire situation of the game board? Let us consider the moves most often made for each country in Spring 1901. These are the moves that are kind of expected to some degree or other and upon which most players determine their Strategies and overall goals.

Spring 1901

Austria: A Vie-Gal, A Bud-Ser, F Tri-Alb.

England: A Lpl-Yor/Edi, F Edi-Nwg, F Lon-Nth.

France: F Bre-Mid, A Par-Pic, A Mar-Spa.

Germany: A Mun-Ruh, F Kie-Hol, A Ber-Kie.

Italy: A Ven H, A Rom-Apu/Nap, F Nap-Ion.

Russia: F StP (sc)-GofB, A War-Gal, F Sev-Rum, A Mos-Ukr.

Turkey: F Ank-Con, A Con-Bul, A Smy H.

Now, of course, there are variations of all of these moves that would depend on agreements, trust or distrust of various players and the like. But, you will see moves similar to these in most cases. But, is there one single move that could be changed that would upset everyone's focus? My contention is yes, there is. It is not a move you see all that often, but you see it enough to think about it. What move could possibly make that much difference that it would affect every player to some extent?

Consider if we use the same moves as above, but change A Mos-Ukr to A Mos-StP. Well, big deal, what does that do? A lot actually, It affects or can affect many players. Let's take a look at who and how.

First is Russia herself. While this move improves the

Russian position in the North, it also weakens the Russian position in the South. I would only consider this move if I had ironclad agreements with Turkey not to move into the Black Sea and with Austria not to move into Gal. The move of A War-Gal makes sure Russia will not have to worry about Austria moving into Gal. Russia will either move into Gal, which is fine with Russia, or he will bounce with Austria and Gal will remain empty, which is also fine with Russia. However, Russia would much rather be able to move A War-Ukr to support his F Rum in the Fall. This would be the move if he feels that Austria will not move into Gal. If Turkey does not move into the Black Sea then Russia should be able to hold on to Rum and get a build for it. But, if Turkey does move into the Black Sea, Russia is in deep trouble. Especially if there is an Army in Arm. So, it is a risky move for Russia, but if he feels he has the Turks and Austrians cooperating for whatever reason, he can make the move and do well.

Now suppose you are Austria. Once he sees a weakened Russia in the South, any agreements he may have had with Russia may very well go out the window. He may make a run on Russia in 02. That is assuming Italy is not sitting in Tri.

Now suppose you are Turkey. You may have been considering an alliance with Russia but, with such a weakened move Turkey may decide to move into the Black Sea and attack Russia in 02. Turkey and Austria may even work together.

Think about be Italy and seeing the potential of Turkey growing at Russia's expense. Italy may decide to ally with Austria against Turkey. This may represent a change in goals, but maybe not.

Now we switch to the North and suppose you are England. I would expect you to be pretty darn unhappy. This is a move England does not want to see. Assuming England has made the Churchill opening, as noted above, this move forces England to use both fleets to ensure she takes Norway. That means England is completely out of the Belgium situation. If, by chance, England moves F Lon-Eng she will probably be bounced out of Norway and even though she may be involved in the Belgium situation, it is unlikely that she will be able to capture Belgium. This means no build for England. That could be a disaster for England. Instead of looking like a good ally for France or Germany, England begins to look like a victim. Russia can move A StP-Fin and build a F StP(nc) and England is forced to use two fleets just to support A Norway in place. She does get a build but, on one to defend the homeland with. This makes England look like a very attractive target. Especially for France who will probably be doing a lot of writing to Russia and Germany.

Suppose you are France and you have been trying to determine who would be the better ally, England or Germany. This situation may decide for you. Building two fleets and swinging back up onto England, France should not have much trouble taking an English center or two. and move more toward France as a strong ally. Both France and Germany will get two builds and perhaps one of them three. They could both build two fleets and attack England and that would spell the end for England.

Now suppose you are Germany. Not only does England no longer look like an attractive ally, but, Germany will not be a bit happy about the strong Russian presences in the North. They might very well form an alliance and France would take all English centers while Germany takes Norway, Sweden and StP. Then France builds more fleets and moves south. Germany builds armies and moves into the center against Russia/Austria, or whoever.

This leaves all kinds of options open for Italy. If Russia is taken down a center or two, he may ally with Austria and attack Turkey to keep him from becoming too big. If Russia remains strong in the South, he may join with Turkey against Austria and then Turkey taking whatever he can take.

Austria also will not be happy to see Turkey take centers in Russia and may try to help Russia survive and/or ally with Italy to stop Turkey. If Russia stays strong, Austria will be more inclined to assist Turkey fighting Russia if possible.

Turkey may have agreed to a DMZ in the Black Sea but the sight of one little fleet in Rum with no support may tempt him to reconsider this arrangement quickly.

So, even if this move of A Mos-StP may not change a lot of moves in every power, it sure can make them stop and reconsider their original plans a bit.

Tim Haffey is the current Archive Editor and former Lead Editor of Diplomacy World.



Schizophrenic Diplomacy

By Dennis Andersson

This is a quick and fun no-press variant for any number of players that was invented a warm summer day in Stockholm while waiting for the Swedish NDC 2004 to start.

0. All standard diplomacy rules apply except when otherwise noted.

1. Power assignment: Put ALL the pieces in the lid and shuffle. Let each player draw one randomly and keep it hidden. The color of the piece symbolizes the power you

play (yes, it's quite possible that more than one player draws the same power and that's perfectly fine).

2. How to win: As in regular diplomacy the goal is to reach 18 centers with "your" power. When a power reaches 18, all players reveal their powers. If one has the winning power then that player wins. If more than one of the players controls the winning power then it's a tie between them. If no one has it, then everyone loses obviously (aka a draw).

3. Orders: Let all players again randomly draw one secret color from the lid. The drawn color is the power for which the player must write down a set of orders.

4. Adjudication: Resolve the orders according to the following algorithm:

For each power

i. If no one has drawn its color then all units will hold.

ii. If exactly one player has drawn its color then this power will obey that player's orders.

iii. If more than one player has drawn its color than only those units that all the involved players have agreed upon will succeed. All other units will hold.

iv. Retreats, builds and disbands are selected by the player that was last in control of that particular power. If no one has yet controlled this power, then builds will be waived and retreats will be OTB, disbands will then be in alphabetical order of the provinces the units are in.

The game may sound a bit random, and it is... But the beauty is that the larger a power becomes, the more difficult it will be to draw that power since it has most of its pieces on the board and not in the lid. And when you do draw it – you are very likely to be alone to act, meaning the balance tends to balance itself out.

If all players are trustworthy you can skip the time

consuming order writing and keep all your orders in your head. Let everyone know when you have decided on a complete set and then don't change your mind (aka cheating) as you go along resolving the orders! This is the best way to play the game.

Play testing has showed that this game works best with a small number of players; 2-4 is probably optimal. There is however nothing that prevents it from being played with more players, even more than 7.

During GothCon XXXI this variant displayed a great flaw, namely that the number of units on the board tend to be lower and lower for every year as everyone will retreat OTB and waive builds to give their own power an advantage. If this happens in your group, just modify the rules to disallow waives and/or follow the standard CD retreat rules instead.

Strategy tips: If you have found out your opponent's power and rendered him too weak, he will try to win with another power than yours so try to make your opponent(s) think you are another power and make him control your real power into attacking that power. Nothing can top the look on his face when he realizes he just won the game for you...right Mattias? ;)

Disclaimer: This is not intended to be a serious variant for die-hard strategists - it has many flaws - but rather an alternative way to spend some time and test your tactical skills in a fun and friendly manner.

Lessons to Learn in Playing Diplomacy

By Tim Haffey

When playing Diplomacy there are several things to learn. Things like strategies, tactics, playing styles, and different personalities, etc. But, I am going to discuss two other very important concepts.

1. Communications with the other players 2. Giving up.

The first one, Communications with the other players should seem obvious. It applies to all types of gaming: Ftf, Tournaments, phone, postal, and email games. This is a very important concept and should not be forgotten or ignored. Most people do communicate to some degree, but every now and then you run into a player who simply does not respond to your emails or letters. This pertains to Diplomacy being played via mail or email. It also applies to ftf and Tournaments but perhaps is not so easily avoided when someone corners you to talk.

To serve as an example I will use a game I played in as

Turkey, and won a solo in game year 1919. This was DW400 on DipWorld. I was Turkey and I sent an email to Russia trying to feel him out about an alliance. I got no response. I send several more emails and still got no response. In discussions with Austria, Germany and England, I found that they were not getting any responses to their emails either. This guy simply did not communicate with anyone at anytime during the game for the short time he existed.

When a player refuses to talk to you or answer your mail/email, you have to assume he is hostile and will attack you. So, I made the anti-Russian move of F Ank-Blk, A Smy-Arm, A Con-Bul. I also worked with Austria and Italy to assure them I was not going to attack them or come after them. Austria moved A Vie-Gal. When the Spring moves came out, I was more than a little surprise to see F Sev-Rum. I got into the Black Sea much to my surprise. A War-Gal bounced with Austria and remained in War. Russia moved A Mos-StP much to England's unhappiness as you can imagine. Germany moved to

Denmark and would bounce Russia in Sweden in the fall.

In the Fall, I captured Rum (A Arm-Rum by a Convoy on F Blk and supported by A Bul). Russia retreat F Rum to Sev. He again moved A War-Gal and was again bounced. Germany bounced him in Sweden and he did not get a build. The whole time I was sending him emails and he simply would not respond. He was sending his orders in to the GM so his computer must have been working. But, now, because he refused to talk to anyone, he had four nations working against him. To make a long story short, in Fall 1903 I took Mos (I had taken Sev in 02), Germany took War with a supported move, and England took StP and the non-communicative Russia went down in flames, still without a word to anyone. He never submitted and EOG statement either.

So, the lesson learn here is communicate with all the other players all the time or you may go down in flames in F-03, or sooner. I think this would also apply to ftf and Tournament games as well.

The second lesson learned really does not apply to ftf or Tournament games because they have time limits and a solo win is not usually the goal. More like a draw somehow. But, in mail or email games where there is no time limit and the game can go on for a long time (19 years in this game), you need to understand that anything can happen. Players realign their alliances, palters quit and you get a new player, players die for real, GMs quit or just disappear and you have to find a new GM which delays the game and players drift away as well. In DW400 we eliminated Russia in 03, by 06 Italy and I (Turkey) had eliminated Austria. I then gained control of the Ionian Sea and pushed Italy out of Tri and Vie. But, Germany and France were solidly allied and I could not get either one to attack the other one. France was almost all fleets built in order to take out England and stalemate the Med. Germany only had two fleets and had all of his armies on my borders attacking me every turn. France was wide open and all Germany had to do was ally with me and attack France and France would have folded up like a cardboard box. But he would not do it. A newbie's loyalty to his mentor I suppose.

We had all agreed to a DIAS and sent in our votes, but, then it happened. Germany resigned due to family

problems and the GM brought in a new player who voted against the DIAS. I raised hell with the GM and later I found out that France did too. Did I mention that Felix was playing France? Well, when he saw Germany start to move toward France, he resigned too. And then Italy resigned. He probably realized that a new French player would take him out anyway. Then, the GM resigned. Now there is no one in the game except me and Germany. So, we became sort of buddies while we searched around for a new GM. We found one and he got a player for France and Italy. The Italian player turned out to be a sweetheart too. He supported me even while I was taking his centers. Germany moved out of War and StP so I took them and tried to take Mun for the win but, I messed up. By this time I had captured all of Italy but, France had Tun and I could not take it. I only had 17 centers. So, I told Germany I was very sorry about trying to attack Mun and he should go ahead and take the rest of France's centers. He took four of his remaining six centers and France had to remove four units. He removed all his fleets in the Med leaving Tun wide open allowing me to take the win. Germany had an army in Spain and had moved his F Mid into Por, so there was nothing he could do about it. I proposed a Turkey solo and they voted for it.

The lesson here, NEVER GIVE UP, anything can happen and turn the game right around.

You're seeing Tim Haffey's name all over this issue, aren't you? I just nominated him for the DW #98 All Star Team.



Comments on and Suggestions for Baron Powell's "1900"

By Fred C. Davis, Jr.

To begin with, I want to congratulate Baron Powell and his associates for preparing what I consider the best European-based Diplomacy variant of all time. He has done the two most important revisions of the original Standard Diplomacy map, in my opinion. These are to eliminate the immediate conflict of the adjacent Venice and Trieste Home sc's between Italy and Austria, and the

completion of the South coast of the Mediterranean Sea. While there are several other revisions in "1900," these two are the most important, and correct what some of us called the "errors" made by Allan Calhamer in his original design.

I much appreciated reading the entire "1900 Gamers' Guide," which explains the reasons for each and every

change which was made between "1900" and the original game. I don't believe any variant designer has ever before prepared such a reasonable explanation for the adjustments which he had made in his design. Also, I don't believe any other Diplomacy design, except for Calhamer's, was ever so thoroughly play tested before the final version was released (called version 2.6.2, dated August 2003).

My comments will be divided into two sections: The Map and The Rules.

The Map. I suggest that the arrows showing where Armies can cross bodies of water without convoy be made more prominent.

I suggest the name "Southern Algeria" be changed to "Sahara."

I would like to suggest that the shapes of certain provinces be simplified, to appear similar to those in Standard Dip, to eliminate unnecessary "wiggles." This is particularly true for Warsaw and the north German spaces. While perhaps not historically correct, simpler boundaries make for an easier to understand map.

I'm glad to see that while Sicily is not a separate space; the rules explain that Sicily is part of the province of Naples. (In my own designs, Sicily was always a separate space passable to Armies).

I like the addition of the Palestine, Hejaz and Arabis spaces, and the move of the SC to Damascus. But why is Smyrna renamed "Konya"?

I especially liked the addition of the province called "Alsace" at the western edge of Germany, separating Burgundy from Munich. In some of my designs, I "solved" the same problem by dividing Munich, adding a western province called "Swabia," consisting of the areas of Wurttemberg and Baden. I named it Swabia because my wife was born in that area, and I had been stationed there for some 17 months in the Army during the Korean War. In any case, there is a need for this extra space between Germany and France.

I don't think it is necessary to use the Artillery piece used by Hasbro to identify Armies. Hasbro used this piece in their Diplomacy sets because they had bought the Monopoly game from Parker Brothers, and the gun was one of the pieces from that game, which they already had in large quantities. (As was the Battleship used for Fleets). Most of the Old Timers in Diplomacy still use the wooden blocks, as originally designed by Calhamer, for Armies. Or, for Map purposes here, one could use the symbol of a soldier. Since this game is starting in 1900, one should not use a Tank symbol for armies, as the Tank was not invented until about 1916. (A Tank would be a good choice for any Variant whose scenario began in 1919 or later).

The Rules. Suggest the Victory Criterion be increased to 19 SC's.

Add a Standing Army in Switzerland, which has to be displaced before any Army can move in. Allow it to be supported by other Armies. (I used this in some of my designs).

Instead of a direct move from MAO to Egypt or Hejaz, consider having a "South African Box" as an in-between move, with no limit on the number of units in that Box.

I very much like your Rules for the Russian Emergency and the Suez Canal. In fact, I like all the rest of your Rules.

I have a separate rule module for use in any variant which uses Boxes for the off-board movement of Fleets. This was originally written by Rod Walker. I simply clarified it slightly and made it available as a module to anyone who wanted a copy, whether for one of my variants or any other variant.

I also composed a Rule Module for the use of Army/Fleets in Convoys over more than one sea space. I was the first person to create Army/Fleets, which are very useful in designs with many sea spaces. It's not really necessary in "1900," but I'm mentioning it just for the record.

In connection with the proposal for a Standing Army in Switzerland, one might also need to add a short Rule to clarify how this Army can be dislodged or supported in place by other Armies.

For comparison purposes, you may wish to compare "1900" with my Variant Designs: Abstraction II (NAVB number cb 30/07); Davis FTF Dip (cm 05/07); Swiss Variant II (ce 02/08); and "1885 II and III" (hp 01/09 and hp 03/09).

Fred C. Davis is a Diplomacy hobby old-timer, the former publisher of Bushwacker (a variant zine), a designer of many Diplomacy variants, and the custodian of Dip Variant Bank East, which offers copies of a small collection of variants for a small copying fee. Let us know if you want to get in touch with him.



