

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

Issue #82  
August 1984  
Strategy & Negotiations

Mark L Berch  
492 Naylor Place  
Alexandria VA 22304

Subs: 10 for \$4  
Europe: 11/\$4.50 or 3/E1  
Circulation: 109

OK, lets get the Con results started with DipCon XVII, run by Gaughan/Connor. It was won by Jeff Key (a real oldtimer whose article was reprinted lastish), who beat out Dave Claman by an eyelash. Best country was again given out separately for each round, and I'm glad to see that innovation from 1982 has taken a good hold. There were 13 boards in Round 1, and 5 in Round two, and at least 4 wins overall. There was also a two-round gunboat tournament, won by Scott Rubin, and a "1939" variant game tournament, won by David Wrobel (no relation to EDI).

The Atlanticon Tournament was won by Mark Klansek, with Doug Byrnes in second. This had 8 boards in round 1, 5 in round 2. The overall results were no wins, 2 2-ways, 7 3-ways, 1 4-ways, 1 5-way, 1 3-3 stalemate, 1 2-4 stalemate (no, I don't know what stalemates are either). Interestingly enuf, the winners of both tournaments managed to snag best country in both rounds. Atlanticon 84 tournament was run by Sacks & Boardman.

Not much else to say here, so lets get on with.....

## THE ZINE COLUMN # 75

Its nice to see the old traditions return. A long time ago, Conrad von Metzke was fond of playing Austria. He often opened with a blitz on Venice: A Bud-Tri, F Tri-Adr, A Vie-Tyo, in SO1. I see that one of my subbers, Lynn Torkelson has done just that in 84AJ in Fol Si Fie. Its a pretty odd game, with FO1 featuring such oddities as Ger A Bur H, Russia: A Lvn-Pru, F Bla-Con, and English F Eng-Mid. Randolph Smyth's next game will be free (no GF), but he's looking only for good, reliable players, and will feature GM commentary for the game. FSF uses 6-week deadlines, so this is only for people who want plenty of time (Randolph Smyth 212 Aberdeen St SE Medicine Hat Alta T1A 0R1)....another opening that one pretty much never sees is the Rotation Lepanto, A Ven-Apu, A Rom-Ven in SO1 -- in North America, that is; its sometimes seen in British games, and indeed appeared in the new game in Ode. I think its supposed to be used in conjunction with F Tri-Ven, to keep Ven open, tho it didn't turn out that way in this game. Its hard to say what these openings do. It has been alleged that Cvm's play of Austria was responsible for dragging Austria down in the hobby stats, and the Lepanto opening (normally done with A Ven H, A Rom-Apu) is so seldom carried thru FO2's convoy into Turkey that I doubt its had much affect at all on Italian fortunes.

The 1984 Runestone Poll results are in. Topping the GM Poll were John Daly, Andy Lischett, Bill Placek, Paul Rauterberg, Gary Coughlan, Jim Meinel, James Woodson, Dave Carter, Dave Kleiman, and Mike Mazzar. The subzine Poll, appearing separately for the first time was won by Sex Appeal, followed by Temporarily Delayed, High Plains Gonzo, Femme Fatale, Submarine Warfare, Maggie's Zine, Strange Doings, Kathy's Korner, Verrtigo, and Dip City. These two lists required only five votes. which is a bit too

low in my opinion, especially for the subzine list. 5 of the top 6 subzines got 8 votes or fewer. The Zine Poll itself was again won by Europa Express, followed by Envoy, Politesse, The Prince, Thirty Miles of Bad Road, Life of Monty, Sleepless Knights, Diplomacy World, No Fixed Address, and Snafu! I was somewhat surprised by the showings of VoD (12th) and House of Lords (37th), both of which I would have expected (and deserved) to do better. By that token, I suppose I should name two zines which should have done poorer than they did. I'll settle for one: Fol Si Fie finished 11th, higher than I think it deserved. DIPLOMACY DIGEST was down at 35th, a whisker behind by constant companion, Murd'ring Ministers. I frankly don't think DD has changed all that much over the last 4 or 5 years, but its ranking has jumped around quite a bit. I thus think those changes reflect more changes in my competition than in DD, an explanation that always seems more valid in years that I do poorly than in years I do well! To reduce the impact of grudge and buddy-buddy votes, the top 8% and bottom 8% of the votes were sliced off, an excellent idea, and the remaining votes were averaged. My only objection to Randolph's methodology is that he permits people to vote for a zine even tho they don't sub or trade for it. This zine is designed to meet the needs of, and the standards of, me and my subbers. No zine can appeal to everyone, and I don't think any zine should be held accountable by those who don't choose to get it. Their opinions are irrelevant to me, because the zine is not designed to meet their needs. I know, for example, that there are people in the hobby who think that reprinting per se, especially from defunct zines, is a terrible idea. Fine, they shouldn't get DD, obviously. But they also shouldn't be allowed to vote for DD either, because DD has never been structured to meet their standards. One thing I was very pleased with was DD's vote total-53 of you voted, topped only by EE, TMoBR, DW, and VoD. There were 119 people voting altogether, up more than 50% from last year (DDs vote total was also up from 41)

