

TOURNAMENT DIPLOMACY PLAYER GUIDE

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of this little guide is to provide players a quick look at the aspects of tournament play that may not occur to them until after several tournaments. For the "new to tournaments" player, it is an attempt to close the gap in information on this very different aspect of the Diplomacy Hobby. It is also here to provide a basis for numerous discussions at the after game lounges for the experienced players to mull over and dispute various aspects as presented here. After all, what is a good Diplomacy Convention if not one that you can talk about long after the action is over?

WHAT MAKES TOURNAMENT PLAY DIFFERENT FROM OTHER FORMS OF GAMING

What does "doing well" in a tournament mean? Is there a standard recognition of achievement? When does it end?

General gaming is usually a single event. All Diplomacy tournaments are a series of games tied together in which the results of one game affect the perception or results of others. In tournament play, it is not enough that you end the game with a 15 center Austria, it is important that no other Austria finishes with more than 14!

In a social game if things get awkward and boring, you may simply say the hell with it and go on with other things. In a tournament system your actions affect not only everyone at your table but have a ripple effect on all other tables. If you decide to throw in with the front runner and help them win, not only will you affect their score, but all the country scores of everyone else in the Tournament.

Tournament play is for most an intense period of gaming in which the pressure to do well is greatly heightened. For many it is also the first time that the definition of "Doing Well" has been determined by others and may be structured in a manner that is not in line with what the player has been accustomed to in their normal playing areas. For example: is having 8 supply centers in a 5-way draw "better" than 7 centers in a 4-way draw? Is it better to have tied with the most centers, regardless of the number of players that survive a game, or is better to have as few as players as possible even if your supply center count is small?

It should also be noted that tournaments have a mega-game aspect in which tournament players may be very affected by the actions on other boards prior to the current round or that they notice at the same time.

Tournament players may approach you on the issue of let's attack player 'C' because they are in the lead in the tournament or because you want best country or some other tournament award. While the playing style of some are much more focused on tournament results as opposed to the individual game, be on the look out for this aspect of yourself and of the other players. The higher the prestige of the event, such as the World DipCon Championship, the greater the number of intense tournament players some of which may be spending a thousand US\$ or more to travel to and stay there for the event.

There is no right or wrong here there is simply knowledge. For the most part, if you want to attack or arrange an attack because the target is a tournament leader, you can think it, you can act on it, but it only works well when you are in a group of other similarly minded individuals. If you do not know for sure the inclination of the other players, it is generally better not to bring in outside board factors. The average player is turned off by such tournament focuses, remember many if not most of the players in a tournament may only be there because this is the only way for them to get into a 7-player game, or are there for a single round or for kicks and chuckles and are not there driven by tournament recognition. Know the answer before you ask the question.

It should not shock you to find out that in the World DipCons, the answers to these questions herein are different -- with almost no uniform agreement among the scoring systems employed or on how to handle the above conditions. Every tournament system has taken a different approach to defining what is "doing well". This is the only one of several shocks that players have to deal with in a tournament.

You should look over and understand what the tournament system is calling "Achievements That are Worthy of Recognition". If you

disagree with them, save it for after the tournament, there is too much at stake to start complaining at the start of the convention and it is not going to change. You should decide if in your play you are going to keep in focus what the tournament system says is achievement or whether you are going to play in a personal style independent of what the tournament rewards. If you decide to go with the tournament system, then be on the lookout for those players who have either consciously decided to go against the system's rewards, or who appear to be unaware of the system.

You may be able to blend their reward system with your focus on the tournament in such a manner that both of you accomplish what you want with you gaining ground in the tournament system and the other players achieving some personal goal. Tournament players often look down on players who are unaware of or ignore the tournament system. Regardless, as the ultimate purpose of any game is to have fun and make it fun for others, it is interesting that sometimes the "personal players" have achieved a much greater sense of enjoyment and continue to come back, whereas the "tournament player" is long burned out with their own intense competition, chasing ever-shifting artificial goals and rewards.

Face to Face games often have social limits: play to midnight or when the last train leaves for home.

Postal play and Email play have no limits, and the game continues till a draw or a win. Tournament play has limits. Most often it is a matter of game time or real time. In a few systems there has been an attempt to place no limit on the games other than to play to a win or a draw. The last method is going out of favor, but still has some social limitations -- the family person with small children at the convention, or reasonable local home front requirements. If you find yourself in one of those rare tournaments where there is no set time limit, then at your table as part of the pre country assignments consider bringing the subject up - setting a reasonable end to the game and see if there is an agreement. If you know that you are only good for, say 12 hours, then you may want to keep in mind those who are determined to play to the bitter end so that in the mid game period you can make the appropriate adjustments to leave the end game made up of similarly minded social players. If you are one of those who feels that their health, make up and intensity can sustain you through an all-nighter then consider the pressure that you will be putting on yourself to perform well in future rounds if you physically exhaust yourself in an early round. Also remember that when players in the tournament find out that you were pushing a game far beyond the social envelope of the game, your chances of survival in the early game goes down quickly.