Diplomacy World Crossword Contest

Okay, here is the deal. Below you will find a simple crossword puzzle, with all the answers having to do with Diplomacy in one way or another. Go ahead and give it a try, it should be that difficult, and if you are unsure of a few of the more historical answers you can probably figure them out by searching the internet. When you're done, the fun isn't over...you can submit your answers to me (one submission per person please), **and three correct entries will be chosen at random to receive prizes. The prizes this issue are a DVD of the acclaimed Matt Damon film about the early days of the CIA entitled "The Good Shepherd"; a selection of stamps and coins from around the world; and a selection of sports cards.** The prizes will be shipped by mail to the winners at my expense. (Void where prohibited by law). To enter, all you need to do is email your crossword answers (or a scan of the completed puzzle) to diplomacyworld@yahoo.com. You can also postally mail your entry to Douglas Kent, 11111 Woodmeadow Pkwy #2327, Dallas, TX 75228 USA. **Entries must be received by October 15, 2007.** You must also provide the following information:

- Your Name
- Your Email Address
- Your City, State/Province, and Country
- Your Age
- How Many Years You Have Been Playing Diplomacy
- How You Play Diplomacy Most Often: Email, Postally, Face-to-Face, or Through a Website (please provide an internet address)
- Your Favorite Article From Diplomacy World #98

Feel free to provide any additional details about yourself or your Diplomacy experience. Heck, as long as you're writing me, why not send a Letter to the Editor for next issue, or some feedback on specific articles. What did you enjoy? What do you want to see more of? What could you do without? The three winners will be contacted by the same method they entered (email or postally) to confirm their shipping information. Have fun, and good luck!

ACROSS

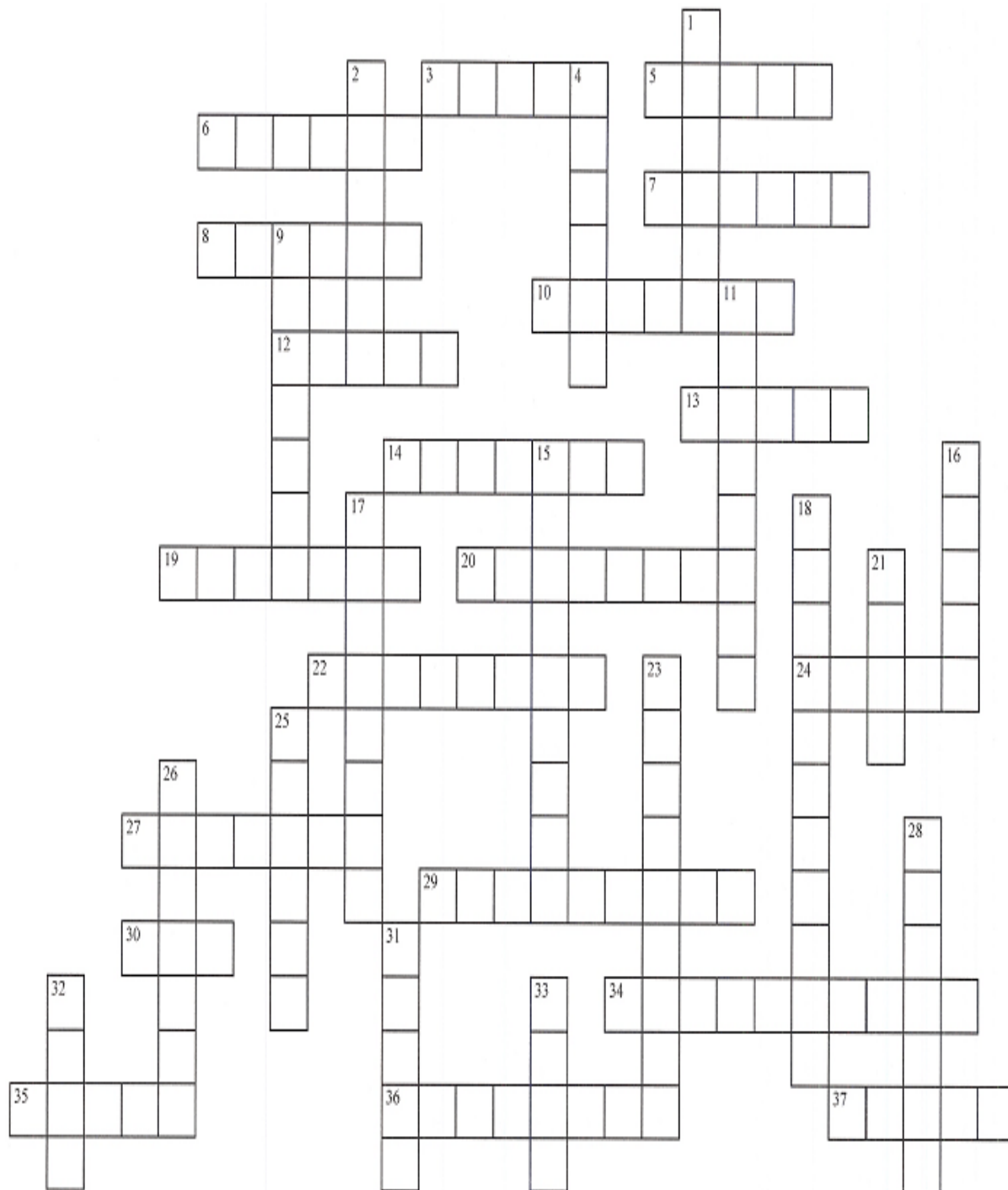
- 3 He designed the Colonia variant.
- 5 St. Petersburg has a north and south ____.
- 6 The season builds take place.
- 7 This power is the only one who can take both Spain and Portugal in 1901.
- 8 Starts with four units.
- 10 One of the things you can do with a dislodged unit.
- 12 Can be white, black, or gray.
- 13 If it isn't an army, it must be a ____.
- 14 Space directly north of Silesia.
- 19 Hungary's partner.
- 20 Published the first Diplomacy zine.
- 22 How many supply centers you need to win.
- 24 A puppet that follows all your commands.
- 27 Popular anti-Turkish strategy.
- 29 England's army begins the game here.
- 30 Failure to submit orders.
- 34 Sold Diplomacy to Hasbro (2 words).
- 35 If it's Peeriblah, it comes from him.
- 36 Inventor of Diplomacy.
- 37 The only supply center in northern Africa.

DOWN

- 1 A financial game which is played in conjunction with Diplomacy.
- 2 Trieste is to the east of this supply center.
- 4 One of Diplomacy's "Wicked Witches."
- 9 To assist an order from a neighboring province.
- 11 A pact between two nations to work together.
- 15 When there is no way for either side to advance on the other.
- 16 Rome can be found here.
- 17 Diplomacy event held in Chapel Hill.
- 18 Impassable land space.
- 21 To attack a former ally.
- 23 Site of the 2007 World DipCon.
- 25 Using naval units to move an army over a sea space.
- 26 The Kaiser comes from here.
- 28 Only power which starts with 2/3 of its forces as fleets.
- 31 This sea is often the scene of Russo-Turkish conflict.
- 32 Diplomacy players tell a lot of them.
- 33 This agreement ends the game with multiple nations taking a share of the win.

Diplomacy World #98 Crossword Puzzle

By Douglas Kent



Kublacon 2007: My Life on the "D" List

By Andy Hull

With Memorial Day weekend looming I just knew it was time to gulp down a large and no doubt slightly toxic dose of Diplomacy. Kublacon is the biggest gaming convention in the San Francisco Bay Area and easily my favorite descent into gaming culture. The Hyatt Regency has a fantastic atrium and we were set up on the second floor balcony with a commanding view of the registration area. Our strategic corner position drew a stream of con-goers around us, which I believe proved quite the boon for recruiting. For this tournament, my goal was to avoid being eliminated at all costs and dig in to reach the draw with some modicum of dignity. My double elimination at the Whipping last October was an experience I was in no hurry to repeat. It promised to be a busy tournament with 38 players and six boards over the four rounds and I was in from the first diplomatic jabs to the final fuzzy-headed, slow motion plunge to the mat.



Andy Hull Enjoys Himself - Momentarily

I drew Turkey in the mentor round, not a bad power for a warm-up game. Louis Abronson, my perennial adversary from Conquest drew Austria and we set about pledging to each other how everything was going to be different

this time. Accordingly we negotiated a lightning attack on Russia, which involved me opening with the classic bull-horns of the Russian Attack, perhaps my favorite opening which leaves Russia in a terrible position in the Fall. I opened negotiations with the ever dangerous Siobhan Granvold as England by declaring war in the nicest possible way.

This set the stage for some amusing dialog but our cross-the-table banter laid the ground for an interesting alliance in the end game. With the Austro-Turkish assault being set in motion, Adam Silverman spied our south-eastern intrigue and tactfully suggested that perhaps it might be considered impolite (in some circles) to annihilate the new guys during the mentor round. Grudgingly I had to accept his point but I must have (somehow) forgotten to mention this to Austria.



Louis Abronson Plots Andy's Demise

Fortunately Lewis and I knew the drill rather well having played almost the same game during the mentor round of Conquest last year. One of the Machiavellian traits we appear to share is a love for making a deal and make deals we did. I think it is somewhat fair to suggest that (perhaps) I might not have followed through as much as I may have (perhaps) led my erstwhile ally to believe. Fortunately he gave as good as he got, if not better, and I think we had a blast double-and-triple-crossing each other. I finished in the draw with seven centers and good positioning to get eight or nine. So far so good.



Fighting fit after intravenous boost of caffeine, I reported in for a 9am start on Saturday. I smiled on the inside as I drew England, a power that I rarely seem to play, and

dove head first into the game relishing the mischief I would wreak. Once again, the axe of injustice fell on Louis, this time as Russia. For some reason everyone decided the future of Europe would just be tidier without a Russian re-interpretation of the Balkans. During a somewhat stagnant game I made the fatal English mistake of convoying my last army out of the British Isles. Adam, being the all-round helpfully nefarious fellow he is, decided to send over a few French units to keep the locals in line. Despite running an England in exile, I managed to hold on to St Petersburg and Scandinavia. Shaking my fist at my French "buddies" across the North Sea I vowed to return. Some day.



Adam Silverman Educates Andy

Thanks Adam for teaching me a about the importance of defending English centers. I was glad when this game ended in a draw that came not a moment too soon for my beleaguered expeditionary force.

As Saturday night rolled around, I drew Turkey again and decided to open with a full Russian attack against Siobhan. I think my moves caught Russia by surprise and I ended up with too much territory too available to capture and not enough units to do the job. I was soon beaten back into a less powerful position and ending up

in a stalemate across the Black Sea. Buz Eddy stepped in to fill the vacant shoes of Russian leadership after Siobhan needed to leave. Italy, played by Adam Silverman and mostly bottled up by Austria and France for the whole game, attempted to broker an alliance between Russia, Italy and my Turkey. For some reason I just didn't like the deal where Russia ended up with Rumania and I sort of neglected to write the support order. Big mistake. After a few more turns of being shunned for being an all-around cad and boulder we finally got into gear and knocked Austria out of the game. By then it was too late and Daniel Byars' Germany had swept most of the board, eliminating Louis Abronson's England and making an all-around nuisance of himself.

I am the world's worst stabber. Another nice draw. Hurray for mediocre finishes.

A general state of fatigue had set in amongst the hard core players by the time Monday's game sputtered into life. I drew my second favorite power, Germany, second only to my self-hurting kamikaze love for Austria. Despite what appeared to be a concrete assurance of a demilitarized frontier with the Czar I was unpleasantly surprised to be confronted with a Jack Twilley's Russian army taking vacation to Silesia in the first turn.

Surely an easily corrected mistake? Perhaps made with good intentions due to bad counsel? I offered to the Czar, in most conciliatory terms, all reasonable assistance to find an amicable

solution that involved an attack on England or Austria or anyone but me. Alas Russia and Germany seemed to speaking a different language and could not seem to pull a translator out of the appropriate department. I ended



Andy, Jack, and Darin Leviloff

up spending most of the game sparring with Russia and puffing up whenever any of my southern neighbors started to sniff around the Bavarian region. I ended up in an uneasy sort of western triple with Daniel Byars' England rampaging over Scandinavia and Joseph Palmer's France nestled up rather too-friendlily along the German border. Adam Silverman's Turkey went ballistic and gobbled up the South of the map looking superbly



Jack Twilley During His Silesian Excursion

placed to make a good try for a solo. At the very last moment I attempted a double-stab, double-cross on England and France, failing to support England into Belgium, while making a supported attack myself at the same time as confiscating Denmark from England. Sadly I missed a critical detail around using Munich to cut support from Burgundy that would have allowed me to smash through the wall of French resistance. Having burned my bridges I threw myself into a slash and burn attack on my former French ally. The tournament was beginning to take its toll on me and I mis-ordered what I still claim could have been a very effective supported attack on Paris. Somehow I ended up in the draw, three units down for when the draw was first proposed. I think I almost saw another Adam Silverman solo.

I am the world's worst stabber. Repeat after me.

Through sheer persistence, good attendance and consistently mediocre results, I managed to bag fourth place behind Joseph Palmer who apparently had a great game in the mentor round and another on

Saturday night. First place was tied by Adam Silverman and Daniel Byars so a final round of Escalation was played in almost total silence



Adam Silverman Shows off his Prize



Outstanding Debut - Ed Allen

Andy was nice enough to leave most of his blood off this article submission.



Prize and Teaching Table

until Adam slipped in another win to take the tournament.

I'll be heading out to WDC in Vancouver in August as a warm-up for Conquest SF and the B.A.D.Ass. Whipping in Oakland later in the year. At least that is what I am telling myself right now. I think I am going to have my lunch eaten.

Thanks again to Edi Birsan for running the show.

From the Archives: The Double Eagle

by David P. Smith
(Originally appearing in Diplomacy World #72)

It had drizzled rain for two days now. I heard the roll of thunder, and our prospects for a new job were the color of the clouds I saw in the distance. Miles had just come in from a stakeout. He was leaning back, legs stretched out, rolling a cigarette.

He had just opened his mouth to speak, looked like he had an idea about something, which would be a change, when Effie opened the door.

"Sam, you've got a client in the office," Effie announced.
"Said she needs action fast."

"Uh, huh. What d'ya think?"

"Oh you'll like her," then she eyed Miles, whose ears had perked up by now.

"Her threads have some mileage, but they cost a bundle."

"And....?"

"And she has lots of these and a lot of those."

"Well, send her in, sweetheart, time is money."

She went out and came back in with our prospective client and Effie wasn't kidding.

"This is Miss Claire Adelaide. Miss Adelaide, Mr. Same Spade and his partner, Miles Archer."

Jesse Owens couldn't have grabbed a chair for her as fast as Miles. She was just his type, when his wife wasn't looking. Young, slim and sophisticated. Effie eased out. The only sound was the patter of rain and Miles's heart.

"What can we do for your Miss Adelaide?"

"Oh, call me Claire, please. I do hate to bother you gentleman so late in the day, but I'm so terribly worried."

Miles was lapping this up like Effie's terrier.

"Go right ahead....Miss Adelaide. It's our job."

"Well, it's my sister, I'm afraid she's in over her head. You see, she's supposed to play in the Diplomacy tournament at Daddy's club tomorrow night, and, well, you don't know Helen. She's so trusting and innocent. Daddy's always said her mind was like a feather pillow, that bore the impression of the last person to sit upon it. I can't bear to think what would happen to her in a game with ruthless grognards."

"Groan what?"

"Old veterans, Miles. Now, Miss Adelaide....Clair...just what is it you want us to do?"

"Oh, please, could one of you arrange to enter the first round game with her. I'm afraid to think what would happen if she went into the game without a friend--flying dutchmans, miswritten orders ignored, lies and backstabs. I just couldn't let that happen to my sister."

Miles glanced at me and grinned.

"Sure," I said, "if it'll make you rest any easier, one of us will sit in and play, just to keep things on the up and up."

"About the money....."

"We charge \$100 a day, plus expenses," I said. She hesitated at that. Then pulled out two crisp C notes.

"Here you are...and I thought, perhaps, you could out something about the other players in the game. They are a despicable lot, and it might help if I...uh, if Helen knew how they played....opening moves, their strengths...."

"Sure, sure, we'll find out. Just who is in the game?"

"Well, the best player, I believe, is a Mr. Gutman, a quite large and abusive fellow. Wears white suits. I don't like him. I understand he particularly wants to win this tournament...because of the trophy."

"The trophy?"

"Yes, a double eagle coin struck in obsidian--quite rare and priceless--donated by a Diplomacy-playing numismatist."

"Yeah, sort of a black bird, huh?"

"There is also a little man...Joel Cairo. He has an accent, Eastern Europe I think. One look at him, Mr. Spade, and you just know you can't trust him. There is also a weasel-looking character named Wilma. It is well known that he makes his moves just as Mr. Gutman says. He scarcely has a mind of his own--I believe the word for him is 'toady'. There are two others, an Englishman, Blakely Crawford, whose favorite country is Russia, and a Texan, Victor G. Clarke, known for his unpredictable and bizarre openings, and for his foul press in postal games."

I reached for her dough, but Miles beat me to it, and blurted out that he would be so much honored to be at the game himself.

We rose and escorted Claire to the door.

"Thank you ever so much, gentlemen, I feel so relieved."

Then giving Miles the eye, she added, in a voice that purred--"I don't know how I will ever be able to repay you."

