BATTLETECH™
UNIVERSE

BATTLETECH™ UNIVERSE

CREDITS

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Ray Arrastia
Aaron Cahall
Geoff Swift

WRITING

Ray Arrastia
Herbert A. Beas II
Randall N. Bills
Aaron Cahall
Chris Hartford
Mark Hayden
Ben Klinefelter
Edward McEneely
Wunji Lau
Joshua Perian
Luke Robertson
Eric Salzman
Lance Scarinci
Geoff Swift

EDITING

Katherine Monasterio

ADDITIONAL EDITING

Aaron Cahall
Wunji Lau
Mark Riggleman

COVER ARTIST

Marco Mazzoni

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Ray Arrastia
Mark Hayden
David Kerber

DESIGN

Dale Eadeh
Natasha Sokulski

STELLAR CARTOGRAPHY

Matt Alexander
Ray Arrastia
Øystein Tvedten

FACT CHECKING & CONTINUITY

Étienne Charron-Willard
Stephen Frabartolo
Matt Frederiksen
Michael Miller
Eric Salzman
Chris Wheeler

INTERIOR ARTISTS

Justin Adams
Ray Arrastia
Pablo Aschei
Robert Atkinson
Christopher Balaskas
Juan Barea
Marie Baumgarten
Margarita Bourkova
Doug Chaffee
Brent Chumley
Ken Coleman
Eldon Cowgur
Liam Curtner
David Dryburgh
Ted Galaday
Germán Galindo
Mark Hayden
David Hovey
Alex Iglesias
Jason Juta
David Kegg
David Kerber
Chris Lewis
Randall Mackey
Marco Mazzoni
Florian Mellies
Alyssa Menold
Aaron Miller
Thomas Moor
Victor Moreno
Will Nichols
Benjamin Parker
Marco Pennacchietti
Matt Plog
A. Roberts
Neil Roberts
Júlio Rocha
Klaus Scherwinski
Karsten Schreurs
Anthony Scroggins
Tan Ho Sim
David Sondered
Florian Stitz
Jessé Suursoo
Tony Szczudlo
Alex Tooth
Jason Vargas
Franz Vohwinkel
Eric Williams
Mark Zug

TECHNICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

Eldon Cowgur
David Dryburgh

BATTLETECH LINE DEVELOPER

Ray Arrastia

ASSISTANT LINE DEVELOPER

Aaron Cahall

BATTLETECH LINE EDITOR

Aaron Cahall

CATALYST GAME LABS ART DIRECTOR

Brent Evans

BATTLETECH ART DIRECTOR

Anthony Scroggins

PUBLISHER

Loren L. Coleman

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Randall N. Bills

ASSISTANT CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Bryn K. Bills

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

John Helfers

SHRAPNEL MAGAZINE MANAGING EDITOR

Philip A. Lee

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Rem Alternis

SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Matt Heerdt

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Chris Callicoat

WEBSTORE MANAGER

Talon Coleman

To all the fans and contributors of BattleTech *past and present, thank you for all your love, support, and good times over the years. To all those fans and contributors yet to come, discovering* BattleTech *for the first time: this book is for you.*

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Printed in China.

Published by Catalyst Game Labs • 5003 Main St. #110 • Tacoma, WA 98407

Precentor_Martial@catalystgamelabs.com (e-mail address for any BattleTech questions)
BattleTech.com (official BattleTech web pages)
CatalystGameLabs.com (Catalyst web pages)
store.CatalystGameLabs.com (online ordering)

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THE UNIVERSE...

FROM THE VERY FIRST *BATTLETECH* GAME A NEW PLAYER OPENS, IT'S CLEAR THAT THEY'RE NOT JUST EMBARKING ON A TABLETOP EXPERIENCE—THEY'RE STEPPING INTO AN ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

OVER FOUR DECADES, THE *BATTLETECH* UNIVERSE HAS CONTINUALLY GROWN TO BECOME ONE OF THE RICHEST, MOST FULLY FLESHED-OUT SPACE OPERA SETTINGS IN EXISTENCE. MAGNIFICENTLY DETAILED LORE FUELS THE GAMES THAT PLAYERS BRING TO THEIR TABLES AND TURNS THEM INTO STORYTELLERS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT AS THEY PEN THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THE *BATTLETECH* SAGA.

TIME AND AGAIN, WE'VE HEARD *BATTLETECH* PLAYERS SHARE STORIES OF THEIR MEMORABLE GAMES, AND THEY'RE ALMOST ALWAYS EXACTLY THAT: *STORIES*. DRAMATIC DICE ROLLS AND BRILLIANT TACTICAL MANEUVERS ARE A PART OF ANY WAR GAME, BUT *BATTLETECH* PLAYERS ARE ESPECIALLY EAGER TO SHARE THE UNITS, CHARACTERS, AND CAMPAIGNS THEY'VE CAREFULLY WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC OF OUR UNIVERSE. FOR OUR PLAYERS, IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO PLAY OUT A GENERIC ASSAULT ON SOME NAMELESS PLANET—THEY NEED TO BE IMMERSED IN THIS *SPECIFIC* BATTLE DURING THAT *EXACT* WAR AS A MEMBER OF A *PRECISE* UNIT, AND WE LOVE HEARING HOW THEY PUT THEIR OWN STAMP ON ESTABLISHED CANON.

BUT THE SAME LORE THAT HAS SO ENTHRALLED GENERATIONS OF FANS CAN ALSO BE INTIMIDATING FOR FIRST-TIMERS. THAT'S WHY WE'VE CREATED THE BOOK YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS, TO SERVE AS AN OVERVIEW TO THE *BATTLETECH* UNIVERSE AND FUEL YOUR CURIOSITY FOR FURTHER EXPLORATIONS OF SOURCEBOOKS AND NOVELS.

WE WANT THE *BATTLETECH* SETTING TO CONTINUE TO BE AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT IN FUELING *BATTLETECH* GAMES—BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN FROM THE VERY START.

HISTORY OF THE FUTURE

When *BattleTech* was created in the mid-1980s, its first developers understood the importance of building their game's setting and infusing it with as much rich detail as they possibly could. The first *BattleTech* novel published by FASA, *Decision at Thunder Rift*, debuted in June 1986, just a year after the Second Edition boxed set cemented the *BattleTech* brand. The strong reception that novel enjoyed—and continues to enjoy—launched a novel line that is still going strong today.

But nowhere is the early dedication to building the *BattleTech* setting clearer than the *BattleTechnology* magazine, published between 1987 and 1995. Rather than publish a supplement offering game material from a real-world perspective, like other wargame and role-playing game periodicals of the time, Bill Keith and the FASA team made *BattleTechnology* a dispatch from tomorrow, immersing readers in recruitment ads for mercenary companies, reviews of amazing new future technology, and the like. Though *BattleTechnology* is not strictly a part of canon today, the intent of those issues was clear. The people, factions, and events of the *BattleTech* universe were not merely window dressing for tabletop games, they were the *reason* for those tabletop games to be played at all!

Through the years, that mission was upheld in nearly every *BattleTech* product, and by all those who have worked on the game. Today, our sourcebooks open with a piece of fiction, are introduced as an in-universe document of some kind, and are often as much about forwarding the overarching *BattleTech* story as they are about providing on-the-table content. Our fiction volumes include depictions of the BattleMechs featured within to connect them to their miniature counterparts, and the *Shrapnel* magazine marries fiction and game content in the finest tradition of *BattleTechnology*. Even our ForcePacks include more than just plastic miniatures—each comes with MechWarrior pilot cards to infuse every tabletop unit with an individual name, personality, and life story.

With every product we make, we're excited to add new chapters to the *BattleTech* saga and provide fuel for even more games. But as we move into the truly new territory of the ilClan Era and to celebrate *BattleTech*'s 40th anniversary, we wanted to provide a thorough overview of the history, characters, and conflicts that have come before.

A UNIVERSE OF POSSIBILITIES

The creation of a truly comprehensive encyclopedia of the *BattleTech* universe would be an undertaking of staggering proportions. As our unparalleled fact check team could tell you, just when you think you've explored every corner of our universe and mastered its details, there's one more canon source you hadn't thought of, or another piece of lore you hadn't considered. Trying to cover all those details would result in a book the size of a *Monolith*-class JumpShip!

Instead, *BattleTech Universe* takes a different approach. In these pages, we emphasized coverage over depth, choosing to give space to as many different elements of the *BattleTech* setting as we possibly could, rather than do a deep-dive into just a handful. Our intent is to provide as wide a view of this universe as possible, so that everyone will find a faction, historical period, or prominent individual that they want to learn more about.

That's important, because we truly believe that *BattleTech* is a setting with something for everyone. Whether you enjoy titanic battlefield clashes, high-stakes covert ops missions, cloak-and-dagger political intrigue, or any other kind of story, you'll find it in the *BattleTech* universe. Even better, you'll find plenty of room to create your own such stories, allowing you to springboard off published material and add an all-new chapter in the *BattleTech* story.

All this rich lore you'll find in *BattleTech Universe* is wrapped in what we believe is the most spectacular layout for any sourcebook in *BattleTech*'s forty-year history. Our layout and production team has truly outdone themselves, and each page offers a symphony of art and text to fuel your imagination.

With that, your DropShip is waiting to depart and bring you into a universe of pulse-pounding action and sweeping drama. It's time to see what's out there–the future awaits.

Hark children of the Clans,
To the wisdom of Kerensky and your forebears.
Know what has come before;
Remember it as you strive toward the future.
Wisdom is the power,
Unbroken by the future, stained by the past.
It is the way to heed;
Those who fail find their flame extinguished.

—Clan Nova Cat Remembrance, Passage 1, Verse 1, Lines 1-8

HISTORY

We, the Lords representative of the six Inner Realms of the Human Sphere, in the name of Peace, free Commerce, and our people, do hereby enter the Covenant to be henceforth be known as the Star League.

We pledge unto each other our Lives, our good Faith, and our Sacred Honor.

—Excerpts from the Preamble to the Star League Accords, 2571

THE STAR LEAGUE

AD ASTRA

Thomas Kearny and Takayoshi Fuchida published the academic paper "What Happened to the Universe When Einstein Wasn't Looking" in 2018. Their theoretical predictions of hyperspace travel represented a bold, mathematically robust interpretation of physics. The pair expected fame and fortune—or at worst, notoriety.

They never expected it would make them laughingstocks, destroy their professional reputations, and ultimately end their academic careers. Neither man lived to see their ultimate vindication. What later became known as the Kearny-Fuchida drive was first successfully tested in 2107. The following year, Captain Norm McKenna commanded the JumpShip *Pathfinder* during the first crewed faster-than-light trip to another solar system.

The *Pathfinder* spent the next two years exploring the systems surrounding Terra. Construction soon began on the first FTL colony ship, the *Ark*. New Earth became the first planet outside of the solar system to be colonized barely a century after McKenna's first voyage. Relatively low-cost mass-production of Kearny-Fuchida drives began soon after the settlement of New Earth. Despite the frequency of voyages, JumpShip travel involved inherent risks. The *Liberator* was the first JumpShip lost in a jump accident, but the potential threat deterred humanity not one iota.

Humanity settled over a hundred worlds in half a century. Asteroids were mined for ice to export water to barren worlds. With a reliable source of water, many barren worlds were opened for colonization. The metaphorical and literal floodgates had opened. All those who could afford to leave Terra's pollution, political strife, and authoritarian rule did so. The greatest exodus in history delivered humans far from the world that spawned them.

Tensions between the wealthy haves and the impoverished have-nots on Terra escalated into terrorism and open warfare. Millions immigrated to new planets to escape the violence. By the end of the century, almost 400 worlds had been settled. The Terran Alliance claimed authority over these far-flung outposts of humanity, but many colonists had departed Terra to escape the chains of Alliance rule. Conflict was inevitable.

In a short time, over 600 systems had been settled. The military might of the Alliance Global Militia enforced obedience. Colonists were expected to remain loyal to the Alliance by paying tax levies in the form of valuable resources. When the first open rebellions broke out on distant worlds, the Alliance sent in the militia to quell the uprisings. These campaigns quickly bogged down in the face of stiff resistance. The entire population of Izar waged an uncompromising guerrilla war against the invaders. Alliance forces killed thousands of civilians in an effort to pacify the world of Summit. A yearlong campaign on Denebola resulted in a hard-fought Alliance defeat. The Terran population was apathetic about the war. Without popular support at home, the fighting ended quickly. Political upheaval on Terra drove the Alliance to abandon all inhabited worlds more than thirty light years from Terra. Hundreds of systems were suddenly independent, whether they wanted to be or not.

Captain Norm McKenna

Captain Norm McKenna was the Mission Commander/Astrogator on the TAS *Pathfinder* for her maiden voyage to New Earth. His father, Major General Leonard McKenna, was a high-ranking officer in the Terran Alliance military, famous for commanding the troops sent to Brazil to quell a strike at a semiconductor plant. Norm McKenna was born into the life of privilege and ease afforded to the Alliance's elite. He attended the finest schools, and he realized the best opportunities influence could afford.

McKenna gravitated towards the Terran Alliance's emerging space exploration program. He cut a fine figure: tall, dashing, and with a friendly, honest smile. Between his clear qualifications and his connections with the Terran Alliance's elite, McKenna was the obvious choice to helm the *Pathfinder.* After completing his mission of exploration, McKenna retired to the wilds of Canada with his family. He had seen more worlds than any human being before him. He refused all offers to write his memoirs or be interviewed. Instead, he chose to live out his days in a rural existence far from civilization.

He was far from the last member of the McKennas to write their name in the history books, but most came to envy their ancestor's peaceful twilight years.

Fusion Engines

Fusion engines were developed by the Western Alliance early in the twenty-first century. Kearny and Fuchida's pioneering scientific work on what became the K-F drive was itself an outgrowth of research into fusion power.

Fusion engines are sometimes called "miniature stars" because they generate immense power, even though they can run for decades or longer on trivial amounts of normal hydrogen from convenient water sources. Their peerless efficiency and lack of pollution make them the preferred method of power generation. Only the expense and difficulty of manufacturing them kept them from completely replacing other means of power generation. Miniaturization enabled fusion power's portability. As manufacturing matured, fusion engines came to be found not just in enormous power plants providing inexpensive, clean power to cities, but also on small vehicles.

It is a common misbelief that a fusion engine can "overload" and explode like a fusion bomb. This is not the case, but this does not stop popular media from depicting it. In fact, fusion engines are far safer than most other sources of power. What appears to be a nuclear explosion is superheated air escaping from the containment vessel. In some rare cases, this can damage objects in close proximity.

The scientists of the Western Alliance and its successors invested much effort into fusion engine development. Their many advantages compared to other power generation methods made them vital tools for colonizing the stars.

The Terran Alliance discovered that fusion power would be ideal for warfare. It would provide enough energy to power the most important weapons system ever developed.

TAS *PATHFINDER*
TAU CETI
5 DECEMBER 2107

TAU CETI
(-12.52, 3.13, -3.5)

SOL
(0.0, 0.0, 0.0)

AGE OF WAR

The retrenchment of the Terran Alliance left a massive power vacuum in its wake. Before long, many ambitious nations tried to fill it. When the dust settled, new major powers had emerged. Though far more massive than the small stellar nations that came before, none were content with their borders. What is now known as the Age of War began at the very end of the twenty-fourth century, when the Capellan Confederation invaded the Free Worlds League over a territorial dispute for control of the Andurien system. Andurien would feature significantly in interstellar politics for centuries to come.

The early portion of the Age of War was characterized by extreme brutality. No weapon was left unused. Combatants and noncombatants alike were cut down in the devastating fighting. Refusal to capitulate on all sides led to escalation. Weapons of mass destruction were no longer used as deterrents, but instead used actively. Strategic weapons found employment against the entirety of enemy worlds, not just the opposing military forces on each side.

This was unsustainable. Horrified by the magnitude of civilian casualties and the widespread destruction, the great powers signed the Ares Convention, placing limits on how war could be waged.

This spared many civilians and many worlds, but it had the unintended effect of making war an easy and inexpensive means of settling disputes. With reduced risk to civilians and vital infrastructure, war became an attractive prospect. Fewer people were killed as the wars raged on, but near-continuous conflict became the normal state of affairs for over a century. The fighting died down only after the successor to the Terran Alliance brokered a settlement between the Confederation and League in the Treaty of Andurien.

Ares Conventions: Rules of Warfare

The onset of the Age of War saw the widespread use of weapons of mass destruction. This culminated in the use of nuclear weapons against civilian targets on Tintavel. Hundreds of thousands died, and the world was rendered barren. Capellan Confederation Chancellor Aleisha Liao was horrified by the devastation. She made it her mission to reduce the brutality of war and worked hard to bring the rulers of the Inner Sphere to the negotiating table. The result was the Ares Conventions.

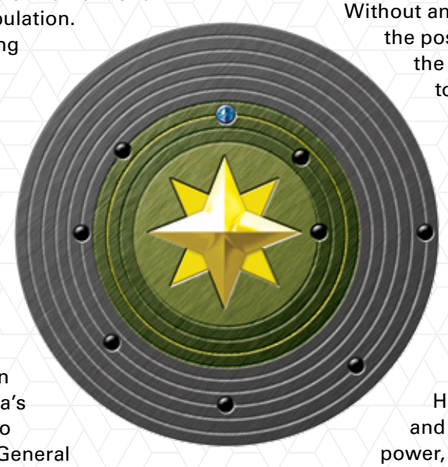
The Conventions banned the use of nuclear weapons on or near inhabited worlds. Chemical and biological weapons were deemed abominable and banned outright. Rules were established to ensure humane treatment of civilians. Fighting in cities was largely banned. Standards for surrender and the treatment of prisoners were codified.

The Conventions reduced the danger to innocent bystanders during fighting. War became more formalized. It also became even more common. House Lords soon saw war as a largely bloodless way to settle disagreements, provided one stayed within the new boundaries of "acceptable" warfare.

Capellan troops invaded the Taurian Concordat not long after Aleisha Liao's death. Because the Taurians had refused to sign the Ares Conventions, Capellan forces did not observe them. During the Davion Civil War, the Conventions were again ignored. When the Star League went to war against the Periphery States, it abolished the Conventions outright. The Successor Lords did not observe the Conventions after the fall of the Star League. Only the near collapse of civilization after the Second Succession War forced the Successor Lords to return to some tenets from the Ares Conventions to prevent humanity from entering a true dark age.

TERRAN HEGEMONY

The Terran Alliance retreated into isolationism after losing the war with its colonies. It collapsed into civil war in less than seven decades. War on Terra should have been catastrophic, given the easy access to weapons of tremendous power and the massive population. Fortunately, it didn't last long enough to be devastating.



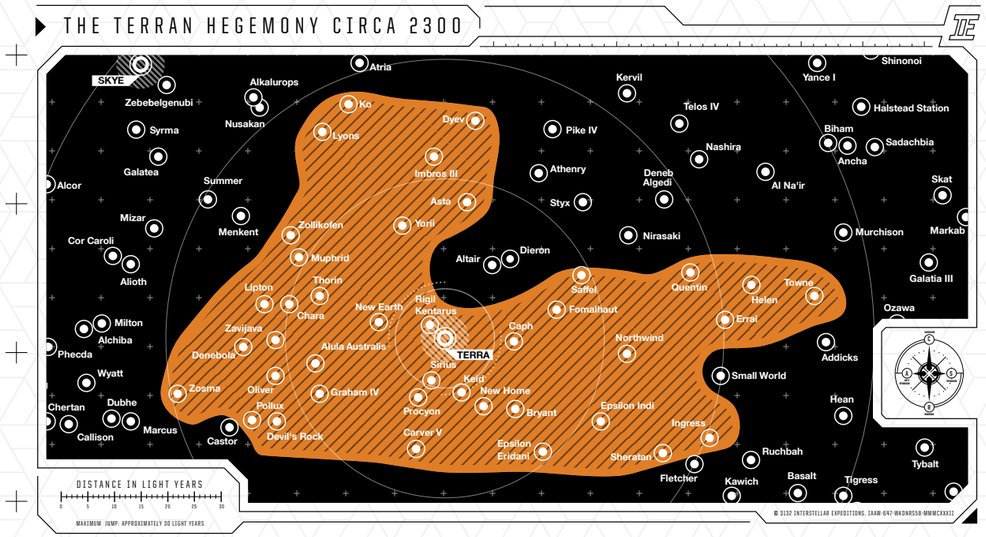
James McKenna commanded the Alliance Navy, which was largely ignored by Terran politicians until McKenna built it into a powerful military force. The Navy's WarShips quickly put a stop to the fighting. The rest of the armed forces and the Terran populace rallied to McKenna's banner. McKenna swept into power as the first Director-General of the Terran Hegemony.

He was an energetic and aggressive leader for the new Hegemony. He launched "campaigns of persuasion" to reassert Terran dominance over wayward colonies. In turn, many worlds banded together to form their own interstellar nations. The Hegemony reclaimed many worlds abandoned by the withdrawing Terran Alliance. The new states that coalesced after the Alliance's retreat contained the Hegemony's expansion.

The lone blemish on James McKenna's time as Director-General was his son. Konrad McKenna was belligerent and incompetent, leading Hegemony forces into a disastrous defeat. He resigned his office in disgrace and died soon after.

Without an obvious successor to the post of Director-General, the Hegemony threatened to dissolve into chaos. Michael Cameron won the only contested general election in the Hegemony's history, then created the neo-feudal system, which altered the nature of society from bottom to top. This was widely imitated throughout the Inner Sphere by the Great Houses. Michael Cameron and his heirs consolidated power, and House Cameron ruled the Hegemony exclusively.

The Terran Hegemony grew powerful under the Camerons. They jealously guarded the Hegemony's technological advances. The most important advancement was the invention of the BattleMech. The armies of the other Great Houses became obsolete overnight. It took the other nations of the Inner Sphere years to duplicate these mighty weapons of war.

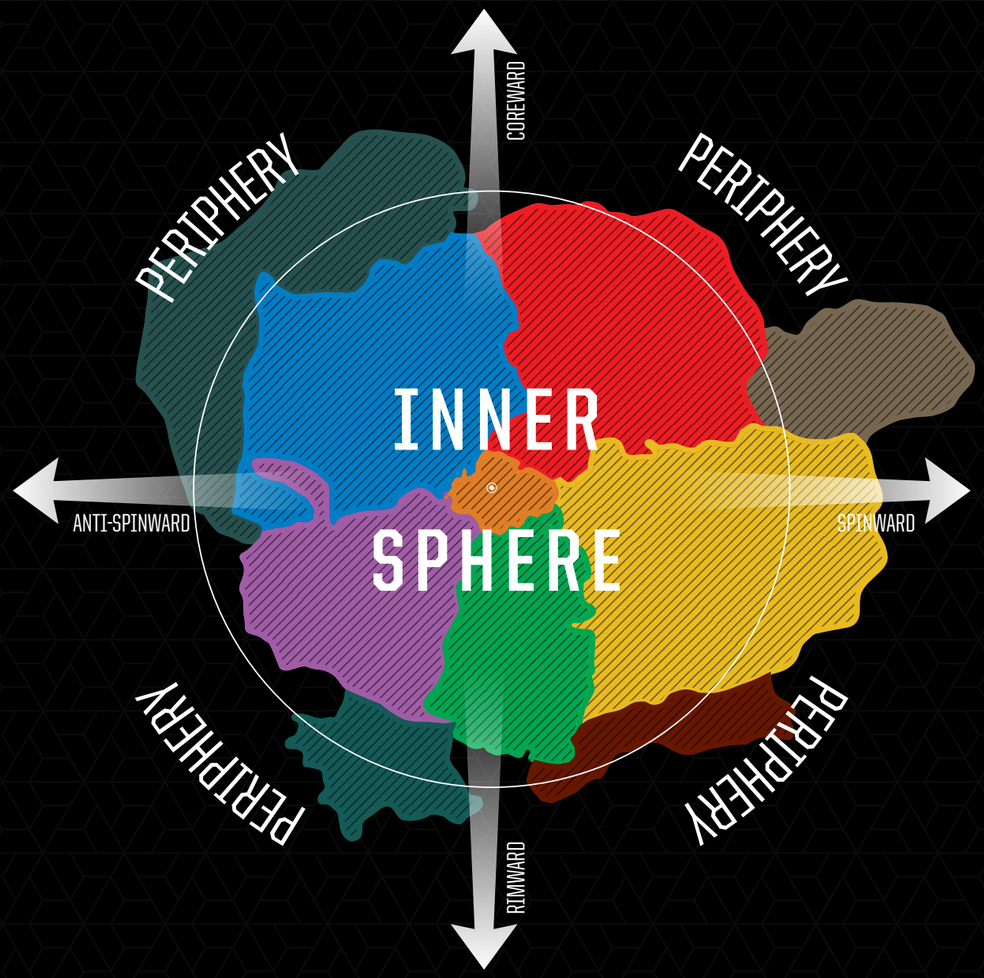


THE INNER SPHERE AND THE PERIPHERY

The Inner Sphere describes a roughly five hundred light-year radius around Terra. Within this arbitrary border lies the vast majority of the human population, and the Great Houses control nearly all of it. Most of the great events and wars of human history occurred in the Inner Sphere. Stellar cartographers regard its boundary as the point where humanity simply stopped exploring; that desire had been largely satisfied. Efforts instead turned toward terraforming marginally habitable worlds within the boundary, creating thousands of inhabited systems.

Beyond this tenuous border is the Periphery, where many smaller nations cling to the edges of the Inner Sphere. These mostly lack the resources, influence, and stability of the Great Houses. Some are little more than bandit kingdoms and pirate havens. The unclaimed regions of the Periphery host colonies and outposts of powers great and small. The lawlessness and freedom of these systems attracts those fleeing persecution or prosecution by Inner Sphere authorities. As with all frontiers, life is hard and often short in the Periphery.

Myths and legends abound in the great unknown beyond the Periphery realms, the space known as the Deep Periphery. Fallen realms have left ruins that attract archaeologists and looters alike. Both groups seek the relics of bygone ages, the former for preservation and the latter for exploitation.



THE GREAT HOUSES

The Great Houses are the nations of the Inner Sphere, each customarily synonymous with its own ruling family. At one time, there were a total of six Great Houses: Cameron of the Terran Hegemony, Davion of the Federated Suns, Kurita of the Draconis Combine, Liao of the Capellan Confederation, Marik of the Free Worlds League, and Steiner of the Lyran Commonwealth. These powerful families command their respective star empires.

All the Great Houses began small, usually from alliances made as the Inner Sphere grew in the early days of interstellar travel. Each House controlled its own slice of the Inner Sphere, and borders were established with the other Houses as their zones of control expanded toward one another.

Every Great House is a melting pot of trillions, and innumerable ethnic and cultural legacies stretching across millennia. Yet each nation has a broad culture and society that holds primacy based upon the feudal government that has given it legitimacy for centuries.

House Cameron established the Star League and became foremost of all the Great Houses. Through manipulation, subterfuge, and assassination, Stefan Amaris of the Periphery nation the Rim Worlds Republic eliminated House Cameron, leaving no clear successor to the throne of the Star League. Nature abhors a vacuum, and the five remaining Great Houses began a struggle for dominance that has lasted four centuries and counting. Since that time, the Great Houses have also been referred to as the Successor States.

HOUSE CAMERON
Terran Hegemony

HOUSE DAVION
Federated Suns

HOUSE KURITA
Draconis Combine

HOUSE MARIK
Free Worlds League

HOUSE LIAO
Capellan Confederation

HOUSE STEINER
Lyran Commonwealth

INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL

Humankind has always longed to explore the stars. In 2018, Professors Thomas Kearny and Takayoshi Fuchida wrote a paper on the theory of warping space to travel over a dozen light years. The professors were laughed out of academics. Almost one hundred years later, their obscure and ridiculed paper led to the Deimos Project, the invention of the Kearny-Fuchida (K-F) drive, and the first "jump" between the zenith and nadir points of the Sol System. This became the literal driving force behind humankind's ability to leave Terra and the Sol System to begin the colonization of the Inner Sphere.

Germanium is the material that makes "jumping through space" possible. It is combined with titanium, and then enclosed in a liquid helium jacket along with controls, initiators, tankage, and associated equipment, to make up a K-F drive core. A K-F drive creates a limited distortion field around itself that allows it to translocate up to thirty light years in one "jump" from a system to another, or between two points within a system. The K-F drive is the heart of the JumpShip. The JumpShip also possesses in-system maneuvering thrusters, recharging elements, and a small crew to operate the vessel.

When a JumpShip moves from one star system to another, it expends all its stored power, and the drive must recharge before its next jump. Almost all JumpShips require solar energy to recharge their drives. This process varies by system, depending on the solar emissions of the local star and the JumpShip's distance from it, but recharging usually takes several days.

The Lithium-Fusion battery extends the capability of the K-F drive, allowing the JumpShip to make two jumps in succession without stopping for a solar recharge. L-F batteries are quite expensive and are typically found on WarShips and military JumpShips. After the second jump, the JumpShip must undergo a standard recharge for both the K-F drive and the L-F battery. Thus, it will take such a ship twice as long to recharge completely. L-F battery technology was another casualty of the Succession Wars.

Traditionally, a JumpShip uses the zenith or nadir points within a star system as anchors to jump to and from. These jump points are at the proximity limit of the star's gravity well "above" and "below" the system's planetary ecliptic plane, but there exist other, non-standard points to enter and exit a system. These "pirate points" are used for closer insertion into a system. Pirate points are near L1 Lagrange points, where gravity between bodies effectively cancels out. Such points are constantly changing and challenging to calculate for JumpShip navigation, but using them can be beneficial to those attempting to catch defenders off-guard.

Many JumpShip captains dislike jumping to uninhabited systems, given the fragility of their vessels. There have been numerous incidents where a JumpShip became stranded in an uninhabited system due to damage.

DropShips are the ferries between JumpShip and planet. They carry thousands of tons in personnel, equipment, and cargo. Once a jump is complete, DropShips detach from the JumpShip and make their way to the target planet. The distance from jump points to a planet determines DropShip transit times. A JumpShip can carry multiple DropShips depending on its size and number of docking collars. The smallest JumpShip carries no DropShips, while the largest can carry nine.

WarShips are to JumpShips as steel naval vessels were to wooden sailing ships. WarShips are JumpShips armed with an array of naval-class weaponry and armored for space combat against DropShips or other WarShips. WarShips can also carry DropShips and provide orbital fire support.

The Succession Wars destroyed much of the Inner Sphere's JumpShip supply and the shipyards that once manufactured them. Production continued at a handful of sites, both automated and human-operated, that were a pale shadow of the Star League's vast shipbuilding industry.

THE BATTLEMECH

MYOMERS AND GYROSCOPES

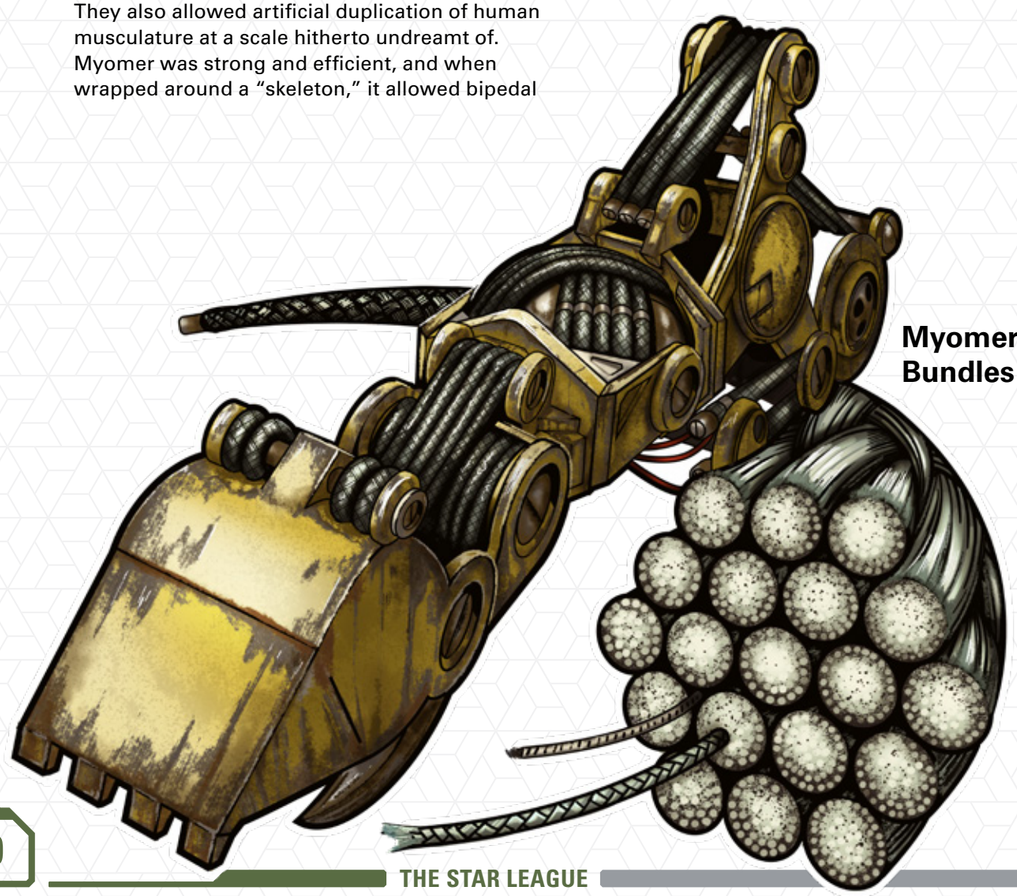
BattleMechs did not simply appear as a great leap forward in military technology. As with most technological developments, the BattleMechs came about via gradual, incremental successes in various technological fields. Miniaturized fusion engines were one necessary component, but the era of the BattleMech dawned because of myomers and gyros.

Myomer bundles were developed by Dr. Gregory Atlas for the Terran Hegemony. An electrical charge transmitted through a bundle of synthetic fibers cause it to contract and expand like a human muscle. Their use in advanced prosthetics revolutionized medicine and enabled amputees to resume full ability. They also allowed artificial duplication of human musculature at a scale hitherto undreamt of. Myomer was strong and efficient, and when wrapped around a "skeleton," it allowed bipedal and quadrupedal vehicles to support their own weight and perform locomotive operation.

That was only the beginning. The Terran Hegemony soon discovered myomer also allowed them to outperform more conventional machines.

The massive reaction wheels of a BattleMech's gyro enable a 'Mech to move like a person. They exert counterforces to keep a 'Mech upright and to allow it to move rapidly. Gyroscopes have existed for over a thousand years, but it was the scientists of the Terran Hegemony who realized their potential to stabilize a walking war machine.

The Hegemony's weapon engineers realized how complementary these two technologies were in tandem. A vehicle that could move like a human and carry more armor and weapons than a tank would make a formidable weapon of war.



Myomer Bundles

INDUSTRIALMECHS

The first 'Mechs were built for industry rather than war. Conventional vehicles struggled on many inhospitable worlds. The powerful myomer muscles of IndustrialMechs gave humans maneuverable, strong vehicles able to function anywhere a person could walk, and many places where humans might fear to tread. At first, IndustrialMechs were seen as a status symbol only for the most wealthy and successful corporations. Their obvious utility soon changed that. They spread throughout the Inner Sphere.

The more IndustrialMechs were built, the cheaper they became. As prices dropped, it became possible to build more and more specialized designs. ForestryMechs penetrated deep into forests that no wheeled or tracked logging vehicle could reach. AgroMechs enabled ranchers to control their herds without risking life and limb. HarvesterMechs proved many times more efficient than conventional farming machines.

Prior centuries taught humans that vehicles of all sorts, from ground vehicles to naval vessels, from aircraft to spacecraft, could be modified to carry weapons. IndustrialMechs were no exception. IndustrialMech owners discovered they could mount weapons on their walking vehicles with little difficulty, so homesteaders on remote worlds relied on such improvised weapon platforms to defend themselves and their property against pirates. But it was clear to the Terran Hegemony that IndustrialMechs could be developed further and made much larger. There would be few limits on the destructive power wielded by such machines, and few places they could not travel.

THE MACKIE: THE FIRST BATTLEMECH

Republic of the Sphere Archives
Copy/Duplication Office

On February 5, 2439, the first BattleMech received its baptism of fire on a desolate series of steppes near the North American city of Yakima. The BattleMech, a joint effort by more than 20 of the best weapons manufacturers in the Hegemony, was tested against four ancient Merkava heavy tanks specially fitted with remote control devices. The commander of the BattleMech and the first MechWarrior was Colonel Charles Kincaid.

The few people allowed to witness the first combat run of the BattieMech were debriefed. What follows is a transcript of a verbal report filed by Professor Htov Gbarleman, chief research scientist for Karena's Fiber Optics Interstellar, manufacturer of the BattleMech's sensor systems.

EYES ONLY!

Hegemony Research and Development Department
Military Weapon Systems Division

Colonel Kincaid, with his usual impatience, rushed through the pre-test warmup and nearly ripped apart one of his umbilical connections trying to get the test started. As I began to monitor the sensor output, I noticed that the BattleMech's myomer-neural feedback circuits were faithfully echoing Colonel Kincaid's brain wave patterns. It was eerie almost as though the 'Mech were technically alive and Kincaid was its spark of divinity. The Colonel's howl of sheer pleasure quickly cleared my head of that notion. He pushed the Mackie forward in a trot straight into the test range where four tanks waited among low, rolling hills.

One of the tanks opened fire. Its shot was true and hit the 'Mech just above the right hip. Everyone in the brightly lit bunker seemed to hold his breath as all the readouts fuzzed into snow at the blast interference. No damage! A piece of steel no thicker than my finger, strengthened by radiation casting techniques and impregnated with a sheet of woven diamond fibers, had stopped cold an armor-piercing shell. That same shell would have gone straight through a third of a meter of normal steel.

The tracking cameras watched as the Colonel swiveled his chest to bring his weapons to bear. Twenty years of my life seemed to focus into a single action that would take no more than five seconds. I watched as Colonel Kincaid used his sensors-my sensor-to pick out the tank hidden behind a group of small trees and bushes. He fired both his PPC and autocannon. Both shots were direct hits and the tank erupted into a ball of flame.

A thunderous cheer swept the bunker, while everyone present began to slap me on the back. Instead of feeling pleased at the 'Mech's performance, I felt increasingly sad.

I didn't realized (sic) why until Kincaid began to track down the last tank. The tank operator was sitting at his remote control panel next to me. I'll never forget the expression on the young man's face.

Outside, Kincaid had disabled the last tank. As he stood over it, he raised the 'Mech's right foot and brought it crashing down onto the tank. Before the hulk had a chance to explode, Kincaid twisted the 'Mech's foot deeper into the tank's carcass. Next to me, the operator of the tank was trying so hard not to show his fear that tears were streaming down his cheeks.

It hit me then that my colleagues and I had just turned loose one of the most powerful weapons ever conceived by man, but we were celebrating like giddy children. While my companions jumped up and down with glee, that poor boy was trying to hide the fact that in the instant his screens went black, he had wet his pants.

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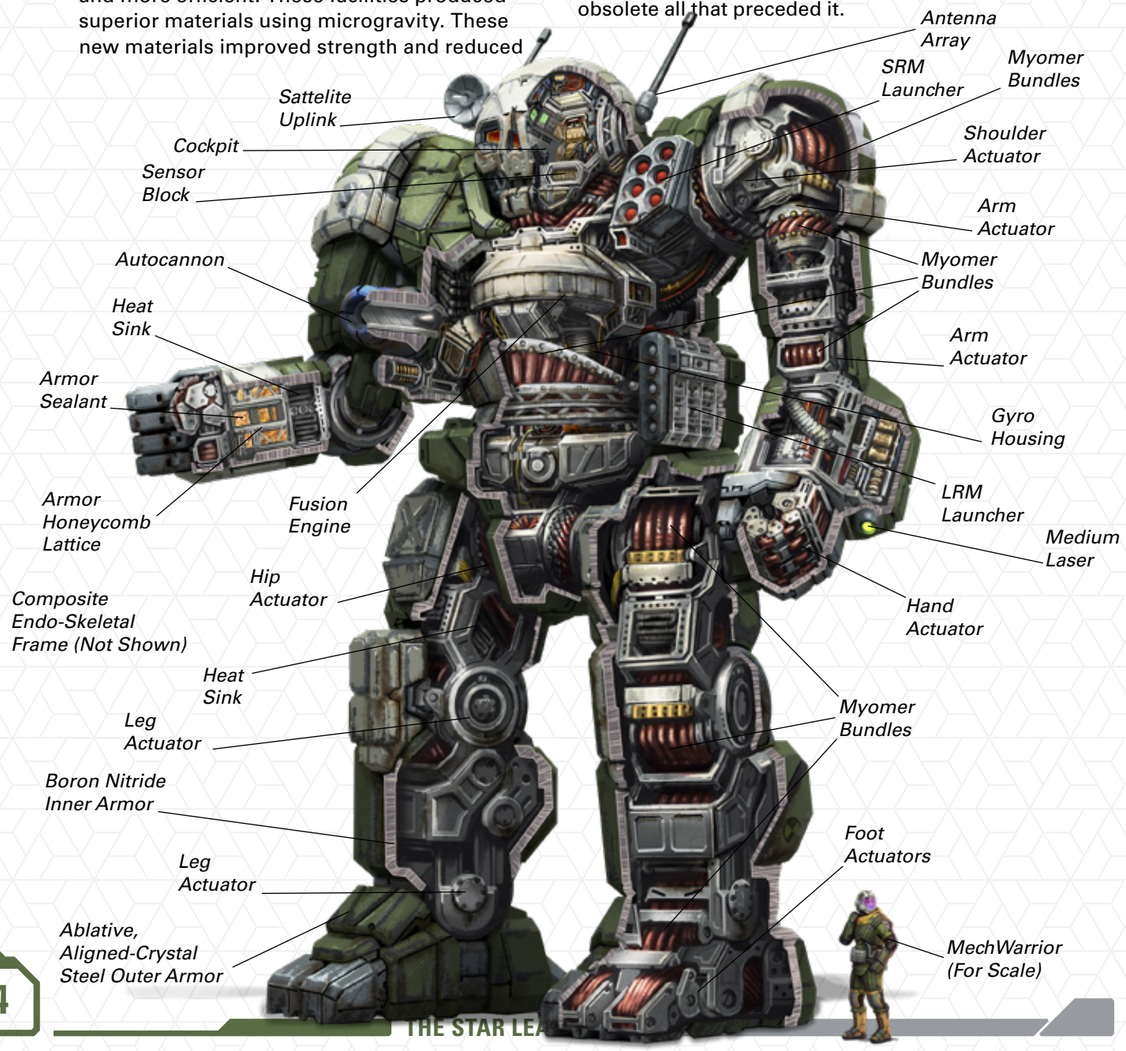
ARMOR AND WEAPONS

For a time, armor protection outpaced weapons development. It gradually became almost impossible for a weapon to penetrate armor. Damaging the contents beneath the armor required completely destroying the entire armor system. Weapon development moved towards the brute-force ablation of armor plate. Crude rifled cannons gave way to hypervelocity autocannons. Chemical lasers were replaced with more powerful models that drew energy from immense capacitors or the limitless power of small fusion reactors. Missile racks enabled fighting vehicles to lob massive salvos at their foes. New guidance systems made missiles more accurate. Orbital manufacturing was developed and matured. Fusion engines were made lighter and more efficient. These facilities produced superior materials using microgravity. These new materials improved strength and reduced density of armor and structural materials. As these components became lighter and more effective, new and deadly applications loomed.

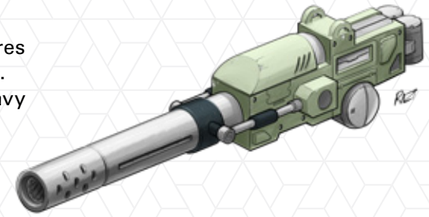
Every new development sparked further innovation. Much time and treasure were spent to maintain the Terran Hegemony's technological superiority over the other Great Houses.

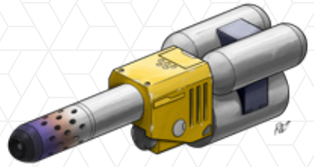
The Terrans pursued what historians call "a revolution in military affairs." This was the idea that a singular development would irrevocably alter the military landscape. All militaries would be compelled to adapt or face becoming obsolete. It was not enough to improve the weapons and armor of existing fighting vehicles. Instead, the Hegemony needed to develop something entirely new. This fighting vehicle would be a complex and sophisticated weapons system that rendered obsolete all that preceded it.



Autocannon

An autocannon is a rapid-firing, auto-loading weapon that fires high-speed streams of high-explosive, armor-piercing shells. Light autocannon range in caliber from 30 to 90mm, and heavy autocannon may be 80 to 120mm or larger.



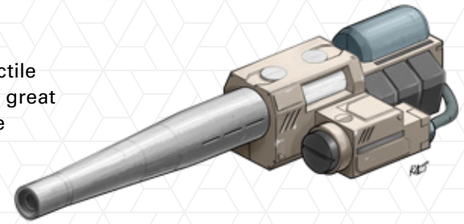


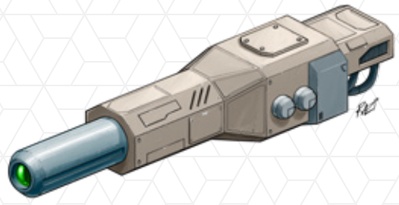
Flamers

The typical flame thrower carried by 'Mechs taps into the heat generated by the fusion reactor to create a powerful but short-ranged burst of fire.

Gauss Rifle

The Gauss rifle uses a series of magnets to propel a projectile through the rifle barrel toward a target. While it requires a great deal of power to operate, this weapon generates very little heat and can achieve a muzzle velocity twice that of any conventional weapon.



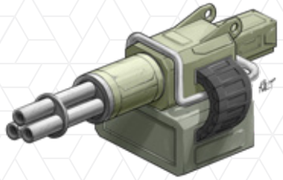


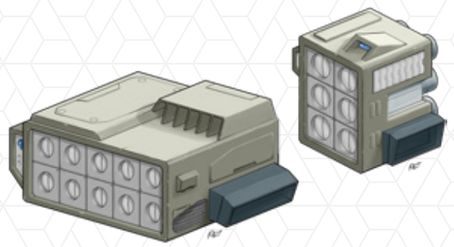
Laser

Laser is an acronym for "Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation." When used as a weapon, a laser damages its target by concentrating extreme heat on a small area. BattleMech lasers are typically designated as micro, small, medium and large.

Machine Gun

The high rate of fire produced by machine guns makes them excellent anti-infantry weapons.



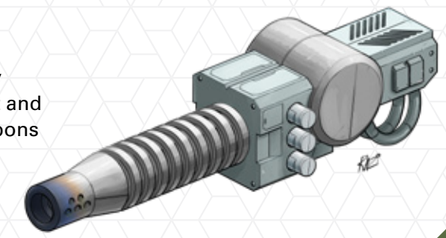


Missile Launchers

Missile launchers are devices used to deliver self-propelled and self-guided high-explosive munitions to inflict damage on a target. Long-range missile (LRM) racks fire indirect salvos at distant targets, while short-range missile (SRM) racks are accurate only at ranges of less than 300 meters, but are more powerful than LRMs.

Particle Projector Cannon (PPC)

A PPC consists of a magnetic accelerator firing high-energy proton or ion bolts that cause damage through both impact and high temperature. PPCs are among the most effective weapons available to BattleMechs.



BATTLEMECH PROLIFERATION

In 2443, when a lance of Terran Hegemony BattleMechs destroyed three times their number of Kuritan tanks on Styx, the genie was freed from the bottle. The existence of these formidable vehicles of war quickly became known to every military in the Inner Sphere. Subsequent combat conclusively demonstrated the BattleMech's superiority over ground vehicles of all kinds. Many high commands had hoped that Styx was a fluke; instead it was the dawn of the future of warfare, the "revolution in military affairs" that the Terrans doggedly pursued. But to leave this development to the Terran Hegemony alone would have been to accept defeat and de facto servitude. The proud House Lords were unwilling to do either. They scrambled to acquire BattleMech technology for themselves.

The Lyrans were the first to succeed; they launched a daring commando raid on Hesperus II and recovered thousands of pages of technical data. Despite this coup, it still took House Steiner's best military scientists years to reverse-engineer the technology.

House Davion and their Federated Suns were next. They failed to penetrate Terran security surrounding the design, and in their desperation for the technology, they relied on other means. The Suns purchased copies of the Lyran Commonwealth's stolen plans—at no small cost.

This meant that the Draconis Combine's two greatest enemies now had BattleMech technology. House von Rohrs chose the most direct path: they sent their Draconis Elite Strike Teams to raid the Hegemony's BattleMech factory on Coventry. DEST suffered heavy casualties, but claimed the precious prize they sought.

When Captain-General Geralk Marik of the Free Worlds League was killed in battle by BattleMechs from House Steiner, the League's morale plummeted. Their military was incapable of protecting even their head of state from enemy 'Mechs. Despite their desire for revenge, the League proceeded methodically. Their agents infiltrated Lyran Commonwealth defense conglomerates over a period of years and orchestrated the defection of a top engineer. In one fell swoop, House Marik gained both BattleMech technology and vital information about the military readiness of their greatest foe.

The Capellan Confederation was the last of the major powers to acquire schematics necessary to build their own BattleMechs. They obtained the information from their old enemy, the Free Worlds League, in a complex intelligence operation encouraging the defection of a FWL scientist.

Charles Kincaid

The first BattleMech pilot was, unsurprisingly, extremely well connected to the war industry. Charles Kincaid's wealthy family was closely involved in the production of weapons for the Terran Hegemony, and he'd dreamed of fighting for the Hegemony from boyhood. His family had no tradition of military service; his antecedents preferred the boardroom to the battlefield. But this did not dissuade him. He rose to the rank of captain in the Hegemony Armed Forces on merit alone. He only turned to his family ties for a chance to become part of the *Mackie* test program, where he distinguished himself with innovative suggestions. Kincaid piloted the prototype *Mackie* at its unveiling in a clear sign of Skobel MechWorks' confidence in a successful test.

Kincaid had the honor of commanding the first regiment of the new BattleMechs once they entered into service. This made him the first person to command 'Mechs in combat. Again, he achieved success. This was only the first of many victories his 'Mechs won against the foes of the Terran Hegemony.

Charles Kincaid retired a general after a lengthy and glorious career. He lived out his final years on his family's large estates on Thorin. The Kincaids became a respected military family. Many went on to fight for the Hegemony and the Star League. Kincaid changed his family's legacy from business executives to military commanders.

BattleMechs were now in the hands of every major power in the Inner Sphere. Every other type of armored fighting vehicle had been rendered obsolete by these walking vehicles of destruction. A massive arms race began, and every empire scrambled to outbuild its rivals. No nation could afford to fall behind; it would have been murder to send soldiers in tanks to stop 'Mechs. The demand for raw materials skyrocketed with production. Fighting over resources became common. New 'Mech classes were developed and sent into the field carrying powerful, cutting-edge weapon systems.

The Great Houses spent so much building vast armies of BattleMechs that any BattleMech left on the field was too valuable to be abandoned. Wherever possible, they were salvaged and returned to action by the victor. This spread new types of BattleMechs far and wide. When the Houses exerted their will on the Periphery states, BattleMechs found their way into the armies of even the smallest nations.

BNC-1E BANSHEE

Field Testing Summation: Original *Banshee* Primitive Chassis
Producer/Site: Hegemony Weapons Research, New Earth
Supervising Engineer: Irina Bendakov
Prototype Introduction Date: 2445
Non-Production Equipment Analysis:
Primitive Armor
Primitive Cockpit
Primitive Engine
Prototype PPC

After the *Mackie* was accepted into service, many of the contractors involved in the design and development of the *Mackie* began working on design proposals of their own. Hegemony Weapons Research of New Earth won the follow-on 'Mech design competition with their close assault *Banshee*. Five tons lighter than the *Mackie*, and with a similar primary weapons load-out—a PPC and a medium autocannon—the hardy and easily maintained *Banshee* boasted heavier armor protection as well as several lasers to provide a better close-ranged damage profile than the *Mackie*. Just as significantly, the *Banshee* was a true anthropomorphic design, featuring fully articulated arms with hands—an important consideration as Hegemony MechWarriors were already employing physical attacks, including "punches" that more often than not left their heavy arm-mounted weapons seriously damaged. What impressed the Hegemony government most, however, was the speed that the company could produce the *Banshee* coupled with a significantly lower cost per unit than the *Mackie*.

The appearance of a Hegemony Armed Forces (HAF) *Banshee*, with its signature death's head, was often enough to cause panic in opposing MechWarriors in the early years of 'Mech combat, but the *Banshee*'s reputation ultimately faded as more capable designs took to the battlefield. Three decades after its introduction, Hegemony Weapons Research debuted the BNC-3E, an upgrade that significantly increased the *Banshee*'s top speed, though at a cost of most of its close-range firepower.

