

Diplomacy World #169



Spring 2025 Issue

www.diplomacyworld.net



Notes from the Editor:

Welcome to the latest issue of **Diplomacy World**, the Spring 2025 issue.

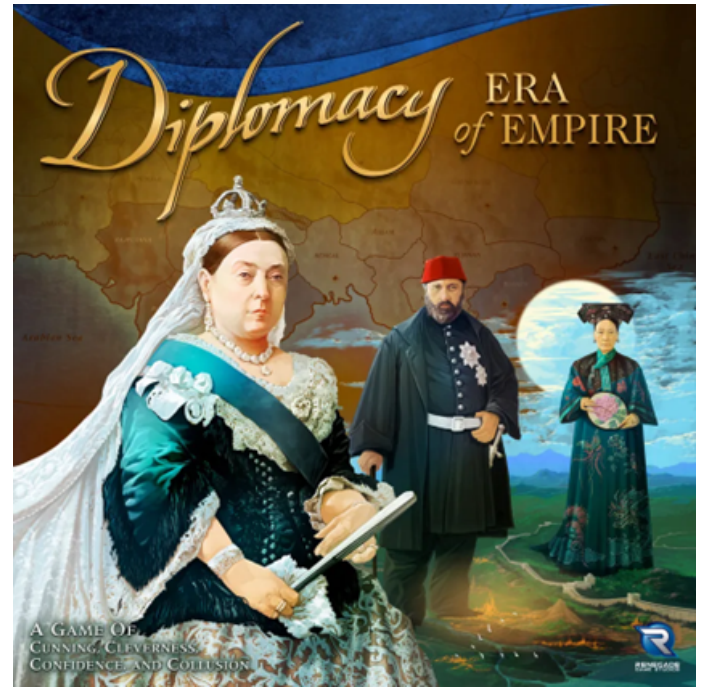
This may wind up being a shorter issue compared to some recent ones. If so, in part that's because the biggest event of the spring – World DipCon 2025 at Whipping in San Francisco, California – is taking place just a few days after this issue is scheduled to be released. In fact, I gave some consideration to releasing this issue late, in order to include the results and perhaps an early article discussing the event. But, in the end, I decided that wasn't the way to go.

First of all, when I returned as Lead Editor in 2007 (at the urging of Jim Burgess), I set down one primary goal: keep **Diplomacy World** on a tight, reliable schedule. During the ten years prior (beginning with my own sudden, unexpected retreat from the hobby in 1998), you never really knew when the next issue was going to come out. From the standpoint of a reader and a contributor, that was a sure-fire way to cause people to lose interest. Why take the time to write something when it might not see the light of day for six months or longer? Why rely on **Diplomacy World** for news and entertainment when it could disappear for long periods at any time? So, when I came on board again, we agreed: the issues will come out on time, no matter how much material was on hand (or how little).

With that in mind, I just didn't think delaying the issue would be worth it. Besides, with luck there will be **plenty** of articles about the event in the **next** issue! And not just about the game results themselves, but the people, the fun, the atmosphere....everything!

As for the issue at hand...there's plenty of material here for you to enjoy in the meantime – and more may arrive before the final publication is uploaded. For example, we have articles from both Edi Birsan and Lewis Pulsipher that point out some Diplomacy lessons from the actions of the new administration in the White House.

Then we have Ben Durfee with two-fisted coverage on the newly-announced official variant Diplomacy: Era of Empire. Not only is there an interview with Thomas Haver (including responses from Renegade Games), but there's also Ben's own view on what we already know, and what he hopes to discover.



The newest official Diplomacy Variant:
Diplomacy: Era of Empire

By the way, if you haven't been paying attention you may not have realized that the Australian hobby is suddenly back in full force. It's probably where we've seen the greatest growth over the last few years! Be sure to check out three pieces from Shane Armstrong highlighting just some of what has been going on down under!

Elsewhere, Roger Pitfield returns with another "Never a Cross Word" crossword puzzle. Mal Arky and David Hood return for their usual – and fantastic – columns. Thomas Haver has news from Renegade and from recent events. **And there's plenty more to read and enjoy.** I always urge readers to slowly peruse the entire issue, start to finish. You never know what article that you might have passed by suddenly turns out to be the one you enjoy the most!

That's enough from me this time around. ***I'll close by reminding you the next deadline for Diplomacy World submissions is July 1, 2025.*** Remember, besides articles (which are always prized and appreciated), we LOVE to get letters, feedback, input, ideas, and suggestions too. So, email me at diplomacyworld@yahoo.com! See you in the Summer, and happy stabbing!

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Some classic art by Nemanja Simic



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Alex Amann, Mal Arky, Shane Armstrong, George K. Atkins, Edi Birsan, Elle Doerr, Ben Durfee, Brandon Fogel, Thomas Haver, David Hood, Marcus Loane, Roger Pitfield, Bryan Pravel, Lewis Pulsipher, Robert Schuppe, Adam Silverman, David P. Smith, Riaz Virani. **Add your name to the 2025 list by submitting something for the next issue!**

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

Selected Upcoming Events

Find Conventions All Over the World at <http://petermc.net/diplomacy/> and <https://www.thenadf.org/play/> and <https://www.diplomacybriefing.com/diplomacytournaments> and <https://diplobn.com/schedule/>

World DipCon 2025 at Whipping

- April 4-6, 2025 – Hotel Spero, San Francisco, California
- Email: worlddipcon2025@gmail.com
- <https://www.thenadf.org/world-dipcon-2025/>

Netherlands Diplomacy Championship

- May 10-11, 2025 – Groningen, The Netherlands
- Details - <https://bit.ly/3G5OQaz>
- <https://forms.gle/ezbyNT49u981NKEe8>

DixieCon

- May 23-25, 2025 – Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- <https://www.dixiecon.com/>

Origins Game Fair

- June 19-21, 2025 – Columbus, Ohio
- <http://www.originsgamefair.com>

RegensCon

- June 28-29, 2025 - Regensburg, Germany
- <https://regenscon.com>

2025 Jameson Hand Memorial ARMADA Regatta

- July 25-27, 2025 - Boulder, Colorado
- <https://www.facebook.com/events/965271088819369/>

World Boardgaming Championships

- July 28-29, 2025 – Seven Springs, Pennsylvania
- <http://www.boardgamers.org>

U.S. Diplomacy Championship at Gencon

- July 31 – August 2, 2025 – Indianapolis, Indiana
- <http://www.gencon.com>

World Boardgaming Championships

- August 1-2, 2025 – Seven Springs, Maryland
- <http://www.boardgamers.org>

National Diplomacy Masters

- September 19-23, 2025 – Las Vegas, Nevada
- <https://wsbgvegas.com>

Dipcon at Weasel Moot XIX

- October 3-5, 2025 – Chicago, Illinois
- <https://windycityweasels.org/weasel-moot-xix/>

Carnage

- October 24-26, 2025 – Killington, Vermont
- <https://carnagecon.com>

EuroDipcon

- November 7-9, 2025 - Leiden, The Netherlands
- <https://bit.ly/42kxkXO>



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Knives and Daggers - The Diplomacy World Letter Column



George K. Atkins - First, happy new year to you and yours! Next, I absolutely love the new format: Snappy layout, strong color, and attractive fonts. Not that I hated or even disliked the old format, but it's good to have a refresh every so often. But yes, I think Elle Doer is doing it, and doing it right.

SUGGESTION: Maybe this is also a good time to have an annotated Beginner's Game run in several consecutive DW issues. Veteran players can send these DW to other newbies who might otherwise be overwhelmed with all of the assumed knowledge found in the articles and discussions. It could be like those annotated games that used to run in AH's The General, where the commentator and players all put in their turn-by-turn comments. By the way, I am definitely not the person to do this! I'm just an idea guy, more or less.

***[[We have done many such games in the past, with the last one wrapping up in 2021 (issue #156 had the end game report and final comments). We decided to take a step back at that time, in part because there were so many YouTube breakdowns of tournament games that we weren't sure if newcomers would want to read through a slow recap over the course of a few years. Perhaps it is time to revisit the idea? I'll bring it up to Rick Desper who is still the Demo Game Editor.**]]*

Incidentally, one of my favorite parts of The General were those wonderful Series Replay articles. I learned a lot about each game.]]



Bryan Pravel (Windy City Weasels) - Robert Zahn's recent submission on the 2009 World Diplomacy Championship at Origins includes implications about the Windy City Weasels Diplomacy Club that don't reflect my experience as a player and organizer with the club since 2015. While I can't speak to why Robert chose to revisit this moment, I believe we can all agree on this: Diplomacy is at its best when our events are fair, respectful, and focused on building community.

To me, Diplomacy is more than a game of strategy. It is an exploration of what happens when competition meets connection. It is where friendships are forged, rivalries are tested, and communities come to life. For nearly two decades, the Windy City Weasels have created a space

where players of all backgrounds can experience the joys, challenges, and camaraderie that Diplomacy brings.

Fairness and respect are at the core of what the Weasels do. We were among the first clubs to champion and more importantly enforce a code of conduct to ensure that everyone who joins our events is treated with respect. These are not just words; they are a promise to everyone who steps into one of our events.

We also believe in giving back to the global Diplomacy community. During the COVID lockdowns, we partnered with the Minnesota and London Diplomacy Clubs to develop virtual formats like the Virtual Diplomacy League and virtual face-to-face tournaments, connecting players worldwide and making the game accessible to more people who may not have the means to travel to face-to-face events. And when we saw flaws in popular scoring systems, we created the Open Tribute system as an effort to discourage collusion and encourage fair, competitive play.

At the same time, we honor tradition. For 16 years, Weasel Moot has been one of the longest-running Diplomacy tournaments in the world, a gathering place for players to compete and celebrate the game we love. Its longevity is a testament to the values we hold and the community we have built.

Diplomacy is more than any one event. It is a global community. That is why we partner with clubs worldwide and support the growth of new ones. Strong local communities strengthen us all, and we remain committed to helping Diplomacy thrive in the American Midwest, and every corner of the map.

As we prepare to host the North American DipCon in Chicago, we are excited to welcome players from every background. We are ready to showcase an event that reflects the best of Diplomacy: fairness, camaraderie, and meaningful competition.

Diplomacy thrives when we come together, not just to compete, but to connect, to learn, and to grow. If you are curious about what it is like to attend a Weasel event, reach out. Talk to those who have joined us since 2015. Hear their stories. I think you will find more than just a game. You will find a community that values fairness, welcomes everyone, and celebrates the bonds we build both on and off the board.





Adam Silverman - I have seen some great pieces on Diplomacy history published in DW, but I was very confused by the article "Origins 2009 and the World Diplomacy Championship" appearing in the Winter 2024 issue. Rather than disparage one of the most active and inclusive Diplomacy communities in the world, I would encourage Robert to play some games with the Chicago hobbyists, attend DipCon in Chicago in 2025, and see for himself why people who play with the Weasels love being part of their community. You can't find a better group of people anywhere than the Weasel organizers Brandon Fogel, Brian Pravel, Kevin O'Kelly, and Chris Kelly, and their dedication to the Diplomacy community is unmatched. There's a reason players like myself regularly travel halfway across the country to participate in Chicago's events; I hope Robert will come and find out for himself at DipCon later this year. I certainly plan to be there!



David P. Smith - This is just a short note to tell you how much I enjoyed Diplomacy World this past year, especially reading about tournaments the world over—all very interesting. Best wishes to you and DW for this new year and thank you for all you do for our hobby.

[[Thank you David. It was a joy to hear from you again in 2024!]]

Diplomacy: Era of Empire – An Interview with Thomas Haver

by Ben Durfee

Recently, I had the pleasure to send some questions to Mr. Thomas Haver regarding Diplomacy: Era of Empire, the first Diplomacy variant to see an official publication since...well, its spiritual predecessor, Colonial Diplomacy. So, this is a two-part article—first would be the questions sent and answered by Mr. Haver on behalf of the Renegade design team for Era of Empire, and second are a few personal thoughts about the upcoming release, especially when compared to Colonial Diplomacy. The interview questions and responses have been reformatted and lightly edited from the original document the questions were submitted and answered on. Please enjoy!

BD: This release is obviously inspired by Colonial Diplomacy, and the map has many similarities but also some important differences. What was y'all's experience with Colonial Diplomacy, if any, and what adjustments did y'all want to make in this release?

TH: Diplomacy was re-released by Renegade in July 2023 after being licensed from Hasbro. The game had solid sales, in no small part to the support of the community and publications such as Diplomacy World. At the end of last year, we began looking at other properties in the Diplomacy-sphere as potential follow-ups. Diplomacy has a long, rich history with an unrivaled number of variants, both official and unofficial. Avalon Hill previously published a few variants such as Machiavelli and Colonial Diplomacy. We knew what worked from a design perspective because those games were already on the market.

We also knew about the design gaps because of community feedback (once again, thanks to Diplomacy World for being one of those voices). After reviewing hundreds of potential variants, *Diplomacy: Era of Empire* was selected and approved as the first official variant to be published in 30 years.

BD: What was the design process for this release? What inspired Renegade to make this the first official Diplomacy variant release in many years?

TH: *Diplomacy: Era of Empire* is based on an existing design, so this was more of a redesign. From a catalog of hundreds of variants, a subset of a dozen titles was selected for further review. From that list, the Colonial Diplomacy project was approved by Hasbro. As part of the selection process for the game, we reviewed prior feedback from multiple sources and pulled in background information and designer details. Some aspects of the original design were retained, while we decided to either rework or remove some existing mechanics. We also decided to introduce several new mechanics to the game to differentiate the experience from classical *Diplomacy*. The overall process involved a tremendous amount of information gathering, reviewing with several variant designers, playtesting with groups of both experienced and inexperienced players, then updating the game for a new audience. Every aspect of the original title was reviewed and updated: box art, wooden pieces, map, rules, game modes, and even the country flags.



For example, Renegade retained the services of Janos Orban for the cover art illustration. The box art for *Era of Empire* was designed to be similar to the most recent edition of *Diplomacy*: three characters representing three of the Powers in the game, with a backdrop of the map. The playtesters themselves voted on the figures to be represented: Queen Victoria, Sultan Abdulaziz, and Empress Dowager Cixi.

For the map, Renegade employed the services of gaming legend Rob Lazzaretti (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rob_Lazzaretti). His challenge was to make a map where the contrast between the wooden pieces plus tokens against the board itself was good enough for people to see from a distance. Most board games are played at a table with everyone seated, but for *Diplomacy* most of the action happens at a distance while players are negotiating. This map was designed for face-to-face play.

Lastly, the *Era of Empire* rules require a team to complete. From the original published rules, they get passed through various groups such as legal, accessibility, cultural consultants, editors, experts on the game, art design, game producers, brand management, and more. People working on this game might have a few dozen active projects and live in different time zones, so the process is quite involved and lengthy. The arc from project approval to physical game in the hands of fans is long, but totally worth it when you see people enjoying the game. We hope fans will enjoy *Era of Empire*.

BD: The original Colonial Diplomacy had several big balancing issues as released. What kind of playtesting has been done thus far with *Era of Empires*?

TH: Feedback about the prior release of the game was directly incorporated into the game from the outset. Playtesting covered the past year plus in person, in Slack, and on Discord with various groups. The rulebook credits more than 40 individuals who have contributed in some form, whether it be gameplay, rules reviews, map revisions, or mechanics. Some individuals are well known in the *Diplomacy* community, whereas others are brand new to the game entirely. We wanted to have both groups represented to ensure both the long-time fans and new players would enjoy this game. The map itself has gone through many modifications (for instance, there are no coasts in *Era of Empire*). Input from several experienced variant designers was valuable in addressing some of the balance concerns from the past game.

The rulebook has also been updated from the original to more closely match the 6th edition rules in style, with the added changes to reflect the gameplay in *Era of Empire*.

BD: How fast does *Era of Empires* compare to classic *Diplomacy*?

TH: *Diplomacy: Era of Empire* plays in 4 hours, same as classic *Diplomacy*. While there are more Supply Centers and provinces in the new game, the mechanics and end-game conditions mean the game moves at a faster pace. The goal was to have both games play about the same time.

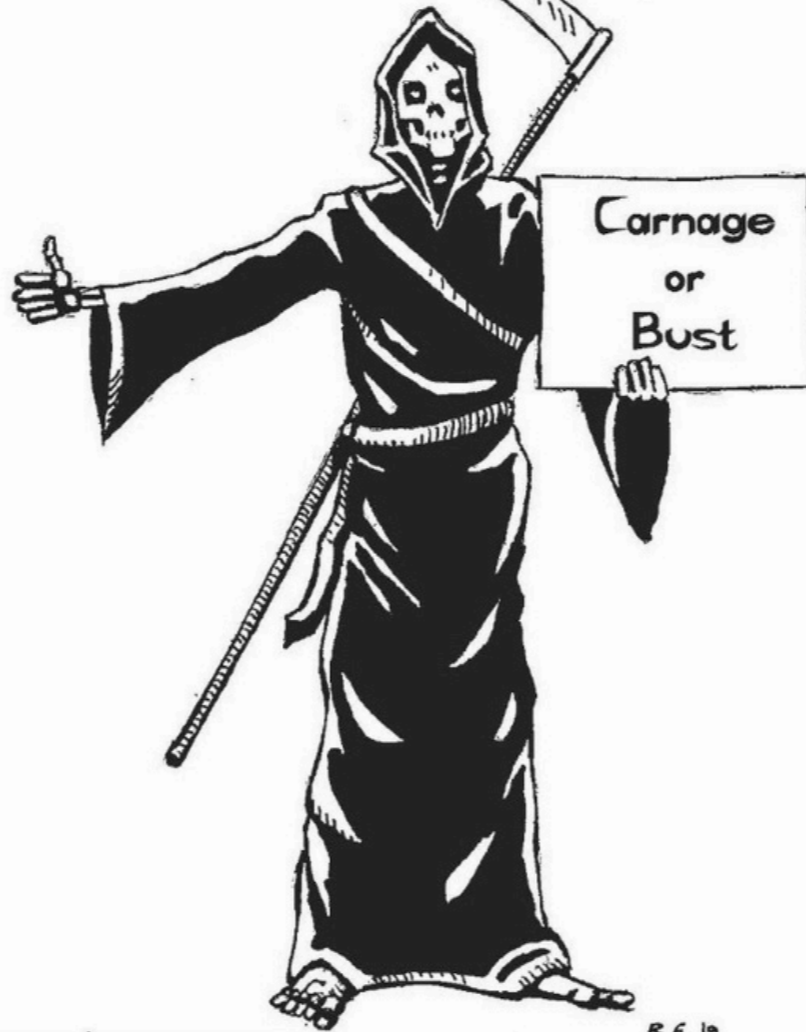
BD: Will this be the first of several *Diplomacy* variants released by Renegade, similar to Renegade's approach to *Axis and Allies*?

TH: The sales from the 2023 edition of *Diplomacy* by Renegade helped lead to the decision to publish *Era of Empire*. Although you won't receive any formal announcements in this interview about new products, it's important for fans of the game to know sales of these products directly affect the decision to publish other *Diplomacy*-related products. Fans of *Axis & Allies* (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/axis-and-allies-home>) and *Heroscape* (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/heroscape-home>) have many releases to look forward to every year.