GOOD BEHAVIOR AND GENERAL PARANOIA

It is only a game. Say it again and again to yourself until you get it straight. Tournaments bring out intense competition and narrowing focus on sometimes minor aspects of the tournament system or even the rules or reading handwriting. It is only a game. Having gotten that straight try to treat people in a social setting and remember that nothing is personal. Try not to use any language that you would not employ in front of your mother when talking to your daughter. It is only a game. Behavior issues at a tournament that you may have to deal with are:

Temper

It's only a game.

Cross Round Grudges

It is considered very bad behavior to bring into a new round hard time that occurred in the last round. So if you were viciously stabbed in the first round, and wind up with the same player as a neighbor in the next round do not go into the game with revenge as the motive. In fact, go out of your way to make sure that the other players know that you treat each game separately. In that way from a very real tournament perspective your in-game diplomacy will be far more flexible and you will have a better game. If everyone thinks you are tied to the last game experience, then you have less options. This does not mean you forget who is trustworthy and who is not, it just means that you may bring a little more caution, but not hostility, in dealing with past foes.

While you generally do not have time to go around in the middle of your game to see what everyone else is doing, if you do have the time try to avoid contact with other players in the other games. For example, if you are playing Austria and doing well you do not go around cheering on all other boards to kill their Austrians, so your score stands as the highest country effort. Do not interfere with other games or even discuss the tactical options in those games when the players are around.

Cross round Tournament Player Mentality

Some players are very keen "tournament players". This means that they will make their decisions on this particular game based on the tournament standings. As such they will mostly go against those that are leading the tournament and who are ahead of them in the tournament. This consideration is not considered as Bad Behavior and is a part of tournament play. It is something that can be used effectively by the victim of it or as a nudge in one direction or another however you have to be very careful with this as there is a group of players who consider tournament play as bad behavior and are turned off by the idea that you should attack so and so because they are ahead of you in the tournament. Know your players in this regard and act accordingly.

PARANOIA

This does not mean that you cannot be paranoid. Most gamers are paranoid; after all, if they really are all out to get you, you can not be crazy to think so. Here are some of the most common things that players get paranoid about in tournaments:

Different language at the table

In international play this is a probably the single biggest hot button to push and drives the paranoia levels way up. As every player who does not understand the language will have their paranoid self say: "They are plotting against me because I do not understand". If it has been agreed that one language is the table language and people lapse into another language, do not be shy and simply ask what that translates into. A common language is often a strain for some in an international setting to put aside as a courtesy to others and lapses and mistakes happen. You must suppress your paranoia at times. It is, after all, only a game.

Always going off with the same person first and last

Try to vary who you talk to and the sequence. That way, players feel that you are more open to communication. Talk to everyone if you can, even if only for a moment. You may never know when you may run into the person in a future round and need some polite prior times to build on. It is after all only a game.

Nationalities/local cliques

Diplomacy is a game in which if there is 1 winner then there are 6 who did not win. Some areas of the world have had a greater exposure to nationalistic conflicts than others and for them it is sometimes tempting for those who did not win to both lessen their own loss and the achievement of the winner by claiming that there was some conspiracy of a nationalistic or a local clique to favor their own against all others. Sometimes there is a minority target fear: "We are the outsiders to this country and they may all jump on us, so should we stick together?"

The reality is that in about 50+ North American DipCons and international Diplomacy Tournaments that I have watched, I have not seen any real function of such nationalistic bias or local cliques despite some grumbling here and there. Diplomacy as a game system attracts INDIVIDUALS and rewards individuals. It is the egotist's dream game.

BASIC TOURNAMENT TYPES

Game Year Fixed vs. Time Fixed vs. Open

Supply Centers vs. Draw

A Fixed Game Year tournament ends in a certain game year. The common settings are 07/09/11.

Game year endings are most common in European tournaments with a few American tournaments experimenting with 1909 and 11. French tournaments have experimented heavily with the shortest of the deadlines (typically 1907) while, when used at all, the Americans have the longest of the deadlines. The Swedes have had tournaments with various dates but are becoming more oriented towards the shorter deadlines. Why everyone picks an odd year is unknown. The effect of the fixed deadline on the game is that in the last two years of the game, players become far more cutthroat than if the game was to end at an unknown time or range of years. So start to think of your standing in the tournament and guard yourself from what might otherwise be a suicide stab in the final years.