The HAF immediately accepted this model, which soon became the standard with over 5,000 units produced over a ten-year span (not counting the countless more converted from -1E models). The *Banshee*'s heyday was already over however; it was undergunned when compared to other assault 'Mech counterparts and never regained popularity with HAF MechWarriors. By the beginning of the twenty-sixth century, the *Banshee* had long been removed from the HAF's frontlines, though it (and its clones, by way of salvage and corporate espionage) remained in varying levels of service with the five Great Houses throughout the Star League era, and even into the Succession Wars.

THE MECHWARRIOR

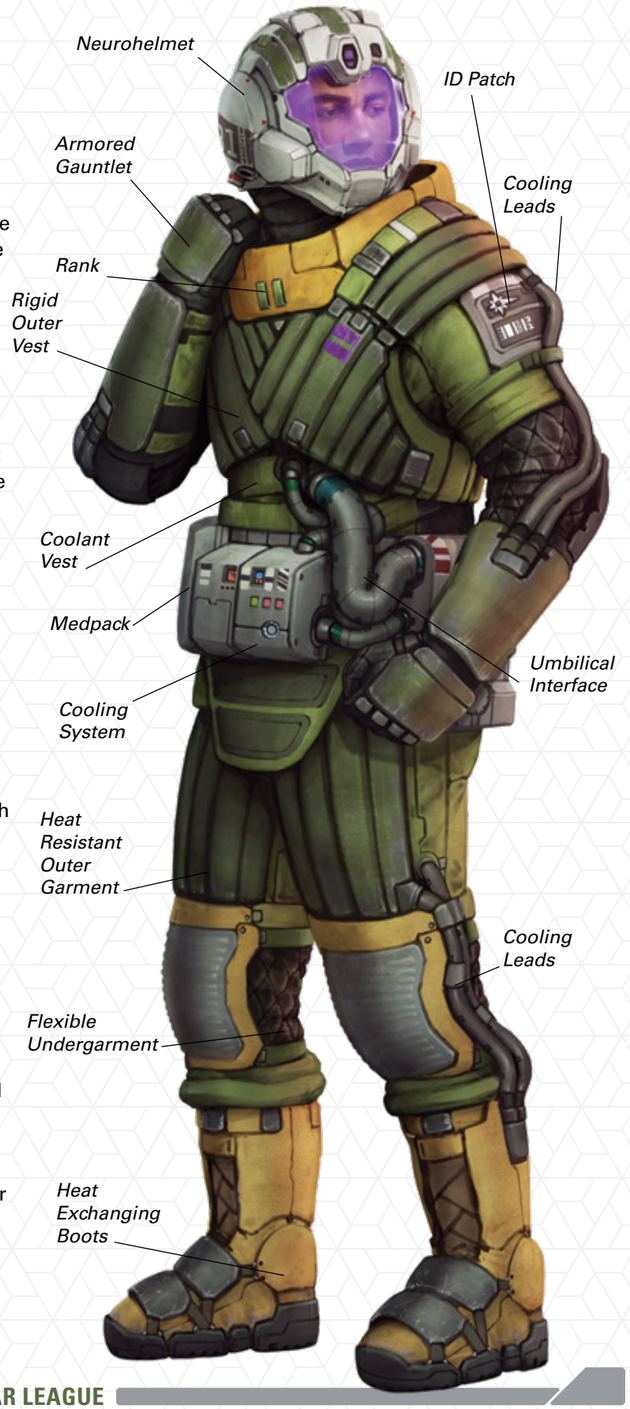
THE NEW KNIGHTHOOD

The Ares Conventions made war into something of a formalized affair. Battles rarely involved large armies; instead, the invention of the BattleMech meant that a single skilled pilot could spell the difference between victory or defeat. But only an elite few could ever pilot BattleMechs. Even the largest militaries represented a small fraction of their state's population. The competition to enter military academies was fierce. Individual MechWarriors became as famous as the aces of Terra's World Wars. Successful warriors were showered with accolades, and the greatest MechWarriors of all could expect to receive landholdings and noble titles. Some were even gifted entire worlds.

They also became valuable propaganda tools. MechWarriors gave far-off battles a sympathetic human face. Civilians hundreds of light years from the frontlines could identify with and cheer on their nation's best pilots. War seemed more noble when fought by heroic armored volunteers instead of unwilling conscripts.

Even MechWarriors who did not distinguish themselves above their peers expected high status. Many were allowed to keep their BattleMechs after leaving service. Some used them to defend landholdings they had won. Others chose to become soldiers for hire. Even this was seen as romantic by the civilians of the Inner Sphere. Mercenaries were equated to the wandering knights of the medieval era.

MechWarriors existed in a peculiar societal niche. They fought and killed like warriors of old, but their service awarded them financial windfalls and considerable esteem. These modern knights served their lieges in the field and at home, employing servants and working their lands to supply troops and materiel and tax funds to continue the endless wars.



NEUROHELMETS

Neurohelmets enable a MechWarrior's brain to directly aid piloting with their 'Mech. Without a neurohelmet, a 'Mech is capable of only the most basic movements—so they have the added benefit of protecting 'Mechs from theft. A helmet can also be tuned to a pilot's specific brainwaves to prevent unauthorized use.

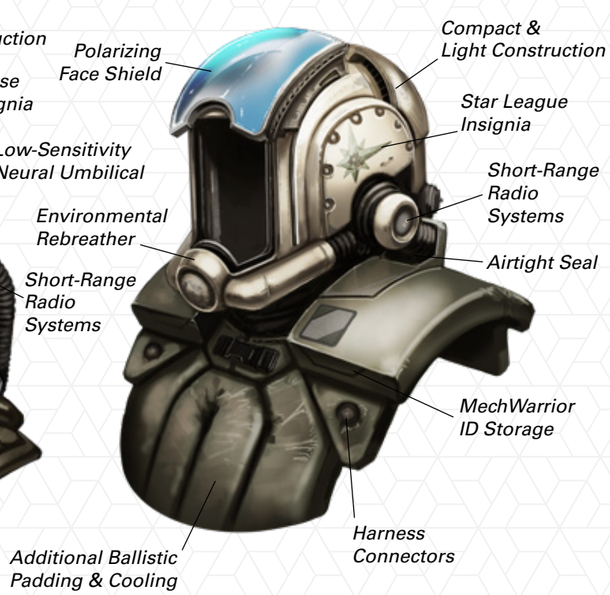
Early neurohelmet models for IndustrialMechs were quite bulky and ungainly, and required a shorn scalp to work properly. This particular necessity no longer exists, though many MechWarriors still proudly shave their heads as a mark of their status. The Star League developed advanced, lightweight helmets that enabled pilots to control their 'Mechs more effectively. During the Succession Wars, neurohelmets became prized treasures in their scarcity. Only the technological recovery begun by the Helm Memory Core allowed the Inner Sphere to manufacture neurohelmets once again in mass quantities. Combat neurohelmets were developed to improve BattleMech pilots survivability, with features like their built-in air supply that keeps downed pilots alive in hostile atmospheres. The Clans' sophisticated neurohelmets combined the advanced technology of Star League helmets with the protective features of the combat neurohelmet.

Neurohelmets are unfortunately a two-way street. They enable pilots to push their 'Mechs to the limit, but because the helmet both sends and receives information, a MechWarrior can be severely injured or even killed by neural feedback when their 'Mech experiences catastrophic damage.

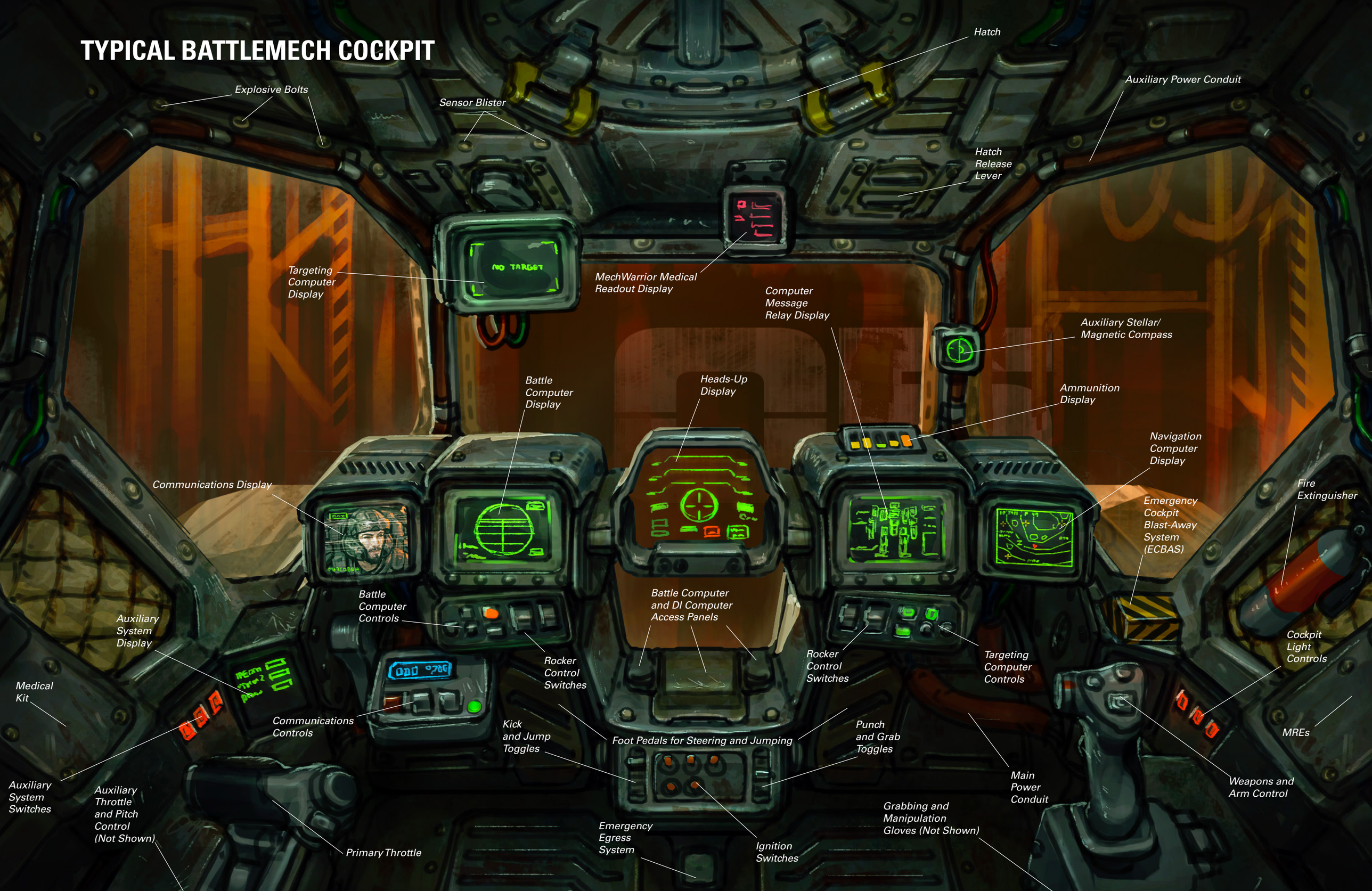
Many MechWarriors like to decorate their helmets. Some do so to show their allegiance. Others, to express their individuality. It is rare to see a neurohelmet that is not personalized in one way or another.

Standard Neurohelmet

Star League Neurohelmet



TYPICAL BATTLEMECH COCKPIT



THE STAR LEAGUE

Ian Cameron conceived of a Star League that would unite humankind. Every Inner Sphere state would play a part. House Cameron and the Hegemony would be first among equals. There would be no need for war to secure natural resources. The first mark of Cameron's success came with the Treaty of Andurien, which ended the Age of War where it began. It took years of diplomacy, but Cameron's dream became a reality in 2571. The Star League was born.

But many of the major Periphery powers were suspicious of the Inner Sphere Houses. They valued independence over membership in the new Star League, which ostensibly wanted to end all war by uniting all of humanity under one banner. What followed was the first test of the League. The Reunification War against the Periphery was fought without the restrictions of the Ares Convention as both sides relied on weapons of mass destruction. Great House militaries capitalized on the chaos of war by annexing Periphery worlds and consolidating these conquests.

Star League forces finally broke the resistance of the Periphery states after more than twenty brutal years. The Periphery was left in ruins. Many millions had died. But humanity was united under the banner of the Star League.

Superior Terran Hegemony technology gave House Cameron something to trade for the valuable natural resources beyond its borders. But the Hegemony was unwilling to remain dependent on potential enemies for vital supplies. It was stronger than any two Great Houses combined, but even the mighty Hegemony couldn't defeat the majority of those Houses working together. Still, House Cameron was surrounded by undeclared enemies. Resources on Hegemony worlds were being depleted. A solution was needed to eliminate the external threat the Great Houses posed while ensuring the Hegemony did not lack for the resources necessary for its continued functioning and dominance.

Hyperpulse Generators: Interstellar Communication

The first HPG was built on Terra in the twenty-seventh century. Like personal communicators that connect a family, community, or society on a single planet, Hyperpulse Generators (HPGs) hold empires together across the reaches of space. HPGs were an integral component of the Star League's expansion. Most inhabited planets in the Inner Sphere have an HPG of some class.

There are two classes of HPG facility: A and B. Ratings were based on the planet's size, position, population, and importance, and could be changed as the world's priority changed. Messages were transmitted in bundles, typically every six hours from Class A stations and twice a day from Class B stations. Sending via priority could ensure the message was immediately sent, but at considerable cost. Messages were relayed from station to station until it reached its destination. Depending on the priority level and the distance from sender to receiver, a message could arrive to close systems in minutes. Conversely, a message sent to the farthest reaches of inhabited space could take months to arrive. The cost of sending a message varies based on its size and how many stations it must be transmitted through to reach the receiver.

GOLDEN AGE

The era after the Reunification War is known as "The Good Years." Human development reached new heights. The invention of the Hyperpulse Generator made near-instantaneous communication possible over great distances. Rulers could now send orders to every corner of their empires. No longer were messages limited to the speed of a JumpShip and its recharge rate. Virtually every aspect of governance was affected.

Advanced water purification techniques made colonizing new planets almost risk-free. Terraforming advances soon made it possible to settle worlds whose natural atmospheres were hostile to human life. Hundreds of new worlds were settled by virtue of these technological advances.

The Star League adopted a common currency. Interstellar trade flourished. The Inner Sphere became wealthier than ever before as economic growth skyrocketed. Precious natural resources flowed from the Periphery to the gargantuan factories of the Terran Hegemony.

The outwardly peaceful appearance of the era was at times a façade. Fierce battles were fought between the Great Houses. Each House Lord dreamed of destroying their rivals. More secretly, some of the Great House hoped someday to supplant the Camerons as rulers of the Star League. The subjugated Periphery states came to resent the strip-mining of their worlds. They hated the occupying Star League troops.

Prosperity made House Cameron complacent. It seemed impossible that anyone could challenge the might of the Terran Hegemony and the Star League. But this represented a poor grasp of history, for all empires face existential threats, both from within and without.

STAR LEAGUE DEFENSE FORCE

The Star League Defense Force (SLDF) was largest military force in history. With thousands of WarShips and hundreds of thousands of BattleMechs, it was also the most powerful. Thousands of bases were required to support the Star League's mighty army. These ranged from small outposts to massive supply depots to the nearly impregnable Castles Brian.

Each Star League member-state had an SLDF Army Group assigned to it to ensure its territorial integrity. These troops also ensured the Houses obeyed the strictures of Star League law. The SLDF's WarShip fleets and countless aerospace fighters provided devastating support to ground forces. In battle, the Star League was inexorable.

Service in the Star League Defense Force was open to all inhabitants of the Inner Sphere. Petty national loyalties were set aside in service to all of humanity. The SLDF attracted the best and brightest from throughout the Star League. Hundreds of training academies ensured the SLDF's soldiery was well-trained. Especially prestigious were the Royal Divisions, which had access to the Hegemony's most cutting-edge technology. "Royal" BattleMechs were more advanced and deadlier than those available to the House Lords. The Terran Hegemony took special care to protect this advanced technology, but even regular SLDF units were equipped to be more than a match for the troops of the Great Houses.

SLDF primacy ultimately derived from numerical and technological superiority more than individual excellence. This was most evident when comparing SLDF troops to the warriors of the Draconis Combine. Combine troops sought to prove their exceptional skills by challenging Star League MechWarriors to single combat. These duels showed that individually, Star League training was lacking. To avoid future embarrassment, the SLDF began the famed Gunslinger Program. Intensive training in individual combat skills gave the graduates of this program comparable skills to Combine warriors.

But even unparalleled numbers and the vaunted individual skills of the Gunslingers were no match for fanatics defending their homeland. The Periphery militaries were crushed in the Reunification War, but crushing them took the Star League more than two decades. Even afterward, restive populations in the distant regions continued to resist Star League occupation. When simmering hostilities eventually boiled over, the vaunted Star League Defense Force found itself once again pitted against the armed forces of the Periphery. And, as in the Reunification War, the "pitiful" Periphery troops put the powerful SLDF on its heels with unremitting, merciless warfare. BattleMechs, WarShips, and fighters amounted to little against enemies willing to destroy their own homes to eliminate the Star League presence. The best academies in the Inner Sphere had not prepared the SLDF for suicide attacks, in which a single individual might detonate a nuclear weapon and kill an entire battalion or regiment along with themselves.

The SLDF had grown complacent, and it failed to learn from the lessons of history in which smaller forces overcame the massive armies of their foes. Small, dedicated forces fighting for their homelands have repeatedly shown that having the largest military does not guarantee a quick and easy victory—or any victory at all.

THE INNER SPHERE 2765

Lyran Commonwealth

Tamar Pact
1) Trellshire
2) Tamar Domains
3) Camlann Shire

Protectorate of Donegal
4) Coventry Province
5) Alarion Province
6) District of Donegal
7) Furillo Province

Federation of Skye
8) Kannon Shire
9) Virginia Shire
10) Rahneshire
11) Isle of Skye

Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Kagoshima Prefecture
2) Coudoux Prefecture
3) Bjarred Prefecture
4) Pusht-i-rud Prefecture
5) Ningxia Prefecture

Galedon Military District
6) Oshika Prefecture
7) Matsuida Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Kaznejoy Prefecture

Rasalhague Military District
10) Radstadt Prefecture
11) Trondheim Prefecture
12) Tinaca Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
13) Baldur Prefecture
14) Xinyang Prefecture
15) Kajikazawa Prefecture
16) Proserpina Prefecture
17) Iruzun Prefecture
18) Kuzuu Prefecture
19) Ashio Prefecture

Federated Suns

Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Fairfax Operational Area
3) Woodbine Operational Area

Crucis March
4) Markesan Operational Area
5) Minette Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area

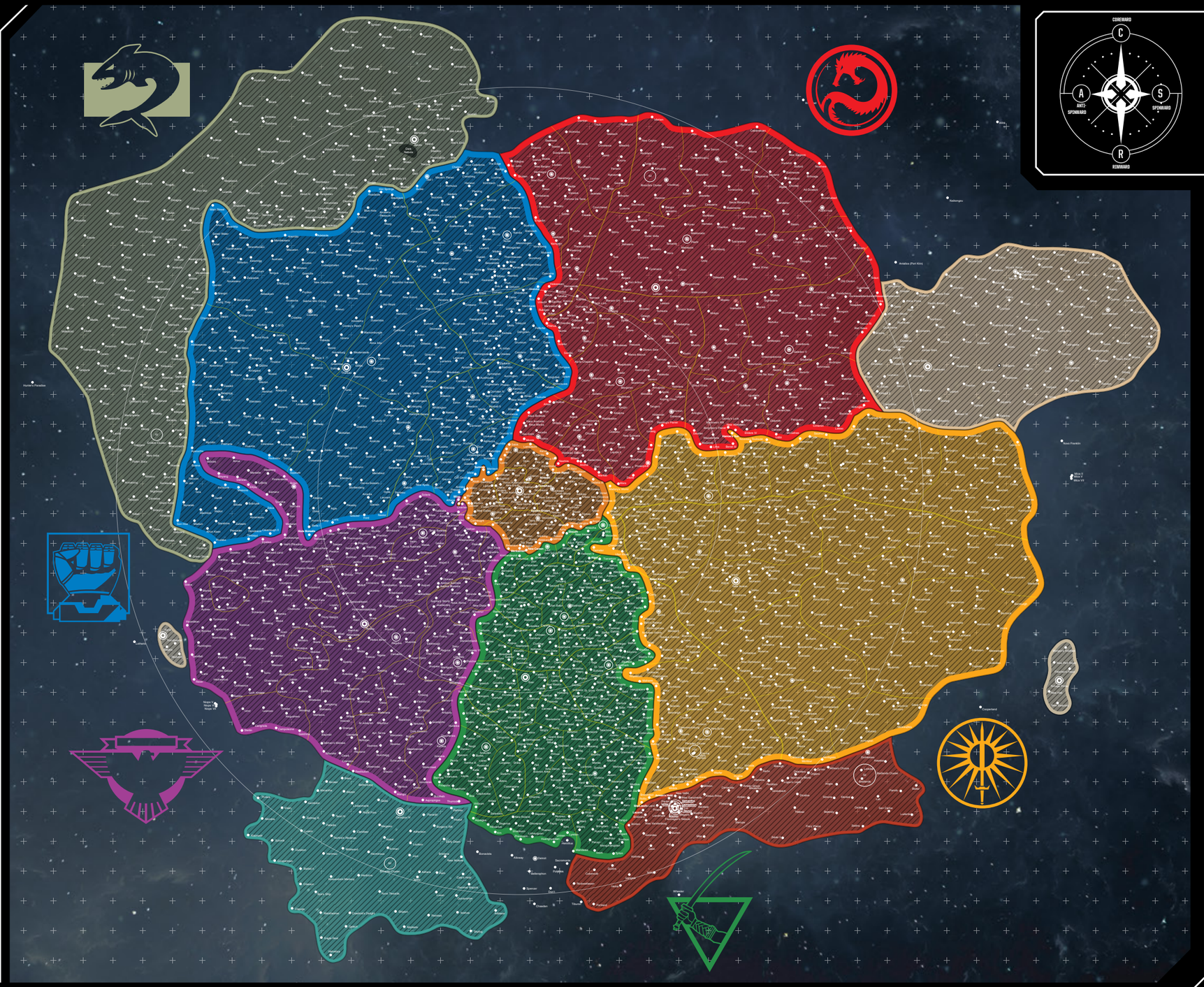
Capellan March
7) Kathil Operational Area
8) Taygeta Operational Area

Capellan Confederation
1) Tikonov Commonality
2) Chesterton Commonality
3) Sarna Commonality
4) Capella Commonality
5) Sian Commonality
6) St Ives Commonality
7) Andurien Commonality

Free Worlds League
1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Federation of Oriente
3) Principality of Regulus
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Stewart Confederation
6) Duchy of Graham-Marik
7) Rim Commonality
8) Regulan Free States
9) Principality of Gibson
10) Abbey District

Terran Hegemony
1) Alliance Core
2) Lone Star Province
3) Lockdale Province
4) Tyrfing Province
5) Terra Firma Province

The Periphery
1) Magistracy of Canopus
2) Taurian Concordat
3) Outworlds Alliance
4) Illyrian Palatinate
5) Rim Worlds Republic
6) Tortuga Dominions



DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

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MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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AMARIS COUP

In 2751, First Lord Simon Cameron died in a suspicious mining accident. His eight-year-old son Richard became the First Lord of the Star League. Aleksandr Kerensky, Commanding General of the SLDF, became regent. The naïve Richard grew up pampered and isolated, with few real friends.

Stefan Amaris, President of the Rim Worlds Republic, took great pains to befriend the young First Lord. The subtle flatterer Amaris found it easy to manipulate Richard. He suggested Richard issue a decree banning most weapons of war in the name of peace. The idealistic Richard required little convincing.

Stefan Amaris

There are few historical figures as reviled as Stefan Amaris, leader of the Rim Worlds Republic and Usurper of the Star League. He was raised on tales of power and intrigue and the exceptionalism of his family. He resented the lowly position of the Territorial States within the Star League and sought to advance it by any means. He was cunning and insidious, and used his people skills to befriend the young Richard Cameron. With the boy's father dead and his guardian, General Kerensky, often absent, it was easy for Amaris to drip poison into Richard's ears, convincing him to take actions that inflamed the Periphery and alienated the Great Houses.

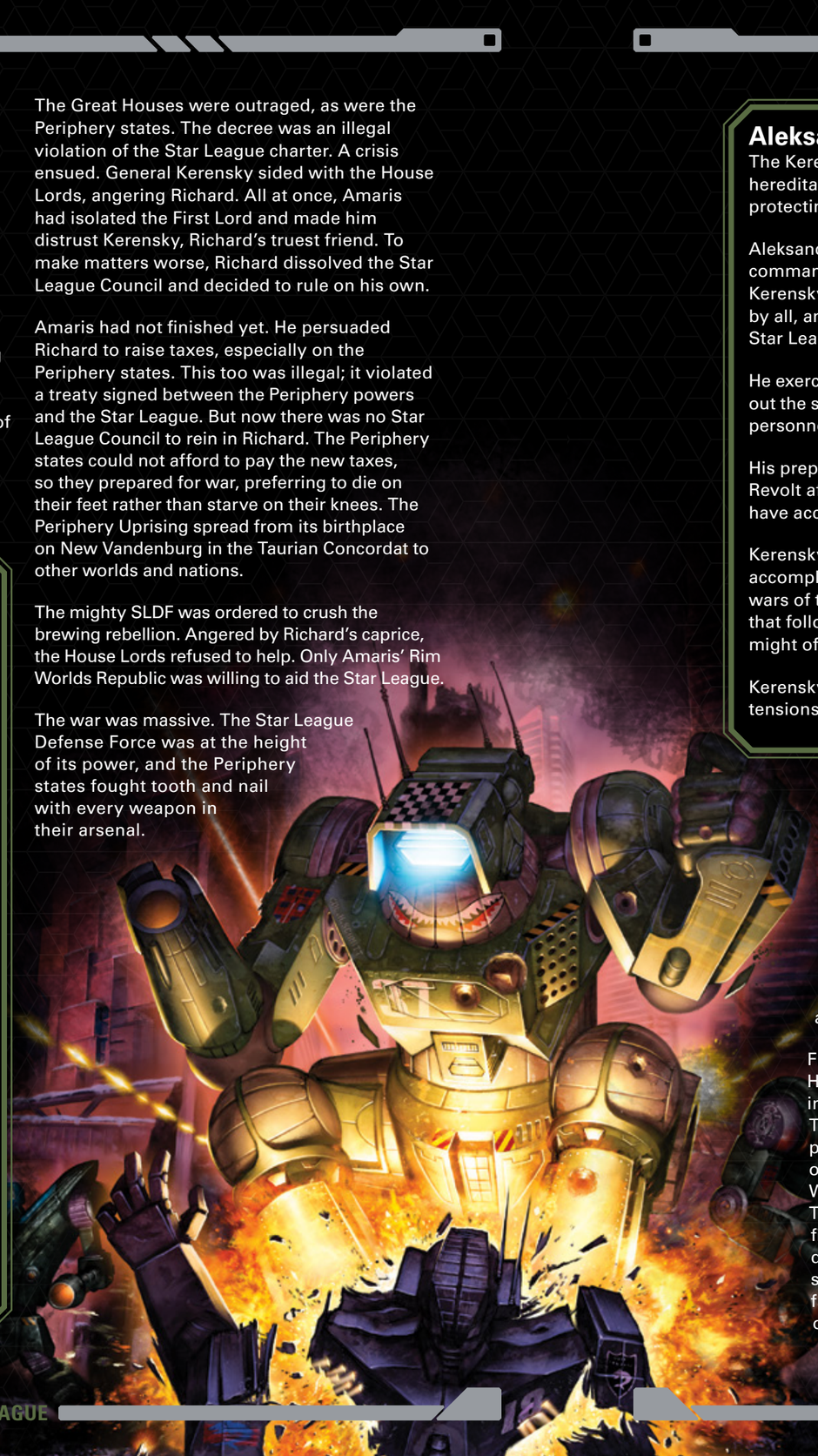
Amaris played the fool in public, and the Council Lords and Kerensky underestimated him, realizing their mistake too late. Amaris' murder of Richard set in motion the largest and bloodiest war in history, culminating in Amaris' capture and execution by the SLDF. The war gutted the Star League and left the institution so fragile that it disbanded. Amaris never saw himself as a destroyer, but rather as a liberator who freed the Inner Sphere and Periphery from the mismanagement of the Camerons and the tyranny of the Star League.

The Great Houses were outraged, as were the Periphery states. The decree was an illegal violation of the Star League charter. A crisis ensued. General Kerensky sided with the House Lords, angering Richard. All at once, Amaris had isolated the First Lord and made him distrust Kerensky, Richard's truest friend. To make matters worse, Richard dissolved the Star League Council and decided to rule on his own.

Amaris had not finished yet. He persuaded Richard to raise taxes, especially on the Periphery states. This too was illegal; it violated a treaty signed between the Periphery powers and the Star League. But now there was no Star League Council to rein in Richard. The Periphery states could not afford to pay the new taxes, so they prepared for war, preferring to die on their feet rather than starve on their knees. The Periphery Uprising spread from its birthplace on New Vandenburg in the Taurian Concordat to other worlds and nations.

The mighty SLDF was ordered to crush the brewing rebellion. Angered by Richard's caprice, the House Lords refused to help. Only Amaris' Rim Worlds Republic was willing to aid the Star League.

The war was massive. The Star League Defense Force was at the height of its power, and the Periphery states fought tooth and nail with every weapon in their arsenal.



The mighty SLDF was driven back with considerable losses. More SLDF troops were needed. The garrisons in the Terran Hegemony were stripped bare to reinforce those reeling in defeat. Those garrisons were replaced by Rim Worlds troops loaned by Richard Cameron's trusted advisor, Stefan Amaris.

Finally, in 2766, Amaris struck. He murdered Richard Cameron in the First Lord's throne room. The Black Watch, the First Lord's personal bodyguard, was wiped out with a nuclear weapon. Rim Worlds troops seized control of the Terran Hegemony with few shots fired, since the SLDF troops had departed for the Periphery. Amaris slew every member of the Cameron family that he could get his hands on. He had planned long and well, but he was not content with merely killing the Camerons. Stefan Amaris declared himself First Lord of the Star League.

He hoped that General Kerensky would obey his commands. Once word of his coup reached Kerensky, however, the SLDF halted its offensive in the Periphery. A hasty treaty ended the war with the Taurian Concordat. Kerensky then moved to occupy Aramis' Rim Worlds Republic. The general planned his masterwork: the liberation of the Terran Hegemony from the forces of Amaris the Usurper.

The House Lords again did nothing. They refused to fight for either Kerensky's SLDF or for Amaris. General Kerensky's soldiers, badly worn down by years of combat, carried the burden of fighting Amaris alone. After years of ferocious battle, the SLDF reached Terra. In the final battle, General Kerensky's *Orion* kicked down the gates of Stefan Amaris' stolen palace. SLDF forces held the Usurper until the full extent of his crimes were uncovered. Then, Amaris and his entire family line were executed.

Aleksandr Kerensky

The Kerensky family served the Star League for generations. They were awarded the hereditary title Defender of the First Lord after Sergeant Tanya Kerensky gave her life protecting Nicholas Cameron in the early twenty-seventh century.

Aleksandr Kerensky was a man of vision. No other military leader has ever successfully commanded an army as large and as powerful as the Star League Defense Force of his time. Kerensky joined the SLDF as a young and promising officer. His clear merit was recognized by all, and he rose rapidly through the ranks to become the youngest Commander-in-Chief in Star League history.

He exercised enormous influence over every aspect of the League military. He personally laid out the specifications for 'Mechs. He dictated the core curriculum for officers and enlisted personnel alike. He spent decades preparing the Star League to fight any war against any foe.

His preparations paid off. The Star League Defense Force managed to crush the Amaris Revolt after hard and brutal fighting. It was a task that no Great House military could have accomplished.

Kerensky would have been remembered by history as a great man if that had been all he accomplished. But it was his foresight that saved the SLDF from becoming a pawn in the wars of the House Lords when they allowed the Star League to fall. The Succession Wars that followed would have been far more destructive had the Great Houses commanded the might of the Star League's champions.

Kerensky died in the Deep Periphery after a massive heart attack at age 100, following rising tensions among the forces that accompanied him from the Inner Sphere.

DISSOLUTION

After the Liberation of Terra, it became apparent that House Cameron was no more. Amaris had done his work well; there was no known Cameron left alive to place on the throne of the First Lord. The Star League Council was reconvened to find a solution, but the House Lords fell prey to their personal ambitions. Rather than try to find some accommodation that might preserve the League that allowed the Inner Sphere to flourish during the Good Years, they chose the path of selfishness and avarice.

Each House Lord felt themselves to be the natural successor to House Cameron. Control of the Star League represented control of all of humanity.

Whichever House replaced the Camerons would be elevated far above their peers. The House Lords soon stripped an exasperated General Aleksandr Kerensky of his title as Protector of the Star League, resenting his obstinate refusal to support any ruler for the First Lordship. They hoped with Kerensky out of the way that it would be easier for one of their number to secure the support needed to become First Lord.

But even with Kerensky removed from the Council, the House Lords were unable to come to an agreement. Each was too proud to yield to another's claim. They decided they would rather destroy the Star League than see a rival rule it. The Star League Council dissolved the League in 2781 and began preparing for war.

Jerome Blake

Jerome Blake was a child prodigy who graduated university at age 15 with a specialization in Hyperspatial Mathematics and Applied Physics. This led to a career in the Star League's Department of Communication. Blake rose rapidly through the ranks. He survived the early ravages of the Amaris Civil War and volunteered his services to Kerensky's forces, developing work-arounds so the SLDF and Great Houses could continue using the HPG network despite Amaris' control of the First Circuit stations.

Blake was badly wounded on Dieron and medevacked to Kerensky's flagship, the *McKenna's Pride*. A friendship developed between the socially awkward Blake and General Kerensky. Both wanted to save the Star League.

After Amaris was defeated, the Great Houses bickered over the fate of the Star League, but named Blake Minister of Communications and tasked him with rebuilding the communications infrastructure. He was Director-General of the Hegemony in all but name. Blake was among the first to learn of Kerensky's plans to leave the Inner Sphere. He negotiated a number of military units that declined to join the Exodus to fall under his authority. With the soon-to-be Successor States nibbling away at the fringes of the Terran Hegemony, Blake convinced the Great Houses to respect the neutrality of the Communications Ministry, which he renamed ComStar. Blake gave up control of the Hegemony as a whole and instead staged a military takeover of Terra in the name of ComStar.

Blake's oversight of ComStar was cold and dispassionate. He limited the access of outsiders to technology, and established ROM as a security agency to protect its secrets. ComStar prospered, but Blake's wounds from Dieron never fully healed. He suffered repeated health issues, which were not helped by his workaholic tendencies. He fell ill at a First Circuit meeting and passed away in 2819. Blake's successor, Conrad Toyama, oversaw the transformation of ComStar into a pseudo-religious sect, but records indicate that many of ComStar's mystic trappings originated with Blake himself.

Many later histories portrayed the "Word of Blake" as a Toyama invention, but contemporary records support claims that Toyama was enacting Blake's will. However, while Blake wanted to reforge ComStar as a church to hold back a new dark age, he could not have foreseen the zeal some ComStar fundamentalists would unleash in the late thirty-first century.

EXODUS

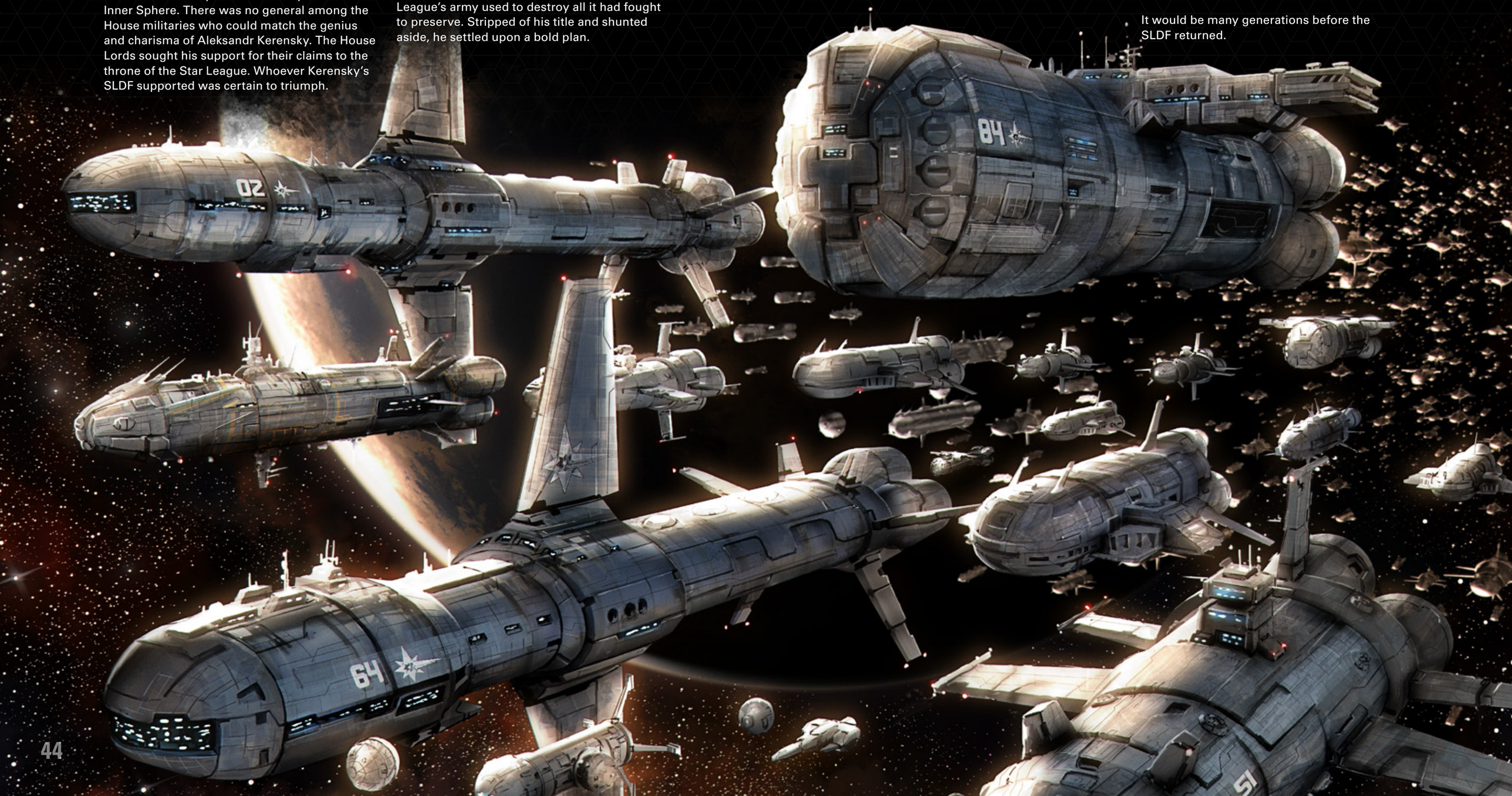
The House Lords saw control of the SLDF as one of the greatest spoils to be had after the fall of the Star League. The Star League Defense Force took massive losses liberating the Terran Hegemony and overthrowing the Usurper, but it was still the most powerful military force in the Inner Sphere. There was no general among the House militaries who could match the genius and charisma of Aleksandr Kerensky. The House Lords sought his support for their claims to the throne of the Star League. Whoever Kerensky's SLDF supported was certain to triumph.

General Kerensky was disinterested in playing kingmaker and disgusted by the House Lords, whose political machinations dissolved the Star League Council and thus the League itself. His troops had died in service to a dream that the Great Houses had simply cast aside. The House Lords began to suborn the SLDF's soldiers instead. Kerensky was unwilling to see the Star League's army used to destroy all it had fought to preserve. Stripped of his title and shunted aside, he settled upon a bold plan.

The SLDF stockpiled massive amounts of supplies in secret. The vast majority of the SLDF agreed to follow Kerensky out of the Inner Sphere, beyond the Periphery, and into uncharted space. Kerensky could not prevent the destructive wars he saw looming over the Inner Sphere, but he could deny the House Lords his army.

On 8 July 2784, Aleksandr Kerensky transmitted a single word, "Exodus," to the SLDF and put his plan in motion. In the following months, a massive fleet assembled at New Samarkand in the Draconis Combine, and on 5 November, the enormous fleet winked out of existence, ship by ship, for parts unknown. The greatest army ever known left the House Lords alone to destroy themselves.

It would be many generations before the SLDF returned.



…I am a descendant of Shiro Kurita, who seized the right of rule and forged the Draconis Combine. In my veins runs the blood of the Emperors of Japan, whose Imperial House of Yamoto is the oldest continuous hereditary monarchy of ancient Terra. What's more, my House alone tested the SLDF and showed the rot within the Star League.

By what right do we rule? By the right of a heritage which spans three hundred centuries. By the right of might that conquers and expands the glory of the realm. By the Dictum Honorium that elevates and enobles all of the peoples under the Dragon.

Join that heritage. Join that legacy. Join that glory. And the Star League shall shine brighter than ever, for millennia to come. This I swear.

…As of this day, the Coordinator of the Draconis Combine shall also be addressed as First Lord of the Star League.

—Minoru Kurita, excerpts from personal address, 31 December, 2786

THE SUCCESSION WARS

COMSTAR

Even during the most hopeless days of the Succession Wars, one light still shone. The beacon of ComStar ensured that no matter how brutal the wars grew, humankind would never lose contact with itself. What came to be known as the Blessed Order by its adherents began as the Star League's Department of Communications. During the Succession Wars, ComStar grew into a mystical sect whose members worshiped the very technology they operated and maintained. ComStar remained officially neutral in interstellar affairs, with services offered equally to all. Only ComStar adepts could operate the complex Hyperpulse Generators that allowed communication among the stars. No House Lord dared challenge that monopoly, lest their realm fall under interdiction and go silent in the void.

Though maintaining a mask of neutrality, ComStar followed an agenda all its own. As servicing HPGs morphed into a religion, a nefarious dogma crept into the prayers of ComStar's acolytes. ComStar began to see itself as the savior of humanity, and would fulfill that role even if it meant accelerating humanity's decline. With every communication flowing through ComStar's machines, no secret was safe. The Succession Wars may have ended far sooner, but for the manipulation and machinations of those who wished the sole light to be their own.

THE INNER SPHERE 2786

Lyran Commonwealth

Tamar Pact
1) Trellshire
2) Tamar Domains
3) Camlann Shire

Protectorate of Donegal
4) Coventry Province
5) Alarion Province
6) District of Donegal
7) Furillo Province

Federation of Skye
8) Kannon Shire
9) Virginia Shire
10) Rahneshire
11) Isle of Skye

Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
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2) Coudoux Prefecture
3) Bjarred Prefecture
4) Pusht-i-rud Prefecture
5) Ningxia Prefecture

Galedon Military District
6) Oshika Prefecture
7) Matsuida Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Kaznejoy Prefecture

Rasalhague Military District
10) Radstadt Prefecture
11) Trondheim Prefecture
12) Tinaca Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
13) Baldur Prefecture
14) Xinyang Prefecture
15) Kajikazawa Prefecture
16) Proserpina Prefecture
17) Irurzun Prefecture
18) Kuzuu Prefecture
19) Ashio Prefecture

Federated Suns

Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Fairfax Operational Area
3) Woodbine Operational Area

Crucis March
4) Markesan Operational Area
5) Minette Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area

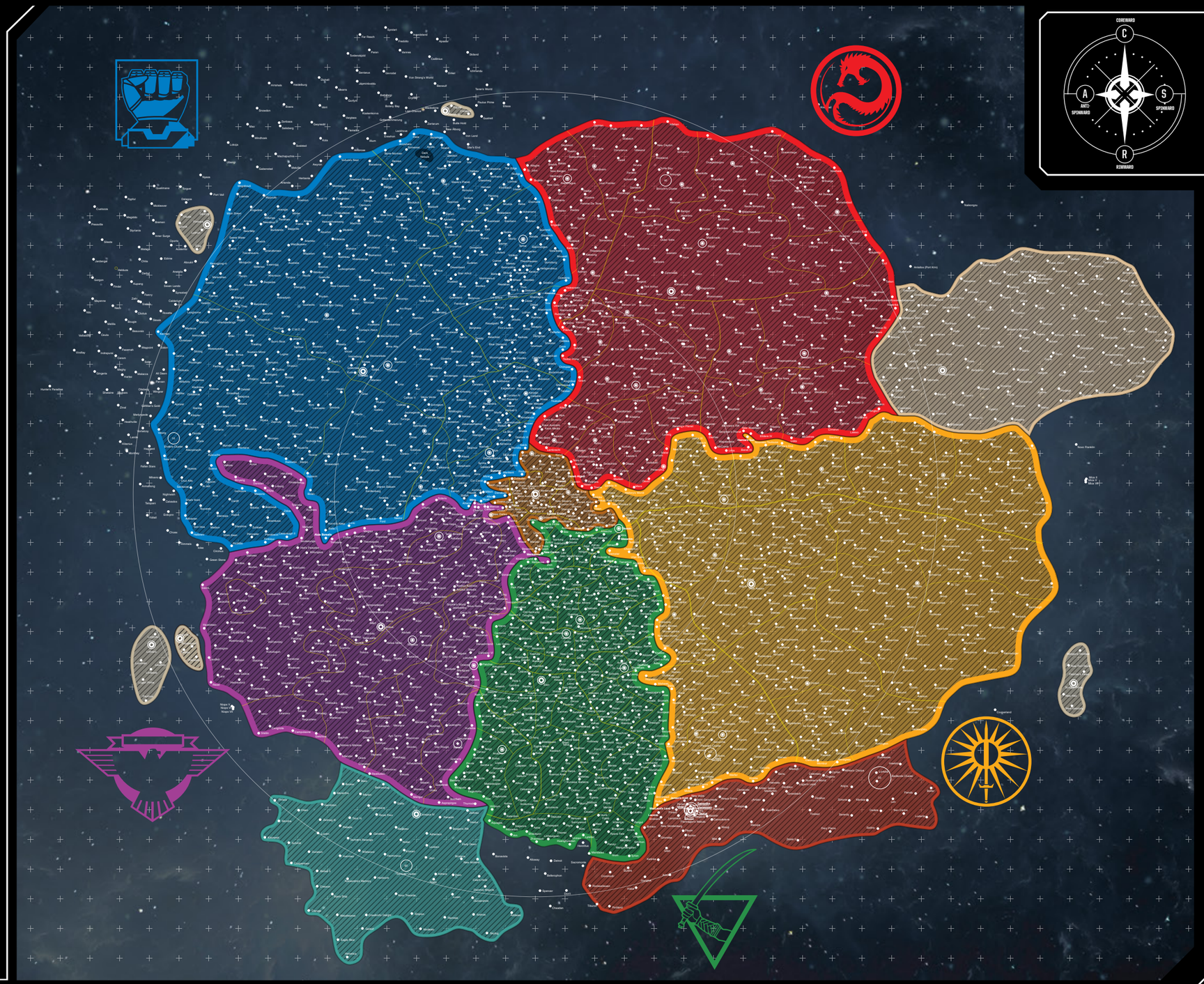
Capellan March
7) Kathil Operational Area
8) Taygeta Operational Area

Capellan Confederation
1) Tikonov Commonality
2) Chesterton Commonality
3) Sarna Commonality
4) Capella Commonality
5) Sian Commonality
6) St Ives Commonality
7) Andurien Commonality

Free Worlds League
1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Federation of Oriente
3) Principality of Regulus
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Stewart Confederation
6) Duchy of Graham-Marik
7) Rim Commonality
8) Regulan Free States
9) Principality of Gibson
10) Abbey District

Terran Hegemony Remnants
1) Alliance Core
2) Lone Star Province
3) Lockdale Province
4) New Dallas Province
5) Brownsville Province

The Periphery
1) Magistracy of Canopus
2) Taurian Concordat
3) Outworlds Alliance
4) Illyrian Palatinate
5) Lothian League
6) Tortuga Dominions
7) Finmark Free Republic
8) Oberon Confederation



DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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THE FIRST SUCCESSION WAR

Centuries of peace and prosperity under the Star League ended in an unmatched death dance known as the First Succession War. The war began with greed and a lust for power by those unworthy of holding it. The power vacuum left by the disintegrating Terran Hegemony demanded to be filled.

But the seeds of the Succession Wars were sown long before General Kerensky put down Amaris' bloody coup. The Great Houses had been striking at each other for years in a covert conflict known as the Third Hidden War. The Council Lords denounced these so-called pirate actions to each other's faces, while in secret, they plotted more raids. Only idealism had held the Star League together during its last decades.

It is debatable whether General Kerensky, popular as he was, could have staved off the wars. His Exodus with the bulk of the Star League Defense Force had the effect of removing the authority figure from a room of unruly children, freeing the House Lords to go for each other's throats. All claimed the title of First Lord of the Star League. None were willing to acknowledge any claim but their own.

The First Succession War was the bloodiest conflict in the history of humankind. Weapons of mass destruction soared in the skies of hundreds of worlds. The Ares Conventions became a distant memory in the Inner Sphere. Dozens of worlds were rendered uninhabitable. Their loss redrew star maps in a more harrowing and permanent way than border shifts ever could. It marked the beginning of the worst dark age in human history. The madness and destruction were so devastating that the Inner Sphere took its first steps down the road to technological regression.

Little was gained by the end of the First Succession War. The Terran Hegemony was absorbed by the Successor States. Border changes between the Great Houses were insignificant. There was no clear winner, nor did the war end with an overarching peace agreement. Exhaustion and loss of resources simply meant that the fighting could not continue.

Shell shock settled in during the first interbellum period. The Great Houses rebuilt their militaries as best they could with their reduced industries. Their vast WarShip fleets could not be easily replaced, as shipyards had also been targeted without restraint. Losses had been horrific across the Inner Sphere. Orbital bombardments were severely curtailed in later conflicts due to the destruction of WarShips. Scientists had been targeted along with enemy industry throughout the war.

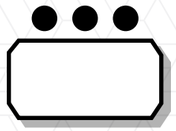
The Kentares Massacre

There exists no greater example of the brutality of the First Succession War than the Kentares Massacre. Coordinator Minoru Kurita of the Draconis Combine met his end by a sniper's bullet while surveying the world of Kentares, which the Combine captured from the Federated Suns. Kurita's son Jinjiro ordered the planet's entire population exterminated in retaliation, to "bathe accursed Kentares in blood." The single greatest war crime in human history proceeded over the next five months as more than fifty million civilians died in the slaughter. At one point, Coordinator Jinjiro forbade his troops from using weapons other than their katanas. Many DCMS soldiers died by *seppuku* to atone for their dishonorable part in the massacre. Footage of the genocide leaked throughout the Inner Sphere thanks to the local ComStar precentor, whose personnel were also murdered by the DCMS.

The massacre became the turning point for the Federated Suns in the war. The AFFS was galvanized by their quest for justice, with many echoing the cry to "Remember Kentares!" They rallied to drive the Combine invaders back behind their border.

MILITARY ORGANIZATION

Most Great House militaries organize their forces along the Star League model described below. Irregular forces such as mercenary commands and Periphery armies often use organization schemes designed to maximize their limited resources, integrating their BattleMech forces with vehicles and/or infantry.

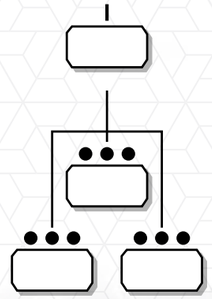


Lance

A lance consists of four BattleMechs or combat vehicles commanded by a lieutenant. The standard aerospace lance (commonly called a flight) consists of two fighters. The infantry equivalent is a platoon, which can consist of between eight and 28 men depending on infantry type.

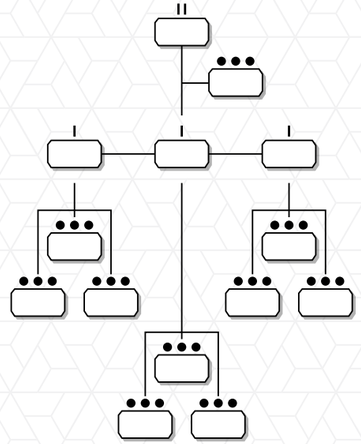
Company

The standard company consists of three lances (twelve BattleMechs or combat vehicles) commanded by a captain. A fourth lance of aerospace fighters may be assigned to the company to support the primary BattleMech force. A company of aerospace fighters is often referred to as a squadron and consists of three flights (six fighters). An infantry company consists of three platoons, often with an attached command squad.