There seems to be quite a bit of zine shuffling going on. Scott Hanson's games, formerly in his Irksome! will now appear in a subzine to So I Lied, which will also be the home to Tom Swider's "Expletive Deleted" (which is variant oriented), which was orphaned by the upcoming fold of Coat of Arms. Mike Mills' Enchain Macha will become a subzine to Europa Express. SNAFU! is going warehouse to finish out his games, as Ron has his hands full with the new baby and potential new job responsibilities. Mike Mazzar's "Strange Doings" will move from CoA to The Magus, which also has Daf's subzine Hare of the Dog and Williams' sizeable Fiat Bellum. EE's subzine "The Beholder", which used to be a zine, seems well entrenched there, but Michalski's Mos Eisley's Spaceport seems to have disappeared, at least for a while, and with the conclusion of its game, "Mass Murders" has also disappeared. Jim-Bob Burgess is starting up his The Boob Report as a subzine to NSWG, and Dustin Lawrence has started up the Space Viking in Life of Monty.

EE #36 has a nice travel story by Robin Finley which makes the point very well that you sometimes don't understand what you think you understand; the locals are sometimes right even if you think they aren't.

Many of you have probably heard about the Linsey-Highfield business. Alas, there are several versions floating around. I'll try to give it to you straight. Bill Highfield published The Modern Patriot. The zine lasted somewhat over a year. When it folded, there were no refunds, and he refused to cooperate with the Orphan Service in rehousing the games. Bruce Linsey had been an early and enthusiastic supporter of TMP, and had been a personal friend of Bill's as well (e.g. spent a week on vacation with him). Eventually, they had a falling out. This was around the time (latter half of 1983 or so) when Bill was alienating a number of his hobby friends. This is what was visible to the hobby. Behind the scenes, however, was a much more disturbing phenomenon:

Bill had a practice of writing notes or letters in which he threatened to, and expressed the desire to, kill people. The people he talked about killing included those in the hobby (e.g. Kieth Sesler) and outside (e.g. his ex-girlfriend Christine). There were 2

of these threatening to kill Bruce, one to Eric Kane, one to Kathy Byrne. In fact, there were at least 5 of these threats, and of course these are only the ones Bruce knows about.

Bruce wrote directly to Bill, telling him that these actions were a felony (because of the use of the US mail). He warned him explicitly that if this did not stop, he would either press charges, or go to his Navy Commander. The actions continued, and Bruce took the next step, and wrote the Navy. It was necessary that someone with real authority get Bill to stop this, and of course, Bruce wanted some evaluation of how likely it was that Bill was going to carry thru on this. This was done in Jan 1984

The rumors in the hobby started not too long thereafter. In the April Europa Express, Bill's TMP appeared one last time as a subzine, and in this he complained that some "lunatic" had written his commanding officer. The nature of the letter was not described, and the writer was not named.

Others would not show such restraint. So far as I'm aware, the first person to finger Bruce in print was John Caruso, who used one of his "Foot in Mouth" roving subzines in the June Sleepless Knights to print this as a response to a Michlaski letter he chose to print. It was labeled as a "rumor". Some weeks later, Terry Tallman went into more detail in the July issue of his North Sealth West George. These comments were of course very selective. Altho both knew about the death threats, neither mentioned it. Terry in fact went to some lengths to give the impression that Bruce did it because of what Bill wrote in his zine, and described Bill's political views in that regard. An oblique mention is made to "an incredibly weak rational", but of course, Terry was careful not to say what that was. At this point, it was no longer possible for Bruce to ignore the matter, and in VoD #98, the whole ugly business was set forth, including Xeroxing a page from the Highfield-to-Sesler letter.

A single such letter by Bill might be dismissed as a fluke. But a prudent person would be entitled to take such a pattern of behavior very seriously indeed. Bruce's action was reasonable, and that's the only standard he needs to meet --- not whether you or I would have handled the situation exactly the same. Bruce was in a difficult situation, for which there was no perfect solution, and for what its worth, I probably would have done pretty much the same.

It might be argued that these letters were all just sick jokes, but once you see the Sesler letter, you won't hold that view. Its a vile letter, dripping with hatred, and the first paragraph has the threat three times. There are a lot of things that I suggest that people just let slide, and ignore. But death threats (and suicide threats) are not one of them. You might also think that Bruce was wrong in going outside the hobby, in "breaking the barrier" But Bill's actions themselves were beyond what is permitted in the hobby; it was he who broke the barrier. Moreover, the fact that non-hobby people were also named leads me to think that this was not a true "hobby" problem at all, tho it did deal with some people who were in the hobby. I have also heard the suggestion that he should have gone to a psychologist or some such. It doesn't work that way. You see such a person because of your own problems, or your family's problems, not someone else's. Such a person would have no leverage over, or ability to analyze, Bill (not to mention the \$50+ bill....) As for the idea that he should have gone to the police, that's really a last resort. Once they launched their investigation, the military would learn about it anyway (you have so little privacy in the military, especially when, like Bill, you're just getting started). So he'd have the same problems there, plus an arrest (or even jail) record to boot.

