



# *Origins of World War One*

*A game of diplomacy by Jim Dunnigan*



# ORIGINS OF WWI - Revised Edition 2020 V6 (April 2024)

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

1. Introduction
  2. Game parts
    - 2.1 The map board
    - 2.2 Playing pieces
  3. Setup
  4. Number of players
  5. Victory conditions
  6. Game length and turn phases
  7. Diplomatic attacks
  8. Obtaining treaty rights
  9. Diplomatic Extra Actions
  10. Last Turn Exceptions
  11. Optional rules
- Revision edition designer's notes

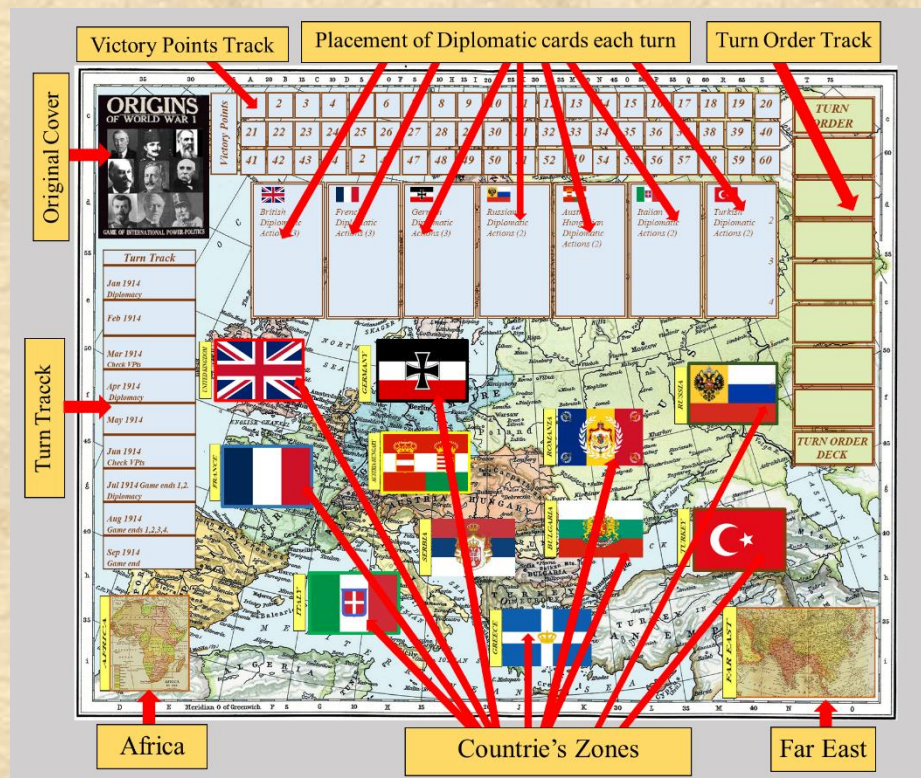
## 1 INTRODUCTION

In this game each player represents the diplomats from each major European power during the years that preceded World War One. Starting at 1909. The game is played by turns and the end is determined randomly starting from 1914, July up to September 1914 (7 to 9 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 a Victory Points Track and a Diplomatic Points Track.



### 2.2 THE PLAYING PIECES

- 39 markers of Diplomatic Points (13 of 1DP, and 24 of 2DPs) for each country. Diplomatic points' markers function like money, they are interchangeable. DP markers have different shapes for each country. United Kingdom are red, French blue, German black, Austrian-Hungarian yellow, Russian dark green, Italian light green and Turkish light red. DF markers of one single point are slightly smaller and are not bordered to note that they do not give treaty rights. Note: markers are not limited, if an improbable shortage arrives during the game, players should improvise some adequate annotation.

### Diplomatic Points Markers



- Each Country has a marker for victory points with its flag to place at the Victory Points Track.

### 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:



Face Up



Cover



Face Up



Cover

- 40 cards of Extra Diplomatic Actions.
- 7 Player Aid cards with the Turn phases chart and the national objectives for all countries (not shown).
- A Setup Card.

## 3.SET UP

- Place the map board on the table.
- Place the turn marker on 1909 of the turn track table.
- Assign randomly the countries for each player according to their number (see below).
- Place the Countries' Victory Points markers on the zero case of the VP track.
- Distribute initial Diplomatic Points for all Countries on the Map board according to the setup card.
- Pick the Turn Order cards, shuffle 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 Diplomatic points markers that they will place on the table in front of them.
- Each player gets one "Increased Diplomatic Budget" Extra Diplomatic Action Card. The remaining Extra Diplomatic cards are shuffled and placed face down besides the map board.