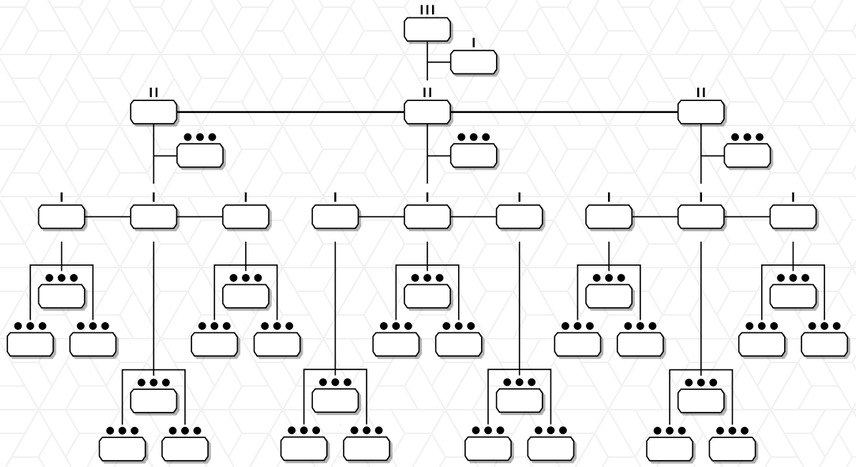
Battalion

A standard battalion consists of three companies (36 BattleMechs or combat vehicles) commanded by a colonel or major. Battalions may include a command lance that provides mobile command and logistical support. Some battalions organize attached aerospace lances as separate companies or squadrons. Star League organization included a command lance at the battalion level, and many Inner Sphere militaries follow this practice. A battalion of aerospace squadrons is often referred to as a wing and consists of three squadrons (eighteen fighters), often with an attached command flight. An infantry battalion consists of three companies, often with an attached command squad.



Regiment

A standard regiment consists of three to five battalions (108 to 180 BattleMechs and/or combat vehicles) commanded by a general or colonel. DropShips or JumpShips are usually attached to regiments, as are support battalions such as infantry or tank forces. A regiment of aerospace fighters consists of two to three wings, with an attached command flight. An infantry regiment consists of three to four battalions, often with an attached command squad.



Larger Formations

A regimental combat team (RCT), pioneered by House Davion, consists of one BattleMech regiment, three regiments of combat vehicles, five infantry regiments, one artillery battalion and two aerospace fighter wings.

During the Succession Wars and later, a brigade represents any and all forces—whether a single regiment or multiple regiments—that fall under the same administrative chain of command and share heritage and naming scheme, such as the Davion Brigade of Guards, House Kurita's Sword of Light or the Marik Militias.

The Star League Defense Force fielded even larger formations; a brigade was formed from three or more regiments, usually of a similar composition. A division was made up of two or more brigades. A corps was composed of five to ten divisions, and finally an army consisted of three to five corps.

PIRACY

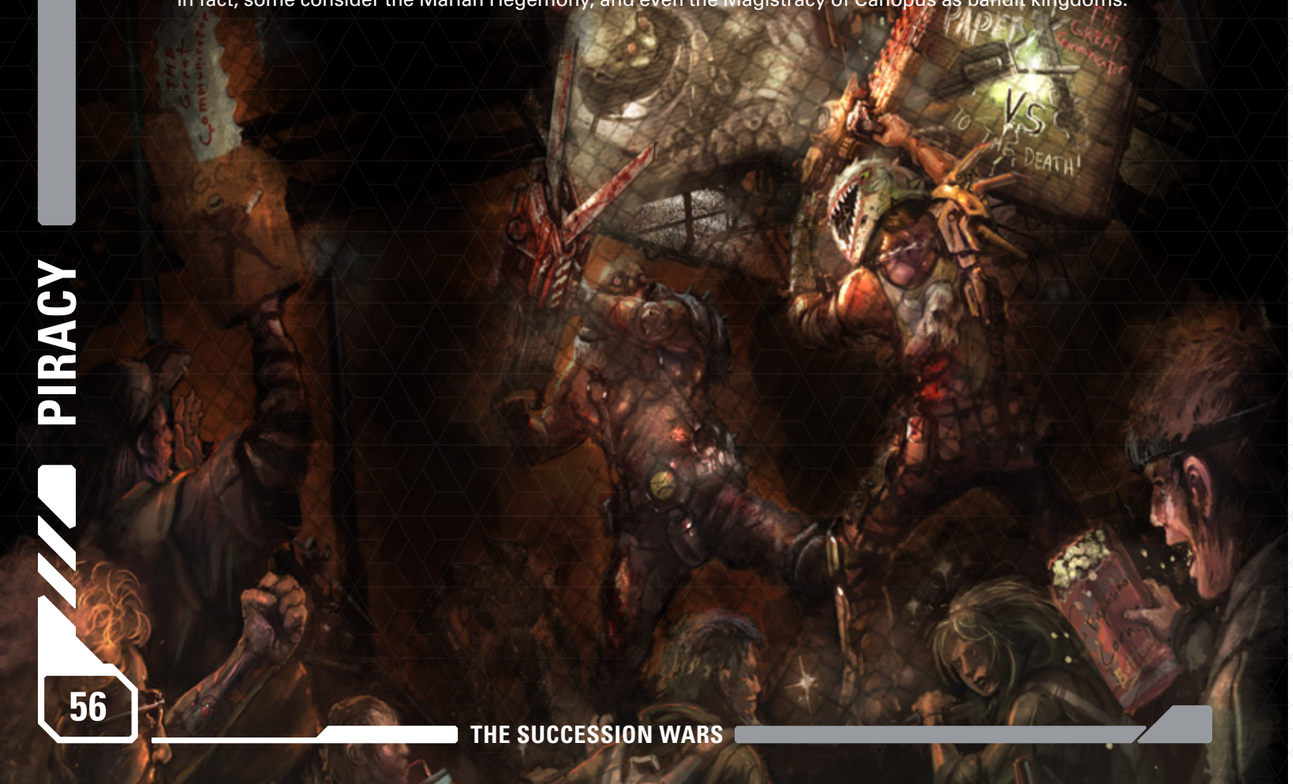
After centuries of holodramas, mythology, and rumors, pirates are seldom portrayed realistically. At their heart, pirates are simply thieves. What makes them unique (and for the romantics, interesting) is that they ply their trade with heavy, military-grade hardware. This means they require a certain degree of skill, education, and organization beyond that of a local pickpocket.

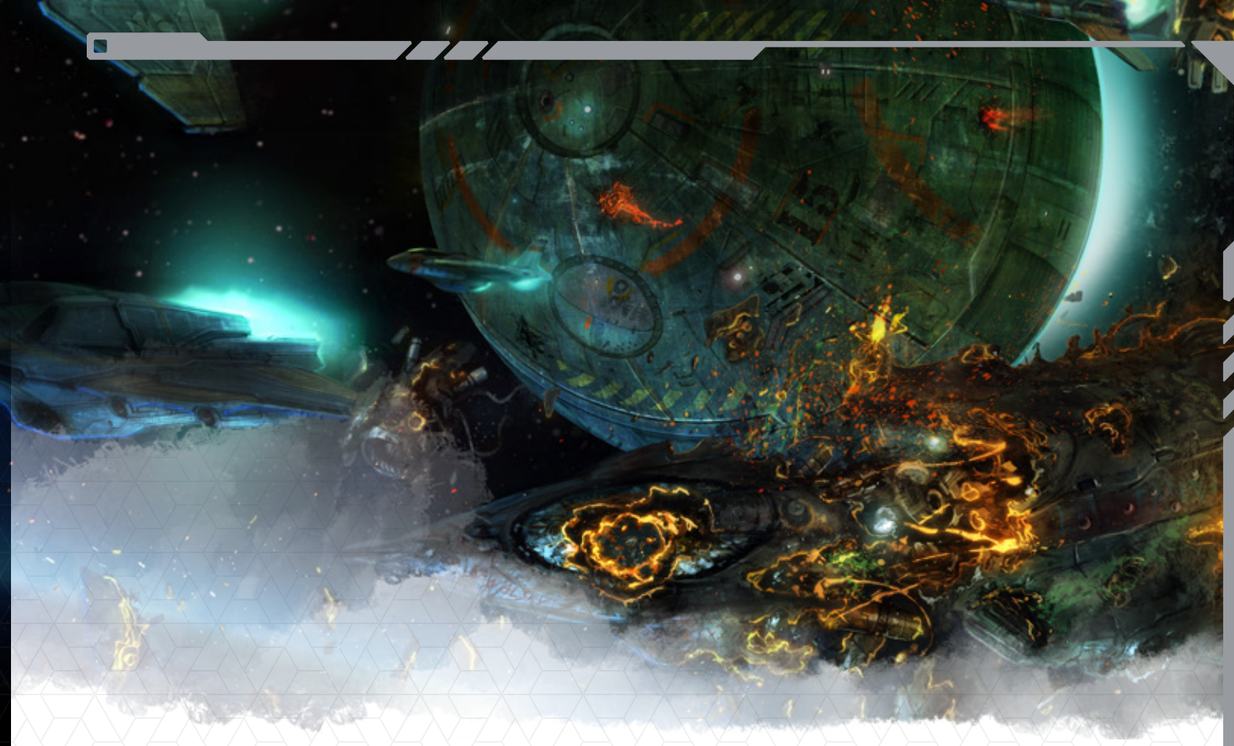
Pirate bands form in power vacuums, typically coalescing around the remains of a military unit cast adrift from its parent. Vance Rezak was a betrayed DCMS *sho-sa*. Hendrik Grimm led a mutinous LCAF regiment. In the wake of a failed military operation, there are always adrift MechWarriors, pilots, and technicians with valuable skills looking for leadership.

Piracy typically takes two forms: attacking a JumpShip or raiding a planet. The mechanics of interplanetary travel make it nearly impossible to capture a DropShip in transit; instead, it is far easier to wait at a jump point and waylay JumpShips as they arrive. Given that merchant captains would rather carry additional cargo than a defensive escort, this is a relatively safe operation for pirates. Riskier but more profitable is raiding a planet. A flashy and violent raid can net more loot, and more specific items of value, than picking off random JumpShips.

But few targets generate massive income. This forces pirates to take any resources they can capture, including a town's food supply or even its populace. A pirate leader must be ruthlessly pragmatic, as must their crew. Life as a pirate is ruled by force, guile, or negotiation. The strong make and enforce the rules, drawing many who are too unstable, violent, or broken for life in the Inner Sphere.

Larger pirate bands have greater capabilities, but also greater running costs. A typical pirate band may consist of a single lance of 'Mechs and supporting assets. Pirates who grow beyond this find they need the supporting infrastructure only real estate provides. These groups evolve into bandit kingdoms, such as the Circinus Federation, Rim Territories, or Tortuga Dominions. They often serve as bases of operation where a pirate band can rest, refit, and dispose of their ill-gotten gains. If they can avoid destruction for long enough, bandit kingdoms can evolve into legitimate states with a source of income beyond piracy. In fact, some consider the Marian Hegemony, and even the Magistracy of Canopus as bandit kingdoms.





The Minnesota Tribe

One of the Inner Sphere's most enduring unsolved mysteries, the Minnesota Tribe was a small warband that appeared along the Draconis Combine's Periphery border in October 2825 and raided four Combine worlds for resources over the course of several months before fading back into the Periphery and into legend. The group's name comes from their insignia depicting the North America region of Minnesota, a crest matching the SLDF's 331st Royal BattleMech Division.

In the three centuries since their brief appearance, little primary evidence and no further sightings of the Minnesota Tribe have come to light. Historians have largely been left with the same few puzzle pieces to endlessly reorganize, argue over, and bend to fit their own theories. Like the mysterious disappearance of the ancient Roanoke colony on Terra's North American continent, it seems unlikely a conclusive explanation of the Tribe's origins, intentions, and destinations will ever be uncovered–too much time has passed with too little new data.

Since the arrival of the Clans, prevailing theories about the group's origins often center around survivors from annihilated Clan Wolverine, as the Tribe's insignia matches that of the former SLDF command of the father of the Not-Named Clan's Khan, and the timing of Minnesota Tribe's arrival fits. More extreme theories point to Periphery raiders masquerading in SLDF cast-offs, or even a ComStar hoax. Given how wild some of the proposed answers have been, a conclusive answer would perhaps prove even less satisfying than the continued mystery.

THE INNER SPHERE 2822

Lyran Commonwealth
- **Tamar Pact**
  - 1) Trellshire
  - 2) Tamar Domains
  - 3) Camlann Shire
- **Protectorate of Donegal**
  - 4) Coventry Province
  - 5) Alarion Province
  - 6) District of Donegal
  - 7) Furillo Province
- **Federation of Skye**
  - 8) Kannon Shire
  - 9) Virginia Shire
  - 10) Rahneshire
  - 11) Isle of Skye

Draconis Combine
- **Pesht Military District**
  - 1) Kagoshima Prefecture
  - 2) Coudoux Prefecture
  - 3) Bjarred Prefecture
  - 4) Pusht-i-rud Prefecture
  - 5) Ningxia Prefecture
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  - 6) Oshika Prefecture
  - 7) Matsuida Prefecture
  - 8) New Samarkand Prefecture
  - 9) Kaznejoy Prefecture
- **Rasalhague Military District**
  - 10) Radstadt Prefecture
  - 11) Trondheim Prefecture
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  - 14) Xinyang Prefecture
  - 15) Kajikazawa Prefecture
  - 16) Proserpina Prefecture
  - 17) Irurzun Prefecture
- **Dieron Military District**
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  - 19) Ashio Prefecture
  - 20) Lone Star Prefecture
  - 21) Addicks Prefecture

Federated Suns
- **Draconis March**
  - 1) Robinson Operational Area
  - 2) Woodbine Operational Area
- **Crucis March**
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  - 4) Minette Operational Area
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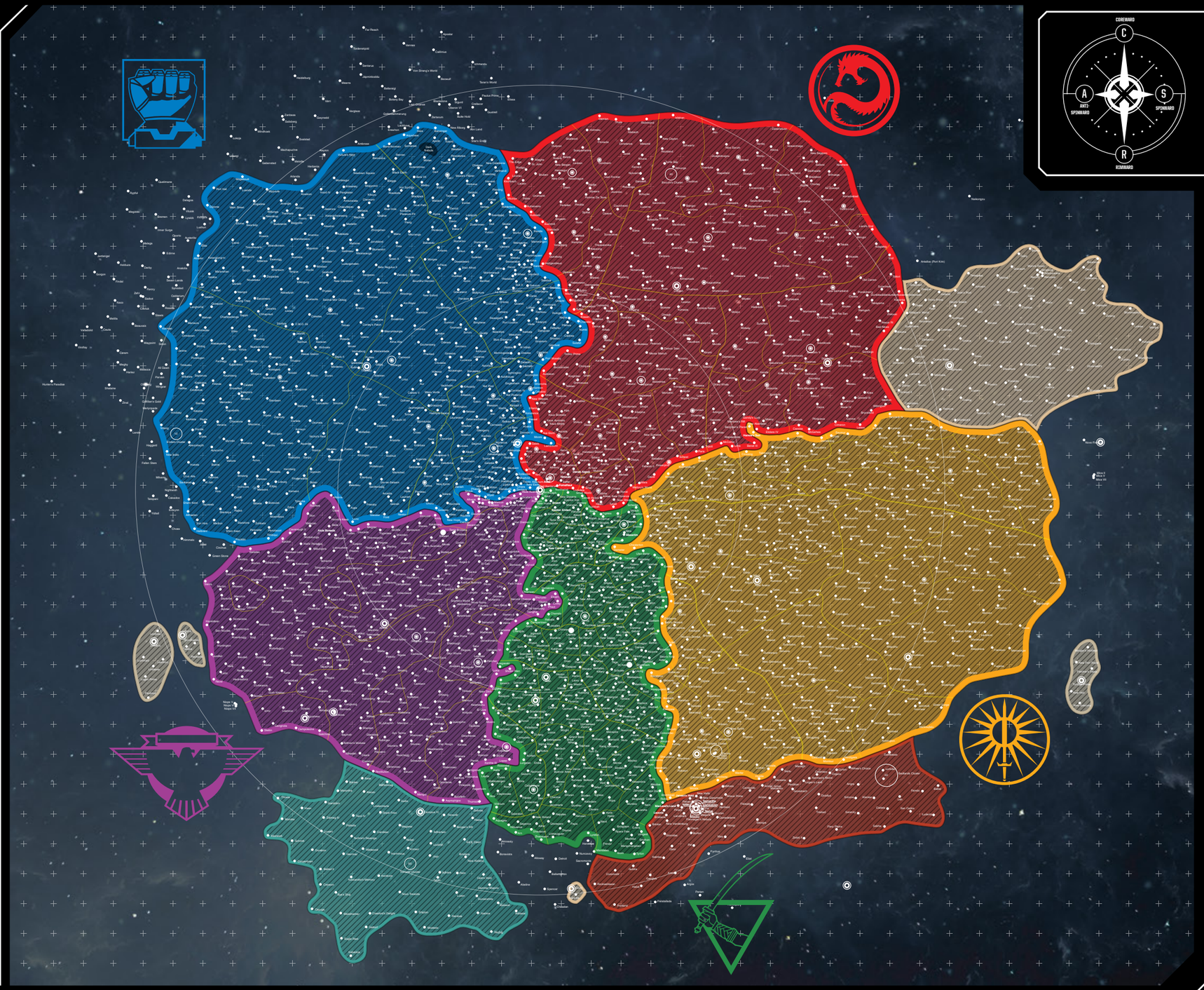

DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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THE SECOND SUCCESSION WAR

Lasting peace may have been possible had events maintained their course. But peace did not fit the plans of ComStar, pursuing its own agenda from the shadows. The secret order instigated the second war by fanning the smoldering embers of the first. The Second Succession War began after less than a decade of peace and was nearly as destructive as its predecessor. The last WarShips in the Inner Sphere disappeared. Scientific and industrial centers were targeted for wholesale destruction. Educated minds may have staved off the oncoming dark age, but ComStar's Operation Holy Shroud killed hundreds of them.

Acts of extreme villainy became normalized during the Succession Wars. No Great House was exempt. They answered violence with an even more violent retribution. Heroes of legendary proportion rose to repel their oppressors. Names like the Stealths and Snow Fire are immortalized in innumerable holovid dramas. The last battle of the LCS Invincible was still romanticized even after its return during the Jihad.

Even less territory changed hands during the Second Succession War. No Successor Lord was any closer to being recognized as First Lord by the others. Nothing had been gained for all the lives lost. The Successor States again settled into a tense period of peace while ComStar nestled on Terra, seemingly separate from the conflict.

THE RISE OF NEO-FEUDALISM

One side effect of the wars was a weakening of central authority in the Successor States. Democracy was a long-failed ideal that did not hold in the vast distances between stars. Communications were maintained through ComStar. Projecting force across the realm presented a different problem. The further one traveled from the House Lords' seats of power, the more they found their control slipping. A new system—or perhaps a very old one—was needed to maintain order

The concept of feudalism began under the Terran Hegemony and took hold throughout Inner Sphere. House Lords bestowed loyal lieutenants with ancient titles like "duke" or "baron." These minor nobles were given free rein over a portion of the House Lord's territory. Some ruled a single world. The most powerful controlled vast stretches of space. Common people could gain hereditary titles through service to the realm. The BattleMech already held the top tier on the battlefield, but their increasing scarcity gave them almost mythical regard in some places, and MechWarriors became the most valued of all combat troops. BattleMech ownership guaranteed a family a landholding. Warriors thus invested fought more loyally when their liege lord called. They rose to the top tier in all nations as all societies stratified. They were the chivalric knights of their age.

The system was not without its difficulties. Some MechWarriors were more loyal to regional lords than to a distant Successor Lord. Trouble could arise if that regional noble harbored ideas above their station. Eventually, every Great House had almost as many powerful enemies within as without.

A SAMPLING OF MINOR HOUSES

House Bey

House Bradford

House Brewer

House Cherenkoff

House Cunningham

House Gideon

House Halas

House Hargreaves

House Kell

House Kelswa

House McKinnon

House Orloff

House Ricol

House Ridzik

House Rivoli

House Sato

House Stewart

House Tormark

House Yadi

House Zibler

PLANETARY ASSAULTS

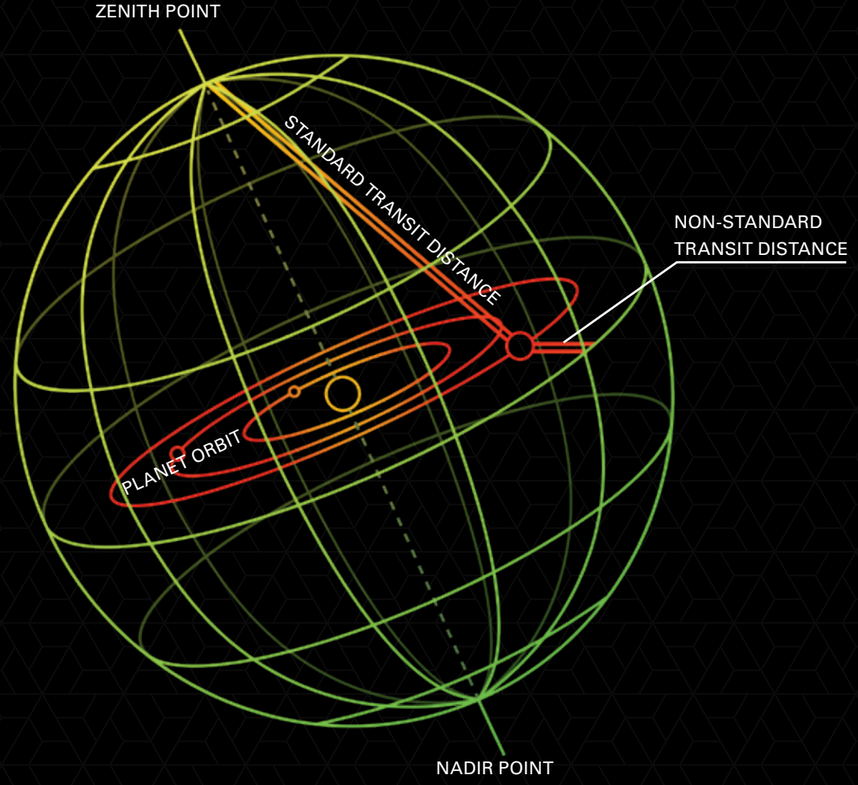
The opening phase of a planetary assault requires getting assets into the target solar system. Reconnaissance JumpShips arrive first to identify potential hazards. Jump points are stable and suitable for moving large forces; pirate points are risky but are undefended and reduce travel times. For those willing to endure longer travel times, any space beyond the jump points is a viable option. Average travel time from a jump point to the target world is two weeks, but varies from a few days to several months, depending on the star system.

Transit to the target world should involve three successive waves: aerospace combat assets, combat transports, and supply transports. Once the aerospace assets secure an orbital window, the combat transports deploy. Their primary aim is securing a beachhead on-world, preferably at an appropriate distance from space ports and defending military facilities.

After a base of operations is established, the assault commander must make some choices. DropShips might be sent into orbit where they are more secure, but some need to be grounded to provide repairs and suppliesCombat vehicles and infantry should be deployed to provide base security.

A commander must then attempt to capture or eliminate points of enemy resistance. A commander with orbital supremacy has excellent battlefield awareness and the ability to quickly deploy air support. DropShips provide rapid mobility to ground forces.

Once the enemy military forces have been eliminated and the local government cowed, a commander must deploy large numbers of troops to maintain the peace until friendly civilian assets can assume control. While most planets surrender meekly, cases of extended guerrilla operations are far from rare.



Standard Campaign Timetable

The following timetable represents the standard progression of a limited military objective raid. Time intervals represent the days before and after the projected drop to the planet's surface.

D –14 Days
The regimental assault force breaks out of hyperspace. Because it is dangerous to use the Kearny-Fuchida drive inside a star system's gravity well. the regiment's DropShips arrive more than 640 million kilometers away from the target planet. Even at full sub-light speed, the assault force will take nearly two weeks to reach its target.

D –2 Days
The regiment arrives in orbit around the invasion target. The aerospace fighters carried aboard its DropShips launch and engage any enemy fighters in orbit. They must destroy or drive off these enemy fighters before their BattleMechs can land.

D –1 Day
Once the defending aerospace forces have been defeated, the invasion force's surviving fighters may be sent to attack ground-based radar stations and missile batteries near the intended BattleMech regiment drop point. These installations areusually present only on heavily defended worlds, and most invasion commanders prefer not to risk their fighters in atmospheric combat.

D-Day (Drop Day)
The attacker's DropShips enter the planet's atmosphere and land on the surface. The invasion commander usually chooses a drop point several hundred kilometers away from the enemy BattieMech garrison, allowing him to organize his force and repair any minor damage sustained while landing.

D +1 Day
The BattleMech regiment begins advancing against enemy positions. Light BattieMech units are detached to make lightning-quick raids against the planetary garrison's supply points, repair facilities and surviving aerospace fighter bases. The rest of the regiment advances behind a screen of light and medium BattleMechs.

D +2 Days and Beyond
The main invasion force makes contact with the defending planetary garrison. The defending BattleMechs probably will have occupied positions in and around water sources such as lakes, streams and shallow rivers. The side that controls the water has an obvious tactical advantage, and most of the fighting will take place around those positions. The garrison will have to hold out for at least six weeks before it can expect to receive any reinforcements. If they are badly outnumbered, the defenders may split up into small units (usually lances) and operate as a guerrilla force, harassing the invaders but refusing to engage in pitched battles.

MERCENARIES

Soldiers of fortune. Heroes for hire. Lucre warriors. Hired guns. Security contractors. Cannon fodder…and more. Mercenaries came into being long before humanity left the confines of Terra's atmosphere. From the Carians and Ionians of Ancient Greece, to the French routiers of the Middle Ages, to the Hessians of the American Revolution, mercenaries sought fortune through bloody conflict. That tradition spread from Terra along with humanity.

Mercenaries took part in all conflicts during the colonization of the Inner Sphere and beyond, but it was the Succession Wars that gave rise to the mercenary trade that continues to this day. The fall of the Star League and subsequent outbreak of the First Succession War created an insatiable demand for troops. Many veterans of prior conflicts, or SLDF troops who chose not to join Kerensky's Exodus, sought to make a living as independent contractors in the employ of the Great Houses. Eridani Light Horse, Blue Star Irregulars, Northwind Highlanders, and the Stealths are just some examples of mercenaries who went on to find great renown.

Employers have long questioned the loyalty of such troops. This concern is exacerbated by commands whose loyalty only lasts as long as their contract—or worse yet, until a better offer comes along. Such mercenaries often find themselves branded as cowards, traitors, or war criminals. They stand in contrast to mercenary commands of great repute, whose diehard commitment to their employers often extends to the sacrifice of their lives. These commands may choose to remain distinct from House armies while fighting for the same House for centuries. The Lexington Combat Group is one such command, whose SLDF forebears chose to serve House Davion. Likewise, respected commands such as the Fourth Tau Ceti Rangers, Fifteenth Dracon, and McCarron's Armored Cavalry served House Liao loyally for centuries.

The Third Succession War, especially in its later stages during the thirty-first century, saw perhaps the greatest changes to the mercenary industry. The arrival of Wolf's Dragoons, whose mysterious origins captured the public's imagination, put mercenaries in the limelight. The Dragoons served one House after the other, completing their secret, original mission for their distant Clan leaders. They were not the only such command to rise to prominence in this time. The Kell Hounds had ties to the Lyran throne, and their participation in high-profile actions aided their rising fame. From saving the Archon's heir to recovering a First Prince's remains, the Kell Hounds exhibited the highest ideals of the profession. The Gray Death Legion not only distinguished itself in battle, but also salvaged a Star League library core, leading to technological recovery for the entire Inner Sphere.

War profiteers often flock to worlds whose rulers open their doors to mercenaries. For generations, Galatea was known as the Mercenary's Star, becoming a hub for mercenaries seeking employment. Other worlds long served as regional markets for mercenaries, from Herotitus to Westerhand, Noisiel to Solaris VII, Kandersteg to Son Hoa, and others. These worlds and many others host hiring halls where soldiers of fortune can seek contracts from employers ranging from House nobles to corporations to wealthy landowners.

The centuries since the fall of the Star League exhibited cases of mercenaries rising to the highest of honorable performance and wallowing in the depths of debasement, for every noble sacrifice was matched with a horrific atrocity. The post-Jihad abhorrence for war depleted House armies and mercenary ranks alike. Even so, mercenaries continued to ply their trade in various conflicts large and small. The Blackout once again increased mercenary fortunes, as did all wars of the Inner Sphere, even as they were a curse to civilian populations. Callous though it might seem to those caught in the crossfire, one thing is certain during such uncertain times: business is good.

THE GAMES

Since the dawn of civilization, humans have used combat to settle grievances, build their strength, and even to entertain one another. Untold years later, the first bet was placed, and thousands of years later, humanity is still doing the same thing—this time, with gigantic, high-tech engines of war.

The biggest revenue makers in the thirty-second century are the 'Mech games of the sports entertainment industry. The early days of the 'Mech pitfighting traces its history to the Star League. Rival BattleMech manufacturers tested their products in front of prospective buyers. Enterprising individuals began to broadcast the combat trials. Spectators placed bets on the outcomes, and the sport was born.

Most games take place in arenas (or pits, depending on the world) where crowds can cheer for events from no-contact 'Mech races over obstacle courses, to solo or team duels to the death in varying environments. Bets can be placed on opposing forces in the arenas of every world that hosts them. Most combatants are independent individuals trying to make a name for themselves. Some fighters lack the necessary equipment to compete, and that's where managers come in. Managers have connections in the entertainment industry, and are out to make their names by riding the coattails of strong fighters. Most managers try to hedge their bets by hiring a group of individuals and building a stable. Then they can place fighters in all categories of the games. Inversely, small collectives of fighters have been known to form to protect combatants from predatory management. Knowing which managers to trust with your money or your life is a tricky business.

'Mech combat games take place on a number of worlds, including Antallos, Galatea, Astrokaszy, Noisiel, Hardcore, New Hessen, and Westerhand. Some are legitimate staples of income and attraction for a planet; others operate in the dark voids of government or are overlooked by government entities. But the gold standard in entertainment for centuries has been Solaris VII, *the* Game World. Everyone in the Inner Sphere knows of the Game World. Solaris 'Mech fights are legendary, and play on every trivid set and holo screen on every world. People travel from all nations to witness the spectacle of the games. Many save money their entire lives to make a single trip to the mecca of gaming and witness these fights live. Even the wealthy are not immune to the charms of the sport. Some go so far as to become benefactors or stable owners so they can associate with these icons of the entertainment industry.

Some say the fights are fake, scripted just to make money. That competitors are injured or die in the arena does little to dissuade the disbelievers. But almost everyone agrees on one thing: that it is the greatest spectacle in entertainment.

THE INNER SPHERE 2864

Lyran Commonwealth

Tamar Pact
1) Trellshire
2) Tamar Domains
3) Camlann Shire

Protectorate of Donegal
4) Coventry Province
5) Alarion Province
6) District of Donegal
7) Furillo Province

Federation of Skye
8) Kannon Shire
9) Virginia Shire
10) Rahneshire
11) Isle of Skye

Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
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2) Coudoux Prefecture
3) Bjarred Prefecture
4) Pusht-i-rud Prefecture
5) Ningxia Prefecture

Galedon Military District
6) Oshika Prefecture
7) Matsuida Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Kaznejoy Prefecture

Rasalhague Military District
10) Radstadt Prefecture
11) Trondheim Prefecture
12) Tinaca Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
13) Dehgolan Prefecture
14) Baldur Prefecture
15) Xinyang Prefecture
16) Kajikazawa Prefecture
17) Prosperina Prefecture
18) Iruzun Prefecture

Dieron Military District
19) Kuzuu Prefecture
20) Ashio Prefecture
21) Chaville Prefecture
22) Towne Prefecture

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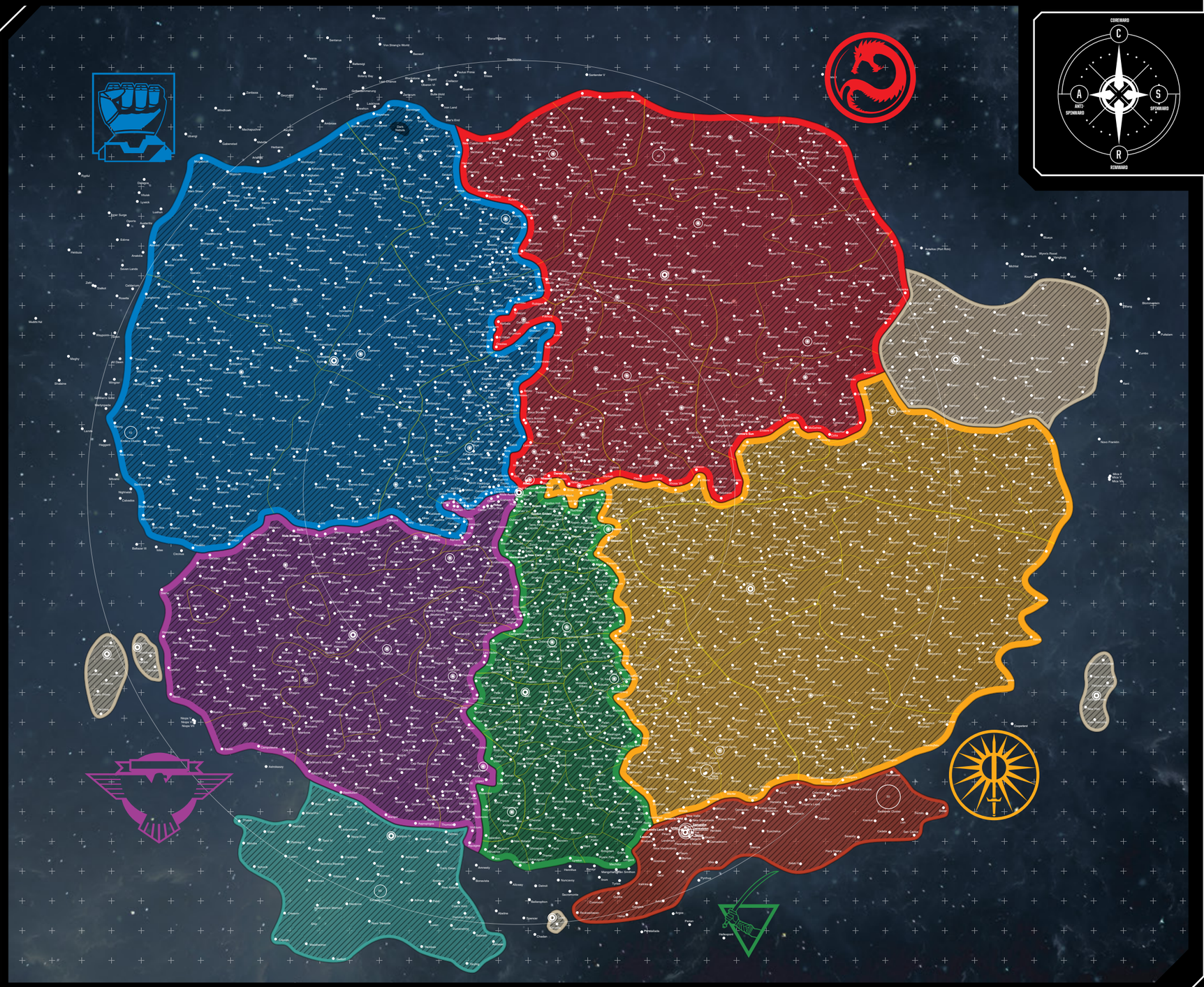

DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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THE THIRD SUCCESSION WAR

The ink on the treaties ending the Second Succession War had barely dried before the Third began. This war would not be like the previous two; too much had been lost to continue fighting on the same scale. The Third Succession War was an unending series of small-scale raids and the occasional major offensive, altogether lasting far longer than the previous wars. Mission objectives shifted from destruction to theft. Resources were targeted and carried off. The technology necessary to maintain life became more valuable than military assets. Raids were often conducted for spoils as simple as potable water. JumpShips became sacrosanct, with so few facilities still able to build or repair them. Should they be lost, humanity would be forever consigned to isolated islands throughout space. The Succession Wars had brought humanity to its nadir.

Many worlds changed hands during the wars. The Capellan Confederation saw half of its worlds gobbled up by the Free Worlds League and Federated Suns. The Lyran Commonwealth absorbed much of the defunct Rim Worlds Republic. The Draconis Combine seized many worlds from the Commonwealth.

But territory does not a First Lord make. None of the border changes mattered on the political stage. The changing of flags meant that the people beneath them answered and paid levies to new overlords, adapting to new laws and societal structures. Armies were reduced to shells of their former glory. Many worlds were garrisoned by a mere lance of BattleMechs standing watch over only their most important settlement. Only precious factory worlds warranted more protection.

The Periphery nations did not participate in the Succession Wars. They had craved independence from the oppression of the Star League and cared not who ruled its ashes. Centuries of seeing their resources drained left them poorly placed to weather the coming years. They had little left besides pride and freedom. Life in the Periphery declined despite a lack of fighting. The Star League abandoned them. Many worlds fell into a subsistence-level existence, or outright barbarism. Many more simply died off. Piracy became rampant as power brokers took what they needed to preserve their own way of life at the cost of others.

LOSTECH

A new word crept into the common lexicon as the wars raged on. *Lostech*, or lost technology, referred to Star League era technology that could no longer be manufactured, or even understood in some cases.

BattleMechs became less deadly as they devolved. The Successor States' vast WarShip fleets disappeared. Factory outputs slowed to a trickle. Entire industries ground to a halt. Equipment broke down and stayed that way. No one knew how to fix it. Functional shipyards were reduced to minimal operation. JumpShip production barely kept up with attrition losses due to age and wear. Losing more to combat would ensure that humanity never traveled the stars again. A tacit agreement between all Houses blossomed that protected JumpShips from destruction.

The decline affected every world differently. The most fortunate lost only their most high-tech gadgets. Less habitable planets found themselves in dire straits. Air and water purifiers became more valuable than gold or jewels. If replacement parts could not be found, the world often died. Some worlds collapsed into complete anarchy. Many regressed to a scavenger economy. Nothing could be had unless it was found by chance or taken from a foe. *Lostech* prospectors roamed the stars on battered JumpShips. Desperate souls made a living by scouring centuries-old battlefields. Hidden Star League depots were occasionally uncovered. Their contents could change life for the better. A cache of old BattleMechs would make the finder rich.

It would also perpetuate the war.

Devolution of a BattleMech: the *Thunderbolt*

The *Thunderbolt* is one of the more ubiquitous heavy BattleMechs in existence, observed on battlefields for over five centuries. The mainstay variant of the *Thunderbolt* TDR-5S was built on a standard chassis, shielded by a staggering thirteen tons of armor, and bristling with an arsenal consisting of a large laser, a trio of medium lasers, long- and short range missiles, and a pair of machine guns. Lastly the *Thunderbolt* is serviced by fifteen complete heat pumps ("heat sinks") mounted within the engine and throughout the 'Mech to dissipate heat buildup.

With the advent of advanced Terran Hegemony—Star League—technology, the *Thunderbolt* saw an upgrade in the mid-twenty-sixth century. Designated TDR-5Sb, it was built from the ground up, with a lighter chassis of endo steel, allowing it to mount heavier weapons and equipment. The large laser was replaced by an extended-range particle projection cannon, an Artemis fire control system was added to the long-range missiles, the short-range missiles were replaced with a Streak missile launcher (which would not fire without an absolute target lock), the machine guns were replaced by far-deadlier small pule lasers, and finally a small laser was mounted above the cockpit. In addition the *Thunderbolt*'s heat sinks were replaced by fourteen "double" heat sinks, allowing the -5Sb to run as cool as the -5S despite the higher heat buildup.

The Succession Wars (and ComStar's Operation Holy Shroud) took a heavy toll on industry. By the twenty-ninth century the *Thunderbolt*'s lighter endo steel frame could no longer be manufactured, and the technology behind much of its other advanced equipment was lost. The TDL-5L was built on the older, heavier, skeleton, and necessitated the replacement of the extended-range particle projection cannon with an extended-range large laser, as well as the removal of the small laser and one double heat sink.

Within three short decades of the introduction of the -5L, -5LS debuted, which replaced the advanced long- and short-range missile packs with their original, pre-Star League counterparts. Furthermore, fifteen standard heat sinks once more took the place of double heat sinks.

The next century would see the production of extended-range and pulse laser come to an end, thus leaving only the old *Thunderbolt* TDR-5S viable for manufacture, maintenance, and repair. Many 'Mechs, such as the *Crusader* and *Phoenix Hawk,* suffered a similar fate, while others—introduced at the zentih of the Star League—such as the *Marauder* and *Black Knight*, were downgraded to remain viable. And then there are those 'Mechs that simply vanished from both the field and from memory.

Primitive Neurohelmet

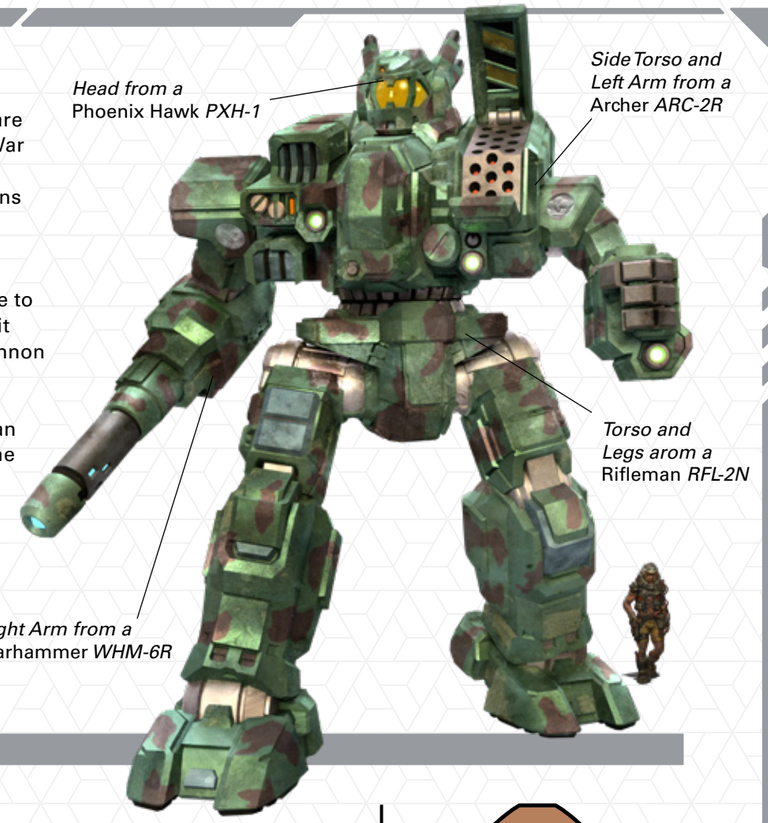
After scrounging for hours, this thirsty Wilson's Hussars MechWarrior finds a few drops of "lostech."

Salvage

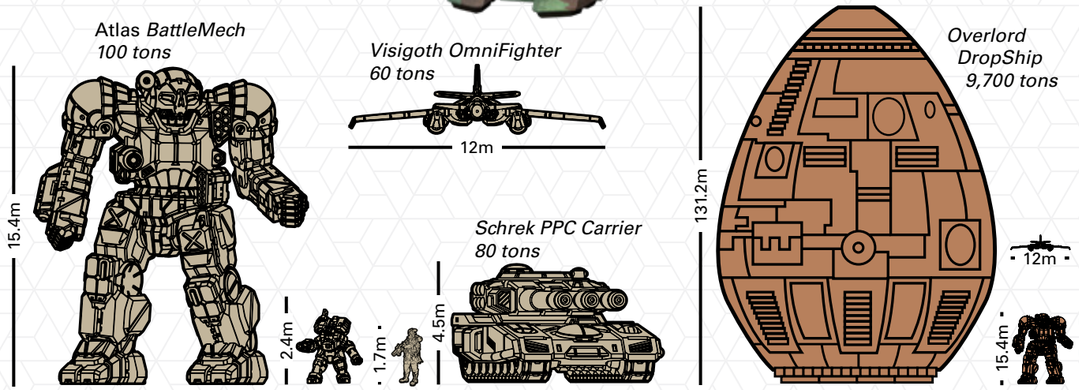
With the scarcity of the Succession Wars, controlling the battlefield was doubly important. Whoever controlled the site in the aftermath had the opportunity to collect salvage from the battle. Collecting salvage was a vital part of warfare that allowed combat forces to keep up with maintenance and repairs, and even replace lost units. In the best cases, a boon in salvage enabled forces to expand their ranks. Conversely, repeated combat losses with little salvage recovered could mean disbandment—as combat during the Succession Wars was often pyrrhic.

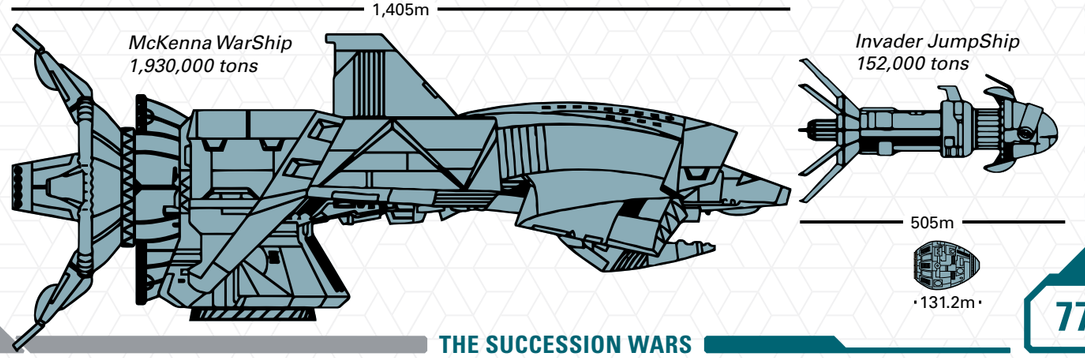
FrankenMechs

The scavenger nature of warfare during the Third Succession War gave rise to the FrankenMech. Desperate techs and logisticians would jury-rig anything and everything salvaged from the battlefield to keep their war machines operational. "Unable to repair this 'Mech's PPC? Yank it out and replace it with autocannon and ammo bin, and pull out a couple now-unnecessary heat sinks while you're at it, they can be used elsewhere." In extreme cases, entire limbs or parts of torsos were cobbled together resulting in an unidentifiable mashup of a machine that stymie recognition by enemy warbooks.



A Matter of Scale





KEEPING THE WHEELS TURNING

Invention and creation are hallmarks of humankind. A dazzling array of mechanical wonders–often focused upon advancements in war–sped us into the Stone Age, through the Bronze Age, and into the Iron Age. Then came the Renaissance and the Information Age. Eventually, we opened up the stars to colonization and the crafting of mighty stellar empires.

During all ages, the secrets of technological production were hoarded by those in power. From ancient alchemists to stonemasons to interstellar corporations and copyright laws: the ability to make a thing is surpassed only by the ability to be the lone ones to make that thing. Before the rise of the Terrain Alliance and the spread of mankind to the stars, several countries and corporations used such tactics to increase their power and wealth. From the Age of War to the fall of the Star League, the Terran Hegemony perfected technological monopolies to remain the most powerful and influential stellar empire for half a millennium, ruling over thousands of planets and trillions of lives—a pinnacle not yet surpassed.

But every mechanical wonder also requires skilled hands to keep it functioning. An engineer may build, but it is the technicians and the mechanics that keep the water running, the lights on, and the machines of war marching. After the fall of the Star League, as technology ground down and *lostech* faded into near-myth, the roles were reversed. Instead of the creators, the power settled into the hands of those that could keep the wheels turning.

Just as the powers-that-be reverted to feudalism to stabilize their realms, the cultural hierarchies of the guilds of stonemasons from the Middle Ages rose through the ashes of mankind's high technology. Soon, similar patterns of apprentices, journeymen and master masons appeared as astechs (assistant technicians), techs (technicians) and master techs. Just as nascent MechWarriors would begin training as young teenagers, would-be aspirant master techs started as journeymen, often as young as ten years old. Just as those stonemasons' guilds jealously guarded their secrets even from each other, various House and mercenary command techs did likewise.

As each group relearned some secret of how to make a 'Mech reactor provide more power, armor withstand more damage, or a weapon hit harder, such secrets became as precious as any *lostech*, with knowledge passed from parent to child. ComStar's relentless drive to equate high technology with magic often further muddied the interaction of techs with their technology, with some going so far as to pray to their 'Mechs as they repaired them, believing that without such rituals their repairs would be for naught. During the long march of the Succession Wars, families of techs worked alongside families of MechWarriors to keep ancient 'Mechs in fighting shape, leading to each avatar of war possessing unique and enduring quirks.

With the return of the Clans and the resurgence of technology, the place and power of such tech guilds has waned significantly, with only the most backwater worlds retaining the full breadth of their ancient traditions. However, even now, as technology continues to advance and a new Star League is upon us, there are plenty of House and mercenary commands that still swear by the traditional journeyman astech to master tech path, and rely on the skills they bring to keep the wheels turning.

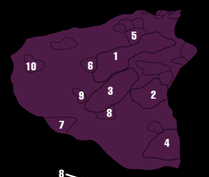
THE INNER SPHERE 3025

Lyran Commonwealth
Tamar Pact
1) Trellshire
2) Tamar Domains
Protectorate of Donegal
3) Coventry Province
4) Alarion Province
5) District of Donegal
6) Bolan Province
Federation of Skye
7) Virginia Shire
8) Rahneshire
9) Isle of Skye

Draconis Combine
Pesht Military District
1) Kagoshima Prefecture
2) Albiero Prefecture
3) Bjarred Prefecture
4) Qandahar Prefecture
5) Ningxia Prefecture
Galedon Military District
6) Oshika Prefecture
7) Matsuida Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Kaznejoy Prefecture
10) Tabayama Prefecture
Rasalhague Military District
11) Radstadt Prefecture
12) Trondheim Prefecture
13) Alshain Prefecture
14) Kirchbach Prefecture
15) Rubigen Prefecture
Benjamin Military District
16) Buckminster Prefecture
17) Xinyang Prefecture
18) Kajikazawa Prefecture
19) Proserpina Prefecture
20) Iruzun Prefecture
Dieron Military District
21) Vega Prefecture
22) Algedi Prefecture
23) Ashio Prefecture
24) Kessel Prefecture
25) Al Na'ir Prefecture

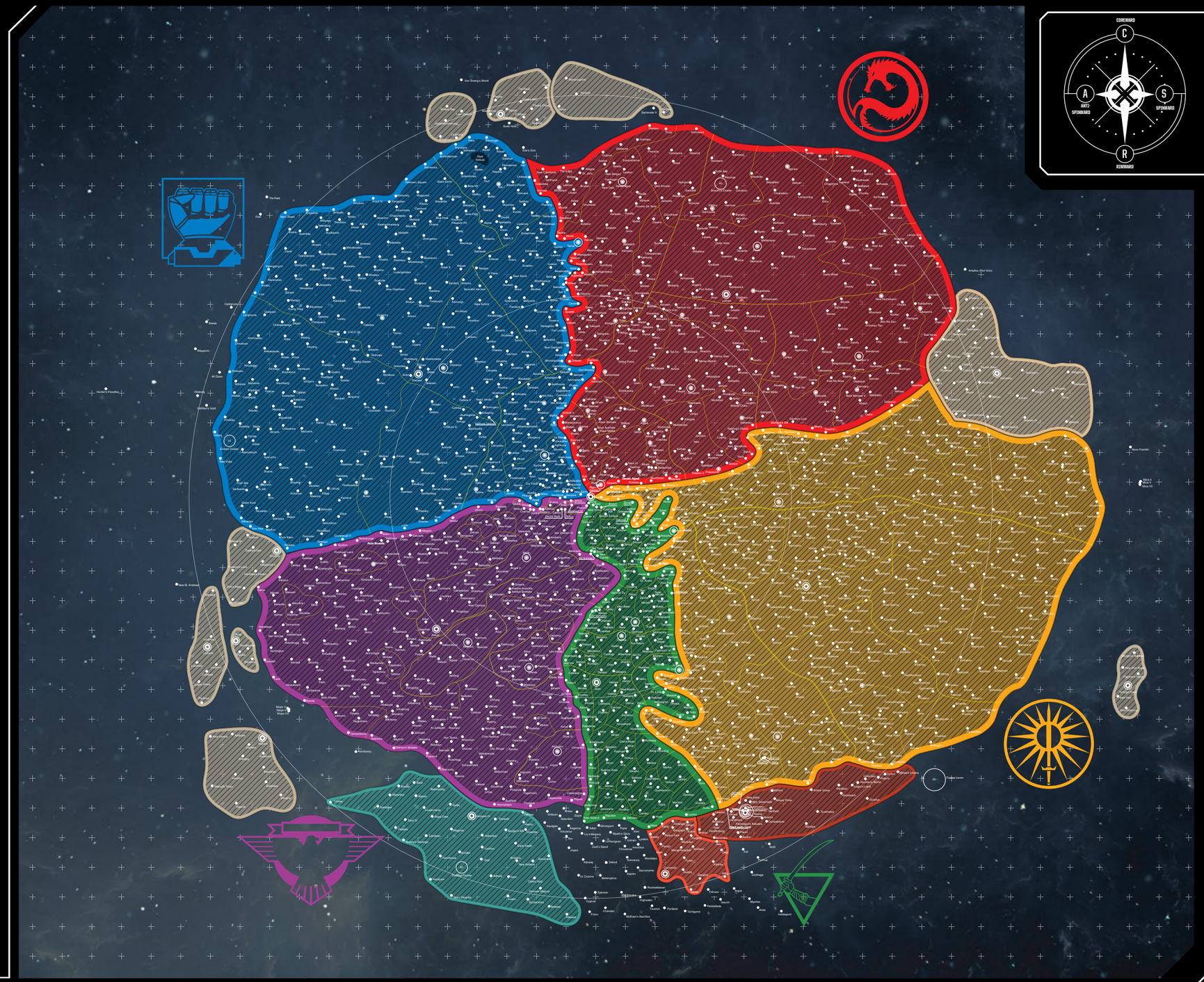
Federated Suns
Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Tancredi IV Operational Area
Crucis March
3) Markesan Operational Area
4) Minette Operational Area
5) Chirikof Operational Area
Capellan March
6) Kathil Operational Area
7) Taygeta Operational Area

Capellan Confederation
1) Tikonov Commonality
2) Sarna Commonality
3) Capella Commonality
4) Sian Commonality
5) St Ives Commonality



Free Worlds League
1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Federation of Oriente
3) Principality of Regulus
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Stewart Confederation
6) Duchy of Graham-Marik
7) Rim Commonality
8) Regulan Free States
9) Principality of Gibson
10) Abbey District

The Periphery
1) Magistracy of Canopus
2) Taurian Concordat
3) Outworlds Alliance
4) Marian Hegemony
5) Lothian League
6) Illyrian Palatinate
7) Circinus Federation
8) Bandit Kingdoms
9) Aurigan Coalition



DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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Hanse Davion

Hanse "the Fox" Davion was the second son of First Prince Andrew Davion and thus never expected to rule, but his brother Ian's death elevated Hanse to the throne of the Federated Suns. His ascension faced staunch opposition from his brother-in-law, Michael Hasek-Davion, but Hanse consolidated power and seized upon the offer of alliance made by Archon Katrina Steiner of the Lyran Commonwealth.