The shorter the fixed deadline the more common it is for conflicts to start in 1901.

For example, in the 1907 fixed deadlines the following are more commonly seen:

England: Fleet London to the English Channel

France: Army Paris to Burgundy

Germany: Fleet Kiel to Holland

Russia: Army Warsaw to Galicia

Austria: Army Vienna to Galicia

Italy: Army Venice to Trieste

Turkey: Army Smyrna to Armenia

You will also see far greater agreed standoffs in Spring 01 in the shorter games than you will in the longer games. The three areas of critical standoffs are:

Russia and Turkey in the Black Sea

England and France in the English Channel

Russia and Austria in Galicia

Germany and France are less likely to agree to a stand off in Burgundy because the French can force the issue by using Army Marseilles as the supporter. Further, the Germans are not gaining any momentum by having Army Munich bounce around. They are far more flexible with Army Ruhr and knowing that the French double crossed them by going to Burgundy when it was agreed otherwise.

Shorter games also bring out greater risk taking by both the very experienced players and the newer players while average experience players tend to be cautious. This is often seen in the cases where Germany has to decide whether to cover Munich in Fall of 1901 when there are armies in either Burgundy or Tyrolia or the French/English decisions when a hostile force is in the Channel.

The theory is that tournament play in general rewards the bold, and that in a shorter game there is less reward for the defensive move than the offensive one. In the longer game you have more opportunities to plan a bold move sequence so that defensive play becomes more important. Using the defense as a diplomatic tool is also very important in the short game where you can sometimes turn

someone around by simply showing that it would take 3 game years to achieve a break and then it might only yield one or two centers while the rest of the board is growing.

Shorter time games will see greater changes in alliance patterns as players become very focused on even the smallest power difference between each other. It is therefore in these short games that the players who are operating outside of the reward system of the tournament become critical partners for the tournament focused player as they will be less likely to turn on you because of a power differential than another tournament player.

Supply Center Ranking vs. Draws

All tournament systems holds the solo win as the pinnacle of achievement, it is what comes next that they break down. Tournament systems come down to a simple divide: do they reward supply centers or do they reward participation in a draw. Two extremes of this are represented by the following:

In a game that ends (regardless of how) with supply centers of 13-12-6-3 The Supply Center shows a Ranking of 1-2-3-4 of the players based on centers often giving the 3 center powers here not much credit. The Draw system says all players participated in a 4 way draw of equal value or that the difference between the 3 centers in this game and one in which all seven were still around is huge.

Overall, the European tournament systems through the 20th century favored the Supply Center Ranking system while the American systems tended to favor the Draw methods.

Some systems will have a little mix of the two extremes, but it is surprising to note that for the most part the tournament approaches are polarized. Know which way your system rewards achievement. You might find it helpful to outline your own scoring in the following four conditions to bring out the bias of the system and help you decide if within a tournament system it is in your interest to move the game strategically from one relationship to another:

At end of the game:

you are 7, others are 6, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2

you are 7, others are 8, 8, 10

you are 7, others are 12, 15

you are 7, others are 18, 4, 3, 2

Knowing your tournament score may decide whether you want to eliminate the weak players to reduce the numbers in the game or to keep them around because your relative ranking would be higher.

PICKING YOUR ROUNDS

Tournaments have multiple rounds. Many allow you to skip one or two rounds or to drop your lowest score in a single round. Many tournaments also have a round devoted to "Team Play" which may also double as a round scored for the tournament. When you play in a team round your results are linked with your teammates in other games. The dynamics of these games thus have an additional set of factors in which you become subject to forces outside your game as the time progresses. You will often see in team games players from the other games coming over to share their results with their teammates. The general behavior of non-game interference is greatly weakened in team rounds.

In the case of a good result in another table, the story could come with information on who is also doing well on their table. The temptation and sometimes outright advice is to go after a particular team on your table so as to toss them back in the over all team standing. However, this very viable team technique is very rarely seen and in some circles is considered "rude". Instead, what is the most common inter-game dynamic is that a teammate that has been eliminated drifts over to share their woe. In those cases it comes with a certain wave of depression that the fellow teammates results is meaningless since the rest of the team was pounded. In these cases, it is very common for the other players to come in with a chorus of "this game means something to my team so why not help me?" This outside dynamic is something critical in a team game round and opens opportunities for diplomacy and discussion.

This is another way in which tournament play is very different from all other games.

Team Rounds also tend to attract the more competitive players. Many of the novices will avoid a team round since they do not have a team, or they perceive the team round as something that experienced players alone do. All of which is not always the case as many pick up teams have done well, but it becomes a reality that the games are affected and that you see on average a higher degree of competition and experience in the team round games.