Fans of *Diplomacy* should stay tuned to the product announcements by Renegade on socials and during RenCon (<https://www.youtube.com/@RenegadeGameStudios>), a regular YouTube event for announcing events and products (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/renegade-con/>). If you want to see more *Diplomacy*, then please continue to support the current edition (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy/>) and pre-order *Era of Empire* (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-era-of-empire/>).



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Ask the Hobby Historian: Back Again?

by David Hood

Just like lots of other folk in Diplomacy right now, as I write this I am eagerly awaiting the 2025 World Dipcon in San Francisco. The Bay Area crowd always puts on a great tournament anyway, and they've been planning and promoting this WDC for years now. The hard work is showing off, as the current registration list is over 110. This will be the largest World Dipcon in some time, with the attendees list running the gamut in terms of country of origin, experience level, and forms of hobby involvement. This is shaping up to be an event of epic proportion.

One look at the names on the list and you will see many recent champions of face-to-face events, virtual league winners, and names you would recognize off the bat from Diplomacy Broadcast Network videos both from the player and analyst ranks. But let's go a little deeper, and older, than that. Sometimes an event like World Dipcon, or a regional championship like the North American Dipcon or EDC, can see the return of players who have been on hiatus for a short, or long, while. I see names on this list of folks who have hobby histories of note of whom some reading this article o' mine have not yet heard. Well, let's change that.



The first person I ever talked to in the Diplomacy hobby was Pete Gaughan, back in 1985. Somehow I had gotten ahold of his phone number as someone who could tell me details about the 1986 Dipcon, which several members of our FTF club had decided to attend.

I asked him mostly about the scoring system (because apparently back then I cared about such things) and then after he's had enough of my hectoring, I think he politely got this overbearing young North Carolinian off the phone. I was later finally to meet Pete face to face at the 1992 Dipcon in Kansas City, after having interacted with him many times postally in between.

Another name I noticed on the list for the upcoming SF is Simon Bouton, from the United Kingdom. The 2000 World Dipcon in Baltimore was one of our hobby's most successful events ever. Not only were the numbers huge (58 total boards played with 141 different participants) but the competition was also fierce, with many of the best players in the world having been recruited by tournament director Jim Yerkey to make the tournament one for the record books. Simon won the event in convincing fashion, with Irish player Brian Dennehy placing second to Simon (but not very close in score.) Simon made a real impression on everyone with whom he played, as a clever, calculating, and persuasive diplomat with little to no weakness in his game. I don't think anyone was surprised to see him at the top of the leaderboard at the end of the weekend.

Certainly, our esteemed 2025 tournament director Adam Silverman was not surprised, as he lost a Wicked Witches solo race to Simon in the second round of that event, with Adam's 15 center Turkey losing to Simon's 18 center England. So, again, it's very exciting to see Simon coming out of quasi-retirement for this year's WDC, given that his last recorded tournament appearance was WDC 2017 and before that it had been the Berlin WDC in 2006.

There are actually a number of players from that World Dipcon 25 years ago who will be in attendance this year, in addition to me (who placed an exciting 94th in that year's competition.) Both Yann Clouet and Edi Birsan were there, both multiple tournament winners in multiple locations over many years. Edi will be participating in the panel discussion about the history of World Dipcon that I will moderate right before round one, and I hope to convince Yann to be a panelist as well. I also want to mention Mike McMillie, whose attendance this year will be for the first time since 2018's WDC in Washington DC (and before that for him it was the 2014 WDC in Chapel Hill) so it's great to see him back after several years absence. David Harshbarger, one of our original North Carolina players, is also scheduled to attend. He started coming back to events in 2023 after many years gone, so that's another stop in the David Hood Nostalgia Tour.

Alright, gentle readers, I know you all are asking the question. So what, Hood? Big deal, Hood. There are scores of newer players coming, and many for the first time. Does it really matter that we are seeing names from the past, back again? Besides geezers like David Hood, is this important to anyone else?



Alright, gentle readers, I know you all are asking the question. So what, Hood? Big deal, Hood. There are scores of newer players coming, and many for the first time. Does it really matter that we are seeing names from the past, back again? Besides geezers like David Hood, is this important to anyone else?

Let me suggest to you that it should be. As has been said many times over the years, we come to the hobby for the game, but we stay in the hobby for the people. Perhaps all the Dipfolk you care about are active right now, and you see them regularly at pickup games, club games, or face to face tournaments - or you interact with them regularly online while playing virtual or extended deadline games.

That's great, I also love to see people over and over as part of my hobby experience. But if you stay at it long enough, you will have Diplomacy friends who partially fade away from hobby activity, or disappear altogether. That's life, of course. But when you have the opportunity to reconnect after a period of years, I'm telling you, it's awesome. So, cherish the hobby friends you have, for sure. Make new ones, for sure. But also, be on the lookout for opportunities to reestablish ties to those in your own hobby history. You'll be glad you did.

Negotiation Tips in Light of a Bad Negotiator's Habits

by Lewis Pulsipher

I saved a list from Quora of reasons selected by David W. Rudlin showing why Donald Trump is such a bad negotiator. I'm going to do a riff off that list and discuss some of the things you need to do to be a good negotiator. (This was written last year, though after Trump was re-elected. Very interesting in light of the Oval Office debacle.)

First, **don't try to bully the other side**, because a great many intelligent people - and we hope you're negotiating with intelligent people - really hate bullies. Bullying doesn't work against them, it just makes you look dumb. (If you don't know how bullies behave, ask yourself if you are one.)

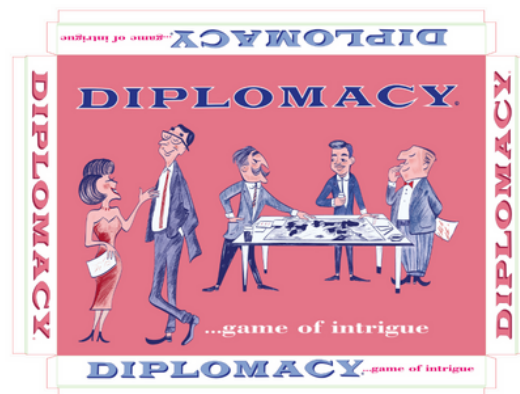
The next thing is you **need to be empathetic about what the other side needs**. You need to see things from the other side's point of view. If you don't, how are you going to understand what they need in order to feel that they have succeeded in the negotiation?

Third, **look for a win-win outcome**, an outcome where both sides feel that they have succeeded. Not every negotiation can work that way, but win-lose as an objective is a bad idea. If one side feels they've lost, they'll look to renege whenever a chance arises. (And in Diplomacy, that amounts to a backstab.)

The next one is, **thinking long-term** more than short term is important. What you do not want to do is "live in the moment" because that's especially shortsighted. Shortsighted is likely to catch up with you in the long run.

The next thing is **don't live in a bubble** in the sense of getting all your information from one source, or possibly from yes-men. You want to get information from a lot of places, you want information that may challenge your point of view or your world view. You don't want to be like Chairman Xi in China who has "shot the messenger" so many times that he doesn't get bad news, because then he doesn't know about reality. If you rely on yes-men (or, say, on a "news" network who have themselves admitted in defending a lawsuit that no reasonable person would believe what they say) you only have a bizarre idea in your head of what reality is. In a negotiation you're trying to move from the current reality to a new reality. If you don't understand the current reality, how can you succeed?

Last thing is **don't worry about how you look to outsiders**. Trump is concerned with photo ops and "reality TV" while the other side is winning the negotiation. Rarely applicable to games, I must admit.



Art courtesy of <https://www.diplomacybriefing.com/>



U.S. Diplomacy Championship

We proudly bring you the annual U.S. Championship at the largest Diplomacy event in the country. Square off in one or more of the four qualifiers. The seven Best Country winners from the qualifiers advance to the Top Board on Saturday night. Our group also hosts "Introduction to Diplomacy" events concurrent with the tournament events.

July 31st - August 2nd at GenCon in Indianapolis, Indiana

Round One: 12pm-4pm Thursday
Round Two: 8pm-12am Thursday
Round Three: 12pm-4pm Friday
Round Four: 8pm-12am Friday
Championship Board: 4pm Saturday

Contact: Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)
Website: <http://www.gencon.com/>

**GEN
CON**



New Year? New Year's Tournament!

by Shane Armstrong

The Asia-Pacific saw its first tournament of 2025 from January 24 to 26 with the Bangkok New Year Tournament held across a few venues in the Thai capital between the Western and Lunar New Years.

15 players hailing from the likes of Australia, Germany, Italy, Hong Kong, the United States, and, of course, Thailand, met over the board to share in the unique experience of playing Diplomacy.

Round 1 saw Australia's Andrew Goff top the board with a 9 SC Germany that earned him Best Germany, followed by a local player, Bonnie, who finished with 7 as France.

Round 2 saw a strong A-R run by Australians Stuart Barton and Ken Gordon (the host of the excellent Diplomacy Games podcast) respectively, finish with 12 and 10 dots, also taking out those best country awards.

The third-round board was also topped by a player hailing from Australia, with Melissa Call's Turkey finishing on 10, and taking out the best country trophy, but Round 4 proved the highlight.



Andrew Goff's 13 as Italy in Round 4 earned him the Best Italy trophy, and would generally be enough to see him home as the tournament winner, but Ken Gordon's 17 dot France saw him top the board with a 4 SC gap to take out the tournament for his debut win in FTF Diplomacy! Congratulations to Ken - truly one of the most fun people to share a board with down in this part of the world.

Best England was awarded to Vidal Das from the United States, who finished on 4 dots in Round 1. Tough tournament for England, with SC counts of 4, 1, 1, and 0 across the weekend.

Best Shane Cubis went to Hong Kong's Tristan Lee, and the ever-wonderful Tournament Director, Sascha Heylmann, awarded a Community Service Award to a true legend of the hobby, Andrew Goff.

In SE Asia and want to get into contact with the hobby? Just go to <https://diplomacygames.com/register>, fill out the form, and we'll put you in touch with Sascha!

Want to hear the tournament wrap-up from the champion himself? Just check out Episode 135 of the Diplomacy Games podcast - <https://diplomacygames.com/>

Many thanks to Stuart Barton for the photos!



The Real World Through Diplomacy's Lens

by Edi Birsan



How do you explain what is going on in the world of politics - be it local or international - through the lens of the game of Diplomacy? There are power plays, turnabouts, betrayals, lies, cheating, and downright shocking behavior... and this appears to be the evening news rather than the Spring 1901 reading of orders. For the last twelve years I have been on the City of Concord city council. This is a city in California with an official population of about 125,000 (although in reality it is closer to 130,000). I have been on the Democratic Party County Central Committee for about 15 years. During that time, I've discovered that much of what goes on in the game of Diplomacy has manifested itself in a shadow painful echo in the real world. Sometimes the table talk is identical to what you hear in reality.

After being appointed to fill an elected position that fell vacant mid-term, a certain person stepped forward to be a 'caretaker' until someone else could run for the position. Then - low and behold - when they later announced they were running for the position, and it was pointed out they had said they were NOT going to do that, the given answer was: "It was true at the time I said it." Here are some other phrases heard often around the table top and actually heard in the real realm, Diplomacy players can fill in the scenario:

"I never agreed to support it; we agreed that you wanted me to support it."

"What, I can't change my mind?"

"You were going to lose anyway, so what if it was 3 to 2 or 4 to 1?"

"There was not enough time to tell you."

"I thought you were kidding."

"I opposed it because you supported it."

While the consequences in the game are a lost game, in the city council it can mean thousands now have expenses going up and services going down. I have never seen a double-cross actually resulting in a benefit to the community.

There is also the description of actions in the real world that lend themselves to Diplomacy move descriptions. For example, the Russian takeover of the Crimea in 2014:

Russian Orders

A Moscow to Sevastopol

Fleet Black Sea Support A Moscow to Sevastopol

Ukraine Orders

No orders received from Ukraine

A Ukraine holds.

Now take a look at the actual Diplomacy map and you see what Putin thinks the borders of the Ukraine are, and that they are inside Russia. He is looking to the U.S. to cut the support from Warsaw and Rumania.

Meanwhile, for those that enjoy worldwide variants, the Trump Administration is now looking at Canada as if it is an undefended neutral supply center, and suddenly thinks that Panama's inland waterway called the Panama Canal is also a supply center. But Greenland...in no variant map is it a supply center! How often do players in email games find that a replacement player comes in for a position, and they totally change the alliance structure, betraying long-term alliances that existed before? The stalemate lines that kept the peace are now broken.

We all play a game so that we can have fun and make it fun for others, but we have to remember we are playing exactly that: **a game**, and that in the real world such behavior cannot be relied on to bring results we would be proud of.



A photograph of two men smiling and standing together at a conference. The man on the left is wearing glasses and a blue shirt, and the man on the right is wearing a blue shirt and has his arm around the first man's shoulder. They are both wearing lanyards with badges. The background is a blurred crowd of people.

DIXIECON 39

DIPLOMACY TOURNAMENT

CHAPEL HILL

MAY 23-25, 2025

Tournament Director: David Hood

Assistant TD: Michael Lowrey

Dixiecon is the longest-running Diplomacy tournament location in the world. Since 1987, Diplomats from around North America and beyond have gathered in Chapel Hill to play games, eat BBQ, and deepen hobby friendships.

This Year's Details:

1. One round each on Friday, Saturday, Sunday – best two scores count, using Dixiecon scoring
2. Unlimited rounds except for Sunday round which has random end time 7 to 9 hours from the start
3. BBQ Dinner on Saturday afternoon
4. Open Gaming, Iron Man Event for non-Dip gaming, and Social Activities start Thursday night
5. \$50 registration, \$50/night double or \$80/night single to stay in dorm, hotel options also available
6. Full tournament coverage on the Diplomacy Broadcast Network YouTube Channel

For more information, email davidhood@dixiecon.com or visit www.dixiecon.com.

Journey to the Bismark Cup

by Marcus Loane

I was first introduced to Diplomacy in 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Bored and with plenty of time to kill, my friends and I played a highly unstructured, chaotic, but ultimately very fun extended deadline game. The following year, I decided to investigate further. I wanted to see how the pros did it. I quickly stumbled across the DBN and was enthralled by the DBNI. I recall watching Peter McNamara win, and while I had never met the man, nor played with him, I was excited to see an Australian take out such an esteemed competition.

My friends and I played three or four more games over the next three years and while our games were few and far between, I continued to watch DBN coverage throughout this period. It wasn't until late 2023 that I decided to investigate how I could join the VDL. When I arrived for my first game, I was both intimidated and excited to be playing with a raft of names I recognized from DBN coverage. My gameplay was characterized by tactical mistakes, poor strategy, and paranoid negotiations. On the good graces of experienced players wanting to give a first-timer a good game, I fumbled my way to eight centers, finishing third. Shoutout to my best mate Gus Cowan, who managed to win this game, also as a first timer. From that moment, I was hooked. (Side note – this is why it's a good idea to help new players to have a good first game). Of course, this result was the epitome of beginner's luck. I played several more games that season and was eliminated in nearly all of them. While my results were poor, what I didn't realize at the time, was how much I was learning by playing with more experienced players.

In February 2024 I signed up for the VDC. The tournament itself went about as well as my first VDL season. I think I was eliminated in every single game. But at that tournament I met the World Champion at the time, Jamal Blakkarly, a man who has been instrumental in my development as a Diplomacy player. Jamal told me about the face-to-face scene he was building in Canberra, where I was living at the time, and invited me to play in my first face to face game. I went and played, was again eliminated, but I loved the face-to-face element. To this day, I maintain that the face-to-face game is incredibly different to the virtual game. Being able to see your fellow players makes a huge difference. As does not being able to see the board, and having to write out orders as opposed to clicking on a screen.

After the game, Jamal told me about the upcoming Melbourne Open, the first face to face tournament in Australia for the year. I was moving to Melbourne just in time for the tournament, and I decided to sign up. I arrived at the Melbourne Open nervous. I didn't know a single person there but I recognized legends of the game, like Andrew Goff and Peter McNamara, as well as Jamal, the one familiar face at the event. I remember my first game at the tournament vividly. I was France in a Western Triple which quickly turned into an EF. Aided by a good ally in England (Rob Hillier), I swept to a 12-center board top. After that game I recall Jamal introducing me to Goffy, proudly showing me off as the first product of the factory of Diplomacy prodigies that Canberra has become. After a respectable middling score in my second round, I went home that night as the leader of the Melbourne Open. I could barely believe it. Up until that point, my Diplomacy career had largely been a chaotic series of eliminations or bare survivals.

I ended the Melbourne Open in 4th place. I had gone from being nobody to a kid with potential. I had belief in myself as a player. Despite my many failed attempts, watching and playing with so many better players had enabled me to learn and develop as a player, and now I had arrived. Of course, I didn't have all the answers at this point, as Jamal likes to always remind me, but I had belief in my ability and a desire to improve.

My next tournament was one month later, in Canberra. It was my best tournament for the year. In the final round, I stabbed Andrew Goff for a 14-centre board top to finish the tournament with the most points. Unfortunately, the title and DBNI points were stripped due to the handicap system in place for the tournament. Nonetheless I was immensely proud of myself.

I didn't play in another tournament until October, in which I finished fourth. Max Wanji Roe Banks won the tournament, setting up a two-way race for the Bismark Cup, which would be decided at the final tournament of the year – the Australian Open. The Bismark Cup is awarded to the player who accrues the most points across face-to-face tournaments in Australia and New Zealand in a calendar year. Jamal Blakkarly would have also been in this race if he weren't the TD of the final tournament.