A Capellan attempt to replace Hanse with a double stoked tensions with the Confederation and shaped the objectives of the Fourth Succession War. After Hanse married Katrina's daughter Melissa, the might of the Federated Suns fell on House Liao while the Lyran military engaged the mighty Draconis Combine. The Steiner-Davion alliance dominated Inner Sphere politics for the next twenty years, though Hanse streak of successes against House Kurita in 3039, in part due to ComStar's support of the Combine.

The Clan invasion was the last campaign for the Fox. His strategic efforts limited losses of Lyran worlds, and he even shored up the Combine by sending mercenaries to defend Luthien. He suffered a heart attack shortly after the Clan invaders were defeated on Tukayyid and died in the arms of his son, Victor.

Katrina Steiner

Katrina was ambitious and politically active, and established a strong base of support in the Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces during her early career. An Lyran Intelligence Corps assassination attempt in 3005 prompted her to flee to the Periphery with Arthur Luvon and Morgan Kell. Her subsequent exploits as the Red Corsair became legend.

She returned a year later and found the Archon—her uncle—had weakened the Lyran Commonwealth with his foolish "concentrated weakness" strategy. Katrina led a successful coup and took the throne. The skilled warrior and strategist hoped to end the Succession Wars diplomatically. She made some inroads with First Prince Ian Davion of the Federated Suns, but his death in combat scuttled that effort. In 3020, Katrina proposed a peace to the other Successor States, but only First Prince Hanse Davion's response suited her. An alliance treaty was signed between the two states, and in 3028, Katrina's daughter, Melissa, married Hanse. The wedding kicked off the Fourth Succession War and set in motion the formation of the Federated Commonwealth. Katrina died of cancer in 3040, a year after abdicating her throne.

Takashi Kurita

Takashi Kurita's military career was exemplary. He earned promotion after promotion, receiving the honor of commanding the Otomo, the Coordinator's bodyguards. The assassination of his father by a bodyguard led to rumors of Takashi's complicity in his father's death, but upon assuming the mantle of Coordinator, he responded with ruthless efficiency by executing many detractors.

The Federated Suns was Takashi's principal enemy in the fading years of the Third Succession War. Takashi studied his opponent, Hanse Davion, intently. The two developed a "friendly arch nemeses" relationship, wishing each other's families well while striving to destroy one another on the battlefield. The Steiner-Davion alliance prompted Takashi to create the Concord of Kapteyn with Houses Liao and Marik, though the alliance ultimately proved ineffective. Takashi's obsession with destroying Wolf's Dragoons distracted the DCMS' actions in the Fourth Succession War.

In the post-war era, Takashi was eclipsed by his son, Theodore, to whom he was forced to give up military power. Takashi later recognized Theodore's reformation efforts as key to the Combine's successful defense against the Steiner-Davion assault in 3039. The Clan Invasion brought Takashi to the frontlines one final time in the Battle of Luthien. The Coordinator passed in his sleep in 3054, but rumors suggested he died by *seppuku*.

Maximilian Liao

In the late thirtieth century, the Capellan Confederation was in a poor state. Young Maximilian decided to take charge, and he unseated his father. He then instituted a series of reforms. His tactics bore fruit, increasing the size and skill of the Capellan military. The Maskirovka—Capellan intelligence—also received considerable investment and carried out numerous covert operations against the Federated Suns. Max also supported Anton Marik's revolt against Anton's brother Janos, including passing the contract of Wolf's Dragoons to the rebel leader. The revolt failed, but the war distracted and weakened the Free Worlds League.

Max's attempts to foster similar trouble in the Federated Suns through Michael Hasek-Davion were less successful. The Steiner-Davion alliance prompted an uneasy detente between Houses Marik, Kurita, and Liao. The resulting Concord of Kapteyn showed its weakness in its first (and only) substantive test: the Fourth Succession War. House Davion's principal goal was to incapacitate the Confederation, particularly after Max's failure to replace First Prince Hanse Davion with a doppelganger. After the disastrous war and the defection of two of his three children, Max suffered a mental breakdown.

Janos Marik

As a cadet at the Princefield Academy, Janos Marik was naive and optimistic. His outspoken views led to multiple honor duels. A succession of personal tragedies hardened his heart as the Captain-General of the Free Worlds League, and some chafed under his firm rule. Chief among these was his brother Anton, who led a short-lived revolt.

Takashi Kurita's formation of the Concord of Kapteyn placed Janos in the difficult position of allying with Chancellor Maximilian Liao, who had supported Anton's Revolt. The alliance proved futile, and the Fourth Succession War was a lackluster affair for the Free Worlds League. The League was only peripherally involved in the conflict and largely failed to support its nominal allies in the Concord. There are theories that Janos was ill during this period, or that his cynicism and pettiness got the better of him. Whichever it was, the result was disastrous, and the League lost numerous worlds to the Steiner-Davion alliance.

Janos' reputation sank post-war, and several relatives schemed against him. A bomb killed Janos in the midst of the Andurien Secession crisis, allowing his murderer, Duncan Marik, to briefly take the throne.

THE FOURTH SUCCESSION WAR

Two visionary leaders arose at the tail end of the Third Succession War: Katrina Steiner and Hanse Davion.

Katrina Steiner of the Lyran Commonwealth made a proposal unheard of in the long years of fighting: live and let live as neighbors. The Succession Wars, she pointed out, had done terrible harm for little to no gain, and the Great Houses couldn't crown a new First Lord of the Star League by treaty or force. That didn't mean they had to keep trying. They could—and should—have peace.

The lords of Houses Marik, Kurita and Liao, laughed or made unacceptable counteroffers. Hanse Davion of the Federated Suns listened and negotiated in earnest. Davion proposed more than just a peace treaty. A union between his House and Steiner's was agreed upon. Uniting the Inner Sphere's strongest military with its strongest economy could cow the others into submission. Marik, Kurita, and Liao might not accept peace, but they would hesitate to make war. Word of the impending alliance brought hope to the Commonwealth and Federated Suns. The Draconis Combine, Capellan Confederation, and Free Worlds League felt differently. They formed the Concord of Kapteyn for mutual defense against their neighbors.

Hanse Davion harbored a deep grudge against Maximilian Liao. Liao had tried to replace Davion with a double some years earlier, and nearly succeeded. Davion decided that such a person was too dangerous to rule a sovereign nation. Years of preparation went into the Fourth Succession war. War games on the Liao border became so routine, that the Capellans would be unprepared for the day the games suddenly became real.

The Federated-Commonwealth Alliance solidified upon the marriage of Hanse Davion to Katrina Steiner's daughter Melissa. The wedding occurred on Terra, and the leadership of the Inner Sphere gathered on neutral ground to pay their respects. Hanse Davion announced that his wedding present to his bride would be the Capellan Confederation. At that moment, Davion regiments swarmed across the Capellan border.

It was the largest military operation in over a century. The Fourth Succession War began.

Lyran generals had long been seen as inept. Years of training under Davion officers changed that. Lyran regiments struck the Draconis Combine border in concert with the Davion offensive. They were to keep the Combine from exploiting Davion's focus on Liao. They succeeded beyond anyone's wildest imagination. The Lyrans seized over fifty worlds from the Combine. Their reputation as bungling social generals seemed at an end.

The vaunted armies of the Draconis Combine struggled, rudderless, as Coordinator Takashi Kurita pursued an obsessive vendetta against Wolf's Dragoons. After failing to force them into permanent Combine service, Jaime Wolf personally insulted the Coordinator and then pledged his Dragoons to defend the Federated Suns. The Dragoons held the border almost by themselves. Only the efforts of *Gunji-no-Kanrei* Theodore Kurita found any success—though not enough.

A desperate Maximilian Liao called on his Concord of Kapteyn allies for aid, but the Combine was fixated on Wolf's Dragoons, and the Free Worlds League instead sought to seize isolated worlds from their Capellan "ally." House Marik still bore animosity towards the Capellans for their involvement in its own recent civil war. The House Liao stood alone against a relentless juggernaut.

Only ComStar took action against the Federated Suns, but the secretive organization had its own agenda. An incident that ComStar manufactured placed the Suns under a communications interdiction. Hanse Davion had anticipated such a move, as he had long suspected ComStar. His war machine slowed, but it did not stop. ComStar felt its monopoly on technology was threatened by Davion's New Avalon Institute of Science, so they executed a covert raid to destroy NAIS. Com Guards disguised as Capellan Death Commandos struck in the night. The First Prince personally played a role in thwarting the attack. The NAIS survived, and ComStar returned to plotting in the shadows.

Exhaustion and the communications interdiction took its toll. The Federated Suns sued for peace after only two years. Hanse Davion had accomplished what he had set out to do. The Federated Commonwealth stretched from one end of the Sphere to the other. The Capellan Confederation lost half of its territory to the FedCom. Maximilian Liao suffered a mental breakdown. A new nation was recognized in Candace Liao's breakaway St. Ives Compact. The Draconis Combine was embarrassed. Only the Free Worlds League escaped relatively unscathed. The Fourth Succession War was the briefest of the Succession Wars, but it nevertheless altered the face of the Inner Sphere more than any of its predecessors.

The Davion-Steiner Wedding

The wedding between First Prince Hanse Davion, ruler of the Federated Suns, and Princess Melissa Steiner, heir to the throne of the Lyran Commonwealth, was touted as the wedding of the century: a gorgeous spectacle with all of the pomp and pageantry expected from the joining of two Great Houses. Nobles, celebrities, and rulers from across the Inner Sphere—enemy and friend alike—were invited to attend the nuptials on Terra. Hanse personally requested Maximilian Liao, his archenemy and leader of the Capellan Confederation, to attend. No one refused the invitation.

Prince Davion spared no expense showering his bride with a wedding worthy of her love, right down to the fine china. While the event was not without its personal drama, it was a wonderful display of the new union.

As the reception came to a close, the cake was served, and when the guests finished their desserts they noticed the exquisite plates beneath their cake were not blank. Hidden beneath the cake was the image of a planet—and no two plates were alike.

It was at that moment that Hanse rose and made a toast to his wife and guests, "Wife, in honor of our marriage, in addition to this morsel, I give you a vast prize. My love, I give you the Capellan Confederation!"

The guests were aghast, but none more than Maximilian Liao, who realized to his growing horror that each plate showed a Capellan world. In a fit, Liao desperately clawed at the plates around him, as if holding onto a plate would somehow stop Hanse Davion.

AT THE HELM

The waning years of the Third Succession War brought unexpected change. One of the biggest was the arrival of Wolf's Dragoons.

The House Lords were desperate for troops, and the arrival of five elite BattleMech regiments from the periphery seemed too good to be true. The Dragoons fought for and against each House in turn. They were perhaps the best mercenaries ever. Their appearance raised endless suspicion, but the Dragoons guarded their origins closely. No Successor State ever penetrated Dragoon security.

Another, much smaller, mercenary unit had an even more profound effect on the Inner Sphere: the Gray Death Legion, which discovered a priceless treasure on the world of Helm in 3028. It was an intact Star League Library Core containing more knowledge than a single human could absorb in one lifetime. Its secrets contained the technological knowledge humanity needed to reshape the destiny of the Inner Sphere and pull it out of its dark age.

Not everyone wished for such an outcome. ComStar covertly tried to destroy the Helm Core. Grayson Carlyle—leader of the Gray Death Legion—was forced to make a deal with an enemy to survive, and disseminated copies of the Helm Core throughout the Inner Sphere. Even so, it took decades of study before the Helm Core gave up all of its secrets.

The Helm Core accelerated a technological renaissance that had already begun with the recovery of a library on Halstead Station fourteen years earlier. First Prince Hanse Davion used the contents to establish the New Avalon Institute of Science. Great minds began to halt the backslide. In some cases, they reversed it. They created the Inner Sphere's first new BattleMech in a century with the Hatchetman. With both the Halstead Station library and the Helm Core recovered, advances in both military and civilian technology seeped back into everyday life.

THE WAR OF 3039

The War of 3039 was an aftershock of the Fourth Succession War. Hanse Davion was determined to finish the job of extinguishing one of his realm's ancient enemies: the Capellan Confederation. But Candace Liao discouraged this, promising that her St. Ives Compact would declare war on the Federated Suns if it tried to bulldoze her homeland completely. Davion relented; the Capellans were no longer a threat. He turned instead to the Draconis Combine.

Coordinator Takashi Kurita's fixation on Wolf's Dragoons cost the Combine in the Fourth Succession War. Theodore Kurita had all but deposed his father in the wake of that dishonor. Theodore's reforms allowed the Combine to recover quickly, and he negotiated the secession of the Rasalhague Military District. The new Free Rasalhague Republic removed rebellious elements from the Combine and created a buffer state between the Combine and the Lyran Commonwealth.

Theodore's greatest accomplishment was a clandestine deal with ComStar to acquire BattleMechs. The Combine built new regiments with these 'Mechs. The Federated Commonwealth Alliance ran into these unexpected regiments, and the attack faltered due to the surprise. Theodore then executed a bold bluff: he counterattacked into the Federated Suns. The Dragon stared down its greatest foe.

Hanse Davion blinked first. He called off his war. The final conflict of the Succession Wars ended with a whimper.

The Inner Sphere took some years off from fighting. They unlocked more secrets from the Helm Core. They prepared themselves for the next inevitable war. None could have predicted who their enemies in that war would turn out to be.

Theodore Kurita

Theodore had a difficult relationship with his father, Coordinator Takashi Kurita. Takashi was cold and distant, so Theodore formed other relationships, notably becoming friends with ISF leader Subhash Indrahar. Theodore's relationship with his father came to an impasse, and he was banished to command the Legion of Vega.

Theodore resented the assignment, though he used it as an opportunity to reform DCMS doctrines. He fared well in the Fourth Succession War, blunting the Lyran assault and counterattacking. Theodore's success and prestige forced Takashi to cede him military power.

Theodore was named Deputy for Military Affairs (*Gunji-no-Kanrei*), and his alliance with ComStar gave the DCMS access to Star League-era BattleMechs. These, combined with Theodore's reforms, allowed the Combine to counter the FedCom invasion of 3039.

Takashi and Theodore reconciled, though Theodore retained a solid grip on the DCMS. He became Coordinator following his father's death, and he was later elected First Lord of the Second Star League. Theodore suffered a stroke early in the Blakist Jihad and died a few years later.

THE COM GUARDS

As the Succession Wars wound to a close, ComStar felt the time had come to unveil its secret army, the Com Guards. These Com Guards were to be stationed on every world with an HPG to "protect ComStar's assets." In reality, these troops represented a dagger held to the throat of the Great Houses. The House Lords had no choice but to accept the Com Guards onto their worlds, or lose their ability to communicate.

The Clan Invasion brought a new purpose to the Com Guards. When the Clans revealed that their ultimate objective was the conquest of Terra, the Com Guard rose to defend humanity's cradle. On the proxy world of Tukayyid, the largest battle of the Invasion played out. Facing the might of seven Clans, the Com Guard stood as a blinding-white shield, protecting Terra from the ravaging horde. In the years following Tukayyid and the schism of ComStar, the Com Guards proudly stood sentinel against Clan aggression. The truce they bought with blood at Tukayyid would one day end, and when it did, the Com Guards would be ready to defend mother Terra again.

Com Guard Force Structure

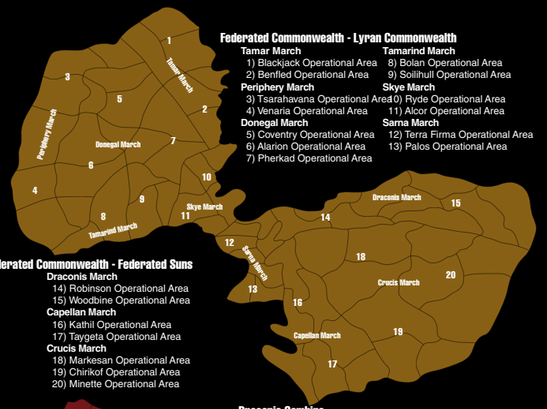
ComStar forces diverge from the Star League-originated system of lances, companies, and so forth. Instead, they use a system based on multiples of six that offers enormous flexibility for deployments.

The smallest formation is a Level I, which comprises a single BattleMech, fighter, tank or infantry platoon. Such forces are the building blocks of ComStar armies. The next formation, a Level II, contains six Level Is. Level II may contain combined-arms (mixed-type) forces at this level.

A Level III, contains six Level II formations and is the ComStar equivalent of a battalion (and is frequently referred to as such). Level IIIs are almost all combined-arms formations, and are usually the largest formation to operate together on a regular basis.

Level IV formations, also known as divisions, contain six Level III formations, making them equivalent to two regiments. Divisions form the backbone of the administrative network. The Level V or army contains between four and six divisions. Though principally administrative, Level V formations can form field commands, as demonstrated on Tukayyid in 3052.

THE INNER SPHERE 3050



Federated Commonwealth - Lyran Commonwealth

Tamar March
1) Blackjack Operational Area
2) Benfled Operational Area

Periphery March
3) Tsarahavana Operational Area
4) Venaria Operational Area

Donegal March
5) Coventry Operational Area
6) Alarion Operational Area
7) Pherkad Operational Area

Tamarind March
8) Bolan Operational Area
9) Solihull Operational Area

Skye March
10) Ryde Operational Area
11) Alcor Operational Area

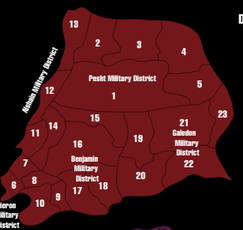
Sarna March
12) Terra Firma Operational Area
13) Palos Operational Area

Federated Commonwealth - Federated Suns

Draconis March
14) Robinson Operational Area
15) Woodbine Operational Area

Capellan March
16) Kathil Operational Area
17) Taygeta Operational Area

Crucis March
18) Markesan Operational Area
19) Chirikof Operational Area
20) Minette Operational Area



Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Kagoshima Prefecture
2) Albiero Prefecture
3) Bjarred Prefecture
4) Qandahar Prefecture
5) Ningxia Prefecture

Dieron Military District
6) Kessel Prefecture
7) Vega Prefecture
8) Algedi Prefecture
9) Ashio Prefecture
10) Al Na'ir Prefecture

Alshain Military District
11) Buckminster Prefecture
12) Rubigen Prefecture
13) Garstedt Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
14) Baldur Prefecture
15) Xinyang Prefecture
16) Benjamin Prefecture
17) Proserpina Prefecture
18) Iruzun Prefecture

Galedon Military District
19) Oshika Prefecture
20) Matsuida Prefecture
21) New Samarkand Prefecture
22) Kaznejov Prefecture
23) Tabayama Prefecture

Free Worlds League

1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Principality of Regulus
3) Duchy of Oriente
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Duchy of Graham-Marik
6) Stewart Commonality
7) The Protectorate
8) Duchy of Orloff
9) Regulan Free States
10) Principality of Gibson
11) Mosiro Archipelago
12) Abbey District
13) Duchy of Tamarind
14) Zion Province
15) Ohren Province
16) Rim Commonality
17) Silver Hawk Coalition

Capellan Confederation
1) Capellan Commonality
2) Sian Commonality

St. Ives Compact
3) St. Ives Commonality

Free Rasalhague Republic
1) Rasalhague Province
2) Radstadt Province
3) Skandia Province

The Periphery
1) Magistracy of Canopus
2) Taurian Concordat
3) Outworlds Alliance
4) Marian Hegemony
5) Circinus Federation
6) Lothian League
7) Illyrian Palatinate
8) Tortuga Dominions
9) Bandit Kingdoms

DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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Return to the Inner Sphere is impossible for us. Our heritage and our convictions are different from those we left behind. The greed of the five Great Houses and the Council Lords is a disease that can only be burned away by the passing of decades, even centuries. And though the fighting may seem to slow, or even cease, it will erupt again as long as there are powerful men to covet one another's wealth. We shall live apart, conserving all the good of the Star League and ridding ourselves of the bad, so that when we return—and return we shall—our shining moral character will be as much our shield as our BattleMechs and fighters.

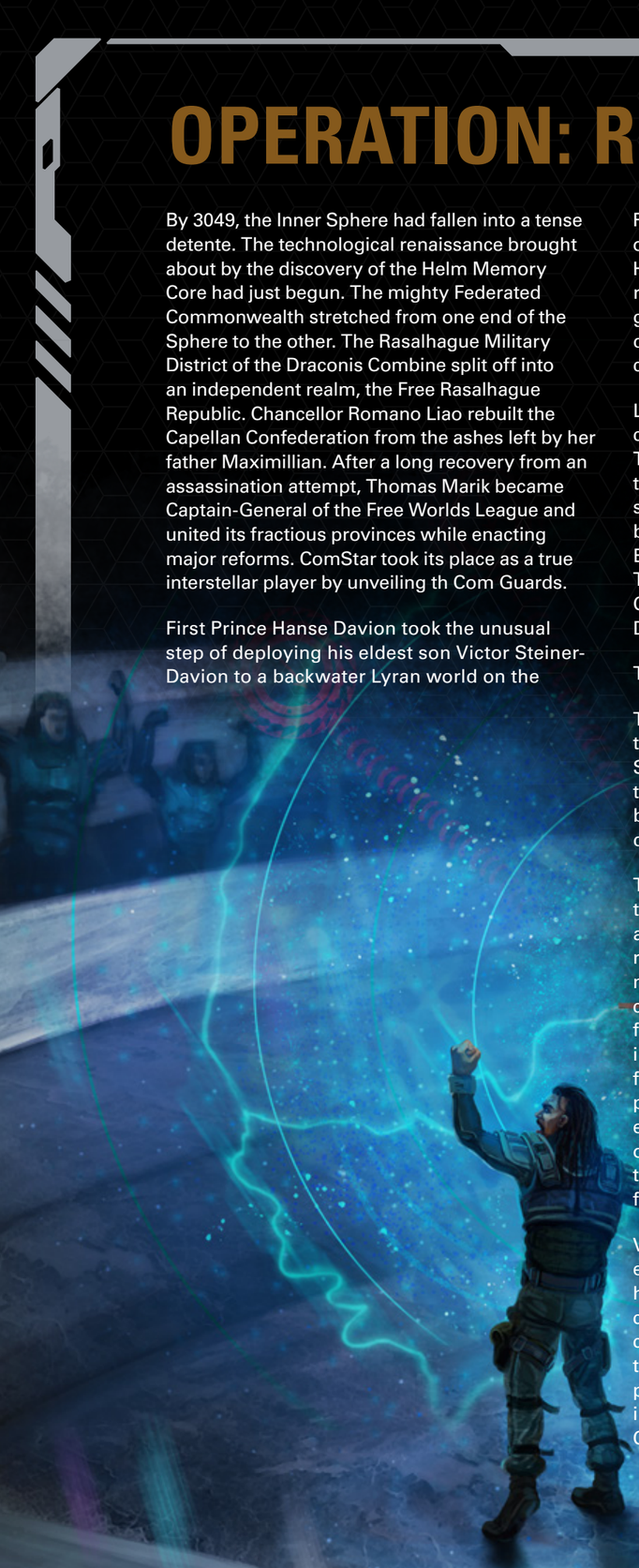
—General Aleksandr Kerensky, General Order 137 (later known as the Hidden Hope Doctrine), 5 December 2785

THE CLAN INVASION

OPERATION: REVIVAL

By 3049, the Inner Sphere had fallen into a tense detente. The technological renaissance brought about by the discovery of the Helm Memory Core had just begun. The mighty Federated Commonwealth stretched from one end of the Sphere to the other. The Rasalhague Military District of the Draconis Combine split off into an independent realm, the Free Rasalhague Republic. Chancellor Romano Liao rebuilt the Capellan Confederation from the ashes left by her father Maximillian. After a long recovery from an assassination attempt, Thomas Marik became Captain-General of the Free Worlds League and united its fractious provinces while enacting major reforms. ComStar took its place as a true interstellar player by unveiling th Com Guards.

First Prince Hanse Davion took the unusual step of deploying his eldest son Victor Steiner-Davion to a backwater Lyran world on the Periphery border. This was seen as an overture of non-aggression toward his old enemies in House Kurita. *Gunji-no-Kanrei* Theodore Kurita responded in kind. His own son Hohiro was given a similar posting. Both princes were disappointed, thinking they would see little to no combat action. Both were wrong.



Late in 3049, worlds on the edge of the coreward Periphery went strangely quiet. This silence presaged something worse than the occasional raid. Worlds across a wide swath suddenly found themselves under siege by invaders with animalistic names: Ghost Bear, Smoke Jaguar, Jade Falcon, and Wolf. These so-called Clans struck the Federated Commonwealth, Free Rasalhague Republic, and Draconis Combine simultaneously.

The Clan Invasion had begun.

The Clans' technologically outclassed every force they faced. Their technology surpassed even what Star League *lostech* the Great Houses had begun to recover. Elite and storied commands crumbled before the Clans. Worlds in their path began to dread the arrival of unknown JumpShips.

The Clans practiced a different form of warfare than the Inner Sphere. They opened every attack with a "*batchall,*" a battle challenge. They requested that defending forces provide their numbers and choose a place of battle. The Clan commanders would then bid among themselves for the right to take the world. Bidding was intended to reduce waste by using the smallest force possible to achieve victory. Honor was paramount to the Clansmen. Inner Sphere units exploited the strange Clan sense of honor to their own advantage. Soon the Clans began treating their Inner Sphere foes as dishonorable. The fighting grew more destructive.

Victor Steiner-Davion fought Clan Jade Falcon early in the invasion, and his losses helped him develop effective counter tactics. Victor's cousin Phelan Kell of the Kell Hounds mercenary command was captured by Clan Wolf during their conquest of Periphery worlds. Phelan proved himself as a warrior and was adopted into the Clan. Hohiro Kurita was captured by Clan Smoke Jaguar. His subsequent escape and resulting insurrection led the Jaguars to launch an orbital bombardment against the city of Edo on Turtle Bay. This wasteful act convinced all the Clans to bid away their WarShip assets; as the Inner Sphere could not match them, their use by the Clans would be excessive and dishonorable.

Terror of these mysterious invaders spread across human space. Rumors that the Clans enslaved the populations of captured worlds ran rampant. Mass migrations taxed JumpShip travel as civilians fled in advance of the invaders. The Federated Commonwealth and Draconis Combine scrambled to move more troops to the front. On the other side of the Inner Sphere, Houses Marik and Liao prepared for inevitable comflict. Periphery nations experienced a sudden population boom as people fled as far as possible from the Clan juggernaut.

Meanwhile, ComStar continued to play up their neutrality. They offered to administer captured worlds for the Clans to prevent insurgencies.

Phelan Kell

Phelan means "wolf," and to be a Wolf was Phelan Kell's destiny. Phelan came to Clan Wolf as one of the first bondsmen from the Inner Sphere after Vlad of the Wards captured him on The Rock at the start of the Clan Invasion. Clan life suited Phelan. He was brash and hot-headed, but highly skilled in combat. Khan Ulric Kerensky saw promise in the fiery young man and mentored him for leadership. Phelan overcame every obstacle and bias set against him. He won a Bloodname and eventually rose to Khan—unprecedented feats for a freeborn.

Phelan Kell and Vlad Ward became mirrors of each other. Vlad rose to command the Crusader Wolves after the Refusal War shattered Clan Wolf. Phelan led the Warden Wolves into exile. His ties to the Lyran Commonwealth through his father Morgan Kell gave these exiles a home. Phelan worked with the Inner Sphere to oppose the Crusader cause without threatening the core of Clan society. He was one of a select few who walked in both worlds. Allies valued his counsel and martial skill. Detractors called him a traitor to both societies. All respected his abilities.

The Clans seemed unstoppable. The Inner Sphere achieved only two minor victories in the first year of the war: Hohiro Kurita successfully defended the world of Wolcott from the Smoke Jaguars, and Victor Steiner-Davion reclaimed Twycross from the Jade Falcons at great cost. The greatest blow to the Clans was struck by a Rasalhague aerospace pilot at Radstadt, when Kapten Tyra Miraborg crashed her aerospace fighter into the *Dire Wolf*, flagship of Clan Wolf. The attack killed ilKhan Leo Showers, leader of the all the Clans. Tyra's sacrifice bought the Inner Sphere a year of peace as the Clan leadership returned to the Clan Homeworlds to choose a new ilKhan.

Jaime Wolf of Wolf's Dragoons invited the leaders of the Great Houses to the planet Outreach for a summit during this pause in the invasion. Wolf revealed that the Dragoons first came to the Inner Sphere as a scouting force for the Clans, but their loyalties had shifted during their years in the Inner Sphere. Wolf was now dedicated to defending the Inner Sphere against the Clans. He insisted that only by setting aside centuries of animosity could the Great Houses hope to survive. They must work together to repel the Clan threat.

Leaders such as Hanse Davion and Theodore Kurita heard the wisdom in Wolf's words. Others like Thomas Marik had to be persuaded into agreement. Some believed that the descendants of General Aleksandr Kerensky and the Star League Defense Force still shielded the Inner Sphere, and would return to save them.

THE CHILDREN OF KERENSKY

Jaime Wolf shattered that illusion. These invaders, so alien in their culture, *were* the children of Kerensky. The SLDF had returned.

General Aleksandr Kerensky foresaw the devastating wars for control of the Inner Sphere and developed a plan to preserve the Star League in exile. Operation Exodus gathered loyal SLDF troops—with less than 20 percent of the League military choosing to remain in the Inner Sphere—and departed the Inner Sphere.

The Exodus was not kind to Kerensky's people. The SLDF consisted of many diverse heritages, all settled on five worlds in neighboring systems known as the Pentagon Cluster. Divisions formed between different factions of troops due to the stress of colonizing the harsh worlds Kerensky had led them to. Order in the colonies began to crumble within a few years of establishing their Star League-in-Exile. Outright war erupted upon General Kerensky's death, at times eclipsing the Succession Wars in its brutality. Aleksandr Kerensky's son Nicholas fled the madness by enacting a second exodus, leading a million others deeper into the Periphery.

On Strana Mechty, Nicholas built a new society based on merit and ability, obliterating all prior national and familial identities (even abolishing surnames) and formed his people into twenty Clans. Each Clan would have its own identity and traditions, but all adhered to a caste system dominated by warriors. 800 warriors, forty per Clan, became the pinnacle of Nicholas' new society. Conflict became a ritualized series of Trials designed to minimize collateral damage. This preserved the limited resources and nascent civilization in the region. Each Clan dedicated itself to supporting the warriors who would protect them and project their will outward.

The first action the Clans took was to launch Operation Klondike: Kerensky and his Clans returned to the Pentagon worlds to crush the forces that tore apart the Star League-in-Exile. The ragged survivors of this campaign joined Nicholas's people, solidifying Clan rule.

Nicholas Kerensky

Nicholas Kerensky is considered the father of the Clans. All that the Clans have done for good or ill can be laid at his feet. Nicholas watched his father Aleksandr's Star League-in-Exile crumble under divisive nationalism. He structured his Clans to fit a perfect martial ideal. Old identities were cast aside as everyone from the Khans to the lowest laborer worked to better their Clan. Nicholas often pitted his Clans against each other to retain his control over them, and he had no compunction against destroying anyone who challenged him.

Nicholas likely suffered from severe psychological, possibly even neurological issues due to childhood trauma and illness. Those within the Clans prefer not to acknowledge his tyrannical and sociopathic tendencies. Clan leaders to this day quote and twist his words to suit their own agendas. He is remembered as both a revered visionary and twisted megalomaniac, depending on the lens, but none can argue that Nicholas Kerensky left an indelible influence upon history.

The early years of the Clans saw the demise of two Clans and the death of ilKhan Kerensky. The Golden Century that followed allowed technology advances exceeding those of the Star League. Selective breeding programs strove to perfect the ideal warrior. Warrior phenotypes were specialized to particular branches of service. Intensive training from a young age ensured the Clans created the best warriors possible. The average Clan warrior could defeat their Inner Sphere counterpart in most fights. MechWarriors, aerospace pilots, and armored infantry known as Elementals held equal status in the warrior caste. Warriors past their prime (approaching middle age by Inner Sphere reckoning) were known as *solahma,* and considered of no use besides caretakers and cannon fodder.

Clan warriors aspired to win a Bloodname—an honorary surname derived from one of the original 800 Clan warriors. Only Bloodnamed warriors sat on Clan councils or could be elected Khan or ilKhan. Most Clan warriors were born through an *in vitro* fertilization eugenics program. Artificial iron wombs birthed dozens of warriors from one pair of genetic parents. These Trueborns were raised in a *sibko*—a sibling company—training and fighting until only the best remained for induction into the warrior caste. Those who failed were relegated to lower castes, if they survived. People born the traditional way were called freeborn, or the pejorative freebirth. Freeborns were considered inferior and had few rights in Clan society.

Bloodnamed Trueborns led each Clan and decided its future, while freeborns were rarely skilled or fortunate enough to join the warrior caste at all.

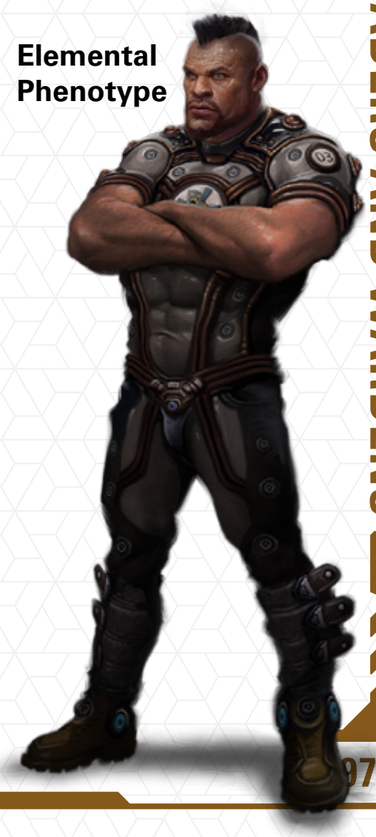
CRUSADERS AND WARDENS

Centuries of focus on warfare generated two opposing philosophies within the Clans. The Warden faction sought to preserve the Inner Sphere from outside threats. The aggressive Crusaders wished to conquer it and rule the Great Houses by establishing a new Star League under their auspices. Decades of butting heads deeply divided these factions, with the Crusader slowly gaining advantage.

The incidental arrival of the *Outbound Light*, a ComStar exploratory vessel, over the Smoke Jaguar world of Huntress changed that. The Crusaders used the threat of an Inner Sphere invasion as a pretext to launch their own. Operation Revival was initiated: the Clans would return to the Inner Sphere and restore the Star League. And the Clan that took and held Terra first would become the ilClan—the Clan above all Clans, in perpetuity.

MechWarrior Phenotype

Aerospace Phenotype



Elemental Phenotype

THE CLANS OF KERENSKY

We must eradicate all vestiges of the tainted past so that we can forge ourselves into a people worthy of our destiny. We must kill the traditions that blinded and crippled us for so long, for the old ways are like shackles that hinder our true strength. We are a new people, reborn in the fire, and we must follow new ways.

Henceforth, our eight hundred warriors will be divided into twenty Clans. And they will no longer fight as lances, companies, battalions or regiments. Instead, they will enter battle in Points, Stars, Binaries, Clusters and Galaxies.

—Excerpted from the papers of Nicholas Kerensky

Blood Spirit

Burrock

Cloud Cobra

Coyote

Fire Mandrill

Ghost Bear

Goliath Scorpion

Hell's Horses

Ice Hellion

Jade Falcon

Mongoose

Nova Cat

Sea Fox

Smoke Jaguar

Snow Raven

Star Adder

Steel Viper

Widowmaker

Wolf

Wolverine

CLAN MILITARY ORGANIZATION

Point, Star, and Nova

A Point is comprised of one of the following: One 'Mech or OmniMech, two aerospace fighters, five battle-armored Elementals, or two vehicles. Five Points form a Star and follow the orders of a Star Commander.

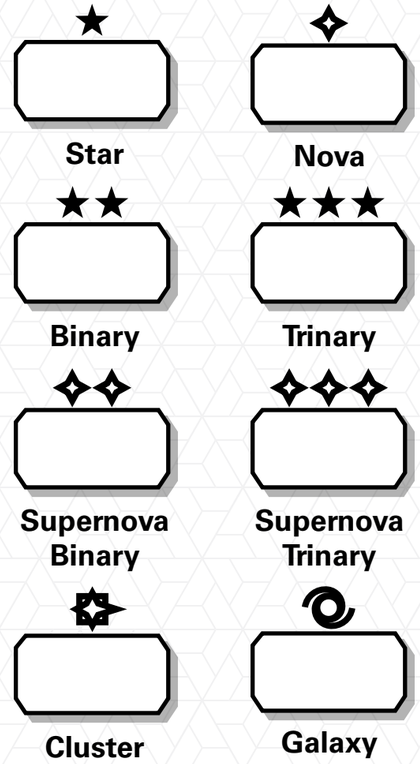
A Star of OmniMechs and a Star of Elementals together form a Nova. Each OmniMech will carry a Point of Elementals into battle.

Binary/Trinary/Supernova

Two Stars forms a Binary. Three form a Trinary. Star Captains command these forces. Nova pairs are Supernova Binaries, and three form a Supernova Trinary.

Larger Formations: Cluster and Galaxy

A Cluster contains three to five Binaries, Trinaries or Supernovas. A Cluster is commandedby a Star Colonel. Three to five Clusters comprise a Galaxy, led by a Galaxy Commander.



Clan Castes

Warrior Caste: A Clan's *touman* (their military arm) is comprised of the warrior caste, which rules and protects the Clan. They are usually the only caste allowed to vote in Clan councils. Subcastes exist for MechWarriors, aerospace fighter pilots, and Elementals. Infantry, paramilitary police, Watch (Clan intelligence organizations) officers, WarShip command staff, and vehicle crews are also considered warriors. Freeborns who pass Trials of Position achieve warrior status as well.

Scientist Caste: The scientist caste exists to drive technological development, education, and medical care. Subcastes include physicians and teachers. The caste's most important role is to oversee the Clan's eugenics program, which allows the scientist caste to overrule the warrior caste in certain circumstances.

Technician Caste: The technician caste maintains machinery, weapons, computers, and vehicles. They make up the non-combat crew of spaceships and other large vessels.

Merchant Caste: The merchant caste acquires or manufactures materials and goods a Clan needs. They encompass various professions from machinists to artisans, though the traders are most famed. Merchants operate their own trading fleets and have greater freedom than other non-warrior castes.

Laborer Caste: The vast majority of the Clan population belongs to this caste. Laborers include builders, farmers, miners, and more. They are highly skilled but poorly educated. Despite their lowly status, they are vital for the functioning of the Clans.

Dark Caste: The completely unofficial Dark Caste consists of those who cannot or will not fit into Clan society. They eke out a semi-nomadic living in the Homeworlds, somewhere between piracy and subsistence, ever fearful of attacks by Clan pirate hunters.

CLAN TRIALS AND ZELLBRIGEN

When forming the Clans, Nicholas Kerensky implemented six combat rituals. These duels lessen collateral damage, maintain fairness, and regulate fighting between the Clans. Trials take place between members of the same caste. Inter-caste disputes are usually arbitrated by Clan Councils. Most trials begin with a challenger issuing a *batchall*, a formal battle challenge. Trials may be fought augmented (in a military vehicle) or unaugmented, likewise armed or unarmed.

Trials have infrequently been resolved through nonviolent contests, and non-warrior castes have adopted contests in their specialties to resolve their own trials. Such Trials have run the gamut from bake-offs, football, ski races, quarterly quota surpluses, feats of gastronomical endurance, and on at least one occasion, a coin flip.

Trial of Annihilation: Used to eliminate a warrior and remove their genetic legacy from the breeding program. This is the most extreme punishment in the Clans, and can target a group or even an entire Clan. It requires authorization by a unanimous vote from a Clan Council or the Grand Council, as appropriate.

Trial of Bloodright: A Trueborn descendant of a Bloodnamed warrior may participate in a Trial of Bloodright to use that name as their own. Each Bloodname typically has twenty-five active warriors, so there is great competition when a Bloodname becomes available.

Trial of Grievance: Used to resolve disagreements between individuals. Parties can either take their case to the Clan Council for binding arbitration or they can declare a Trial of Grievance to quickly resolve the issue, usually through combat. Non-combat contests can be arranged for disputes involving non-warriors. Trials of Grievance are often impromptu and informal.

Trial of Position: Part of the training trials in *sibko*s and in the Blooding, the Trial of Position is the final trial for candidates to earn a position and rank as a warrior in the Clan. Warriors may be required annually to prove themselves still worthy of their status through Trials of Position, both by challenging superiors for their position and by defending one's own position from challengers.

Trial of Possession: Used to settle disputes of ownership between individuals and Clans, this Trial can be fought over territory, machinery, factories, intellectual property, genetic legacies, or populations. Trials of Possession effectively allow wars between Clans while limiting collateral damage and the military hardware required.

Trial of Refusal: Used when an individual or Clan wishes to challenge a decision made by a Clan or Grand Council. The balance of forces is determined by the difference in the votes between the winning and losing sides. A subordinate may also declare a Trial of Refusal against a superior if they wish to refuse an order.

The following trials have evolved since the time of Nicholas Kerensky:

Trial of Abjuration: Abjuration ensures a Bloodname is erased from all Clan records. Though originally intended to eliminate all related genetic material, this Trial has evolved to see the abjured party exiled rather than Annihilated. Compare the annihilated Clan Wolverine with the Abjured Clan Nova Cat.

Trial of Absorption: This combination of a Trial of Possession and a Trial of Refusal occurs when the Grand Council seeks to eliminate a Clan without annihilating it. After a unanimous vote, the Grand Council selects a Clan to absorb the target Clan into its ranks. That Clan may face Trials of Refusal from rival Clans seeking the honor for themselves. The selected Clan then attacks the Clan to be absorbed. If the target to be absorbed repulses the attacker, it is treated as a successful Trial of Refusal.

Trial of Founding: A Khan may nominate exceptional freeborn lines to create new Bloodhouses, infusing the Clan breeding program with new genetic material.

Trial of Propagation: Just as a Blood Heritage may be Reaved, it may be expanded based on the advice of the scientist caste. A Trial of Propagation pits those who want to expand the Bloodname against those who disagree.

Trial of Reaving: Reaving is the practice of reducing the number of Blood Heritages associated with a Bloodname from the maximum of twenty-five. As only Bloodnamed warriors vote in Clan Councils, this has become a political weapon. This is technically a Trial of Refusal, but applied to a Reaving.

Zellbrigen

Zellbrigen refers to Clan ritualized warfare. It was first practiced by Clan Coyote during Operation KLONDIKE, after which it spread to the other Clans and was later formalized by Nicholas Kerensky.

Zellbrigen describes ideal behavior for dueling between warriors. It need not be applied when engaging with combat vehicles or conventional infantry. Under *zellbrigen,* Elementals and ProtoMechs consist of a single Point. Larger units, like a DropShip or WarShip, or even a BattleMech attacking Elementals, may choose to disable weapon systems in order to have a more balanced, honorable fight.

Each warrior in a unit issues a challenge to an opponent, with any unchallenged warriors waiting until an opponent becomes free. A warrior can challenge multiple opponents at once, and will be attacked by anyone challenged. A warrior has the right to refuse any challenge they consider frivolous or underhanded. If an opponent performs too many *dezgra* (dishonorable) actions, the duel may be rendered void and the entire unit is likely to engage in a free-for-all. Though not a tenet of *zellbrigen*, a warrior is expected not to retreat, nor to engage in melee combat.

Each Clan has its own interpretation of *zellbrigen,* which may change over time. Some apply it strictly at all times. Others, when facing *dezgra* opponents like pirates or mercenaries, apply *zellbrigen* selectively. At the dawn of the ilClan, most Inner Sphere Clans employ a strict interpretation of *zellbrigen* only against other Clans, and refuse to extend the honor to non-Clan opponents.

CLAN TECHNOLOGY

Many factors contributed to the aura of fear and invincibility the Clans generated during the earliest days of the invasion of the Inner Sphere. However, no single factor did as much to cement their reputation as an unstoppable force as their technological edge. If the BattleMech was the projection of mankind's power on the battlefield, Clan 'Mechs represented the superhuman.

OMNITECH

One of the Clans' greatest advantages is the advancement known as Omni technology. OmniMechs are built with a series of modular hard points instead of fixed components. Technicians can swap out damaged equipment and return an OmniMech to the field in a fraction of the time needed to repair a standard BattleMech. Configurable pods allow MechWarriors to customize their 'Mechs for a given mission or per their preferred mode of combat. An OmniMech can provide fire support to chase an opponent from the field, then be outfitted for urban combat in under an hour. All Clan 'Mechs and aerospace fighters in the initial stages of the invasion were Omnis. This technology alone accounted for much of the stunning pace of their advance into the Inner Sphere.

Clan MechWarrior Suit

Clan Neurohelmet

The Clans employed OmniMechs exclusively in the initial Invasion. In the Clans, OmniMechs were considered superior to standard BattleMechs in a social sense. OmniMechs brought prestige to the warriors who piloted them. Standard BattleMechs were used in the Clans' second-line forces. Lower-quality troops, solahma, and freeborns tended to pilot standard BattleMechs. A Trueborn warrior would usually consider a standard BattleMech assignment a slight on their honor.

The Great Houses made acquiring and copying OmniTech a high priority. House Kurita captured several intact OmniMechs at Wolcott, and shipped them to Luthien Armor Works for dissection and reverse engineering. Clan weapons were more advanced than the Inner Sphere's, but the principles behind Omni technology proved simple to master. The Draconis Combine began to deploy its own OmniMechs within a few short years. The detente between the Successor States ensured that these designs spread to the other Great Houses. The Inner Sphere took its first step towards technological parity with the Clans.

BATTLE ARMOR

One of the Clans' most terrifying assets was their massive Elementals. Elementals are walking walls of muscle, selectively bred to be the ultimate foot soldier. They regularly stand well over two meters in height. Carrying these giant warriors into battle was a technology the Inner Sphere had never fully developed: suits of powered combat armor that wrapped the Elemental in an intimidating, weaponized shell. The combination of warrior and battle armor revolutionized the role of infantry on the battlefield.

Clan Elementals worked in groups of five called a Point, with five Elemental points forming an Elemental Star. A well-trained Point of Elementals could take down a BattleMech with precise strikes against its actuators and other critical components. OmniMechs were designed with special mounting points to carry battle armor with no loss of mobility. OmniMechs and Elementals were sometimes organized into a formation called a Nova, mating a Star of each into a single combat element. These deadly combos could defeat an Inner Sphere force twice their size.

The Inner Sphere was quick to copy the battle armor concept, but the first suits deployed by the Federated Commonwealth were bulky and inefficient. Successive generations of armor incorporated new technological advances. The capabilities of Inner Sphere battle armor began to outstrip their Clan counterparts. The Clans responded in kind. The Elemental was alone in its class at the beginning of the Invasion. By the end of the decade, nearly two dozen varieties of battle armor roamed the fields of war.

TIMBER WOLF (MAD CAT)

Mass: 75 tons
Chassis: Type W3 Endo-steel
Power Plant: Starfire 375 XL
Cruising Speed: 54 kph
Maximum Speed: 86 kph
Jump Jets: None
Jump Capacity: None
Armor: Composite A-2 Ferro-Fibrous
Armament:
27.5 tons of pod space available
Manufacturer: Wolf Clan Site #2, Wolf Clan Site 1
Primary Factory: Strana Mechty, Arc-Royal
Communications System: Khan Series (Type 2c)
Targeting and Tracking System: Series III OPT

OVERVIEW

The first OmniMech the Inner Sphere encountered, the *Mad Cat* was so named by ComStar analysts for its resemblance to both the *Marauder* and *Catapult*. Built by Clan Wolf, the *Timber Wolf* has proven to be a near-perfect blending of advanced Clan technologies in a single lethal machine.

CAPABILITIES

Fast and well armored, the *Mad Cat* is also endowed with a generous pod capacity. The Primary configuration is a well-balanced mix of lasers and missiles, equally deadly at short and long-range. The B configuration is something of a compromise in order to fit a Gauss rifle, and it remains relatively uncommon. Configuration C has a weapon mix better suited to combat at intermediate ranges and is a popular choice for dueling. With its rear-firing missile packs, configuration D is well suited to the kind of infighting seen in a Bloodname Grand Melee, or in use against Inner Sphere opponents.

