



Origins of World War One

A game of diplomacy by Jim Dunnigan

ORIGINS OF WWI - Revised Edition 2020 V6 (January 2024)

A game by Jim Dunnigan, 1969, revised by JM Costa after an idea from Gus Molz.

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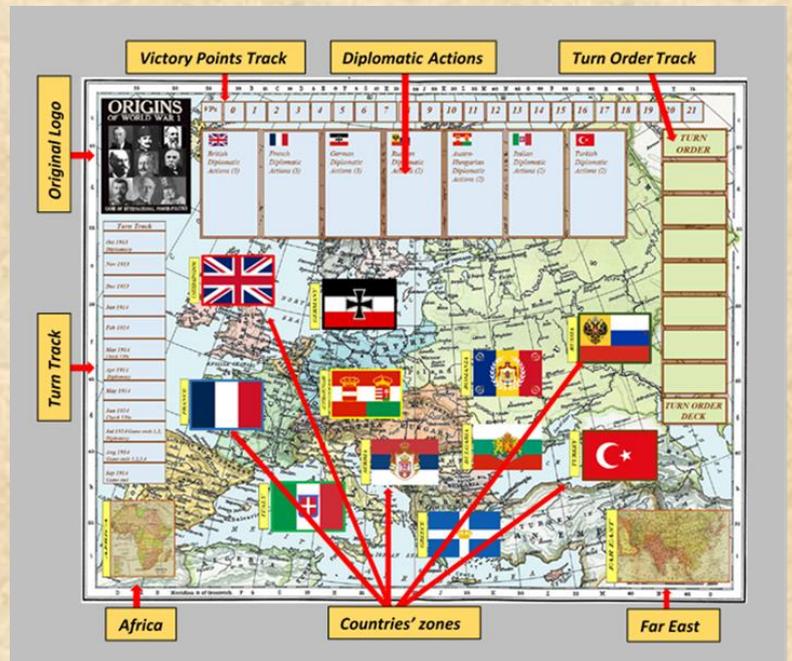
1 INTRODUCTION

In this game each player represents the diplomats from each major European power during the months that preceded World War One. Starting at 1913, October. The game is played by monthly turns and the end is determined randomly starting from 1914, July up to September (10 to 12 turns). Each game lasts around 2 hours. Quoting the author, Jim Dunnigan, *each player must compete against each other to achieve each nation's national objectives*. This is a Diplomatic game, no movement troops or armed combats takes place, only diplomatic "fights" at Embassies. Many thanks to Gus Molz; without his brilliant contribution this new version wouldn't exist...

2 GAME PARTS

2.1 THE MAP BOARD

The map board depicts Europe in 1913/1914. Eleven country zones (United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Russia, Ottoman Empire (Turkey), Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece) are represented by their 1914 flags; there are also zones for Africa and the Far East. Players place diplomatic factors on these zones during the game. The Map provides also spaces for the chosen Diplomatic Cards by the players each turn (Diplomatic Actions), a Turn Track and a Victory Points table.



2.2 THE PLAYING PIECES

- 39 markers of Diplomatic Factors (13 of 1DF, 13 of 2DFs and 13 of 3DFs) for each country. Diplomatic factors' markers function like money, they are interchangeable. 1 Point DF markers are round shaped; all the others are square shaped. United Kingdom are dark red, French blue, German dark grey, Austrian-Hungarian yellow, Russian dark green, Italian light green and Turkish light red. Note: markers are not limited, if an improbable shortage arrives during the game, players should improvise some adequate annotation.



- Each Country has a Victory Points marker with its flag to place at the Victory Points Chart.

Victory Points Markers



- There is a Turn track marker to use on the map board turn track:

Turn Marker



- 7 cards with country flags used to determine randomly the turn order.

Turn Order Cards



- 13 cards of Diplomatic Actions for each Country

Diplomatic Actions Cards' Examples:



- 7 Player Aid cards with the Turn phases chart and the national objectives for all countries (not shown).

3.SET UP

- Place the map board on the table.
- Place the turn marker on October 1913 of the turn track table.
- Assign randomly the countries for each player according to their number (see below).
- Place the markers for the participating Countries' VPs on the zero case of VPs track.
- Pick the Turn Order cards of the participating Countries (cards of non-participating countries are placed aside, they will not be used for the rest of the game) shuffle them and place them face down at the Turn Order Deck on the Map Board.
- Give to each player the 13 Diplomatic Actions' cards for each country they have and their DF points markers that they will place on the table in front of them.