Initial Setup							
	UK	Fra	Ger	Rus	AustHung	Ita	Tur
United Kingdom		2	1	1		1	
France	1			1	1	2	1
Germany	1			1	2		2
Austria-Hungary			2	1		1	2
Russia	1	2	1		1		
Italy	1	1	1		2		1
Serbia		1		2	2	1	
Romania		1	1	2	1	1	
Bulgaria			2	1	1		1
Greece	1	1				2	2
Turkey	2		2		1	1	
Africa	2	2	1			2	1
Far East	2	1		2			1



#### 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 <sup>st</sup> player	2 <sup>nd</sup> Player	3 <sup>rd</sup> Player	4 <sup>th</sup> Player	5 <sup>th</sup> Player	6 <sup>th</sup> Player	7 <sup>th</sup> Player
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Kingdom</li> <li>• France</li> <li>• Russia</li> <li>• Italy X3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany</li> <li>• Austria-Hungary</li> <li>• Turkey X4</li> </ul>					
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Kingdom</li> <li>• Italy X3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia</li> <li>• France X3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany</li> <li>• Austria-Hungary</li> <li>• Turkey X2</li> </ul>	•			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Kingdom</li> <li>• Italy X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia</li> <li>• France X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany</li> <li>• Austria-Hungary X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkey X2</li> </ul>			
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Kingdom X2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• France X2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Austria- Hungary</li> <li>• Germany X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia</li> <li>• Italy X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkey X2</li> </ul>		
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Kingdom X2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• France X2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Austria-Hungary</li> <li>• Germany X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Italy X2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia X2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkey X2</li> </ul>	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Kingdom X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• France X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Austria-Hungary X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Italy X1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkey X1</li> </ul>

- NOTE: X means the multiplying factor of the final score at game end

## 5.VICTORY CONDITIONS

Victory points are counted at the end of game turns 1911, Jan/June 1914 and at the end-game turn.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVES:							
Number of VPs when having Treaty Rights with:							
	UK	Fra	Ger	Rus	AustH ung	Ita	Tur
United Kingdom		2	1	1		1	
France	1			1	1	2	1
Germany	1			1	2		2
Austria-Hungary			2	1		1	2
Russia	1	2	1		1		
Italy	1	1	1		2		1
Serbia		1		2	2	1	
Romania		1	1	2	1	1	
Bulgaria			2	1	1		1
Greece	1	1				2	2
Turkey	2		2		1	1	
Africa	2	2	1			2	1
Far East	2	1		2			1

Note: If a Country is the only one having Treaty Rights on a Zone its VP are doubled.

A country is considered to have Treaty Rights with another Country / Zone if it has 2 or more Diplomatic Points on that Country zone.

If a country has exclusive treaty rights on a zone (i.e. no other Country has treaty rights on that zone), its VPs are doubled.

Victory Points are cumulative throughout the 3 counting phases. At the game end, the final third counting is doubled.

At the end of the game players add the VPs of each Country they control and multiply the final sum by the blue factor numbers on the table of 4. *NUMBER OF PLAYERS* (see above). The player who has more Victory Points (VPs) wins the game.

There are no Tie-Breakers, if two or more players finish the game tied with equal number of VPs, they win together.

## 6. GAME LENGTH AND TURN PHASES

The game lasts 7 to 9 turns, the first 5 turns represent one year, from 1909 to 1913, the 6<sup>th</sup> turn 6 months (January-June 1914) and the last 3 turns represent 1 month each: June, July and September 1914 (the end turn is decided randomly at the start of each turn, beginning in July 1914 by a single dice roll (see below)).

<i>Turn Track</i>
1909 <i>Diplomacy</i>
1910
1911 <i>Check VP's/shuffle extra cards</i>
1912 <i>Diplomacy</i>
1913
Jan-Jun 1914 <i>Check VP's/shuffle extra cards</i>
Jul 1914 Game ends 1,2. <i>Diplomacy</i>
Aug 1914 <i>Game ends 1,2,3,4.</i>
Sep 1914 <i>Game ends</i>

Each turn has 3 to 6 phases:

**Phase 1 - Determination of game end (July 1914, Aug 1914, September 1914)**

This phase 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:

<i>TURN PHASES</i>	
<i>1. Determination of game end</i>	<i>Jul 1914 &amp; next Turns</i>
<i>2 Diplomacy</i>	<i>1909, 1912, July 1914</i>
<i>3 Chose Countries where to make Actions</i>	<i>All Turns</i>
<i>4 Turn order Check / Diplomatic Actions</i>	<i>All Turns</i>
<i>5 Determination of Victory points. Shuffle the Extra Diplomatic Action Cards.</i>	<i>1911, Jan/Jun14, end-game turn</i>
<i>6. Advance the Turn Marker</i>	<i>All Turns</i>

During this last turn the Phase 4 Turn Order Check / Diplomatic Actions has some exceptional rules (see below):

**Phase 2 - Diplomacy (1909, 1912 and July 1914)**

During 1909, 1912 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.