If you have done well in your prior rounds and you have the tournament individual results as a personal goal, then it may be to your Tournament interest to avoid the Team Game Round since there are some additional outside dynamics and the level of competition is greater.

Another question of tournament play is whether you want to skip a particular round, the most obvious being to skip the first round or the second round. By skipping the first round in a tournament that allows you to drop a round, you may have a better idea as to who is ahead and can then try to catch up. However, if you have done very well in the first round you may want to skip the second round to

see who appears to be competition in the tournament and then plan your approach based on what you may consider as your margins. All this depends on being able to find out what the results are.

THE FLOW OF THE TOURNAMENT

Some experienced players believe that tournaments have a certain flow or mass psychology which you can pick up in an early round and then apply in the latter round of the same tournament. This point dwells almost on the "mystic forces of a tournament" which may not be valid and can never really be proven either for or against. For the purposes of this guide, we will discuss it because it is a fun aspect and some people really believe in it. The flows are in two areas: play on the game board and play around the game.

Play on the Game Board:

It is held that sometimes tournaments will have it out for one or another country and you will hear that "Russia is being pounded". Or that one offensive opening is being used extensively, such as Lepanto (See below on openings) against Turkey. (In DipCon 9 in North America where there was a seminar talk to the players before the tournament about the Lepanto opening, the resulting 3 rounds of a total of 57 games saw the best Turkey in a 1909 deadline game being a 7-center survival with 23 cases of Turkey being eliminated. Killing Turkey, by any means was obviously in the Flow of the Tournament). When you convince yourself that there is a Flow in game play then your position on supporting it, directing it or reacting to it is based on your country of play. Remember that you may be creating a self-fulfilling prophesy by your own actions. However, if you are convinced that the other players in the game may have been influenced by the latest fad in openings then make your moves accordingly.

Play Around the Game Board:

The most common mass psychology aspect of the Tournament Mob is the approach to very experienced players. In some tournaments there appears to be a mentality of ganging up against the experienced players while others seem to ignore it. Experience can be an attraction to other experienced players who always fear a silly stab, while at the same time be an attraction as a target to the paranoid novice or average player that fears the tactical ability of a star player. Getting a sense of this allows you to emphasize or try to divert attention from your skills or to play up the paranoia or the situation as best fits in with your position.

Individually there is a long-standing tradition of dumping on the prior year's winner. This is something that is outside of what we are talking about here as the flow of the crowd and almost a tradition of sorts that the former champions take as a badge of honor.

SCOUTING FOR GAME RESULTS

Tournaments are by nature the comparison of your results with everyone else. Knowing where you stand can affect drastically the style and play of the game you are in. This is also a key question of game morality or ethics: how much should you allow your play to be affected by the results of the prior round, by the results seen in games around you.

Most VERY experienced players will tell you that they play each game on its own and hope for the best. Most experienced players will admit to the reality of tournament information affecting the play though they deny that they themselves are affected. Most novices seem to recognize the validity of tournament information affecting play but are unsure on how to do it and question whether it is valid to beat on someone just because in the prior round the player did well.

Some tournaments post the results of one round as soon as it is done, so that players can see what the best country score is and who are the leaders. Some tournaments are very much the opposite where cross game information and effect is considered highly rude and anti-social. This reached a height in the United States where for several years the common method was that the actual tournament system was not known in advance of the play of the tournament and that players were only given the most general of information. You were advised to play your game as best you could and then at the end when the system was applied the winner was chosen. This method has gone out of favor because players want to be able to accept the results on a system known before hand.

Currently, it is common for players to know who, or which countries scored an outright win in the prior round as well as often who were the top scorers. This is the reality of a tournament as played.

It is also a common reality that on the final elimination round to get into the top board or in the final round of a tournament to determine over all standings that players discuss what their position in the game means to them in terms of their tournament standings as the game progresses and the end results of their game are about to be determined. It is not unusual for a deal to be cut on the top board that will give one player 1st and another 2nd. This negotiation is based on Tournament Position and not actual game board position.

The ethics of it all and the social value of the situation is up to you to decide. However, be aware of this difference between regular play and tournament play that this brings out.

OPENING PLAY BY COUNTRY

((Now how many of you skipped all that good stuff up above and went straight to this?))