4. NUMBER OF PLAYERS (2 to 7)

Assign randomly the countries for each player. The game shines better with five or more players.

Number of Players	1 st player	2 nd Player	3 rd Player	4 th Player	5 th Player	6 th Player	7 th Player
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Kingdom France Russia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany Austria-Hungary Turkey 					
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Kingdom France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany Austria-Hungary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russia Italy 				
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russia France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany Austria-Hungary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Kingdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turkey 			
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Kingdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Austria-Hungary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russia 		
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Kingdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Austria-Hungary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turkey 	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Kingdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Austria-Hungary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turkey

5. VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game the player who has more Victory Points (VPs) for the countries he controls wins the game. If some players control more than 1 country (2 to 4 player games) they add the VPs of each Country. If some players control two and other players only one country, these latter double their VPs. There are no Tie-Breakers, if two or more players finish the game tied with equal number of VPs, they win together. Each country receives victory points if he has treaty rights with other nations, according to its own National objectives, which are checked according to the following table. A country is considered to have a Treaty Right with another Country if it has at least 2 Diplomatic Factors on that Country's Zone.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVES: to have Treaty Rights with:							
	UK	Fra	Ger	Rus	AustHung	Ita	Tur
United Kingdom		3	1			2	2
France	3			2		2	
Germany					4	2	2
Austria-Hungary			3 or 6*Ex			1	
Russia	3	3	1		2		
Italy		2	1		2		2
Serbia		2		4	3 or 6 *Ex	2	2
Romania		1		1 or 3 *Ex	1		
Bulgaria			2	1	1		1 or 4* Ex
Greece	1			1		1 or 4*Ex	2
Turkey	2		3	1 or 7 *Ex			
Africa	2	2 or 5 *Ex	2			3	2
Far East	2 or 5 *Ex			3			
*EX: Exclusive	5 No other nation has more than 14pt	5 if Germany without treaty rights for at least two of these countries: UK, Russia and Italy	5 if UK without treaty rights for at least two of these countries: France, Russia and Turkey		5 if Turkey (or Russia, if Turkey is not an active player) without treaty rights for at least two of these countries: Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria..	5 if Aus-Hun without treaty rights for at least two of these countries: Serbia, Romania and Greece	5 if Russia without treaty rights for at least two of these countries: Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria
Total without special clauses	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Total	21	21	21	21	21	21	21

Important note: in games where Turkey does not participate as an active player (3-player and 5 Player games) Austria-Hungary's Special Clause is changed to Turkey's Special Clause: *it gets 5 points if Russia without treaty rights for at least two of these countries: Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria.*

6. GAME LENGTH AND TURN PHASES

The game lasts 10 to 12 turns, each turn represents a month, from October 1913 until July or September 1914 (the end turn is decided randomly at the start of each turn, beginning in July by a single dice roll (see

Turn Track	Oct 1913 Diplomacy	Nov 1913	Dec 1913	Jan 1914	Feb 1914	Mar 1914 Check VPs	Apr 1914 Diplomacy	May 1914	Jun 1914 Check VPs	Jul 1914 Game ends 1,2, Diplomacy	Aug 1914 Game ends 1,2,3,4	Sep 1914 Game end
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below).

Each turn has 2 to 5 phases:

TURN PHASES	
1. Advance the Turn Marker Determination of game end	<i>All Turns Jul 1914 & next Turns</i>
2 Diplomacy	<i>Oct 1913, April 1914, Jul 1914</i>
3 Chose Countries where to make Actions	<i>All Turns</i>
4 Turn order Check / Diplomatic Actions	<i>All Turns</i>
5 Determination of Victory points	<i>Mar14, Jun14, end-game turn</i>

Phase 1 - Advance the Turn Marker / Determination of game end (July 1914, Aug 1914, September 1914)

Advance the Turn Marker by 1 case.