Finally, one could argue that none of this belongs in dipzines, that Bruce shouldn't have revealed this, etc. This is, in a sense, true. Even this account can only be defended in terms of a "necessary evil", or the lesser of two evils. This should have remained a private matter between Bruce, Bill, and the Navy. And it could have been if Terry and Caruso had not been so eager to drag this into print. Let us hope that this is an isolated incident, and that neither of these two gentlemen is planning to bring other private matters into print.

((We're going way back for this early look at game strategy. Its by Gene Prosnitz, from Diplomania #18, October, 1967))

#### ALLIANCE-BREAKING, DOUBLE CROSSING, AND THE BALANCE-OF-POWER PRINCIPLE

One of the most neglected areas in Diplomacy, especially in the postal game, is the art of alliance breaking. A player who is on the process of being conquered by 2 or more enemies will frequently make no effort to change the power lineup, but will just sit back passively ((in a diplomatic sense)) and await the inevitable defeat. Of course, alliance breaking is not easy, and its usually wiser for the allies to stick together until they've completed the job ... but there are various techniques to try.

First, the one-sided offer. Usually, agreements between powers should be on a 50-50 basis, or close to it, but when one side has a much better bargaining position, this is not so. When you're trying to break up an enemy alliance, you may make headway by offering one of your foes a deal which is tremendously one sided in his favor, and is just too good to be turned down. For example, suppose that, as T, I'm fighting A and R. I might offer to support A into both Rum and Sev (both belonging to R), and ask nothing in return. There's nothing wrong in being very generous with a third party's possessions. ((Such an offer, while often called for, can easily backfire. If A knows that you'll be using your pieces to support his supposed attacks on R, he also knows that those pieces won't be used to defend T, and that makes an attack on T even more favorable --- since it won't be as strongly opposed. A then figures that since he can crunch T a lot faster than expected, he can then Turn on R all by himself))

If you are in the unfortunate position of being the victim of a 3-way attack ... the three powers will undoubtedly have to fight among themselves after they've wiped you out. ((That's a bit overstated, since some triples can very easily avoid that fate. EFA blitzes G, but after that, the alliance could easily stay together, as AF attacks Italy, and ET attacks R)). Try to pick the enemy power which is most likely to end up on the short end of the stick, and detach him from the alliance. For example, if 2 of your 3 enemies are from the same city, and the third is from a different geographical area, the 2 neighbors are likely to stay allied -- so this should be pointed out to the third. Or suppose one of the 3 aggressors stands to get the smallest portion of your territory (e.g. in a three-way attack on F, E usually comes out without too much -- i.e., just one center, Brest)-- work on him, trying hard to get him to shift sides. ((That wasn't a good example. Unless E is being harried by R, or Italy began her attack before E did, England is likely to get Por as well)) Sometimes, one of the powers involved in a three way attack seems very likely to be "caught in the middle" because of the position on the board, For example, FGR attack E; afterwards, G is in between F and R. Therefore, E should probably concentrate its efforts on detaching G from the alliance ((not only is G more promising from that point of view, but E can make a more flexible offer to G --- support. against either F or R, whereas only one offer is available for F or R)).

When you are the victim of a 2-way alliance, its often more difficult to convince one of the allies to change sides. For one thing, two powers working together closely are more likely to stick together, even after you're defeated. Also, of they're successful, the rewards are greater --- the pie has only to be cut two ways. With either ... things frequently work out so that one ally emerges much stronger than the other(s). If things are pointed in that direction, show the weaker ally how his compatriot is taking advantage of him.

Very often one of your allies will have engaged in double dealing, making a phoney agreement with you and, at the same time, an "honest" agreement with his true ally. Point this out to the other party, and perhaps the two of you can get together against the double-dealer.

Suppose all rational methods of persuasion fail. You might try "kamikaze" tactics. This entails concentrating your forces in one direction, as a way of showing a particular enemy that, no matter what happens to you, you are going to make sure he

doesn't get any share of the spoils... That may convince him that he should make peace with you. Of course, this tactic often means that you leave your rear unguarded and get wiped out even more quickly, so it should be treated as a last resort. ((I discussed this option in my "The Unbalanced Defense" article in Diplomacy World #34)) Closely related to this is the threat to throw the game to one of your enemies if the other doesn't cooperate with you....