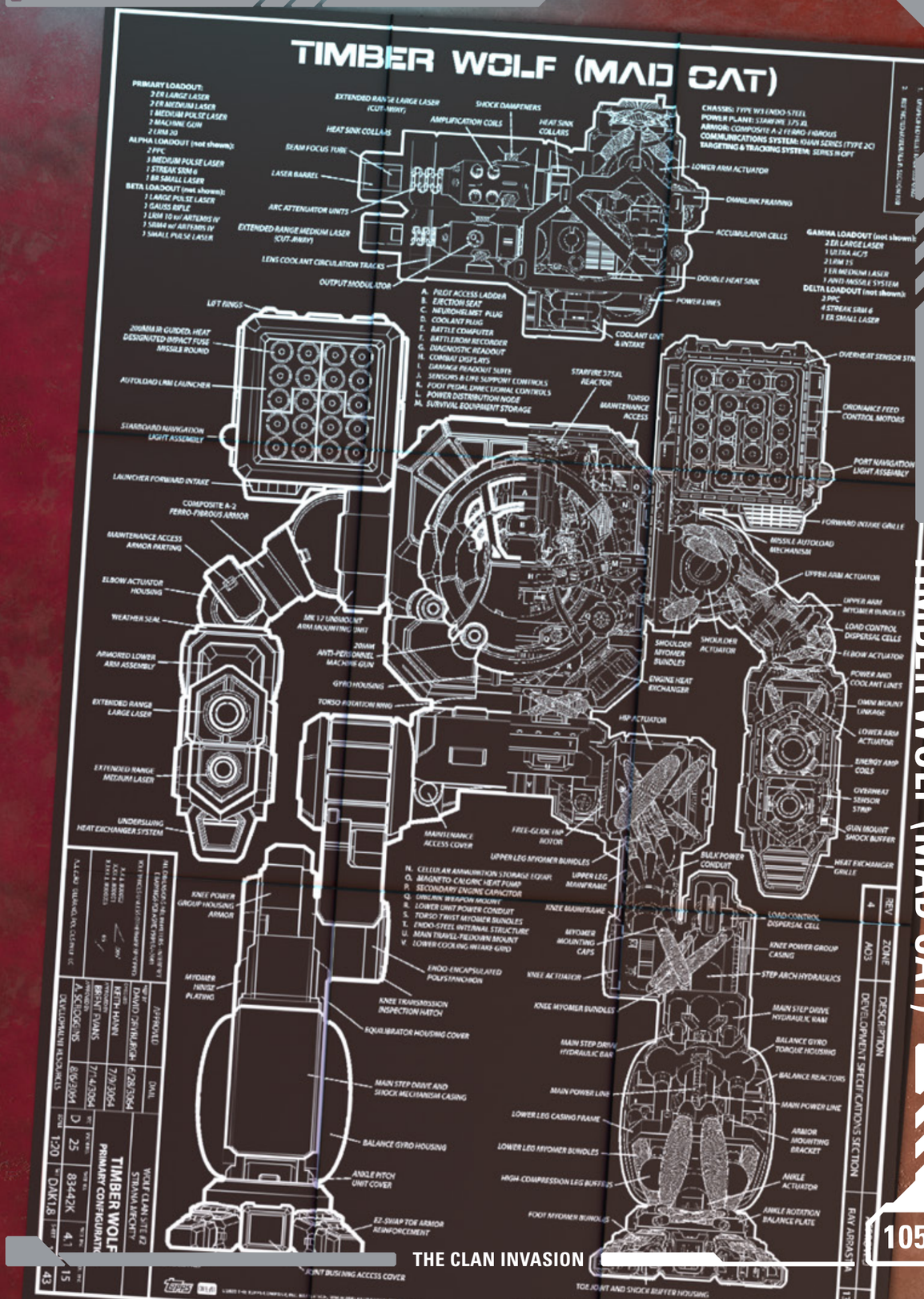
Contact with Inner Sphere tactics prompted the development of Configuration S. Geared for urban combat and dealing with conventional infantry, this version is becoming a common sight in the Clan Occupation Zone.

The OmniMech's unique strengths allow for rapid adoption of new technology. The E and H configurations are variants of the prime that have been modified to incorporate ATM and heavy laser technology respectively. Faced with the realities of modern warfare, the Jade Falcons have adopted new anti-personnel weapons on their *Mad Cat*s. Mounting three of the new anti-personnel Gauss rifles, the F configuration is equally efficient against battle armor as it is against conventional infantry.

DEPLOYMENT

Clan Wolf introduced the *Mad Cat* in 2945 to help replace the aging *Woodsman* OmniMech. Debuting with the Fourth Wolf Guard, the *Mad Cat* was a nasty surprise for the Sea Foxes (now Clan Diamond Shark). Fast and powerful, two Trinaries composed primarily of the new OmniMech rolled over the Thirteenth Cruiser Cluster defending the oil fields on Priori. Since that victory, the Wolves have jealously guarded the rights to build the *Mad Cat* in numerous Trials of Possession. Unable to manufacture their own *Mad Cat*s, other Clans must fall back on battlefield salvage or trade to acquire the design. Consequently the other Clans field only a modest number of *Mad Cat*s.

Much of the credit for the Wolves' success during Operation Revival must be laid at the feet of the *Mad Cat*. Inner Sphere MechWarriors found their equipment woefully inferior to the deadly OmniMech. It is little wonder that the *Mad Cat* quickly came to symbolize the Clans' technical superiority.



ELEMENTAL BATTLE ARMOR

Type: Elemental
Manufacturer: Clan Wolf, Other Clans
Primary Factory: Strana Mechty (Wolf), Various (Other Clans)
Chassis Type: Humanoid
Weight Class: Medium
Maximum Weight: 1,000kg

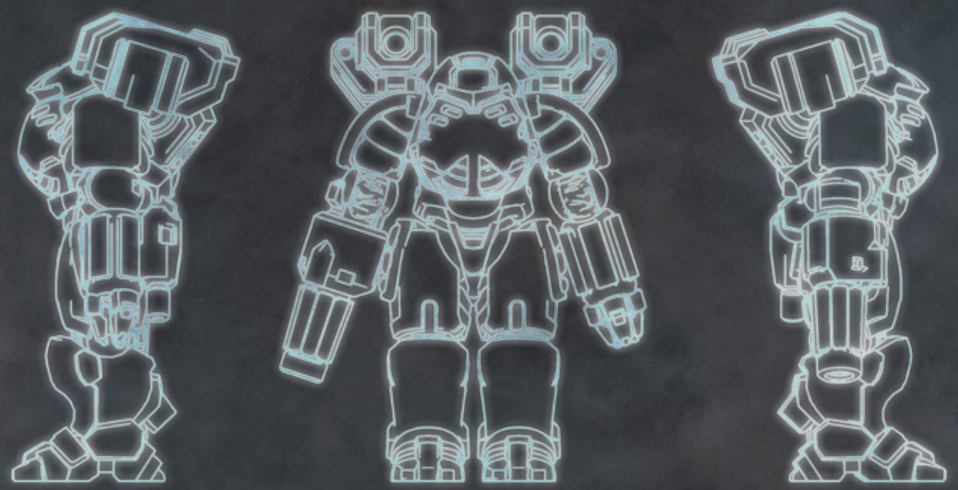
MechWarriors of the Inner Sphere were baffled when they first encountered Clan Elementals in 3050. Awestruck, the Inner Sphere MechWarriors watched as battle-armored Elementals withstood machine gun fire and even direct laser hits from BattleMech weapons, bounding about the battlefield swarming 'Mechs, and even firing support-sized missiles. Indeed, the capabilities of Clan battle armor were so far beyond anytning that Inner Sphere MechWarriors had ever seen,that many believed the Clan Elementals were some type of alien life form.

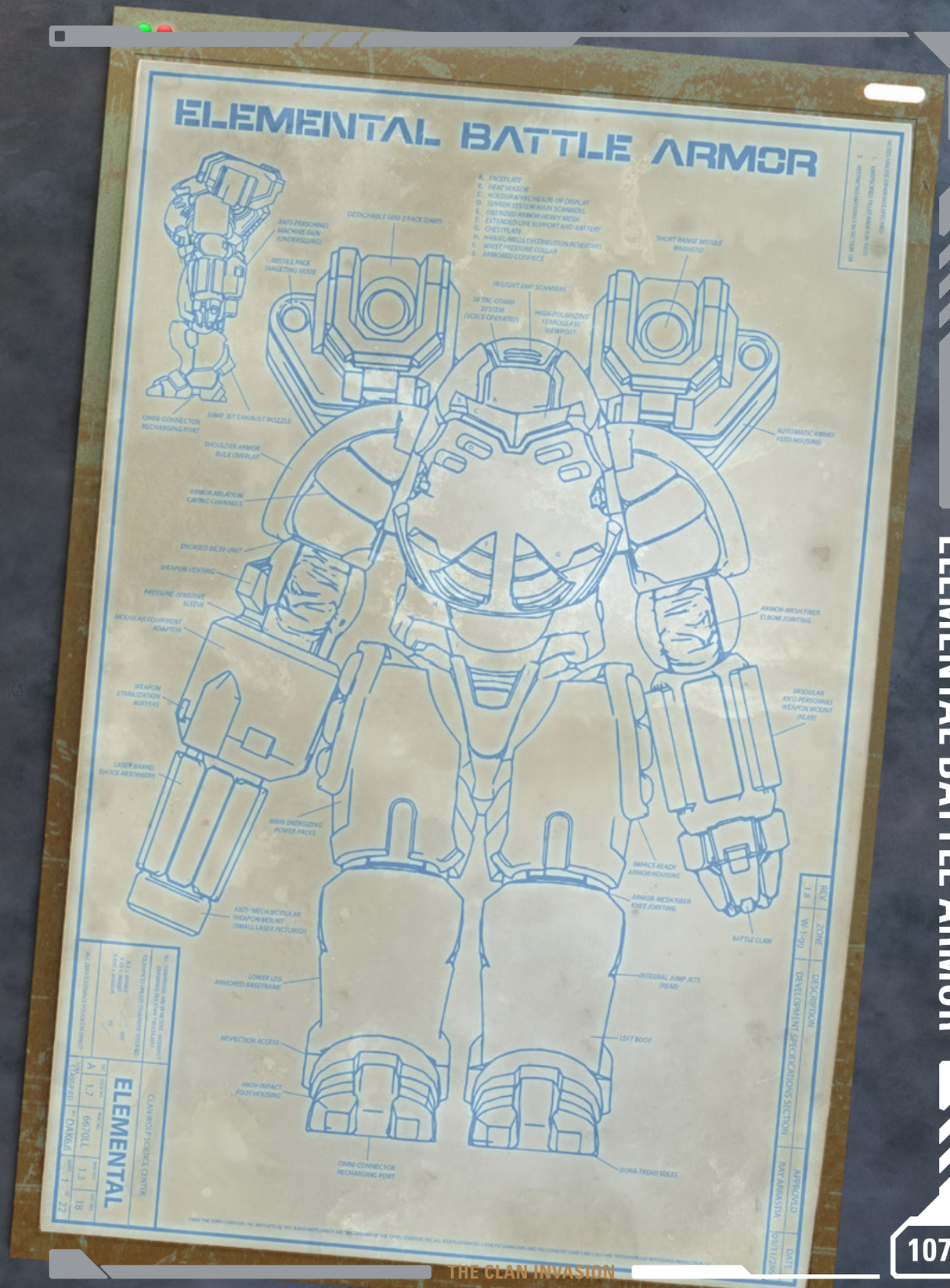
The origins of modern battle armor can be traced back to the pressurized diving suits developed by Clan Goliath Scorpion to exploit the resource-rich oceans on the planet Dagda. This proto-battle armor featured myomer musculature, self-contained air-supply and life-support systems, and heavy, atmospherically sealed bodies designed to withstand the high pressures of deep-sea work. Clan Wolf was quick to realize their combat potential. Consequently, the Wolves obtained a few of the suits and set about adding armor, weapons, and jump jets to adept them for combat. Their new battle armor could travel on the exterior of the OmniMechs, thus freeing them from dependence on conventional APCs.

The Wolves first deployed their new battle armor in 2868 with devastating results for the Star of light Nova Cat troops who faced the Wolves' creation. Later that year, the Wolves faced off against Clan Hell's Horses in a series of Trials. Hell's Horses had been breeding genetically enhanced conventional infantry troops—what later came to be called Elementals. After the Trials concluded, the Horses had obtained battle-armor technology and the Wolves had obtained the knowledge needed to create their own Elementals. Almost immediately, the two Clans initiated the tradition of matching Elemental troops with battle armor, giving rise to the tradition of also calling the battle armor Elementals. Soon the other Clans were deploying their own Elemental troops.

Clan Wolf initially experimented with several suits, each tailored to specific environments (these environment-specific suits would later form the basis of the Gnome, Salamander, Sylph, and Undine designs). Ultimately the Wolves opted for a general-purpose battle armor suited to most battlefield conditions.

Modern Clan Elemental suits differ little from the original Wolf design. They use similar types of myomer musculature, self-contained life-support systems, atmospherically sealed bodies, armor, integral jump jets, and weaponry. The most distinguishing characteristic of Elementals remains the variety of weapons they can carry. Typically, an Elemental carries an arm-mounted small laser, flamer, or machine gun. Backing this up are an arm-mounted anti-personnel machine gun and a back-mounted detachable short-range missile launcher with ammunition for two salvos. This mix of weapons enables an Elemental to deal with targets large and small. The impressive firepower of Elementals, along with the maneuverability provided by their jump jets, gives them the ability to destroy a 'Mech.





INVASION RENEWED

The Clans renewed their invasion with new ilKhan Ulric Kerensky of Clan Wolf. Kerensky accelerated the pace of conquest, activating three reserve Clans—Steel Viper, Nova Cat, and Diamond Shark—to facilitate this. Meanwhile, the Federated Commonwealth and Draconis Combine reached a tentative state of alliance, and their elite military commands hastily redeployed from their shared border to the Clan front. The Free Worlds League lent its industrial might to supply war materiel to them and to the faltering Free Rasalhague Republic.

The Clans began to choose their targets wisely. Clans Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat assaulted the Draconis Combine capital, Luthien. In a remarkable show of solidarity, First Prince Hanse Davion sent his mercenaries, Wolf's Dragoons and the Kell Hounds, to defend Luthien. They proved critical in Luthien's successful defense. Luthien held, as did the alliance.

Primus Myndo Waterly of ComStar sought to manipulate the Clans to her advantage, but Waterly's tune changed when ilKhan Ulric revealed that the Clans' ultimate goal was the conquest of Terra and to reestablish the Star League in their image. ComStar's perceived neutrality evaporated. Precentor Martial of ComStar Anastasius Focht proposed a proxy battle on the world of Tukayyid. If the Clans won, ComStar would surrender Terra to them. If the Com Guards prevailed, the Clans would place a fifteen-year hold on the invasion.

The Battle of Tukayyid was the largest engagement in centuries. ComStar bid its entire army against the might of all seven invading Clans. IlKhan Kerensky warned the Clans not to underestimate the Com Guards. The Crusader Khans mocked his caution as cowardly. The Precentor Martial dragged their folly through the mud of Tukayyid, and beat them with it. Several Clans suffered humiliating defeats to the Com Guard before Kerensky's Wolves even landed.

ComStar triumphed, but at great cost. Primus Waterly launched Operation Scorpion—an ill-advised attempt to seize control of the Inner Sphere through treachery during the battle. Her spectacular failure caused a schism in ComStar. Precentor Martial Focht opened ComStar's records to all. Centuries of secrets were laid bare. Those within the Order who found his acts heretical fled to the Free Worlds League to continue their secretive religion.

INVASION RENEWED

THE BATTLE OF TUKAYYID

Tukayyid. To the Clans, its name reverberates through history like an echo of shame and failure. It is as much a curse among the Clans as any other profanity.

The Clans' goal was to claim Terra. From the cradle of humanity, they would reestablish the Star League in their image. ComStar had controlled a neutral Terra for centuries, which survived the Succession Wars unscathed because of this neutrality. Dozens more worlds would be ravaged if the invasion were to proceed as planned, along with the catastrophic devastation of the battle for Terra itself.

ComStar Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht used his knowledge of Clan ways to limit the violence. He proposed to ilKhan Ulric Kerensky a Trial of Possession for Terra. A proxy world was chosen to keep Terra's sacred soil free of bloodshed. The unassuming planet of Tukayyid in the Free Rasalhague Republic would play host to this greatest of Trials. Ulric called off any further Clan engagements and ordered the invading Khans to begin their bidding. At the same time, ComStar performed a logistical miracle by moving all fifty divisions of its Com Guards to Tukayyid to prepare.

All seven Invading Clans would take part in the Trial. Each would have an equal chance to stake their claim on the title of ilClan. Each Clan had two objectives to take and hold. The Clans bid against each other for targets, landing order, and troop strength. IlKhan Kerensky advised the Khans not to underestimate their Inner Sphere foes. The Com Guards were an as-yet untested army, and Precentor Martial Focht was a master strategist who knew his enemy well. Kerensky did not expect an easy victory. The other Khans scoffed at his Warden caution. They were Clan, bred for war, bred to win.

The proud Smoke Jaguars won the bidding to be first on Tukayyid. They did not yet understand the depths of trickery that Inner Sphere forces could unleash. The Jaguars split their forces to attack their two targets simultaneously. ComStar hit them with artillery, ambushes, and hit-and-run attacks. When both of their Khans fell, the ilKhan ordered the Jaguars to withdraw. The resulting animosity raged between the Jaguars and the Wolves until the Jaguars' annihilation in 3060.

The Nova Cats relied on ammo-dependent configurations for their OmniMechs. ComStar lured them into prepared battle sites that dragged out the conflict and quickly exhausted that ammo. The Cats nevertheless made decent progress towards their objectives. They recognized their error and made up for it by capturing several Com Guard supply depots. The Com Guards initiated a massive push to keep the Cats off balance. The inexorable advance shattered the Nova Cats, who suffered the most devastating losses of any Clan on Tukayyid.

The Prezno River halted Clan Jade Falcon's advance. ComStar sappers destroyed all crossings, grinding the Clan's advance to a halt. The Falcons who did cross fell victim to an elaborate ruse. ComStar built an exact duplicate of the Falcon's objective town of Olalla. The prepared ambush within forced the Clan to retreat, but the Falcons were awarded a draw due to the sheer amount of damage they inflicted on the defenders.

Clan Steel Viper did not properly scout the terrain around their objectives. Their Galaxies were drawn into the Devil's Bath, a volcanic morass of mud pits and sulfur fumes. OmniMechs disappeared under the mud as hidden Com Guards sniped at them. Ammunition shortages left Viper 'Mechs with no option but to employ *dezgra* physical attacks against their foes. The Vipers exited their personal hell to find fresh Com Guards waiting on the other side. The Vipers' reserves of ammo and hope were exhausted. Their Khan ordered a retreat.

The Ghost Bears adapted quickly to their dearth of supplies. They captured a number of Com Guard depots and pressed on. They seized their objective city of Spanac against heavy resistance, but on their way to their second objective, the Com Guards set fire to the Holth Forest as the Ghost Bears passed through it. The Bears lodged a formal protest against this dishonorable and destructive act. The ilKhan called off the Ghost Bear campaign when he saw that their remaining forces could not take their second objective. The Bears were awarded a marginal victory for taking Spanac. They were the only Clan besides the Wolves to claim victory on Tukayyid.

Clan Diamond Shark never fought Inner Sphere troops before Tukayyid. They derisively ignored ilKhan Kerensky's advice. ComStar easily preyed upon the Sharks' drawn-out supply lines. The Sharks' retaliation destroyed a full division of Com Guards, but it was too little, too late. Com Guard reinforcements overwhelmed and routed the Sharks before they came within sight of their objectives. The best Diamond Shark warriors had

to be rescued by freeborn second-line troops. The humiliating defeat would change the entire course of the Shark's future, as thereafter they began to question the idea of martial prowess as the primary tool of conquest.

Ulric Kerensky's own Clan Wolf achieved success. The Wolf Khans heeded his advice and outfitted their OmniMechs for a long campaign. Being the last to land allowed them to observe the Com Guards' tactics. Proper preparation led them to victory. The Wolves achieved both of their objectives despite heavy resistance, and the defeated Clans cried foul. They credited the Wolves' victory to everything *but* superior planning and skill. Ulric Kerensky would feel their anger in the years to come.

On Tukayyid, each Clan fought as individual entities; they did not coordinate with each other or cooperate to defeat their foes. That coordination would violate *zellbrigen*, the Clan honor system that governed combat for them. The Com Guards, by contrast, fought as one coherent unit. Each army group moved to reinforce the others as needed. The defeat of one Clan led to assets being redeployed against those still fighting, and it led to ComStar's victory.

Tukayyid proved once and for all that the Clans could be beaten. The Com Guard victory provided the spark of hope that the invincible foe could be brought to heel. The Inner Sphere had fifteen years to rearm and prepare. In the end, it was more than they needed.

Ulric Kerensky

There are few descendants of Aleksandr Kerensky more deserving of his name than Ulric. Ulric's mastery of both mlitary and political battlefields earned him the Khanship of Clan Wolf at a relatively young age. He was a champion of the Warden cause. Many Crusader initiatives in the Grand Council were stymied by his hand, but he could not delay the return to the Inner Sphere after ComStar's Explorer Corps discovered the Homeworlds. Instead, he was forced to lead it. His unwanted election to ilKhan was intended to ruin his career. Ulric turned it to his advantage for as long as possible.

He set himself apart from the average Clan warrior by planning for the long-term. He thought of the future, and the future beyond that. His was a liberal mind in a society growing more fascist every year. He mentored Phelan Kell to succeed Ulric as leader of the Warden faction. Ulric sought always for the Wolves to be the leaders of the Clans. If the Clans must one day return to Terra, Ulric ensured that the Clan of Kerensky had the best chance of being first.

Anastasius Focht

Anastasius Focht was a man who died and was reborn. He was born Frederick Steiner, a cousin to the Lyran Commonwealth's Archon Katrina Steiner. His keen tactical mind made him one of the Commonwealth's most accomplished generals. Naiveté and ambition put him under the sway of Aldo Lestrade. After Lestrade's failed coup, Frederick Steiner was executed a patriot at the hands of Theodore Kurita—as far as the world at large knew. Theodore saw in Frederick an honorable warrior who was misused as a political pawn and then discarded. He was spared and put in ComStar's charge.

ComStar had an interest in Frederick's martial talents. They rehabilitated him and placed him in charge of their newly unveiled army. Frederick adopted his new name to distance himself from his old life. He was a much wiser man in his new identity. He rose above petty politics and was a compassionate warrior . Even his opponents' lives were precious to him. He limited the bloodshed of the Clan Invasion through the Tukayyid proxy battle.

Focht opened the libraries of ComStar to all the Inner Sphere. This caused a schism that created the Word of Blake. His desire to see the best in humankind blinded him to its worst. Focht retired after the Great Refusal ended the Clan Invasion.

The Word of Blake

Tukayyid and Primus Myndo Waterly's failed Operation Scorpion rent ComStar in two. Those who remained in ComStar shed their mystical trappings for openness and technology sharing. Those who held to the ComStar religion that evolved through the Succession Wars retreated into the Free Worlds League, calling themselves the Word of Blake. While ComStar focused on halting the Clan threat, the Word of Blake schemed like the ComStar of old.

The Word of Blake seized Terra from ComStar and began a secret military buildup that led to the bloodiest conflict since the First Succession War. The dust had barely settled on the FedCom Civil War when the Word began their Jihad. None were safe from the wrath of the technologically advanced, fanatical cult bent on enslaving the Inner Sphere, or burning it to ash. It took the combined might of the Great Houses, and even allies among the Clans, to extinguish the Word's flame. Decades later, at the ilClan's dawn, the shadow of the Word of Blake still hovered over the Inner Sphere.

THE INNER SPHERE 3052

Federated Commonwealth - Lyran Commonwealth

Tamar March
1) Pasig Operational Area
2) Pandora Operational Area

Periphery March
3) Tsarahavana Operational Area
4) Venaria Operational Area

Donegal March
5) Coventry Operational Area
6) Alarion Operational Area
7) Pherkad Operational Area

Tamarind March
8) Bolan Operational Area
9) Soilihull Operational Area

Skye March
10) Ryde Operational Area
11) Alcor Operational Area

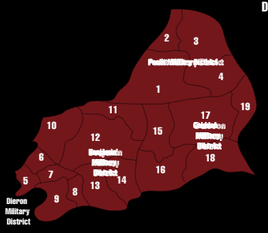
Sarna March
12) Terra Firma Operational Area
13) Palos Operational Area

Federated Commonwealth - Federated Suns

Draconis March
14) Robinson Operational Area
15) Woodbine Operational Area

Capellan March
16) Kathil Operational Area
17) Taygeta Operational Area

Crucis March
18) Markesan Operational Area
19) Chirikof Operational Area
20) Minette Operational Area



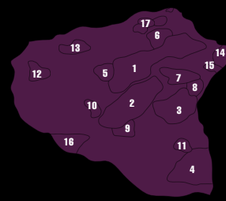
Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Kagoshima Prefecture
2) Lonaconing Prefecture
3) Qandahar Prefecture
4) Ningxia Prefecture

Dieron Military District
5) Kessel Prefecture
6) Vega Prefecture
7) Algedi Prefecture
8) Ashio Prefecture
9) Al Na'ir Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
19) Baldur Prefecture
11) Xinyang Prefecture
12) Benjamin Prefecture
13) Proserpina Prefecture
14) Irurzun Prefecture

Galedon Military District
15) Oshika Prefecture
16) Matsuida Prefecture
17) New Samarkand Prefecture
18) Kaznejov Prefecture
19) Tabayama Prefecture



Free Worlds League
1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Principality of Regulus
3) Duchy of Oriente
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Duchy of Graham-Marik
6) Stewart Commonality
7) The Protectorate
8) Duchy of Orloff
9) Regulan Free States
10) Principality of Gibson
11) Mosiro Archipelago
12) Abbey District
13) Duchy of Tamarind
14) Zion Province
15) Ohren Province
16) Rim Commonality
17) Silver Hawk Coalition

Capellan Confederation
1) Capellan Commonality
2) Sian Commonality

St. Ives Compact
3) St. Ives Commonality

The Periphery
1) Magistracy of Canopus
2) Taurian Concordat
3) Outworlds Alliance
4) Marian Hegemony
5) Circinus Federation
6) Lothian League
7) Illyrian Palatinate
8) Tortuga Dominions
9) Rim Collection

The Clan Occupation Zones
10) Clan Jade Falcon / Clan Steel Vi
11) Clan Wolf
12) Clan Ghost Bear
13) Clan Smoke Jaguar / Clan Nova

DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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THE TRUCE YEARS

The Truce Years were not free from conflict. Cross-border raids above the so-called Truce Line became frequent. The Inner Sphere enacted crash programs of research and development to close the technology gap. The industrial decay that marked the Succession Wars finally dissipated in the face of existential annihilation. WarShips began to reappear in Inner Sphere navies. New BattleMechs specifically designed to combat the Clans stalked the battlefield. The disparate peoples of the Inner Sphere rose to the challenge of defending their way of life.

The Clans did not suffer the Truce lightly. Ardent Crusaders sought to unseat ilKhan Kerensky and repudiate the Truce, and their manipulations eventually succeeded. The resulting fallout pitted Clan Jade Falcon against the Wolves in a massive Trial of Refusal. Both Clans suffered greatly. The Falcons were mauled, and the Wolves split into two factions. Phelan Kell took the Warden survivors of Clan Wolf into the Lyran state to guard against the Crusaders. The Crusaders reestablished their Clan under Vlad Ward. Khan Ward began his tenure by killing both Jade Falcon Khans. The Crusader Wolves earned the respect of the other Clans, while Khan Phelan Ward's Exiles were Abjured and branded as outlaws.

The Federated Commonwealth suffered its most grievous wound from within. Victor Steiner-Davion proved a poorer politician than general. His missteps led to the sundering of the great realm. The alliance forged by his parents collapsed. Victor's sister Katherine declared herself Archon of a new Lyran *Alliance*. Victor chose not to oppose her while the Clans threatened the Inner Sphere.

Sun-Tzu Liao succeeded his mother Romano as Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation after her assassination. The new Chancellor proved to be as cunning as his namesake. He instituted programs to inspire national pride in the beaten Capellan people and forged a tentative alliance with Captain-General Thomas Marik of the Free Worlds League. Their nations coordinated an attack on former Confederation and League territory conquered in the Fourth Succession War. The Capellan Confederation once again rose as a strong Successor State.

Theodore Kurita became Coordinator of the Draconis Combine after his father Takashi's death. The liberal Theodore instituted massive reforms across Combine society. His policies helped the Combine deal with the Clan threat and simultaneously created a new danger; traditionalists within Combine society vehemently opposed his reforms, and the Black Dragon Society worked in secret to undermine him. The pervasive cabal remained a threat throughout Theodore's reign.

Many Periphery nations prospered during the invasion. The Taurian Concordat forged strong ties with the Magistracy of Canopus. The New Colony Region blossomed between them. The Capellan Confederation entered an alliance with both major nations. The Marian Hegemony expanded its reach by conquering its weaker neighbors. Even the pacifistic Outworlds Alliance grew in power and influence.

Marthe Pryde

Jade Falcon Marthe Pryde was *sibkin* to Aidan Pryde, the legendary "Jade Phoenix," but Aidan's heroism could not outshine Marthe's own star. She reached her position without relying on politicking or devious plans. Her goals were met without ever sacrificing her personal honor. The Refusal War left Clan Jade Falcon fractured and vulnerable. Marthe's leadership stabilized the Clan and reminded all comers what it would mean to challenge the Jade Falcons.

Marthe was often seen as cold and aloof. She did not pursue options past the point of failure, nor did she dwell on failure, but honor did not bind Marthe to tradition. She allowed Aidan's freeborn daughter Diana to compete for the Pryde Bloodname. Marthe rolled with the tides of change instead of stubbornly opposing them. She moved her Clan to the Inner Sphere without hesitation or regret when the Wars of Reaving broke out. She was the Jade Falcon exemplar of her generation.

THE TWILIGHT OF SMOKE JAGUAR

Khan Marthe Pryde of the Jade Falcons unwittingly provided the final impetus the Great Houses needed to end the Clan Invasion when she initiated an invasion of the Lyran Alliance that skated close to violating the Truce of Tukayyid. Her purpose was to blood her latest generation of warriors. The alarmed Inner Sphere responded with a multi-national coalition. Pryde withdrew rather than fight the formidable alliance. The Inner Sphere had at last had enough. In a series of summits, the Great Houses formally established a new Star League.

This Star League's first priority was proving itself a legitimate threat to the Clans. The vicious Clan Smoke Jaguar was chosen as the target for this demonstration. The Jaguars would suffer the ultimate punishment: complete annihilation. The new Star League Defense Force succeeded, smashing the Jaguars and driving them from the Inner Sphere. A serendipitous event had earlier revealed the secret location of the Clan Homeworlds to the Star League, and a simultaneous strike force, Task Force Serpent, journeyed to the Jaguar homeworld of Huntress.

The other Clans took this new war in stride. Newly elected ilKhan Lincoln Osis did not call the Clans to aid his Smoke Jaguars, nor did those Clans offer aid themselves. Clan Ghost Bear abandoned the Crusader cause *and* the Clan Homeworlds. They declared their new nation within the Inner Sphere the Ghost Bear Dominion, and began a closer integration with the Rasalhagian people. Clan Nova Cat outright defected from Clan society and joined the new Star League. Theodore Kurita gifted them worlds within the Draconis Combine for their service.

Clan Smoke Jaguar crumbled under the might of the new Star League. Their annihilation was completed in months. Victor Steiner-Davion then led a coalition force to the Clan capital of Strana Mechty, where they engaged the Crusader Clans in a series of Trials known as the Great Refusal to overturn Operation Revival and put a stop to the Clan Invasion.

The Star League triumphed. The Clan Invasion formally ended.

None of us wishes to see more conflict, but we can no longer ignore the problems plaguing us. Now we must live with the results, however painful, as we acknowledge the irreconcilable difierences that continue to divide my sister from me. It is no longer possible for me to stand back in the interest of peace. The time has come, my people, where no other choice remains.

None but war.

—Broadcast made by Victor Steiner-Davion, December 8, 3062, to the people of the former Federated Commonwealtll

THE CIVIL WAR

THE FEDERATED COMMONWEALTH

The Federated Commonwealth was a great experiment in unity after centuries of ceaseless war. It began as a peace proposal by Archon Katrina Steiner of the Lyran Commonwealth. Only First Prince Hanse Davion of the Federated Suns responded with an acceptable counterproposal. The two nations shared many beliefs and enemies. Talks grew beyond a simple alliance into a full union of the two realms. The military competence of the Federated Suns complemented the economic might of the Lyrans. Cooperation between scientists hastened the recovery of data from the Helm Memory Core. The FedCom seemed poised to dominate the whole of the Inner Sphere.

Integration on such a massive scale came with its challenges. Old prejudices never died out. Separatist movements threatened the unity. The pressure of the Clan Invasion exacerbated existing tensions. Strong leadership was needed to ensure continuity of the realm after the deaths of Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner-Davion, but their children did not provide that leadership. The Commonwealth's enemies did little more than sit back and watch as simmering embers erupted into civil war.

But the Federated Commonwealth proved that the Successor States were capable of working together, for a brief time at least. It was the prototype for the Second Star League.

OPERATION GUERRERO

Joshua Marik, son of Captain-General Thomas Marik, was diagnosed with leukemia at a young age. First Prince Hanse Davion arranged treatments for Joshua at the New Avalon Institute of Science in return for military equipment from the Free Worlds League. When the young Marik died on New Avalon during his treatments, Victor Steiner-Davion, on advice of his counselors, authorized the replacement of the dead boy with a doppelganger to ensure continued delivery of materiel to the Federated Commonwealth.

Thomas Marik's discovery of his son's death and replacement prompted retaliation. In September 3057, the Free Worlds League Military launched Operation Guerrero, a series of attacks against the narrow territory linking the two halves of the FedCom. The operation's goal was to recover worlds lost in the Fourth Succession War. At the same time, Thomas Marik's prospective son-in-law, Sun-Tzu Liao, launched attacks on the Sarna March, and Victor's sister Katherine seized control of the Lyran state. While Operation Guerrero made limited gains, it sundered the Federated Commonwealth and caused chaos in the former Sarna March. This provided a fertile breeding ground for discontent that the Word of Blake later exploited. The Capellan Confederation's gains provided impetus to Sun-Tzu's Xin Sheng movement and the resurgence of House Liao after the disastrous Fourth Succession War.

OTHER CONFLICTS

The rest of the Inner Sphere did not sit idly by as the FedCom nations tore themselves to shreds. The illusion of alliance kept the other Great Houses from outright preying upon their ancient enemies. The Second Star League's accords were still in effect, and no lord wanted to be the first to violate them. Gains were instead made through subterfuge. Sun-Tzu Liao used political maneuvering and treachery to seize the long-disputed world of Tikonov for the Capellan Confederation. The Word of Blake expanded its influence from Terra into the disputed Chaos March. Clan Jade Falcon enacted an incursion of Lyran space. The Sandoval Offensive resulted in brutal fighting along the Draconis Combine–Federated Suns border. House Kurita became embroiled in a war with Clan Ghost Bear, leaving acting First Lord Theodore Kurita unable to intervene.

Xin Sheng

Xin Sheng ("New Birth") is a cultural movement instigated in 3060 by Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao of the Capellan Confederation to restore national pride in the people he ruled. The Confederation lost significant territory in the Fourth Succession War and struggled during the Clan Invasion. *Xin Sheng* unified the disparate cultures and heritages of the Confederation under the banner of Chinese Han culture. This included reorganizing the Capellan Confederation Armed Forces (CCAF), renaming all ranks with Chinese equivalents, and nationalizing mercenaries with long standing service to the Confederation (most notably, McCarron's Armored Cavalry). Efforts were made to retake worlds lost during the Succession Wars, like the St. Ives Compact and the Tikonov region. The movement brought a surge in productivity across the Confederation, spurring economic growth and helping to stabilize the hemorrhaging Capellan economy. *Xin Sheng* brought the Capellan people together by focusing not on the ethnicity of individuals or regions, but on the fact that they were all Capellans.

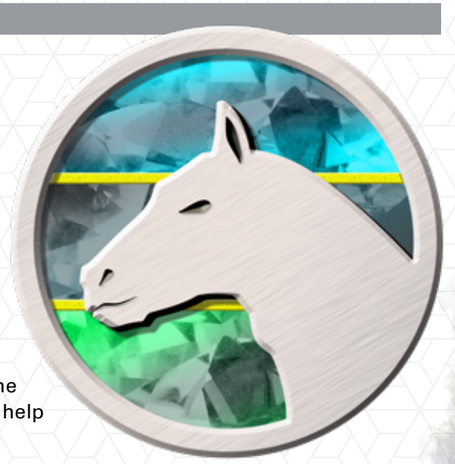
Sun-Tzu Liao

Sun-Tzu Liao was arguably the most dynamic House Lord of the late thirty-first century. The Capellan Confederation he inherited from his paranoid, unstable mother was on the verge of collapse. Sun-Tzu leveraged his innate political acumen and extraordinarily cunning mind to rebuild his nation into a true power of the Inner Sphere. All of Sun-Tzu's actions served his ultimate goal of bettering the Capellan state and its citizens. He was as grand a strategist as his namesake. His elegant machinations unfurled in ways that benefited him no matter the outcome. Pride, prosperity, and a good deal of lost territory returned to the Confederation through his policies.

Sun-Tzu's distrust of outsiders led him to undervalue foreign alliances; his allies served a purpose and were then discarded. Only the Magistracy of Canopus could forge a lasting relationship with the Capellan Confederation through Sun-Tzu's marriage to Naomi Centrella.

Sun-Tzu's death in 3113 remains shrouded in mystery. Capellan citizens believe that Sun-Tzu ascended to godhood. Rumors persist that he never actually died, and will return to lead the Confederation to even greater glory.

The St. Ives Compact



Following the Fourth Succession War, the St. Ives Commonality left the battered Capellan Confederation, entering an unequal alliance with the nascent Federated Commonwealth. The St. Ives Compact faced pressure from a perpetual low-intensity brush war against the spurned Capellans, and war reparations to the FedCom.

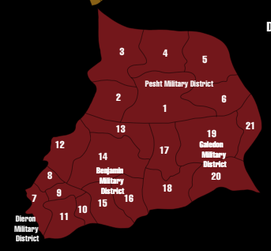
Under the ruling Allard-Liao family, the Compact leveraged House Allard's ties to Houses Steiner and Davion, rebuilding industries and improving the quality of life for its population. Never large, the St. Ives Military Command was suited to the defense of the Compact, aided by materiel and troops from the Federated Commonwealth and top-tier mercenaries. The Compact repaid this aid by sending their best forces to help fight the Clans.

As the FedCom came to blows, Sun-Tzu Liao saw an opportunity to strike his aunt's weakened realm. After a tenacious three-year war, Candace Liao negotiated her realm's reintegration into the Capellan Confederation to end the fighting.

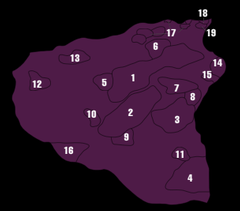
THE INNER SPHERE 3063

Lyran Alliance
1) Coventry Province
2) Melissia Theater
3) Alarion Province
4) Timbuktu Theater
5) Bolan Province
6) Cavanaugh Theater
7) Skye Province
8) Freedom Theater
9) Donegal Province
10) Pandora Theater
11) Arc-Royal Defense Cordon

Federated Suns
Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
1) Woodbine Operational Area
Capellan March
3) Kathil Operational Area
4) Taygeta Operational Area
Crucis March
5) Markesan Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area
7) Minette Operational Area



Draconis Combine
Pesht Military District
1) Kagoshima Prefecture
2) Irece Prefecture
3) Albiero Prefecture
4) Bjarred Prefecture
5) Qandahar Prefecture
6) Ningxia Prefecture
Dieron Military District
7) Kessel Prefecture
8) Vega Prefecture
9) Algedi Prefecture
10) Ashio Prefecture
11) Al Na'ir Prefecture
Benjamin Military District
12) Buckminster Prefecture
13) Xinyang Prefecture
14) Benjamin Prefecture
15) Proserpina Prefecture
16) Irurzun Prefecture
Galedon Military District
17) Oshika Prefecture
18) Matsuida Prefecture
19) New Samarkand Prefecture
20) Kaznejov Prefecture
21) Tabayama Prefecture



Free Worlds League
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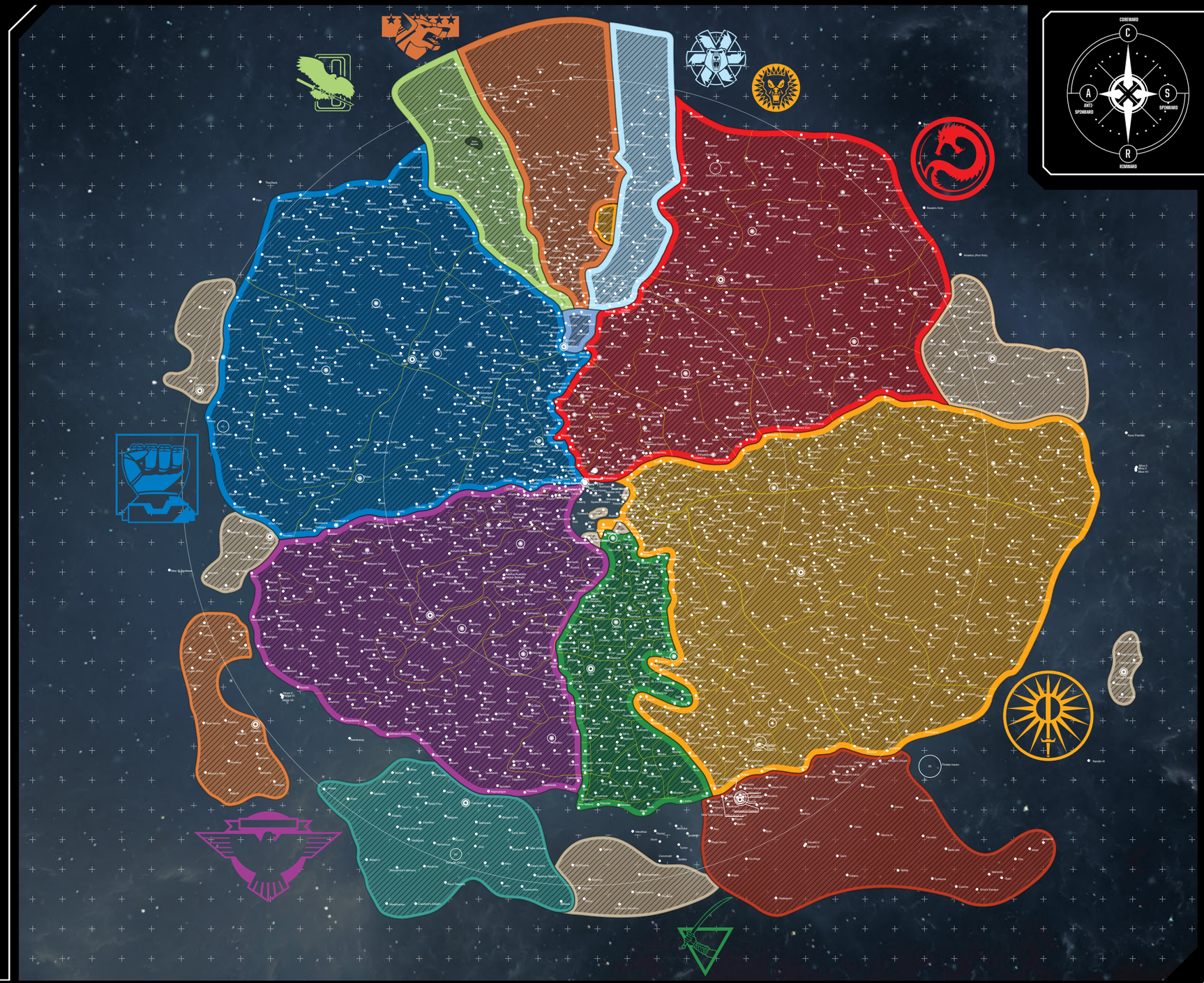
3) Duchy of Oriente
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Duchy of Graham-Marik
6) Stewart Commonality
7) The Protectorate
8) Duchy of Orloff
9) Regulan Free States
10) Principality of Gibson
11) Mosiro Archipelago
12) Abbey District
13) Duchy of Tamarind
14) Zion Province
15) Ohren Province
16) Rim Commonality
17) Silver Hawk Coalition
18) Border Protectorate
19) Sirian Concordat

Capellan Confederation
1) Liao Commonality
2) Capellan Commonality
3) Sian Commonality
4) St. Ives Commonality
5) Victoria Commonality
6) Styk Protectorate
7) Sarna Protectorate

The Periphery
1) Magistracy of Canopus
2) Taurian Concordat
3) Outworlds Alliance
4) Marian Hegemony
5) Circinus Federation
6) New Colony Region
7) Tortuga Dominions
8) Rim Collection

The Clan Occupation Zones
9) Clan Jade Falcon
10) Clan Wolf
11) Clan Ghost Bear
12) Clan Hell's Horses

Chaos March
13) Saiph Triumvirate
14) Terracap Confederation
15) Duchy of Small



DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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THE FEDCOM CIVIL WAR

Many historians say that the Federated Commonwealth was doomed from the beginning. Strain existed in the alliance since its first major venture, the Fourth Succession War. Lyran hardliners saw First Prince Hanse Davion as a manipulator who would send their children to die for his gain. Davion's own generals considered their Lyran counterparts inept, and feared they would bungle any joint military operations. The first cracks appeared when the Federation of Skye attempted to secede from the alliance shortly after the Fourth Succession War. Agitators and nationalists within both realms continued to stir a wicked insurrection brew for decades.

The untimely deaths of both Hanse Davion and Archon Melissa Steiner-Davion accelerated the decline. The popularity of each ruler within their respective halves of the great union kept most separatist grumblings in check. Their son Victor, the first and last holder the title of Archon-Prince, was too polarizing a figure to lead such fragmented peoples. Victor's military prowess did not translate to political or diplomatic success. A number of simple missteps led to discontent with his rule, especially within the Lyran half of the realm. Archon Melissa's murder became a particular sticking point. Dissidents accused Victor of assassinating his mother to speed his ascent to power.

Victor came to rely on his sister Katherine for public relations. Katherine outwardly embodied many characteristics of her beloved mother Melissa and equally beloved grandmother Katrina. She took to calling herself Katrina to enhance this perception. Victor remained focused on the Clan invaders, allowing a different threat—Katherine—to gnaw on his realm from within.

But no public relations could have saved Victor when the ill-conceived plot was exposed to replace Free Worlds League Captain-General Thomas Marik's son Joshua with a double. Katherine decried this action and declared the secession of the Lyran portion of the nation, calling it the Lyran Alliance. The physical sundering of the Federated Commonwealth hastened its cultural decay. Citizens' loyalty became strongly divided between Victor and Katherine, and either House Davion or House Steiner, rather than the united House Steiner-Davion.

Katherine's propaganda portrayed her as a compassionate ruler. She excoriated her brother as a war-mongering deviant, incapable and unworthy of rule. Katherine's rule, however, was in fact tyrannical. Voices of dissent within her realm were quickly and permanently silenced. She alienated Davion loyalists. Her appointment of Tormano Liao, son of Maximilian Liao, to an advisory position was seen as nothing less than treason. These hardliners saw Victor as the true heir of Hanse Davion, and urged him to depose his sister.

Victor chose not to oppose his sister's usurpation of half of his realm; doing so would ignite simmering angers into full-blown conflict. Even when evidence surfaced proving Katherine's involvement in their mother's assassination, Victor postponed acting. The Clans remained a threat, and the years won in the Truce of Tukayyid slowly ticked away. To send the Federated Commonwealth into chaos would be to hand the Inner Sphere to the Clans.

Victor's final mistake was leaving his younger sister Yvonne in charge of the Federated Suns while he pursued Clan Smoke Jaguar to the Clan Homeworlds. Victor won the Great Refusal, and all it cost him was his kingdom. Naive and gullible, Yvonne fell under Katherine's sway, and ceded rule to her. Victor Steiner-Davion returned to find he no longer had a nation.

Even this second usurpation failed to spur Victor to war. Instead of denouncing his sisters, he accepted the post of Precentor Martial of ComStar. It fell to nobles in the Federated Suns to resist Katherine's tyranny. George Hasek all but declared his Capellan March independent. Katherine became more unstable as elements within her government and military spoke out against her. Arthur Steiner-Davion, the youngest brother of the Steiner-Davion children, became a rallying point for anti-Katherine sentiment. When Arthur was killed

in a terrorist bombing, Victor finally reached his breaking point. The embers that had long simmered at last erupted into flame.

The resulting war touched nearly every world under the FedCom aegis. It was not a conflict constrained by borders. Victor and Katherine both had supporters on every world in the FedCom. As tensions grew, clashes became frequent. Neighbors argued, classmates bickered, and old friends found themselves at odds. For four long years, the Federated Commonwealth ground itself out of existence.

In the end, Victor defeated his sister. Katherine surrendered on New Avalon as her generals fled or died by suicide. Victor did not resume his throne after the war. His name was forever soiled by the fact that he had ignited the hostilities and caused so much death. He instead resumed his post as Precentor Martial of ComStar. The people of the now fully sundered Federated Commonwealth nations would be ruled by Peter Steiner-Davion in the Lyran Alliance, and a wiser Yvonne Steiner-Davion in the Federated Suns. Katherine was later surrended to Khan Vlad Ward of Clan Wolf, who was besotted with her. Vlad threatened to renew aggression with the Lyran Commonwealth unless Katherine was released to his custody.

The cost of the war in lives, industry, and morale had barely begun to be counted when the next horror descended.

Victor Steiner-Davion

The heir of First Prince Hanse Davion and Archon Melissa Steiner was never destined for an easy life. The long shadows cast by his parents spurred Victor to achieve more than most. His sense of justice guided most of his actions. He excelled as a general,a but his political missteps were often as damaging as his military victories were impressive. Victor became a polarizing figure. His comrades appreciated his candor and dedication. His opponents saw him as inheriting the worst of his father's militaristic tendencies. After his mother's assassination, he finally ascended to the dual thrones. He was the first and last Archon-Prince of the Federated Commonwealth.

Victor spent his life opposing tyranny across all human space. His crusade stretched from Strana Mechty in the Clan Homeworlds to New Avalon and the defeat of his usurping sister, and to Terra and the downfall of the Word of Blake. He later recognized the divisiveness of his presence and stepped back from leadership to aid Devlin Stone in building the Republic of the Sphere. Victor fought for freedom until the end of his life, helping expose a conspiracy to overthrow the Republic government. He was assassinated by the conspirators.

Katherine Steiner-Davion

The second child of Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner always resented her older brother Victor. Katherine saw him as a bumbling warrior whose only solution to a problem was to stomp it with his BattleMech. She believed that her ability to bend people to her will with a smile and polite word made her more fit to rule. Katherine hid a devious mind behind a smile beloved by the media. Her legendary beauty was matched only by her ruthless thirst for power.

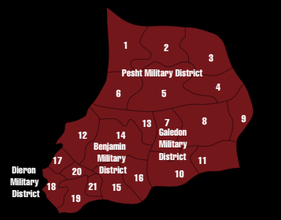
Katherine tolerated no criticism. She was prone to fits of rage, and she harshly punished those who failed her. She commanded loyalty through fear and manipulation. Paranoia and uncertainty were common among sycophants during her illegitimate reign over the Federated Commonwealth.

She remained influential even in defeat. Khan Vlad Ward claimed her for Clan Wolf and used her as an adviser. She remained powerful within the Clan after Vlad's death. Her greatest coup was raising and training her offspring, Alaric. Alaric proved himself his mother's son by murdering her to eliminate a potential rival. He was well on his way to fulfilling her dreams of total dominion over humanity.