When she had left, Miles held the bills up the light and whistled.

"Crisp as a starched collar. And did you see their brothers in her purse? This one gig I'm gonna enjoy."

The ringing wouldn't stop. I shook my head, but it kept on ringing. Eyes open now, I sat up in bed and fumbled for the phone. I was two o'clock in the morning.

"Hello. Yeah, this is Spade. What is it? You don't say? Uh, huh. Yeah, I can't say...it's confidential. Yeah, all right. I'll be up there in thirty minutes."

I pulled up in front of the building where the Diplomacy tournament was being held. Inspector William Owens, the pick of the bad lot, met me at the door and scurrying along beside him was Sgt. Paddock. Paddock and I had tangled once before. It stuck in his craw--I could see he hadn't forgotten.

"Hello Sam. Tough break about Miles."

"Yeah, Bill, tough. Show me where it happened."

"Ain't you even going to ask how he got it, Spade? Or don't you already know?"

A short right cross would have put Paddock on his back, but Owens grabbed me first.

"Come on, Sam, let it go."

"All right, but get him away from me, you hear, get him away if he knows what's good for him."

We went up a flight of stairs, through heavy oak doors and into a well-lit room. Old look...19th century...large leather-covered easy chairs, but only one caught my eye. The photographer was still at work, others were dusting for prints around the table--the Diplomacy game still set up where it was interrupted.

I walked over to the chair, but I knew what I was going to see. There was Miles, head slumped slightly forward. Just as I figured it. He had been stabbed....a crimson strain on him white suite encircled the ivory-handled stiletto in his back.

They took the body out and we got down to business. There wasn't much to on...except one thing. No one had come in or out of that room while the Diplomacy game was in progress--no one had seen the murder committed. The narrowed the suspects down to the six surviving players, unless Miles had committed suicide by stabbing himself in the back. He would have thought it was a great gag.

"Well, Sam, what d'ya think? Miles have any enemies in this game? Revenge, maybe?"

"You got me, Bill."

"All right, Sam, let me have it. I know Miles was on a case. Who's the client.?"

"All right. For what it's worth, a dame named Claire Adelaide--her sister, Helen, was one of the players."

"Who are you trying to fool? Claire Adelaide was one of the players. And she doesn't have any sister. We started the questioning with her. The others are all in an adjoining room now. They all claim the same thing. No one saw anything. They all say someone must have sneaked in and stabbed him while everyone else was over at the board. But one of the tournament directors was out in the hallway the whole time. He said no one came in or out. That's not all. The Double Eagle coin that was to be the first place prize is missing. It was in a case over the fireplace and we've searched them already--it can't be found, and we don't have a clue."

I asked Bill to let me question the suspects and he agreed. Paddock didn't like it--said the force didn't need the likes of any gumshoe in their investigation--but Bill had the suspects all brought in anyway. I've been around a few Diplomacy players in my time, long before Miles ever thought about playing, but this was as seedy and untrustworthy bunch as I've ever seen.

Bill introduced everyone, then we all sat around the table with the game board still set up just as the game was interrupted after the Winter of 1904. Most of them kept darting their eyes over to the chair off to the side where Miles got it. They all looked guilty to me. Before I could day anything, the fat guy, Gutman, started in.

"I'll have you know, sir, that I am unaccustomed to being treated in such a manner. I demand that I be charged immediately or released."

Then they all started in. Everyone shouting at once. All demanding their rights. Paddock got them quieted down. Then I looked at the board, and an idea came to me.

"Mr. Clark, could you tell me who was playing each country?"

That was a mistake. You would have thought the redhead had a spotlight on him as he pontificated. I finally shut him up after coming up with the players; Gutman--England; Wilma--France; Blakely Crawford--Turkey; Joel Cairo- -Italy; V.G. Clarke--Austria; Claire Adelaide--Germany; and Miles played Russia.

I had seen the recording of the moves in the game. I believed I had it now. I knew who killed Miles, how it was done, and the location of the missing Double Eagle. But I never could resist winding up a case with a flourish.

"Mr. Gutman. I notice that you began the game with the Churchill Opening: F Edi-Nwg, F Lon-Nth, A Lvp-Edi. Why that opening rather than the Channel attack?"

"Hrumph, there was no profit in the Channel, sir, no profit at all."

"You no doubt knew that France would not dare open there. Yes, we know that France kowtows to you so don't deny it. But I know you would give your right arm for that Double Eagle--so Wilma here was your target--but something lured you to Scandinavia."

Wilma was standing now, glaring at Gutman and looking like he could jump over the table and grab his flabby throat.

"Yes, sir, I don't deny it. I had good information that Russia would not only move A Mos southward, but he would not receive a build for Sweden."

"Not good enough Gutman. You know that St. Pete is a dead end for England. You're a better player than that. You know you had a firm alliance with France, so no worries there. It was Germany and Russia you had to deal with. Germany passed along information that F Kie-Den would allow Russia to be stood off in Sweden. Germany promised you something more, didn't she? A classic Anglo-German alliance that would take out the threat of Russian fleets building StP(nc) and later your good ally France would be your next victim."

"Sit down, Wilma," growled the inspector.

"Yeah, you knew that England always is better positioned in such an alliance to stab Germany after France falls."

Puffing himself up, and looking at the rest of us with contempt, Gutman went on. "I tell you, sir, I did not want to trust that woman. She has a certain reputation on the Diplomacy circuit. But confound it, the Russian would not look me in the eye. I never trust a man who will not look me in the eye. He kept leering at her all night. Yes, sir, I took her up on the offer."

I eased up out of my chair and sidled over by the Italian player, Cairo. A sweet scent from his oiled ringlets, combined with the perfume from his pocket handkerchief, made me a little nauseous.

"What's your story, Cairo? No, let me guess. Germany persuaded you that she was opening Mun-Bur, so you decided to head westward, knowing that the only time a western attack by Italy is not hopeless is when Germany expects to make it to Burgundy. What did she promise you? Marseilles, Spain, Portugal?"

Cairo whimpered and bolted for the door. I grabbed him and slammed him against the wall.

"Let me go! I know nothing. She sounded convincing; I thought I could trust Austria and Russia to be busy against Turkey. I will not answer anymore questions! I will not, do you hear!"

I took a fist full of shirt and slapped him a few times.

"You'll answer questions and like it, Cairo.

"She probably said she had a firm Anschluss in place, didn't she?"

Cairo whimpered and nodded.

"Just as I thought. The grand German-Austrian alliance was in place, with Italy sufficiently warned not to enter Tyrolia--and encouraged to head westward. You folded like a cheap paper bag, Cairo. You make me sick."

Cairo sunk down on the floor. He looked like a frightened rabbit.

The redhead, Clark, was next. I took a deep breath. His kind always get on my nerves. Before I ever said a word he was on his feet. He thrust his pipe toward me and began a monologue.

"I tell you, the Anschluss was only for convenience and defense. And besides, I convinced her of its potential. True, she mentioned it first, but I was going to ride to victory anyway. After all, Russia was doing everything I asked. Russia, your late partner, seemed distracted about something. He opened A Mos-Sev, F Sev-Rum, and A War-Ukr. So that tells you something right there about his lack of ability. He actually thought that was an anti-Turkish opening. With Germany backing me, I opened F Tri-Alb, A Vie-Bud and A Bud-Ser. Of course, I am aware that opening is inferior to the Southern Hedgehog, but after all, my neighbors Italy and Russia could be trusted to toe the line."

He would have rambled all night like that at if I had let him.

"All right," I said, "let's take a look at the Supply Center Chart."

	01	02	03	04
England	5	6	7	8
France	5	5	5	6
Germany	5	5	5	5
Italy	4	4	3	1
Austria	5	5	6	7
Russia	5	4	2	0
Turkey	4	5	6	7

I told them the solution to the case was right before their eyes. Paddock snorted, but everyone leaned over the board and shifted their eyes from the chart to the board and back again. At least one of them knew what it meant.

"Oh, Mr. Spade," cooed Claire Adelaide, "could I please have a word with you...in private?"

She took me by the arm and eased to a far corner of the room, while the players, the Inspector, and Paddock, all shook their heads and muttered as they studied the board.

"Mr. Spade...Sam...I have something to say. I don't know why I didn't mention this before. I suppose I was afraid of him. Of Wilma, I mean. I know I saw a knife blade in his coat pocket. He saw me watching him. Oh, Sam, you've never seen such a vicious look as he kept giving me."

I couldn't help but grin.

"You're good, Angel...Claire...real good, but I don't doubt if you've ever told the truth in your life. No, Angel, it won't work. You killed Miles and you're going over for it."

"Sam, don't joke about things like that. You almost sound as if you mean it."

"I do. You made it easy. Look at the last turn. Russia, Miles, was out of the game. He probably didn't mind at all; he could get a better look at you as a spectator. And you were the only player that winter turn who didn't have a build or removal to make--just the way you planned it. Who would have a better story? After all, you hired the poor chump, so it would be one of the other players who would take the rap. And, besides, it gave you the perfect chance to get take the Double Eagle and dispose of it. No, while everyone else was at the game board, you were beside Miles--it was your knife, your murder, and now you're going to pay for it."

"Sam, please, you don't have to say anything. Wilma can take the fall. Gutman and Cairo will be glad to hand him over. It'll take everyone off the hook. Besides, you didn't care for your partner. We'll go away together, Sam, please!"

"Miles wasn't worth much in a lot of ways, but he was my partner. And when a guy's partner is iced someone has to pay. If not, it's bad for business...bad all around. Oh, I doubt if they'll stretch you're pretty neck, Angel, but they'll put you away for a long time. With good behavior you'll be out in twenty years or so, and I'll think about about you a lot. Goodbye, kid."

I laid it out for the Inspector. They had enough to get her on circumstantial evidence, but her confession was icing on the cake.

"It seems easy, to way you explained it, Sam," Bill said as he rubbed his chin and slowly shook his head, "but something else still has me stumped. The Double Eagle. Where is it? We've made a thorough search of everyone and everything in the room. No one got out to this room, so where is it?"

"You're wrong, Bill someone did make it out...Miles. I'll bet if you check his clothes at the Coroner's office, you'll find the Double Eagle somewhere on him. Right where she put it, just after she stabbed him, but before she eased back to the game before being missed. You'd better hurry, though. She must have a partner on the inside--at the Coroner's office. Better get there quick."

Bill left in a hurry. As the rest of us headed out the building I could still hear snatches of conversation about the game from the players. They had already forgotten the murder...only the game was important now. Sgt. Paddock, more subdued than he was earlier, shook his head as they walked by, all five of them planning to resume the tournament--making their alliances and opening move proposals.

"Can you beat that? It's just kid stuff, pushing wooden blocks around. What kind of game is that anyway?"

"Game, Paddock? It's not a game. It's the stuff dreams are made of."

David P. Smith is a talented writer for DW, and an obvious Sam Spade fan.

From the Archives:

The Art of the Possible: Stalking the Perfect Alliance

by Brian Cannon
(Originally appearing in Diplomacy World #76)

If you're like me, you enter a new game of Diplomacy eagerly anticipating and hoping for a thrilling victory, but still dreading the prospects of the enemy alliance or the treacherous stab that will reduce all your glorious plans to ignominious dust. In some games you never seem able to find an ally and get crushed by your neighbors like a pile of old and moldy potato chips. In other games, you are sure you've found and made an ally who will help you further your plans (and his own), only to find him changing sides and turning on you just when you were starting to roll - or, in some ways worse, proving just plain unreliable causing you to waste moves with NSO" (no such order) supports and the like and allowing your enemies to advance while you futilely spend your time and energy trying to breathe life back into your supposed

ally. Since it is virtually impossible to be successful in Diplomacy without gaining allies at some point (barring variants like no-press Gunboat & Fog of War & the like), it follows that one of the most important skills of a successful Diplomacy player is the ability to build and maintain (and direct) an alliance. In this article I'll discuss several aspects of alliance building and maintenance (ABM", yet another TLA <g>). This is by no means an exhaustive list; and, as is common in Diplomacy, there will always be exceptions that call for violating otherwise valid rules of thumb. Nevertheless, it can serve as a good starting point for those seeking improved success in their Diplomatic endeavors.

The first principle of effective alliance building is mutual respect. This includes mutual understanding of and

concern for the legitimate needs and goals of each ally's country and also, I believe, respect for each ally as a person and a player. This latter is important because, ultimately, it is the player (person) who decides what alliances their country will join, what moves they will make, what Diplomacy they will conduct, who they will stab (and when) and who they will favor when the going gets tough. And since, so far at least, all Diplomacy players are flawed, FEELING, humans" (no Vulcans involved yet, to my knowledge), it must be expected that most players will be influenced in their strategic decisions by how they FEEL about you and the other players. Dale Carnegie could tell you more (and better) than I about how to build an attitude of respect into how other players view you. For now I'll just mention a few thoughts.

1. Respect begets respect, and vice versa. If you think (and convey) that another player is a jerk, it's likely they'll return the favor. If you think (and convey) that your potential ally is a good player with good ideas and a sound grasp of tactics, it is far more likely that they will be disposed to think the same of you (if you give them reason to, at least) or at least that they will be willing to give you the benefit of any doubt.

2. Interest and concern for one's welfare can be catching. If you take the time to see the world (or at least Europe) from the viewpoint of your prospective ally; and if you put in the energy to consider how you can help them reach goals that benefit their country (at least to the point of not damaging your own country); and if you genuinely listen to the concerns they express and put in the time and thought necessary to factor those concerns into any proposed plan for alliance; then you build a foundation from which a strong and long lasting alliance can be formed. One capable of weathering the stresses imposed by those scheming, untrustworthy and nasty yokels on the other end of your cannon barrels.

3. With the strength and resiliency of your prospective alliance at stake, seek to devise a Balanced plan. An unbalanced plan (one which favors one ally significantly more than another) can be the death of your alliance hopes - and can kill your alliance later even if you succeed in forming it now. The best plan, generally, is one in which each ally has minimal (and roughly equal) opportunities for stabbing another ally; in which each has reasonably equivalent opportunities for growth; and in which no ally becomes (or is likely to become) THE obvious target once the alliance has been successful (e.g.: a Western Triple E/G/F in which England rules the North, France the Med, and Germany a thin band thru the middle - just begging to be crushed by E/F on the theory that a 2-way beats a 3-way any day). The challenge here is to devise a plan for the proposed alliance that considers and seeks to prevent such imbalances from developing. David Partridge's article in DW #75 about "The Little Guy" is a good illustration of how an otherwise stable G/F alliance became unbalanced (due to unexpected and unplanned for

mechanizations by Italy) and disintegrated forcing inclusion of Italy in the Draw.

4. Open and active communication lines are, in practically every case, essential to the health of a long term alliance. Silence presents a vacuum to your current ally in which fancy can construct all sorts of demons and fears about WHY you stopped writing. And when other players ARE writing and following sound principles in their attempts to build a new alliance structure (one which excludes you) with your current ally, you are just begging for trouble if you give them an open field to play in. Certainly there are times when you can't keep up the writing as much as you would like (you're on vacation or ill or your work load is taking all your free time, for example). In these cases, be candid and let your ally know what is going on so he will understand why your communication has diminished. Invite him to take an increased roll in your alliance's plans and to keep communicating with you. Do everything you can to ensure he understands your continuing interest in maintaining an alliance which will benefit both of you and your continuing commitment to that alliance - even in spite of your reduced letter writing.

In addition to the above, here are several techniques that may be employed to shore up or strengthen (or encourage the building of) an alliance you desire. Not every technique will be applicable all the time, and there are many others, but these can be a few more arrows to add to your quiver.

1. Paint the picture (to your prospective allies) of an enemy alliance which will destroy all of you if you don't band together. It may even be necessary to attempt to encourage the formation of such an alliance. True, this can be dangerous - but if you are having difficulty convincing your prospective allies to join you (instead of attacking you) it may be necessary. Ideally, the nature of such an enemy alliance should be that your alliance (if formed) will be able to emerge victorious from the conflict, but which will be able to eat your prospective allies (and you) piece by piece if they don't join with you.

2. While you will be planning your alliance's operations so that each ally has minimal opportunity to stab another, there will always be slight discrepancies (someone will have a slight advantage). If possible seek to keep that slight advantage on your side.

3. Of course, along with this goes the added responsibility of reassuring your allies that even though you may have a slight advantage, they can trust you not to exploit it. Giving preference to their desires about your builds; maintaining a buffer between your forces and their dots; selflessly assisting them in other areas of the board to their benefit (or potential future benefit); and discussing & highlighting their importance to the alliance are all steps you can take to balance your allies' perceptions of your slight stab-potential advantage.

4. Anticipate ways in which a current ally could turn on you if they decided to join a new alliance - and plan how you could deal with each possibility. If you can arrange your moves to be in position to deal with such treachery while continuing to help the alliance move forward you will have gone a long way to preventing such tricky stabs (at least by others). This is a rather complicated area so aside from mentioning it I'll leave it as an exercise for the reader (or to a later article) to discuss in detail.