Determination of Game End: This only happens in July 1914 and subsequent eventual turns; the turn track on the map board signals this action. A single die is rolled. The game ends at the end of this particular turn (end of phase 6) with the following results:

Turn:	Die roll required to end game at the end of the turn:
July 1914	1 or 2
Aug 1914	1,2,3,4
Sep 1914	Game automatically ends this turn

Phase 2 - Diplomacy (October 1913, April 1914 and July 1914)

During October 1913, April 1914 and July 1914 players have up to 10 minutes to conduct diplomacy; they can leave the room to engage in conversations; players may try to overhear ongoing conversations among other players. There are no binding agreements. There is no need to spend 10 minutes in this phase, it is only the upper limit of time allowed.

During other phases / turns players are allowed to engage in brief agreements but without leaving their places at the table and without delaying the game.

Phase 3 - Chose Countries where to make Actions

Each player choses secretly 2 Diplomatic Action Cards for each Country he controls (or 3 cards for UK, France and Germany) and places them face down at the Country's Diplomatic Action Zone on the Map board.

Phase 4 - Turn Order Check / Diplomatic Actions

- a) Pick the top most card from the Turn Order Deck and place it face up at the top case of the turn order track. The card indicates the Country that will be doing first its actions (named the *Active Country*).
- b) The Diplomatic cards of the active Country that were placed at its diplomatic Actions zone on the Mapboard are now revealed (flipped face-up), showing in which Country zones that country will have actions this turn.
- c) For each Country zone revealed, the active player has the following optional actions:
 1. Place or add 1 point of Diplomatic Factor.
 2. Conduct a Diplomatic Attack.

- d) After the Active Country finishes its actions, pick a second card from the top of the Turn Order Deck and place it face up at the 2nd topmost case of the turn order track and repeat the actions b) and c).

The above procedures are repeated until all the participating countries have done their actions for the turn. After this phase is finished reshuffle all the Turn Order Cards and place them again face down at the turn order Deck. All players recover to their hands the Diplomatic Actions Cards they have played this turn.

Phase 5: Determination of Victory points (March 1914, June 1914 and game end Turn)

This phase only happens during the following turns: March 1914, June 1914 and game end turn (this is noted at the turn track table).

According to the conditions of victory points for United Kingdom, this is the last country to determine its victory points (it receives 5 VPs if no other nation has more than 14VPs). It is recommended that the counting is made from right to left according to the disposition of Diplomatic Actions zones displayed on the Map Board.

March 1914 and June 1914 are provisional assessments made in order to aware the players of “what is going on”. At the beginning of the next Victory Points’ Check all the Countries’ VP markers are reset to 0.

With 4 players, when 2 player control 2 countries (Germany / Austria-Hungary and France/Russia) and 2 players control a single Country (United Kingdom and Italy), United Kingdom and Italy VPs are doubled.

The Victory Points are counted according to the National Objectives Chart (see above, *Victory Conditions*).

7. DIPLOMATIC ATTACKS

If a Player decides to make 1 Diplomatic attack on a Country Zone he must have at least 1 Diplomatic Factor point on that zone.

During an attack a Country removes 1 or more points of Diplomatic Factors (DFs) of their own and the same number of DFs from another Countries.

A player may opt to remove DFs from different Countries in the same zone (providing, of course that he removes the same number of his own Country.

A player may opt to remove all his own DFs on that Country Zone to eliminate the equivalent number of other Countries’ DFs.

A Player may opt to “suicide” all his DFs on that Country zone without removing other countries DFs (this could be made to comply with previous agreements with other players).

8. OBTAINING TREATY RIGHTS

Unlike the previous versions of this game there are no Treaty Markers; by definition, a Country has a treaty with another country if it has 2 or more points of Diplomatic factors on that Country zone. To make it clear on the Map board, the 1 point DF markers are round-shaped, while the 2 and 3 points markers are square shaped.

If a Country reduces its Diplomatic Factors to only one point in a Zone, it ceases to have Treaty rights with that zone / Country.

9. OPTIONAL RULES:

Diplomatic Frenzy after the Sarajevo Murder:

During the last turn all players are entitled to make two actions instead of one at the Countries they have chosen.

Relative Winning and Ties:

To win the game a player needs to have three Victory points more than the 2nd player, otherwise there's a tie. This favors the possibility of players to form an alliance and pre-arrange a tied winning.