THE INNER SPHERE 3067

Inner Sphere Powers

1) Word of Blake
2) Clan Jade Falcon
3) Ghost Bear Dominion
4) Clan Wolf
5) Outworlds Alliance
6) Tortuga Dominions
7) Calderon Protectorate
8) Taurian Concordat
9) Fronc Reaches
10) Magistry of Canopus
11) Marian Hegemony
12) Circinus Federation
12) Rim Collection



Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Albiero Prefecture
2) Bjarred Prefecture
3) Qandahar Prefecture
4) Ningxia Prefecture
5) Kagoshima Prefecture
6) Irece Prefecture

Galedon Military District
7) Oshika Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Tabayama Prefecture
10) Matsuida Prefecture
11) Kaznejoy Prefecture

Benjamin Military Distr
12) Buckminster Prefec
13) Xinyang Prefecture
14) Benjamin Prefectur
15) Proserpina Prefectu
16) Iruzun Prefecture

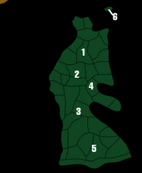
Dieron Military District
17) Vega Prefecture
18) Kessel Prefecture
19) Al Na'ir Prefecture
20) Algedi Prefecture
21) Ashio Prefecture

Federated Suns

Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Woodbine Operational Area

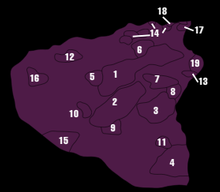
Capellan March
3) Kathil Operational Area
4) Taygeta Operational Area

Crucis March
5) Markesan Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area
7) Minette Operational Area



Capellan Confederation

1) Liao Commonality
2) Capellan Commonality
3) Sian Commonality
4) St Ives Commonality
5) Victoria Commonality
6) Tikonov



Former Free Worlds League

1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Principality of Regulus
3) Duchy of Oriente
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Duchy of Graham-Marik
6) Stewart Commonality
7) The Protectorate
8) Duchy of Orloff
9) Regulan Free States
10) Principality of Gibson
11) Mosiro Archipelago
12) Duchy of Tamarind
13) Ohren Province
14) Silver Hawk Coalition
15) Rim Commonality
16) Abbey District
17) Sirian Concordat
18) Border Protectorate
19) Zion Province

Lyran Alliance

Provinces
1) Donegal Province
2) Arc-Royal Theater
3) Coventry Province
4) Melissa Theater
5) Alarion Province
6) Timbuktu Theater
7) Bolan Province
8) Cavanaugh Theater
9) Skye Province
10) Freedom Theater

DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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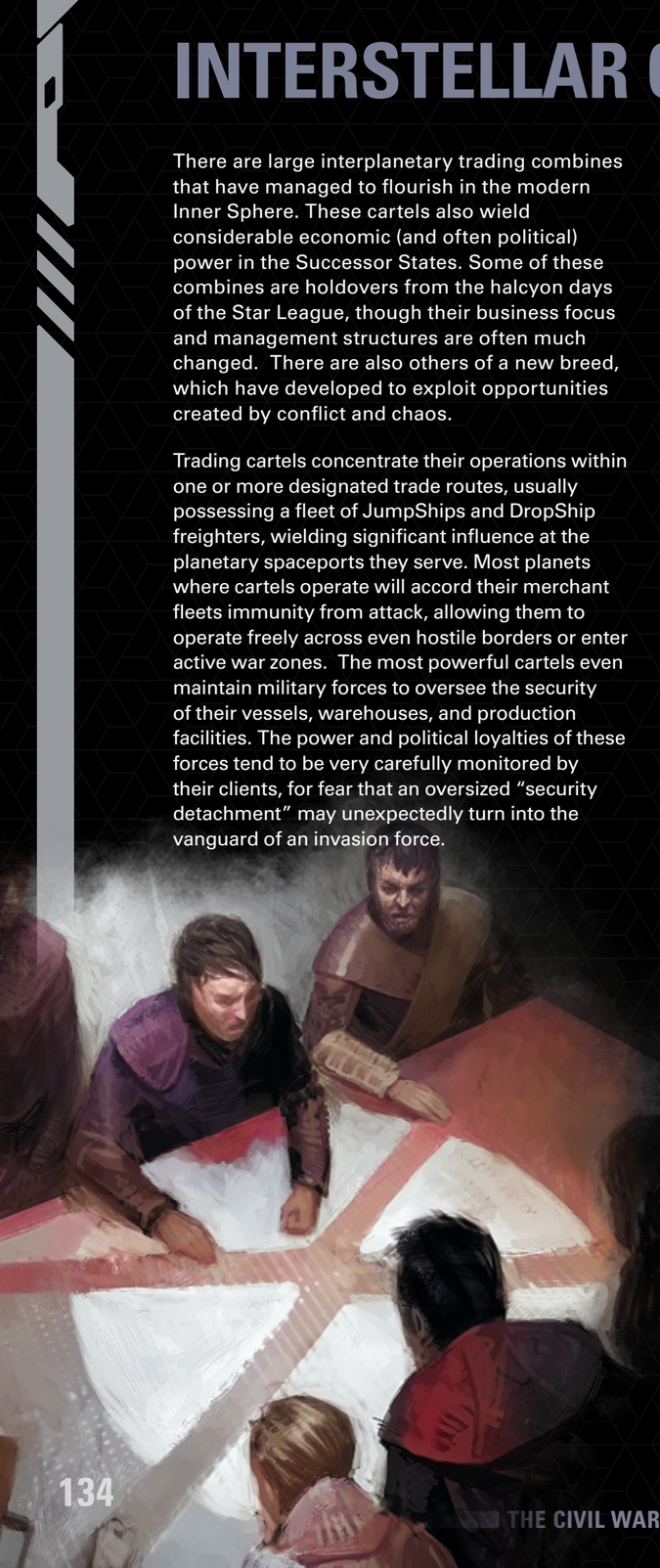
INTERSTELLAR CORPORATIONS

There are large interplanetary trading combines that have managed to flourish in the modern Inner Sphere. These cartels also wield considerable economic (and often political) power in the Successor States. Some of these combines are holdovers from the halcyon days of the Star League, though their business focus and management structures are often much changed. There are also others of a new breed, which have developed to exploit opportunities created by conflict and chaos.

Trading cartels concentrate their operations within one or more designated trade routes, usually possessing a fleet of JumpShips and DropShip freighters, wielding significant influence at the planetary spaceports they serve. Most planets where cartels operate will accord their merchant fleets immunity from attack, allowing them to operate freely across even hostile borders or enter active war zones. The most powerful cartels even maintain military forces to oversee the security of their vessels, warehouses, and production facilities. The power and political loyalties of these forces tend to be very carefully monitored by their clients, for fear that an oversized "security detachment" may unexpectedly turn into the vanguard of an invasion force.



The largest interstellar corporations are major economic forces with interests throughout most of the Inner Sphere. Though military planners primary focus on their weapons manufacturing sites, these firms typically are far more diversified, operating major mining, refining, and manufacturing facilities on hundreds of worlds, producing all manner of military and non-military components and equipment. Their fleets of freighters have carte blanche throughout the Inner Sphere, and their political power on their core planets rivals that of the local bureaucracies. They maintain neutrality by supplying arms and equipment to anyone who can pay, keeping any preferences among their clients well hidden. Average citizens throughout the Inner Sphere satisfy their everyday needs with products and services that they may never imagine are connected to these massive corporate entities.

It is rumored that many of the largest interstellar corporations have established a host of informal agreements among themselves, making backroom deals in the name of corporate superiority. Evidence has been hard to find amidst a byzantine tide of shell companies, accounting tricks, and "act of God" writeoffs. It is likely that cabal members would provide mutual assistance to crush non-member competitors and maximize market share and profit margins, and facilitate corporate espionage. Off-books "deniable assets" may be employed when opportunities present themselves outside of legal boundaries. If a Corporate Cabal does exist, one of its prime areas of concern would certainly be on how to deal with Clan Sea Fox.

The most mercantile of the Clans, the modern Sea Foxes prowl the Inner Sphere in search of profit opportunities, their ArcShips and CargoShips vastly eclipsing the capabilities of the established trading cartels. Their reputation for quality products, hard but honorable bargaining, and their proven ability to blockade entire star systems places them at the apex of everything to which an interstellar corporation could aspire. The question remains of whether the Spheroid companies will continue to treat the ascendant Sea Foxes as a potential trading partner or as an arch competitor. The answer will determine whether competition is waged with ink on contracts or blood in the streets.

Achernar BattleMechs

Aldis Industries

Arc-Royal MechWorks

Alshain Weapons

Cal-Boeing of Dorwinion

Ceres Metals Industries

Coventry Metal Works

Defiance Industries

Diplan 'Mechyards

Earthwerks Incorporated

Hellespont Industrials

Independence Weaponry

Irian Technologies

Kali Yama Weapons Industries Inc.

Lushann Industries Ltd.

Luthien Armor Works

Menke Armor and Armaments

Nashan Diversified

Quikscell Company

Swedenborg Heavy Industries

All of history is a river, driven by currents of inertia that few can resist…and that fewer still can ever hope to comprehend.

Great men are those who can see the currents and navigate them to glory… but only a true Master can find a way to tame the currents themselves, to use history's own momentum as an instrument of true change.

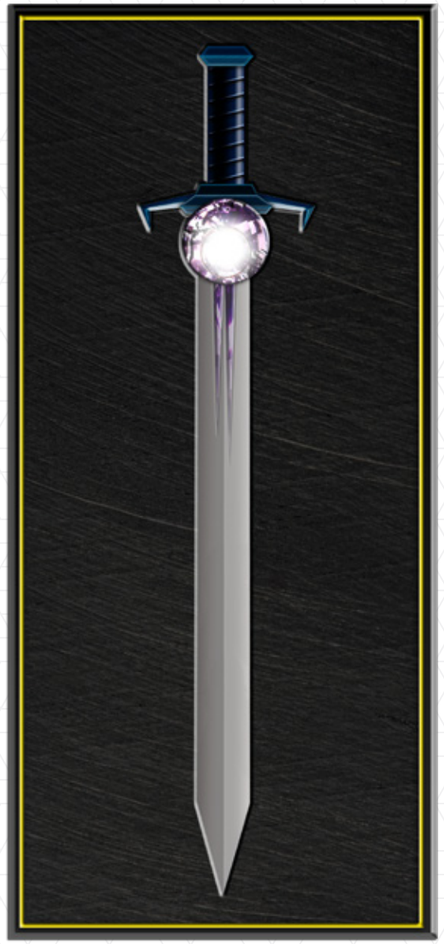
Merely jumping in front of history is not enough, but neither is facing it head-on. No matter how strong the personality, the current will simply wash away those who surrender to it, and erode away those who fight it.

All our preparations, all our efforts, have led us to this day…the day of our reckoning, but is it enough? It has to be enough! Though the names have changed, and the villains have changed, the outcome has to be no less than history demanded…in the ashes of war, we shall find our vindication.

Blake's will be done!

—Attributed to Thomas "The Master" Marik in his final days, 3081

THE JIHAD



THE WORD OF BLAKE JIHAD

The Federated Commonwealth Civil War had barely wound down when a new, more terrible conflict arose. A secret threat had grown at the heart of the Inner Sphere for years; the splinter faction of ComStar known as the Word of Blake, which seized Terra in 3058. Precentor Martial Focht of ComStar deemed the loss inconsequential and kept his focus on defeating the Clans. He saw the Blakists as disorganized and weak.

This mistake had ramifications for all of humanity.

At its inception, the Word of Blake was disparate and ineffective. Factions within the organization bickered about what direction to take. Primus William Blane nominally held power over a coalition of the moderate Blakist factions, but he was a clueless figurehead. The real power within the Word of Blake was Thomas Marik. The *real* Thomas Marik.

This was not the same Thomas Marik who led the Free Worlds League for three decades. That man was a double, inserted by ComStar after an assassination attempt. The real Thomas Marik burrowed deeper into his ComStar faith. The injuries inflicted by the assassin's bomb required rebuilding him as a cyborg. Whether this permanently altered his mental state is debatable. What is known is that he took the moniker of "The Master," and gathered legions of loyal fanatics.

Second Star League

The Second Star League was the result of many long years of diplomacy and negotiation. Its purpose was ostensibly the betterment of the human condition through unity, but in reality, it was an alliance of convenience designed to intimidate a common foe: the invading Clans.

It is debatable how many of the Inner Sphere's leaders entered the pact with altruistic motives. Each sought to use the Star League for their own gains. Sun-Tzu Liao abused his position as First Lord to absorb a fellow member state. Katherine Steiner-Davion tried to maneuver into the First Lordship to quench her thirst for personal power. The Inner Sphere was simply not ready for full reunification, and no alliance can last long beyond the conclusion of its purpose.

The Clans always regarded the Second Star League as a sham. They believed that their own society was the only one worthy of reforming that august body, and refused Victor Steiner-Davion's invitation to join. But their disdain came tinged with apprehension. The example of Clan Smoke Jaguar's Annihilation by the new SLDF loomed over them.

The House Lords deemed the Second Star League as moot after the conclusion of the FedCom Civil War. None suspected that the League's dissolution would lead to a war that would rock all of human space.

Terra was not as insignificant as Focht believed. The Blakists used Terra's factories to institute an incredible military buildup. Dozens of divisions were raised in secret. Old WarShip hulls were salvaged and returned to service. The intended purpose of such a massive army was nothing less than the absolute destruction of the Clans.

The Word of Blake was still very much a religious cult. Prophecy and portent played as much of a role in their policies as economics and diplomacy. The Blakists read much into the formation of the Second Star League. They believed that this new unity would herald the beginning of a second golden age. The one missing element needed to guide humanity to that enlightenment was the divinely ordained leadership of the Word of Blake. The Blakists expected their Protectorate, which had grown to encompass several systems neighboring Terra, to be recognized and inducted as a member at the Whitting Conference in 3067. Instead, they watched in horror as the House Lords dissolved the sacred Second Star League.

What followed represented perhaps the single greatest outburst of unfettered rage in history. Blakist leaders first pleaded with the House Lords to reconsider. Then they turned to coercion. Then enormous Blakist fleets arrived at some Successor State capital worlds to coincide with the Whitting Conference. They were supposedly there to extend a hand of friendship and relief to war-weary worlds. Instead, they rained fire from orbit. If the powers of the Inner Sphere would so callously dissolve the Star League a second time, then they would burn with it. The Word of Blake stood ready to rebuild civilization on their ashes, with themselves at the helm, as ComStar had always intended.

Jaime Wolf

Jaime Wolf was among the most impactful people in both the Inner Sphere and the Clans during the early thirty-first century. He began his warrior career in the Clan Homeworlds as a Clan Wolf freeborn. His tactical skill and prowess with a BattleMech brought him fame at a young age, and he climbed the ranks despite the bias against freeborns in Clan society. Khan Kerlin Ward selected Jaime and his brother Joshua to pose as mercenaries and lead a deep reconnaissance mission to the Inner Sphere. Thus were born Wolf's Dragoons.

Professionalism and unrivaled skill put Jaime's Dragoons in high demand. Jamie served and fought each of the Successor States in turn. He learned their strengths and weaknesses. Intelligence he provided to the Clans helped them prepare their invasion.

Jaime suffered a number of personal tragedies during these years. His wife, daughters, and brother were murdered by Anton Marik. Political maneuvering by a Draconis Combine warlord pitted Jaime against his friend, Minobu Tetsuhara, in a battle that nearly spelled the end of the Dragoons. Jaime channeled the pain of these and other losses to drive himself and the Dragoons ever onward.

The world of Outreach became a permanent home for the Dragoons after the Fourth Succession War. From there, Jaime prepared for the inevitable Clan Invasion. To Jaime, his actions on behalf of the Inner Sphere were never a betrayal of the Clans. Kerlin Ward's final orders were to protect the Inner Sphere from the Crusader Clans. Jaime helped the Inner Sphere's armies oppose the Clan invasion but refused to divulge the location of the Clan Homeworlds to the Inner Sphere.

He became a champion of mercenaries after working in the trade for so long. His Dragoons created and oversaw the Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission. The mercenary profession gained a great deal of integrity under the MRBC. The death of his son MacKenzie and a civil war within the Dragoons made Jaime step back from battlefield command and turn to more political matters. He used his influence to form the Allied Mercenary Command to oppose expansion of the Word of Blake in systems around Terra and Outreach.

But despite his turn to politics, Jaime still fought in his cockpit at an age most people would consider elderly. He finally fell when his old nemesis Wayne Waco led a group of renegade mercenaries—sponsored by the Word of Blake—in an attack against Outreach. His death is regarded as the opening shot of the Blakist Jihad.

A FIFTH SUCCESSION WAR?

The Blakist army could not conquer the Inner Sphere; their numbers were simply too few. Their advantage lay in keeping the Great Houses off balance. Regional prejudices reemerged in the wake of the end of the Clan Invasion. The FedCom Civil War was not the only conflagration waiting to erupt. Blakist agents fanned the flames of these conflicts where they could. Some needed no interference at all to erupt into violence. The dissolution of the Second Star League itself provided the impetus.

The first blow of the Jihad fell before the fateful Whitting Conference even occurred. Wolf's Dragoons had formed a mercenary coalition on Outreach to oppose the spread of the Word of Blake through the disputed Chaos March. In return, the Blakists instigated a renegade mercenary strike against Outreach. Jaime Wolf was killed in a duel with an old nemesis who lead the attacking mercenaries. The enraged Dragoon survivors struck back by attacking Mars. They were the first victims of the Word's improved defenses. The Blakists' retaliation reduced Outreach to a radioactive ruin. The legendary Wolf's Dragoons were shattered.

Thomas Halas (Marik)

When Thomas Marik suffered terrible injuries in an assassination attempt that also killed his father, Janos, ComStar inserted a double—Thomas Halas—to rule the Free Worlds League until the real Marik's recovery. No one knows who Halas was before ascending to the role, but Halas became more independent as the real Thomas Marik grew disinterested in the affairs of state. Halas retained a strong sense of honor and idealism. he founded the Knights of the Inner Sphere to embody chivalric ideals. It was Halas' leadership that ushered the Free Worlds League into its greatest age of prosperity since the Star League. The irony that the most effective leader of the Free Worlds League was not of its ruling family is not lost on historians.

The real Thomas Marik's Word of Blake exposed Halas as an imposter when Halas refused to support the Jihad. Halas abandoned the Marik deception and took the surname of Sherryl Halas, his wife, to distinguish himself from the real Thomas Marik and his abominable actions. Halas never stopped believing in peace and unity. He instilled in his daughter Jessica the belief that their sundered realm could one day be made whole again.

Three Inner Sphere capital worlds suffered catastrophes at the hands of the Word of Blake after the Whitting Conference. Luthien once again fell victim to Black Dragon treachery, and the battle devolved into a three-army tangle once the Word of Blake landed. Tharkad City exploded when a supposed warning shot from a Blakist WarShip caused a catastrophic radioactive chemical detonation. Blakist troops seized New Avalon, cutting off the head of the Federated Suns.

The House Lords scrambled to restore order. Power-hungry nobles pursued personal agendas rather than concentrate on the true enemy. Scarcely a border remained calm as old grudges resurged. Regent Yvonne Steiner-Davion of the Federated Suns had to deal with rebel March Lords starting wars against both of her Successor State neighbors. The Lyran Alliance devolved into a more distributed form of government; multiple so-called Archonettes—leaders of "Little Kingdoms" within the Lyran Alliance—fancied themselves Successor Lords in their own right. The Draconis Combine suffered a crisis of leadership after the untimely death of Coordinator Theodore Kurita and the capture of his heir Hohiro by the Word of Blake. Sun-Tzu Liao's Capellan Confederation fared the best. United by nationalist fervor, the Capellans repelled the Word of Blake and other predatory neighbors.

Quarrels within the Free Worlds League ended in an event that shocked the Inner Sphere: the Word of Blake exposed Thomas Marik as a double. The League tumbled into political chaos. A bickering and divided Parliament decided they could no longer function as a united government. The Free Worlds League was dissolved. The Blakists' machinations accomplished what over 300 years of civil and Succession Wars could not. A Successor State had fallen.

The Clans dealt with internal problems in addition to Blakist strikes. Clan Jade Falcon habitually struck into the Lyran Alliance. Clan Snow Raven moved into the Outworlds Alliance after being ejected from the Homeworlds. A Blakist-induced border war with the Combine followed. The Hell's Horses returned to exact revenge on Khan Vlad Ward's Wolves.

Periphery nations usually weathered the wars of the Inner Sphere untouched. Not so with the Jihad. The Taurian Concordat was goaded into attacking the Federated Suns, but their initial successes mattered little against the Suns' counterattack. The Concordat was sundered. Some worlds joined the breakaway Calderon Protectorate. Many were simply lost to the void.

The chaos of wholesale destruction gripped the Inner Sphere. Factories became targets for obliteration rather than capture. Attackers burned what they could not haul off as booty. The Word of Blake was not the only perpetrator of such wanton destruction; the Great Houses attacked each other's infrastructure in ways not seen since the darkest days of the Succession Wars. Shipyards and JumpShips once again became targets. The recovery of the Helm Memory Core emboldened such strikes. The Inner Sphere thought that they could rebuild easily. They learned otherwise.

Military hardware shortages plagued every army. Too many years of fighting whittled their numbers to dangerously low levels. Never before had Successor States protected their borders with so little. The thirst for equipment gave rise to a new industry. "RetroTech" BattleMechs packed less punch than their modern counterparts, but their older technology was easier, cheaper, and faster to produce, and thus deployed in greater numbers. RetroTech factories sprang up on unlikely worlds. Isolation and obscurity protected them from attack. Fears of a new technological regression crept into the minds of those canny enough to recognize the existential threat of the continuing war.

"The Blood"

Speculation over the fate of the Minnesota Tribe took on an especially elaborate form during the Jihad, with one story placing the supposed Clan Wolverine survivors at the heart of the Word of Blake.

According to the story presented in highly questionable documents produced by Chandrasekhar Kurita, the Minnesota Tribe were indeed remnants of the Not-Named Clan, but did not disappear into the Periphery as commonly accepted history holds. Instead, they were intercepted by ComStar in June 2826 and offered sanctuary on Mars. A faction within the former Clan's civilian population used the respite to forge a cult-like splinter within ComStar known as "the Blood," with the intention of gradually co-opting the communications giant from within and using its power to conquer both the Inner Sphere and their former brethren. According to the documents, these efforts were only partially successful, and "the Blood" became the secret inner core of the Word of Blake, directly responsible for launching its Jihad.

Though utterly dismissed by most serious historians and the populace at large, these documents did play a very real role in shaping the Jihad. In 3074, Kurita and Devlin Stone passed this information to the Ghost Bears to bring the powerful Clan into the war. Even the possibility that their hated enemy had survived in some form was enough to cause the Bears to rush headlong into the conflict—though they ultimately found no evidence of any kind that "the Blood" ever existed.

BEATING BACK THE DARKNESS

Confusion and uncertainty gripped the Inner Sphere. Guns were pointed outward as the Great Houses hunkered down. No one seemed focused on the threat centered at the cradle of humanity. The Blake Protectorate expanded its borders into the territory of neighbors too exhausted to fight back. Some efforts were made to address their influence, led by Victor Steiner-Davion and the shattered remains of ComStar. ComStar itself fell under heavy suspicion. Much of the organization's membership had been subverted by their wayward brethren. The Word of Blake kept its enemies unbalanced. The infamous Donner Bombing killed many who might have organized against them.

But in times of great need, great heroes often emerge. A charismatic man named Devlin Stone rose to the challenge of leadership. Stone first appeared leading an uprising at a Word of Blake internment camp on Kittery. From there his band of insurgents quickly grew as did his personal campaign against the Blakists. Stone convinced the House Lords one by one to support his drive against the Word of Blake. Even Clan Khans deferred to him. A spark of hope flickered in the face of the Jihad.

Virtually every nation and Inner Sphere Clan lent troops to Stone's command. Only the Capellans remained aloof. The united coalition pushed back against their enemy, and world by world, the Blake Protectorate fell. The final battle for Terra held shades of Kerensky versus Amaris. Humanity's homeworld lay ravaged by the end, but Devlin Stone was victorious. The Blakists were eviscerated, and their seat of power was gone. At last, the Inner Sphere could rest.

The Word of Blake was not exterminated at Terra. The Master and many of his powerful servants still dwelt in the remnants of the shattered Free Worlds League. The former Free Worlds state of Regulus took initiative to extirpate the Word of Black remnants. Nuclear fire annihilated the Blakist stronghold of Gibson. The Master himself perished in a similar perdition at Circinus, a system in the Periphery just beyond the Free Worlds' border. The Jihad saw more death and devastation than any conflict since the First Succession War. Industries crumbled. Armies were denuded. Worlds were rendered uninhabitable. The peace that settled was one of exhaustion. The Great Houses were happy to cede the most ravaged planets to Devlin Stone to form his new Republic of the Sphere.

Scarcely a world was untouched in the Jihad. Even minor Periphery nations such as Niops felt its echoes. A large number of Manei Domini remained unaccounted for at the Jihad's end, along with two of the Blakists' five "Hidden Worlds." Rumors and legends of their survival persist to this day. The Word of Blake may yet await their time of vengeance under the light of some far-off star.

The Hands of the Master

Greatest among the Blakists' hidden assets were the terrifying Manei Domini. These utterly fanatical cybernetic soldiers were loyal to the Master directly. All Manei Domini were made in his image and crossed the line between human and machine. Manei Domini Shadow Divisions spread terror across the Inner Sphere. They worked as infiltrators, saboteurs, and assassins. They could survive in hostile environments and recover easily from catastrophic damage. Their cybernetic augmentations often took horrifying, unnatural forms.

The Manei Domini wielded technology unsurpassed by the Inner Sphere or Clans. Advanced interfaces allowed them to take control of 'Mechs and battle armor as if operating their own bodies. Cybernetic augmentations granted them speed, skills, and abilities far beyond the human norm. The reputation of the Manei Domini acted as a force multiplier. Some worlds surrendered rather than face their abominable fury.

Devlin Stone

In the darkest hour of the Jihad, a man without a past arose to forge a new future. Devlin Stone called no nation home and fought only to return peace to the Inner Sphere. Competent strategies and somber negotiation helped him build a coalition of enemies to face the greater evil of the Word of Blake together. The leaders of the Inner Sphere accepted him simply because he was not one of them; Stone carried no hereditary grudges or biases to taint his perception as head of the alliance.

After the Jihad, Stone founded the Republic of the Sphere on the ashes of the Word of Blake Protectorate. The Republic cast a long shadow over Inner Sphere politics for decades. No House Lord or Clan Khan dared cross the man who had rid the Inner Sphere of the Blakist evil. Stone's biggest flaw was that he never stopped fighting the next war. His policies sold oppression under the guise of peace. He continued to scheme and develop contingencies. Rumors persist that the Blackout might have been the result of one of Stone's plans gone awry. The great hero died in defeat after failing to keep Clan Wolf Khan Alaric Ward from seizing Terra.

The Master

The architect of the Word of Blake Jihad was Thomas Marik, seventh child of Captain-General Janos Marik of the Free Worlds League. With six siblings ahead of him in line to the throne, few saw state leadership in Thomas' future. His early affinities focused more on the study of science and theology rather than history and politics. In the late Third Succession War, it was natural for this calling to lead him to the quasi-religious Order of ComStar.

Thomas became a ComStar acolyte at sixteen. ComStar nurtured his scientific pursuits, and as the young prodigy grew, he expanded his knowledge of medicine, astrophysics, and technology. After a stint in the Explorer Corps, and later as a deputy director of several HPG stations, he saw much of the Inner Sphere.

But the tumultuous politics of his homeland changed his course forever. His elder siblings died, and two others were estranged or lacking. Captain-General Janos Marik chose Thomas as his heir. ComStar recognized it now held immense sway over the League's next ruler and worked to ensure that Thomas was well-prepared. ROM, ComStar's intelligence organization, shared reports with Thomas regarding League politics and recent history. It is unclear just when the Order's more shadowed agencies took an active interest in Thomas, but it was likely through these early connections that his true rise to power began.

Thomas was called to serve as regent following his father's stroke. He led the realm through the Janos' convalescence and remained active in state politics after the elder Marik returned to the throne five years later. Then, assassins used a bomb to kill Janos. Thomas was also presumed dead, but he was in fact rescued by ROM agents and taken to a secret base on the lost world of Jardine for reconstructive surgery. The cybernetics necessary to save his life were widely stigmatized in the Free Worlds League. A body double (Thomas Halas) was thus prepared to assume Thomas Marik's role and regain control over House Marik. This scarred, completely human lookalike appeared to rule, but the real Thomas Marik actually ruled from ComStar's deepest shadows.

This is believed to be the time when Thomas Marik grew increasingly close to a secret cabal within ComStar. His traumatized mind assumed a fanatical regard for the words of Jerome Blake, in which ComStar would guide humanity to a new golden age after a great conflict. With his blend of knowledge of science, history, and spirituality, Thomas became increasingly obsessed. His zeal eventually led him to take over the cabal, which he turned toward his messianic vision. In the process, his interest in League affairs waned. By the Clan Invasion, his double ruled with little oversight, while the real Thomas became the shadowy Master that few inside ComStar even knew about.

The Clan Invasion and ComStar's schism fueled his plans. The former provided the perfect forge to unite all humankind, while the latter purified his power base of the faithless. Through new intermediaries, he saw to Terra's conquest by the Word of Blake, the creation of Manei Domini super-soldiers, the amassing of a vast WarShip navy, and numerous other secret projects. The rebirth of the Star League in 3058, allegedly predicted by the Master's "prophesies," helped realize his plans: the coming of the "Third Transfer," when Word of Blake would lead a holy war against the Clans and unite all the Houses together under *his* command.

Much is made about the carnage that erupted when the Master's minions lashed out at the Inner Sphere upon the Second Star League's dissolution, igniting a genocidal war on scales not seen since the fall of the first Star League. Some believe that the Jihad was a tragic accident that Thomas wanted to avoid, only to be forced on the defensive by an enraged Inner Sphere. What is often lost in these discussions is the fact that the universe would have witnessed a horrific genocide anyway, had his original plan come to fruition. Only the targets differed.

From the moment the first WarShips struck Outreach, Tharkad, and New Avalon, the Master continued leading from the shadows. His identity came to light only through whispers and the emergence of his personal chosen ones, the Manei Domini. After Terra's fall to the upstart Devlin Stone and his allies, the Master emerged. He was caught by Regulan forces on Circinus, where he died amid a bombardment of naval weapons and nuclear bombs. Some claim to have found his remains, while others say that he escaped with his lost followers into any number of undiscovered hidden bases. None of these dark fantasies have borne the bitter fruit of truth.

Nothing on the surface of Circinus survived the Master's final stand.

THE INNER SPHERE 3081

Inner Sphere Powers

1) Republic of the Sphere
2) Clan Jade Falcon
3) Clan Hell's Horses
4) Ghost Bear Dominion
5) Clan Wolf
6) Outworlds Alliance
7) Filtvelt Coalition
8) Tortuga Dominions
9) Calderon Protectorate
10) Taurian Concordat
11) Fronc Reaches
12) Magistry of Canopus
13) Rim Commonality
14) Marian Hegemony
15) Rim Collection

Republic of the Sphere

1) Prefecture I
2) Prefecture II
3) Prefecture III
4) Prefecture IV
5) Prefecture V
6) Prefecture VI
7) Prefecture VII
8) Prefecture VIII
9) Prefecture IX
10) Prefecture X

Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Albiero Prefecture
2) Bjarred Prefecture
3) Dandahar Prefecture
4) Ningxia Prefecture
5) Kagoshima Prefecture
6) Irece Prefecture

New Samarkand Military District
7) Oshika Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Tabayama Prefecture
10) Matsuida Prefecture
11) Kaznejov Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
12) Buckminster Prefecture
13) Xinyang Prefecture
14) Benjamin Prefecture
15) Proserpina Prefecture
16) Iruzun Prefecture

Federated Suns

Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Tancredi IV Operational Area

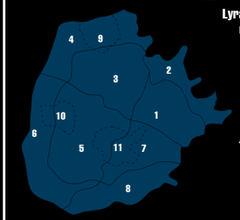
Capellan March
3) Kathil Operational Area
4) Taygetta Operational Area

Crucis March
5) Markesan Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area
7) Minette Operational Area

Periphery March
8) June Operational Area
9) Anjin Muerto Operational Area
10) Woodbine Operational Area

Former Free Worlds League

1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Principality of Regulus
3) Duchy of Oriente
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Duchy of Graham-Marik
6) Stewart Commonality
7) The Protectorate
8) Duchy of Orloff
9) Regulan Free States
10) Principality of Gibson
11) Mosiro Archipelago
12) Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey
13) Ohrenson-Zion Province
14) Silver Hawk Coalition

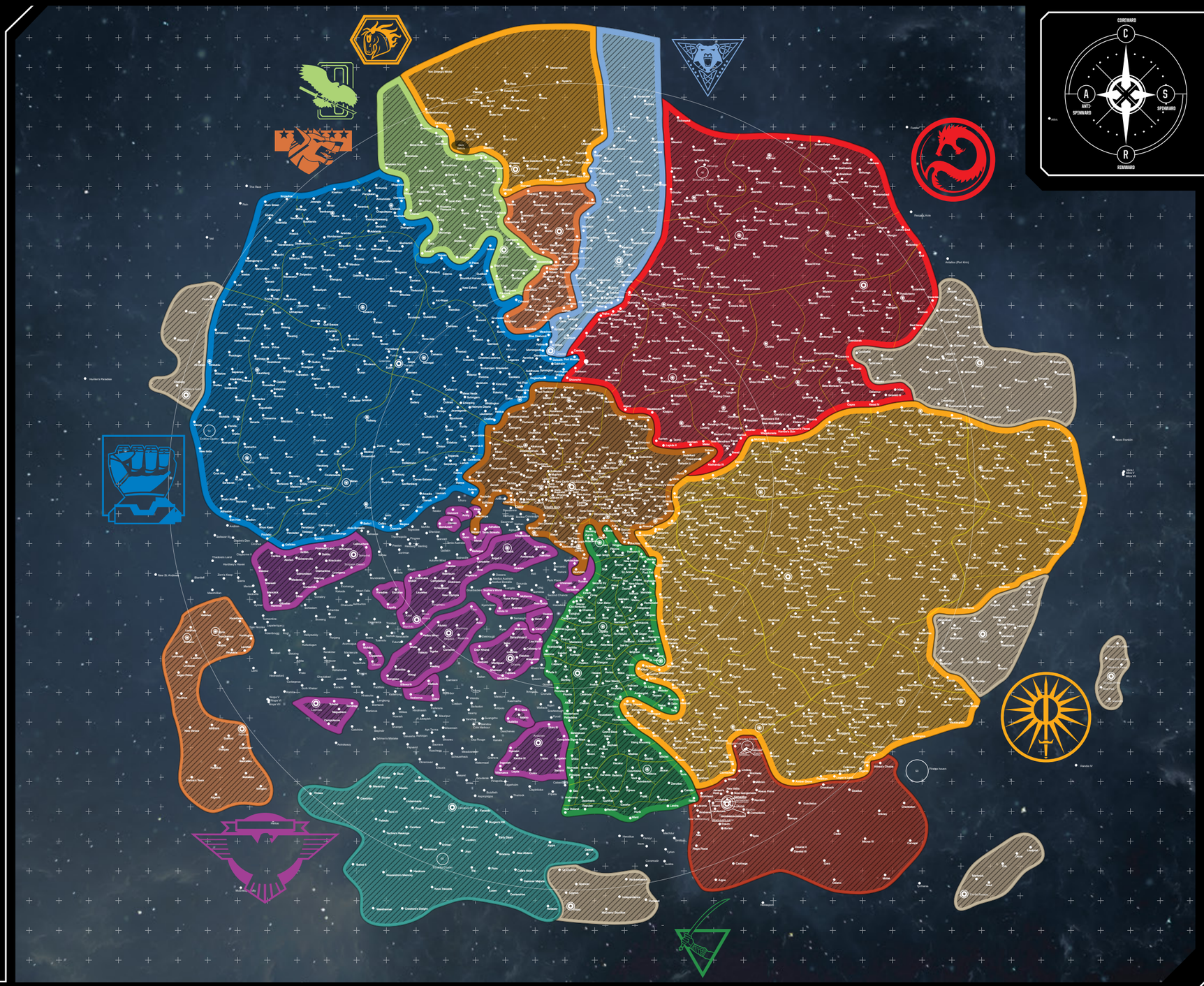


Lyran Alliance

Provinces
1) Donegal Province
2) Arc-Royal Theater
3) Coventry Province
4) Melissa Theater
5) Buena Province
6) Timbuktu Theater
7) Bolan Province
8) Dixie Theater

Archonettes
9) Inarcs Archonette
10) Kaumberg Archonette
11) Halfway Archonette

Capellan Confederation
1) Liao Commonality
2) Capellan Commonality
3) Sian Commonality
4) St Ives Commonality
5) Victoria Commonality



DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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THE WARS OF REAVING

The Wars of Reaving comprised of a group of concurrent conflicts in the far-flung Clan Homeworlds. IlKhan Brett Andrews of Clan Steel Viper desired to remove the Inner Sphere "taint" from the Homeworlds, sparking the war that followed. A faction calling itself The Society, comprised of rebel scientists, fought the warriors for rule over the Clans. Clan Star Adder took advantage of the chaos to seek dominance over the Homeworlds.

The Second Star League collapsed, convincing some Clans to pursue a renewed invasion of the Inner Sphere. Steel Viper Khan Brett Andrews felt the Clans should be purged of Inner Sphere corruption, "taint," before any such undertaking. Eliminating powerful Invader Clans (those Clans who participated in the invasion of the Inner Sphere) was a convenient bonus. Clans Steel Viper, Cloud Cobra, and Star Adder formed the Snake Alliance. Weaker Clans capitalized by settling ancient scores and taking new holdings. Their effectiveness varied.

To remove the "taint," Andrews demanded a purging of the Clan eugenics program. This represented a multi-generational disaster for the scientist caste, as the program embodied their unique take on Kerensky's vision for the Clans. The Society rebelled using every forbidden, ethically questionable, mad-scientist, project they had to offset the warriors' advantages. With jump cores failing, HPGs offline, and plagues circulating, Clan enclaves became isolated and vulnerable. The Society managed to recruit Clan Coyote, along with a resurrected Clan Burrock, a motley collection of pirates, and the Dark Caste.

As the situation collapsed, the Invader Clans retreated to the Inner Sphere. Clans Snow Raven and Hell's Horses followed. Clan Ice Hellion botched invading the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone (OZ) in the Inner Sphere, and its paltry remnants were absorbed by Clan Goliath Scorpion.

The Snake Alliance finally restored order. The Society was subdued. The Coyotes violently eliminated Society influence from their ranks. The Fire Mandrills and Burrocks met their ultimate ends. Finally, ilKhan Andrews faced Clans Blood Spirit, Cloud Cobra, Coyote, Goliath Scorpion, and Star Adder in the Grand Council. The Adder Khan noted that Clan Steel Viper had fought in the Inner Sphere and was similarly "tainted." Andrews was killed, and the surviving Clans Annihilated Clan Steel Viper, leaving Clan Star Adder dominant in the Homeworlds. Clan Stone Lion formed from the scraps that Clan Hell's Horses left behind when they fled for the Inner Sphere. Soon after, the Goliath Scorpions were caught using the DNA of Eridani Light Horse personnel (who had been left behind in the Clan Homeworlds since the Great Refusal) in their breeding program. The Scorpions evacuated the bulk of their civilians and warriors, eventually invading the Castilian Cluster. The Star Adders Annihilated Clan Blood Spirit's remnants.

Peace finally reigned in the Homeworlds. Rebuilding proceeded with typical Clan efficiency, but communications were severed between the Homeworlds and the Inner Sphere. The fate of the Homeworld Clans, and their plans regarding the Inner Sphere, remain unknown.

Brett Andrews

Few individuals had a more profound effect on Clan society than the Mad ilKhan, Brett Andrews. Andrews was a serious man with a scowl never far from his face. He saw the universe as divided along stark lines between those who agreed with him, and those who were the enemy. No hill was too small for Brett Andrews to die on. His penchant for argument and contrarianism led him into many conflicts that only his daunting skills as a warrior extracted him from. History places people where they are needed, so it situated Brett Andrews perfectly to bring the apocalypse to the Clan.

Andrews enjoyed a long and successful career in Clan Steel Viper before being elected their ilKhan. He immediately initiated a policy of annihilation against Clans he considered tainted by the Inner Sphere. Andrews prosecuted his civil war efficiently and violently. His single-minded focus and myopic black-and-white view of the universe became his undoing. He could not conceive of a situation in which he might be out-thought. Star Adder Khan Stanislov N'Buta played Andrews like a fiddle to suit his own needs. Andrews' retaliatory murder of N'Buta led to his own death, and that of his Clan.

The Society

The Society was a secret cabal of scientists who considered themselves the only ones who truly understood the vision of Nicholas Kerensky. Science allowed humans to survive on the hellish Pentagon worlds and Kerensky Cluster. Science created BattleMechs. Science created the Trueborn Warriors who ruled the Clans. The Society's leaders believed only they understood where the Way of the Clans was leading humanity, and that they were the best ones to guide it.

The Society existed for centuries as cells hidden in most Clans. Genetic scientists commanded the highest esteem. Those working in weapon technologies held the second rank, followed by those studying humanities, space, and conventional sciences. Analogous to the warrior caste, The Society used ranks such as Scientist-General and Control Commander, deferring to those with age and experience.

The Society struggled in stricter Clans, such as the Smoke Jaguars, but thrived in more liberal Clans. Indeed, they rose to such prominence in Clan Coyote that they swayed decisions of Khans. They entered Clan Star Adder after it absorbed the Burrocks. The Society found ready accomplices in the Dark Caste.

Not all scientists were members of The Society, but those who were positioned themselves to adapt existing projects to their own needs. The warrior caste might cancel an apparently failed project only for The Society to continue it in secret. The Society routinely used human guinea pigs to develop mutagenic drugs and subhuman slaves.

The overthrow of the Warrior Caste was The Society's overarching and long-sought goal.

SHADOW WARS

When wars are portrayed in popular media–or played in the backyards of a million young aspirant MechWarriors–there is nearly always just one vision: BattleMechs storming enemy strongholds. That truth is known across a thousand worlds as energy, autocannon and gauss weapons carve red-hot furrows through metal and flesh alike.

Yet that is only one pillar of war. Another is logistics: an army marches on its stomach, and the spare parts that keep their vehicles and 'Mechs operational. Much less the DropShips and JumpShips that transverse the expanse. Depending upon the military, there can be as many as fifteen non-combatant soldiers for every tip-of-the-spear warrior.

However, there is a third pillar. Information is ammunition, as they say. Misleading an enemy and causing them to drop at the wrong time, or even onto the wrong world, can be a force multiplier worth multiple regiments. Knives in the dark can often be just as effective as any number of ground pounders. Intelligence gathering and covert operations have been a part of war from the moment a rock was raised in anger. Several Houses used such means to secure BattleMech plans from the Terran Hegemony after the *Mackie* was unveiled during the Age of War. The infamous Shadow War rocked the Draconis Combine during the Second Succession War as two Kurita scions vied for the throne. Perhaps most famously, ComStar engaged in near-constant strikes in the dark in their attempts to keep *lostech* out of the hands of the Great Houses, culminating in Operation Holy Shroud that derailed technological preservation across the Inner Sphere.

While MechWarriors earn the glory of the battlefield, their shadow brethren of the various intelligence agencies often silently tip the scales of victory or defeat, whether they know it or not.

Federated Suns

Dept. of Military Intelligence

MIIO

MI6 Special Forces

Star League

Star League Intelligence Corps

Draconis Combine

DEST

Internal Security Force

Order of the Five Pillars

Free Worlds League

SAFE

Lyran Commonwealth

Lyran Intelligence Corps

LOKI

Free Rasalhague Republic

Mimir

The Clans

Clan Watch

Capellan Confederation

Death Commandos

Maskirovka

ComStar and Word of Blake

ComStar ROM

Word of Blake ROM

The Periphery

Magistracy Intelligence Ministry

Taurian Ministry of Intelligence

Outworlds Alliance Intelligence

Ordo Vigilis

In the past few years, The Republic has been on a slow, steady slide toward the edge of an abyss. The catalyst for this slide was the loss of the hyperpulse generator network, and thus the loss of interstellar communications—lifeblood to any star-spanning nation.

During this time of trials and tribulations, we have all witnessed the best and worst that everyone—anyone, citizen or resident, peerage or proletariat—had to offer. We found greatness. And frailty. We discovered new allies, new enemies, and the depth of our own resolve to take a new and stronger hand in our own lives, our futures, and our destinies.

And if there was a failure, it was our failure. The failure of those of us entrusted to safeguard Devlin Stone's great legacy.

There is nothing more to say, nothing more to endeavor, that we have not said or attempted in the last ten months. So it is with great sorrow but firm resolve that we put to you, the people of The Republic of the Sphere, that the time has come for drastic and irrevocable action.

And formally dissolve The Republic of the Sphere.

—Excerpts from Jonah Levin's "Final Address," 1 October, 3135

THE DARK AGE

END OF THE REPUBLIC ERA

The end of the Jihad left an exhausted Inner Sphere facing a new status quo. A legitimate nation formed around Terra for the first time in centuries. The Republic of the Sphere stretched a long arm into the affairs of the war-weary Successor States. Devlin Stone proposed that the Inner Sphere could live in harmony without the flag of a united Star League flying on every world. Through diplomacy, the Republic cajoled most House Lords and some Clan Khans into an age of relative peace.

Border wars were infrequent, brief, localized affairs. The Capellan Confederation in particular bore an animosity toward Stone and his Republic. Tensions remained high between the two realms, erupting into armed conflict on one occasion. Such minor struggles did little to sully the image that an age of peace reigned over the Inner Sphere. Generations of children grew up never knowing the horrors of war. Devlin Stone retired from public life, disappearing as legends sometimes do.

The catalyst that ended these golden times was something no one foresaw. On a day that came to be known as Gray Monday, 80 percent of ComStar's Hyperpulse Generator network collapsed. This led to the idea of a grand conspiracy. Nearly every world in the Inner Sphere found itself cut off from neighbors and rulers. ComStar's increasingly desperate efforts failed to restore communications. Soon, fear and suspicion drove nations to take up arms once more.

The Republic of the Sphere became the first victim of this new age. Factions splintered away as old loyalties resurfaced. The Republic crumbled without a strong leader to keep it united. Worlds fell to outside forces, including the Capellan Confederation and Clan Jade Falcon. The Republic's enemies sought to feast on its dying body. The normally quiescent Ghost Bears stretched from their Rasalhague Dominion into Republic space. The Republic's core worlds abandoned the fight and sealed themselves behind an impenetrable hyperspace wall, the daunting Fortress Republic. No further guidance came from Terra or ComStar. The Inner Sphere entered the Dark Age.

The Blackout/Gray Monday

The Blackout, also known as Gray Monday, occurred when unknown saboteurs disabled the HPG network. This occurred 7 August 3132 in the Inner Sphere space, including the Clan Occupation Zones, and brought interstellar communications to a standstill.

It began with HPG core elements overloading and burning out. This was caused by a malicious system-wide virus. Additionally, some HPGs were attacked by unknown assailants—standoff weapons, aerospace and DropShip attacks, a zero-g assault, and a battlesuit assault. One such attack occurred during a guided VIP tour when a member of the party pulled out a laser pistol and shot critical components before being killed by security.

Ultimately, this reduced HPG functionality to a mere 20 percent across known space. The results proved devastating. Warfare coordination slowed to a crawl. Militaries were reduced to using JumpShips to transport messages. This lack of communication required great trust and leeway in commanders of armies and assault forces. They had to be self-reliant and loyal, as support and help were usually months away. The ramifications of the Blackout are still felt decades after Gray Monday.

OF KNIGHTS AND MEN

When Devlin Stone created the Republic of the Sphere in the wake of the Word of Blake's bloody Jihad, he looked to remake his new war-torn nation unlike the Inner Sphere's feudal dynasties. Stone wanted the Republic to be ruled and protected by the right people, not those placed on the throne simply by luck of birth. Thus, Stone created the Council of Paladins and the Knights of the Republic to be his successors and champion exemplars of his beliefs.

At the top, Paladins were the epitome of Stone's values—avatars that inspired enthusiasm, devotion, and honor to the Republic's ideals. Paladins were trusted advisors and the next leaders of the Republic, who during the dark days of the Blackout were instrumental in holding the crumbling Republic together. Without Paladins like Damien Redburn and Jonah Levin, the Republic of the Sphere would have collapsed long before Alaric Ward conquered Terra.

Serving as standard bearers of the new nation and the pool from which new Paladins would be drawn, Knights and Knights-Errant were parts ambassador, marshal, and soldier. Admittance to the knightly ranks was not determined by lineage, connections, or wealth, but rather by ability, ethics, and loyalty. Knighthood was available to anyone with the drive and skill to serve, and nominees counted former clansmen, citizens, and immigrants in their ranks. MechWarriors have always been seen as modern battlefield knights, but to the common soldier and civilian, Knights of the Republic were something else. Knights were the best of what Stone's Republic of the Sphere had to offer.

Though far from perfect, throughout the Republic of the Sphere's existence, Paladins, Knights, and Knights-Errant faced the Republic's challenges head on. In the early battles to ensure the Republic's existence, newly-christened Paladins and Knights forced the Capellan Confederation off Tikonov and secured the Republic's final border. Later, during the Capellan Crusades, Paladins and Knights did the same again, cementing themselves as protectors of the Republic's citizens.

At the fall of the HPG network, Knights of the Republic shed blood, sweat, and tears holding the nation together as it fell apart. From Dieron to Sheratan, Knights such as Raul Ortega and Alexi Holt carried Stone's flag onward and fought against the Republic's enemies as their nation was carved apart. Through the herculean efforts of Paladin Ariana Zhou and Knight Kristoff Erbe, the Republic Remnant held for a decade as a bastion where Stone's ideals survived outside the Fortress Wall.

When the collapse of the Republic did come—when Clan Wolf and Jade Falcon descended on Terra—knights like Edwyn Tiew and Ludvig Yabar thwarted the Clans' plans for a quick victory. At one battle after another, knights laid down their lives to keep the last flicker of Stone's dream alive. And while the Republic did fall, the Paladins' and Knights' legacy of selfless sacrifice—as protectors of the people and paragons of justice—will likely be remembered for generations to come.

As securitas per unitas!

THE INNER SPHERE 3130

Inner Sphere Powers

1) Republic of the Sphere
2) Clan Jade Falcon
3) Clan Hell's Horses
4) Ghost Bear Dominion
5) Clan Wolf
6) Outworlds Alliance
7) Filtvelt Coalition
8) Tortuga Dominions
9) Calderon Protectorate
10) Taurian Concordat
11) Fronc Reaches
12) Magistry of Canopus
13) Rim Commonality
14) Marian Hegemony
15) Rim Collection
16) The Barrens

Republic of the Sphere

1) Prefecture I
2) Prefecture II
3) Prefecture III
4) Prefecture IV
5) Prefecture V
6) Prefecture VI
7) Prefecture VII
8) Prefecture VIII
9) Prefecture IX
10) Prefecture X

Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Albiero Prefecture
2) Bjarred Prefecture
3) Qandahar Prefecture
4) Ningxia Prefecture
5) Kagoshima Prefecture
6) Irece Prefecture

New Samarkand Military District
7) Oshika Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Matsuida Prefecture
10) Kaznejov Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
11) Buckminster Prefecture
12) Xinyang Prefecture
16) Benjamin Prefecture
14) Proserpina Prefecture
15) Iruzun Prefecture

Federated Suns

Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Tancredi IV Operational Area

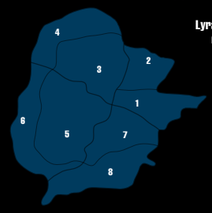
Capellan March
3) Kathil Operational Area
4) Taygetta Operational Area

Crucis March
5) Markesan Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area
7) Minette Operational Area

Periphery March
8) June Operational Area
9) Anjin Muerto Operational Area
10) Woodbine Operational Area

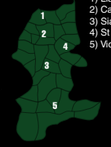
Former Free Worlds League

1) Oriente Protectorate
2) Marik-Stewart Commonwealth
3) Regulan Fiefs
4) Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey
5) Duchy of Andurien
6) Rim Commonality



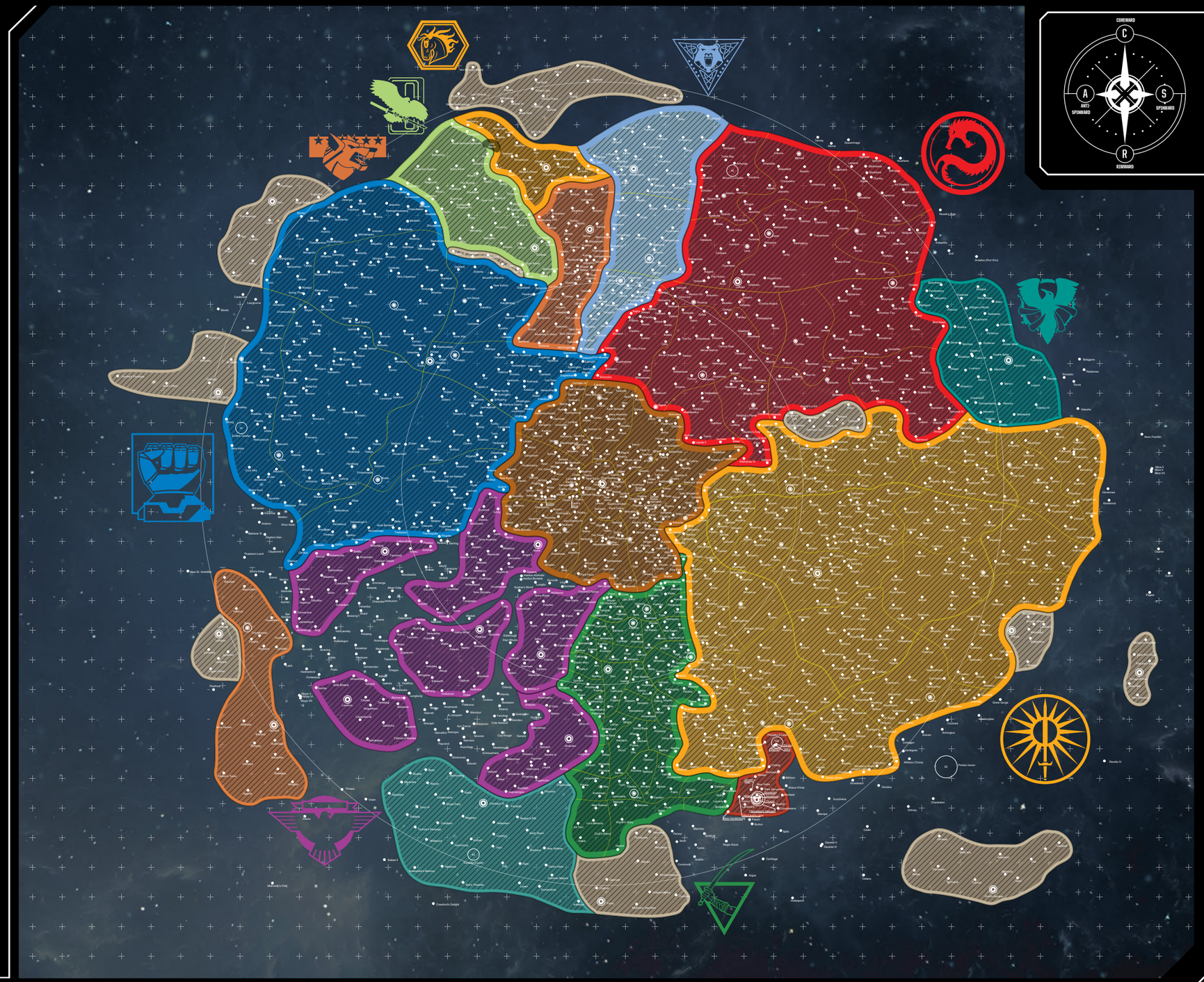
Lyran Alliance

Provinces
1) Donegal Province
2) Arc-Royal Theater
3) Coventry Province
4) Bucklands Theater
5) Buena Province
6) Timbuktu Theater
7) Bolan Province
8) Cavanaugh Theater



Capellan Confederation

1) Liao Commonality
2) Capellan Commonality
3) Sian Commonality
4) St Ives Commonality
5) Victoria Commonality



DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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The Wall

The Wall, also known as the Fortress Wall, was a defensive field surrounding the ring of worlds in Prefecture X of the Republic of the Sphere. The Wall's specific purpose was to protect Terra from external threats, preventing all interstellar traffic from penetrating its systems and preventing those systems' JumpShips from venturing outside the protective ring. Any JumpShip that attempted to breach the Wall was repulsed. These vessels might misjump, or return to their origination point, mangled beyond recognition. The Wall's controllers could open a "window" and allow traffic through, but it required extensive faith on the passing party to make the jump.