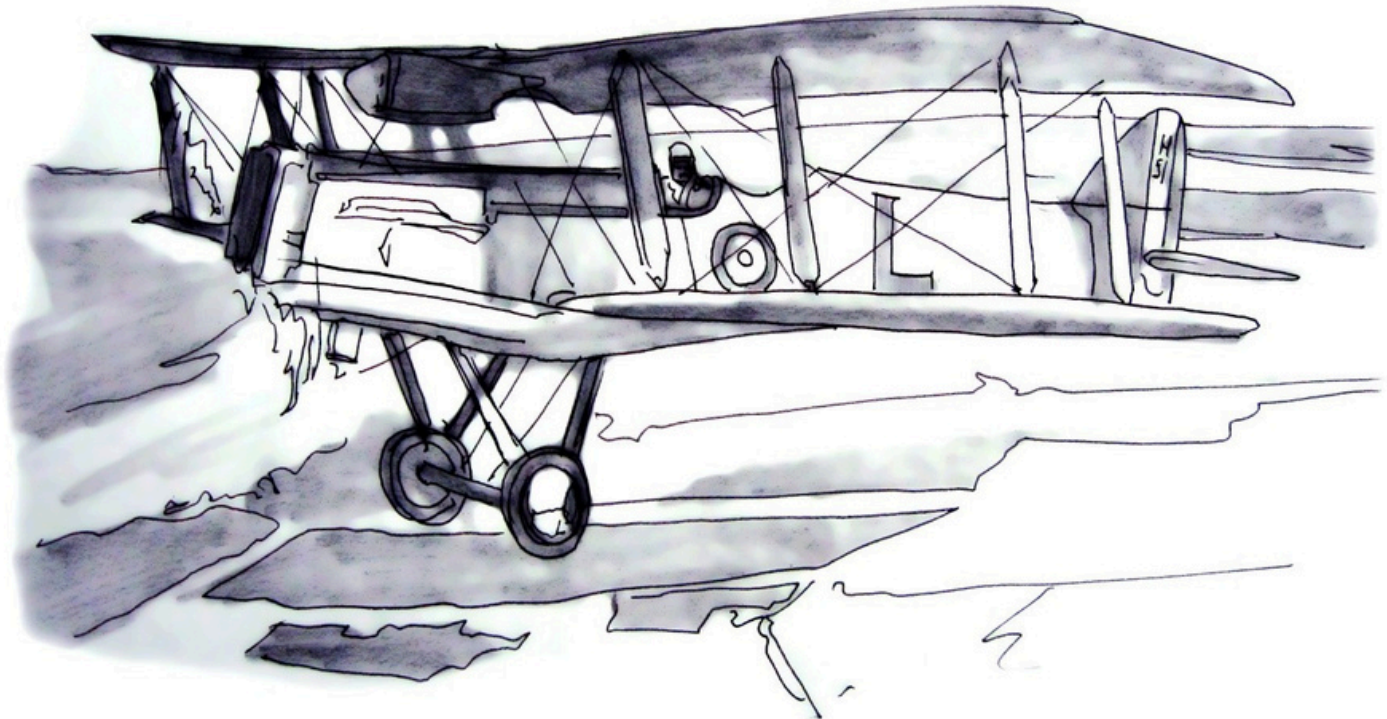
The Australian Open was my first time playing in a tournament with a top board and after three initial rounds, I qualified. So did Max. My first top board, my first Paris selection, and the highest stakes game I had played to date. I was nervous, but I had a plan. I came out of the Paris selection happy enough, ready to play as England. The list of players in the game was as follows:

- Austria – Peter McNamara
- England – Myself
- Italy – Andrew Goff
- France – Darcy Morris
- Germany – Jude Connor
- Russia – Max Wanji Roe Banks
- Turkey – Tianyu Sun

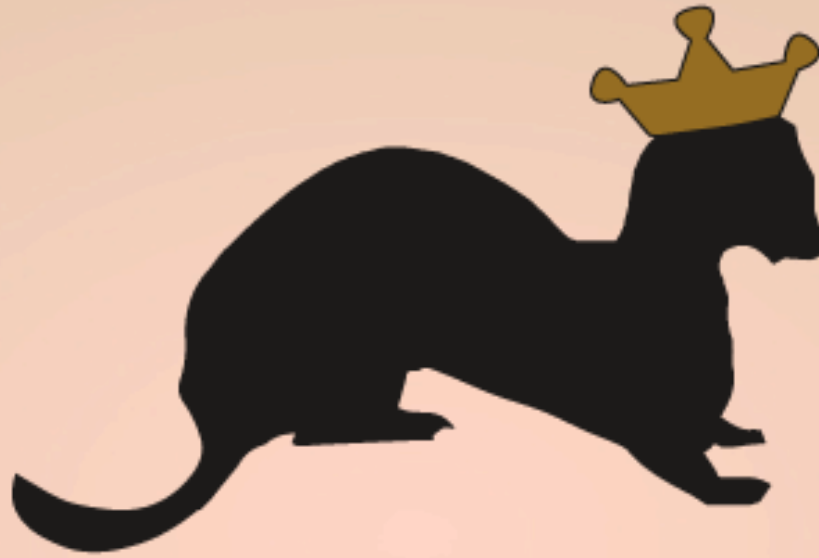
Despite the high stakes, my game went relatively smoothly. Nobody attacked me the whole game. In the early game, I was able to break down Germany's defenses to control all of Scandinavia and Denmark, leaving me on six centers going into the break. At this point, I and many others, thought I was likely to win. I was in a great position and from here it was a game of patience, helping France and Russia in their efforts against the East, while getting in position to make a late push for the Board top. Eventually I made my move. I decided to attack France.

It was the right move, and the right timing. Had I executed it well, I believe I would have coasted to victory. However, I did not, and this meant the last turn came down to a guessing game for both Peter and I. Just a few years ago I had been marveling at Peter winning the DBNI. Now we were going toe-to-toe in a race for the Australian Open. Spurred on by his determination not to repeat the events at World Dip Con, Peter guessed right and won the tournament by one center. It was a bitter way to end a long and exhausting game. However, it was a game I was proud of. Moreover, having faced a barrage from Peter all game, Max had been eliminated in 1909. I had won the Bismark cup.

If you had told me at the start of the year that I would be considered the most successful Diplomacy player across Australian tournaments in 2024 I simply would not have believed it. After a few months off, I have had a chance to reflect on what enabled me to improve so quickly and win the Bismark Cup, but those reflections are better off the subject of another submission. My next big challenge is the DBNI (which will be played before this is published). I go into that challenge with little preparation, and without expectation, but I am excited and honored to be playing in the tournament that I watched so eagerly back in 2020.



DipCon 2025 at Weasel Moot XIX



October 3-5, 2025

The Windy City Weasels are thrilled to announce that DipCon 2025 will be held this fall at the nineteenth edition of the Weasel Moot, our annual tournament. The games will take place October 3rd to 5th at the Springhill Suites near O'Hare airport. The rooms, all suites, are \$129/night, the airport is a quick, free shuttle ride away, and there is a short walk to the Blue Line subway heading directly downtown. Registration is \$50 before September 1 and \$60 after, half-price for students.

We'll kick things off with a group dinner for earlycomers on Thursday, October 2, continue with a midday outing on Friday, October 3, and then get right to Diplomacy with the first round Friday evening. We'll have morning and evening rounds on Saturday, October 4, and then crown a new Alpha Weasel and North American champion following a fourth round on Sunday, October 5.

The Sneak: Brandon Fogel, Chris Kelly, Kevin O'Kelly, Bryan Pravel

See more at moot.windycityweasels.org

Melbourne Open for Diplomacy!

by Shane Armstrong

Hot on the heels of the 2025 Hung Parliament Handicap, two weeks later, it was Melbourne's turn to play host to Australia's diplomats, with the 2025 Melbourne Open held from 7-9 March at the State Library in Victoria.

Tropical Cyclone Alfred prevented any representation from the Queensland hobby (flights out of Brisbane were cancelled), but Sydney, Melbourne, and, of course, The Diplomacy Capital of the World, Canberra, sent their best diplomats to duke it out over three rounds in which games longer than the usual 1907 finish were played.

Friday night saw Round 1 played in Mr. Tulk, the cafe at the State Library, and was a nice casual way to kick off the tournament. Three boards were played, with home town players Melissa Call (VIC) in England, and Marcus Loane (VIC) sharing a 10 SC board top as England and Turkey respectively (and netting Marcus Best Turkey into the bargain). Nancy Jin (ACT) topped her board with an 8 SC France, backed up by Alan Thompson (VIC) on 7 as Germany, and Tianyu Sun (ACT) as Italy on 6 dots. That result earned Tianyu Best Italy in a tournament where no other Italy got over 4 dots!

The highlight of Round 1, though, was Jamal Blakkarly's (ACT) Best England earning 16 dots, followed by Darcy Morris's (ACT) 8 dot France. Players whose games were already over due to draws being agreed were definitely on Solo Watch as this game wound up.

After an exhausted group of players went straight home with promises of proper socializing on Saturday night, it was off to the Seminar Rooms at the State Library for Round 2, with a 1911 finish scheduled. Board 1 saw Jamal Blakkarly with his second board top finish on 15 as Russia, backed up by Shane Armstrong (ACT) on 12 as England. Zoe Cameron (VIC) earned her Best France on Board 2 with 11 dots in a frankly mind-boggling position (SCs included all 3 home dots, Smyrna, and Moscow), with Shane Cubis (VIC) finishing 2nd on 9 as Germany. Wunderkind Soham Schinde (VIC) topped Board 3 with an 11 dot England, followed by Tianyu Sun on 9 as Turkey.

The early finish on Saturday night meant dinner, drinks, more boardgames, and for a couple of Diplomats of a Certain Age, seeing New Order at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

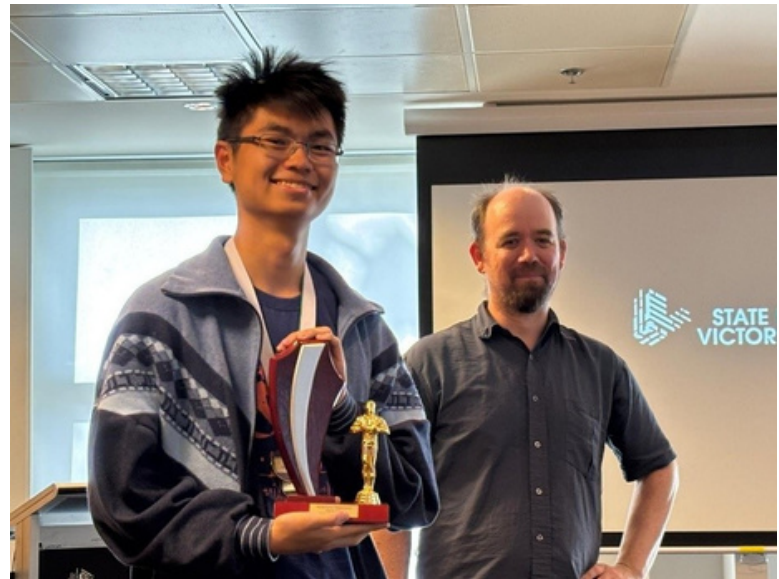
So, it all came down to Sunday. With Jamal Blakkarly's 16 and 15 only able to be eclipsed by a solo, the tournament finished strongly with four boards played.

Board 1 was a cagey affair that was drawn comparatively early because each player judged they were probably not going to improve on their SC counts.

Board 2 saw Alan Thompson's (VIC) 7 SC Russia share the board top with the TD, Peter McNamara (VIC) in Austria-Hungary. Jamal Blakkarly finished on 6 on this board, meaning his score should have left him safe from anything but a solo.

Boards 3 and 4 had the players ranked 2nd and 3rd at the start of the day playing on them, with Shane Armstrong in France on Board 3, and Tianyu Sun in Russia on Board 4 trying to get as close as they could to the clubhouse leader as their games pushed on.

Board 3 ended on a Fogel, with Robert Chatterton (VIC) as (Best) Austria-Hungary, Nancy Jin as Germany, and Shane Armstrong as France, each on 11, with debutant Alex Gunning (VIC) finishing as the 1 as Italy. While this board was hard-fought, its ending was ultimately dictated by what was simultaneously occurring on Board 4.



Tianyu Sun



Board 4 saw Tianyu Sun's Russia storm the board (Russia had an Army in Gascony in Fall 1905), going from 7 dots in 1904 to 9 in 1905, 12 in 1906, to a massive 17 in 1907, before Tianyu completed the first solo of his Diplomacy career in 1908 finishing on 20 SCs! The only result that could shift the top of the standings was achieved, and Tianyu Sun was crowned the winner of the 2025 Melbourne Open!

Tianyu is another fantastic emerging player coming out of the Canberra scene who has developed a deep understanding of the game very quickly, allied with a fantastic strategic and tactical nous that also earned him Best Strategist. The scary thing is, he's only going to keep getting better.

The tournament saw six players make their tournament debut, with James Denholm the pick of them, finishing in 12th. All in all, it was another magnificent weekend of Diplomacy, with all thanks to the Tournament Director, Peter McNamara, and also to Andrew Goff, who remains an ornament to the entire hobby.

All board details are at: <https://www.world-diplomacy-reference.com/tournaments/1891/boards>

Standings and other Awards

- 1st - Tianyu Sun
- 2nd - Jamal Blakkarly (also Best Negotiator)
- 3rd - Shane Armstrong
- 4th - Nancy Jin
- 5th - Alan Thompson (also Best Survival for his Round 2 Austria-Hungary)



Peter McNamara's lunch (photo courtesy of Shane Cubis)

Best Midsoda (misorder) went to Melbourne's Casey McAllister, and Darcy Morris also took home The Mandarin, for best Canberra-based player to not win an award.

Toughest Mark went to Henri Gray, who played well, but couldn't catch a break all weekend. Henri's an excellent young player who is on the brink of having his breakout game in the Australian scene. Joshua "The Beast" Crowther (ACT) took out Best Lasagne as the player whose country most looked like a lasagne.

Hot on the heels of their Best Shane Cubis victory two weeks earlier, Arden Gough was awarded Best Shane Armstrong, providing more evidence that the Venn diagram of Shane Cubis and Shane Armstrong must truly be near to constituting a total eclipse...



Jamal Blakkarly



Shane Armstrong



World Boardgaming Championships

WBC is an annual gaming convention held at Seven Springs Mountain Resort. The best two rounds of three will count towards the final tournament score. Best Country awards and prizes will be provided by the organizer. Food and drink will be provided during each round, with a pizza party during Round Three. A teaching round will be taught on Friday with board game prizes to select competitors.

August 1st – 2nd in Seven Springs, PA

Demo – 5pm-7pm Friday

Round One – 7pm-11pm Friday

Round Two – 10am-2pm Friday

Round Three – 7pm-11pm Saturday

Scoring: C-Diplo

Rank: Best two out of three rounds

Contact: Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.boardgamers.org/>



RENEGADE
GAME STUDIOS



Diplomacy: Era of Empire – A New Era for Diplomacy?

by Ben Durfee

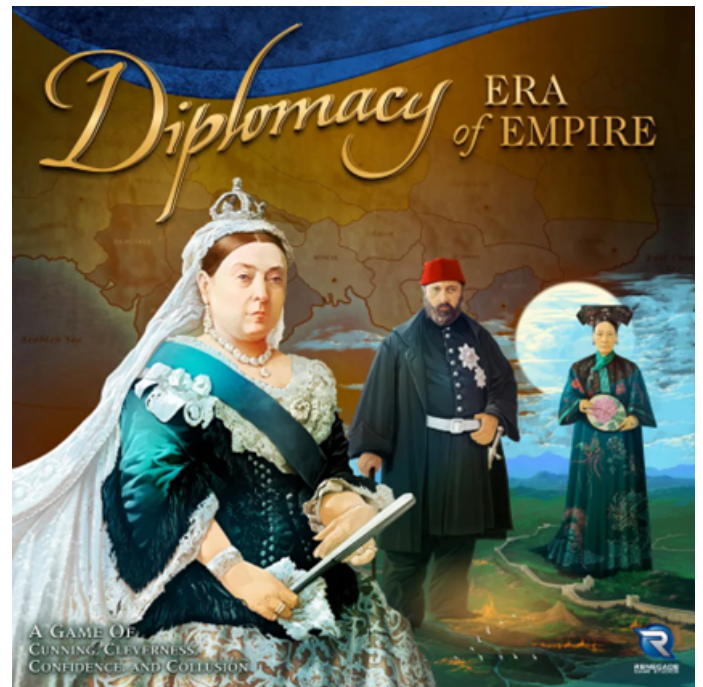
Colonial Diplomacy was the first variant I organized myself to play with a group of friends in college, and while I enjoyed the new setting and some extremely entertaining public press releases during the game, I found it overall to be a map I would not see myself returning to. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't because I did poorly in the game, on the contrary I had about the easiest Diplomacy game I've ever sailed through. Yes, I had the great pleasure of randomly drawing Japan as my country, and when the most defensive-minded player to ever grace our game group drew China, the Empire of the Rising Sun was truly set for glory. Still, while I personally enjoyed romping around Asia unimpeded by a comatose China and a fettered Russia, I recognized issues with the design that would not have passed muster in today's amateur but very competent variant design scene.

It is undeniable though, that the setting for Colonial Diplomacy was attractive for an official variant. The time period it takes place in is still in that sort of Great Power period that matches so well with the Diplomacy theme, and the area depicted is one fresh from Europe and presenting whole new countries to explore strategy and conquest with. It is unsurprising then, that Renegade chose to lift Colonial Diplomacy into their new release catalog, remodeled as Diplomacy: Era of Empires. As my interview with Mr. Haver suggests, Era of Empire is a clear homage to, but not copy of, Colonial Diplomacy. So, does it look to be an improvement or not?

While I don't have a physical copy on hand, plenty of publicity is available to examine some of the most important physical components of the new release, and with any board game, the physical components and design deserve attention even if many of us may play diplomacy over email or Discord these days.

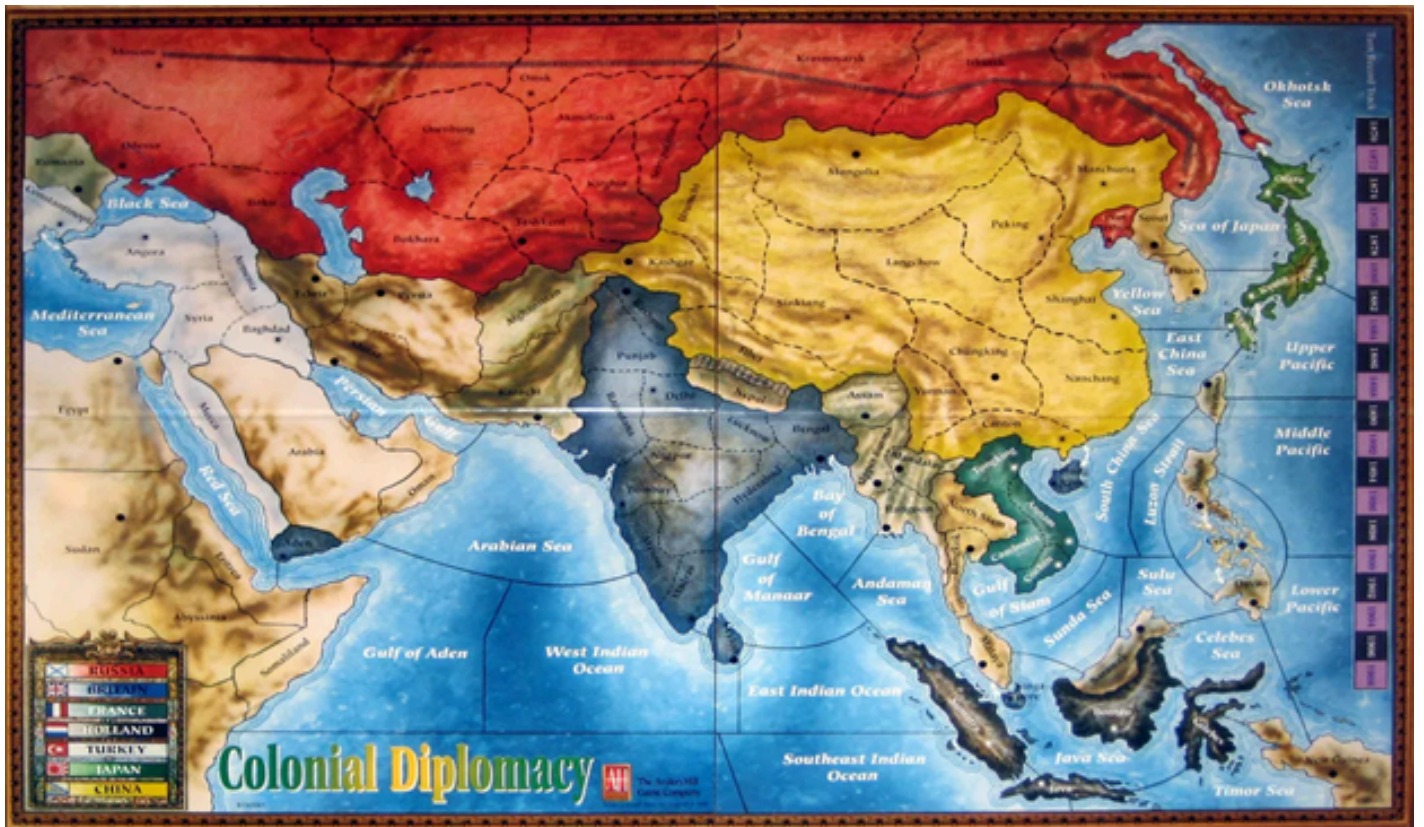
I'll show an image of the front of the box, because previously in these storied pages I attacked Renegade's revamped Diplomacy (classic) box, calling it a weird mismatched effort that looked worse than the 50th Anniversary Edition it was bastardized from. Renegade's Era of Empire art looks like an improvement. Yes, as before, we have figures superimposed on a faint image of the game map, but rather than three odd semi-historical looking men (and one woman in the back?) scattered around the front of the box, we have three of the historical leaders from that time period.

