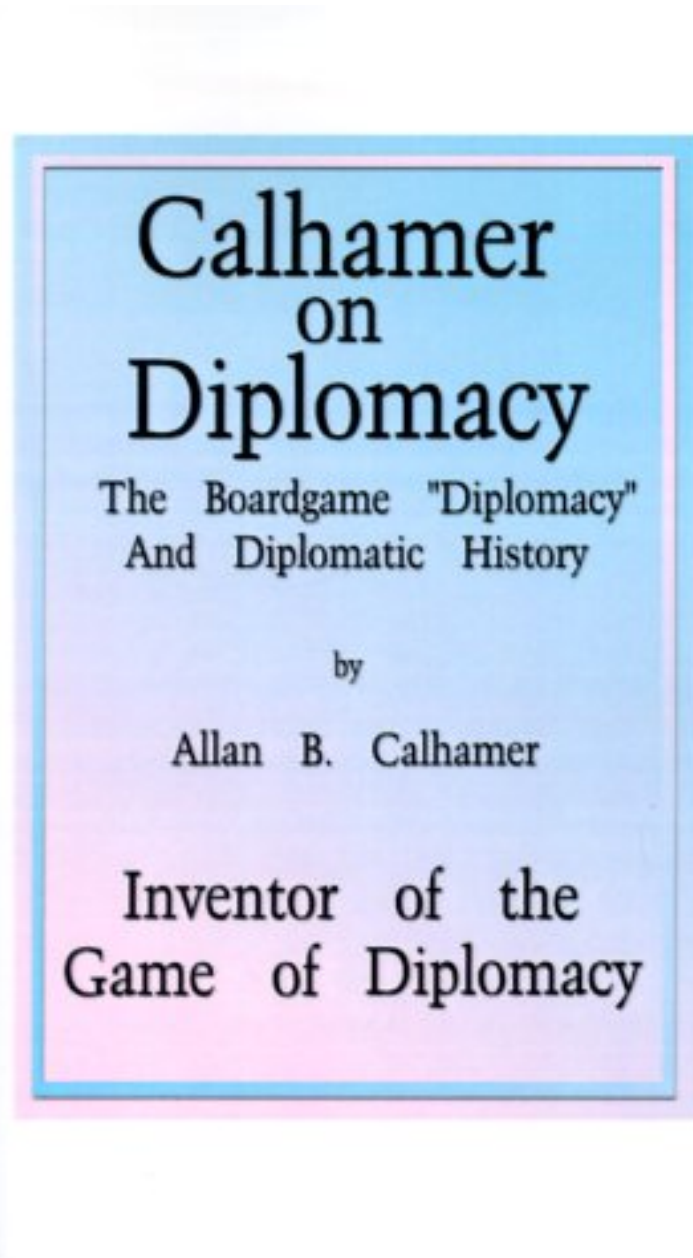


Calhamer on Diplomacy: The Boardgame "Diplomacy" and Diplomatic History

Allan B. Calhamer

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Allan B. Calhamer : Calhamer on Diplomacy: The Boardgame "Diplomacy" and Diplomatic History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Calhamer on Diplomacy: The

Boardgame "Diplomacy" and Diplomatic History:

30 of 30 people found the following review helpful. Origins and Background of One of America's Great Board Games
By Conrad von Metzke "Diplomacy: The Game of International Intrigue" is one of the most impressive board games available today. It has been in commercial circulation since 1961 (currently produced by Hasbro Inc.) and has spawned an amazing sub-culture of local gaming clubs, national and international conventions, and a vast array of amateur publications ("fanzines") devoted to play by mail - more recently, it has become an on-line and e-mail phenomenon. A simplistic summary might be: Seven players, each taking the part of one of the major European combatants of World War One, engage in military and diplomatic interaction, making and breaking deals, forming and dissolving alliances, ganging up on one another, being ganged upon by others, etc., etc., until one of the seven (or an alliance of two or more) emerges victorious. The focus is not on the military technicalities, but on the diplomatic ones: This isn't a hex-sheet game of army corps and naval units, rather it's a game rooted in communication and psychology. The present reviewer discovered the game in a classified ad in 1961 and has been playing ever since, and it has provided a near-lifetime of immense joy and satisfaction. The author of this book, Allan Calhamer, is the game's inventor. He devised the prototype during his student days at Harvard and refined it through play-testing over a period of many years. Now he has authored a book in which he relates the game to its historical foundations, explaining in wonderful depth where the game mirrors history and where it diverges. He offers a wealth of ideas for successful play, but it is of special interest that the game's inherent flexibility is such that these 'suggestions' are only several of nearly infinite possibilities, guidelines rather than strictures; the game lends itself so well to development of individual styles of play that it would be impossible to offer anything more concrete, and that fact is one of the greatest features of the game! In addition Mr. Calhamer covers in summary form the actual events of the replicated period, and while this is by no means a history text in any sense, it does offer the spark for further exploration for anyone interested in pursuing the matter. Calhamer also draws parallels and divergences with modern diplomatic and military situations, again inspiring further investigation for those so inclined. The book derives from a lecture Calhamer delivered in Japan in 1997, and this fact gives rise to its only serious weakness: Frequently it is clear that the text has not been fully edited into book form, and often comes across as the mere expansion of lecture notes. It needs to be turned more fully into prose. This does not detract in any way from the informational value, but it does make for a number of awkward transitions and seemingly random points scattered into the body of the work. Still, for anyone interested in the game, it is absolutely essential. And for anyone with interest in the history of 20th century diplomacy and international relations, it is a fascinating and wide-ranging overview and an excellent place to begin one's in-depth approach.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Great Book for a Great Game
By Jason S. Taylor At first glance the word "Diplomacy" conjures up a rather boring picture. Every time there is a crisis someone says try "diplomacy" which apparently means meeting together in a conclave, toasting each other with wine, understanding each other and thus eliminating war and congratulating each other on how civilized you are. This may be how diplomacy should be. It is not what it is. Nor is it what this game is about...Have you ever pictured yourself a ruler fighting for power in the midst of a tangled web of deceit? This is the game for you. You get to be in the place of Frederick the Great, Cardinal Richelieu, Otto von Bismark and all the great and sinister masters of European power-struggles. In Diplomacy you get a glimpse into what it is like to make decisions that change the course of history. Allan Calhamer writes an excellent book about both the game and the background. He tells both anecdotes from Diplomatic history and from the game of the tense struggles for dominance and the conspiracies between various powers. The game is a remarkable game. So remarkable that the next time you read a history book you will feel a sense of *deja vu*. Calhamer also gives the various strategems involved in the game which are many and mighty. So enjoy the book and enjoy the game. And as "the Diplomatic Pouch" E-game club says to naive new Diplomacy players, we hope to...Stab You Soon!