....Turning to the question of when, and how, to double-cross: When contemplating a "double-cross" (or, to put it more euphemistically, a "shifting of alliances" --- which may be a lesser category of backstab), one must weigh the immediate gain against the following considerations: (1) Will you need to deal with the victim later in the game? (2) How will this affect your dealings with him in other games (current or future)? (3) How will this affect the other players' opinion of your trustworthiness? ((I'd add a fourth question --- to what degree can you accomplish the same goals, albeit slower, by not stabbing?))

First, the question of first-move strategy. I've noticed that a number of players enter into inconsistent alliances at the beginning of the game --- e.g. A forms an anti-T alliance with R, and forms an anti-R alliance with T, and breaks one of them. The argument is that if you write to everyone, you are more likely to get an ally. However, this reasoning is somewhat faulty. Suppose, in the above example, that A writes R and gets turned down. Chances are that R and T are already allied, and a letter to T at this point would do no good. On the other hand, maybe A would have gotten results by writing to T right away before R and T got together, so there's no clear answer. I consider the question of what negotiations to enter into at the start of the game to be the most serious, difficult problem in Diplomacy. On balance, however, I think that the practice of making inconsistent alliances and following them up with a first year (or second year) double-cross is unwise. For one thing, once you get the reputation for doing this, players are less likely to deal with you at the beginning of the game, and this can be disastrous. Also, the backstab in this case does not have the effect of knocking your enemy out of commission; you may need his help later in the game, and have a tough time getting it.

In a game in which I'm playing Italy, for example, A made alliances with I, R and T the first move, and immediately double crossed both R and T. He gained a tempo --- i.e. he gained Gal and kept Italy out of Tyo, which he could not have done if his intentions had been known in advance. However, this compensation was not nearly enough when compared to the price he paid concerning his future dealings with the Russian and Italian players. The result, which could be foreseen, was that shortly thereafter, Austria made what he thought was a deal with Russia. However, R, who felt that one good turn deserved another, double-crossed Austria, who was then almost completely destroyed in a short time.

Another point -- if you enter into inconsistent alliances, the players may let each other know about your double dealing. Or worse yet, they may prove your double-dealing by sending each other copies of your letters (which is one of the reasons why a telephone game figures to be the dirtiest of all). ((I suspect that thinking on this subject has changed somewhat in the years since this was written. The practice of concluding inconsistent alliances, even in WOO, is fairly common, so much so that doing it will often not be viewed as a great offense. After all, what will be betrayed at that point (especially if a SO1 stab is contemplated) is just a promise, not a genuine alliance with a history behind it. The dynamic often leads you into these situations. A good player will usually propose an alliance of some sort to all of his neighbors, especially where joint military action is possible by SO2. If all of your offers are accepted, as sometimes happens, taking Gene's advice may force you to repudiate an offer you made only 10 days ago, and will practically proclaim your willingness to attack the person. IF you don't write all the people, then you are taking the risk that you've missed the best possible alliance --- or perhaps the only one. One way to avoid the problem is to propose the sort of alliances where you can ally with all your neighbors.

These, however will usually be limited to non-aggression, except in a few cases where you can attack a non-neighbor, e.g. FI vs G, and division of neutrals. While some writers do advocate this kind of non-committing approach (e.g. Smyth), others point out that you may lose out to someone who is more forthcoming, someone who presents a plan to your neighbors which calls for some growth --- at your expense. I suspect that nowadays, betrayal in 1901 is much less likely than betrayal in, say, 1904, to produce an enemy that you cannot later work with. Of course, any betrayal has its risks))

In my opinion, the best time to double cross another player is not when its a question of a small gain, but rather when the backstab will cripple him beyond repair. Thus, you won't have to worry about whether or not this player will ever trust you again in this game .... If your ally is foolish enuf to leave himself wide open for this sort of thing, it's his own funeral. ((This is the "best" time, but its not the only time. See my article "Must A Stab Be Fatal?" in DW #36. Yup, tooting my horn again.))

On the other hand, it's best to be scrupulously honest in the small-scale promises and deals which go on all the time between allies. If you lie to an ally or friendly neutral in a small matter, where you don't actually intend to declare war on him, you're sowing the seeds of mistrust without gaining any real benefits. My philosophy is to be completely truthful in about 95% of my dealings and correspondence, and to hope other players ecome aware of this. However, the other 5% of the time they'll get hit with everything but the kitchen sink. ((Looking at the benefit to be gained is important, but its not the whole story. One must also look at the chances that the lie will be detected. A lie for very small gain can be completely justified, if the other guy is unlikely to be able to discover he's been lied to. If, for example, your lie consists of confirming some (inaccurate) observation he's made, you're unlikely to be caught because he's not going to be examining what you've said for its honesty (unless he's done it deliberately as a trap). By the same token, a lie which could net you a sizeable gain may be a poor risk, because the lie is unlikely to be believed. Inexperienced players or very greedy players are often tempted to tell real whoppers because of the prospect of a crippling strike, without taking into consideration that the particular player they're telling it to is probably not going to be fooled))