Rather than unidentifiable lands to stand astride, we have the Great Wall visible with the storied Chinese Empress Dowager Cixi behind it. Queen Victoria is the largest figure, as probably befits the 'Pax Britannia' time period this game is situated within. I would've personally chosen a Russian leader (to play on the Great Game era between Britain and Russia during this time) or a Japanese leader (as would make sense during this period of rebirth and re-emergence for the Japanese) rather than an Ottoman Sultan as the third figure on the box, but from the start we have an improvement from the prior Renegade game box art. The armies and fleets will be wooden sailing ships and cavalry, and from the photos they look pleasant and a nice change of pace from wooden pieces in other Diplomacy releases.



Getting to the meat and potatoes, we have the game map itself. I've attached to this an image provided publicly of the new Era of Empire map along with the old Colonial Diplomacy so readers can compare and contrast. I'll talk a bit more about the non-cosmetic changes to the map next, but subjectively, I must confess to preferring the look of the old Colonial map more. The pop of the colors is brighter, and I prefer the older color choices for the Powers and neutral spaces. The older ocean art with the white fonts in the oceans is preferable to me as well compared to the new black font with the newer darker seas.





I understand why the new map lost the coloring for the 'colony' supply centers that are colored in on the map but technically must be captured by the players still, but it does lose a little physical appeal as a result when studying the now odd borders.

That's not to say I don't understand at least some of the decisions behind the new map. The more subdued mountain contrasts on the new map do seem to improve readability of the territories. The light blue of France, orange of the Netherlands, and green for Russia are more appropriate color choices than the Colonial colors, I just like the sharper and brighter colors of the old map more. The nameplates of each power around the board are excellent additions to tie this variant firmly in with the classic Diplomacy board.

Clearly, as interview responses from Mr. Haver express above, there have been substantive changes on the map as well from the old Colonial release. I was not able to find a really good resolution image so my naming may be off in places when examining the new map. Traveling from left to right across the board, they are generally:

1. There are an additional two spaces in Africa, one being a supply center. Rather than contesting Sudan with the Yemen supply center, Britain could instead go for the less confrontational new center. This change may have been made to prevent the African side theater from being resolved too quickly and creating a little more opportunity for larger troop involvements there.

2. The South Indian Ocean now connects with the Gulf of Aden. This seems like a good change to create greater maneuverability in the south side of the map between Dutch Indonesia and Africa. With Ceylon being a full neutral at start, the Dutch player may not be as fully oriented around the Philippines/French Indochina as before.

3. The Ottoman Empire is unchanged, which makes some sense, because most changes remove territories, and the Ottoman territories were pretty sparse to start with. Arabia is modified slightly to remove the south coast. If this was done simply to remove an edge rule case, that would not be surprising.

4. Central Asian neutrals remain largely intact, Persia with its valuable three supply centers, and Afghanistan and Pakistan remain, but Russia to the north is vastly different. Orenburg and Perm have been combined.

Russia has lost the supply center at Olmsk, shifted east and while the space itself remains, three former empty areas to its south are now one neutral. All and all, four territories have been removed from the middle of the old Colonial Russia, and with them it seems the old (rather charming) Trans Siberia railroad.

5. India is unchanged in territories.

6. The south east Asian neutral area (in the old game a strip from has been trimmed slightly. Seven neutral centers previously occupied the area, now just five, and only because previously British Singapore is now neutral and previously Chinese Chungking is neutral as well. The previous eleven spaces overall are now roughly nine in total around the same area.

7. French Indochina is unchanged, but the area around it is. The aforementioned neutral south east Asian area around it is greatly changed. Canton is now a neutral center separated entirely from French territory by an enlarged empty Yun space. Hong Kong is now a neutral center as well. This displacement of China gives French Indochina a lot more empty space around it.

8. Dutch Indonesia is fairly unchanged, though the sea territories have been cut down in number and the Philippines only has two neutral supply centers, down from three. As a whole, twenty seven sea spaces by my count on the Colonial Map have been trimmed to twenty three sea spaces.

9. China has gone from five home centers to three home centers. Mongolia, Manchuria, and Kag are now empty instead of supply centers. Nan has been removed as a space, with Canton, Yun, and Chu rearranged so that China no longer borders French Indochina directly. Port Arthur is a neutral center, and Korea is now a one supply center location instead of two.

10. Japan is unchanged physically, but has lost Oka, and importantly Sak now has a printed arrow between it and Vladivostok. A reduction in early power and safety was necessary with Japan and the printed arrow in Sak was an easy change, since many Colonial players were already advocating for such a change in the Colonial map.

It is hard to theory-craft from no play experience, but in sum, one can see that there is a sharp reduction in starting supply centers for China and Britain, and a smaller reduction for Russia and Japan. While variants with



variable supply center starts can succeed, there is a danger in relying too much on...well, Diplomacy to level out the playing field, especially with newer players. A player with five centers will have that much more opportunity for additional growth, a player starting with three centers will never be able to make more hay than he has the means to make (a topic for fuller exploration in perhaps another article). This leveling is probably a safer choice for Renegade to make in ensuring a more even start to each game.

The new map at first glance gives France some breathing room. In Colonial, French Indochina is weak, not necessarily because it is central, but because it is the only power that can conceivably be attacked the first year by a group of powers who can't meaningfully attack each other. The new map certainly gives France more room, the question is, will this room create more incentives for the surrounding powers to go for each other and not the still very central French?

Second, the map diffuses some tension between Russia and China and weakens Japan slightly. In Colonial, Russia and China have tangled supply centers that will usually lead to friction and conflict, while Japan will simply expand to Sak with multiple other opportunities. Once Japan has built additional fleets in the first round of builds, no other Power in that region will ever meaningfully contest the seas. Will this map change that? Japan will certainly be slowed, but China may still have to expand more aggressively as a central power and not risk a buildup with fleets that will lead to a small payoff. Russia may be better positioned as a responsive country, but with two sets of two supply centers on opposite sides of the map, Russia may be equally unable to build up some kind of effective response to Japan. I think the changes are good from a balance side, I'm just not sure they solve the issue.

The Dutch potentially look quite strong—New Guinea and Sam are easy neutral pick-ups and it would not be hard to see a rather painless three center start for the Dutch—that can then be translated into three more fleets built, which, like Japan, gives the Dutch an unusually strong defense that the land-based powers can only be jealous of. A Dutch-Japanese alliance or at the least neutrality pact seems from both sides to be still the most beneficial alliance on the board.

Britain looks to be in a positive position still. The Oman space will afford Britain a probable pickup in Africa and Britain retains the crown jewel of India with probably less

Russian and Chinese interference early due to the trimming of their starting centers.

The Ottomans seem about the same as before—off in a pseudo corner, but with slightly greater expansion chances given the lessened Russian presence. Russia, in the meanwhile, looks to be in a worse strategic spot than in Colonial—its centers are horribly spread out still with only four instead of five, and with a two-two split it is nowhere in force compared to its neighbors. I'm curious to see it in play.

To summarize, leveling almost everyone back at three supply centers (four for Russia and Britain) and adjusting the positioning of China, Russia, and South East Asia show that the designers are attempting to reign in the original Colonial Diplomacy map back a bit towards classic Diplomacy's parity while making some balance adjustments to avoid the Colonial pitfalls. The general question is: will that smoothing down result in a more balanced game than Colonial, or will it simply mask the Colonial issues behind just a couple more turns of early expansion?

The first professionally published Diplomacy variant in over twenty years is cause for celebration, and the changes made all seem reasonable and thought out, whatever the designers' actual experiences with Diplomacy are. I have not explored stalemate line potentials or other higher end analysis in this article, that may skew the final opinion on designer choices here, but at least at first view it appears thought has gone into this release, by not simply publishing the old Colonial with a new coat of paint. The real test of a published variant is not whether us bitter conniving Diplomacy veterans will enjoy playing it, but whether novices will be drawn to the game and once it is open and on the table, have a great time with it. Here's hoping that the game survives first contact and makes new fans to join us.



Renegade Expands Community Outreach

by Thomas Haver



Since their founding, Renegade has maintained a strong organized play program. They have a diverse catalog of games that range from traditional board games to RPGs to living card games. They took the next step in 2024 when they launched the HeroScape Battle Network (<https://playheroscape.renegadegamestudios.com/>), a one-stop shop for all events, strategy, rankings, and community outreach. The launch has been a massive success, with more than 1500 events since launch. Now Renegade is adding more support to help grow games like Diplomacy. This past week, Renegade put out the following statement:

"We're thrilled to officially launch the Renegade Heroes Community Program!

The Renegade Heroes Program is a grassroots initiative built for passionate fans of Renegade Games who want to help us do what we love most: bring innovative, fun, and unique games to tables everywhere.

This program is all about supporting local champions who want to spread the joy of gaming—whether at conventions, game stores, community events, or kitchen tables. If you love Renegade games and want to help others discover them, this is your call to action!

We're kicking things off by migrating our incredible group of over 200 existing Renegade Heroes from Slack into our brand-new Discord channel, where this community will live and grow. These folks have already supported us at events like Gen Con and beyond, and we're excited to bring them into this next chapter.

Led by Thomas Haver, the Renegade Heroes Program will coordinate grassroots marketing efforts regionally, giving our Heroes the tools, guidance, and support they need to succeed. Soon, we'll begin recruiting new Heroes to expand our ranks! More details to come. For now, get ready. The Renegade Heroes are just getting started.

Join the mission to share fun. Be the spark in your community!"

Since I've been tapped to lead this initiative, I thought I'd share some details for Diplomacy players and what this means. We have an existing network of volunteers across the world, with some individuals focused on specific games. We're gathering new volunteers to supplement the existing group with added support to help facilitate games.

The goal is to uplift these volunteers to teach games at local game stores, game cafes, conventions, local libraries, and pretty much anywhere else they want to play. Examples of support can include event promotion, material support (e.g., games and swag), financial support (e.g., hotel badges, hotel rooms, travel vouchers). For Diplomacy players, one of the biggest challenges is getting seven people together for a game. Leveraging public places with publisher support is a good means of promoting more widely and getting new & existing players to show up. We want more people playing Diplomacy.

There is no commitment on time investment – everyone can set their own level of involvement. If you want to run monthly Diplomacy games at your game store, we can help facilitate that by working with the store owners and getting promotion out there. If you want to run games at a convention, we can help there as well. The program is also a wonderful means to connect the most passionate members of the community in one place so we can collaborate.

If you're interested in the Renegade Heroes program, then please apply at the link below. Feel free to join the Renegade Discord server as well.

Renegade Official Discord:
<https://discord.gg/H8gvxrpX>

Renegade Heroes Application:
<https://bit.ly/42ht4Za>





National Diplomacy Masters

The World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG) and Renegade Game Studios are joining forces to host the National Diplomacy Masters in Las Vegas, Nevada. The tournament is being held in conjunction with the WSBG championship to crown the brightest star in board gaming.



Compete against our honored Diplomacy Masters:

- National Diplomacy Master Champ **Katie Gray**
- US National Champion **Robert Zahn**
- Famed GM **Phil Burk**
- Mystery Diplomacy Master to be announced

- September 19-23, 2025
- Horseshoe Hotel & Casino
- Four Round Diplomacy tournament with Top Board on Sunday
- First "Diplomacy: Era of Empire" competitive event

Do you have what it takes to defeat a Master?
Find out at the World Series of Board Gaming!

• Hotel & Tickets: <https://wsbgvegas.com/>



From the DW Archive: The Two-Way Game-Long Alliance

by Mal Arky

THE TWO-WAY GAME-LONG ALLIANCE

by WALT BUCHANAN

The following account of 1972ED by Doug Beyerlein is reprinted with permission from Dan Gallagher's fine gazette, *Warlord*. 1972ED is the best example to date of what I consider the most powerful strategic weapon in postal diplomacy, the game-long 2-way alliance.

Since nearly the beginning of my postal play, I have believed in the power of the game-long 2-way alliance, and in every game I have entered, I have tried to achieve one. Although multi-player alliances are more powerful, they are very difficult to achieve in postal play since it is almost impossible for more than two players to confer at once. This breeds mistrust and, in my opinion, mutual trust and tactical guarantees to minimize the temptation of a stab are the two essential elements of a successful game-long alliance.

In 1972 before 1972ED started, Rod Walker wrote an article for *Graustark* called, "The Inevitable Alliance." It related that in the history of postal diplomacy, statistics had shown that Austria and Turkey were natural enemies. In only 2 games had they finished 1-2, i.e., not at the expense of the other.

Therefore, on entering 1972ED as Turkey, I decided to put my belief in the power of the game-long 2-way alliance to its ultimate test. What better way than to show that the 2 most natural enemies on the Diplomacy board could achieve the fastest classic 2-way draw in postal history through the use of a successful 2-way alliance?

As Doug's account below will show, this was done. I had intended to write up an account of the game itself, but Doug's narrative adequately covers the history of it. What I would like to relate, however, is how the game illustrates my philosophy on good play.

I have been very fortunate during my career as a postal Diplomacy player in winning my first 6 games. In fact, this game was the first to end in a draw although I have recently finished 2 or 3 games in second place due to a stab by my game-long ally, Dan Gallagher. The tactical guarantees and DMZ set-up proved inadequate although the game could have still ended in a 3-way draw if one of the other players had cooperated. He was subsequently eliminated.

But anyway, the point I wanted to make was the power of the game-long 2-way alliance. Due to my success as a player, I have many lines. I have asked to write an article on the strategy and tactics of Diplomacy and reveal my secrets, but outside of my belief in the value of constant communication, my main secret has been the game-long 2-way alliance. It has made elimination of the opposition easy.

One added bonus of the game-long 2-way alliance is that if your game-long ally stabs you and tactical guarantees or other considerations prove insufficient to force a draw, as in my case with Dan Gallagher, you are nearly always able to finish in second place.

It is my opinion, however, that in the long run, it is not to one's advantage to stab his game-long ally if the ally holds up his end of the alliance and cooperates in setting up tactical guarantees. One's reputation as a player is important in this hobby, and if one becomes known as a stabber, he finds it increasingly difficult to find allies.

Doug Beyerlein in the first game-long ally I have had that held up his end of the alliance to the end and in which external factors didn't enter in to result in my win. Therefore, even though I could have stabbed him for the win, I saw no long-term profit in doing so. Also, I was impressed with the concept of demilitarization that Doug came up with to minimize the temptation of a stab in the alliance where the ultimate in mutual trust is called for, namely, the Austro-Turkish alliance.

This brings up the second element that I believe is essential to a game-long alliance, and to which I alluded earlier. Although mutual trust is essential in a game-long alliance and constant communication is essential in bringing it about, one must also have tactical guarantees to minimize the temptation of a stab. Diplomacy players being what they are, if one ally stabs his neck out too far, he is asking to get it chopped off. I have stabbed an ally only once, and that was a case where he left his centers so undefended that all I had to do was move in to put the win on ice. But I didn't feel good about it and would have preferred that he set up the tactical guarantees that I had originally suggested.

Perhaps I should define more precisely what I mean by "tactical guarantees." By that I mean a combination of moves that allies make that minimize the temptation of a stab. It can be the setting up of a DMZ, i.e., a neutral buffer zone, an agreed-to series of "bounces," or the demilitarization idea that Doug came up with. Its purpose is to minimize a stab by giving the other player an early warning of it. This acts like a deterrent and works both ways. Not only does it minimize the temptation of a stab by the player in the dominant position, but I have heard of cases where the ally in the inferior position stabbed because he was sure that the other player was getting ready to! This also brings to mind the axiom that the allies should stay within a one or two supply-center total of each other so that it is hard to stab and obtain

It seems, then, that Walt was very successful when pursuing this two-way game-long alliance! This, for me, isn't very surprising: from my own experience, this kind of alliance tends to be more stable than a multi-player alliance. This is, indeed, what Walt tells us, too. Isn't it amazing that people who play Diplomacy, who think about the game, reach similar conclusions much of the time? You'd think we were all copying each other, rather than writing down our thoughts about playing based on actually thinking about it and our experiences playing it.

I regularly write about how alliances in Diplomacy are built on trust. Trust is built on honesty. Honesty relies on communication and on both people doing what they say they'll do. Ironic, then, that Diplomacy, a game about communication, relationships and alliances, often attracts people who lie and spread fake news. It takes all sorts, I guess.

Walt also points out, though, that a successful two-way alliance is about checks being in place. In his eighth game, he writes that: "The tactical guarantees and DMZ set-up proved inadequate" to prevent Dan Gallagher's successful progress to victory. Walt points out that these can take many forms but they are all tactical guarantees. DMZs, agreed bounces, positioning units defensively to deter a stab, Doug Beyerlein's demilitarization theory (which he discusses in [DW#3](#) in his article and which I famously discussed as part of this series in [DW#167](#); I know, I didn't need to mention my own take on Doug's musings but where else am I going to get the free advertising?).

So, Walt tells us, there are two pillars on which a successful two-way, game-long alliance is built: trust and tactical guarantees. You might argue that there are, actually, three pillars: trust through communication, trust through not stabbing your ally, and tactical guarantees. I've not added anything there, just split the second from the first; Walt having done so himself without necessarily making it clear. Three makes for a much more stable structure than two.