5. If you can't guard yourself against likely stab opportunities by your current allies, seek to plan moves that will make YOUR units essential to the alliance. The most common example of this is, of course, maneuvering yourself into a crucial position in a stalemate line. A position in which you possess the absolute ability to allow the enemy alliance thru any possible stalemate lines no matter what your current allies do about it. A position in which you can retaliate to a stab by forcing the stabbers onto the losing side. Another example is one in which your alliance is advancing but has yet to cross the enemy's stalemate line. If you can so arrange it that your units are essential to crossing the line (for example, pushing a western alliance past the key positions of Venice and the Italian boot). If you are France in such a position with the ability to cross the line, but also with the ability to help the eastern powers bottle up the line if you are stabbed, you possess tremendous leverage - even if your home dots are surrounded and unprotected.

Of course, there is much more to alliance building and managing than I've discussed here. Not least of which is the question of what to do when your alliance has defeated all opposition and entered the end game. Do

you accept the draw? Will your allies accept the draw? Will you (or they) seek to reduce the size of the draw? Or lunge for a solo? Do you have the ability to even consider the option? Fertile field here for future articles (including by other budding authors lurking out there <hint, hint>). For now, aside from encouraging more of you who are reading this to consider submitting articles (especially Strategy & Tactics articles), I will close with this quote by Benjamin Franklin, July 4, 1776 "We must all hang together else we shall all hang separately." How will YOU hang?

Brian Cannon was a regular contributor of Strategy & Tactics articles to Diplomacy World.



Selected Upcoming Conventions

HuskyCon V - Friday August 17th, 2007 - Sunday August 19th, 2007- Stony Brook, Long Island, New York, <http://www.huskycon.com>

German Diplomacy Convention 2007 at HessenCon 2007 – Friday August 24th 2007 – Sunday August 26th 2007 – Frankfurt, Germany, contact [vorstand of diplomacy-bund.de](http://vorstand.diplomacy-bund.de)

Conquest San Francisco – Saturday September 1st, 2007 – Monday September 3rd, 2007 – San Francisco, California, <http://avalonconventions.com/conquests/>

Euro DipCon XV – Saturday September 8th, 2007 – Monday September 10th, 2007 – Marseille, France, <http://diplomed.free.fr/>

Sydney Diplomacy Challenge – Saturday September 29th, 2007 – Monday October 1st, 2007 – Sydney, Australia – <http://daanz.org.au/dip-tournaments.htm#syd2007>

San Francisco Bay-Area Whipping – Saturday October 13th, 2007 – Sunday October 14th, 2007 – Oakland, California, contact Adam Silverman at [adam.silverman of gmail.com](mailto:adam.silverman@gmail.com)

2007 Boston Massacre – All in the Family

By David Webster

My fourteen-year old son Peyton enjoys the occasional game of Diplomacy. He had never experienced Diplomacy in a tournament setting. The Boston Massacre seemed like a good beginning because it probably would have a mix of talent, from very good to effectively novice. Secondly, one of my best friends lives west of Boston with his teenage daughter, who gets along really well with Peyton. I gave my friend a ring, and invited him and his teenage daughter to the Boston Massacre. No dice, they were heading to Maine to visit their extended family and hopefully work in the usual couple nights of the card game Euchre at my house. We were destined to cross somewhere on the interstate, so much for expanding the base of the hobby for now.

Boston is four and a half hours from my house in the Bangor Maine area. The plan was to use the subway once we hit the Boston area. We decided that we would pick-up the subway at Alewife Station, avoiding the hassles of parking in downtown Cambridge. For five dollars we could park all day, and not worry about moving the car. To be safe, we needed to allow six hours for travel. The tournament was scheduled to open at 10:00am Saturday June 23rd. A pre-dawn drive was in order, in Maine that puts one in line to hit a deer, sooner or later. At 9:00 am we arrived at Alewife Station, which is about a fifteen-minute ride to Pandemonium Book Store, site of the 2007 Boston Massacre. We are the first to arrive. The bookstore does not open until 10:00am. Only a few moments later, a college student strolled up the street. I advised my son that our stranger almost certainly was a Diplomacy player. Sure enough, he asked us if we were there for the tournament. It wasn't long before my son could identify Diplomacy players by sight. Peyton was the youngest participant in the tournament. There were three women, including the Tournament Director, Melissa Call, and all three spoke with foreign accents. My friend's daughter would have been the youngest player and only American female entrant.

Pandemonium Bookstore provided space downstairs for the Diplomacy tournament. The location within Cambridge is good for a Boston tournament. The basement of the bookstore does not qualify as great accommodations, but it has enough space. Since it was June, Cambridge was not sweltering. The Boston Massacre had twenty-two official players, and was the only formal tournament in Massachusetts this year. Sadly, before the third round was completed early Sunday evening, an equal number of Magic- The Gathering players invaded the lower level to play their game. Not an organized tournament, but just casual players. Two players can play Magic in five minutes. On the accessibility scale, Magic scores a solid ten. Diplomacy requires seven people to dedicate a minimum

of five hours (the time of the opening round of this tournament.) The great strength of Diplomacy is the interaction of seven players, and that requirement of seven players also has led our hobby down the lonely path of being orphaned, out-of-print. Regardless, I looked over at my son and hoped that he would enjoy his weekend. The odds are that we would only be seeing one another during meal breaks and at the hotel Saturday night.

I had not played in a tournament south of the Maine border since Dipcon in 1995. I finished eighth of seventy-three, even though I still possess an award certificate from Avalon Hill for eighth place, the online reporting still indicates that I was twelfth. I believe that the tournament director ran a good tournament. Yet, I walked away from the tournament feeling that the games were influenced by external factors and that I did not have a level playing field in any game. I was unhappy and decided to only play in Maine / New Brunswick. A decade later, here was the Boston Massacre. I didn't expect a fair game. I was playing in a tournament with my son and just looking for us to have a good time.

Melissa Call, tournament director, assigned countries for the first heat. A total of three boards were playing. The scoring system at the tournament was Detour98f. A player's score is a combination of supply centers and order of finish. A significant bonus goes to the first place player because he/she receives a bonus for every supply center that he/she has more than the second play finisher. My first board had Peter McNamara, Jon Hill, Charles Steinhardt, and Jeremy White. They finished the overall tournament at first, second, third and fifth respectively. As luck would have it, I drew Austria. Very quickly I made a lasting pact with Steinhardt, the Italian. I also progressed toward a solid understanding with Jeremy White (Turkey.) Two key decisions unfolded a few years into the game. First, I (Austria) voluntarily gave Greece to Italy, in exchange for positional considerations. Second, I moved Galicia to the Ukraine, while Russia was still powerful. My fellow players were all surprised, not because it was a stab (it wasn't), but because it created a tactical position that spelled Russia's demise, even when it still appeared numerically to be a dominant force. We all could see how Sevastopol and Moscow were doomed. The entire tournament was particularly brutal for Russia, with only one board above a two-center finish!

As the game developed five countries had more or less parity, England, France, Italy, Austria and Turkey. As I watched the other players negotiate, I reminded myself that McNamara (England) and Hill (France) had played Templecon together earlier in the year. Diplomacy tournaments are often about relationships made in prior

tournaments. The time had arrived in my current game for my allies to expand. Turkey naturally looked to the Mediterranean. My prospects were an Austrian finish of certainly nine, maybe ten. Steinhardt (Italy) had engaged in a sort of balancing act throughout the game, which is typical. His demeanor seemed especially suited for the role.

I looked over at the board that my son was playing at and he was all smiles. I was happy playing my game, and happier to see the joy that Diplomacy was bringing to him. He appeared to be playing a game that was a mix of passivity intertwined with the occasional outrageous demand. Peyton was going to learn from experience. Naturally, the country he dislikes the most, Russia, was his draw. Later he told me that he had made a mistake in not co-operating with France-May Martel (England.) He was playing very cautiously and missed opportunities that cost him later in the game.

About this time, Jon Hill (France) came to me and threatened that unless I went after Turkey or Italy, he was going to throw the game to McNamara (England). He said it precisely that directly. Peter McNamara (England) was watching our meeting from the distance. I was disgusted with Hill and told him to do it, meaning throw the game. Essentially, I was saying I'm not altering my game plan for you and McNamara, and I don't think you will stoop so low. Hill went back to McNamara and I watched him tell McNamara that he was going to throw the game to him. McNamara accepted. From that point onward, France left his positions in Germany and headed toward Austria (me) and completely vacated France, Spain, and Portugal. Each turn, England landed in a formerly French possession, including the French homeland unopposed. Meanwhile France was moving forces toward Italy. Within a few seasons, Steinhardt (Italy) informed me that he was throwing the game too (unless I gave him Trieste.) I tactically outplayed France and Italy and never lost any supply centers. Unfortunately, Turkey's potential expansion was decimated by these actions. England made sixteen centers before a time draw was called.

After the tournament I found an article from *Diplomacy World No. 87*, by Jim Burgess, about the 1999 World Masters E-Mail tournament. Charles Steinhardt made the final game of the world championship and drew France. Jim Burgess wrote, "For whatever combination of reasons, Charles quit on the game and permitted England, Germany, and Italy to take all of his centers that quickly. I won't speculate on those reasons, but I do find that fact disappointing." Someone who pulls such a stunt in the world final makes a mockery of an entire tournament. This is why I stopped playing outside of Maine. If Steinhardt and Hill had pulled those stunts in a Maine tournament, the tournament director and players would stop play and pointedly ask them what strategy they were pursuing to maximize their tournament results. In Maine and New Brunswick people travel three to four

hours, one-way, to play in "local" tournaments. They get very ugly when games are thrown. If you throw a game in Maine, you only do so once, and on occasion you will not finish the game.

The first round had been scheduled for five hours. The rounds were timed with a central timer on notebook computer. Generally, there were ten minutes per round to negotiate and write orders. The pace was brisk, some felt that it impacted play with the tendency being to keep treaties intact and hindering the negotiating of new treaties. I understand the restrictions placed on the tournament director by the venue, limiting hours available. Her decision to push for fast play was pretty much a necessity. Personally, I like fast play. Incidentally, after the game, Jeremy White (Turkey) expressed that he would have been more likely to stab me if he had more time per round to examine the particular tactics. I really like fast play now!

Peyton told me that he finished with one Russian supply center. He was having a ball, and was looking forward to drawing France or Turkey in the next round. He asked me how I did. I was pleased to finish with seven with Austria. I told him that Hill threw the game. He wasn't surprised. We were ready for game two.

Peter McNamara received Russia. Charles Steinhardt drew Turkey. Bob Holt commanded Germany, and I had England. My first move was to ask Russia not to head north. I made an arrangement with Germany that was quite simple. I would be his ally, if he bumped Russia in the fall of the first year in Sweden. Holt agreed. Bob Holt was an excellent partner. He failed to support me fully only in a minor incident early, and later in the game we disagreed somewhat on how inevitable a Turkish solo victory was. I never felt that Turkey had irreversible winning prospects. Holt and most of the other players were very concerned and changed their game plans to answer the threat. I felt that this created an element of chaos that provided about as much opportunity for Turkey as opposition. In the end Steinhardt (Turkey) finished with fourteen. I (England) was a distant second with seven supply centers including Spain and St. Petersburg.

The main focus of the second game for me was McNamara's decision to go north with Russia. I found this to be insulting. McNamara received the first game as a gift; I had played in that game and finished second with Austria. McNamara's choice of going north was certainly influenced by his perception that he was a superior player. Obviously, with a Turkish ally Russia can choose to attack Austria, Germany or go north. Bob Holt is a known entity in Massachusetts Diplomacy. McNamara and Steinhardt held Austria in disdain and believed that the player was inept. Thus, McNamara decided to head north for easy pickings against me. After his Spring opening Moscow to St. Petersburg, I told him that I was disappointed because he was taking me

out of my intended game and that I would now have to crush him, unless he moved the army back from St. Petersburg. In the fall he played for position by moving to Finland and built on the northern frontier. I now was dedicated to destroying Russia. Within two years I was in Russia and McNamara wanted a truce. I told me no dice and that I intended to give the remainder of Russia to my German ally. Ultimately, Holt (Germany) decided let Russia survive. Russia ended the game with two supply centers. McNamara is a strong player. His best ability is to plant ideas with other players. He had tried to get me to stab my Turkish ally in the first round game. Here in round two, he convinced France to head for what appeared to be a defenseless Liverpool. What France and McNamara had failed to assess properly was the effect of the fall builds. When I gained a supply center, I simply placed a fleet on Liverpool blocking France. This was obvious and I had told France that heading for Liverpool was not going to work and that it was only a tactic that Russia was employing to release pressure from his homeland. Even so, McNamara convinced France to make the move. When it failed, and I completed my activity in Russia, I shifted my fleets and successfully attacked Spain and Portugal. In the process Turkey cut loose and at one point was in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean. Then panic ensued, and the game consolidated with Turkey being checked at fourteen primarily by Holt (Germany) operating in France and Austria by land.

After the game, McNamara presented his position that Germany had misplayed by bouncing Russia in Sweden in the fall of the first year. His reasoning indicated that the move actually hurts Germany in the long run. Whether that is true or not, it certainly hurt McNamara (Russia.) Readers may want to ponder the issue themselves. With Russia employing a northern strategy, should Germany bump Russia in Sweden? Instead of Germany finishing with six supply centers and Russia with two, I think that the opposite result was very likely, and the single move that prevented that was the bump in Sweden.

After the second game, we caught the subway out to Alewife Station and headed for Chelmsford where I had reserved a hotel room. Chelmsford is about twenty-five miles outside of the city on I-495. I had stayed at the Radisson before for a professional conference. On Saturday, a large suite is only \$76 for two people because the business travelers have all cleared out before the weekend. We turned on the cable television and found Jens Pulver versus BJ Penn in an Ultimate Fighting Championship match-up at 155 pounds. Pulver had upset Penn in a match a few years ago. Penn was heavily favored in the rematch, and it was obvious that Pulver really didn't want the rematch. There was bad blood between them. Penn ignored an easy arm-bar and punished the over-matched Pulver. Round two delivered the inevitable, Penn submitted Pulver by choke. Within seconds the bitter rivals were talking about Pulver moving to Hawaii to train with Penn. Like Diplomacy,

when the match is over, it's over. We turned off the television, and Peyton braced for the onslaught of snoring that began soon after the lights went out.

In the morning, Peyton and I found time for an hour swim in the indoor pool at the Radisson. My kids always liked swimming at hotels. When Peyton was younger, we would stay at a local hotel for his November birthday party. The long swim was great; however, we were cutting it close on time. Round three was scheduled for Sunday noon at Pandemonium Bookstore and at 11:00am we were still in Chelmsford. We decided to take a different route into Cambridge. Everything fell in line perfectly; fifty minutes later, Peyton and I were eating kielbasa around the corner from the tournament site. I was looking for Turkey or France and a chance to win this tournament. Ooops, Russia called my name. Adam Snodgrass was Germany, Jon Hill drew Turkey, and Christian Pedone was in Italy. I asked Hill to meet and negotiate. He openly announced that Russia must give Turkey Sevastopol. Okay, I must work with Italy then. Austria insisted on going to Galicia. I really had no intention of attacking him, and I didn't want to waste the bounce from Warsaw to Galicia. Austria insisted though; I couldn't really blame him. The game progressed quickly. France and Germany were strong, while England headed toward elimination. Too bad, England is a better player than circumstances allowed him to show in this tournament. Pedone (Italy) worked his way toward nine supply centers. My Russia had seven centers and could have finished the fall with nine. Austria collapsed and Turkey was contained with three armies and a fleet in the homeland with Bulgaria too. Pedone (Italy) decided to balance power and stabbed me. In retrospect, Pedone's stab came at both of our high watermarks. Italy collected a couple more centers, but hit the wall. He didn't get any of the Russian homeland, while Turkey occupied Sevastopol.

Fundamentally, it was then a three-way game, Italy, France and Germany. Snodgrass really played well as Germany. As it became apparent that Italy could not develop past seven or eight, *he decided to throw the game to France*. Yes, he allowed France to take Italy unopposed. I was disgusted but restrained by the fact that I held only one counter with Russia. Any complaint would probably have been seen as momentary frustration. When France gobbled all but one of Italy's supply centers, (Pedone asked to stay in the game with one center), she sailed back to France. Meanwhile, Turkey expanded west as Italy imploded. Snodgrass (Germany) benefited from none of this and any chance of a tournament winning solo dissipated. Another bogus game.