Similarly, it's unwise to offer false promises to an enemy who's trying to make a deal with you and is already on the ropes, if you can defeat him by straight-forward play. ((I don't think such a blanket statement is justified. After all, if you betray him, he's not going to be in a position to retaliate, and such a betrayal may be much faster than an all out war.))((Some generalities on Balance of Power have been cut))

Sometimes a single expeditionary force can restore the balance of power. In a recent over-the-board game wherein France was doing very well, Italy, who was not really fighting France (being engaged primarily on the Eastern front), sent a fleet into Mid. This maneuver didn't really help Italy at all (at least in the short term sense), but, by harassing France considerably, it helped restore the balance of power in western Europe. ((This is a tactic that G and I are especially well suited to do, and players consistantly overlook it. The loss of a piece will slow down their main campaign. But this can be more than compensated by slowing down the growth of a neighbor who is starting to dominate his area, and will soon come after you. In other cases, the one piece can help prop up a neighbor, stalling the growth of an alliane which is overwhelming him. Either way, the one piece can often buy a great deal of time, and you will probably get an ally out of it. If the neighbor attacks you anyhow, you've at least got a forward piece already in position, and if its to help your neighbor, he may hand you one of his centers near the end in gratitude.))

....Many players feel they can wait until a power gets 14 or 15 SCs before uniting against it. However, this often proves fallacious, as difficulties in communication and cooredination, as well as a lack of trust, usually result in giving the front-runner an easy victory at this point in the game. ((Forget 14 or 15 centers. If the opposition is not largely united by 13 or in some cases, 12 centers, the leader is the odds on favorite to win, unless he has a close ally no more than 2 centers behind))

# THE DOMINANT PLAYER

by Douglas Beyerlein

Over the last few years I have written numerous articles on various aspects of playing the game of Diplomacy. Some have been devoted to the tactics of the game, others to country strategies, and even a few have been written on the diplomacy and player relationships in the game. These are all various schemes and ploys which I have found useful in my play over the years. However, they are only random pieces of the total picture of how to play the game of Diplomacy successfully. In this article I hope to bring at least some and possibly most of these pieces together and create one coherent picture of how one can play consistent winning Diplomacy.

If one was to study the top players of the game in an attempt to discover why they are so successful one would learn many things. But the simplest, most overwhelming fact about them is that they strive in nearly all situations to totally dominate the play of the game. They do more than just keep up their correspondence with their allies. They write to all of the players in the game—at least once a season, if possible. And not only do they correspond avidly, but they write first and in doing so guide the discussion to subjects where they have the most to gain and away from sensitive areas. This allows them to discuss and present strategies, tactics, and most importantly, individual orders for the coming season. The ally or cooperative neutral hardly has to think for himself. Just send in the 'suggested' orders and sit back and wait for the next set of instructions from the dominating ally.

Now that I have shown how the dominant player operates, I will present two case studies where, in a field of dominant players, the most dominant player rose to dominate all and in doing so won the game. The two games are 1971BC and 1972CR, the first two Hoosier Archives demonstration games.

Edi Birsan, playing France, won 1971BC in a lightning campaign that only lasted six game years. And, although he had only 15 of the required 18 supply centers, he so dominated play at that point that the four other surviving players conceded the win to him right then and there. I will not attempt to repeat the story of the win as Edi did an excellent job in his article, "A Whirlwind of Knives" published in Hoosier Archives #83 & 84. What I will do is to emphasize the highlights of Birsan's dominance over the other players in the game.

At the very start of '71BC Birsan outlined his strategy: take out England and Turkey. Quick proposals of an anti-English alliance went out to Germany and Russia. In the same manner, Italy and Austria were cohered into going after Turkey. Phone calls and some fast correspondence outlined these plans before the other players had the opportunity to present alternative plans of attack. This domination resulted in the opening game going exactly as Birsan had planned. Events continued on the planned course of action as Edi convinced the English player that it was Russia who had masterminded the anti-English alliance. This brought about the English banzai against Russia and the uncontested French occupation of all three English home centers in 1903. Things continued to go in Birsan's favor not because of luck alone but because he continued to control his allies and enemies. Germany was talked into going east so that Edi's French units met no opposition as they advanced into and through the German centers. The same domination prevailed when it came time to blitz Italy. And all of this worked because there was no other single player in the game willing to take the time and trouble to counter this domination and become the dominant player. And yet all of these seven players were good players and were dominant players of varying degrees. It was that in this game Edi Birsan was the most dominant player of them all because he wanted to be.

Game 1972CR, the next HA game, was similar to 1971BC in that it was dominated from start to finish by one player. In this case it was Brenton Ver Ploeg (Russia) who won. This game is being included as an example of how the dominant player works because I, as Italy, viewed Ver Ploeg's actions from all too close a range.