Walt doesn't believe in stabbing an ally. I have to say that I, personally, have no qualms about doing so. Walt's argument that the more you stab, the more you earn the label of being a stabber is, of course, true; I'm not sure that it carries as much of a trust-penalty as Walt suggests, however. Perhaps with a smaller player-base it is more of an issue; in the online world in which I play my Diplomacy,

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Browsing for another article from the glorious history of 'Diplomacy World', I came across Walt Buchanan's article in [DW#6](#). I'd looked through issue 5 and nothing waved to me as a good article to review. Nothing to cut and paste here, I thought. But when I examined issue 6, this article jumped up and down in greeting.

For those of you who have read my thoughts on this type of alliance you'll know I am, unashamedly, not a fan of what it can lead towards. I don't mind forming any alliance if it's going to benefit my game, and that includes a long 2-way alliance. What I don't like about this alliance is the often-cherished intention to draw the game.

This, however, is not necessarily what Walt is suggesting when he writes about the game. He writes: "I have been very fortunate during my career as a postal Diplomacy player in winning my first six games. In fact, this game was the first to end in a draw, although I have recently finished my eighth game in second place due to a stab by my game-long ally, Dan Gallagher!" (Second place?! I'll come to that later.)



not so much, and not just because you can play games anonymously online. Perhaps even in the in-person formats of Diplomacy, in which you're more likely to come across people more often, it is more likely to encourage greater caution than prevent another player from allying with you. But it can't be ignored completely: reputation as a player – or as a person – counts. When you show yourself to be a stabber, just as when you show yourself to be an obnoxious, venomous person, that can stay around like the stink of a forty-year-old corpse.

Stabs are an interesting aspect for me, especially in relation to the claim that a player never stabs. It boils down, I suppose, to what you consider to be a stab. Is it just the betrayal of someone who is your ally, or is it also the betrayal of someone who *thought* they were your ally?

If I'm allied with one player, let's call them Elle for some reason, and I'm making myself out to be allied with another player, who we'll randomly call Doug, and I betray Doug, have I stabbed them? If this was a patsy alliance, a false alliance, is this a stab? Not from my point of view, because I wasn't ever intending to keep this alliance... but from Doug's point of view? If I then go on to stab Elle, I have to accept that both they and I would have to see it as a stab!

The object of playing Diplomacy is to win the game. At some point, you are going to have to betray one or more players. You are making yourself to be the best possible ally to everyone at some point, in one way or another. Not only is this to encourage them to trust you but it is also to discourage them from lining-up against you. Initially, it's about self-preservation; later it's about moving on to try to win the game.

For me, attacking Doug is as much a stab as attacking Elle would be. Although I didn't intend to keep the patsy alliance going with Doug, I used the tantalizing taste of an alliance to build trust between us. I don't believe that anyone can say that they haven't built, or tried to build, false alliances in a game and to use that alliance to further their own interests.

Walt doesn't really mention anything about patsy alliances, which isn't the subject of his article, after all. From this single context, then, we can't say that he never stabbed a patsy. He does say: *"I have stabbed an ally only once, and that was a case where he left his centers so undefended that all I had to do was move in to put the win on ice."* So, Walt does stab, exceptionally. He doesn't, however, believe in stabbing, as I mentioned above. In fact, about this one

stab, he says: *"But I didn't feel good about it."* It was, he says, the other player's fault for not setting in place tactical guarantees against the stab.

In the second part of the article, Walt publishes an End of Game statement (EOG) by Doug Beyerlein. This must have been a good game to play in: it was a demonstration game (all the rage back then) to showcase John McCallum's ODD ratings system. (I believe this system was an early version of combining Dip scoring with an Elo scoring variant.) Only players rated 900 or higher were invited.

In this EOG, Doug tells us:

"I talked Buchanan [Turkey] into attacking Ward's Russia in an attempt to make the Austro-Italian eastern attack go smoother. Ward then made the fatal mistake of telling Buchanan to fake an attack on Russia to throw me, Austria, off guard when the real Russo-Turkish attack came. Walt was then left with a perfect attack on Russia in the Fall of '01, gaining Bulgaria, Rumania and Sevastopol."

This is the perfect example of when a player who says they don't stab does stab, although as Buchanan doesn't see Russia as an ally, this isn't viewed as being a stab. Ask Russia for their opinion on it!

The second part of the article is interesting in its own right. It demonstrates the success of a two-player, game-long alliance, which is what Walt's writing about. For me, more interestingly, it shows Doug's Beyerlein's demilitarization strategy (mentioned briefly above) in action. Not completely foolproof, Doug's theory; he says that Walt had chances to win *"if this is what he wanted"*.

There are two things I'm going to mention here that aren't strictly aspects Walt is discussing simply because I doubt their validity in Diplomacy. One is the intention to play for a 2-player draw. I'm not going to harp on about it, I've done that before numerous times. So, I'll leave it at stating that it is a completely artificial way to end a game. It requires one or both players to ignore the object of the game, which is to win. In the game Doug's discussing, Walt clearly wasn't interested in winning the game or he could have done so. Instead, it employs a non-objective: Playing to draw the game. At the end of his section of the article, Walt says: *"... there is something beautiful about a classic 17-17 finish."* I disagree: it's ugly; it's fake,

Secondly, I'm baffled at the importance of being 'placed' behind a soloist or (in this case) a 2-way draw, other than



to cater to silly scoring systems. In his article Walt says that, if you are stabbed by your ally: “you are nearly always able to finish in second place”. If someone successfully solos, you’ve lost. What difference does the number of SCs make? “Well, I did OK; I lost but I got more SCs than any of the other losers.” Celebrating being the most powerful loser?

Walt’s article was something I expected to moan about when I first saw its title and, yes, being a picky old bugger, I managed to squeeze a couple of gripes in there, I know. But there is one thing that Walt wrote that I’ll admit to not giving a lot of thought to previously about this kind of alliance: *“Even though you start the game with a game-long ally and never stab him, it is amazing how often external factors can enter in to result in a win.”*

I’m one of those players who loves a game where the alliances shift and change throughout, in which the players constantly jockey for advantage, when everyone is trying to win or prevent someone else from winning. But I can see what Walt’s saying, and I can appreciate that managing to get through a game of Diplomacy without breaking an alliance, and without the other player breaking it, takes a lot of skill both on the board and off it. And it doesn’t necessarily mean playing the game to an artificial 2-player draw.

External factors – which might be things from outside the game completely, or even bad choices by other players not part of the alliance, Walt doesn’t really define these – can affect the outcome of any game, clearly. A power suddenly goes into Civil Disorder? A player leaves themselves wide open for you to walk into their centers? It takes a diehard Carebear to ignore these opportunities in order to force a 2-way draw!

This is why I like finding these articles from past issues of DW: the chance to read about different perspectives on the game, and to think about my own ideas of playing it. It’s why I write about Diplomacy, not because I have anything particularly brilliant to say about the game but to bring different perspectives. If I enjoy learning about the game from what I’ve read and from my experiences of playing it, perhaps others might? And if they don’t, I enjoy writing about it, so win-win.

What I find enjoyable is challenging and possibly changing my thinking on the game. If I was stuck in the same place I was decades ago, it would be a pathetic thing, after all.

Local Conventions and Other FtF Play in the San Francisco Bay Area

by Alex Amann

World DipCon 2025 at Whipping in San Francisco may be the biggest face-to-face event this year, but did you know that there are many other opportunities to play face-to-face Diplomacy outside of that? There have been sessions at KublaCon Prime in Burlingame in May in the last few years. More recently, we’ve also expanded to KublaCon Fall and DunDraCon, and through a new Discord server, have organized house games at multiple locations.

The inaugural KublaCon Fall (<https://kublacon.com/kublacon-fall/>) was in November 2024 in Santa Clara. For that convention, I held a teaching session on Friday night and full sessions on Saturday and Sunday. Another convention goer, John Deatrack, also organized a game on Monday. Overall, there were 20 unique players over the course of the weekend. We even had a prime location near the vendor room and in the front of the board game area, so we got a lot of interest from the high foot traffic going by!

We also had a couple sessions at DunDraCon (<https://www.dundracon.com/>) in February 2025 in Santa Clara. While DunDraCon is primarily focused on RPGs (the DunDra is short for Dungeons and Dragons, after all), there is a small but vibrant board game scene there. Saturday’s session was originally scheduled by someone unknown to our local group, but unfortunately he was a no-show. Luckily, I had come prepared with a Diplomacy board and other supplies, so we were able to get a game going. On Sunday, up-and-coming local player Patrick Jacobson organized the session. We had 13 unique players over the weekend.

Looking forward, there will also be a significant Diplomacy presence at KublaCon Prime (<https://kublacon.com/register-for-kublacon/>) over Memorial Day weekend in Burlingame. I will be running a teaching session on Friday night and will have scheduled sessions on Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon, and



Monday morning. Additionally, Thomas Haver will be running a session of Diplomacy on a giant board on Saturday morning, and a session of Diplomacy: Era of Empire on a giant board on Saturday afternoon. Diplomacy: Era of Empire is a remake of Colonial Diplomacy and will not be officially releasing until later this year, so this is a sneak preview that you won't want to miss!

Finally, our local group has been organizing face-to-face games outside of conventions or major tournaments. Adam Silverman and Noam Brown have hosted games at their houses, and I also organized a game at local game store GameKastle in Redwood City. We've moved over to Discord for the most part - come join us at <https://discord.gg/yeEfVc2dFm>. Hope to see you over a board soon!

Hung Parliament Handicap 2025 – Canberra Craze

by Shane Armstrong

The Australian face to face season swung into action in February with the 2025 Hung Parliament Handicap (HPH) held in the nation's capital, Canberra.

Currently unique in world Diplomacy, the HPH runs pretty conventionally. That is, until less-experienced players are given a predetermined score boost at the end of the regular rounds. This potentially gives them a kick into the prizes - or in the case of this season's tournament, a place on the top board.

What started in 2024 as a bit of a silly name, the HPH truly leant into its parliamentary vibe this year.

In Westminster political systems, a hung parliament is one in which no party commands a majority, with both leaders then attempting to secure a majority by negotiating with minor parties and independents for their support.

With a still recovering former parliamentary officer as Tournament Director, it was decided this year that 3 rounds would be played, with an award given to the leader at that stage, and also to the winner of the top board. The winner of the top board would be awarded 'Prime Minister', with second on the top board (or the leader after the 3 rounds, if they didn't win on the top board) being awarded Leader of the Opposition - the person trying to become Prime Minister, but falling just short...

As has become practice in Canberra over the last year, Round 1 began on Friday night. Brandan Austin (ACT) topped Board 1, John Curtin, with a 10 SC Germany good enough for Best Germany for the weekend, followed by tournament debutant Arden Gough (VIC) on 9 in Turkey. Another debutant Turk, high schooler Isaac Barrett (NSW) got his first board top on 8 SCs, followed by Harry Fulton (ACT) in Austria-Hungary, and Darcy Morris (ACT) in France, on 7 SCs apiece. Board 3, Life Assurance Bill 1904,

saw Jamal Blakkarly (ACT) getting a game in prior to his VDC exertions over the rest of the weekend top the board as England on 12, followed by Stuart Barton (ACT) on 11 as Turkey. The fourth and final round of the day saw another Turkish board top, with Andrew Goff (VIC) finishing on 10, followed by not just a tournament debutant, but a player playing their first game of Diplomacy ever, Hugo Kemp (ACT) managing 8 SCs as Italy (6 armies, 2 fleets!)

So, 4 games, and Turkey with an average SC count of 9.5! Talk about Turkey getting out of the box!

Saturday saw 2 rounds of 3 boards each, with Board 1, Frederick Holder, topped by Nancy Jin (ACT) in England, 2 dots clear of Joshua "The Beast" Crowther on 7 in France. Robert Hillier (VIC) also had a 2-dot clear board top as France on 10 (earning him Best France), followed by Brandan Austin (best Italy) on 8 SCs. The third board, Nova Peris, saw yet another strong Turkey, with Jacob Traeger finishing on 10 SCs, again, 2 dots clear of second place, which was held by Harry Fulton in France.

After a late lunch, it was into the evening rounds, with the first board, Isaac Isaacs, topped by Turkey (AGAIN), helmed by Darcy Morris on 9 SCs. Hector Soukhavong pulled into second on 7 SCs as France. Jacob Traeger won Best Russia on this board, holding off an I-T, and rallying the board to his defense to only concede Sevastopol and to finish on 6 SCs. Board 2, Neville Bonner, was the scene of an Andrew Goff masterclass as Austria Hungary (SC count: 3, 5, 5, 5, 6, 9, 10), finishing three clear of second placed Tristan Barrett (NSW) in France on 7.

At this point, the tournament director was dreading trying to pick out the Best Turkey from a power that at this point had managed an average SC count of 7 with only 1 elimination. Mercifully, Tianyu Sun (ACT) made it easy on board 3, Joan Child, playing a beautiful Turkey, finishing on



13 and easily sweeping the Best Turkey trophy, 2 dots clear of Arden Gough, who finished on 11 as England, taking home Best England for their troubles.

At the end of the regular rounds, Andrew Goff was leading the tournament, a point clear of Brandan Austin, with Tianyu Sun in third, Darcy Morris in 4th, and Arden Gough in 5th.

After the application of handicaps, tournament debutant, Arden Gough was in 1st, Brandan Austin remained 2nd, another debutant, Hugo Kemp, was 3rd, Isaac Barrett rocketed from 14th to 4th, Tianyu Sun dropped to 5th, Darcy Morris dropped to 6th, and Andrew Goff held on in 7th by 0.4 points.

As Hugo Kemp and Tianyu Sun were unavailable to play on the top board, a countback was used to welcome Stuart Barton and Roger Yu to the top board.

Contributing to the silly, the tournament also included a karaoke modifier, with singing a song adding points, and outstanding performances adding a little more, though this had no material effect on who was on the top board, but it was clear Kiran Gill (ACT) was one of the best performances, showing everyone how it should be done on one of the unofficial Canberra Diplomacy Club jams, Carly Rae Jepsen's 'Call Me Maybe'.

Thus, Saturday night turned into Sunday morning, and it was time for the top board. Ably covered by DBN (https://www.youtube.com/live/mQiF_GfRRa8?feature=shared&t=11534), the game utilized the Paris Method to select powers. The game ebbed and flowed in the early years, with Andrew Goff taking his usual calm and measured approach. Stuart Barton (ACT) took the initiative before being reduced to 1 SC for the majority of the game. In the west, Isaac Barrett focused on attacking Andrew Goff in Russia, getting Sealioned for his troubles and, thus, eliminated in 1906. Roger Yu played a patient game until a rush of blood to the head and an ill-advised decision to attack both Russia (Spring 1907) and Italy (Fall 1907) at once meant his chances of being a competitor in the final years were done. Arden Gough fought strongly as Italy, but never really caught a break.

At this point, the game looked finely poised between Russia, France, and Germany, with the organizers double checking who had the Paris Method advantage in case it was needed. Fall 1908, though, saw Andrew Goff misorder, failing to provide a support, meaning he lost Sevastopol,

and also had the fleet in it blown up. This prevented him from being a viable runner as the game entered the final year. The final year, 1909, led to Brandan Austin walking into Rome after some Italian disbands, and capturing London to offset the loss of Venice to Germany, to finish on 10 SCs, with Andrew Goff finishing on 8, and Darcy Morris finishing on 7. Roger Yu finished on 5 SCs, and Arden Gough and Stuart Barton finished on 2 apiece.

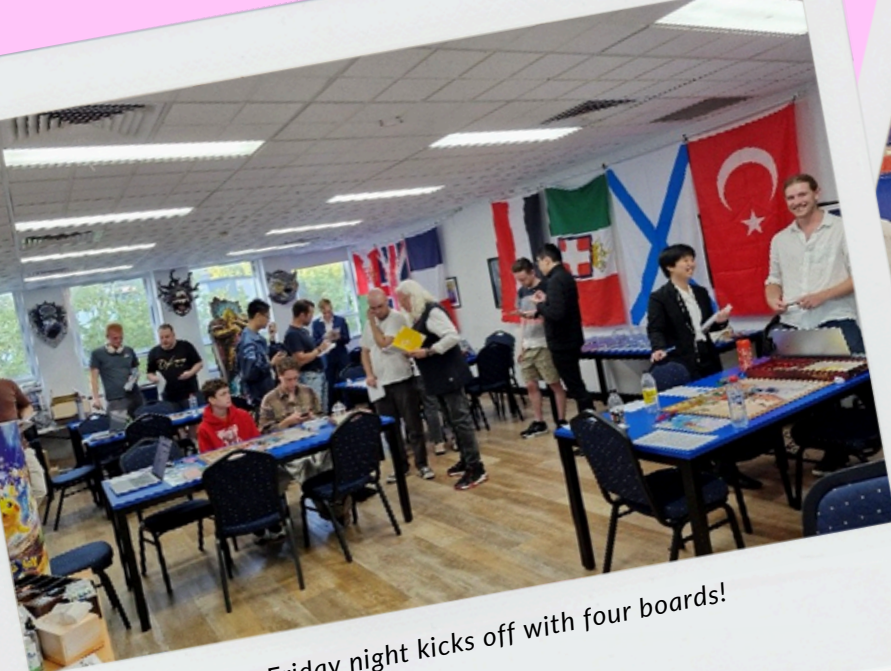
Congratulations to Brandan Austin for his first tournament win (interviewed here by the wonderful David Hood: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_Ba1Fz0DAU&t=2808s). Brandan was elected Prime Minister by his top board peers, with clubhouse leader prior to handicaps being allocated Andrew Goff being confirmed as Leader of the Opposition. Darcy Morris was awarded Deputy Prime Minister for finishing third, and Roger Yu was awarded Leader of the House for next best finisher.

Isaac Barrett won Best Debut for a phenomenal performance, making a top board in his first tournament, having played the game only once before, and Arden Gough was awarded Best Shane Cubis due to a chaotic arrival from Wodonga, wearing indie rock t-shirts, and making some suspect mis-orders. Most Based Move went to Tessa Chancellor (ACT) in her first game ever, with a sneaky convoy of another power's unit behind the lines of their common enemy.

The final award of the tournament, the tournament director's award, The Mandarin, went to the beating heart of the Canberra hobby, Hector Soukhavong. As usual, Hector was everywhere all weekend - double boarding, helping organize extracurricular activities, and ably supporting the running of the top board, while also managing to get in a good game as France in one game.

And so, the Hung Parliament Handicap was done for another year. It will be back in 2026, bringing more fun, more silly, but still some top-quality Diplomacy. If you're interested in running your own tournament in this format, do get in touch with diplomacycbr@gmail.com so we can share the handicapping methodology with you.





Round 1 - Friday night kicks off with four boards!



Top Board Negotiations - Arden Gough, Stuart Barton, Brandon Austin, and Darcy Morris try and work things out.



Top Board - Robert Hillier (left), and Hector Soukhavong (right) enjoy ringside seats at the top board, bringing you all the action via the sideling captured for DBN.



Origins Game Fair

The annual Origins Diplomacy Tournament is held at one of the largest gaming conventions in the US. The tournament is three rounds running Friday through Saturday. Best Country Awards, the Midwest Diplomacy Championship, and prizes will be awarded following the third round. We also host a teaching round on Thursday evening with prizes to select participants.