The following are the most common conservative openings in play regardless of venue:

England:

Fleet Edi-Norwegian Sea, Fleet London-North Sea, Army Liverpool-Yorkshire

France:

Fleet Brest-Mid Atlantic, Army Marseilles-Spain, Army Paris-Burgundy

Germany:

Fleet Kiel to Denmark, Army Munich-Ruhr, Army Berlin to Kiel

Italy:

Fleet Naples-Ionian, Army Rome-Apulia, Army Venice holds

Austria:

Fleet Trieste-Albania, Army Budapest-Serbia, A Vienna-Galicia

Russia:

Fleet St Pete-Gulf of Both, Army Moscow-Ukraine, Army Warsaw -Galicia, Fleet Sevastopol -Black

Turkey:

Army Con-Bulgaria, A Smyrna-Con, F Ankara-Black Sea

There has been a slow trend toward having the English play Liverpool to Edinburgh and the Italians to play Army Venice to Tyrolia, but for conservatism you can not beat the above display.

Tournament play brings out a sense of bravado and dash in many players and it is therefore very common to see slashing openings as part of a tournament. The shorter the time period in the tournament the greater the tendency to go with a slashing opening. Here are some:

THE SEA LION

Made for a French and German alliance against England. It is critical that France gets into the Channel in Spring 01. Works best if the German move in Fall 01 is unexpected. Can be enhanced by having the Russians move Army Moscow to St. Petersburg in Spring 01 in order to pressure Norway.

S-01

France: Fleet Brest-English Channel, Army Paris- Picardy

Germany: Army Berlin to Kiel, Army Munich-Ruhr, Fleet Kiel-Denmark

F-01

France: Fleet English Support German Fleet Denmark-North Sea, Army Picardy-Belgium

Germany- Fleet Den-North Sea, Army Kiel-Denmark, Army Ruhr-Holland

W-01

both France and Germany build a Fleet and an Army

S-02

Army Belgium-Wales convoyed by Fleet English Channel

Army Holland to York convoyed by Fleet North Sea

Critical factors are the concept of taking the North Sea from the English in 1901 and opening up tremendous convoy potential and leverage for the F-G combination. The double convoy is an idea to demilitarize the Lowlands and go for 100% offense against England. There are plenty of chances for double cross in St Pete in 02 which will give the game some tension. Also strong chance for a quick growing Germany and France.

THE FRENCH ROLLOVER

France is not often the target of a slashing opening attack but when it is, it is generally a double stab by England and Germany who have agreed with the French to stay out of Burgundy and the Channel. The situation can be made worse by Italy going to Piedmont, however that is very rarely the play of the Italians in tournament play.

S01

England: A Liverpool to Wales, Fleet London to the English Channel

Germany: A Munich to Burgundy, Fleet Kiel to Holland, Army Berlin to Kiel

Italy: A Venice to Piedmont

F01

England: Convoys to Belgium with German Support or into Brest

Germany: Army Burgundy goes for Paris or supports the Italians to Marseilles

Italy: can go for Marseilles or he fears a stand off can support the French from Spain to Marseilles

Note that Italy can make the above obnoxious by using the Western Lepanto wherein he also moves Army Rome to Tuscany and Fleet Naples to the Tyn. Then in the Fall he convoys to Tunis leaving Fleet Tyn in place to move on the Gulf of Lyon in the Spring of 02 or the Western Med.

THE MUNICH FALL OKTOBERFEST

Everyone wants to be in Munich. Works best with a traditional conservative German opening to Ruhr/Kie/Den. If Germany has made it clear to Russia that he intends to stand him out in Sweden in the Fall then this can often result in a mass gang up on Germany as follows:

Spring 01

France: A Paris to Burgundy, (can be supported by Mar if paranoid)

Italy: A Venice to Tyrolia

Russia: A War-Silesia, F StP(sc)-Gulf of Bothnia

In the Fall of 01 all sorts of things can go down. Given the above the most common result is:

France: A Burgundy-Belgium

Italy: A Tyrolia-Munich

Russia: A Silesia-Berlin, F Bothnia-Baltic

The combination of attacks on both Munich and Berlin generally means the German is reduced to 1 build at the most and often stays the same at 3. The Russian Fleet in the Baltic cements the 1902 offensive to take the rest of Germany if the 3 stay together and the English decide to go vulture and make a play for Holland and Denmark.