In playing the role of the dominant force on the board Brenton used one of the strongest weapons available to the Postal Diplomacy player: the long distance phone call. This tactic in the end cost Ver Ploeg over two hundred dollars in phone bills,

but it did the job. And I, as his chief ally, was the focal point of much of his domination. Before I even received the game announcement in the mail Brenton called with an alliance offer. (His mailman was faster than mine.) From then on, as the game results arrived in the mail every second Monday, he called that evening to discuss plans for the coming season. This fone tactic was very successful as he was then able to open the discussion and there was no possibility that I could fire off the first letter and set the pace. I did have the option of calling him first, but being a graduate student perpetually short of funds that was not too realistic. I also had outside factors, not conducive to concentrating on the game, on my mind, but my main failing was letting ver Floeg dominate my play. He is the only player in recent years who dominated me for control of the game and won because of it.

Now, you may be finding this all very interesting, but are asking yourself: How can you use the role of dominant player to improve your play? Think of your games and the strategies and tactics which would benefit you the most. Then use your diplomatic ability to convince the other players that your plans are best suited to their interests. Approach them with strategies, tactics, and suggested orders before they can formulate and propose other plans. Anticipate and beat them to the punch. That is how one dominates and wins games.

It may all sound simple; too simple to be true. But then, if you are not winning game, then more likely than not, you are not the dominant player on the board. Aim to beat the dominant player in your games by beating him with his own ploy of domination and become the dominant player in the process. What have you got to loose?

((The next issue brought the following response from Lew Pulsipher:))

Tell us, John, why did you print "The Dominant Player"? I don't intend to criticize Beyerlein, but I have to say something about this type of article. It states that a condition usually exists in a game (domination by a player). It says nothing about how to obtain that domination, or how to avoid being dominated. It is pure description and not prescription. Only the rawest neo could be unaware that he ought to try to make the other players do what he wants, and what he ought to try to make the other players consistantly determine what he does. Yet the article doesn't go beyond this stage! The least Doug could have done, if he'd thought of that, was to point out that one way to avoid phone callers is to refuse to negotiate with them until you've received a letter from him. This gives you a chance to get a letter to him before the call; it also gets things in writing. I don't make significant negotiations by fone (I've never made a long distance call for negotiations) because I want things in writing for proof later on, which may help at some point. (That's a very important reason why I haven't played in any of the ((Hoosier Archives)) demonstration games run by Walt -- the two week deadlines almost forces a player to use the phone (which I couldn't afford even if I were inclined to it.) On the other hand, it is not necessary to make calls or write every player every turn in order to dominate the game. It is necessary to get a move on early, but that's because you don't have much time to discuss plans before moves are due. Usually, it is the more positive personality, the man with ideas, who dominates, not the man who moves first. As it happens, the two characteristics usually go together.

This type of article, one that describes what happens but offers virtually no insight ~~about~~ or suggestions about what players ought to do to make something like it happen, is becoming more prevalent. They appear to me to be a waste of space, time and effort.

By the way, where does the word "Cohersted" come from? I thought it was coerced? (((Probably a typo by me --- Boyer))).

((The discussion then closed with this response from Doug in #43:))

....I don't really think that I need to try to defend my articles (especially the bad ones), but perhaps I can give some background as to what my thoughts were when writing that article. I was trying to get across to the reader the concept of the dominant player in the game of Diplomacy. This concept was not obvious to me until I had



played the game for some seven years. And then even when I thought I understood the concept and knew how to use it, I spent some 15 months thinking over the article and how to present it. (For comparison, my average time needed to think out and write an article runs about 6 months.) And altho the article was completely rewritten twice, I was still not really satisfied with it. I only submitted it at the last minute to John to be included in the 1974 IDA Handbook ((John was the editor)) because I thought it to be the most important article I have written for Diplomacy. It was too late to be included in the Handbook, but then John asked to publish it in Impassable. After a little editing (mostly by John) I agreed and sent him the article.

As I said above, I am still not happy with how I presented the concept of the dominant player, but I still don't know how to improve on it. If you or anyone else would be interested in co-authoring a more complete article, I would be happy to give it another chance. And last, you can probably blame the word "coheresed" on me.....

((To Win The Game You Must Strive To Be The Dominant Player --- that may strike you as a tautology. The winner, after all, is the dominant player. But there are other strategies to pursue, and no one strategy, including Doug's is suited to all games! You might try to form an alliance of equals, to sweep the board. Here you are not trying to dominate your ally. You'll try for the win, either by arraiging that somehow he faces a bit more opposition than you do, or by stabbing him sometime in the endgame. Another alternative is to deliberately allow someone else to be the dominant player, with you seeking to be the best liked player. At some critical juncture in the game, you will try to organize a stop-the-leader alliance. From the rapid fall of the leader you intend to emerge as the winner. This is based on the notion that a stop-the-leader alliance is fairly common, its rather unusual for a game to have two such alliances. Especially if the leader does not have a stalemate line (a common problem for Italy or Germany in late midgame), the destruction of the original leader may be all you'll need, especially if you can stab one of your allies once the original leader is safely crippled.))