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

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 3 Diplomatic Action Cards for each Country he controls and places them face down at the Country's Diplomatic Action Zone on the Map board.

**Phase 4 - Turn Order Check / Diplomatic Actions**

- 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*).
- The Diplomatic cards of the active Country that were placed at its diplomatic Actions zone on the Map board are now revealed (flipped face-up), showing in which Country zones that country will have actions this turn.
- For each Country zone revealed, the active player choses one action among the following options:
  - Place or add 1 point of Diplomatic Factor.
  - Conduct a Diplomatic Attack.
  - Pick one Extra Diplomatic Action Card from the top of the Deck (only once per turn).
  - Do nothing.
- Extra Diplomatic Action. The active player may play one Extra Diplomatic Action Card from the ones he has on his hand. He cannot have more than 2 cards in his hand at all times.
- Reaction Phase. All other players, in clockwise order (starting with the player that is on the left of the active player and finishing with the active player) may play and execute one extra diplomatic action card, providing that at least one action is executed on a zone that the active player activated during his turn. Note: if any other player opts to play a Diplomatic Extra Action Card, then the active player, if he hasn't made before an Extra Diplomatic Action, may also react and play a Diplomatic Extra Action Card. Note the active player may react providing that at least one action is executed on a zone that one of the other players have reacted, not his original elected 3 zones.



- f) 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 (1911, Jan/June 1914 and game end Turn), Shuffle Extra Diplomatic Actions' Deck.**

This phase only happens during the following turns: 1911, January / June 1914 and game end turn (this is noted at the turn track).

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

If a country has exclusive treaty rights on a zone (i.e. no other Country has treaty rights on that zone), its VPs are doubled.

The total VPs for each Country at the game end Turn are doubled.

Also, at the end of the game, if there are Players with a different number of Countries, the total VPs of each player are multiplied by a factor according to the number of Countries they have (See 4. Number of Players).

At the end of this phase all the discarded Extra Diplomatic Action Cards are shuffled with the remaining Deck.

**Phase 6 Advance the Turn Marker** Advance the turn marker by one case at the turn order track

## **7. DIPLOMATIC ATTACKS**

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

During an attack a Country starts by removing 1 Diplomatic point of another Country that is on the same Country Zone and then it may remove 1 or more points of Diplomatic Factors (DPs) of their own and the same number of DPs from another Countries.

A player may opt to remove DPs from different Countries in the same zone (providing, of course that he removes the same number of his own Country after the second removal of enemy DPs).

A player may opt to remove all his own DPs on that Country Zone to eliminate an equivalent number of other Countries' DPs.

A Player may opt to "suicide" all his DPs on that Country zone without removing other countries DPs (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 Diplomatic points on that Country zone. To make it clear on the Map board, the 1 point DP markers are smaller than the others.

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

## **9. Diplomatic Extra Actions**

During the game each Country starts with two different Diplomatic Extra Action Cards that its player chooses during setup.

There are 4 extra actions:

- a) Increased Diplomatic Budget: a country can place two additional Diplomatic Points distributed on any two regions that the player chooses.
- b) Extra Diplomatic Attack: a Country can conduct an extra-attack on any region where it has Diplomatic Points.
- c) Assassination: a Country may remove two Diplomatic Points from a single other Country on any Country Zone of the Map Board where it has at least one Diplomatic point.
- d) Foreign Office Reorganization: a Country may move up to two Diplomatic points from any zone(s) on the Map Board to any other zone(s).

At setup, after all players have chosen 2 Diplomatic Extra Action Cards for their Countries, all the remaining Diplomatic Extra Action Cards are shuffled and placed face down as a Deck besides the Map Board.

A player can earn additional Diplomatic Extra Action Cards by skipping one action in a zone he has chosen during phase 4 (Diplomatic Actions) picking the topmost card from the Deck. He cannot have more than 2 Diplomatic Extra Action Cards in his hand; if he chooses a third card he must immediately discard one.

One Diplomatic Extra Action Card may be played and executed:

- a) During its diplomatic action phase, after all the other diplomatic actions have been made.
- b) As a “reaction” after an active player has finished its Diplomatic actions. If the active player hasn’t played before a Diplomatic Extra Action Card and another player has played a reaction card, he may also “react”.

If the Diplomatic Extra Action Cards’ Deck is exhausted all discarded cards are reshuffled to make a new Deck.