The game was also dealing with another issue. France-May Martel simultaneously played on another board as Italy. She wanted to win Best Italy for the tournament (and ultimately was Best Italy). The tournament director allowed a few people to play multiple boards to make

enough players for twenty-one and three boards. The understanding was that a player playing two boards in a round could only keep one score. Thus, Ms. Martel was not interested in further expanding France in our game. As the game withered, a time draw was called, and the tournament was in the books. Peyton walked over to me. He did all right with Turkey and he was smiling. He looked at my sole Russian unit and chuckled. I laughed too. It's the worst game that I have played in close to twenty-five years. I think if Italy had stayed with me, we would have been fine. Diplomacy turns on a dime. I'm not upset that Pedone prevented me from picking up Budapest and Bulgaria on the key fall move, when I had seven centers. The problem is tanking the game. I have a hard time respecting that. Conversely, Snodgrass played an excellent game and made his move against me and won. Of all of my opponents, his performance was the cleanest and best.

Melissa Call efficiently announced the tournament results. McNamara's gift with England, with a big game with Austria, won the tournament. Hill had two poor performances, but a good game with Germany, and Italy's surrender in the final round allowed him to capture second. Steinhardt's excellent performance with Italy in the second round carried him to third. In my eyes, all three of the top player's tournaments were tainted. This is especially regrettable because all three are talented. If the tournament were replayed from scratch, I would expect to see those three players near or at the top again. Additionally, the tournament director had no part in these players tanking. She probably is still unaware of the events having transpired. Some might take the position that tanking a game is fair game in Diplomacy. That being the case, we may better understand why the hobby seldom can muster one hundred players for major continental tournaments. The one Massachusetts

tournament for the year had fewer than thirty players, and was matched in size by pick-up games of Magic – The Gathering. We thanked the organizers and congratulated the top finishers, and then we set-out for the evening drive back to Maine. About seventy-five miles from home, on the interstate, we watched a deer get hit fifty feet in front of us and fly over our car. The landing occurred somewhere behind us. We did not inspect the dead carcass, as we already knew the sight from playing Russia in the Diplomacy tournament.

The Boston Massacre 2007 was marked by a good urban location, with a somewhat substandard venue. The field had a good mix of strong players and relative novices. The tournament staff was friendly and had selected a rapid play system with a scoring system that matched the style of play. Solo victories were noticeably absent. The tournament was one of the smaller New England tournaments for 2007, and the intensity level was at the lower end of the scale. Overall it was a good opportunity for Peyton. One gauge of the entertainment value is that Peyton and I were almost always within thirty feet of one another for two days of game play. During that time we had only a handful of conversations because the games were so engrossing. The tournament experience has also inspired Peyton to study the game, and look ahead to two local tournaments, one in Long Island and possibly another in Vermont later this year. A busy first year for Peyton; naturally, he needs a parent to transport him. Oh, the sacrifices we parents make.

David Webster would stab his own son for a solo win. In fact, he probably has! But that's what makes him a great player and a valued hobby member.

Table Talk from Weasel Moot and Origins 2007

Submitted by Edi Birsan

"There were just three people stabbed on my board. I was two of them."



"Taking 5 centers in a stab of two allies is one thing. Holding them is another."

"I don't consider it attacking you until I take a supply center"

"So then do not consider it as defending against you when I kick your ass out of Silesia."

"Who's running the show?"

"Opening to Picardy and Burgundy is what you call a non-aggressive set of moves?"

"I have to lie to you, I don't know what the truth is."

"You stabbed me first."



"Are you the same Andy Bartalone that we knew?"

"After 5 turns of lies why should I believe you now?"

"Because I asked nicely."

"Your Russia opened Moscow to St.Petersburg and Warsaw to Silesia, what were you thinking?"

"Well I figured that I would work with either England or Germany and this way I had a good position to help whoever allied with me."

"Did you think that maybe you gave England and Germany a reason to ally together against you?"

"Hmmm, maybe this was not such a good idea"

"You could have gotten a guaranteed solo in the next move by going....."

"I see..." ((adjusts his Boston Red Sox hat))

"That's OK, you are a Boston Fan you are expected to choke."

"Why is a die hard Yankee fan wearing a White Sox hat?"

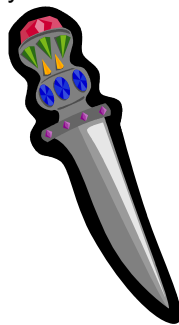
"Shhhh...I am in disguise."

"You have been attacking me for the entire game, did my grandfather rape you in a prior life?"

"No, but I decided on the way to the game that I was going to attack no matter what."

"How about next time you take it out on a Gunboat game."

"I didn't stab you, you weren't using those centers."



"You did not take my London when I offered it so now I have to eliminate you?"

"But Belgium is **always** French."

"Don't worry about taking Tunis in Fall 01. It will still be there in 02."

"Why did you remove your army in Berlin holding the stalemate line?"

"I like fleets. There are more centers adjacent to sea zones."

"But France **always** builds a fleet in Brest."

Balkan Wars VI: a Designer's Look 15 Years Beyond

by Brad Wilson

[[Editor's Note: As a new occasional feature in Diplomacy World, we will be re-introducing worthy variants to the readership, making an effort to select those which seem to be generally overlooked in the current Diplomacy hobby. The first variant to receive this treatment is Balkan Wars VI. Brad Wilson, who designed this version of the variant, explains some of the reasoning behind the changes he made. Following his commentary you will find the rules and map. Do yourself a favor and give Balkan Wars VI a try. And if you have suggestions on which variants to feature in future issues, please let me know!]]

I have always been entranced by Allan Calhamer's oh-so-simple system for combat used in Diplomacy: 2 beats 1, 3 beats 2, and so on, and no dice (I was driven to investigate Dip in the late 1970's after one too many games of Afrika Korps when the entire Axis army was eliminated by rolling a '5' outside of Tobruk). And the game itself, Diplomacy, remains the best way to experience Calhamer's concept.

But Dip is not the most practical of games: seven people and at least that many hours, usually. So after a while, I became very interested in variants that cut down on time and players.

Fred Davis – to whom anyone who plays Dip variants should genuflect towards daily for his efforts in promoting variants – had, in the waning years of the Reagan Administration, revived Charlie Reinsel's Balkan Wars, set in 1910 or so – i.e., just before the two Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 – in that most quarrelsome of Europe's peninsulas. It required seven players – for Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Rumania, Serbia and Turkey – and thus did not cut down the number of people needed, but it was a much shorter game and one that seemed to often end in Calhamer's ideal: a "rulebook" win.

Reinsel's Balkan Wars I and II had no neutral supply centers and very few if any (I honestly don't remember) open spaces. Davis' Balkan Wars III and IV added some neutral centers and open spaces.

IV was a fun game I enjoyed several times, but it seemed to me that it was not balanced: Italy always seemed to dominate. This was because, in all the versions I through IV, Italy had an entire edge of the map – the western – to itself, thus was invulnerable to flank attacks (imagine Russia in the regular Dip game with no Turkey and it's comparable).

So I decided to try my hand at designing a more balanced Balkan Wars. I fooled around with introducing "French North Africa" to flank Italy but, then, who would

flank the French? Ditto the idea of introducing Austria-Hungary, which, by any standard, was more of a Balkan power than Italy ever was.

Somehow I hit on the idea of eliminating Italy entirely. This would shrink the number of players needed – not a bad idea by itself. It would open up the board with vast amounts of empty space at the west side of the map with two neutral centers (Trieste and Malta). And it was historical, as Italy took no part in either the First Balkan War – Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Greece against Turkey – or the Second – Albania, Serbia, Rumania, Greece and Turkey against Bulgaria.

Once I eliminated Italy I didn't make many other changes to IV and we had Balkan Wars V. That was better balanced than IV, but still had problems: instead of one power being too strong, one was patently too weak: Bulgaria was getting mauled. Albania had its problems too. I also wanted more of a naval game.

So I gave Bulgaria an extra dot. I added neutral supply centers for Greece and Turkey to go after that weren't Bulgarian. I made Albania's setup all choice – it could be 3 armies, 3 fleets, any mixture – which would, depending on alliances, allow it to pair with landlocked Serbia or the necessarily nautical Greece. Greece, Turkey and Rumania didn't need much tinkering and Serbia couldn't take any, being landlocked, but I allowed her to build in a non-SC coastal province (Croatia) which allows Serbia to be seafaring without a center. Since countries could build in any SC they owned, not just home dots, stalemate lines and the like were negated.

Also, to make the opening turn's diplomacy crucial, I stipulated that the choice builds (three of six powers have them, Greece, Albania and Bulgaria) not be known until the Spring 1910 opening moves were read – allowing for all kinds of initial chicanery and devastating early moves for the daring.

The result is version VI, which, since its introduction in 1991, has become the standard for Balkan Wars. It's not perfect, but it is fast-moving and ever-changing. Alliances can shift every turn, and countries can go from one unit to a win (I once saw a Greek win with 1 home Greek SC owned). Because it's fast – no seasons are ever separated and there should be a result by 1918 – multiple games can be played in one session, meaning a quickly-eliminated player doesn't have to sit for hours while others have fun.

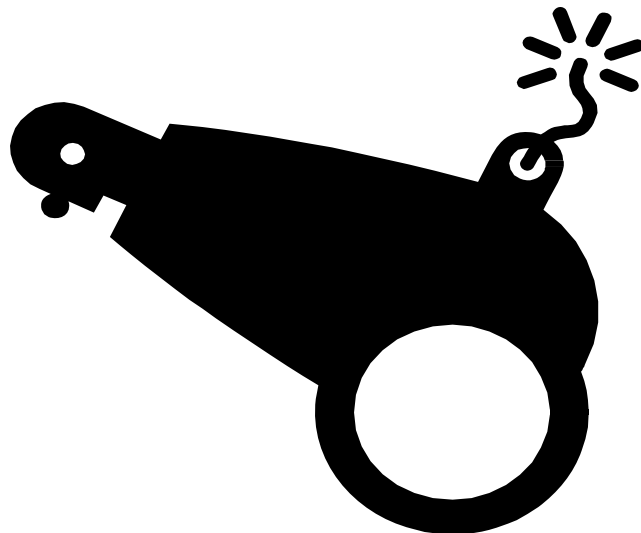
I especially like the uncertainty generated by the "blitzkrieg" start – imagine the surprise for Serbia, say, when Albania, after promising to build three fleets, builds three armies and waltzes into all three Serbian home

dots in Spring 1910! Face-to-face games of Balkan Wars VI can be, um, vituperative in the extreme (making it a delightful choice for voyeuristic GMs at tournaments).

Serbia and Bulgaria are the most challenging countries to play – Rumania is the easiest, I think. I like to play Greece, which has the most options open to it. But wins can and have come with any power.

It is gratifying to see this old friend of mine get brought back to attention – I do believe it a worthy test of even the best Dippers. And if you want to play against the designer, check out Douglas Kent's subzine "Eternal Sunshine" in The Abyssinian Prince, where I am signed up. I look forward to the challenge of taking this quick, nasty little variant up again.

Brad Wilson, a largely-retired old-timer from a hobby long, long ago, is now hiding out in Philadelphia. He can be reached, and welcomes queries, at bwdolphin146 of yahoo.com.



BALKAN WARS VI

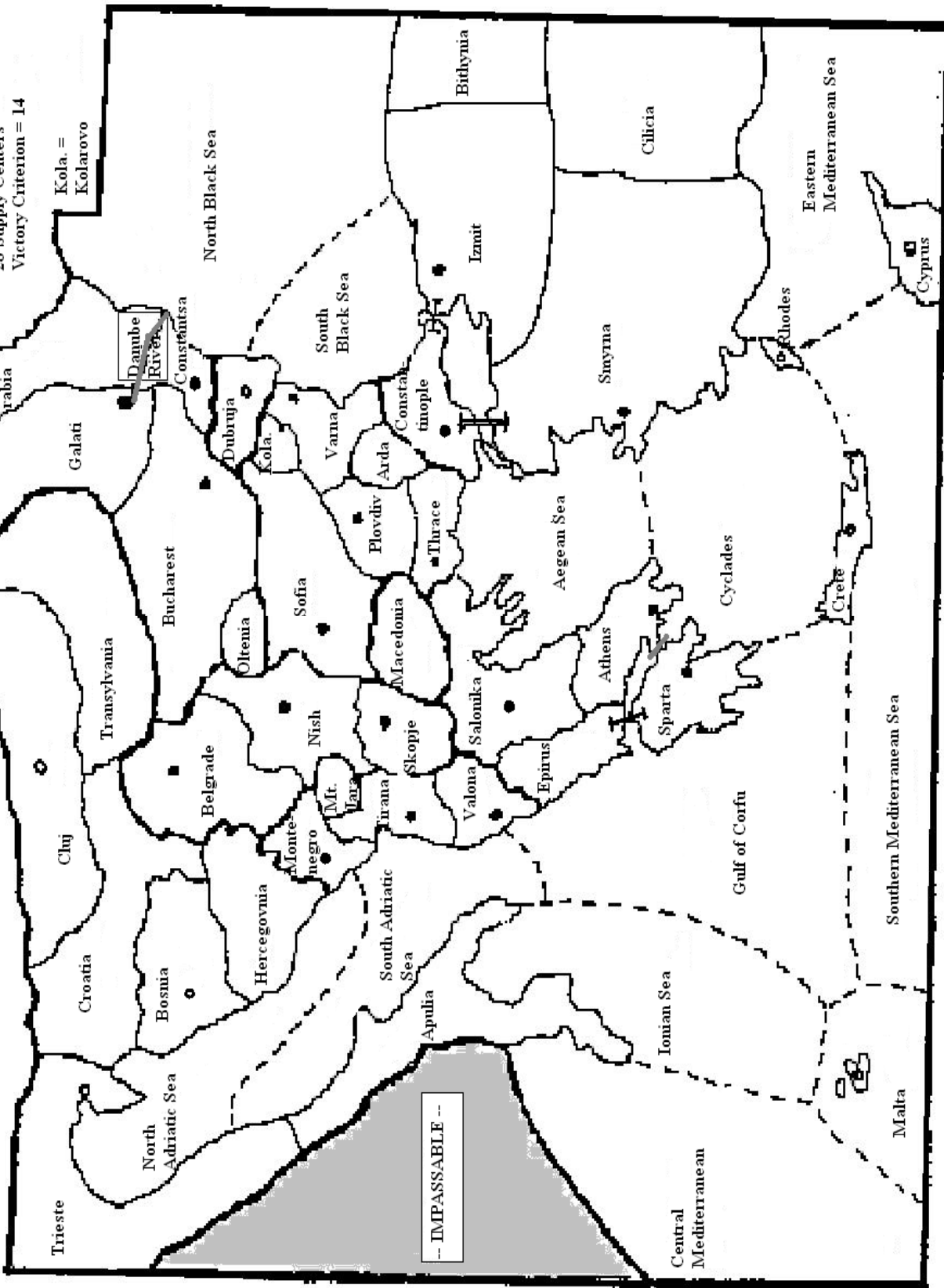
A DIPLOMACY Variant

1. Where not otherwise specified, the rules of standard DIPLOMACY apply.
2. The six powers and their starting units are:
ALBANIA: Choice Tirana, Choice Montenegro, Choice Valona
BULGARIA: A Sofia, F Varna, A Plovdiv, Choice Thrace
GREECE: Choice Athens*, A Solonika, F Sparta
RUMANIA: A Bucharest, A Galati, F Constanta
SERBIA: A Belgrade, A Nish, A Skopje
TURKEY: A Constantinople, F Izmit, F Smyrna
*Athens, due to the Corinth canal, is a single-coast province
3. There are 28 supply centers (19 home, 9 neutral). Victory criteria is 14 Supply Centers.
4. A Power can build new units in ANY unoccupied Supply Center she owns. Serbia may build fleets in Croatia when she owns that space.
5. There will be no "separation of seasons". Winter build/tear orders will be submitted with the Spring orders. This holds even for the "choice" starting units so that the first set of orders will cover Winter 1909/10 and Spring 1910.
6. Fleets in Bessarabia or Constanta may move and support, via the Danube River, into Galati, and vice-versa. Fleets can be built in Galati. Danube is NOT a space. Fleets remain in the regular provinces.
7. Direct passages: There are several Direct Passages across narrow bodies of water which may be used by both armies and fleets without interfering with the passage of fleets between adjacent sea spaces.
8. The usual convention of abbreviating a province's name by using either its initials or its first three letters may be used with the exception of Constantinople (Cone) and Constanta (Cona).

Balkan Wars VI - Original design by Charles Reinsel (1974), III & IV by Fred C. Davis, Jr. (86/87), V and VI by Brad Wilson (89/91)

- Home Supply Center
- Neutral Supply Center

— = Direct Passage
 Daube River and Corinth Canal are passable to fleets.
 28 Supply Centers
 Victory Criterion = 14



How Many Possible Positions Are There After Spring 1901?