June 19th - June 21st in Columbus, Ohio

Teaching Round: 7pm-11pm Thursday

Round One: 7pm-11pm Friday

Round Two: 12pm-4pm Saturday

Round Three: 7pm-11pm Saturday

Scoring System: C-Diplo

Rank: Best two out of three rounds

Contact: Thomas Haver (tjhaver@gmail.com)

Website: <https://www.originsgamefair.com/>



RENEGADE
GAME STUDIOS

PrezCon Diplomacy Tournament Results (2025)

by Thomas Haver

After returning to PrezCon in 2024 with a 14-year gap between events, the Diplomacy tournament at PrezCon was a regular fixture again. This year we hosted a best two rounds out of three rounds Swiss-style tournament. Players from the Midwest and East Coast descended on Charlottesville, Virginia to compete for the title. Two-time defending Champion Claude Worrell was just short in his three-peat bid, with Robert Zahn riding two "board tops" as England and France to the championship. Veteran Diplomacy player Nick Benedict claimed 2nd place after a strong tournament showing across all three rounds. Congratulations to Robert Zahn on winning PrezCon 2025!

The teaching round was held on Friday before the tournament. We had two extra players intent on playing in the tournament, so they brushed up on the rules in the teaching round then jumped immediately into the game. Another core aspect of events we run is we're friendly to new and returning players. Additionally, we ran a "Era of Empire" demo for players on Sunday morning after the tournament to get a sneak peek at the new game.

Following Round Three we awarded the prizes so players could begin their journey home. The focus for this event was finishing in the Top 7 or "Top Board". Among the Top Board gear were Diplomacy hats -- a podium finish earns you a Diplomacy hat of your choice. We had two styles for events this year. We also had "Top Board" photo clipboards produced for the Top 7 finishers. The clipboard has a classic Diplomacy logo on the back in a cross-weave pattern and a map with event details on the front. Players can collect a set of seven for their home games! During each round we passed out board games, shirts, quarter zip pullovers, etc.. We always bring the swag for our players.

Santiago Carnice received the "Best Diplomat" award for his play during the tournament. Despite being the youngest competitor by far and competing in his first real tournament, he was punching far above his weight in negotiations. The other players universally had positive feedback about his play, and one included an anecdote: "During the Fall turn, Santiago didn't want to agree to another player's plan. So, he asked me during our chat to call him back over quickly about 'something serious' so he could cut short his negotiations with the other player until the clock ran out." Wonderful stuff, Santiago. You've got a bright future in Diplomacy ahead.

Photos of the event can be found at:

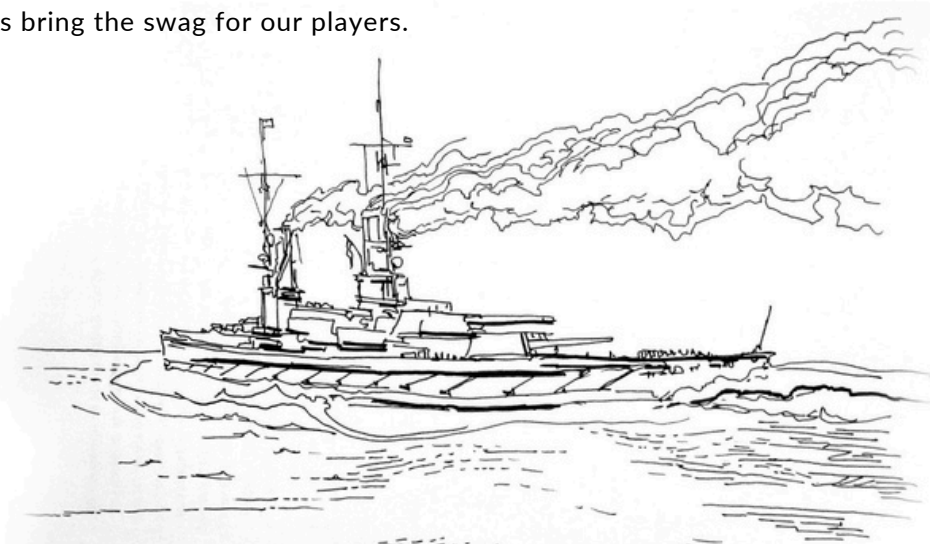
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/HTNwpCRqKpKxBbig6>

Top Board

- 1st Robert Zahn
- 2nd Nick Benedict
- 3rd Claude Worrell
- 4th Jay Buckwalter
- 5th Jeff Hayman
- 6th Paul Konka
- 7th Santiago Carnice

Best Country Awards

- Best Austria – Paul Konka
- Best England – Robert Zahn
- Best France - Robert Zahn
- Best Germany – Paul Konka
- Best Italy – Nick Benedict
- Best Russia – Nick Benedict
- Best Turkey – Jeff Hayman





Never a **CROSS** word No. 2

ACROSS:

- 1 Right out the German cardinal points in a crazy way to a neutral Scandinavian country. (6)
- 5 Surround or gape perhaps over Quisling state. (6)
- 8 Around November thanks both ways are extended by Californian city for Georgian capital. (7)
- 9 Crazy battle with which I'm identifying low country. (7)
- 11 Water commemorated in Slavic hymn. (5)
- 12 Shapes collection of extreme campaign secrets. (9)
- 13 Old language so backward for Hispanic American men. (7)
- 15 Lost ship with behemoth in command. (7)
- 16 Graduate introduces goal line technology and backs AI for German state. (7)
- 19 Sticky situation possibly, descriptive of many mid-to-late Great War Western Front battles. (7)
- 22 Invader most likely contrived gross rage. (9)
- 23 Alhaji had contained holy war (5)
- 24 When to play around by the sound of it and have a cuppa. (3-4)
- 25 First lady goes before others to reach highest point. (7)
- 26 Legendary band rocks. (6)
- 27 Sets my arrangement? (6)



'Paris in the Spring you say?'

DOWN:

- 2 Type of strike by Royal Navy helicopter? (7)
- 3 Old Scottish comic is just fine. (5)
- 4 Befuddled nun aces subtleties. (7)
- 5 Most aristocratic Lord at a guess joins good man. (7)
- 6 Repositioned half rusted coaler. (9)
- 7 Gain from German captures French town on the Rhone. (7)
- 8 Italian villain delivers cast iron support. (5)
- 10 Surgeon's initial mix-up with ICU after beginning of microsurgery possibly sound. (5)
- 14 Citizen of 5 Across also accompanies ash perhaps for a song. (9)
- 16 Savage animal. (5)
- 17 US General gets behind Virginia – bum! (7)
- 18 Responds unsettling war's three key points. (7)
- 19 Promotes exchanging places. (7)
- 20 Bath let Exeter string along sports star. (7)
- 21 Died happy? (3-2)
- 23 Juliet pees around military vehicles. (5)



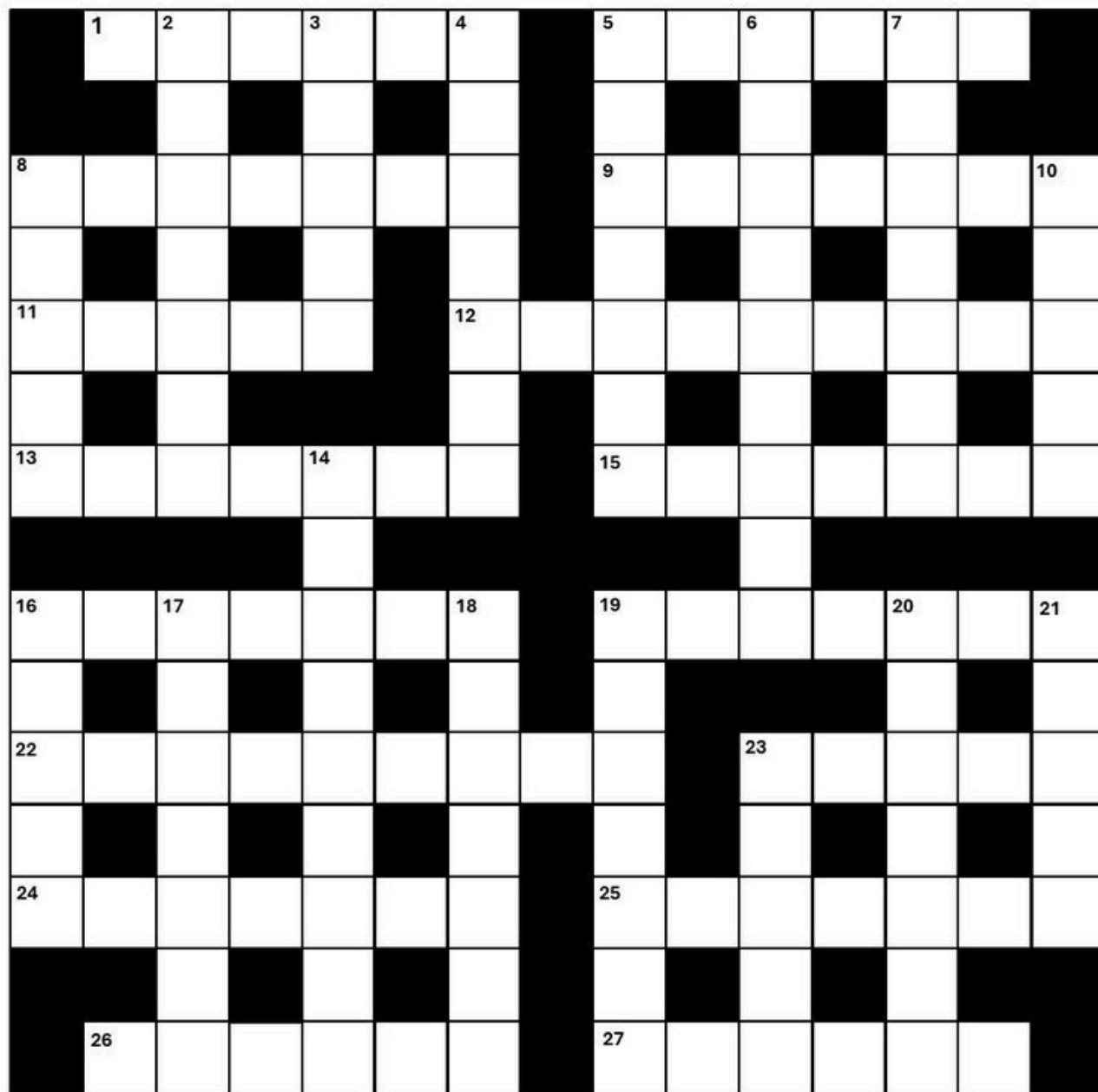
'I knew we should never have trusted that Italian gigolo.'

ANSWERS to 'Never a CROSS word' No. 1

ACROSS: 1 Acting, 5 France, 8 Vandals, 9 Sojourn, 11 Ivory, 12 Originate, 13 Germany, 15 Gliders. 16 Austria, 19 England, 22 Bohemians, 23 Swipe, 24 Moronic, 25 Emerald, 26 Piracy, 27 Turkey. **DOWN:** 2 Contour, 3 Italy, 4 Gascony, 5 Fishing, 6 Adjoining, 7 Crusade, 8 Vying, 10 Needs, 14 Agromania, 16 Album, 17 Scherzi, 18 Anarchy, 19 Easiest, 20 Animate, 21 Dread, 23 Steer. [The missing Great Power was thus RUSSIA.]

By Roger Pitfield

Never a **CROSS** word No. 2



Compiled by the one and only Archie Duke

WINNERS for the prizes associated with 'Never a **CROSS** word No. 1':

- Completed crossword:
No fully correct entries received.
- Missing Great Power:
Chris BRAND.
- Clue proposal:
No entries received.



We've still got some way to go
before we reach the Alps my friend.

Tournament Diplomacy in DC Makes a Triumphant Return

by *Thomas Haver*

When the new edition of Diplomacy was scheduled for release in 2023, Renegade sought to promote the new version of the game at conventions across the country. At the time there was this new event in Washington, DC run by Fort Circle Games. The convention director was recruiting game designers and industry veterans for Circle DC, billed as a “conference on history, education, & play.” That’s when we signed up with a Giant Diplomacy set for a special game.

Two years and many games later we’re back in DC but this time for a tournament. We built a good relationship with Fort Circle Games, and, coupled with local support, turned the demo games into a competitive event. This year Circle DC was hosted at the DC History Center. It’s an excellent location with plenty of ambient lighting and wide-open spaces to showcase the giant set. The convention also features dozens of game designers teaching their existing games and unpublished games. For the event, we were gifted a private room for Diplomacy for our other board and prizes. Staying true to our original intent, we ran an “Introduction to Diplomacy” game for two boards on Friday before the tournament.

After the Intro event, we jumped into the tournament. This year we ran a Swiss style tournament, best two rounds out of three with C-Diplo scoring. The podium awards were shaped like the Washington Monument. We also brought the standard Best Country awards and Best Diplomat award. This tournament would be a good “next step” to bigger and better things, since we built from a single demo game in 2023.

We had a special guest in Round One: Randy Thompson of *Legendary Tactics* (<https://www.youtube.com/@LegendaryTactics>) fame. This was Randy’s first face-to-face tournament. He performed admirably as Italy on the giant set, finishing with six centers, just two centers behind board top Evan Walter (France). After the game Randy conducted an interview on the map with Evan, which should make its way to their YouTube channel sometime in May. Over on Board Two, Robert Zahn (Austria) teamed up with real-life Diplomat Patrick Horne (Turkey) to eliminate one of the newcomers from the Georgetown University Wargaming Society and cruise to a 14c-11c finish.

Both the tournament and convention finished each night at 8pm, so we planned for a comped group dinner. On Friday the team elected for dinner & drinks at The Capital Burger, just across the street from the venue. The advantage of the DC History Center is the central location: hotels and restaurants abound in this convention space. I think Fort Circle Games is strongly considering a return to the venue and I hope they commit.

Saturday had two more rounds of Diplomacy action. One neat aspect of Circle DC is the daily raffle: publishers and the convention director donate games for the raffle. Attendees get raffle tickets each day for the dozens of games available, which are announced sometime in the afternoon. The big prize this year (in my opinion) was War Room by Larry Harris, which just so happened to be won by Randy Thompson. He had to do some repacking to get the oversized game into his luggage, but he made it work. As for Diplomacy, our Round Two and Round Three were hotly contested. Players had the opportunity to see the Diplomacy swag and board game prizes for each board top after Round One, so that added some motivation for our players. We had plenty of first-time tournament players and some long-time vets vying for board tops.

Two critical moments happened in Round Three to determine the tournament: (1) Kevin Fernandez’s Germany was dogpiled from the outset by four Powers to eliminate any chance of winning the tournament; and (2) Evan Walter’s Russia stabbed Austria for Budapest to end the game, which guaranteed a board top over Robert Zahn’s Germany. The combination locked Kevin into his first two round results as his best scores, whereas Evan was able to get two clean board tops as France and Russia. They weren’t big center counts – only 8 centers each – but in C-Diplo you care more about rank than center count to get those 1st-2nd-3rd place bonus points.

Walter won the first Circle DC championship, his first tournament win ever (after 10 attempts at the World Boardgaming Championships). It’s been a long time coming, but it was well earned. He did so by beating the other podium finishers in each of his games. Even more impressive, Evan elected to sit out Round Two, so he was playing without a drop round. Congrats to Evan and to our Top Board finishers on a tournament well-played.



After the event we went to City Tap House for more food & drinks to rehash the boards before parting ways. Only, that's not the end of our story. . .

The event wasn't finished on Sunday. This year we had demos for "Diplomacy: Era of Empire" the new Diplomacy game Renegade will release in August 2025 (<https://renegadegamestudios.com/diplomacy-era-of-empire/>). Era of Empire is a stand-alone game that's reinvented Colonial Diplomacy with a new map, new rules, wooden meeple pieces, and new artwork. We had 18 players signed up to learn the game and ran two boards. Legendary Tactics was on hand to record the rules explanation and the action, with several interviews conducted with me during the event.

The two games ended with a 16-center Netherlands board top on the giant map and a 16/16-center shared board top by Japan & Turkey. Feedback on the game was positive, with several players stating they preferred the game to the original because of the open map and flexibility the new game mechanics afford them during play (I still love my classical Diplomacy the best even though I worked on Era of Empire). We had lots of "Era of Empire" branded swag on hand for the players. This year we've got two new varieties of hats, four different shirts, pens, stickers, magnets, and even Diplomacy mints. Love those little supply center shaped mints. Remember to have minty fresh breath while you stab someone in the back!

After the convention, we had an opportunity to reflect on the Diplomacy events and what's coming for next year. We were flattered by the turnout. As per usual, we had a group of travelers from the East Coast and Midwest. We also had 17 players competing in their first ever Diplomacy tournament. Most of them were locals to the area. DC used to be one of the hotbeds for Diplomacy in the US before the local group stopped hosting events and tournaments in 2019. Now we have a solid opportunity to build the community here again with so many interested players. We'll connect them with the wider Renegade Heroes community to get Diplomacy into game stores, cafes, student groups, libraries, and wherever else games are played.

The venue for the convention was fantastic. Our hotel was just across the street; plus, there were more than a dozen restaurants within a block of the tournament. We have a good partnership with Fort Circle Games. We elected to award our host Kevin Bertram with the "Best Diplomat" award since he adjusted to the chaos in DC by finding a new venue within a month of the event AND still managing to get us a separate room for Diplomacy. His entire family is involved in running the event. He still made time to teach several of the games he designed & published too. The man is a dynamo and worthy of the award.

We'll be back next year. Diplomacy is growing and we've got multiple games that can be run at conventions. We may hold two tournaments or a mixed event that showcases classical Diplomacy and Era of Empire. Leading up to the convention we'll poll the players and attendees in the Fort Circle Discord so we run the type of event players want. We'll also keep running the "Introduction to Diplomacy" events. Both Intro events were well attended this year (14 players and 18 players, respectively), so let's run it again. Same time, same place. Diplomacy in DC is back!