## 10. LAST TURN EXCEPTIONS (Diplomatic Frenzy after the Sarajevo Murder)

During the last turn all players are entitled to make one extra action at the Countries’ zones they have chosen with the 3 Diplomatic Action Cards, in reverse turn order. The first actions are done according to the regular rules, randomly deciding the order; then all the countries are entitled to make extra actions in reverse order. Note: during the reverse turn round players may not change the 3 Diplomatic Action cards they have chosen at the start of the turn.

During this phase players are entitled to play Diplomatic extra-action Cards as a final action or as a reaction at the end of each player’s action, as per the normal rules.

## 11. OPTIONAL RULES:

**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 same rules: during a Diplomatic Attack the active player first decides how many DPs he is spending in the attack and the country(ies) he is attacking, then he rolls 1 D6 for each country attacked: with the result of 1 or 2, the attacker (the active country) removes first 1 DP and then the combat proceeds normally, with the result of 3 or 4, the attack is made without changes to the normal rules; with a result of 5,6, the Defender removes 1 extra DP point prior to the attack. You can even add more randomness: 1: Attacker removes 2 DPs, 2: Attacker removes 1 DP, 3-4, no country removes DPs prior to the attack; 5: Defender removes 1 DP; 6: Defender removes 2 DPs. These optional rules may add some time to the game length but may introduce some more excitement – it’s up to you to decide.

**Diplomacy at all costs:** This game is designed to be fast-paced; however, if players agree on spending an agreeable day dedicated to playing it, they can have diplomacy periods at the start of all turns, of about 30



minutes each. This will of course increase the game-length around 3 to 4 and half hours. But the experience will decidedly be more immersive.

### **Aftermath of Origins of World War 1, a possible narrative:**

If a Country manages to win with 6 or more VPs than the second player, or the Entente (allies) / Central Powers have 11 or more VPs (with the rules applied for Russia and Italy as below) than the other faction, their diplomatic influence is so big that the world war is avoided.

If not, then the world war starts:

Add up the Victory points for each faction:

1. Allies: UK, France and Russia
2. Central Powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

If Russia ended up last or second from last, the Russian revolution happened and its victory points doesn't count.

If Italy ends up in the 3 last places its VPs are added to Central Powers; if it ends up in the first 3 places its VPs are added to the Allies. If it ends up in 4<sup>th</sup> place its VPs are ignored (this simulates the facts that Italy was at first allied with the Central Powers, then it remained neutral when the war began and finally entered on the Allied faction).

Each faction throws 2 dice and add the result to their VPs sum (this simulates the misfortunes of war).

The faction that manages to have 3 more points than the opponent wins the war. Otherwise nobody wins; all countries throw 2 dice; with an even result the political regimen survives; with an odd result the country suffers a revolution and turns communist (Russia is excepted from this dice throw if a revolution happened before – see above). If a majority of Countries turns communist the whole XXth Century History is transformed, there will be no WW2 and no Berlin wall or its fall, or maybe there will be a war of USA against the whole Europe, maybe we have not survived to tell...

### **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 time 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 "homage" to all its victims.

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 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 to have an initial setup, where countries start with some Diplomatic points distributed on the Map Board and a randomized game end, with only 7 to 9 turns. The players get to know that the game is going to end but only at the start of the last turn. I have also introduced three VPs counting during the game in order to disperse the tension throughout the game and not only at 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. To add competition, after trying very much to stick to the asymmetric original National Objectives I finally gave up: now all players have similar national objectives’ victory points and the same possibility to execute 3 actions; I still tried to preserve the historical flavor with the specific countries / zones where each playing country earns victory points. This creates a more balanced game emphasizing the diplomatic interactions between players.

There still was a problem lingering on: players who would play last in the turn had much more advantages, unbalancing the game. To counter this I’ve introduced the Extra Diplomatic Action Cards (a suggestion from my friend Carlos Mesquita) and the possibility to play them as a reaction to other player’s actions; also the last turn is played in “slow motion” reversing and re-reversing the turn order.

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. At the optional rules I’ve even included the “Diplomacy at all costs” option allowing for more time spent in diplomatic conversations and agreements; the game can still be played during a single afternoon.

At the optional rules I’ve also included an aftermath to the game to try to give a meaning to the game’s result: what would be the influence of prewar diplomacy? Would the war be avoided? What would be its consequences?

Many thanks to all my friends who play tested this variant with me, in particular to Carlos Mesquita and Marco Quinta who made important contributions and reflections.

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  
<https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3193007/hidden-daggers-diplomatic-struggle-without-dice>

BoardgameGeek: Origins of World War One <https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/17967/origins-world-war-i>

Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_War\\_I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I)

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