THE BALTIC OPENING

The Germans are often in tournament play with short deadlines tempted to make a play for all three nearby centers of Holland, Belgium and Denmark. However, often one can avoid being a target by taking only 2 centers at the start. The Baltic Opening is also designed to be used as part of a Western Triple Alliance where France goes south putting both armies in the Iberia and shifting Fleet Brest through the Mid Atlantic and into the Western Med in Fall of 01. England goes to Norway with an Army and then shifts Fleet Norwegian into the Barents. The German agrees not to take Belgium and to support England into Sweden in Spring/Fall 02 so that the west all have 5 centers. Germany open develops as follows:

Spring 01: Fleet Kiel to Baltic, Army Berlin to Kiel, Army Munich to Ruhr

Fall 01: Fleet Baltic to Sweden, Army Kiel to Denmark, Army Ruhr to Holland

Winter 01: build Army Munch, Army Berlin

Spring 02: Army Denmark to Livonia Convoyed by Fleet Baltic, Army Berlin to Prussia, Army Munich to Silesia

The above sequence assumes that the Germans will stand out in Sweden. If they play down to the Baltic then the German gets three builds which can include a fleet to blow the Russians out in the Spring. You also note that Denmark is vacated in favor of the move to Livonia, this is a gamble that the Russian will not go for Sweden in the Spring and let the English have it. Most less than experienced players never see the convoy into Livonia and thus this presents a massive German Army invasion of Russia that spells the end.

THE AUSTRIAN BLOOD BATH

No country has a reputation for being first out like Austria. This works well even when there is an agreed stand off in the Black Sea. It rings the Austrians with hostile armies in 1902 and with a little luck will keep them down to at least 4 and maybe even 3 in the first year. The following combination is why Austria is eliminated more than any other country:

S-01

Italy: A Venice-Tyrolia, A Rome-Venice

Turkey: A Con-Bulgaria, A Smyrna-Con

Russia, A War-Galicia, A Moscow-Ukr

F-01

Italy: A Venice-Trieste, A Tyrolia Support Army Venice to Trieste

Turkey: A Bul-Greece, A Con-Bulgaria

Russia: A Galicia-Budapest, A Ukraine-Rumania

THE AUSTRIAN HEDGEHOG

Paranoia is the normal situation for a Diplomacy Player. Combine with playing Austria and the slightest increase in insecurity and Austrian players may go for the Hedgehog Opening. Barring a German entry into Bohemia, this opening will make sure that Austria gets at least one build in 01 and has the option of being converted with Italian support into the destruction of the Austrian Fleet and its replacement by an army.

S-01

Army Vienna to Galicia

Fleet Trieste to Venice

Army Budapest to Serbia

In the fall the Austrians can cover both Vienna and Trieste while keeping Serbia so they are assured of a build. The Austrians can have the Italians who played to Tyrolia and Apulia dislodge Fleet Trieste and by refusing to retreat the Austrians build two armies. In the South the Army Serbia can be used to go to Bulgaria or Greece to curtail the Turks or even to support the Turks to Rumania for some

more fun in the Balkans. The danger of the opening is that in the face of a Russian-Turkish alliance the Eastern Steamroller has a jump on Greece and the central Balkans, that and an Italy who might not be so forgiving as to the intrusion into Venice.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Russia is about the only country that can attract 4 powers to attack it in 1901-02 with any degree of regularity. The mass jump on Russia is often driven by personality factors as well as the simple desire to crush someone early. Critical to speed in the south is the failure of the Russians to stand out the Turks in the Black Sea. Failure to stand off in Galicia against the Austrians will also contribute to a massive downturn in Russian survival chances. When Russia dies early in a game it is usually from this sort of opening:

S01

Turkey: A Smyrna-Arm, F Ankara-Black, A Con-Bulgaria

Austria: A Vienna-Galicia, A Budapest-Serbia

Germany: F Kiel-Denmark

England: A Liverpool-Edi, F Edi-Norwegian, F London to North Sea

F01

Turkey: A Arm-Sev, F Black Support A Arm-Sev, Army Bul-Rum (or Supports Austrians there)

Austria: A Galicia-Rumania or Ukraine, A Serbia Support Turkish A Bulgaria-Rumania

Germany: F Denmark-Sweden

England Convoy Army Edi to Norway, Fleet Norwegian to Barents

These moves may keep the Russians from having any builds in the first year and will attract the Vulture in the English if nothing else. In the Spring of 02 the Doom Ring is assembled as the English slip an army into St Petersburg and back it up by a fleet in the Barents, the Germans move armies to Silesia and Prussia, the Turks and the Austrians should have Rumania and Sevastapol and the only question is who gets Moscow. A sad fate for the Russians but a common enough one.

IONIAN GAMBIT

Italy is often not the target of a Blitz in 1901 since other than bringing three armies against Venice in the Spring, not much can be normally done. Players in tournaments very rarely open with mad slashing and dashing moves against the Italians in an opener. One possibility is the Ionian Gambit. It depends totally on Italy being convinced to move its fleet into Tunis in the Fall of 1901. Austria plays a conservative opening to Albania, Serbia and covering Trieste and then in the Fall of 01, slides both armies south, taking Greece from Serbia and then moves Fleet Albania to the Ionian. From here the Austrians can convoy into Apulia, Naples, threaten the Turks or get themselves in mischief in any number of places. One of the variations on this is called the Blue Water Lepanto where in Spring 02 Italy dislodges the Austrian fleet in the Ionian and the Austrians retreat to either the Aegean or the Eastern Medit to start the Turkish campaign.