Photo Album of Circle DC can be found at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/pxMCNPGPHmCKgmPw7>

Diplomacy Tournament Top Board (top 7)

1. Evan Walter
2. Robert Zahn
3. Kevin Fernandez
4. Paul Konka
5. Alex Burr
6. Patrick Horne
7. Owen Fleming

Best Country - Player

Austria - Robert Zahn
England - Paul Konka
France - Evan Walter
Germany - Robert Zahn
Italy - Paul Konka
Russia - Evan Walter
Turkey - Alex Burr

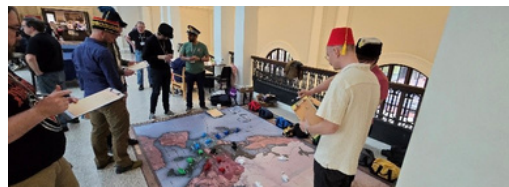
Best Diplomat

Kevin Bertram





CIRCLE DC



VIEW MORE AT:
[HTTPS://PHOTOS.APP.GOO.GL/PXMCNPGPHMCKGMPW7](https://photos.app.goo.gl/PXMCNPGPHMCKGMPW7)



Diplomacy

THE ERA OF EMPIRE TOUR

JANUARY	GRIMSBY, ON	• NIAGARA BOARDGAMING WEEKEND
FEBRUARY	MINNEAPOLIS, MN	• CON OF THE NORTH
FEBRUARY	CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA	• PREZCON
FEBRUARY	HOUSTON, TX	• OWLCON
FEBRUARY	LOUISVILLE, KY	• GAMA EXPO
FEBRUARY	ROTHSCHILD, WI	• EVERCON
FEBRUARY	AURORA, CO	• GENGHIS CON
MARCH	LAS VEGAS, NEVADA	• DICE TOWER WEST
MARCH	ORLANDO, FL	• ESCAPE WINTER CON
MARCH	INDIANAPOLIS, IN	• WHO'S YER CON
MARCH	MILWAUKEE, WI	• ADEPTICON
MARCH	WASHINGTON, DC	• CIRCLE DC
APRIL	LEXINGTON, KY	• LEXICON
APRIL	GLEN ELLYN, IL	• CODCON
MAY	COLUMBUS, OH	• BUCKEYE GAME FEST
MAY	KANSAS CITY, MO	• MIDWEST GAME FEST
MAY	MILWAUKEE, WI	• GAMING HOOPLA
MAY	ST. LOUIS, MO	• GEEKWAY TO THE WEST
MAY	KNOXVILLE, TN	• ROCKY TOP GAME CON
MAY	KERNERSVILLE, NC	• RECON
MAY	DALLAS, TX	• BGG SPRING
MAY	BURLINGAME, CA	• KUBLACON
MAY	BIRMINGHAM, UK	• UK GAMES EXPO
JUNE	COLUMBUS, OH	• ORIGINS
JULY	ORLANDO, FL	• DICE TOWER EAST
JULY	CHARLESTON, WV	• CHARCON
JULY	SEVEN SPRINGS, PA	• WORLD BOARDGAMING CHAMPIONSHIPS
AUGUST	INDIANAPOLIS, IN	• US DIPLOMACY CHAMPIONSHIP AT GEN CON
AUGUST	SEATTLE, WA	• DRAGONFLIGHT
SEPTEMBER	LAS VEGAS, NEVADA	• NATIONAL DIPLOMACY MASTERS AT WSBG
OCTOBER	COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA	• NUKECON
OCTOBER	CINCINNATI, OH	• CINCITYCON
OCTOBER	BLOOMINGTON, IL	• FLATCON
OCTOBER	MADISON, WI	• GAMEHOLECON
NOVEMBER	TORONTO, ON	• TABS CON 66
NOVEMBER	DALLAS, TX	• BGG CON
DECEMBER	PHILADELPHIA, PA	• PAX UNPLUGGED

*EVENTS AND DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE



Diplomacy

THE ERA OF EMPIRE TOUR

Vancouver Annexed by Someone from Washington DC

by Riaz Virani

You might think that from the news these days that I'm joking. But it actually happened. Read below for details.

The Greater Cascadia Open has been around and run annually (Covid being the exception) by Chris Brand since 2017. Chris always does a fantastic job making it a fun and friendly event for everyone. This year was no exception.

The 2025 Cascadia Open was held at the Holiday Inn Express in Surrey BC from Jan 31st to Feb 2nd. We had everything you could expect from a trip to Vancouver in the winter including rain. And this year brought multiple new local players to the fold.

The majority of the players came in early afternoon on the Friday. After some time to unwind, the Friday Night Social was held at the Green Timbers Pub, owned by the late Len Tennant who is survived by his 2 sons who run and manage the pub. Games were played in the afternoon and after dinner at the venue, giving everyone a chance to enjoy the night over drinks and talks of tariffs.

The tournament itself was three rounds - two on Saturday and one on Sunday. Cascadia used the scoring system that will be used at the World Diplomacy Con in SF in April 2025. Round 1 saw 3 boards with Adam Silverman volunteering to sit out. Harj Guram put up a massive first round score as Italy when he stabbed yours truly's Austria on the way to a 16-centre board top. On the other boards, Matt Crill and Dave Miller topped their respective boards to set the stage for the early leaderboard.

One intriguing thing about round 1 was the introduction of a lunch break. Players were given the option to have a short break to order food delivery and then play on until it arrived or just head out for lunch together and return at a set deadline. This allowed for a good mental health break that also looked after the players' nutrition needs.

Round 2 also had 3 games but had Harj sit out. Patrick Jacobsen put up a massive 15 SC France as the highlight of the round, with Liam Stokes and Jason Mastbaum topping the other boards. The round had a similar food break but most players elected to play through it.

So, the stage was set for round 3, with Dave Miller having a slight lead over Harj, Matt, Greg Matthews and Jason for the tournament lead. Round 3 began Sunday morning with

the snow falling and the final round of diplomacy ahead. Dave, Harj and Jason all ended up on one board, Greg and Matt on separate boards.

Neither Matt nor Greg put up a strong enough Round 3 score to challenge for the Championship. Dave Miller did just enough to edge out Harj for the tourney win. After barely losing out in 2023 to yours truly, Dave Miller held on to be the 2025 Greater Cascadia Open winner. Washington DC makes good on its threats to annex Canada. And thankfully, after winning, Dave did not threaten more tariffs.

Excluding the TD, the 2025 Cascadia Open had 22 players play with 11 players from BC including a few playing in their first tournament.

Best country awards went to the following players:

Austria - Andrew Zick
England - Craig Mayr
France - Patrick Jacobson
Germany - Greg Moore
Italy - Harjot Guram
Russia - Doug Moore
Turkey - Benjamin Djukastein

Harj Guram also won Best Stab and Best Canuck. Patrick won The Players Choice Award. Kyra won the With Friends Like These Award and lastly Riaz won Just a Flesh Wound.

A fun time was had by all at the 2025 Greater Cascadia Open and we look forward to the 2026 Open. Thank you to Chris Brand for running a fun and well-run tournament as usual.





WDC 2027: Las Vegas

by Thomas Haver

The *National Diplomacy Masters* is a tournament held in Las Vegas at the “World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG)” convention (<https://wsbgvegas.com/>). The Diplomacy event started in 2024 with a partnership between WSBG and Renegade Game Studios, the publisher of Diplomacy. The event will be held annually under the name and will be the eventual host tournament of World DipCon (WDC) in 2027. In this informational article, we’ll provide some details about the event so players know what to expect if they want to join the fun.

Background

The Diplomacy tournament is held in a specially designated area within the WSBG convention. We have our own storage room and a large space for the giant, walkable Diplomacy map readers have likely seen featured in other tournament reports. For those unfamiliar with the convention, it started several years ago as a competitive board gaming event with cash prizes. Every day there are multiple qualifying “Ring” events. The winners of each Ring event (such as Acquire, Azul, Terraforming Mars, etc.) proceed to a playoff to determine the WSBG champion. They have over \$200,000 in cash & prizes at the event. Does Diplomacy have a cash prize? No, we avoided that by supporting our players up front. Cash prizes in Diplomacy events can drastically alter behavior, and we wanted to avoid that. Instead, we invested heavily in prize support for all players: Diplomacy challenge coins, Top Board wooden trophies, Best Country awards, board games, shirts, pens, stickers, magnets, keychains, mugs, tumblers – the list goes on and on.

For the 2024 edition of the event, we advertised several potential events the night before the tournament and planned meals after each round. These meals were fully comped for players, their families and their friends. On successive nights we finished the round at 8pm, then went out dining to Guy Fieri’s, then Carmine’s, and finally Giordano’s. This will be a tradition we intend to continue in future years. For 2027 the plan is to comp just the opening night dinner. We want players to enjoy Diplomacy, socialize as a group after the round over a meal, and then be free to enjoy the Vegas nightlife on their own terms. Event pictures from 2024 can be found at:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/HU8d8U8oqSy4K8rf7>

For 2025 the event is shifting to WEEKEND dates (September 19-23) and adding a “*Diplomacy Era of Empire*”

tournament. That means 4 rounds of classical Diplomacy with a Top Board and separately 3 rounds of Era of Empire in a Swiss-style event. If you want to play Diplomacy, you could play seven rounds during the convention. You can thank Katie Gray and Steve Cooley for that change. They wanted more Diplomacy, so they’re getting it!

In 2026 the “World Series of Board Gaming” moves to Labor Day weekend. That’s a holiday weekend in the United States. One other detail regarding an online question I received about the age 18+ restriction on certain events: I was told by WSBG that for cash payout events, that restriction needs to be in place (legal reasons). However, since Diplomacy **doesn’t** have a cash payout, we can host games with under 18 so long as we assign those boards to designated tables in our event space. We have many parent-child pairs at our events, so this will open attendance up for all.

Event Details

Event Name: World DipCon (WDC)

Event Dates: September 2027

Location: Horseshoe Hotel & Casino (Las Vegas, Nevada)

Official Site to Signup: <https://wsbgvegas.com/?ref=S0024502>

WDC 2027 Informational Site: <https://wdc2027.com/>

Hotel Booking: <https://www.caesars.com/horseshoe-las-vegas>

Email Contact: WDC2027LasVegas@gmail.com

Rules: 6th edition, Renegade Games

Scoring System: C-Diplo

Round Structure: Three qualifying rounds followed by a fourth round with a Top Board

Tournament Director: Thomas Haver

TD Assistants: Shane McBee (Overall WSBG & PrezCon Tournament Director) & Trevor McGregor (Organized Play Manager with 20+ years’ experience and Las Vegas native coordinating events and meals)

Background about the TD: Thomas Haver is a veteran events organizer. He’s been volunteering for Rogue Judges running board game events since 2007. In 2016 he was named a Volunteer Events Coordinator for Hasbro / Wizards of the Coast and TD of the US Diplomacy Championship at Gen Con. Since 2022 he’s served as an Expert Consultant with Renegade Game Studios on Diplomacy, Diplomacy Era of Empire, and Acquire.



Most recently he's been named the Renegade Heroes program coordinator for community outreach. Thomas is the most prolific event coordinator in the history of Diplomacy, running 49 tournaments and countless Introduction events; he's taught close to 2,000 players how to play Diplomacy. He was named to the inaugural class of the Renegade Hall of Fame

(<https://renegadegamestudios.com/renegade-hall-of-fame>) and he's the only Diplomacy TD to win the Board Player's Association "GM of the Year".

Abstract

The World Series of Board Gaming (WSBG) and Renegade Game Studios plan to host World DipCon (WDC) 2027 in Las Vegas, Nevada. The tournament will be held in conjunction with the WSBG championship to crown the brightest star in board gaming. WDC 2027 will be a four-round Swiss tournament with a Top Board to determine the World Champion. WDC 2027 will take the place of the existing "National Diplomacy Masters" event at the World Series of Board Gaming. The hotel site is also the event site, so no additional travel is required. Additional event information can be found at the WSBG site (<https://wsbgvegas.com/>) and on the Renegade Game Studios official Discord (<https://discord.gg/uGzzUQbq>).

Player Support

The National Diplomacy Masters tournament honors four competitors as part of the event. Each competitor receives a "Play & Stay" package to cover hotel & events costs. This tradition will continue at WDC by celebrating the achievements of players on the board and those organizers who uplift face-to-face play. Additionally, four hotel rooms will be made available to international travelers representing different nations. Each hotel room has two queen-size beds, so multiple competitors can elect to stay together for the duration of the event. Lastly, the WSBG will offer travel stipends to select VIPs to help support event attendance.

Prizes

Each competitor will receive: WDC Challenge Coin, WDC Diplomacy Shirt, and WDC Diplomacy logo pen.

WDC Champion -- "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign acrylic trophy

Top Board -- WDC Top Board Wooden Coin Box

Best Country -- "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign wooden trophies

Other prizes will include board game giveaways, pins, magnets, stickers, coasters, keychains, tumblers, and hats.

Travel

- Travel to Las Vegas - Las Vegas is one of the top tourism destinations in the world. It's serviced by 31 airline carriers. The airport has about 457 direct flights each day to 164 destinations in 10 countries and 50 US states. Some international cities with direct flights to Las Vegas include: Amsterdam, Frankfurt, London (Heathrow & Gatwick), Manchester, Zurich, Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg.
- Travel from the Airport to the Hotel/Tournament Venue - The airport in Las Vegas is located just 5km / 3.1mi from the Hotel. There are multiple modes of travel to the venue: bus, taxi, town car, and rideshare.

Hotel

- Horseshoe Resort & Casino (<https://www.caesars.com/horseshoe-las-vegas>). The hotel site is also the event site, so no additional travel is required. The convention rate is \$125 per night, with options of two queen beds or a single king bed. Upgraded rooms are available with views of the High Roller observation wheel, the South Strip, and rooms that allow pets.

Questions from Potential Attendees

Can players under 18 play?

Yes, Diplomacy has been excluded from the cash prize event and is held next to the open gaming space. Teenagers are allowed to participate in the tournament.

Is "opt-in" for sharing registration info an option? In other words, IF the players want to be exposed to the wider hobby, you'll cooperate, right?

Players signing up at Rogue Judges events may optionally list their contact information. That information is shared ONLY with the player's consent. Neither Rogue Judges nor Renegade will share the private information of a player without their explicit consent.

Will dinners be provided at WDC 2027?

Likely the opening night dinner in 2027 because of event size. For 2025 and 2026, the event rounds will follow the tradition started at the inaugural event by paying for all dinners of players, friends, and families.

Can the organizers provide an indication of the entry cost?



Current costs range from \$89 to \$1099 depending on the number of side activities players want to participate in. The highest cost incorporates a hotel room for the duration of the convention and includes all events, known as a “stay and play” package. The 4 Masters selected for the event each receive this package for the National Diplomacy Masters. Anyone wishing to ONLY play Diplomacy needs just the \$89 pass. For more details, please visit <https://wsbgvegas.com/>.

Can the organizers provide details on the last 3 tournaments held in their city, including attendance, cost of entry, and full board-by-board results?

The 2024 event results have been posted to Diplomacy World, Discord, Twitter, BoardGameGeek, Facebook, Instagram, BlueSky, Reddit, and Renegade’s email distribution list. Event pictures from 2024 can be found at: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/HUsd8U8oqSy4K8rf7>. The first tournament in 2024 had 30 players & 9 boards, with a top board to finish. The 2025 and 2026 events will have similar reporting across social media platforms. The event reporting exceeds all other Diplomacy events globally and includes both the Renegade official accounts as well as FtFDiplomacy accounts for Rogue Judges.

There will be full video recordings from last year’s event with the Top Board entirely mic-ed up provided by Board Game Nation (<http://www.youtube.com/@BoardGameNation>), an official media partner of Renegade Game Studios. Each player and the GM had audio recordings, with 4 cameras setup to capture the action around the giant map, including a confessional booth. Full results will be posted with the debut release of the videos to help promote external interest.

Can the organizational committee confirm that they fully support the World DipCon charter and accept that the process of selecting a host for WDC will continue to be decided by the Diplomacy Community as laid out within that charter?

It was relayed to us by an NADF representative (Jonnie Gilliam) the charter is being rewritten, but no one from Rogue Judges, Renegade Game Studios, or Hasbro has been involved in this process. Any selection process should involve localization partners for the game to get a true global community behind organized play, most especially communities under-represented presently but have Diplomacy now in publication. Specifically, Renegade has partners in China and Spain. The Spanish-language edition of the game is also sold in Central and South America.

Any process should not be exclusionary to the primary stakeholders of the game.

Renegade will continue to sponsor WDC, as outlined in the announcement here:

<https://renegadegamestudios.com/blog/renegade-announces-official-sponsorship-of-diplomacy-world-championship-events/>

Can the organizational committee commit to the principle of sharing the hosting rites for future WDC events evenly among all events that are reasonable candidates to do so, both within their region and globally?

Please refer to the answer above. This is not a statement that can be made on behalf of all stakeholders for the game but needs to be asked for each organization. Any process should involve all parties invested in organized play.

Looking at the 2024 WSBG schedule, I saw that Diplomacy’s Day 1 was on Monday. Would that likely be the same for 2027? Meaning that the first Diplomacy round would probably start on a Monday and round 4 with the top board would be on a Thursday?

2025 is held over the weekend: one round Friday, two rounds Saturday, and one round Sunday. In 2026 the convention is shifting to Labor Day weekend (a holiday in the US), with the event occurring over the weekend. The same will happen in 2027. Weekend Tournament.

I noticed this section of the rules:

“During the course of play, if a player abandons their position to another player for the purposes of advancement to the Top Board, the Tournament Director may elect to invalidate the score of both players for the round and may further elect to disqualify both players from the tournament.”

2a) What other tournaments have used this rule, if any?

The US Championship at GenCon.

2b) Are there any anonymized examples of this rule being enforced and either score invalidation or disqualification happening?

It’s never been enforced during an event.

2c) Is this rule’s inclusion in any way related to the tournament being at WSBG?

No.



WDC 2027 Las Vegas Activity List



The following is a list of potential activities. It is by no means exhaustive. Las Vegas is one of the tourism capitals of the world -- there is something for everyone! Events are identified by category: **adult** or **family friendly**, **on-site** or **extended travel required**, including **free** events.