((Lew has, I think, a legitimate beef against the article. Doug really only discusses one method of becoming the dominant player --- that of communicating first. Let me suggest a few other ways. The first is to try to set the strategic agenda. If you try to set the tactical agenda to your own needs, it will be painfully obvious that you are trying to dominate the alliance and the game. For longer range, or strategic goals, its not going to be so obvious. Such goals might be preventing the east from setting up a stalemate line in the Ionian; getting Russia to switch sides; trying to persuade the rest of the board that F-G alliance is unbreakable, so all most oppose them; taking Venice before the west does, etc. If these goals subtly favor you more than your ally, working toward them increases your dominance. Another technique is to present your ideas as his ideas. That means that some of the time, you'll be using your ideas, and some of the time "his" ideas --- but some of the latter will be yours. Thus, if he wants to try to jam up the German home centers to block a build, and that plan isn't done (or is, but doesn't work), and a year or two later you see that this will really profit you more than him, bring it up again, but present it as his idea ("I'd like to get back to your earlier, excellent idea of ....."). Another way is to discover who is not writing whom, and then becoming the ears for the left out party. Thus, the west might not be writing Turkey, a common occurrence. If Russia finds this out, he can become Turkey's window to the west, and gain some dominance that way, especially if he is not totally complete or honest in his news from the west.))



Diplomacy World-UK Edition Andrew Poole 17 Montgomery St Roath Park Cardiff CF2 3LZ  
Morrigan Phillip Murphy 19 Killeen Pk off Rathmore Rd Bangor, Co. Down, Northern Ire.  
Perlmutter's Revenge Paul Gardner 1676 E. 24th Eugene OR 97403  
Feudesse Ed Wrobel P.O. Box 3463 Arlington VA 22203  
Ultimately Cool Keith Sherwood 9966 Cliffridge Ave La Jolla CA 92037(might be a hoax, tho)

Part II The Middle Game - Or How to Tell Your Friends From Your Enemies

The middle game (to use chess terminology) in Diplomacy often starts with two main alliances racing each other to destroy their respective enemies. At this point the options open to a player in a major alliance are many and varied. To make them more meaningful, I'll assume a game situation and deal with the options available to one player. Assume a game where France and England have Germany down to 3 units, Turkey and Russia have Austria down to two units, and Italy is at 4 units and doing nothing.

To have the best chance of winning in this position, France must end the war with Germany as quickly as possible, either by military defeat or treaty, and must strive to prolong the war in the east as long as possible. Of the choices of treaty or defeat, I usually prefer defeat in most cases, for the following reasons: 1) It is easier to trust your own units than those of an ally--your armies cannot revolt, 2) an enemy which you have allowed to live may just be waiting for the time to spoil your chances for victory, 3) vassal states, who are not in control of their own destinies, can be rather unreliable in making moves. About the only reason for a treaty is that the other alliance has finished its war and you must end yours now or lose the game. The fastest reasonable way to defeat a country is to get that country to go into civil disorder. One way to encourage a country to drop out, outside of making them an offer they cannot refuse, is not to write them. Yes, there are times not to correspond in postal Diplomacy. Most people play Diplomacy partially because they like to get letters and if they are both losing and cut off from communication, they lose interest in the game. If, in the above example, France wants to keep Austria in the game as long as possible, France should write Austria at least once per season and he should encourage his allies to write Austria with promises of help, observations on the innate evil of Russia or Turkey, anything at all. This is difficult but often pays great rewards. Of course, if France could deliver aid (an English attack on Russia) so much the better.

After France has disposed of Germany, in one way or another, a new enemy must be chosen. Again considering that it is easier to defeat someone you have a high ratio of superiority over, the ideal situation for France would probably be getting a three way alliance (England, France, and Turkey) with Turkey and England fighting Russia and France fighting Italy. Anyone who succeeds in doing this regularly should be immediately sent on shuttle diplomacy between Moscow and Peking.

Other possibilities are: 1) a stab of England with or without a concomitant Russia-Turkish conflict, or 2) England and France vs Russia and Turkey with Italy either being an ally of one side or just part of the battlefield. The pro stab people will favor option 1. However, without a Russian-Turkish stab, any France stab of England is extremely counterproductive toward winning. The advisability of a France stab of England simultaneously with a stab in the eastern alliance must depend on tactical positions. You must be able to finish off your erstwhile ally quickly as he will probably direct most of his efforts toward avenging the stab. Also, it is usually more difficult to trust someone who has never worked with you in the game than it is to trust your long time ally. Therefore, I estimate that course 2 is preferable to the stab about 70 to 80 % of the time. If this puts me in with the pure of heart, it is only because I like winning games (being part of a 2 or 3 way draw, I consider a win).