TURKISH TOE STUFFING/LEPANTO

Of all the countries to get at in an opening, the hardest is Turkey. The biggest opening advantage comes from a Russian successful move into the Black Sea. This is an uncommon occasion in Tournament play. More common is the bounce in the Black Sea. However, if Russia is either in the Black Sea or has Fleet in Rumania, there is always the possibility of an Austrian Russian combination to move on Bulgaria in the Fall of 01 to cripple the Turks. This move is occasionally done when the Turks have been terrorized by the prospect of an Italian Lepanto and are opening with Fleet Ankara going to Constantinople for the move to the Aegean in the Fall of 01. This leaves Bulgaria open to a supported attack. If successful it also means that Russia will have a shot at controlling the Black Sea and threatening Armenia in the Spring of 01.

THE LEPANTO

The Lepanto system is one in which the Italians open with Fleet Naples to the Ionian, Army Rome to Apulia and then in Fall of 01 convoy to Tunis. From there they build Fleet Naples and in Spring of 02 shuffle the fleets: Ionian to Eastern Med and Naples to the Ionian to convoy Army Tunis to Turkish corner into either Syria or Smyrna depending on the opportunities. As opening go in tournament play it is rarely pulled off completely. It is a slow opening when carried to the full extent. However, it has flexibility in that in the Spring of 02 Army Tunis can be convoyed into Albania to kick off a Balkan campaign, or even dully back to Apulia to take on a Defensive role. There are variations in the plan making use of Army Venice which in what is called the Key Lepanto goes to Trieste and then to Serbia with the Austrians consent as the Italians can alternatively give up on going to Tunis and instead shift the Fleet directly in the fall to the Aegean or the Eastern Med. as the Austrians fill in at Greece and the Ionian behind them. A very tense situation for the Italians who must have loads of trust in the Italians as a compliment of the loads of trust that they gave the Italians in their Spring 01 walk through of Trieste. It is a fast move on Turkey if that is what you are up to.

FRENCH SLING SHOT

Single country slashing, like the Lepanto above is uncommon because they rely on extensive diplomatic strategic balances to be able to employ with success. One of the most overlooked French openings is one in which the French yield the issue of Belgium as a matter of contention between England and Germany while having an alliance with the Germans. The idea is to keep the French Fleet in the Mid Atlantic and then use it to move to the North Atlantic or Irish in a stab move on England and follow it up with a move that allows the convoy into England of an army while protecting Brest from the English coming in the Channel. It also allows for the

movement into the Western Med. if needed to face off against the Italians. A possible dream sequence may look like this:

S-01

Fleet Brest to the Mid Atlantic, Army Paris to Gascony, Army Marseilles hold or goes for one of the more unusual standoffs with Germany in Burgundy or Italy in Piedmont

F-01

Fleet Mid Atlantic convoys Army Gascony to Portugal, Army Marseilles to Spain

Winter 01

Build Fleet Brest, and Army Paris or Fleet Marseilles

S02

Fleet Mid-North Atlantic, Fleet Brest to the Mid, Army Spain to Gascony, Army Portugal to Spain

F02

Convoy Army Spain to Clyde/Liverpool/Wales depending on your options.

STRATEGIC COMBINATIONS

The strategic game is one in which you look at the alliance patterns as a system. It has long been argued that a perfect Diplomacy game is one that would resolve into a three-way draw. In the beginning game there are basically 5 players against 2. Usually this means that there is one or more players splitting their forces against the 2 targets. In the Middle Game the situation comes down to 3 against 2, again with at least one of the majority alliances holding down two fronts. In the End game there is no strategic stable situation as 2 on 1 in a perfect game would see the 2 breaking down as soon as there was an advantage to one side and then the 2 would change make up and you would have a strategic stalemate.

Tournament play in fixed deadlines does not allow for the End Game to develop for the most part. Therefore, you have the game in two parts: a beginning and a middle. The most dangerous situation in a tournament is for there to be one part of the board where there are 2 vs. 2 and the other side where there is 2 vs. 1. This causes a significant power shift in tournament terms towards the odd side. The most common set up where this happens is when the East breaks out as Austria and Italy vs. Russia and Turkey. That leaves England, France and Germany to play odd man out. If you are thinking of fast gains then think globally in large groups. Plan to be in the 5 vs. the 2. Think about who is going to be your buddy and your target when you are down to 5 and it is going to be 3 on 2. The shorter the game the less stable the alliance must be. So, an alliance of everyone against France and Austria is probably the most unstable group of 5 to go into a mid game situation. However, in a game which ends in 1905 this might be perfect for a group of slashers. A longer game means you must pace yourself strategically and will most likely have less shifting of alliances unless the tournament system is in the extreme range of Supply Center Ranking. Strategically thinking, every time you change your own alliance structure you lose time. If you ever have an Army, go back to a province it came from you have lost time.