Exarch Jonah Levin withdrew most of the Republic Armed Forces (RAF) behind the Wall before he enacted the defensive measure. This decision caused several problems. With the bulk of the RAF behind the Wall, the remaining Republic troops and planets were easy pickings. Thus dwindled the Republic's territory, and with it the Republic's influence and power. Many Republic worlds fought alone against overwhelming odds while the government of the Republic did nothing. The Wall retracted to only surround the Terran system in 3149 at the order of Exarch Devlin Stone as he prepared for the invasion of Clan Wolf.

In the silence, House Lords returned to their old ways. People who had lived all their lives without war took to it naturally. Ancestral hatreds were reborn. The armies that marched during the Dark Age were smaller than others in recent history, but no less destructive. These forces caused the greatest border changes since the Fourth Succession War.

The Draconis Combine renewed the aggressive stance toward its neighbors that had characterized it through the Succession Wars. The Federated Suns found itself beset on all sides. The Capellan Confederation pursued a vendetta against House Hasek of the Federated Suns over years of simmering hate. The Capellan March capital of New Syrtis fell to Capellan guns, and Duchess Angela Hasek was executed. The Combine in turn ran roughshod over House Davion's Draconis March. The death of First Prince Caleb in a Combine ambush demoralized the AFFS, which all but crumbled before the might of the dragon. The Federated Suns' capital New Avalon itself became the final prize in the dragon's jaws.

The Dark Age heralded a renaissance for the Clans. Clan Sea Fox's profits soared as demand for war materiel rose across known space. Archon Melissa Steiner entered into an alliance with Clan Wolf, inviting the Wolves to cross Lyran space and join her in a war of conquest against the fragmented states of the former Free Worlds League. It crumbled in the way many alliances of convenience did when it was no longer beneficial to one party.

Yori Kurita

Yori Sakamoto learned of her ancestry from New Samarkand District Warlord Matsuhari Toranaga. Her great-grandfather was the legendary Theodore Kurita. Toranaga took her under his wing and used and manipulated her to elevate himself politically. Coordinator Vincent Kurita accepted Yori as family and treated her well.

The Coordinator and his family fell to various assassination efforts, placing Yori upon the throne of the Draconis Combine. She promoted Toranaga to *Gunji-no-Kanrei*, and they reconquered the remaining Combine worlds from the Republic. Then she turned her eyes toward the Combine's ancient enemy, the Federated Suns.

Clan Nova Cat and Dieron District Warlord Katana Tormark initiated a civil war against Yori. The Nova Cats had sheltered Emi Kurita and her son, Vincent's last surviving heirs, the true heirs to the throne. But Yori defeated and destroyed Clan Nova Cat, and Emi killed herself and her son rather than face captivity. This cemented Yori's hold on the throne.

Her invasion of the Federated Suns achieved success beyond any of her ancestors, with the Combine flag flying on New Avalon for the first time. Yori now seeks to operate independently of Toranaga, creating the Hikage regiment in secret and gifting it to him as a show of her autonomy. Setbacks in the Draconis March and the contract severing by Wolf's Dragoons threaten the Suns conquest. Toranaga is working to hold their gains while Yori consolidates her power.

Julian Davion

Julian Davion never sought to be First Prince of the Federated Suns. The grandson of Jihad hero Jackson Davion was content to be Prince's Champion, but the death of Prince Caleb on Palmyra gave Julian the throne. He ascended at the worst period in Federated Suns history. Invasions by the Draconis Combine and Capellan Confederation claimed the capital and great swaths of territory. The new First Prince led a nation under existential threat.

He rose to the challenge. He led the reconquest of New Syrtis, the Capellan March capital, losing a leg in the process. His defeat of Danai Liao-Centrella and the Second McCarron's Armored Cavalry secured both the world and a ceasefire with the Capellans. This allowed Julian time to recover and to plan the next steps for the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns (AFFS). Robinson, the Draconis March capital, was recaptured from the Combine, thanks to Republic allies.

Julian faces tremendous obstacles. His primary goal is to reclaim the territory taken by the Combine. First, though, he must retake New Avalon. The nation's capital cannot remain clutched within the Dragon's claws. He knows that liberating the capital will provide a morale boost to match the rallying cry of "Remember Kentares!" from the First Succession War.

Danai Liao-Centrella

Danai Liao-Centrella grew up believing her parents were Sun-Tzu Liao and Naomi Centrella, but she is actually the daughter of Chancellor Daoshen Liao and his sister Ilsa Centrella. The relationship with the father she long believed to be her brother is understandably strained. Danai was a battalion commander in the Second McCarron's Armored Cavalry (MAC) until the command staff was killed in fighting on New Syrtis. She assumed command and brokered a ceasefire with First Prince Julian Davion that allowed Daoshen to focus on the Clans' coming invasion of the Republic of the Sphere.

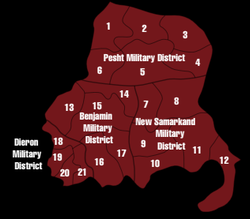
Danai formally took command of the Second MAC for the Confederation's assault on the Republic of the Sphere. The operation's unexpected ease ended it prematurely, only to pick up again a few months later. She saved the Fifth MAC and Warrior House Imarra from Republic forces on Liberty, securing the world for the Chancellor in the process.

She inherited the famous *Yen-Lo-Wang* BattleMech from her cousin Kai Allard-Liao and piloted it on Solaris VII as he and his father had. She later replaced it with a Black Knight named for a respected foe: *Julian*.

THE INNER SPHERE 3145

Inner Sphere Powers

1) Republic of the Sphere
2) Clan Jade Falcon
3) Clan Hell's Horses
4) Rasalhague Dominion
5) Wolf Empire
6) Raven Alliance
7) Filtvelt Coalition
8) Tortuga Dominions
9) Calderon Protectorate
10) Taurian Concordat
11) Fronc Reaches
12) Magistracy of Canopus
13) Marian Hegemony
14) Lothian League
15) Rim Collection
16) Rim Territories
17) Chainelane Isles
18) The Barrens
19) The Remnant
20) Galatean League



Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Albiero Prefecture
2) Bjarred Prefecture
3) Qandahar Prefecture
4) Ningxia Prefecture
5) Kagoshima Prefecture
6) Irece Prefecture

New Samarkand Military District
7) Oshika Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Matsuida Prefecture
10) Barlow's End Prefecture
11) Kaznejov Prefecture
12) Tancredi Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
13) Buckminster Prefecture
14) Xinyang Prefecture
15) Benjamin Prefecture
16) Proserpina Prefecture
17) Irurzun Prefecture

Dieron Military District
18) Algedi Prefecture
19) Dieron Prefecture
20) Al Na'ir Prefecture
21) Ashio Prefecture

Federated Suns

Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Tancredi IV Operational Area

Capellan March
3) Kathil Operational Area
4) Sirdar Operational Area

Crucis March
5) Markesan Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area
7) Minette Operational Area

Periphery March
8) June Operational Area
9) Anjin Muerto Operational Area
10) Woodbine Operational Area

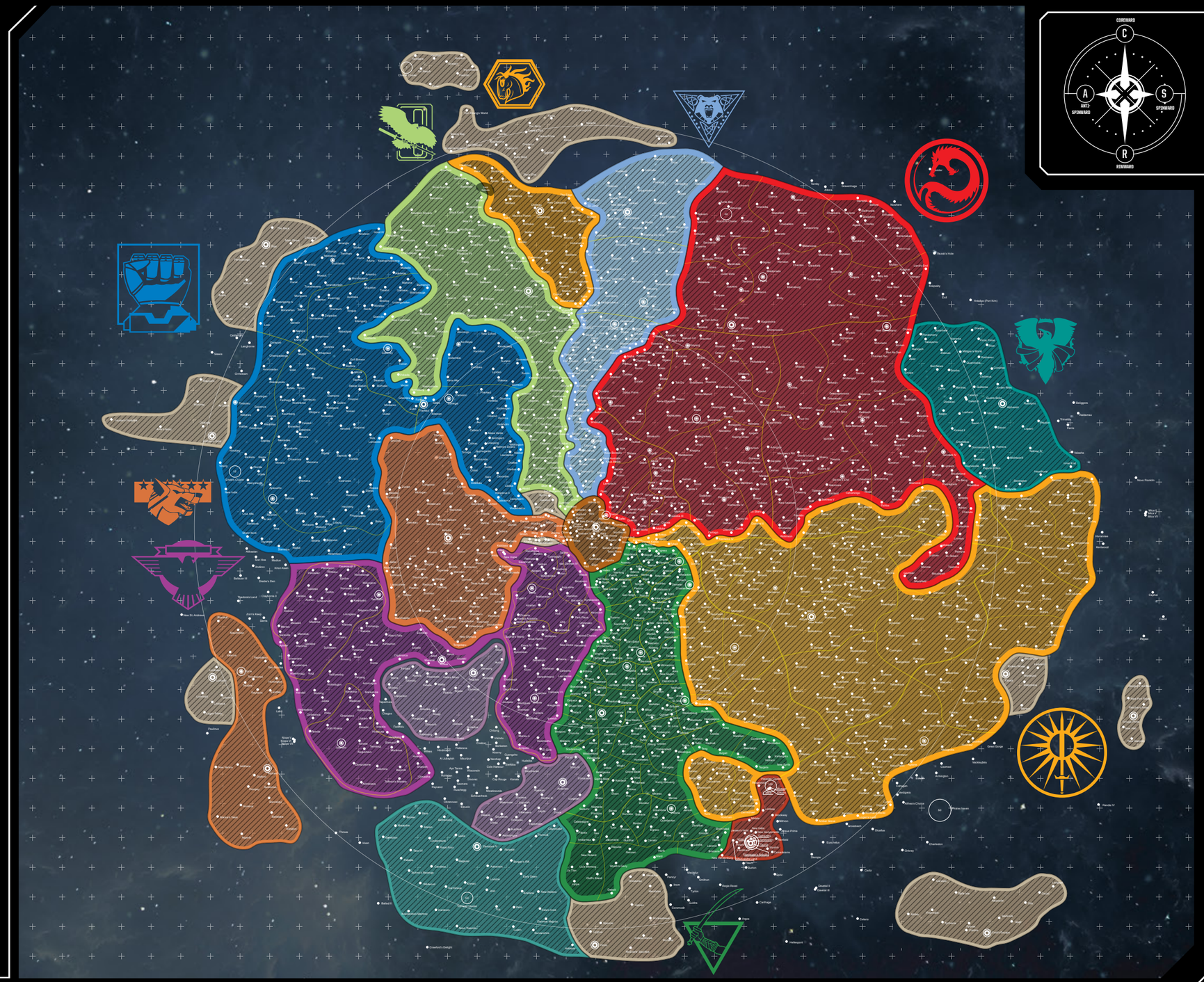
Free Worlds League
1) Oriente Protectorate
2) Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey
3) Rim Commonality
4) Clan Protectorate
5) Covenant Worlds
6) Augustine Alliance

Former Free Worlds League
7) Duchy of Andurien
8) Regulan Fiefs

Lyran Commonwealth

Provinces
1) Donegal Province
2) Arc-Royal Theater
3) Coventry Province
4) Bucklands Theater
5) Buena Province
6) Timbuktu Theater

Capellan Confederation
1) Tikonov Commonality
2) Chesterton Commonality
3) Sarna Commonality
4) Capellan Commonality
5) Sian Commonality
6) St Ives Commonality
7) Victoria Commonality



DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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Melissa Steiner did not treat honorably with the Wolves, and in retaliation, Clan Wolf turned on the Lyran Commonwealth. Clan Jade Falcon survived a minor civil war and emerged from it commanded by the most vicious Khan the Inner Sphere had ever seen. Malvina Hazen doubled Jade Falcon territory at great expense to the Lyrans.

Amidst this nightmarish time came Jessica Marik (Halas). The Lyran-Wolf invasion of the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth provided an impetus for creating a new, unified government. Through strong politicking, Jessica undid the sundering caused by the Jihad and reunited most fragments of the Free Worlds League. House Marik once more ruled a viable state, though one surrounded by strong adversaries.

The Periphery states suffered comparatively less than the Inner Sphere after the Blackout. HPG communication in these nations played a lesser role in daily life, and its people had long ago adapted. The Marian Hegemony took the opportunity to absorb several former Free Worlds planets. The Magistracy of Canopus strengthened ties with the Duchy of Andurien. The estranged Taurian Concordat and Calderon Protectorate put aside their differences and agreed on a reunification treaty, though the fate of the many worlds that chose independence remains to be seen. The Raven Alliance invaded and annexed a chunk of the Federated Suns' Periphery March. Smaller realms used the distraction of the Inner Sphere nations to enjoy their continued freedom from distant governance.

The Republic did not stay idle behind the Fortress Wall. Devlin Stone returned his from cryogenic slumber and resumed his role as Exarch in the Republic's time of need. The Fortress could not last indefinitely, and Stone worked against the day it must come down. He foresaw a time when Terra would be laid to siege, a fear which would soon be realized.

Clan Wolf carved out the Wolf Empire from Lyran, Free Worlds, and Republic territory. Alaric Ward became its Khan and then set his sights on Terra. The Fortress Wall began to come down, and the race to Terra began. The Wolves were not alone in their pursuit. Chancellor Daoshen Liao seized world after world, returning formerly Capellan territory to his fold. The Draconis Combine, though overextended on the Davion front, greedily snapped up what worlds they could. But the true race for Terra was between Clans.

Malvina Hazen matched Alaric Ward's progress towards Humanity's birthplace. The two foes seemed on a quest to out-brutalize each other in their single-minded drive. No less a prize than the future of the Inner Sphere drove them to such lengths. The greatest dream of the Clans, once thought unachievable, lay within their grasp. No sacrifice was too great when the title of ilClan lay in the balance.

The Fall of ComStar

The nascent Republic of the Sphere barred ComStar from operating its own military or intelligence arms. This reduced the organization to a purely communication-based organization again. Quasi-religious trappings were likewise eliminated. Hidden under ComStar's neutrality, however, a neo-Blakist faction called the Blessed Order formed and set about rearming.

The collapse of the HPG network deprived ComStar of much of its influence and income. ComStar's Special Project branch established the Cassie DeBurke Institute for Hyperspatial Studies to resolve the failure. When scientist Tucker Harwell showed promising results, the Blessed Order revealed itself by sending its First Division to abduct Harwell from his lab. The Republic pursued the Blessed Order to Luyten 68-28 and Epsilon Eridani and exterminated them. Within the Republic, ComStar was nationalized and put under direct control of Republic officials, ending its time as a centralized, independent entity.

ComStar fragments outside the Republic withered after the Fortress Wall went up. With no income from HPG traffic, they operated independently as best they could. Clan Sea Fox's Spina Khanate embedded itself into the politics of the Free World League and purchased all ComStar assets within the League it could. Tiburon Khanate later exploited First Prince Julian Davion's difficulties to make similar purchases in the Federated Suns. Clan Sea Fox's intentions spawn much open speculation as to the uses of a damaged and non-functional HPG network.

All the worlds of the Empire are mine, all the worlds of the Inner Sphere and beyond. We are the ilClan and the Star League, and all will be ours. Today, or tomorrow, and forever.

—ilKhan Alaric Ward, communique from Terra to the Wolf Empire, received on Gienah 4 June 3152

THE ILCLAN

THE ILCLAN APPROACHES

Dreams of becoming the ilClan propelled the Clans to invade the Inner Sphere. The idea of an ilClan was distilled from the writings of Nicholas Kerensky. Whichever Clan took and held Terra would forever be acknowledged as the Clan above all Clans. The Clan's Khan would be installed as a permanent ilKhan. All other Clans would acknowledge the primacy of the ilClan, which would re-establish and rule over a new Star League.

The Great Refusal seemingly sounded the death knell of this dream. The Successor States proved a much more intractable foe than the Clans expected. Tensions between Wardens and Crusaders meant some Clans would not acknowledge an ilClan of the opposing philosophy. The formation of a Second Star League called into question the very need for an ilClan. The ilClan dream was finally shelved after the Wars of Reaving sundered Clan society. Life in the Republic era left no room for grand wars. Exhaustion from the Jihad and Devlin Stone's military reduction policies prevented widespread conflict. Clan culture, with its warlike focus, began to stagnate.

It is not known exactly when the notion of an ilClan resurrected itself in the Clan mindset. Perhaps the Blackout inspired ambitious warriors to dream again. It could have been in Seth Ward's thoughts when he uprooted Clan Wolf and moved them across the Lyran Commonwealth to establish the Wolf Empire. Malvina Hazen may have pondered seizing Terra as she carved a slice of systems away from the faltering Republic. What is known is that the Blackout revitalized the Clans. Clan Jade Falcon seized vast swaths of territory under Malvina Hazen's leadership. Alaric Ward's Wolf Empire thrived in conquered Lyran and Free Worlds territory. Even the normally docile Ghost Bears stretched a claw toward Terra with their seizure of the Vega Prefecture.

One significant obstacle hindered any ilClan dreams: the Fortress Wall still surrounded the scraps of the Republic, locking Terra away. The Clans and hostile neighbors like the Capellan Confederation and Draconis Combine could advance no further into Republic space. The aggressors contented themselves with what they had taken, and what they could steal from each other—until the day the Wall came down.

The Republic initiated its return with a series of raids. It recaptured lost territory. Several Republic regiments aided allies in the Federated Suns. These acts announced to the Clans that the road to Terra was open. Devlin Stone had resumed his post as exarch to defend his nation. The Republic had rebuilt its military during the Fortress Wall years, but it was insufficient to face all of Stone's enemies at once.

Alaric Ward received intelligence on how to pass through the Fortress Wall. The man who would be ilKhan gathered his entire *touman* for the assault, but the Wolves did not go alone. Malvina Hazen had also been leaked the information. She would claim the ilClanship for her Falcons or die in the process. The race for the ilClan was on.

The Clans were not the only predators hunting the Republic. Chancellor Daoshen Liao cautiously reclaimed ancestral Capellan worlds. The Draconis Combine reabsorbed the last occupied worlds of its old Dieron district. The Republic withdrew its forces to the one world where the Fortress Wall still stood: Terra. The last stand would be made there. Devlin Stone reached out to his allies, but none responded. Even First Prince Julian Davion could not repay the aid Stone had lent him. Terra stood alone.

Stone hoped that Clan rivalry would pit the Falcons and Wolves against each other, but he was disappointed. Clan honor respected any Clan, even an enemy one, above an Inner Sphere power. The Falcons and Wolves collectively turned their fury on the Republic. Only after Stone's final defenses were shattered did the Trial of ilClanship begin.

The Wolves triumphed. The Inner Sphere was finally rid of Malvina Hazen and her brutal Mongol Doctrine. Her Falcons were destroyed. Alaric Ward had achieved the dream of every Clan warrior for well over a century. He had conquered Terra—but his victory was bittersweet. The new ilKhan spoke privately to Devlin Stone on his deathbed. Whatever Stone shared with Alaric left him shaken. Alaric was always one, if not two, steps ahead of his rivals all the way until he achieved ultimate victory. Yet since Stone's death Alaric has been on the back foot.

Alaric invited the Khans of the other Clans to Terra to pay homage to their new ilKhan. Reactions were mixed. The Hell's Horses stormed away in anger over being left out of the fighting. The Ghost Bears, Snow Ravens, and Sea Foxes adopted a more measured stance; they wanted to see how Alaric handled the stresses of his new title. Alaric's allies included the surviving Jade Falcons. Those warriors now serve the ilKhan as his enforcers. Alaric also officially reformed Clan Smoke Jaguar. Remnants of that Clan had survived into the present day, serving Devlin Stone in secret as the elite Fidelis soldiers. Now they were Clan once more.

Time will tell what lies in store for the ilClan. No one knows how the House Lords will react. Most will doubtless try to turn the situation to their advantage. The ilClan could make a powerful ally. The Periphery nations may not care at all; their distaste for a Terran overlord government is well documented. Given past issues related to the major Periphery nations and Terran rule, it is doubtful the ilClan will treat them gently. One predictor lies in the former Jade Falcon Occupation Zone, where several small powers quickly rose in the vacuum left by the Falcons. Alaric's ilClan may rule over a splintered and fragmented Inner Sphere.

The future is an unknown quantity full of promise and terror. The time of the ilClan may be a prosperous one, but the cycle of history suggests otherwise.

Malvina Hazen

Malvina's small stature made her a target of her *sibkin*. She survived with the aide of Aleksandr, her only friend in the *sibko*. She learned that cruelty and malice were powerful weapons. The brutal and merciless Jade Falcon version of Clan Hell's Horses Mongol Doctrine matched her damaged psyche. She slaughtered innocents as a matter of course, and her troops followed her lead as it brought triumph. She built a strong base of supporters and rose to Galaxy Commander.

Her *sibkin* Aleksandr was killed during their invasion of Skye. This severed her tenuous grasp on her own humanity. She fought a civil war and won the Khanship. She repaid the Lyran peoples for Aleksandr's death with cruelty not seen since the Amaris Coup, employing *dezgra* tactics such as nuclear attacks that wasted valuable resources in favor of inspiring terror. When Khan Ward of Clan Wolf "invited" her to Terra to fight the ilClan Trial, she stripped the Occupation Zone and took her entire *touman*. The Falcons were defeated and Malvina died soon after at the hands of her "pet," Cynthy, whom she had abused one time too many.

Alaric Ward

The man who led Clan Wolf to triumph on Terra was decanted as part of the Ironborn *Sibko* in 3111. He took his Trial of Position much later than typical warriors in Clan Wolf. His performance earned him the rank of Star Captain. He rose to Star Colonel, but was captured by the Wolf Hunters (mercenaries commanded by Anastasia Kerensky). Clan Wolf reacquired Alaric, but he had to earn back his former rank. He did so by single-handedly defeating an entire command lance of Mercenaries. Alaric stopped an assassin from killing Khan Seth Ward, then completed the assassin's job and killed Seth himself. Alaric then won his Bloodname and was elected Khan. After that, he killed his genemother, Katherine Wolf (nee Steiner-Davion), and asserted his right to the Archonship of the Lyran Commonwealth as her son while leaving Trillian Steiner on the throne.

Alaric consolidated the Wolf Empire's territory and planned for the invasion of Terra, where Clans Wolf and Jade Falcon defeated the Republic. Then Alaric led his Clan against the Falcons in the ilClan Trial, and his victory made Clan Wolf the ilClan. Alaric laid claim to the titles of ilKhan and First Lord of the Star League.

CURRENCY IN THE INNER SPHERE

During the Star League era, interstellar commerce was primarily based on the Star Dollar (officially germanium-backed, but in truth dependent on the population's confidence in League governance). The collapse of the Star League ushered in a century of financial chaos, with Star Dollars made worthless once it became clear that none of the Successor Lords would be able to declare victory and restore the League under their rule.

Instead, each Successor State promoted use of its own national currency, which they had maintained for internal commerce even during the height of the Star League. These House Bills (H-bills) vary considerably in value, and fluctuate according to their issuing states' fortunes on the battlefield. They constitute approximately ninety percent of all currency in the Inner Sphere.

H-bills are primarily used for interplanetary commerce within states, leaving many worlds to mint their own currencies for on-planet commerce, such as the Game World's Solaris Scrip. Underdeveloped and technologically regressed worlds often lack even this level of fiscal sophistication, relying on crude barter-based economies. Of limited utility away from their native worlds, planetary scrip generally trades for as low as one percent of their face value when exchanged for hard currencies such as H-bills.

For centuries after the fall of the Star League, the hardest currency of all was the ComStar Letter of Credit, commonly known as the C-bill. Comprising ten percent of the currency in circulation, it was first issued in 2835, offered in exchange for the resources ComStar needed to rebuild the HPG network, and redeemable for ComStar communications and transportation services. Given ComStar's spotless reputation, C-bills were quickly accepted throughout the Inner Sphere, and even provided a basis for the resumption of trade between the warring Successor States.

The arrival of the Clans resulted in the replacement of local H-bills and C-bill based economies with the Clans' own economic systems in their Occupation Zones. Each citizen in a Clan-held territory receives work credits based on their function and level of experience. These may be redeemed for goods and services, but only by the recipient, and are not transferrable between individuals. Unused credits are forfeited after their time limit expires, making it impossible for individuals to accumulate personal wealth over time. For transactions between Clans or with the Free Guilds, the merchant caste uses a currency called the Kerensky.

The growing interactions between the Inner Sphere and Clans resulted in local variations, such as the Ghost Bear Dominion's use of the bear-krona, rather than the work credit/Kerensky economy. The Sea Foxes, in particular, introduced a new currency known as the Sea Fox Credit, which, unlike the Kerensky, could be used by any caste and was honored for transactions with both Clan and Spheroid customers. With the collapse of the C-bill after Gray Monday prevented ComStar from providing communications services, the Sea Fox Credit has been increasingly replacing it as the preferred medium of interstellar exchange, while the C-bill goes the way of the Star Dollar. Starting in the 3140s, users increasingly referred to the currency as the "Sea-bill." Attempts to enforce the proper terminology failed, and Sea Fox merchants have slowly adopted it, adapting to customer demand.

THE INNER SPHERE 3151

Inner Sphere Powers

1) Republic of the Sphere
2) Former Jade Falcon OZ
3) Clan Hell's Horses
4) Rasalhague Dominion
5) Wolf Empire
6) Raven Alliance
7) Filtvelt Coalition
8) Tortuga Dominions
9) Calderon Protectorate
10) Taurian Concordat
11) Fronc Reaches
12) Magistracy of Canopus
13) Marian Hegemony
14) Lothian League
15) Timbuktu Collective
16) Rim Territories
17) Chainelane Isles
18) The Barrens
19) Galatean League

Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Albiero Prefecture
2) Bjarred Prefecture
3) Qandahar Prefecture
4) Ningxia Prefecture
5) Kagoshima Prefecture
6) Irece Prefecture

New Samarkand Military District
7) Oshika Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Matsuida Prefecture
10) Barlow's End Prefecture
11) Kaznejov Prefecture
12) Tancredi Prefecture
13) New Avalon Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
14) Buckminster Prefecture
15) Xinyang Prefecture
16) Benjamin Prefecture
17) Proserpina Prefecture
18) Iruzun Prefecture

Dieron Military District
19) Algedi Prefecture
20) Dieron Prefecture
21) Al Na'ir Prefecture
22) Ashio Prefecture

Federated Suns

Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Tancredi IV Operational Area

Capellan March
3) Kathil Operational Area
4) Taygeta Operational Area

Crucis March
5) Markesan Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area
7) Minette Operational Area

Periphery March
8) June Operational Area
9) Anjin Muerto Operational Area
10) Woodbine Operational Area

Free Worlds League

1) Oriente Protectorate
2) Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey
3) Rim Commonality
4) Clan Protectorate
5) Covenant Worlds
6) Augustine Alliance
7) Regulan Fiefs

Former Free Worlds League

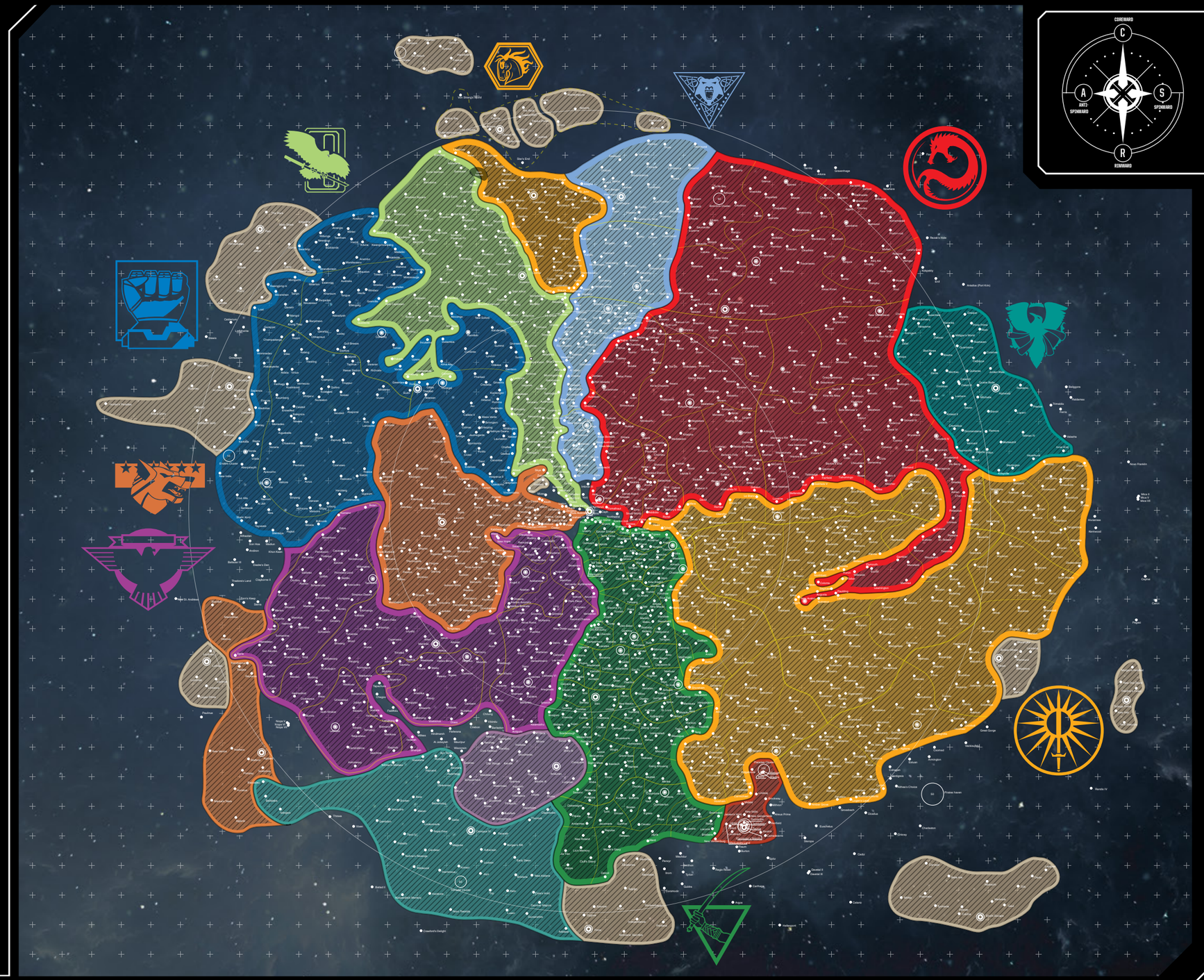
8) Duchy of Andurien

Lyran Commonwealth

Provinces
1) Donegal Province
2) Arc-Royal Theater
3) Coventry Province
4) Bucklands Theater
5) Buena Province
6) Florida Theater

Capellan Confederation

1) Tikonov Commonality
2) Chesterton Commonality
3) Sarna Commonality
4) Capellan Commonality
5) Sian Commonality
6) St Ives Commonality
7) Victoria Commonality



DISTANCE IN LIGHT YEARS

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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The unification of all Humanity into one realm is an obvious path. What I don't understand is why we broke up into petty realms in the first place.

—Lord Ian Cameron, quoted in **The Statesman of the Stars,** *by Duke Torrence Ferl, Belgrade Press, 2599*

FACTIONS

There are fewer difficulties in holding hereditary states, and those long accustomed to the family of their prince, than new ones. For even a prince of average powers to maintain himself in his state, he only needs to not diverge from the customs of his ancestors, and to deal prudently with circumstances as they arise.

—Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince*, Hammond and Hawthorne, Terra, 1532*

Though eight centuries have passed since those words found utterance on the page, they are more applicable now than ever before. As we expand our realm and the distances between the stars lengthens exponentially, what better way to ensure the prosperity of the people than to establish a new neo-feudalistic order. One that leaves the weaknesses in the past and embraces the best of such governance for the future. We will forge a dynasty that leads to prosperity despite difficulties and any distances amongst the heavens.

—Lord Michael Cameron, preamble to the Cameron Edict, 2351

THE GREAT HOUSES

HOUSE DAVION

THE FEDERATED SUNS

HISTORY

The Federated Suns began as the Crucis Pact, in direct response to the formation of the Terran Hegemony. The High Council governed the Pact, and a President led the Council. Lucien Davion, the founder and first President, began the centuries-long dynasty of House Davion, and the Presidency became a hereditary Davion post.

The Age of War brought internal strife to the Suns. Worlds seceded and sought aid from the Capellan Confederation. The Suns raised an army to pacify the worlds, but the Capellans defeated the Suns military. This placed the Suns on defensive footing for the rest of the conflict. Inept leadership portended disaster. A new President ascended via assassination and instituted reforms that altered the nation's political structure permanently. The nation was divided into five Marches, each led by a Prince. Simon Davion, the Prince of the Crucis March, domain of House Davion, was recognized as the First Prince, leader of the nation.

The Suns agreed to join the Star League on the promise that the League military would defend the Suns against the Draconis Combine. The peaceful early years ended with the Reunification War, during which the Suns gained territory from its Periphery neighbors. The following years of peace ended when the Draconis Combine invaded and attempted to place a puppet on the throne. The Star League Defense Force's slow response resulted in the death of the First Prince. Failure to uphold the promise that brought the Suns into the League ruined the relationship between House Davion and House Cameron, rulers of the League.

The Amaris Civil War led to the Star League's demise. After General Aleksandr defeated Stefan the Usurper, the Star League Council stripped Kerensky of his Protector position. Kerensky assembled most of the SLDF and left the Inner Sphere. Each House Lord claimed the title of First Lord, which began the Succession Wars.

The First Succession War almost saw the twilight of the Federated Suns. The Draconis Combine invaded and gobbled up system after system. The vaunted Armed Forces of the Federated Suns (AFFS) fell back in disarray. When a sniper assassinated the Combine Coordinator on Kentares, his son and heir ordered the world's entire population put to death. The murder of over fifty million Kentarian civilians inspired the Armed Forces of the AFFS to stand firm and drive the invaders back with the battle cry, "Remember Kentares!" The Kentares Massacre sickened the entire Inner Sphere, and many Combine samurai died by *seppuku* to atone for the dishonor.

The Suns fared somewhat better in the Second Succession War, though the Combine still managed significant victories over the AFFS. Wanton destruction threw the Inner Sphere back centuries.

In the Third Succession War, combat reverted to much smaller-scale affairs because of technological regression. Near the end of the prolonged conflict, the Federated Commonwealth Alliance initiated the biggest change in interstellar politics since the fall of the Star League—the union between two of the five Great Houses.

The Fourth Succession War was the most successful for the Suns. The AFFS consumed a large portion of the Capellan Confederation, linking it with the Lyran Commonwealth via worlds taken from the Free Worlds League.

The Federated Commonwealth enabled the Lyran state to survive the Clan invasion, but fell to internal strife when Katherine the Usurper seceded the Lyran state from the Federated Commonwealth and renamed it the Lyran Alliance. She later usurped the throne on New Avalon, too. It took the designated heir, Victor Steiner-Davion, leading a civil war to overthrow his sister.

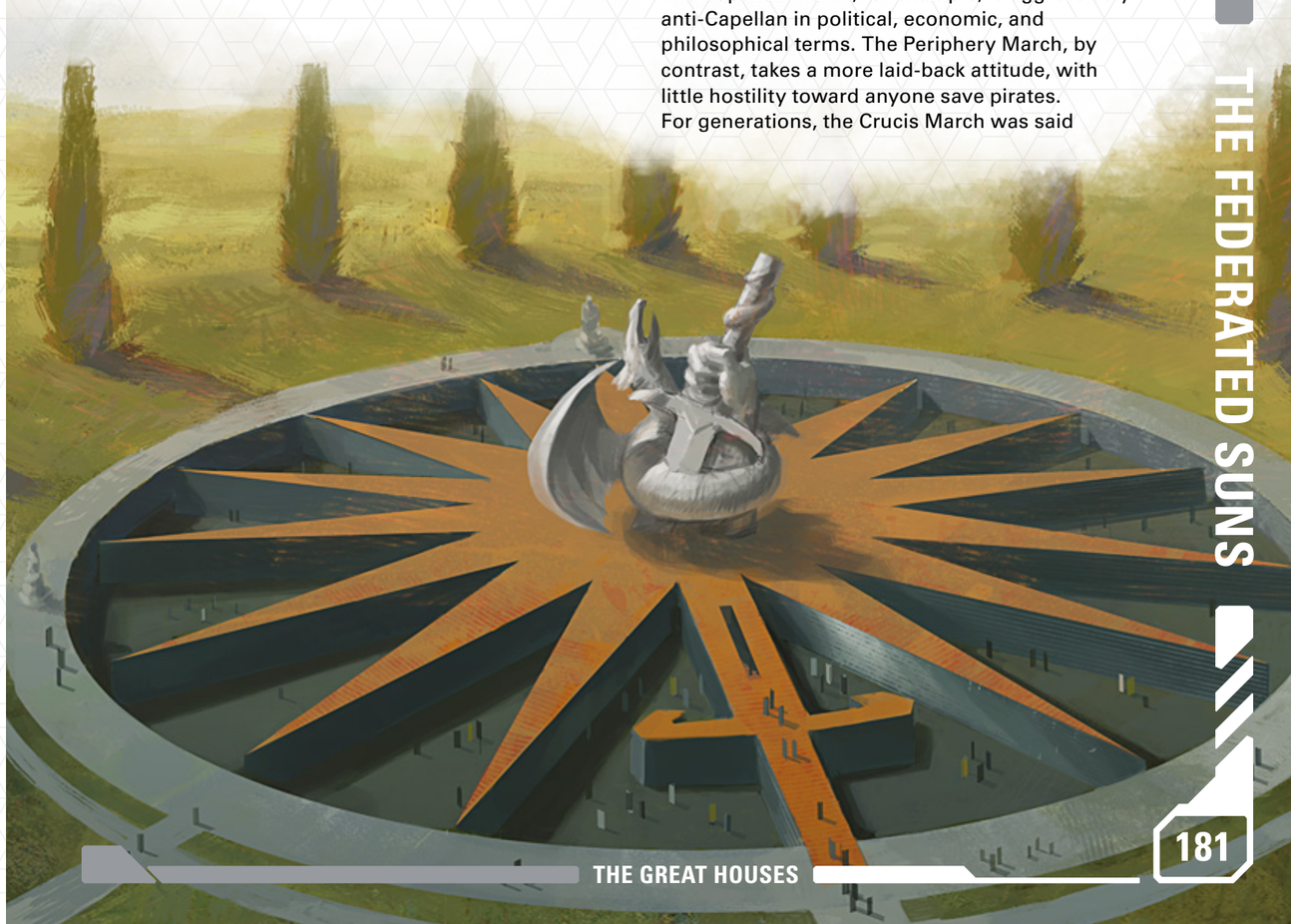
The civil war was followed by the Word of Blake Jihad, compounding the devastation. The period of peace that followed was necessary, but insufficiently used. The AFFS failed to restore its former glory, and the Blackout allowed the nation's enemies to attack with minimal effort. The Suns teetered on the brink of complete destruction.

CULTURE

The Federated Suns continue to operate from the original Constitution that founded the Crucis Pact. Among the tenets of that document are protections for the citizens of the Suns. Citizens are guaranteed certain rights, known as the Six Liberties.

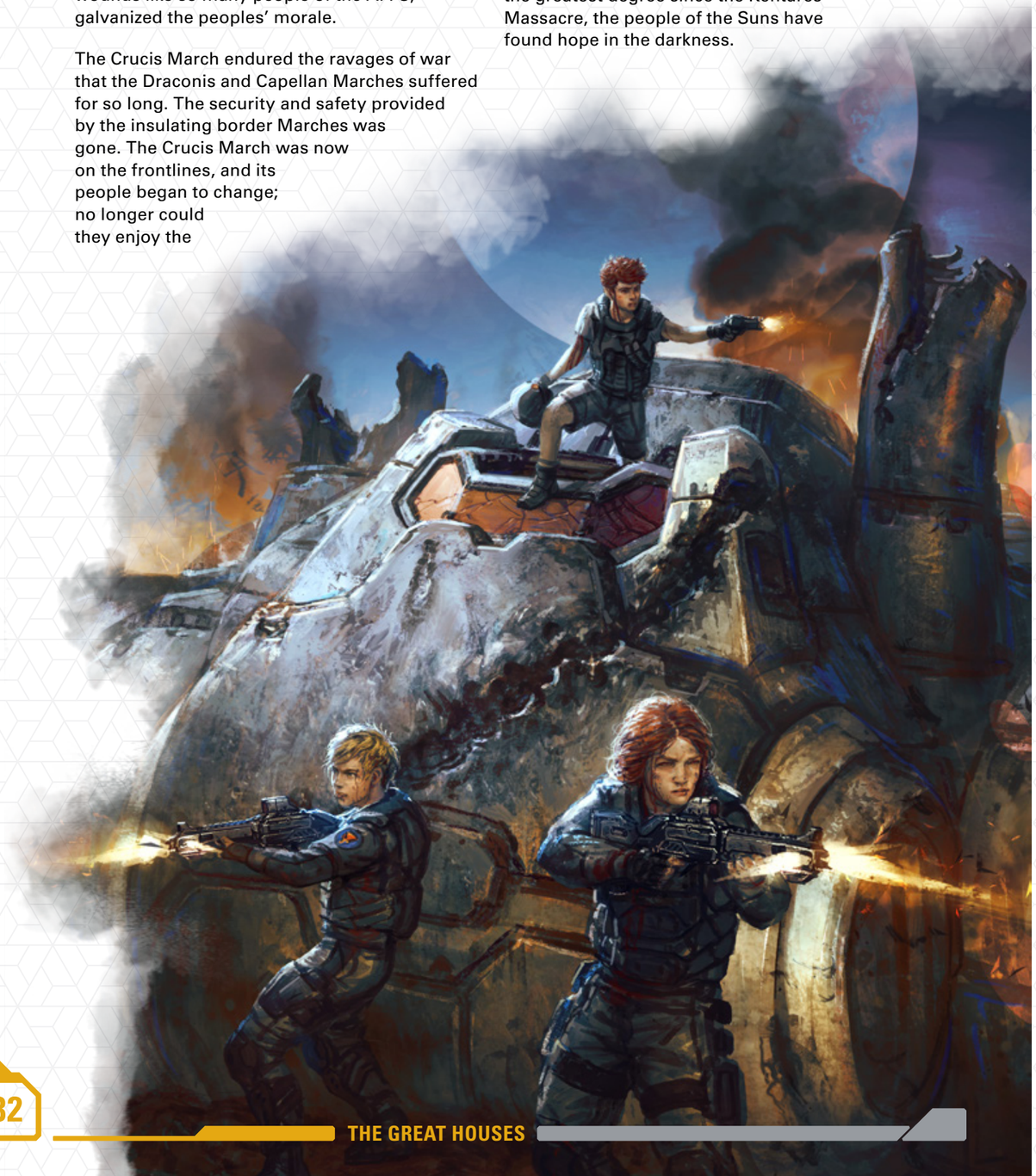
The Liberties include the right to personal liberty, to own property, to own weapons, to expect fair treatment, to privacy, and to participate in planetary government. Thus, the people of the Federated Suns demand and receive certain privileges. Freedom of religion and of expression cannot be restrained by local rulers, since those rights are guaranteed by the national government. The people are also free to petition for the removal of local nobles, should they be unworthy of the post and the post's responsibilities to the people.

The nation's four Marches each harbor peculiar and particular tendencies among their people. The Capellan March, for example, is aggressively anti-Capellan in political, economic, and philosophical terms. The Periphery March, by contrast, takes a more laid-back attitude, with little hostility toward anyone save pirates. For generations, the Crucis March was said



to hold a neutral stance toward the nation's neighbors. However, the invading Draconis Combine may have eradicated that open-minded stance. The fall of New Avalon to this ancient enemy threatened to destroy the nation. Only the courage of Julian Davion, the First Prince, engaging the nation's foes in battle and suffering wounds like so many people of the AFFS, galvanized the peoples' morale.

The Crucis March endured the ravages of war that the Draconis and Capellan Marches suffered for so long. The security and safety provided by the insulating border Marches was gone. The Crucis March was now on the frontlines, and its people began to change; no longer could they enjoy the good life while their neighbors faced external threats. In seeking to conquer the Federated Suns after so many centuries, the Draconis Combine may have spawned a new degree of unity and camaraderie amongst the Federation's citizens. Instead of fracturing in fear, the Suns welded together in the fire of war, united to the greatest degree since the Kentares Massacre, the people of the Suns have found hope in the darkness.



Volunteers have flocked to recruiting depots for the AFFS. First Prince Julian Davion's call to arms came with generous offers of land grants and noble titles. Young people of all persuasions demand to enter the ranks, regardless of billets and combat roles. Retired MechWarriors have returned, well past their prime but with their ancient family BattleMechs and aerospace fighters in tow. These aging soldiers and pilots answered the call perhaps for the potential rewards, but their presence and the precious war materiel augment the faltering AFFS.

On the shoulders of these courageous veterans and teenagers rests the very fate of the Suns. They understand their awesome responsibility, and they embrace it. "Better dead than Drac" has became a slogan on recruiting posters. Dread at falling under the Dragon's claws drives more and more into the military than ever before.

The nation's culture is focused almost entirely on the war effort. It is unknown what form the national mindset may take at war's end. Such concerns await the next generation, should it be born under the warm glow of the Sword and Sunburst, or in the icy death grip of the Combine Dragon, or the Capellan Sword and Fist.

GOALS

The Federated Suns are now consumed by one goal: eliminate the enemy. Those enemies have claimed vast swaths of territory on both national borders; it has not been so small since before the Age of War.

The first milestone of the Federation's goals is to reclaim the capital of New Avalon from the Draconis Combine troops currently ensconced there. The First Prince knows that national morale hinges upon his success or failure in the endeavor. He cannot fail, for the losses that failure would deal to the citizenry may be unrecoverable. He plans to commit as many troops as he can to the liberation effort. However, he will do so judiciously. The Palmyra Disaster saw the loss of over a dozen combat commands, setting the AFFS into a defensive posture which persists to this day, so the First Prince knows all too well to keep his proverbial eggs in more than one basket. All that remains to be seen is if the liberation of New Avalon comes in a single overwhelming onslaught, or in successive waves. Either way, the operation will consume most of the military's focus for some time.

After freeing New Avalon from the Dragon's talons, the AFFS must use their exceptionally large force to drive the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery (DCMS) troops back from the Dragon's Tongue, the extended salient that marked the Combine's invasion route to the capital. The AFFS will have several options. They may attack from the Tongue's extreme end, pushing it back into the Dragon's mouth by retaking system after system en route to the pre-war border. They could attack the Tongue from the sides, as well as from the tip. They may attack at the root of the Tongue, where it sprang from Combine territory, and sever it completely. Thus, the tongue will be torn from the Dragon's mouth. By cutting the enemy off from supply and relief, the DCMS troops may retreat to safer territory. Of course, the Combine knows their own weaknesses, so any course of action is fraught with risk.

The Capellan threat remains significant. First Prince Julian may allow the Confederation to spend its fury against the new ilClan, knowing the Capellans covet their former worlds and will stop at nothing to reclaim them. This should allow combat operations to proceed against the greater threat of the Combine. However, once the Combine is dealt with, the Capellans may be vulnerable. The First Prince's wounds came at Capellan hands, and he would love to repay them. They also conquered many worlds that were never Capellan; Julian's duty is to free those people from Capellan subjugation, but it will take time.

The ilClan poses a new threat. The revelation that ilKhan Alaric Ward is descended from First Prince Hanse Davion (via Katherine Steiner-Davion) could cause a succession crisis. However, it could also present an opportunity. Julian may seek rapprochement with his distant cousin in the form of cooperation against the Confederation or the Combine, or both. Julian wanted dearly to keep his word to Devlin Stone and aid the Republic against Clan Wolf. However, his inability to do so may now be something to exploit to his advantage. Since he did not show hostility toward the Wolves, perhaps he can spin his past inaction into an alliance.

FUTURE

The immediate future of House Davion looks grim. Even if all the systems conquered by the Combine and Confederation can be returned to the Federation fold, it will mean years of warfare. The cost in blood and treasure and materiel will be incalculable. Winning the war may bankrupt the nation.

Before becoming First Prince, Julian Davion was the youngest Prince's Champion in history. Whether he can deliver victories both political and military, while preventing complete economic collapse, remains to be seen. Hints of cleverness have begun to manifest in his decision-making. Comparisons to the Fox, Hanse Davion, have inevitably followed. Julian's new nickname, the Jackal, connotes cleverness, but also could portend scavenging from the corpse of the nation.

Liberation efforts dominate the entire nation. People from all walks of life contribute to the war effort. The Six Liberties have not been suspended, but they have been curtailed on many worlds. Conscriptions have been implemented—not for the AFFS, whose ranks are swelling with jubilant, eager volunteers—but into the industry necessary to support the military and the citizenry as a whole. Agricultural workers must continue to produce food; electronics factories must continue building devices and components that allow modern civilization and the AFFS to operate. Shipyards must build JumpShips and DropShips to ferry troops and supplies to the front. Vehicle, fighter, and 'Mech factories operate nonstop, churning out units as fast as possible to make up for losses to the enemy.

Each of these critical industries require laborers. With so many seeking to join the AFFS in a groundswell of patriotic furor, staffing levels have fallen below their minimum. Until the war ends, one way or another, the right to choose one's profession has been superseded by the needs of the nation.

Should the First Prince fail to recover the pre-war borders, the nation's political boundaries may be redrawn. Already, March Lords have fallen to hostile forces. It remains to be seen whether the First Prince will replace the March Lords whose families ruled their respective Marches for generations. That they allowed their Marches to be taken by their ancient enemies could indicate a failure of proper leadership. Should the First Prince make such a unilateral move, it could cause internal strife that may jeopardize whatever safety and security he manages to achieve.

The First Prince's narrow focus on the war effort may succeed in destroying the nation's enemies, but it could also destroy the nation from within. Such massive (even if temporary) reorganization of a nation's economy always reverberates into the future. How the Suns will weather the shift back toward their former status quo is unclear. The First Prince is offering so many landholdings and noble titles to military volunteers that the nobility will be forever changed. Likewise, the rulership of worlds, and districts upon them, will be required to adapt to new names and personages. Old nobles may conflict with new title holders. Rulers thought dead at the hands of invaders may resurface to reclaim lands given away to bolster the AFFS' ranks. Such stresses may be another source of conflict.

But these issues must wait. First, the war.

HOUSE KURITA
THE DRACONIS COMBINE

The Age of War birthed the BattleMech and increased the deadly character of the conflict. Combine agents stole the technology necessary to build 'Mechs, which allowed the Coordinator to liberate worlds lost to the Lyrans.