Finally, if France and England fight Russia and Turkey, France should promise Italy almost anything for aid. Italy could slow up Turkey enough to prevent Turkey from expanding to stalemate lines and thereby assure France at least a chance at a win. Whether France should keep these promises is another question--one that must be answered in individual cases. A stab of a much smaller ally is often useful. The adage that you should pick on someone your own size is wrong in Diplomacy--pick on the little guys, they fall quicker!

In short, when nearing the end of your initial conflict in 1902 or 1903, end it as quickly as possible either by total defeat preferably, or by treaty if necessary. Likewise, actively try to prolong conflict on the other side of the board as long as possible. When deciding whom to fight next, pick someone small or get three big powers to pick on one big power. Don't stab unless you have a really good reason for it!

# WHEN IS MIDGAME?

The term "midgame" is commonly used, but its not so easy to pinpoint exactly what the term means. The concept is fairly important, tho. When you've played only a few games, each one looks very different. But after a while, you see how games go thru distinct phases, each of which have their own demands. But lets have a look at a few ideas which have been presented.

1. When two main alliances begin racing each other to destroy their respective enemies. This is the one proposed in the previous article by Gary Burce, altho to be fair, he didn't present this as a definition, only as something that often kicks midgame off. The problem is that many games never go thru such a stage, because there is only one dominant alliance or power. DW Demo game 72CR would be a famous example.

2. When the barren zone (Pie-tyo-Boh-Sil-Pru-Lvn) is crossed in force. This is probably the oldest definition, and the one I've seen the most frequently. On one hand, this can occur too early --- even in Spring 1901, and easily in S02. On the other hand, if east and west are dominated by an alliance or power around the same time, this may never occur, or may occur only a few seasons before a win. The definition is unduly dependent on the German alliance structure.

3. The spring after one of the major powers is down to 2 or fewer SCs. This has the advantage of being very specific, and it was the one I used in my analysis of Austrian game performance in DW #16. This could occur awfully early, even S02, and can reflect an isolated event, such as an early dropout or a very successful blitz. My analysis, incidently showed that by this definition midgame started in S04 (median and mode).

4. When the opening game alliances start to obstruct the progress of those successful in the opening game. This is Smyth's definition. This is a more flexible definition, as it looks at the entire board. It emphasizes the strategic changes which must accompany the new phase that the game is in. On the other hand, its a little hard to say exactly when this is occurring. Moreover, as in the first two, it might never occur. If only one alliance has really been successful in the opening game, it may continue rolling for the rest of the game. Many triple alliances, such as EGT or FIR can go all the way with little or no serious obstructions.

If none of those are satisfactory, let me create two more for you to ponder:

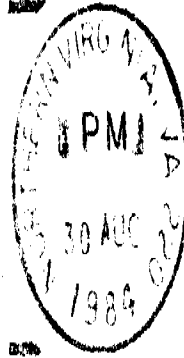
5. The time between opening and endgame. No, I'm serious: Those two are easy to define. Opening game is when alliances are weak or fluid, players are exploring options and jockeying for position, and the board is sorting itself out into stronger and weaker powers. Endgame is where the focus is directly on determining the outcome of the game, when the decisions are made and carried out which will bring the game to a close. Midgame is just what falls inbetween. Like 4., this one is somewhat vague, and subject to interpretation, and probably best seen from hindsight. It emphasizes that midgame has a different agenda, without spelling out exactly what that is.

6. This is my favorite, but its complicated. A player is at midgame when his first victim has been crushed, and he's deeply engaged with his second victim. The game is at midgame when either A) two players, not militarily allied, are both at midgame or, B) one player is deeply engaged with his third victim. For example, under A), EG pushed F down, to Spa-Por, and the attack on R is in full swing. IRT have stomped A, and now RT have attacked Italy. Under B), AR have knocked out T, A has then stabbed I. When AR attack G, we're at midgame, even if I has not been dispatched. The second or third victim does not have to be destroyed, just that there be a serious war. And it must be an attack. Thus, in B), if G had attacked A, I'd say we are still at opening game, as A may be stalled at this point. The definition, then, tries to look at whether the players have gone beyond the reasonable goals of the opening game.

No matter how you define it, midgame is the time to reevaluate the strategy that served you well (or poorly, for that matter) in the opening game. It is the time when relations with your non-neighbors become increasingly important. Alliances tend to be more stable, because the victims may be larger, and players can afford a unit or two behind as protection against stabs. And it is the time when you prepare the stage for the drama of endgame.

Mark L Berch  
492 Naylor Place  
Alexandria VA 22304

If the number (83) appears by your  
name on the address label, this  
signifies that your sub has just  
, well, expired.



Horace Moses  
Founder, Junior Achievement  
USA 20c

~~Long Beach~~  
ave 1  
Menlo Park, CA 94025