By Jérémie Lefrançois

Introduction

The question I hoped to solve when I began this study was simple: how many possible board positions are there after Spring 1901 moves have been adjudicated? While the problem itself is clear-cut, the answer appears to be less so. It becomes immediately clear that the number in question is vertiginous. Indeed, there are exactly 22 units on the board at the start of a standard game of Diplomacy (6 countries have 3 of them and 1 has 4 of them). If those units have the option of moving to any of 5 areas in the first season (approximating for the basis of this example), one will be able to reach the order of magnitude of $522 = (\text{rounded-off}) 2.38 \times 10^{15}$. (A more precise manual calculation by a third party came up with 6.09×10^{15}). There is thus no option of using this direct approach to produce a simple list of possible openings; the space such a list would occupy would overflow the hard disk of any commercial computer.

There is no way to enumerate all of the possible orders either, applying an electronic referee to obtain positions which you then insert into a master list, eliminating the duplicates carefully. A completely honest electronic referee carrying out 1000 arbitrations per second would spend so much time calculating that it would become necessary to instruct future generations on how to collect the result. This would be reminiscent of the supercomputer in Douglas Adams' "Hitchhiker" books!

Stage 1: By Country

Like any complicated problem, this one is best solved by breaking it into smaller parts. The obvious way to do that here would be to compute starting positions by individual country. Some may have already noted that any set of orders can be written in a "canonical" way. What does that mean exactly? Well, it means that one can classify the orders into one of two categories:

- ☐ orders which are successful after adjudication,
- ☐ and, all others.

If you change all moves in the latter category (the orders which were not adjudicated as a successful move) into an order to Hold (since the net result is the same in this case), and if the others are left as is, you would obtain exactly the same result.

What are the possibilities in Spring 1901 for a given unit? To remain in the zone it begins in, or to move to an accessible one. The use of the term "zone" is necessary in order to distinguish between coasts or non-coasts. In other words, StP(sc), StP(nc), and StP are three separate zones. These three zones remain attached to only one area, STP. In the large majority of the cases, the attached area keeps the same name as the zone.

For these computations, you need a list of proximal locations by fleet and a list of proximal locations by army (any Diplomacy adjudication software by necessity has one somewhere within the program or the data files). Here an extract of one such file, declaring the proximal locations (from the French, "ARMEEVOISIN" means "ARMYNEIGHBOUR" and "FLOTTEVOISIN" means "FLEETNEIGHBOUR"):

(ARMEEVOISIN ALB GRE)
(ARMEEVOISIN ALB SER)
(ARMEEVOISIN ALB TRI)
(ARMEEVOISIN ANK ARM)
(ARMEEVOISIN ANK CON)
(ARMEEVOISIN ANK SMY)
(ARMEEVOISIN APU NAP)

One uses these proximal locations to obtain, for each unit, all his new possible positions (in the form of zones), and thus, for a triplet (or quadruplet) of units, by combining all the positions of the units of the country in "rough" form. Of course, a fleet uses the "FLOTTEVOISIN" and an army the "ARMEEVOISIN" to determine which zones are neighboring and accessible.

It is necessary, however, to shorten this list by preserving only the cases where the three (or four) units occupy distinct areas, which is rather easy. Our distinction between zone and area is convenient here, because it makes it possible to refuse the result of {F STP(SC) H, A MOS - STP} which would lead to two units in the area STP simultaneously.

Another case is less obvious, but must also be purged from the list. One defines movements to be in opposition if they are carried out by two units (close) with each seeking to take the place of the other, or more precisely to enter the area occupied by the other. A simple example is {A ROM - VEN, A VEN - ROM}. It is thus necessary to remove from our list the combinations comprising movements in opposition.

After these changes, is the result we are left with the one we are looking for? No, because we can thus produce doubled up ending positions. Here are two sets of orders producing identical results: {A VEN - ROM, A ROM - TUS} and {A ROM H, A VEN - TUS}. Certainly the units don't carry their site of origin written on them. This last purging will enable us to obtain a correct result, which has been confirmed by other sources in the zine VOPALIEC (available from jeanpierremaulion of wanadoo.fr).

Here is the number of possible position deployments for each country:

Russia	425
Germany	160
Italy	98
Austria	97
France	93
England	88
Turkey	40

A quick examination of the chart confirms the common opinion that Turkey does not have very many options in Spring 1901, while Germany has more than it can handle. Having 4 units, Russia can spread itself out in many directions, but the extra unit makes any comparison with results from the other powers difficult.

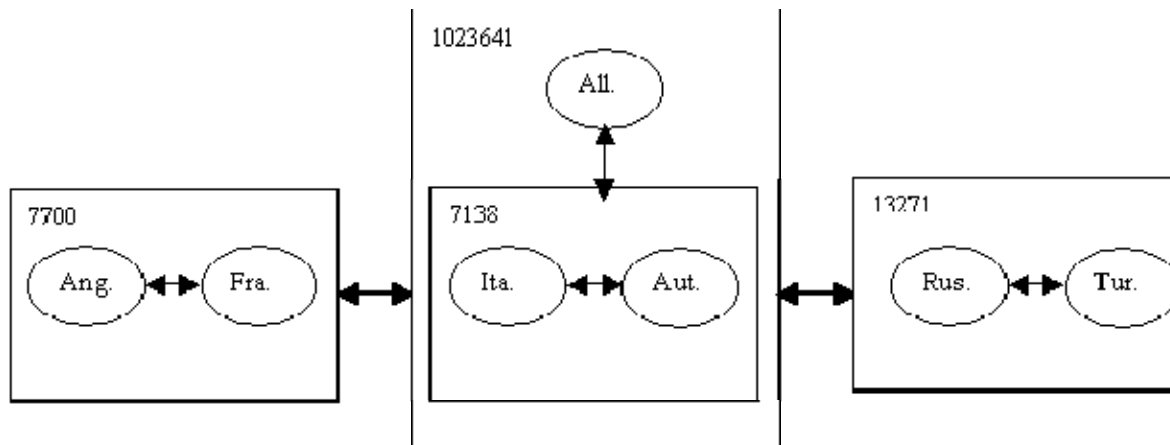
Stage 2: By Groups of Countries

Now that we have our list of position deployments by country, the next step is to combine those lists into several countries. In the most basic format, if these 7 countries did not interact with each other, the solution to our original question would simply be the product of these 7 values, namely approximately $425 \times 160 \times 98 \times 97 \times 93 \times 88 \times 40 =$ (rounded-off) 2.11×10^{14} . Of course certain

incompatibilities are obvious. For example, between England and France the English position deployment {ENG, EDI, YOR} cannot cohabit with the French position deployment {ENG, PAR, MAR}.

One could calculate the number of incompatibilities for each pair of countries (21 pairs in total, computed as 7 initial countries $\times 6$ other countries $/ 2$), to multiply each result by the product of the possible deployments for the 5 other countries. By then subtracting all of these incompatibilities from the initial sum of possible deployments, one would obtain a result rather close to the solution, but all the same it would be erroneous, because doing so would have subtracted some incompatibilities twice. For purposes of this article, let us refer to this method as the "bad method", it will end up with a number smaller than the correct number.

After having carefully observed the Diplomacy map, we gather our countries (using the French names, so Allemagne for Germany, Angleterre for England, and Autriche for Austria) in the following way:



To calculate the number of possible deployments for two countries, all the possible couplings are produced, then the same purging operations are carried out as if all the units were from the same country. This saves us from having to repeat the operation. This process includes the cases where two units attempt to exchange location, which on one hand is different than before as the units are of different nations, but on the other hand the result remains impossible (the units of VEN and TRI could not be exchanged, as that would require movements in opposition). Interestingly, the only such possibility in Spring 1901 is in fact the moves F TRI – VEN and A VEN – TRI; no other opposing units border each other in the initial setup.

One finds thus

- 7,700 deployments for England and France;
- 7,138 deployments for Italy and Austria;
- 13,271 deployments for Russia and Turkey.

At this point we still need to compare Italy and Austria with Germany, which is a delicate operation since the product of the possible positions is $7,138 \times 160 = 1,142,080$. To purge these million elements is possible, but it is somewhat necessary to optimize the treatment. This saves having to check the conflicts of units which cannot occur between German units on the one hand, and Italian or Austrian on the other hand.

To go even more quickly (because the heaviness of calculation requires it), we limit ourselves to check between the following elements:

- (Italy, 3rd unit) and (Germany, 3rd unit)
- (Austria, 2nd unit) and (Germany, 3rd unit)

The possible conflicts of those units are shown in the following table:

Country	1st unit	2nd unit	3rd unit
Italy	NAP	ROM	VEN => {TYR}
Austria	TRI	VIE => {TYR, BOH}	BUD
Germany	KIE	BER	MUN => {TYR, BOH, SIL}

Of these 1,142,080 elements mentioned earlier, now only 1,023,641 remain. We must now carefully preserve the possible deployments for these three subsets of countries in three separate files, and then we can finally seek the number of solutions to our initial problem.

Stage 3: Partitioning of the Subsets

This last stage will be a little harder. Let us point out initially the definition of the partitioning of a unit deployment: it is to find subsets checking the three following properties:

- ☐ None are empty,
- ☐ their union is the starting whole,
- ☐ they are disjointed two by two.

Let us study initially the deployments of England and France. It is in BUR and PIE that they interfere with rest of Europe in an independent way.

Our partition will thus have 4 elements:

Locate	BUR	PIE	Numbers
A1	Yes	Yes	418
A2	Yes	Not	2244

A3	No	Yes	1408
A4	No	No	3630

Next, let us examine the deployments of Russia and Turkey. It is in GAL, PRU and SIL that they interfere with the rest of Europe, and in a dependent way this time. It is the unit which is in WAR at the beginning which causes this conflict; the occupations are thus incompatible two by two.

Our partition will thus have 4 elements:

Locate	VAR?	Numbers
B1	GAL	2634
B2	PRU	2634
B3	SIL	2634
B4	Ø	5369

Finally, let us study finally the deployments of Germany, Austria, and Italy. It is in PIE, BUR, GAL, PRU and SIL that they interfere with the rest of Europe, and in an almost independent way. We will explain this "almost" later on

Our partition will thus have 32 elements:

Locate	PIE	BUR	GAL	SIL	PRU	Numbers
C1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	80
C2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3192
C3	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	3192
C4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	7980
C5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	0
C6	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	8250
C7	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	8250
C8	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	20625
C9	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3192
C10	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	17140
C11	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	17140
C12	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	29550
C13	Yes	No	Not	Yes	Yes	8250
C14	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	42262
C15	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	42262
C16	Yes	No	No	No	Not	71280
C17	Not	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0
C18	Not	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	9228
C19	Not	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	9228
C20	Not	Yes	Yes	No	No	23070
C21	Not	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	0
C22	Not	Yes	No	Yes	No	22158
C23	Not	Yes	No	No	Yes	22158
C24	Not	Yes	No	No	No	55395
C25	Not	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	9228

C26	Not	No	Yes	Yes	No	47108
C27	Not	No	Yes	No	Yes	47108
C28	Not	No	Yes	No	No	79320
C29	Not	No	No	Yes	Yes	22158
C30	Not	No	No	Yes	No	108276
C31	Not	No	No	No	Yes	108276
C32	Not	No	No	No	Not	178365

Here, impossible cases (number = 0) remained in our partitioning. The first set, for example, corresponds to a unit in PIE, BUR, SIL and PRU, and no unit in GAL. It is BER and MUN which can occupy PRU, SIL and BUR, and for these two units to occupy the three at the same time is impossible. The presence of these impossible cases results from the small lack of independence of the combinations. We can leave them because they do not obstruct the continuation of calculations; although “a good” partitioning does not tolerate empty sets.

One may at the same time check that the sum of the numbers of elements for each partitioning **does** yield the total number of elements of the partitioned unit.

Stage 4: Exhaustive Calculation

All these possibilities should now be combined. One can be in $4 \times 4 \times 32 = 512$ different cases, some are plausible (if there is no conflict), others are impossible. For each different triplet, the product of the three numbers gives a value, and these numbers are the values that we will combine to obtain our final result.

Here is a possible example of combination and an impossible example of combination:

- ☐ {A4, B6, C32} is possible, no conflict.

- ☐ {A2, B3, C8} is impossible, because there is a conflict in BUR.

The 512 different cases are thus listed, and one selects only those for which there is no conflict to go on.

Concretely, the absence of conflict means that for at least one deployment:

- ☐ BUR is not occupied at the same time in one of {France, England} and one of {Germany, Italy, Austria}.
- ☐ PIE is not occupied at the same time in one of {France, England} and one of {Germany, Italy, Austria}.
- ☐ IF WAR went into GAL in one of {Russia, Turkey}, GAL is not occupied in one of {Germany, Italy, Austria}
- ☐ IF WAR went into SIL in one of {Russia, Turkey}, SIL is not occupied in one of {Germany, Italy, Austria}
- ☐ If WAR went into PRU in one of {Russia, Turkey}, PRU is not occupied in one of {Germany, Italy, Austria}

One thus obtains a list of 180 triplets, it is thus necessary to carry out the 180 products, then the sum of the 180 results.

The result obtained is thus: **74,980,036,938,664**

(or, in English, approximately seventy-five thousand billion, in scientific notation (rounded-off) 7.50×10^{13})

A recapitulation and comparison of the successive estimates (rounded-off):

Result by “bad method”	Result	Estimate from deployments by country	Coarse estimate starting from the orders
7.47×10^{13}	7.50×10^{13}	2.11×10^{14}	2.38×10^{15}

Technical Details

The enumerations were carried out thanks to several small expert systems developed by the author (under LINUX in C Language). This engine uses a subset of OPS5 syntax,

which makes it possible to write rules easily (putting “?” by the variables):

Example of the inference used:

Base Rules	Initial Base Facts	Fact resulting from the inference
If (father? X? y) (father? y? Z) then (grand_father? X? Z)	(father Jeremie Michel) (father Michel Paul)}	(grand_father Jeremie Paul)

The RETE Algorithm (conceived by C. Forgy in 1982) is implemented in a standard way, which allows strong optimized calculations at the price of a very extensive occupation of memory resources. The predicate "DIFF" was used, for example, to detect the triplets of zones arrived at by the units of a country for which the 3 corresponding areas are indeed distinct. Each problem corresponds with a base of rules and a specific base of facts, the inference producing the anticipated results. To program the resolution of such a problem with an expert system is practical, hospitable and fast.

When that it was simply necessary to count the number of each element of the partitions, the calls to UNIX "grep" (research of character string in a file, with the option "-v" for a reversed research) and "WC" (account of the number of lines, words and characters) were used.

Here is an example of research in the whole of the unit deployments {Germany, Italy, Austria} corresponding to the case C20:

```
cat italautall.txt | grep -v PIE | grep BUR | grep GAL | grep -v SIL | grep -v PRU | wc
```

For those unfamiliar with UNIX, the use of the "|" sign allows the programmer to redirect the exit of a process to

the entry of another, and orders the program to "cat" list the contents of a file.

When 180 products had to be carried out and then summed, EXCEL was used, and still in a very hospitable way. I copy/pasted the result of the inference, then imported this into an EXCEL folder to complete the calculations.

Conclusion

The problem of finding the total number of possible positions at ANY time is another, more mathematical question which could be the subject of a later study. The methodology used could solve the quizzes related to the positions of Diplomacy published here and there (reconstitution of a game starting from incomplete information.) Lastly the possible lists of positions by country produced could be also used to revisit the theory of the openings.

I would love it if any reader would like to confirm my results so they could be further validated.

Jérémie likes to play with calculators, spelling out things like SHELL OIL when you hold it upside down.

2007 Variant Roundtable Part 2

Moderated by Interview Editor Jim Burgess

Part 1 of this appeared in the last issue of Diplomacy World. The idea was that we got a group of experienced variant designers to answer questions from me in a Roundtable format. Bios on them appear in the last issue, but we have Baron Powell, David Cohen, Michael Golbe, and Benjamin Hester (in each case, we will use last names from here on out to identify who is speaking, including for me):

Burgess: Many variant designs change only a small number of rules, or use a new map with the same rules. But other variants are more aggressively "variant". If you've designed more complicated or divergent variants, tell us something about what you've learned by doing this, both about the original rules of Diplomacy and about variant design challenges?

Cohen: The original rules are not without their problems, including contradictions, ambiguities and holes, and of course, convoy paradoxes. That said, in the vast majority of cases, the rules work quite well. As the rules of a variant diverge more from Standard, or become more complicated, you tend to lose potential players, and you also run the risk that the rules, as changed, just

won't work very well, due to internal ambiguities or contradictions, or because they unbalance play. I am not afraid to change rules, but I am careful when I do so, after careful consideration, to change them as little as possible, and for a good reason.

VonPowell: I believe this is sage advice. The more special rules, the more the variant deviates from Standard Diplomacy, the less likely it is to appeal to, at least initially, hard-core Diplomacy players. Further, special rules run the risk of being "gamey" and contrived to produce desired results, especially if we are trying to simulate a historical event. For example, I'm sure we've all played or heard of WWII simulations where the French are so hamstrung by the rules that their quick defeat by the Germans is inevitable. Historic this may be. Great fun if you are the hapless French (or even the Germans) it is not.