Strategic tournament thinking also means that you must consider if you are going to be facing any of these people in the next round. How much will your future ability to influence them be if you set yourself up as someone who is always playing against the leader even when he is your ally? While carry game grudges are considered very bad behavior, knowing a player's playing style is often critical in making a choice. Who would you want as an ally: the player who always plays against the leader or someone who is willing to run side by side with you against the enemy putting your alliance ahead of a single supply center difference in your power? It is interesting to note that players who have been playing in tournaments with Supply Center Ranking are most prone to turn on you when you have an alliance and you pull a head, while those who are most use to operating under a draw system tend to have longer alliances regardless of difference in supply center count.

In the games where there is a lot of time and draws are the emphasis then strategic play comes down to choices: do you take as an alliance partners that will be crossing the stalemate lines and thus risk a double cross with no defensive stalemate, or do you plan an alliance structure that seeks to achieve a stalemate line to guarantee results in a small draw?

Remember that most alliances bring with them a mirror alliance and that the tighter one alliance it the more it forces its opponents to be allies. The most common alliance is that of two players who are neighbors: England-France, Russia-Turkey ((The Steam Roller)) are the two most powerful combinations. They also bring against them a potential of a three-way alliance which can overwhelm them given time. Know the strategic limitations and counters to your alliance mix.

COMMON ERRORS

When you start the game, you set a tone for yourself that others hear. For new players, take a good look at the openings that are possible. When you are given a country assignment have immediately in your mind what the most common conservative opening is and the slashing combinations above. Know the game geography of your home country so that you can discuss your opening without having to wonder if Liverpool connects to London (*it does not) or be shocked that Army St Petersburg could move to Norway in Fall of 1901.

In tournament play if you act like you do not know anything and try the technique of a victim learning to play, then you will be a victim and will not have learned the most important thing be confident in yourself. The technique of the meek which works in some

social settings does not work well in tournament play.

Irrationality as a technique works mostly in short games where you can get away with a few "crazy" moves or paranoid plays. "I want to see what it would be like to get an Italian Army in Silesia in 1902" or an Austrian raider into the Mid Atlantic. When confronted with a player that is using irrationality then you put a consistent policy of treating them as an enemy. This way their irrationality is discounted since you are only concerned with their unit moves. You will be surprised as the number of times players who profess to be wild and crazy suddenly come down to being rather conservative after all when they are forced to contend with unrelenting pressure.

In longer tournaments the general reaction of players to those few who try to constantly stab and lie is to eliminate them. In shorter tournaments players tend to be more forgiving of stabs simply because players can always fall back on the old line: The tournament system made me do it...I need the center to stay even in the tournament."

Stagnation is a common error. At times you may have to play a few turns in a Turtle mode just holding a defensive line. You should not be content with this ever. An imbalance is a dynamic that wins tournaments and breeds great players. It is also a lot more fun. When you find yourself in a stagnate situation see if you can get your ally to help you open things up diplomatically. Sometimes a retreat presents your opponents with conflicting desires that allows you to shift the alliance structure.

Order writing is horrible for the most part in tournaments. The handwriting is even worse. The number of miss-written orders goes through the roof. Even very experienced players make errors. The first thing to do is to make sure your starting forces are correct. Do not try to abbreviate things if you are nervous or new. Remember that a poorly written order that allows for only one interpretation generally will work. So what if you spell out North Sea, it avoids a discussion point on any abbreviation starting with Nor. Use a big piece of paper...the trees will forgive you long before you forgive yourself for a bad opening move in which you forget to complete the movement of a starting piece because the paper was cramped.

The most common adjudication error is to forget that a force can not cut support for an attack on itself. The second most common perception error is that your allies' armies are still capable of dislodging you if they are supported by your enemies. One North American DipCon was decided by an unintended support that caused Munich and a stalemate line to collapse.

Players may come across adjudication errors some of which may be in your tournament interest to overlook. Polite play requires you to point them out. Playing with illegal extra units or wrong locations may be funny at the time in a secret inner place, but in the long run it is not good for the game. Every tournament has a Gamemaster somewhere; make use of him to help in the confusion. However, do not argue the results. A bad GM call may be wrong, but arguing with the GM is even more wrong.

It is only a game.
Have fun and make it fun for others.

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