Activity	Categories
Horseshoe Casino	Adult, On-Site
Indigo Lounge	Adult, On-Site
The Arcade Bar	Adult, On-Site
Lobby Bar	Adult, On-Site
Sully's Casino Bar	Adult, On-Site
Purple Zebra	Adult, On-Site
The Cabinet of Curiosities	Adult, On-Site
The Lock Speakeasy	Adult, On-Site
Potted Potter	Family Friendly, On-Site
Paranormal Mind Reading Magic Show	Family Friendly, On-Site
Battlebots	Family Friendly, On-Site
Dita von Teese: a Jubilant Revue	Adult, On-Site
Walk the Strip	Free
The Sphere	Family Friendly
Bellagio Casino Fountain Show	Family Friendly, Free
Cirque du Soleil	Family Friendly
The Venetian Casino Grand Canal	Family Friendly, Free
Caesars Palace Forum Shops	Family Friendly, Free
The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas	Adult
Fremont Street Experience	Free
Red Rock Canyon National Park	Family Friendly, Travel
Hoover Dam	Family Friendly, Travel
New York-New York & The Big Apple Coaster	Family Friendly, Free
Area 15	Family Friendly
High Roller Observation Wheel	Family Friendly
Wynn Las Vegas	Adult
SkyPod & Observation Deck at the STRAT Hotel	Family Friendly
The Neon Museum	Family Friendly
Discovery Children's Museum	Family Friendly
The Mob Museum	Family Friendly
Hershey's Chocolate World	Family Friendly
Springs Preserve & Origen Museum	Family Friendly, Travel
SPEEDVEGAS	Adult, Travel
Mandalay Bay Casino, Aquarium and Beach	Free
MGM Grand Casino	Adult
Madam Tussauds Las Vegas	Family Friendly

There are many more activities than this limited list. If you're looking for ideas, please check out:

Official Las Vegas tourism site:
<https://www.visitlasvegas.com/>

Recommended Family Friendly activities:
<https://travel.usnews.com/features/things-to-do-with-kids-in-las-vegas>

Trip Advisor Las Vegas activities:
<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g45963-Activities-Las-Vegas-Nevada.html>

World DipCon

September 2027
Horseshoe Hotel & Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada

- ★ Held in conjunction with the World Series of Board Gaming
- ★ Four-round Swiss tournament with Top Board
- ★ Hotel & Tournament are co-located
- ★ Airport with 457 direct flights each day to 164 destinations in 10 countries
- ★ "Stay & Play" event package covering both hotel and event costs awarded to select players
- ★ Four hotel room packages covered for international players
- ★ WSBG offers travel stipends to VIPs





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Where Should I Let You Build?

by Elle Doerr

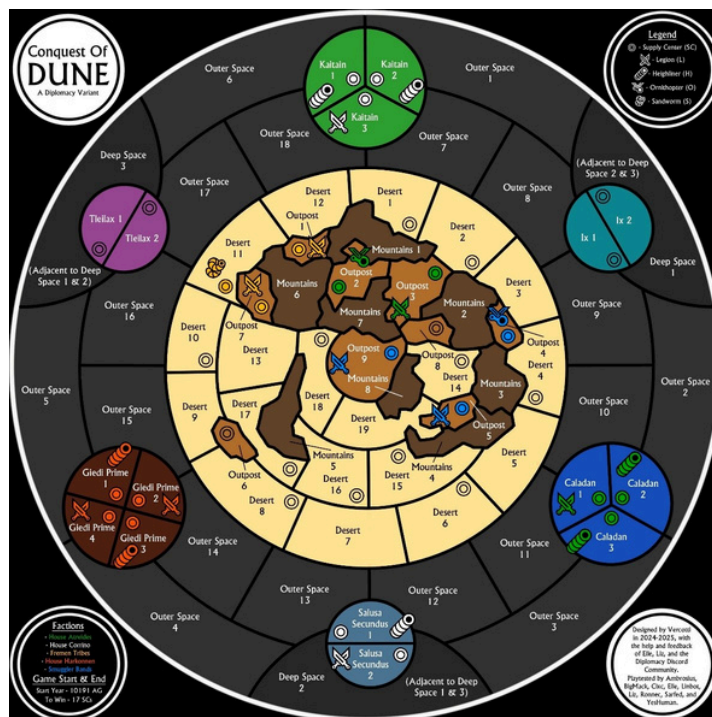
So, you thought Austria couldn't build in Moscow, did you? You weren't allowed to build a fleet in Paris? You wanted to build in Tunis, but the rulebook said no? Well, you can in a variant! If you haven't figured it out by now, I'm a big fan of diplomacy variants. I've designed a couple myself, but most of my time is put into managing the Imperial Diplomacy community, which I helped codesign. Each diplomacy variant creator comes across a crucial choice in their design, which is: Where Should I Let You Build?

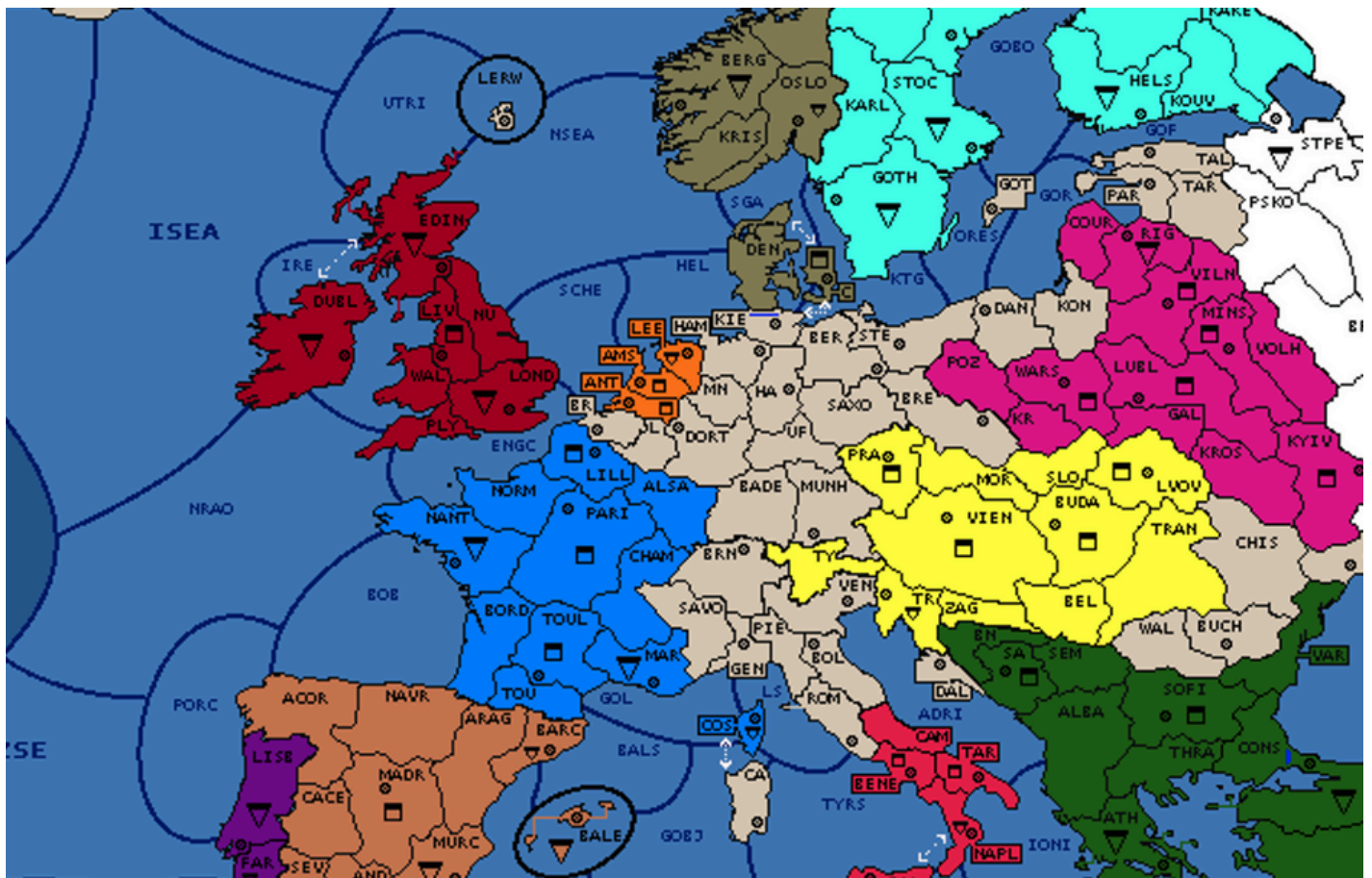
In classic Diplomacy, each player is only allowed to build in their starting home scs. This creates an interesting dynamic, as some build sites are more powerful or useful than others, as they can be closer to the front lines, or can only build armies, or aren't allowed to build fleets. This directly forces certain powers to be primarily naval or land based, and makes fleets generally have a slight advantage, because of their ability to quickly transport units from the back lines to the front for a large and sprawling power.

When one is not simply playing classic Diplomacy, however, these standard build rules are not necessarily in effect, and a creator can choose alternative ways to allow folks to spawn their new units. I wanted to go over some of the most common ways that people choose, so that when you decide that the classic Calhmer board bores you, you know which version you prefer the most!

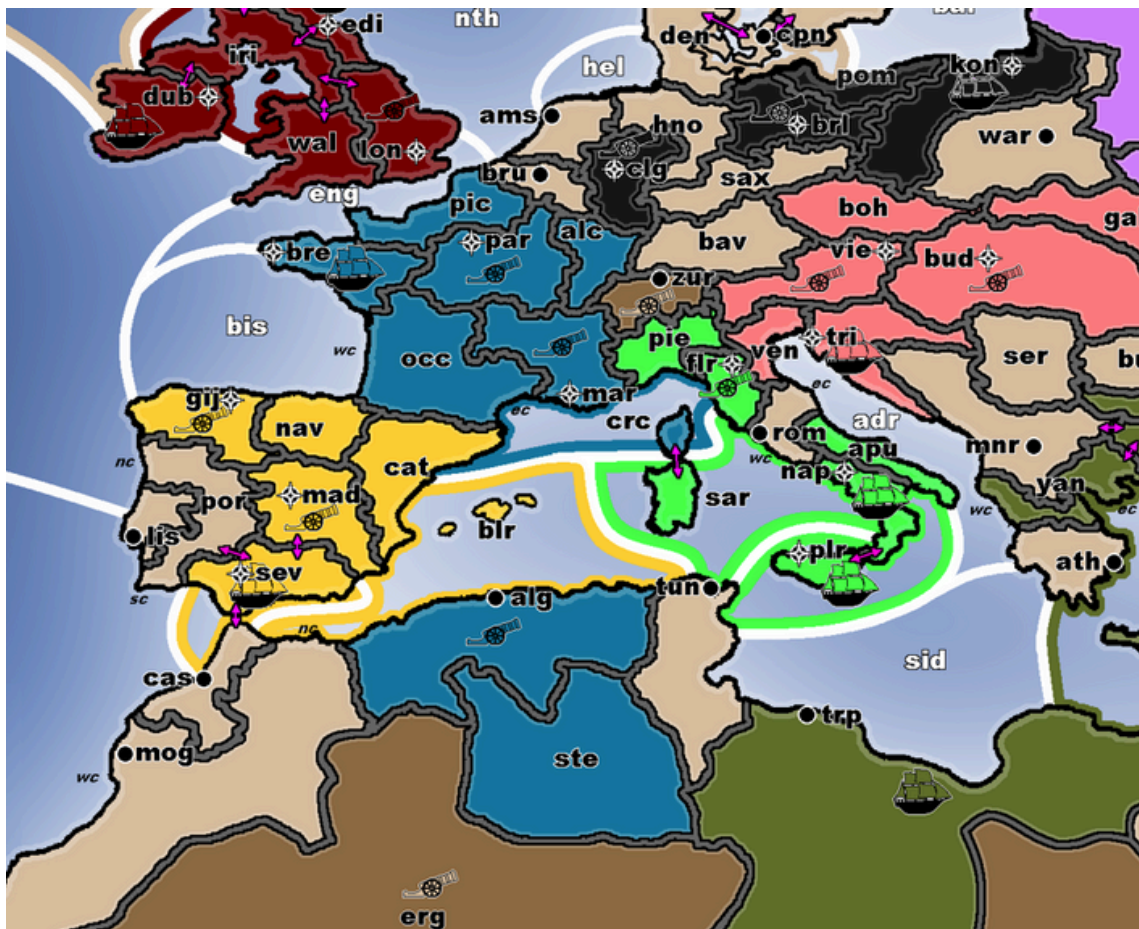
Obviously, one can stick with the typical version where a power cannot build except in their starting SCs. However, assuming that you do not want to be an average Diplomacy variant creator (or player), you might be thinking of some alternatives.

The first example that I have of alternatives is restrictions; this variant has a blend of multiple options. This variant, created by Vercotti, is set in the world of Dune, the book series by Frank Herbert. With 6 different players and 4 different units, each unit and location has different build restrictions. This variant allows you to build anywhere that you control, as long as it follows the relevant restrictions. For example, legions can only be built on outposts or planet tiles. Only the Fremen can build sandworms, but they cannot build any heighliners. Each unit has their own restrictions for where they can be built, and each power has a restriction for which types of units they can build, and often additional restrictions on where. For creators that are interested in different types of units or terrain, these restrictions will often come naturally. Faction restrictions also often come into play with variants that are built off of certain source material, or want to add in additional terrain. I tend to not prefer these restrictions in my own variants, as they can deviate quite far from the norms of diplomacy, but I find them to be a very creative way to match the lore of the material for a specific variant, and can allow for very unique variants.





Europe, as displayed in Revolution Diplomacy



In 1862, SCs that can be built in have a star in the center, where SCs that are not buildable in at the moment are simply a black dot.

The most common alternative to standard build rules that I have seen in variants is the build anywhere option. Rather than being limited only to your starting scs, you are allowed to build in any sc that you control that is not occupied. One example of this is Revolution Diplomacy, created by Illuminati Joe. This variant is one set in the revolutionary time period of the United States, and contains a variety of colonial powers (which have smaller groups of scs scattered globally) and regional powers (ones which are only in one place). The ability to build anywhere provides opportunities for much faster growth, and allows for flexibility across very big maps. It can, however, limit certain tactical choices because of how easy it is to shift fronts. One's loci of power can shift rather dramatically, and I do not typically prefer it for large maps, but do not mind it on smaller maps, such as applying it to classic Diplomacy's map.

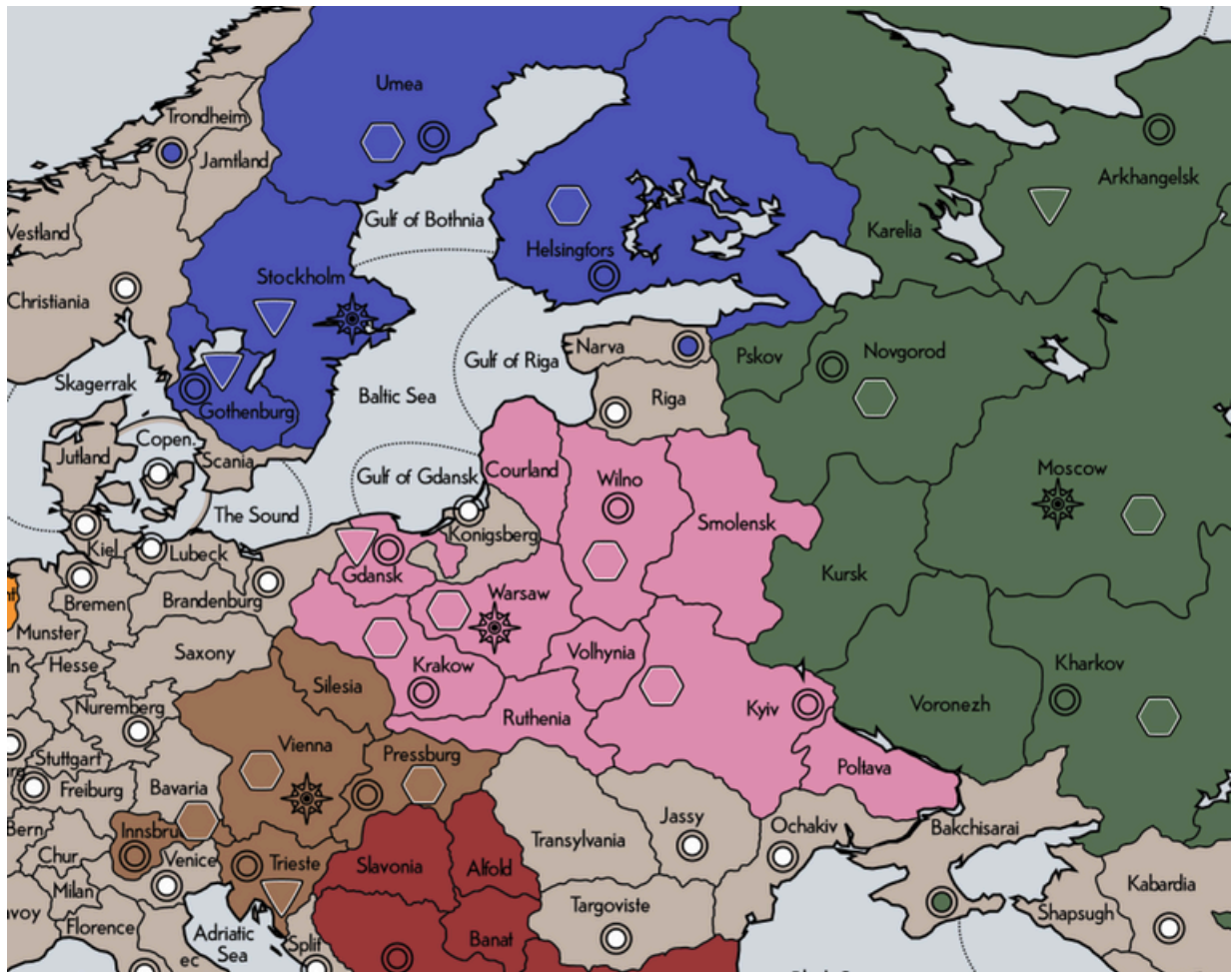
In Superstition's 1862 variant, a player can acquire different build sites by controlled territory. If all the non-ocean or neutral-unit occupied tiles around a controlled sc are controlled by that respective player, that site is now available for building in. If at any time, there is a space that would change ownership around that sc, it is no longer legal for building in. Some initial home centers are always available to be built in, but this is not true for all powers, especially for colonial powers. This makes non-sc spaces far more valuable, and forces players to go in directions that might not typically be strategic, in order to create new building locations.



NoPunIn10Did is one of my favorite variant creators of all time, with my current favorite map of his being Order of the Dragon. In many of NoPunIn10Did's games, he uses a system called Diplomacy Points which allow people to affect neutral units that are on the board. In Order of the Dragon, Diplomacy Points can also be used to control Vassals, minor powers that can be created by a marriage of heirs between two different powers, with one power donating an SC to create the Vassal. Normally, in Order of

the Dragon, a power is not able to build anywhere besides their starting scs, but a Vassal is able to build in its initial supply center with its starting unit and any additional captured scs, allowing for more flexibility for both powers. This creates a variety of complications for both powers, but gives them a committed way to work together (and stab each other). Your Vassal might just start taking your own SCs!





On the Imperial Diplomacy map, you can see that some nations, specifically Sweden in this image, already have precores in neutrals to allow them to expand in other directions faster.

Finally, I want to talk about my preferred method for allowing players to build in new places: coring. It is used in my variant that I created with Flare, Imperial Diplomacy. Coring is an action that people can take to turn a controlled SC into one's own core, a.k.a. a place that the coring power can build in. Some areas on the Imperial Diplomacy map already start out as cores, even though they do not belong to that power at the beginning of the game, meaning that if the respective power takes that area, it automatically becomes a legitimate build site. In Imperial diplomacy, a power is required to take the coring action twice, consecutively, in an SC that they already control, to make it their core. They can even change other players' cores into their own cores! This mechanic can be adjusted to change the length of time needed for a core, or remove the ownership requirement, or people can simply change different areas that get precores, as it can significantly buff a power to have an additional build site on a front that did not initially have many options.

In Imperial Diplomacy, we also do not permit a coring order to be supported, and it can be stopped by any attack, making it a high risk move, but one that often has high rewards. I enjoy the coring mechanic for variants, especially colonial based ones like Imperial Diplomacy, because of the flexibility for balance and for strategy that it provides on such a large map.

So Where Should I Let You Build? Hopefully not where you can stab me! The choices a creator makes for their game about build sites will affect tempo, strength of particular powers, and even provide more immersive lore. I encourage you to try some of these options out, even on a classic map, so that you can shake up your alliances and strategies even more! Maybe the Lepanto will become even more valuable, once you can build in Tunis? Which option is your favorite? I'd love to hear from you!

- Your stabby co-editor, Elle