Diceless OWW1 with Dice:

The purpose of this new Rules' Version was to make a simpler and faster game without the original randomness. If players do lack the dice throwing, they can always play according to the earlier versions. Anyway they can add some simple rules to get a bit of randomness using these rules. During a Diplomatic Attack the active player first decides how many DFs he is spending in the attack and the country(ies) he is attacking, then he rolls 1 D6 for each country he is attacking: with the result of 1 or 2, the attacker (the active country) removes first 1 DF point and then the combat proceeds normally, with the result of 3 or 4, the attack is made without changes to the normal rules and, with the result of 5,6, the Defender removes 1 DF point prior to the attack. You can even add more randomness: 1: Attacker removes 2 DFs, 2: Attacker removes 1 DF, 3-4, no country removes DFs prior to the attack; 5: Defender removes 1 DF; 6: Defender removes 2 DFs. These optional rules may add some time to the game length but may introduce some more excitement – it's up to you to decide.

REVISION EDITION DESIGNER'S NOTES

During 2020 I've found this precious gem of a game from Jim Dunnigan browsing through Boardgamegeek. I made at that time a 7 player version that I've tested with friends; the game had potential but we had some issues with the Diplomatic attack table, being sometimes too harsh. I have published at that time a print and play version at BGG and made a Vassal Module but the interest faded away. Then, some weeks ago (November 2023), Gus Molz posted a forum at Boardgamegeek with a variant called "*Hidden Daggers • Diplomatic struggle without dice*"; his suggestion struck me as a brilliant idea that could solve all the issues that we have faced and, at the same time, making the game much simpler and faster, without removing its intrinsic and interesting complexity. I cannot thank him enough and this new version simply wouldn't exist without his ideas.

This game has some of the potentialities that can be found at the classic "Diplomacy" from Allan B. Calhamer but it can be played in less than two hours. I'm surprised that is so less known. Avalon Hill published, from the same author, Origins of World War Two in 1971, but the diplomatic activity previous to world war one is far richer and complex than it was in 1939. All wars are stupid, but the stupidest of them all was, unquestionably World War I; it is however fascinating all the diplomatic activities and blunders that preceded the onset of the "Great War". This revision is my "hommage" to all the victims of this war.

I read all the (few) forums about the game at Boardgamegeek and I want to acknowledge and thank all the participants from many ideas that I have "stolen" from them (namely random orders, the random ending of the game, the possibility of adding more players, turn, the critics about the "dryness" of the original Diplomatic Attacks table and thoughts about national objectives).

The game was originally devised for 5 players but I wanted the possibility to adapt it for 7 players including two "minor" powers from WW1 which I'm very fond of: Turkey and Italy.

I've made some minor adaptations from the original game whose original rules can be found at boardgamegeek (<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/17967/origins-world-war-i>).

The original game has 10 fixed turns; I prefer instead a randomized game end starting at the 9th turn by a simple die throw. The players get to know that the game is going to end but only at the start of the last turn.

As I've adapted the game for 7 instead of 5 players I needed also to change the national objectives for each country. I've found the "exclusive treaty rights" condition too harsh to get any points so I've decided to add some points even if the country doesn't attain the "exclusive" goals. I've changed the conditions to Germany and France that could get some points for avoiding respectively United Kingdom and Germany to have treaty rights from any other nation,

which I found almost impossible; with this revision they only need to avoid treaty rights from their enemies with major countries (defined as the countries controlled by players). I've also added some points for some countries to have treaty rights from France as this was a country that was seldom used with the original rules. Adding Italy and Turkey to the game gave me the opportunity to refine things around the Balkans also.

In this edition I wanted to incentive the use of Diplomacy meetings. In order not to drag on, I've limited to ten minutes each diplomatic round, only happening during 3 turns; in this way 30 minutes' maximum are spent in these conversations (if there were Diplomatic phases in all turns it would add 90 to 120 minutes to the game-length). Players can altogether skip this part although I think that it adds a lot of interest in the game; as the mechanics are so fast I still think that the game can be easily played in around 2 hours.

I would like to know your opinions if you're so kind to try these rules.

Bibliography:

Gus Molz, Boardgamegeek: Hidden Daggers • Diplomatic struggle without dice

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Christopher Clark: The Sleepwalkers, How Europe went to war in 1914, Penguin; 1st edition (4 July 2013)

Cover Illustration: Congress of Berlin, 13 July 1878, painting by Anton von Werner, 1881, source: Wikipedia

Back Cover Illustration: Title page of the *Domenica del Corriere* with a fantasy drawing by Achille Beltrame, how the assassination of Sarajevo could have happened.