VonPowell: With 1900, I tried to stay away from special rules. I found, however, that I could not do so and successfully recreate a feature I specifically desired, namely the ability to move a unit around the southern tip of Africa and have it pop up on the other side of the

map. The intent was to allow the British (or French) to reinforce their position in Egypt by deploying forces from the British Isles. While this was historic enough, the flip side was that the Turks could use the mechanism in reverse to deploy forces from Egypt to the Atlantic, a most ahistorical possibility. This goes back to the point made by Michael earlier: sometimes we sacrifice reality, at least in terms of what actually happened, to create a better game. This was not an easy decision to make. I contemplated a number of alternatives that didn't allow the Turks this possibility, but I ultimately rejected them for being too complex, too restrictive, or too unbalancing. I called the mechanism I created the Suez Canal Rules. I pretty much got it right the first time around because I've made only two changes (one of them being more a clarification than a change) since introducing the SCR. I must let it be known that the SCR were most decidedly NOT greeted with universal enthusiasm. Many felt they were gamey, others felt they were too complex, still others felt they were too ahistorical. <sigh> The good news is that over time, the seeming strangeness of the SCR disappeared and players came to accept them as naturally as they do the convoy order in Standard Diplomacy. Even better, they appear to have accomplished what I was after.

VonPowell: Unfortunately, over time it became clear (at least to me) that 1900 had a flaw. Specifically, Russia was far too weak. I had worked to curb Russian power and I had apparently exceeded beyond my expectations. Having decided that something needed to be done, I solicited comments from several veteran players and eventually came up with the Russian Steamroller Rule. I thought this would do the trick nicely. It didn't. Russia went from being the weakest of Powers to the strongest. Worse, completely contrary to all of my calculations, a stronger Russia resulted in French and Italian play falling off. How could this be? Certainly, this drove home the point about unintended consequences. After analyzing what went wrong and once again soliciting the comments of several veteran players, I came up with the Russian Emergency Measures (REM) Rule. Actually, this rule has a firm historical basis and justification. Whether it will work as intended remains to be seen. I'm gathering data now.

VonPowell: Unlike 1900, Jeff and I realized A&E would probably require special rules, though we did try to keep them to a minimum. Currently, deviations from Standard Diplomacy involve armed neutrals that keep the played Powers from simply walking into an empty SC, Diplomacy Points that allow the played Powers to influence whether the armed neutrals support or hold, the Religious Rules that attempt to replicate the religious schisms in Europe at the time, and the 3rd Home Supply Center Rule that allows the 2 SC played Powers to gain a third home SC and put them on par with their larger opponents. All of these rules fit in nicely with the historical context of the game and lead to increased levels of subterfuge and chicanery. Somewhat

surprisingly, they have generally been accepted without much question by the players who have played A&E over the years. This is not to say all is well. I know for a fact that A&E's relative complexity has frightened off more than one potential player. Further, we do have harsh critics out there that feel Jeff and I have gone too far (or not far enough!) in attempting to capture the feel of the period. Perhaps the lesson to be learned in this is that one cannot please everybody.

VonPowell: My bottom line would be this: institute special rules only as a last resort to increase balance and flexibility, and do your best to ensure the special rules enhance rather than restrict overall play.

Burgess: What is your view of playtesting? How have you playtested variants? What do you think is needed to make good playtesting, and at what stage do you start playtesting? Are there innovative ways to playtest without a full setup with assigned players (in particular, I'm thinking about the use of the new DAIDE bots, has anyone tried using those to test variants, and if not do you think it's a good idea?)?

Cohen: Playtesting is very important, because no matter how confident the designer is in the balance and playability of the variant, inevitably there will be mistakes in design or rules, or potential improvements that would be readily apparent to a player with a fresh perspective who has experienced the map through actual play. Regarding Diplomacy Als, I suppose they might have a place, but for any rule change, additional programming, in some cases substantial, must be implemented, and I would think that most AI designers would be reluctant to do that for a variant that has never been, and may never be, played.

VonPowell: I completely agree with David. Playtesting is absolutely critical. He is also correct in pointing out that players have a different perspective from the designer. To better enable me to peer into the players' minds, I have always asked them to CC me when they correspond with each other or used "eavesdrop" when playing on DPJudge. Most players have obliged me without complaint. The insights I gained by doing this were often invaluable (plus the negotiations were usually fascinating to follow). Players have brought up things that I hadn't considered or offered valid perspectives completely contrary to my own. One thing I would caution variant designers to do is avoid making players in a playtest feel like their game is somehow invalid by moving on with new rules or a new map before the current playtest is finished. Even discussing variant faults and flaws too openly with the players during a game can make them feel cheated. I have not used AI during my playtests. Like David, I'm not sure that option would even be available in most cases.

Cohen: I agree on the point about new rules and maps during playtests. I sometimes have changes in mind, but

I normally do not make them, or opinions as to problems, public prior to the conclusion of games being played. Not only can it make players feel cheated, but remarks of the variant designer can also have a great influence on the players, thereby skewing the results of the playtest, which prevents a "fair" test of the variant.

Hester: I was going to say something on this topic, but I think Baron and David hit it all. I guess I'll have to get quicker to the punch, or take up basketweaving :-). One small note - doesn't require a fancy programmed bot to do automated playtesting. I'll give you all one chance to read my mind, and guess what I'm going to say next...that's right! Realpolitik! Just program your variant into RP (much easier than a bot) and you not only have the ability to run simulations, but also a great tool for your players to generate their own maps and test their strategies in sims. Something most bots nor the DAIDE mapper allow to the best of my knowledge.

Burgess: A little subtle pressure to keep up is not bad! How are we doing with this so far?

Cohen: I think we are doing pretty well. P.S. I do not think I mentioned my Conquest of the Americas variant in my bio. Consider it mentioned. ;^)

Burgess: Yeah, OK, well that's good. But why do you design variants? What are you trying to accomplish, what are your goals?

Cohen: A number of reasons. First, I design variants I think I would want to play. Second, it gives me the opportunity to be creative, combined with some of my other likes, which include maps and history. And finally, by observing players in variants which do not yet have a bunch of scripted openings, I can gain deeper understanding of the playing styles of players in general, and of those players in particular.

VonPowell: This may sound odd and perhaps a bit arrogant, but I'm not really very interested in variants other than my own. This is not to say that there aren't excellent variants out there because I know there are. I think it has more to do with the fact that I'm less interested in actually playing a variant than I am in creating and trying to perfect one. 1900 started simply as an attempt to improve upon Standard Diplomacy. I think Calhamer's concept for a game is absolutely brilliant in its novelty and its elegant simplicity. That Calhamer was on to something is clearly evidenced by the staying power of his creation. That does not mean, however, that his game is perfect. I think each of us can find some faults and flaws that, while not really detracting from the quality of the game, are annoying. As trivial as this may seem, I was really disappointed that the map depicted Europe in 1912 (i.e., after the Second Balkan War), but the game starts in 1901. I also felt a better job could be done to level the playing field and increase player interaction. When I commented on Stephen

Agar's article (New Improved Diplomacy), it was not my intent to design a variant. I was simply discussing things I agreed with and things I most decidedly didn't agree with. The fact that a variant grew out of my letter still surprises me.

VonPowell: As for Ambition & Empire, I was contacted by Jeff Kase about the notion of collaborating on a variant. I must admit I was not too enthusiastic initially. 1900 was still taking up a lot of my time and I questioned whether I'd have the resources and energy needed to make A&E viable. Fortunately, Jeff and I worked exceptionally well together. I don't recall one disagreement that we weren't able to amicably resolve to our mutual satisfaction. David articulates nicely many of the things that made putting A&E together so appealing. It was a chance to draw a map from scratch. It was a period of European history I found fascinating. It was an opportunity to introduce new concepts and be creative in general. As Jeff and I polished the map and rules (and I want to give a huge shout out to Jeff for producing a truly beautiful and well written rules packet), it was extremely gratifying to see the variant come to life. With each playtest, we grew more confident that we had something special. The last A&E game I GM'd was easily the best Diplomacy game I had ever been a part of (thanks in large part to a stellar set of players). The whole experience from the start to where we are now (we are certainly not finished yet!) has been very satisfying. As for goals, I think the ultimate goal of any variant designer is to produce something that, over time, develops a following and becomes a classic. While lots of variants are out there, only a few make it into the pantheon of great variants. I know I would love to see both 1900 and A&E brought up whenever a serious variant discussion breaks out. Only time and patience will tell if they make the cut.

Burgess: Great thinkers always say that their greatest ideas started out as mistakes, it is what they do with mistakes that makes them great. What has been your greatest mistake in variant design? Did it ultimately help you design a better variant?

Cohen: Well, since you asked... I know I have made mistakes, but I don't know that one really stands out. I do learn from my mistakes, though. Sometimes lessons learned can't be immediately applied, but I bear them in mind when designing new variants.

Hester: My greatest mistake was rushing Sengoku to playtest before running enough simulations on it myself. Fortunately, the variant survived, and generated enough interest after further revisions to have people play it again, but damage was done to its reputation by the mixed reviews that came out in commentary and EOGs. One negative comment by one person on a public list is often all it takes to make anywhere from 1 to 100 people immediately decide to never play your variant. So the advice is: be patient. Really work on your project yourself, have people look at the map and critique it

BEFORE a playtest, and have a really REALLY 90% or closer to complete product before taking it to playtest.

VonPowell: How should I answer this? I'll start by defining what a "mistake" is in my mind. For me, a mistake is something that is generally small scale, is relatively harmless, and is usually made without much thought. An example would be putting on a pair of mismatched socks. I'm not sure that this is what is meant in the question when it refers to a "mistake." Instead, I'm going to assume that the question is referring to a decision, often well thought out, that results in the variant not getting off the ground like it should or taking a step backward after a promising introduction. The decision could involve a rule that doesn't work as intended, a design that contains a flaw, a map that is inaccurate, or a host of other possibilities that simply don't work out. When I first introduced 1900, it contained what I consider with hindsight to be a serious design flaw. For reasons that make no sense to me now, I made Iceland a supply center. I thought this would help give Britain its historical due as the reigning naval Power of the day and foster Anglo-Russian conflict in the north, thereby complicating the relations in the (under analyzed) B/G/R triangle. Instead, I created the seeds of a superpower. Britain won the first playtest in a rout. Looking back, I can say that this possibility should have been identified. Fortunately, the people involved in the playtest accepted that the variant would have growing pains and, since I was willing to acknowledge the error, give the variant another chance. The fact that the variant also showed real potential certainly helped.

VonPowell: Another "mistake" came when I introduced the Russian Steamroller Rule. This rule was given a great deal of thought and was discussed extensively with several 1900 veterans. It seemed the perfect solution for the weak Russia that existed in the pre-Steamroller version of the game. I truly believe I had "nailed it" when I introduced this rule. I was wrong. I was astounded by the aftermath of the rule change. Possibilities I had not even considered came to the forefront. Unlike the Iceland issue mentioned earlier, however, the problem here took longer to identify because I wanted to ensure I wasn't making a hasty decision based on a small sample size. Well over 70 Steamroller games were started before I decided that something was definitely amiss and needed to be fixed. Even after this many games, I cannot dismiss the possibility that I didn't gather a sufficiently large sample with which to make a proper decision. The statistical test I employed told me that things were not going to go in the direction I wanted, but I've seen the vagaries of Diplomacy at work and have come to realize that even 100 games might not tell the whole story. Still, I was developing the impression that I needed to make a move or lose potential players. Word of mouth is important in the variant world and Steamroller Russia was developing the reputation as THE Power to beat. Not good! This is why the Steamroller was tossed overboard and the Russian Emergency Measures Rule,

another thoroughly thought out and intensively discussed rule, took its place. I'm keeping track of results even as I write this.

VonPowell: Ambition & Empire had its share of fits and starts as well. Our very first game saw Milan as a minor neutral. We were later informed that Milan was, at the time being simulated, an integral part of Austria. Oooops! This is one of those occasions where a gaffe actually resulted in something better. The revised Austria (that included Milan) resembled its historical counterpart much better, not only in its physical appearance, but in its sprawling nature and resulting play. Much later in the life of the variant, in fact well after Jeff Kase and I thought we were finished with the design work, we made some changes around Turkey. Sadly, we couldn't initially come to an agreement on how these changes would impact on Ottoman play. We released V4.0 of A&E and immediately realized there was a problem. The Turkey we created was a beast and went on to win fairly easily. Yikes! The trouble was we had no idea how to fix it. The good news is that a mutual friend (Chris Dziedzic...the same person who mentioned Milan to us) pointed out a simple, but brilliant solution that gave us the Turkey we wanted (i.e., one with a choice of game-start options that was neither too strong or too weak).

VonPowell BOTTOM LINE: I think "mistakes" are inevitable in variant design. The real challenge is recognizing when they have been made and taking corrective actions as quickly as possible. Failure to do so jeopardizes the reputation of the variant and a bad reputation is the kiss of death.

Burgess: Finally, this, if you had ONE piece of learned wisdom to impress on a new variant designer as they embarked on the effort, what would it be?

Cohen: Invite constructive criticism, and pay attention when you get it.

VonPowell: My one piece of advice would be to plan on sticking with the variant for the long haul. I'm convinced that some worthy variants never get to see the light of day because their designers churn them out, play them once or twice, post them in some variant bank, and then move on to other projects. Variants need nurturing. They need to be playtested. They need to be fixed and/or refined. They need to be sold to a skeptical hobby that is already saturated with variants (getting them on a judge is key). They need articles written about them (and usually the designer is the only one, at first, who will do this). They need to be studied over a long period of time to see if results are acceptable. Unless the designer is willing to spend lots of time and energy over an extended period, I personally think the odds of a particular variant gaining long term popularity is very slim.

Burgess: OK, thanks everyone. As of this writing, there

are 164 members of the DVWorkshop Yahooogroup that is devoted to Variant design and publicizing playtests. I, for one, am an enthusiastic variant playtester when I get the chance (seemingly a lot with Mr. Cohen's variants lately). So even if you're not designing variants, but just want to playtest them and see what is coming down the

pike, join the group. It's been quite quiet lately, but I hope this series will spruce it up a bit. Happy variant hunting!! And as DW Interview Editor, if anyone would like to be interviewed, would like to see someone interviewed, or has another topic for a Roundtable like this, let me know at "burgess of world.std.com".

Is A/T Broken?

by Charles Roburn

As fans of Diplomacy, I'm sure we can all agree that part of its charm is the vast assortment of alliance combinations that can arise in the game. Age cannot wither this game, nor custom stale its infinite variety. The geopolitical realities of the board mean that some combinations are more likely than others, and players may have their own preferences when playing a given Power; but ultimately it's diplomacy and personal relationships that determine what happens. As a result, no long-term pairing of two Powers in an alliance is unworkable.

Except...

Except that in the time I've played Diplomacy, I have never seen a long-term alliance between Austria and Turkey in the standard game. Sure, I've seen them work together temporarily — usually against Russia, or a very large power occupying Russia — or to stave off another Power's solo at the end of the game. But I've never seen Austria and Turkey get together in a victorious game-long alliance from the very beginning.

If Austria and Turkey ally against Russia early on, one of them will almost certainly stab the other once the Tsar is defeated. If they are reluctantly forced together to stop-the-leader, they will either secure the stalemate line and go for the draw — or again stab one another once the danger is past. There just doesn't seem to be a way for them to work together in a lasting partnership. Admittedly my experience in Diplomacy is less than that of many; still, I don't think I'm alone in this observation.

And on some fundamental level, it just seems wrong. Diplomacy is a game of possibilities, and no alliance should be impossible. It's also unbalancing; if Austria and Turkey are inevitably destined to fight, that gives an unfair advantage to their neighbors.

So **are** they destined to fight?

Conflict

Well, there are a few factors that generally lead Austria and Turkey into conflict:

- **Neutrals:** The Balkans represent the largest single grouping of neutral supply centers on the map, and they're located right in between Austria

and Turkey. So naturally they both head in that direction in the first year. And once started in one direction, it's easy to continue that way.

- **Overlap:** When you count the nearest eighteen centers to each country's home SCs, there's a great deal of overlap between those needed by Austria, and those needed by Turkey. This naturally makes for a great deal of friction.
- **Lack of Turkish options:** The overlap problem is even more pronounced because Turkey has nowhere else to go. The closest eighteen only just fall within a four-move radius of Turkey's home centers. In an AT alliance, the Sultan has to go even farther afield to find centers to make up for those he cedes to his ally.

Together, these reasons make a strong argument for the position that Austria and Turkey are going to have to fight each other, and that sooner rather than later.

And yet, there are other factors that should counter or mitigate these problems.

Conciliation

In spite of the natural friction between Austria and Turkey, they do have some powerful motivation to work together:

- **Fear of Russia:** When you look at the distance between home centers, Russia is actually in a better position to invade Austria and Turkey than those two are to invade each other. Vienna and Budapest are within two moves of Warsaw, while all three Turkish home centers are that close to Sevastopol. For Turkey in particular, Russia is the only other Power able to sail a fleet on the key Black Sea space; and it also blocks Turkey's quickest route to a center on the other side of the main stalemate line (St Petersburg).
- **Fear of Italy:** This other mutual neighbor can be a headache for both Austria and Turkey. The Venice/Trieste border is a constant worry for Austria, while Italy's natural naval bent can be a huge obstacle to Turkish ambitions. And when

Italy works together with Russia — which is not uncommon — the IR alliance can crush first one and then the other between them.

- The stalemate line: Both Austria and Turkey are on the same side of the main stalemate line. No Power can win without crossing that line, and it's generally a good idea to do so as early as possible. The more time AT spend fighting each other, the more difficult that becomes. If on the other hand they make peace and work together, they should be able to slam into Munich and Marseilles before the western Powers realize what's happening.
- Inland boundaries: Inland boundaries are very useful in creating a demilitarized zone between allies, and AT should be able to use this fact to reduce tensions between them. Turkish fleets in Greece and Bulgaria offer no threat to Serbia, for example. Conversely, an Austrian army in Sevastopol can't sail onto the Black Sea; a single Turkish unit in Armenia will block its only route south.
- Novelty: In the original *Gamer's Guide to Diplomacy*, this was the one point listed in favour of an AT alliance. It's so completely unexpected that it should take everyone by surprise, and leave them convinced that it can't last. This can, of course, be a huge diplomatic advantage for the two allies.

These are all very fine in theory, but in practice they don't seem to offset the natural Austro-Turkish tendency to fight. But can they? Is there hope for a game-long AT alliance?

A Hopeful Model: England-Germany

When you think about it, England and Germany are in a roughly analogous position to Turkey and Austria. Like Turkey, England is a corner Power that must go a long way to reach eighteen centers; and like Austria, Germany is a central Power that stands in the way of England's shortest route to victory. Both of them can clash early on in the Low Countries and Scandinavia. And yet, the EG alliance is generally considered to be as workable as any other.

So it seems to me that a good place to start is by looking at the factors that make for a functional EG alliance, and try to adapt them to the Austro-Turkish situation.

1. Army/fleet division.

England is clearly a naval Power; Germany is more balanced, but more strongly oriented toward building armies. In AT, Austria is very clearly a land-based power while Turkey can afford to build either type of unit. So a successful AT alliance could have Austria focus on land,

while Turkey builds only fleets. This should let the allies proceed with minimal fear of a stab, and make it easier to demilitarize areas by using inland borders.

2. Long-term prospects.

They say that in politics, it's important to have an enemy; and this is certainly true in Diplomacy. A mutual foe can be the glue that holds an alliance together.

England and Germany start off with two possible targets: France and Russia. Once the President and Tsar have been dealt with, they can work together against Italy, with Germany sending armies overland through Tyrolia to attack Venice, while England sends fleets around Gibraltar.

Similarly, Austria and Turkey can cooperate against Italy and Russia to begin with. Afterward they can focus on France, with Austria sending armies around Switzerland to hit Marseilles through northern Italy (and Munich!), while Turkey carries the naval war to Spain and the Mid-Atlantic.

3. Mutual understanding.

It's important for any alliance to make sure that each partner is treated fairly. This doesn't necessarily mean exact equality. In an EG alliance Germany may prosper more initially in terms of growth, but the Kaiser can also be attacked from more directions. Later on in the alliance, England may need to grow in order to build more fleets for use in the Mediterranean. As two very different countries, England and Germany must be able to appreciate each other's point of view.

Again, I think a similar principle applies with regard to Austria and Turkey. The AT relationship does face several difficulties, as I've listed above; it will take some work to overcome them. The alliance will have to balance Austria's need for security with Turkey's need to expand.

Making it Work

So what does all of this mean in practical terms? What do the Archduke and Sultan have to do in order to set up a firm alliance?

I'm afraid I can only speculate; I've never yet had a chance to try it myself with a willing partner. However, I would like to try it someday; and I've thought of a few points to start from based on the reasoning above.

As with an EG alliance, I think AT would have to be divided along fleet/army lines, with Austria providing the vast majority of land power, and Turkey providing the fleets. This is complicated by the fact that Turkey already starts with two armies, but I think that could be worked around. Perhaps one Turkish army can be sent north against Russia, or attacked and disbanded to permit construction of another fleet, while the other is used for

convoys as Turkey heads west.

There is also the question of how to divide the Balkans. Greece falls naturally within Austria's sphere in 1901, but if Turkey is to follow a westward strategy, the Sultan may want to claim it, and certainly won't want the Austrian fleet there. Austria, on the other hand, will want Turkish help against Russia, but not want to see Turkish armies circling north. So it seems to me that one possibility would be to have the Austrian fleet act in the vanguard of the push through the Mediterranean, while a single Turkish army serves on the eastern front. This unit exchange may have some dangers; but if handled well it could help to stabilize the alliance. It could also lead to forward retreat attacks, where (for example) an Austrian fleet dislodged by Turkey gets a choice of retreats into Naples or Tunis *after* Italy has moved — the Blue Water Lepanto in reverse!

The flow of the game might involve the two allies splitting the Balkans between them in 1901, blitzing Russia in 1902-03 and Italy in 1903-05, and preparing for the strike into Germany and France thereafter. At this point the centers could be divided something like:

Austria: Vie, Bud, Tri, Ser, Rum, Mos, War, Ven, Mun
Turkey: Con, Ank, Smy, Bul, Gre, Nap, Rom, Sev, Tun,

Progress beyond this point could be difficult if a strong power or bloc has arisen in the western part of the board; with no northern fleets, AT will find it difficult to force their way through. Perhaps the best way to avoid such a blockade is to play on the novelty aspect of the AT alliance. Everybody knows that Austria and Turkey have to fight sooner rather than later, right? If the two allies can make everyone think that their alliance is liable to fall apart any second, the western Powers may be less

vigilant about defending against it. Failing that, there may be a small power left in the north willing to act as a Janissary long enough for the Turkish fleet to sail past Gibraltar and/or Austrian armies to establish themselves on the northern coast.

It will be a challenge; but having seen games where EG ended on a 17/17 split, I cannot believe the same is impossible for AT.

Conclusion

I may be wrong, of course. It may be that these two Powers really do have irreconcilable differences. But I'm not prepared to accept that yet! It seems to me that there is indeed some common ground that can, with enough goodwill on both sides, lead to an alliance just as effective and prosperous as any other. After all, that is what the game is all about!

In the real world, the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires were indeed bitter enemies throughout most of their mutual centuries-long history. But at the end, in the Great War at the beginning of the twentieth century, they were on the same side.

So who knows? Perhaps now at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it's time for them to start working together in the game of Diplomacy as well.

Charles Roburn, aside from being a nice guy and a very good Diplomacy player, is also the new Lead Editor at the Diplomatic Pouch. Be sure to visit the DP web site (and support DP and all of Charles' efforts!) You can find The Diplomatic Pouch at <http://www.diplom.org/Zine/>

Knives and Daggers

The Diplomacy World Letter Column



Yann Clouet – Many thanks for the reading material. It's been a real pleasure. Here are a few quick random comments.

It's funny to see the various references to the past arguments of whether Mail or Email is the more favored version of THE game. I appreciate most of the early Diplomacy Hobby was built thanks to the Postal Hobby and the postal zine, but for me nothing will beat FTF. This is where I had all my favorite games. For me, Email games are nothing more than a pretext; a way for me to keep in touch with some people where distance wouldn't help otherwise; a way to motivate the people to cross the line and see what's behind the screen. On that account,

the communities around a website are often a real bonus for a FTF tournament. People know each other in a pseudo-sense, and they have common ground even before they meet. Sometimes the whole reason they make the journey is to meet that damned Italy who killed us both by one-dotting me after month of cooperation!

As for the postal zine landscape in France, it is pretty devastated! The last remaining French speaking paper zine just gave up. It's on countdown to the last issue. Fortunately, there are still a few e-zines, especially the "18centres' Gazette" (<http://www.18centres.com/SPIP3>) which publishes one article per week and has all the subjects you would expect in a postal zine: FTF reports, Delirious, Strategic consideration, future events

marketing, Enigma, Variant rules, etc. Having edited the zine for quite some time I appreciate the value and time it takes to do such a job, and I want to thank you on behalf of all your readers for the time you have committed.

Thanks Yann, putting together #97 was like a trip back in time for me. It was a lot of fun, but not without moments of frustration or self-doubt. That's pretty much the way I do everything though, so I'm used to it.

Regarding your article on Italian openings, it's your lucky day, as it's one of my specialties! At the moment Italy is probably the country I've gotten the best results with. I know it is difficult to master (it was the last one with which I won a game FTF, and it took me 8 years), but if you are patient enough it is very flexible and offers lots of different possibilities. Here are a few more funny combinations to append to your article. All of these have been tried in real games and led me to top the board. All it takes is a little Diplomacy :)

The Catapult: Not the best plan, but still one of the funniest! It relies on early I/G cooperation. Have you already experienced the doubt of the fall guessing game? Here is how to avoid it :

Spring 01: (German) A Mun-Tyr; (Italian) A Ven-Pie, A Rom-Ven.

Fall 01: A Ven s A Pie-Tyr, and the German retreats to which ever SC is free among Vienna or Trieste. Also you have one more unit in the area.

The Little Train: Once again, you want to avoid the Vienna or Trieste guessing game. So what you want is to blow some smoke in your opponents' direction:

Spring 01: A Ven-Tyr, A Rom-Ven.
Fall 01: A Tyr-Boh, A Ven-Tyr.
Winter 01: Build A Ven.

Now there are many possibilities with those 3 armies, including going to Germany!

The Little Train - TGV Version (French High Speed train): The drawback of the previous opening is that you have only 1 fleet, so your Mediterranean front looks very tempting for Turkey. Now imagine you trust France and convince him to have some fun:

Spring 01: (French) A Mar-Pie; (Italian) A Ven-Tyr, A Rom-Apu.

Fall 01 (get ready for the surprise): (French) A Pie-Tyr; (Italian) A Tyr-Boh, A Apu-Ven.

You have the same strong position as in The Little Train, but in addition you have an extra fleet. And France will probably enjoy this early involvement in the Southern

theater, plus a strong leverage on Germany. Try to convince him, you'll be surprised how easy it proves to be.

The Blitzkrieg: Once again an opening relying on Diplomacy, and on strong confidence with a Western alliance partner, this time Germany.

Spring 01 (apparently harmless moves): (Italian) A Ven-Tyr, A Rom-Apu, F Nap-Ion; (German) F Kie-Hol, A Ber-Kie, A Mun-Ruh.

Fall 01 (all agreed to by Germany): (Italian) A Tyr-Mun, A Apu-Ven, F Ion-Tun (part of the surprise effect); (German) A Ruh-Bel, A Hol s Ruh-Bel, A Kie-Den.

Winter 01 : Build F Nap, F Rom.

Spring 02: (Italian) A Mun-Bur, A Ven-Pie, F Tun-Wes, F Rom-Tys, F Nap-Ion (just to keep the south at check).

Now the surprise blitzkrieg should gives you Marseilles, and Germany is ready to join right away.

Last but not least, **The Gambit Lepanto:** (this is currently a very fashionable opening in the French circle, and has been the key to Austria AND Italy improving a lot in the stats). The idea is simple : Austria trades Trieste to Italy in exchange for Italy building 2 fleets. Both gain a lot from it. Austria gains ... peace, and an Italian naval force which can only go against France or Turkey, and HAS THE MEANS to do it. Italy gains : a second build, an ally and the possibility to make a real campaign against whichever sides he chooses. Of course for confidence it is better if Italy enters Trieste only in Fall, and put himself in a position where stab is not possible. That makes the deal more likely.

I like those openings a lot – I love the excitement, danger, and large payoff of a strategy which forces you to really leave yourself open to your ally for a season or two. Who knows which way it will end? Nobody, until the results are posted.

By the way, I had a really excellent time both times I went to San Marino. Early Spring Italian warmth; high quality of food; friendliness of the locals; excellent organization of the ASGS; San Marino is really a perfect location to spend a few days before or after an event. You can even drive to the Medieval San Marino, Rimini - one of the favorite trendy coastal destinations of the Italians. Or you can cross the Apennines and visit the classical Firenze, or the less known but still excellent Bologna.

My next destination is Chicago next week, and I expect to meet the local crew for some more fun. It's good to know people in virtually every city you want to go to :).

I haven't done as much face-to-face gaming as I

would have liked since I joined the hobby, but hopefully I can rectify that in the coming years. My life just didn't allow for the travel, and when I was married Mara's health required quite a lot of attention. Of course I wouldn't mind finding some local Dallas-area gamers to play with now and then!



Walt Buchanan: Thanks so much for DW #98! You and Jim are indeed doing a fantastic job getting DW back on track. I now really believe #100 will be a reality. I'm looking forward to contributing an article to #100.

Thanks for the well-wishes Walt!



Fred C. Davis, Jr: I really enjoyed the article on Dip Variants. Part I, which ran from Pg. 28 to Pg. 38. I'm looking forward to seeing Part II of this article in the next issue. Maybe I'll have something to contribute to it.

You probably know that I am still maintaining a small North American Variant Bank (NAVB), consisting of my own designs and my favorite designs of other variants from years past. All of these have Miller Numbers or Variant Bank Numbers to identify them. I haven't had an order for any of these designs for a couple of years, but I'm keeping them in case someone wants to order one or more of them without having to contact the Main Variant Bank now being maintained in England. I very much want to include "1900" and "Ambition & Empire" in my files, and also to study them for my own satisfaction.

Fortunately most major variant designs are available on the web these days. The only real problem with that is getting decent-sized printouts of some odd maps. I do worry that playable or interesting variants might get lost in the shuffle over time as there doesn't seem to be that much emphasis on maintaining a complete list or catalog these days. Still, I'm not all that involved in the variant scene so hopefully somebody is keeping things up to date.



Chris Dziedzic: First off, I am so glad to see the return on Diplomacy World. I do agree with Doug's assessment... when there is a predictable and reliable publication schedule, authors will polish off the submissions and get them in. On the flip side, when authors send in submissions only to see them lost in cyber space, or see a year go by without a new issue, interest in the 'zine will fade. To butcher the line from Field of Dreams: "Publish it... and they will write!"

Second, a response to the letter by Tim Haffey. While it is true that most games are played on the internet via e-mail, I would disagree with the assessment that few of these games are tracked or trackable. Most of the Judges have archives that can be searched for

statistics. Many PBEM communities also have archives that results that can be tracked. I recently wrote a piece for the Diplomatic Pouch with tracked the games played in three PBEM communities: CAT23, DipWorld and the Diplomatic Corps. You can see that article at:

<http://www.diplom.org/Zine/S2007R/Dziedzic/PBEMCommunities.htm>

Maybe this is not the central archive that Tim alludes to in the hobby's past, but it is a far cry from these games existing only between the players and the GMs.

Furthermore, I believe Tim over-generalizes in the lack of community in PBEM games. In my six or seven years in the hobby, I have been blessed in getting involved with a handful of GMs who run more "postal" style games. In those games, press with the adjudication is the norm. Poems, songs, artwork, tactical and strategic discussions, they all were submitted for publication in those games. Specifically, gaming under Paul Shearlingborne and Baron Powell was and is a treat. And gaming in their circle has given me friendships that have spanned beyond the games. I e-mail or call Wayne Bailey or Bill Leake to catch up, even though we haven't played together in over 12 months... the real key is finding those right GMs and players to foster a sense of community, not to write off the entire PBEM subset of the hobby.



Fred C. Davis, Jr (again): Thanks again for sending me the three issues of DW and the variant rules and maps. I especially like the "1900" variant, which I would say is the best variant of the European and North African theatre ever made. (Yes, even better than my own designs!) I wonder whether you've received any comments from Calhmer on this variant? "1900" solves the difficulty of the adjacent Venice-Trieste SC's.

I don't recall any comments from him offhand. Maybe your letter will motivate him to drop us a line!



Charles Roburn: Congratulations on a great new issue of Diplomacy World! Having recently gotten involved in producing the Diplomatic Pouch Zine, I have an idea of how much work it takes to get everything together. You've done an excellent job of putting solid content into an attractive format, and I'm glad to see DW back in such good shape after its year-long hiatus. I'm already looking forward to the next issue in August. Keep up the good work!

For those of you who don't know, Charles is the editor of the zine Diplomatic Pouch. Be sure to check out the current and back issues at:
<http://www.diplom.org/Zine>.