The Draconis Combine was the last Inner Sphere nation to join the Star League, and used this alliance to achieve technological parity with the other nations. The Reunification War put the martial prowess of Combine warriors on display; the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery showed little mercy to civilians or the volunteer militias that made up most of the Outworlds Alliance military defense. The Combine committed atrocities against both the Alliance and the Rim Worlds Republic, brutally retaliating against even the slightest armed resistance to their authority. They also used the conflict to annex territory and expand the nation, as other nations did during that conflict.

HISTORY

Shiro Kurita founded the Draconis Combine through a blend of diplomatic guile and military force. Reprisals against rebellious elements also served to subdue internal threats as the Combine sought to expand its reach. Shiro's brother Urizen was instrumental in the early growth of the nation as its first Warlord. Tenno Kurita succeeded his father, Shiro, as Coordinator. Tenno completed the conquest of the Principality of Rasalhague, and then set about establishing the culture that would form the Combine identity.

The culture of the Combine is that of a modernized feudal Japan—although it is as diverse in ethnicities as any other realm. The elderly are revered, families are paramount, and duty and honor guide the actions of soldiers and civilians alike. Ambition, however, sometimes guided heirs and their supporters to accelerate regime changes. Assassinations marked the end of multiple Coordinators. Many justified these actions in terms of the greater good, making them less criminal and more heroes upholding the duty of the new Coordinator in protecting the nation.

Stefan Amaris took members of the House Kurita family hostage during his seizure of the Star League throne. The Coordinator thus forbade General Aleksandr Kerensky from passing through the Combine or using it as a staging ground during the war against the Usurper. The hostages were killed before the Liberation of Terra. The Coordinator realized that submitting to a foreign authority was unacceptable. After Kerensky fled the Inner Sphere, Coordinator Minoru Kurita was the first House Lord to declare himself First Lord of the Star League.

The Succession Wars followed similar declarations by the other House Lords. House Kurita's superior martial abilities outmatched the Lyran Commonwealth early in the First War, so the Combine turned to the Federated Suns for a greater challenge. The assassination of the Coordinator Minoru Kurita led to the Kentares Massacre, which sparked internal conflicts and loss of morale, critically weakening the DCMS. The Combine's gains evaporated before the Davion juggernaut. The subsequent wars resulted in little permanent border shifting for the Combine. Worlds came and went, as did Coordinators.

Things changed centuries later with the Federated Commonwealth alliance, as the Combine now faced a single, united neighbor instead of two distinct ones. Losses in the Fourth War were cleverly offset when the Combine allowed the Rasalhague Military District to secede, forming a buffer state between the Combine and most of the Lyran portion of the FedCom. The Clan invasion nearly ended the Combine, save for intervention by the FedCom. Unity against the Clans led to a new Star League, albeit one with less authority over the Coordinator than the original.

The Jihad also came close to destroying the Combine, but the nation emerged stronger for the trials it survived. The Blackout finally ended the period of peace that chafed the Coordinator and *Gunji-no-Kanrei* (Deputy of Military Affairs). The assault into the Federated Suns reached even further than the First Succession War. The Suns capital New Avalon fell, finally proving the Combine superior to the Suns.

CULTURE

The Draconis Combine is a utilitarian society, and its core values are embodied by the Five Pillars. Each of these pillars represents a different aspect of the nation. When the pillars collectively support one another, society performs to perfection. Such perfection is an ideal that the Combine strives toward. Once that ideal is finally attained, they will bring all worlds and peoples under its aegis. This unity will benefit all, with the blessing of the Coordinator.

The Pillar of Gold represents the government of the Draconis Combine. Gold is both a precious metal and a useful engineering material. Thus, the government aspires to present the proper form at all times, while also serving the Combine and its citizens. The Coordinator embodies the government. References to "the Dragon" indicate both the nation as a whole and the Coordinator as an individual. No distinction exists in the minds of the people. Warlords and ministers carry out the Coordinator's will to the betterment of all. Ministries divide the government into separate bureaucratic entities, efficiently overseeing the nation. Warlords and ministers are drawn from the nobility, forming the upper tier of Combine society.

The Pillar of Steel represents the military. The warrior class of samurai occupies the second tier of Combine society. Warlords and many ministers also hold military positions, indicating the high status of the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery. The DCMS is built upon the concept of *bushido*, a code of honor guiding samurai in proper conduct both in combat and outside it. Dedication to duty and honor dictates the lives of those in the DCMS. Even before the Star League existed, DCMS warriors were regarded as peerless in skill and honor. On an individual basis, few warriors of other nations compare to those of the DCMS.

The Pillar of Teak represents the people and culture of the Combine. Combine society is highly stratified, with all levels expected to perform given roles to the best of their ability. The Coordinator is the pinnacle of society, followed by the nobility, which runs the government, and the warrior class, which fights at the pleasure and for the glory of the Coordinator. The next stratum is the middle class, populated by professionals of all stripes. The common class comprises the bulk of society. Commoners perform the labor required to maintain society's function. Unproductives occupy the lowest tier of society. Every member society follows the dictates of honor and proper behavior. Even criminals show respect for their superiors, the same as low-ranking DCMS soldiers show to the Warlords.

The Pillar of Ivory represents the spiritual aspect of the Combine. Purity and Harmony are two ideals which all Combine citizens pursue. Religions are accepted so long as they encourage these concepts and the focus on community and collectivism over selfish individualism; those practices which encourage overt questioning of authority or tradition are considered inappropriate and are thus discouraged, although rare exceptions for the sake of pragmatism do exist.

The Pillar of Jade represents the nation's economy. The Combine is resource-poor compared to some other nations, but its regimented society exploits its available resources to their utmost. Military boards oversee all business organizations that impact the military in any way. These boards can override civilian directors for the good of the DCMS. Other businesses are more free to operate, though most have at least one military officer, since every company affects the overall economy and thus the DCMS. Workers show loyalty to their company employers in the same fashions as Warlords to the Coordinator, though all Combine citizens revere the Coordinator above all.

GOALS

The Dragon's goals are simple in concept but complex in execution.

First, the Coordinator defends the nation and its peoples against all threats, foreign and domestic. This manifests in severe responses to territorial violations by foreign powers or bandit raiders. Often, the Coordinator must eliminate potential threats before they coalesce into exigent ones. Thus, the DCMS undertakes military operations outside the Combine's defined borders. By engaging enemies on their own territory, the Combine's lands and peoples are thus spared any resulting harm. When the DCMS destroys enemies before they transgress against the Combine's worlds, Combine citizens are able to continue performing their required duties to the Dragon.

Internal threats plagued the Combine's early years and continue to do so today. Secret societies and rebellious elements pose a danger to society as a whole. Their insidious words and terrorist actions disrupt the harmonious synergy that can only exist when Purity and Harmony permeate all people and places. Opposing the Coordinator's vision and working counter to social unity prevents efficient functioning of society. These threats must be dealt with even more harshly than external threats. Allowing even one corrupt faction will permit its ideals to multiply in secret and sap the strength and vitality of the Combine society. Internal investigations and surgical strikes are carried out quietly and efficiently, minimally disrupting the day-to-day activities of the people.

The Combine also seeks to foster unity and purpose throughout all of humanity. Encouraging Purity and Harmony among all peoples will ensure peace and tranquility for all. Those raised outside those tenets of unity of purpose tend to resist them. Their lack of vision and purpose is evident in their culture—inefficient resource exploitation, rampant criminal behavior, and low military quality are exemplary of impurity and disharmony. Destroying these discordant frameworks begins with defeating their militaries. Once the enemy military is swept away, the citizenry can then be guided away from unrestrained individualism. Service to a greater cause will free them of the strife of individuality: the uncertainty of chaotic economies, betrayal by uncaring superiors, or the deadlocks of constant bureaucratic bickering. Service to the Dragon, as opposed to service to those fickle masters, provides for one's family, offers realistic opportunities for personal success, and creates an environment where one can take the time to be happy, enjoy nature's beauty, and still be part of a harmonious community. Harmony and happiness are one, and the Draconis Combine will bring this peace to all those who suffer without it.

When a new threat rears its head, the Dragon will respond quickly and with finality. One such new menace has announced itself upon the birthplace of humanity. The DCMS seeks to repudiate the so-called ilClan and its criminal, false Star League. They vow that, like the Republic of the Sphere before it, any power seeking to impose its will upon the united people of the Combine, especially those with the temerity to attempt seizing Combine territory, will be destroyed. As the Republic Armed Forces crumbled before the might of the DCMS, so too do they believe will the forces of the ilClan will fall as the Clans ever have when daring to disturb the Dragon in its lair.

FUTURE

The near future of the Draconis Combine is one of uncertainty. The greatest military gains since the conquest of Rasalhague netted the Dragon the world of New Avalon, capital of the Combine's ancient enemy, the Federated Suns. That these gains came with assistance from the mercenary Wolf's Dragoons indicates not a deficiency of the DCMS, but the wisdom of the young Coordinator, Yori Kurita, in employing all available resources to the betterment of the nation. However, the conquest left the realm overextended, and their delicious triumph threatens to turn bitter. Surprise attacks by cowardly third parties have caught the DCMS unaware. Claimed territory fell back into enemy hands. This temporary return of impurity and disharmony will be rectified once the Combine's warriors eliminate the new threats. They believe that the light of the Dragon will shine on those worlds and peoples once again, and soon.

Clan threats continue to annoy the Dragon. The destruction of Clan Smoke Jaguar nearly a century ago was a grand triumph in the service of justice for the people of the Combine. That the new Star League allowed the rebirth of the Smoke Jaguars per the order of the so-called ilKhan, reveals to all the truth of this new power. The Combine expects hostility from this ilClan, and the Dragon is preparing to repel the forces of the bastardized League when they attack. After blunting the ilClan's renewed invasion, the DCMS will retaliate. The original Star League fell because the other members of the Council refused to recognize the Coordinator's right to rule; today's Coordinator will not repeat the folly of her predecessors. Those who came before tolerated the existence of the Star League. That will not be the case now.

Clan threats of more familiar nature still reside on the Combine's borders. The Ghost Bears tend to remain in their dens unless provoked. For the moment, the Coordinator is content to allow the Bears to remain at rest. The Snow Ravens, however, pose a different concern. The Ravens once allied loosely with the Federated Suns, and that alliance of convenience seemed to evaporate with the Blackout. However, that the Ravens so recently stood beside the Combine's ancestral enemies proves they are not to be trusted. The Combine believes that the new Star League may court the Ravens, perhaps combining their forces to attempt to entrap the Combine between them. The Coordinator will not allow this.

The Federated Suns represents the Combine's greatest concern. Seizing the enemy's capital realized the goal of Coordinators stretching back centuries. Holding it, however, may present a greater challenge. Resistance by the previously demoralized troops of the AFFS has, surprisingly, stiffened since the conquest. The DCMS was careful to avoid committing any actions that might inspire a determined counterattack, as the Kentares Massacre doomed the advances of the First Succession War. Even slaying First Prince Caleb Davion at Palmyra did not ignite the AFFS to drive the Dragon back. The new First Prince possesses a superior mind than that of his predecessor, but is not the same caliber of warrior as his ancestors, as indicated by the crippling wounds he suffered from Capellan troops.

Whatever machinations the First Prince makes against the Combine will be met openly and honestly, as befits the DCMS. When Davion's forces are crushed, the Dragon will stand triumphant over the former Suns, completing the consolidation of the Combine's new districts.

HOUSE LIAO

THE CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

HISTORY

The Capellan Confederation began as the Capellan Commonality. When the loose alliance faltered in the face of external aggression, Franco Liao formed the Confederation. With authority centralized and invested in Chancellor Franco, the invaders were thrown back. House Liao has ruled the Confederation for nearly its entire history.

The Confederation expanded aggressively and defended its borders ferociously. A dispute over the Andurien system led to war with the Free Worlds League, marking the beginning of the Age of War, in which worlds were devastated by unrestrained warfare. When a Capellan world suffered nuclear desolation, Chancellor Aleisha Liao called for limits on warfare. The resulting Ares Conventions had the unintended effect of making war palatable, ensuring it would continue unabated. A century and a half after the Age of War began, the Andurien Peace Treaty ended it where it began.

The Star League formed not long after. Signing the Andurien Peace Treaty made the Confederation and Free Worlds League the original members of the Star League, along with the Terran Hegemony, which negotiated the treaty. The Star League era was a time of peace and prosperity. When the Star League Civil War broke out, Chancellor Barbara Liao declared neutrality to avoid the war. The forces of both Aleksandr Kerensky and Stefan Amaris were denied entry into Capellan space. After Kerensky won the war, the House Lords voted to remove him as Protector of the Star League, something the Chancellor later regretted. The Star League Council could not select a First Lord, so the body dissolved. General Kerensky's loyal troops of the Star League Defense Force departed the Inner Sphere.

The House Lords all declared themselves First Lord, but none would accept the rule of any other. So began the First Succession War. The Capellan Confederation seized many former Terran Hegemony worlds, some bloodlessly, and the nation expanded to its largest size yet.

The Second Succession War placed the Confederation on the defensive after Chancellor Ilsa Liao was killed in combat. They lost numerous worlds, and the Capellan Confederation Armed Forces (CCAF) were reduced to a shadow of their former greatness. The nation was vulnerable as never before.

In the Third Succession War, the faltering CCAF motivated Chancellor Otto Liao to create the Elastic Defense Doctrine. This controversial strategy concentrated the depleted CCAF on a few worlds, leaving the rest only tiny garrison forces. By mobilizing troops from the fortified worlds to reinforce neighboring worlds under assault, the nation was saved. Expansion, however, was impossible with such a defensive mindset. What the Confederation could not do militarily, Chancellors tried to do covertly, with espionage and subterfuge.

The Fourth Succession War cost the Confederation greatly when its covert activities backfired. The sudden Federated Suns invasion conquered the Sarna Commonality and most of the Tikonov Commonality, and the St. Ives Commonality seceded to form the St. Ives Compact.

While the Confederation was barely affected by the Clan invasion, Chancellor Romano Liao failed to take advantage of that rare opportunity for international unity, eschewing future technological and economic gains in favor of isolationism and personal vendettas.

Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao helmed the Confederation during its greatest period, when the breakup of the Federated Commonwealth allowed House Liao to reclaim numerous lost worlds. The Compact was reconquered. Deft political maneuvering and convenient alliances allowed the Confederation to prosper during the small-scale conflicts that roiled the Inner Sphere. The Word of Blake Jihad inflicted comparatively minor damage to the nation, while the peaceful years that followed allowed the CCAF to rebuild to levels not seen in centuries.

Ruling from the Celestial Throne on Sian, Chancellor Daoshen's service to the Confederation has reaped a great bounty for its citizens. When Gray Monday plunged the Inner Sphere into chaos, he struck. At last, the Confederation took revenge on the Federated Suns, returning many worlds to the Confederation for the first time in centuries. As the ilClan era began, the Daoshen turned his eyes to the worlds the former Republic of the Sphere had taken from it eight decades prior.

CULTURE

The Capellan Confederation requires its people to earn the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. Childhood is a time of education as wards of the state, regardless of economic or social status. Children participate in the improvement of their communities in some fashion, such as through community service. Teenagers are evaluated to determine whether their discipline and accomplishments justify citizenship. Those who fail receive further education for two years. Those who fail a second time join the non-citizen servitor class.

Capellan citizens enjoy typical liberties of other nations. They join a caste system and receive free services including medical care, education, retirement pensions, and more. As in all nations, such benefits come with a price. All citizens must swear an oath of loyalty to the Capellan Confederation, House Liao, and the Chancellor. If the Confederation calls upon them, citizens must relocate to another world or change occupation. They must also register with the planetary militia, unless they are a member of the CCAF. Militias are called upon not only to repel invaders, but also to respond to natural disasters or other threats to the communities of the world.

Community service is a lifelong commitment for all citizens. Those who give of themselves the most are rewarded with prestigious appointments, while those who shirk their duties to their neighbors risk loss of citizenship and demotion to the servitor class.

Those who serve in the CCAF perform their military service in lieu of other community service commitments. The most duty-bound, however, give of their free time to the local communities where they are stationed to show their commitment to the people, the world, and the Confederation. Such service elevates all. By keeping spirits up, threats from other nations seem less fearful. Rebuilding city blocks and industrial facilities on recently reclaimed planets demonstrates to the conquered populace the harmony and joy that service to the state can bring. This example is critical to reintegrating lost Capellan peoples, whose commitment to the state vanished during occupation by foreign powers. These individuals must also demonstrate their worth to receive citizenship. The Confederation is concerned that many on the worlds newly returned to the fold will refuse to participate and become servitors.

Many volunteer for relocation to the new worlds that they might work alongside the peoples there. By showing their own commitments to the greater good, they hope to inspire their new compatriots to give of themselves in equal amount.

Family is crucial to Capellans. Relocations of one citizen require relocating as many family members as is feasible, and failing that, providing generous dispensations for regular communications and occasional visitation. Thus, hyperpulse packets brim with video messages and letters between even distant relations. These representatives of the Capellan culture show by their dedication to family and to the state the value of Capellan life and citizenship.

Security is paramount during times of strife since Gray Monday. The Maskirovka, the Confederation's Intelligence Agency, ensure peace and tranquility from dissident groups and terrorists. The work of the secret police is even more important on the new worlds, as rebellious and insurgent elements often persist within the populations of those liberated worlds. The Maskirovka's methods seem harsh and arbitrary to outsiders, but citizens understand that those means are necessary to protect the state from threats when the luxuries of time and gentleness are simply not practical.

GOALS

The Capellan Confederation's first goal is always to secure its borders and protect its citizens from external threats. Reconciliation with the Magistracy of Canopus was accomplished when Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao married Naomi Centrella, daughter of the Magestrix. Naomi became Magestrix during the Jihad, cementing the alliance between the two nations. The Confederation's other borders remain hostile, as they have always been.

Securing the Confederation's territory required a massive military buildup. This began during the nation's low point following the Fourth Succession War. Outsiders predicted the nation would eventually fall completely, but deft politics and foresight allowed the Chancellor to fortify the new, smaller borders, and dedicate the military-industrial complex to modernization and expansion. New factories churned out BattleMechs for the CCAF at unprecedented rates. The CCAF avoided battle whenever possible, preferring tactics like relying on Free Worlds League troops to drive Federated Commonwealth forces from the Sarna Commonality so those worlds could rejoin the Confederation. Chancellor Sun-Tzu ignored the calls for disarmament following the Word of Blake Jihad. In secret, CCAF continued to innovate and expand. When Gray Monday came, the CCAF was perhaps the strongest House military in the Inner Sphere.

Another goal of the Confederation is restoring lost ancestral worlds to the nation. Many worlds were stolen in the Succession Wars and the birth of the Republic of the Sphere. Invasion of the Federated Suns came with the promise of liberating territory conquered by the Suns in ages past. Chancellor Daoshen reclaimed numerous former Capellan worlds, some of which had suffered under the Davion yoke for centuries. Punitive operations continued until the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns were no longer a threat to the Capellan Confederation. The citizenry rejoiced at these great accomplishments, though more worlds remain to be returned to the fold. The Republic of the Sphere's fall allowed some former Capellan worlds to be repatriated; others remained beyond reach, behind the Fortress Republic. Now that Terra has fallen to Clan Wolf, Chancellor Daoshen is poised to seize this opportunity. With reduced combat operations against the Federated Suns, troops can be redirected toward worlds closer to Terra.

The peoples of the Confederation seek to prove their worth to Chancellor Daoshen. He is worshipped by some as a divine presence; his many successes for the Confederation prove this divinity. The age-old notion of House Liao's divine right to rule the Confederation is thus reinforced, and will surely continue for generations to come. The most dedicated worshippers spread their conviction to others, especially among populations newly added to the nation. Some in the administrative sections of the government show concern over this belief. They are aware of the cost of the military operations, in troops and materiel, as well as in funding. The Confederation is a command economy, so the state controls all resources and expenditures. The financial experts seek to restrain the Chancellor's military excesses to preserve the industrial and mineral resources of the Confederation. This is difficult, however, in the face of the CCAF's successes, all of which are attributed directly to the Chancellor by his adherents.

FUTURE

The immediate future of House Liao and the Capellan Confederation will focus on warfare and reclamation of former Capellan territory. Armed conflict with the ilClan is guaranteed once the remaining Wall around Terra comes down. Chancellor Daoshen anticipates hard fighting; Clan Wolf will aggressively defend the territory it inherited by defeating Devlin Stone and the remnant of the Republic of the Sphere. The Chancellor is eager to demonstrate to the warriors of the ilClan the superiority of Capellan warriors, proving the inferiority of Clan society to Capellan society. None can predict how long and how hard the war will be to return Capellan worlds to the nation where they belong.

Efforts to pacify, assimilate, and integrate the restive populations of worlds returned to the fold will continue for years, perhaps decades, to come. This will require increasing the size of the Maskirovka to deal with radical elements seeking to oppose and destroy Chancellor Daoshen's vision. The increased size of the servitor class will in turn yield great dividends for industrial operations in need of manual labor (although this is also likely to create long-term administrative problems, as those many servitors with professional and academic skills quickly gain citizenship and higher-caste roles). The example these non-citizens set will reinforce the benefits of citizenship for those who loyally and truly serve the Chancellor, the nation, and their neighbors.

Longer-term potential risks are evident. Chancellor Daoshen's divinity is not questioned by his loyal followers, but immortality is not part of their belief. Higher-ranking members of the CCAF and the civilian government grow concerned about succession should the Chancellor's daring in battle lead to disaster. If he falls, it is most likely that Danai Centrella-Liao will become Chancellor. However, the unsavory facts of her origin present potential complications. Publicly, she is the third child of Sun-Tzu Liao and Naomi Centrella. The truth—known only to an intimate few—is that she is the daughter of Daoshen and his sister Ilsa Centrella, the firstborn of Sun-Tzu and Naomi. Incestuous taboos are not the foremost concern, for a large percentage of the Capellan population is in fact descended from the Liao family. Rather, the concern is that such close inbreeding may result in a decline in ability or stability. Such reproduction caused the downfall of many ancient Terran royal lineages, and that potential is especially worrisome to those who remember the volatility of past Liao leaders like Maximilian and Romano. Thus, the truth of Danai's parentage remains a secret.

The CCAF will remain a terrible force for outside militaries. Only a tragedy such as the Palmyra Disaster that broke the AFFS could pose an existential threat to the Capellan military. Chancellor Daoshen clearly possesses sufficient wisdom to avoid such folly, never betting on only a single proverbial card. Arrogance and complacency are the true dangers for a military so mighty and successful as the recent CCAF. It was that very hubris that brought low the AFFS, again serving as a lesson to the Capellan warrior. Proper caution and respect for the Confederation's many foes will ensure the CCAF remains the preeminent military in the Inner Sphere.

HOUSE MARIK

THE FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

HISTORY

The Treaty of Marik united the Marik Republic, Federation of Oriente, and Regulan Principality as the Free Worlds League before even the Terran Hegemony formed. The League was administered by a Parliament rather than an individual. Parliament named Juliano Marik the first Captain-General to lead the unified Free Worlds League Military (FWLM) in annexing the Stewart Commonality. After the war, Juliano returned control of the FWLM to Parliament, as required by the League Constitution.

The position of Captain-General was originally purely military, activated by parliament in times of crisis. However, the office eventually included diplomatic responsibilities. Over time, failure by non-Mariks in the Captain-General position led Parliament to give House Marik the right of first refusal for the post.

The League conquered numerous worlds in the Capellan Zone, which drove the formation of the Capellan Confederation. The Confederation attacked the League for possession of Andurien, marking the start of the Age of War. Unrestricted warfare led to the Ares Conventions, which imposed limitations on warfare. Captain-General Peter Marik largely ignored them in his campaigns. Parliament passed the War Powers Act to restrict his authority. When Parliament later called upon him to take the mantle of Captain-General again, he refused. A series of non-Mariks were unsuccessful in the post, threatening League security. Parliament had to repeal the legislation before a Marik again served as Captain-General.

The Age of War ended where it began, with the Andurien Peace Treaty between the League and Confederation. The Terran Hegemony negotiated the treaty, leading to the formation of the Star League, with those three nations the first signatories.

Internal strife threatened the League in the twenty-seventh century. Terrorists assassinated most of the Marik family. A fearsome campaign followed to eliminate the terrorists, uncovering proof that its leaders were the rulers of the Principality of Regulus. This revelation drove the Selaj family, the rulers of Regulus, from the League. Paranoia led to brutal purges, causing a break in House Marik itself, leading to executions and considerable political upheaval.

Stefan Amaris usurped the throne of the Star League in 2766. Captain-General Kenyon Marik refused to recognize him, but also refused to allow General Kerensky to stage operations from Free Worlds League territory. After Kerensky defeated Amaris, the House Lords removed Kerensky as Protector of the Star League. The Star League Council could not select a new First Lord, so it dissolved. General Kerensky and his loyal troops of the Star League Defense Force departed the Inner Sphere.

Kenyon took advantage of the panic that swept parliament following the death of the Star League, and pushed Parliamentary Resolution 288 through the legislature, which gave the office of Captain-General almost total control over the nation, "for the duration of the crisis." The powers granted by the resolution, and the vague wording, meant that the crisis and its duration was completely up to the whim of the Captain-General to define. Each successive Captain-General has invoked Resolution 288 upon taking office.

The First Succession War began when the Lyran Commonwealth invaded Bolan. The Captain-General used nuclear weapons, and the invaders retaliated. He declared the Ares Conventions suspended; the limits on war had been cast off. The League claimed many worlds from the Confederation and the former Hegemony, but inconceivable destruction finally drove the League to sign armistices with its neighbors.

The Second Succession War nearly ended the League. The Captain-General Charles Marik discovered ComStar was leaking intelligence to other nations, so he attacked a hyperpulse generator station. ComStar imposed a communications interdiction, and the FWLM suffered considerable losses. The shadow war with ComStar lasted less than two years, but the League spent the next two decades trying to reclaim worlds lost to it.

The Third Succession War saw little territorial exchange, but it did feature Anton's Revolt, pitting Captain-General Janos Marik against his brother Anton. Late in the war, the League signed the Concord of Kapteyn with the Capellan Confederation and Draconis Combine to counter the Federated Commonwealth alliance.

The Fourth Succession War cost the League many worlds. After the war, the Duchy of Andurien seceded. The war to reclaim the duchy claimed more Marik lives. Thomas Marik was thought killed in a bomb blast, but miraculously returned with heavy scars. But this "Thomas" was in fact a ComStar agent, who, as Captain-General, pushed legislation through Parliament, including veto over them.

In a strange twist, Thomas Marik instigated Operation Guerrero after it was discovered that his son Joshua had died of leukemia in the Federated Commonwealth and been replaced by a double. This caused the breakup of the FedCom. Thomas ceased his operations when Katherine Steiner-Davion returned the worlds the League had lost to the FedCom in the Fourth Succession War.

The Word of Blake revealed the true nature of "Thomas Marik" during the Jihad. The resulting political turmoil, along with the horrors of the war, broke the League apart. It was not until after the Blackout that the League finally reunited under a Marik Captain-General. Then Clan Wolf consumed a great deal of the League to form the Wolf Empire, only to leave for Terra to become ilClan. Now, as the ilClan era begins, the League's sights are set on reclaiming worlds from the Wolf Empire and securing its territory for good.

CULTURE

The Free World League was founded on the principle of the free market. Much of League society is governed by concepts of cost and earnings. This economic underpinning defies the command economies of other nations and contributes to the fierce opposition to foreign rule by citizens of League worlds. Free trade enables citizens of any stratum the opportunity and ability to rise in rank and join the upper echelons of League society. During the Star League era, this was a fact of life with countless examples throughout the nation. The poor and impoverished applied themselves and excelled and rose to own companies, command armies, and rule worlds.

The horrors of the Succession Wars called into question the benefits of such open commerce. Some problems, it seemed, could not be solved by the free market after all. Adherents refused to accept that, and friction between authoritarian elements and traditional, freedom-minded groups increased the political instability in the League. However, the adherents' dedication saved the League during the Inner Sphere's darkest times, as merchants plied wares throughout the Inner Sphere, bringing riches and economic prosperity to the League.

The nature of the free market conflicts with mores such as free education and medical treatments for all. Because only the wealthiest can afford the best schools and medical treatment, fewer quality institutions exist. However, the competitive nature of the economy means that there are always efforts to found new schools and hospitals in hopes of claiming market share from a rival. This keeps the best on their toes and forces continuous improvement.

English is the official language of the League, but the many separate states that make up the League tend to establish their own official languages, sometimes in defiance of the central authority. Individual worlds sometimes name an official language distinct from their province *and* the nation. This free thinking is a manifestation of the fierce independence fostered in all individuals. By establishing their own language, they control the discourse on their world or in their province, allowing them to identify outsiders immediately. While this can improve one's trade at a local level, it affects large-scale national organization, especially with regards to the military.

League society has held a unique bias for generations. Captain-General Gerald Marik's paranoia and brutal pogroms were blamed on the bionic enhancements that saved his life after a bomb killed the rest of his family. This led to a national tendency to discriminate against anyone with bionic implants. The Word of Blake fielded large forces of bionically modified soldiers, increasing the bias against bionics in the League and spreading the sentiment beyond their borders. Those with replacement limbs or organs as a result of military service or catastrophic accidents are accepted; those who seek out such implants, however, are viewed with suspicion and distrust, especially by those of lower income strata. Only the wealthy can afford the best, natural-appearing bionics.

Recent times have altered the League greatly. A vast swath of worlds was conquered by Clan Wolf, and Clan rule imposed on the freedom-minded citizenry. Surprisingly, many younger individuals flocked to the new social structure, perhaps because the Clan's need for Warriors to defend its territory motivated a call for freeborn locals to serve. This merit-based recruitment boosted morale considerably, for wealth was not a factor. The poor prospered greatly under Clan Wolf, but with the Clan now located on Terra, the people of the Wolf Empire worlds face an uncertain future.

GOALS

The Free Worlds League is composed of multiple autonomous provinces. Each of these states possesses its own set of short- and long-term goals. Parliament and House Marik, and specifically the Captain-General, are often concerned with policies and goals of the League as a whole. These goals may run counter to those of the League's member states, but often what is good for the nation is good for its components as well.

The League's goals hinge upon the FWLM. Considerable territory fell to Clan Wolf, and then nearly all the Clan's forces departed for Terra to contest for the title of ilClan. That move left the worlds of the Wolf Empire ripe for the picking. Parliament and the Captain-General intend to reclaim as much of this territory as possible while it is underdefended, and in some cases completely undefended. This requires haste, as the Lyrans will certainly waste no time in doing the same. One hope is that since entire provinces were consumed by the Wolf Empire, the League can reacquire those worlds without necessarily re-establishing the old provincial rule. If, for example, the worlds of the Silver Hawks Coalition are liberated from the Wolf Empire, it is possible that the Coalition will not be reconstituted.

Parallel to the goal of recovering worlds from Clan Wolf, the Captain-General covets former League worlds which have refused to return to the fold. These include the Duchy of Andurien, the Regulan Fiefs, and numerous unaffiliated individual worlds. Without the military support of those worlds, especially the two provinces, the FWLM is weakened. The Captain-General accomplished a Herculean political feat in reforming the League; it may take another to return those restive provinces to the nation without military force.

Another concern is the Marian Hegemony. The notion of a Periphery nation invading and seizing territory from a Successor State once seemed impossible. However, the Marian Hegemony accomplished that very thing. The FWLM drove these invaders from some of their conquered worlds, but if the League cannot repel Periphery forces completely, unaligned worlds will be even less inclined to rejoin the League. The Captain-General is considering punitive operations both to push the Marians completely beyond the old border and to remove their ability to prosecute such a bold move again.

The dual threats of the Capellan Confederation and Lyran Commonwealth remain, as they ever have. The Commonwealth is the lesser concern for the moment. First, the Wolf Empire consumed much of the border between the two nations. Second, the Lyrans will be as focused on the vulnerable worlds of the Empire as the League. Should the League delay, there is a risk that the Lyrans will claim former League worlds. That would turn easy reconquests into military escapades of uncertain result. Third, the Lyrans are dealing with deadly conflict of their own, on a level not seen in centuries. This distraction will prevent them from focusing on the League, at least for a while.

The Confederation is a great threat. However, the refusal of the Anduriens to return to the League places a buffer between current League territory and the Capellans on one front. Closer to Terra, the fearsome Capellan military masses at the border. The CCAF's eyes are not on the League, though. They are focused on Terra and former Capellan worlds behind the fallen Fortress Wall. If Captain-General Nikol is canny, she will avoid incurring the Chancellor's military wrath while he is distracted with the ilClan. That should free the FWLM to retake worlds from the Empire and possibly entice their wayward former comrades to restore their worlds to the Free Worlds League.

FUTURE

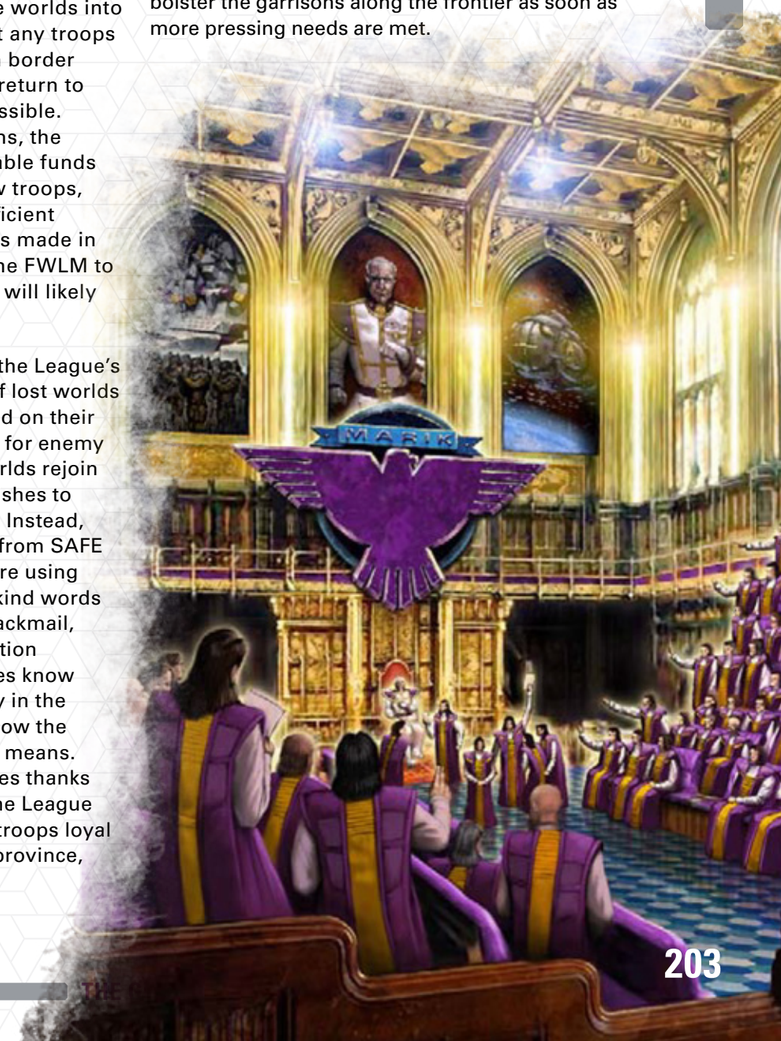
The Free Worlds League's existential crisis is far from over. The League reformed, but without two significant provinces and a large region of independent worlds that once were members. The coming of Clan Wolf threatened the reborn League. It is critical for Captain-General Nikol to restore the worlds lost to the Empire as soon as possible. Industry within that territory will strengthen the League, especially the military.

The League's Capellan neighbors are focused on Terra and nearby worlds for the time being. Once the status of those worlds is settled, the Confederation will once again turn to conquest. The Chancellor believes himself divine, and his soldiers fight with fanatical fury. Should he claim the border worlds of the League, he will pursue every avenue to bring those worlds into his possession. It is imperative that any troops transferred from the Confederation border to subdue worlds from the Empire return to their border stations as soon as possible. Without the Regulans and Anduriens, the League must also devote considerable funds and materiel to train and equip new troops, from MechWarriors to infantry. Deficient troop numbers will nullify any gains made in reclaiming lost territory. Look for the FWLM to add regiments soon. Most of these will likely be conventional forces.

The Captain-General has tasked all the League's diplomats to pursue reintegration of lost worlds at all costs. Every independent world on their border represents a staging ground for enemy troops. Security demands those worlds rejoin the League. The Captain-General wishes to avoid military conquest in this goal. Instead, her representatives and operatives from SAFE (the League's intelligence agency) are using every tool at their disposal. Where kind words and promises might fail, bribery, blackmail, extortion, abduction, and assassination might succeed. The former provinces know how House Marik has gotten its way in the past. They hesitate because they know the capabilities and limitations of those means. For now, they can resist the overtures thanks to their own military forces. Once the League stabilizes its border and fields new troops loyal to the nation and not an individual province, the situation will be different.

House Marik too long neglected the potential threat of the Marian Hegemony. The Captain-General recognizes the reality of that threat now. Her forces have already dealt several setbacks to the Marian Hegemony troops, throwing them back from their furthest gains. The message she intends to send to the Hegemony must wait, however, as the extent to which the Marians can truly threaten the League is minimal. Once she has dealt with the Wolf Empire issue, her next order of business will be settling matters with the Marians once and for all.

Captain-General Marik currently dismisses House Steiner as a threat. She knows from her own nation's history how internal divisiveness can hobble a national leader. Rebellions and uprisings will plague the Lyrans for years, but that does not mean the border is secure. Upstart realms whose rulers feel the need to demonstrate their might pose a threat to border worlds. She intends to bolster the garrisons along the frontier as soon as more pressing needs are met.



HOUSE STEINER

THE LYRAN COMMONWEALTH

HISTORY

The Lyran Commonwealth formed with the merger of the Federation of Skye, Protectorate of Donegal, and Tamar Pact. These three mercantile powers merged to benefit from mutual defense. The rise of major interstellar nations threatened the freedom of unaffiliated worlds. The original government of the Commonwealth proved ineffectual almost immediately. A military coup before the nation turned forty years old stabilized the economy and developed a military capable of resisting its hostile neighbors.

The Age of War nearly ended the Commonwealth. Its inept military leaders resorted to scorched-earth tactics that barely slowed the invading Draconis Combine. Archon Alistair Marsden sacked the high command and took over the military personally. His leadership gave the Commonwealth a determined, purposeful objective rather than the disparate strategies of multiple generals. The attack on Vega succeeded beyond all conceivable measure. After the Archon's combat death shortly after, his widow, Katherine Steiner, succeeded him as Archon, transferring the leadership to House Steiner for the first time. The Steiners held the nation's throne as tightly as the clenched hand in the nation's new Steiner Fist emblem. In a short time, German was the official language, and Germanic culture was encouraged throughout the nation. A new noble class using Teutonic titles lorded over the populace.

The Star League brought strife to the Commonwealth. By spreading required dues across all Commonwealth worlds equally, less wealthy worlds suffered compared to more developed systems. A revolt forced the Archon to alter the taxation apportionment. The Reunification War pitted the Archon against the Rim Worlds Republic, allowing dissident elements in the Commonwealth to attempt a coup. Her actions soured relations between House Steiner and the Skye and Tamar worlds, which would simmer for centuries. Only after suffering through considerable growing pains did the Commonwealth finally reap benefits from the Star League, as the original mercantile vision of the nation's founders brought prosperity with judicious application of industrial and economic resources.

The Amaris War ended the Golden Age. Archon Robert Steiner II allowed General Aleksandr Kerensky's SLDF troops to stage from the Commonwealth, but he did not openly support the general. This caused countless Lyrans to pledge their loyalty to Kerensky. To aid the SLDF, Lyran forces occupied and pacified the Rim Worlds Republic, Amaris's nation. Many of those worlds became part of the Commonwealth. Kerensky and most of the SLDF departed the Inner Sphere after the House Lords dismissed him as Protector of the Star League.

The First Succession War resulted from the inability to name a new First Lord of the Star League, and began when the Commonwealth invaded the Free Worlds League system of Bolan. House Marik's use of nuclear weapons indicated the abandonment of the Ares Conventions, in a prelude to the unprecedented destructiveness of that war.

The Second Succession War cost the Commonwealth more systems. Once again, unrestricted warfare dominated the conflict. A succession crisis saw the capital invaded and the new Archon executed. The coup's success cost the Lyrans more border worlds.

The Third Succession War's smaller scale warfare nonetheless cost the Commonwealth numerous worlds due to ineffectual and apathetic leadership. Katrina Steiner rose to the Archonship, ushering in a new era. Her drive for peace led to the Federated Commonwealth alliance, which reshaped the Inner Sphere more than any event since the fall of the Star League.

The Fourth Succession War netted the Commonwealth considerable territory, most of it conquered by the Federated Suns as the First Prince's wedding gift to his wife, the Archon's daughter Melissa.

The Clan invasion and breakup of the Federated Commonwealth threw the Lyran state into chaos. Renamed the Lyran Alliance by the usurper Katherine Steiner-Davion, all systems linking the Lyran and Suns states were abandoned. The FedCom Civil War and Word of Blake Jihad featured combat and existential threats to the nation's capital. After the Jihad, the nation reverted to the Lyran Commonwealth, washing itself clean of the usurper's legacy.

The Dark Age found the Commonwealth taking the offensive in the wake of the Blackout. Cooperation with Clan Wolf initially succeeded, but the alliance collapsed and the Wolf Empire was formed in part with Commonwealth worlds. Khan Alaric Wolf sought to lead the Commonwealth by revealing his mother to be Katherine Steiner-Davion, but Trillian Steiner was selected to rule.

CULTURE

The Lyran Commonwealth is a nation overlaid by German cultural heritage. This is the legacy of Archon Katherine Steiner, the founder of the Steiner Dynasty. German is the official language, and traditional German noble titles identify members of the upper class. The actual ethnicity and cultures of individuals and communities represents the vast array of Terran history, but within the Commonwealth, the unified language and culture melded the disparate constituencies into one.

Most citizens give their loyalty to their home world first, and the Commonwealth second. This independent streak persists and in fact was fomented by Archons' brutal military reprisals through the centuries. Distrust of the national government is simply one strange component of the national identity. This odd cultural evolution made rebellions and insurrections a fact of life.

Religious freedom is a precious guarantee of the Commonwealth. A strict delineation between church and state further established a national tolerance of religions. Every religion originating on Terra can be found in the Lyran state, along with numerous new religions that sprang up after humanity left its cradle.

The Commonwealth's mercantile foundation brought considerable wealth to the nation. Even during the Succession Wars, Lyran traders traveled the length and breadth of the Inner Sphere. Great revenue funded great tax coffers. Lyrans thus had the best standard of living for centuries, and an excellent free education

system made Lyrans the best educated people in the Inner Sphere. A relatively small portion of the population suffers poverty, but government programs guarantee them food and housing. These programs are carefully moderated to prevent reliance; instead, they encourage users to improve their lot in life through hard work.

The Lyran economy peaked early thanks to considerable resource wealth on its many worlds. The nation's strong currency, the *kroner*, remained the coin of the realm throughout the Succession Wars. Most nations came to rely on the C-bill, but the Lyran government's regulation of the economy propped up the *kroner*'s value and thus prevented potential economic damage from reliance upon an external currency. Economic regulators do more than protect the nation's currency; they also invest in businesses and industries, encouraging trade both within the Commonwealth and with other nations. This is not to suggest that the Commonwealth has a command economy. Instead, the free market is often allowed to operate without direct oversight, but with security measures in place to prevent crashes or depressions.

The nobility occupies the highest stratum of society. However, if one is a high-ranking member of the nobility, that individual may not serve in the Estates General. The Estates General is the representative parliament of the Commonwealth. Each world (or sometimes a group of worlds) elects a representative to the Estates General. The body prepares annual budgets, tax reform, and other legislative duties. The Estates General is often regarded as a mouthpiece echoing the Archon's preferred policies, but through the years, it has sometimes openly and vocally opposed the Archon for the betterment of the Commonwealth.

Separate from the Estates General is the Commonwealth Council. This body consists of the most powerful nobles of various regions and high-ranking civilians from different national government departments. The Council advises the Archon and serves as an intermediary between the Estates General and the Archon. Legislation passed by the Estates General is debated by the Council before reaching the Archon for approval. Military emergencies sometimes lead to strife between these various bodies, as delays related to prolonged debates can drastically and negatively affect military considerations.

GOALS

The Lyran Commonwealth's goals are typical of other nations. They wish to secure their borders from external threats. They seek to educate the population and provide opportunities for them to contribute to society and to elevate their status. They wish to protect the people and their culture from those who would impose their own philosophies and political systems upon Lyran citizens.

In addition to these considerations, the Commonwealth also wishes to foster economic development on less wealthy worlds. The government encourages commerce with other nations, even hostile ones provided the goods being offered are not military in nature. This legacy of the nation's mercantile founders is the one continuous thread through Lyran society over the centuries. It will continue to be central to the Lyran identity, internally and externally.

In recent years, the Commonwealth's borders have shrunken tremendously; territory has eroded for more than a century. The Clan invasion claimed numerous Lyran systems, and then the breakup of the Federated Commonwealth stripped dozens of systems in the Sarna March. More recent Clan hostilities nearly conquered the capital, Tharkad. Archon Trillian Steiner has prioritized improving the military and reclaiming worlds lost to the Falcons and the Wolf Empire. Worse, some worlds have declared independence or formed mini-states that view themselves as separate from the Lyran state. These worlds must be brought to heel, but that will mean fighting rebellious Lyrans rather than Clan warriors, Combine samurai, or League soldiers.

Loss of territory and unquelled rebellions threaten the Commonwealth. If the Lyrans cannot shore up the fabric of their society, the nation may collapse as the Free Worlds League did. Thus, it is imperative to bolster the nation's shared identity, in part by recovering those lost to conquerors and by eliminating restive elements within the Commonwealth itself.

Trade will always enable the Lyrans to recover from disasters, but trade requires secure industrial facilities and freely available resources. When systems are taken from the nation, merchants and the Commonwealth suffer. One of the reasons territory is so important is the valuable natural resources some worlds possess. When the plentiful worlds fall to hostile powers, essential industries cannot operate. This is exactly the motivation for pirate raids and other supply-centric hostile operations; those who cannot protect their resources (or lack them entirely) must seek to acquire them from others. Protecting trade by any means necessary forms a significant part of the Lyran government's guiding principles now and for the future.

FUTURE

The near future of the Lyran Commonwealth presents a grim vista. Recent years have been unkind to the nation, and the consequences of considerable territorial losses and governmental upheaval continue. The full extent of the damages to the military, culture, and collective psyche remains to be seen. Archon Trillian Steiner is expected to shore up the military and secure what remains. The Commonwealth can scarcely suffer any additional losses.

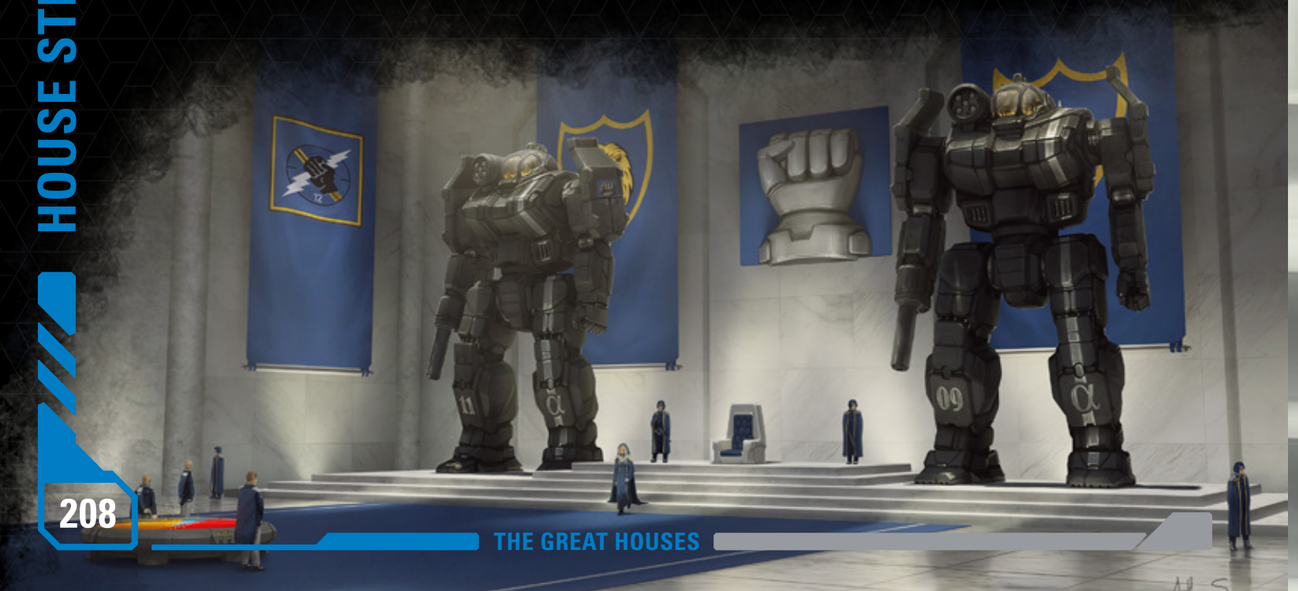
The Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces (LCAF) have degenerated compared to glory days of the past. If they don't demonstrate themselves to be a credible threat, the nation will collapse. The Lyrans need to believe in the strength of the military; if that faith is lost, worlds will flock to other banners, and so before that happens, the LCAF must accomplish something notable. Expect operations to target major lost worlds, possibly at great cost. Recovering territory and citizenry will do much for the national mood. By boosting morale, the LCAF should receive an influx of recruits, ensuring that additional missions net success.

But proving themselves a respectable military may happen another way. Instead of simply targeting worlds to recover, the LCAF may consider specifically targeting hostile military commands. By engaging enemy units of great repute, and defeating them, the Lyran military may find some pride to offset the shame of recent losses.

The Lyrans also must contend with the fast-changing Clan threat. With Clan Jade Falcon reduced to a shadow of its former self, the LCAF must deal with lingering Jade Falcon remnants that did not accompany the Clan to Terra. They must also address the power vacuum created by the Falcons' destruction. The Falcon Occupation Zone will draw other Clans, rebellious nobles, and perhaps even ambitious pirates seeking to establish a bandit kingdom. The LCAF must respond to the opportunity by becoming a major contender for former worlds that have suffered under the Clan yoke for a century. There will never be a better time to do so.

Territory lost to the Wolf Empire is another consideration. Khan Alaric Ward left behind minimal defenders when he attacked Terra, and former Lyran worlds are vulnerable to reconquest. Expect the LCAF to pursue retaking those worlds in the near future. Regarding the new ilClan, little is known of the happenings within the Fortress Wall, but the LCAF is already preparing to engage Clan Wolf's forces when the Wall drops. Whether those engagements see the LCAF on the defensive, repelling aggressive Wolf attacks, or on the offensive, taking the fight to former Lyran worlds, remains to be seen.

Clan Sea Fox represents a considerable threat to Lyran mercantile activities. The roving Khanates and Aimags oppose Lyran merchants in every market, undercutting Lyran prices simply to drive the Lyrans elsewhere. Unless some sort of merchant marine force is established, Lyran merchants may lose their ability to project their economic power to other nations. Conflict with the Khanates will come. It is only a matter of when.



We will purge our old ideals and ethics; those belong to the corrupt stars of the Inner Sphere, and will not serve as we begin anew. Now, while our minds are open and yearning for new insight, we must remold them and fill them with the truth of our destiny. For we are destined not only to be different from those we left behind, but also better. My father knew this, and saved us from the holocaust of the Inner Sphere. I accept it as truth, and have returned to lead you, the survivors of this most bitter trial.

—Nicholas Kerensky to his loyalists on Strana Mechty, 2802

THE CLANS

THE ILCLAN

CLAN WOLF

Jerome Winson was an SLDF officer under Aleksandr Kerensky. He became a surrogate older brother to Kerensky's sons after Terra's liberation. He joined both Aleksandr's and Nicholas' Exoduses. Nicholas even married Winson's sister, Jennifer. Winson founded Clan Wolf and was assigned to Eden in Operation Klondike, along with Clans Jade Falcon and Smoke Jaguar. Clan Wolf's superior performance earned Clan Wolf ilKhan Kerensky's genetic legacy for their own. This drew resentment from the other Clans, especially Clan Jade Falcon.

Following the alleged destruction of Clan Snow Raven's genetic depository by Clan Wolverine, Clan Wolf bid low against Clan Widowmaker to win the rights to Annihilate the Wolverines. The grossly outnumbered Clan Wolf defeated Clan Wolverine, and the resulting spoils positioned the Wolves as foremost among the Clans. Clan Wolf leveraged this into an extensive trading network and colonization program. Liberal attitudes toward the lower castes encouraged innovation in trade and technology. This kept Clan Wolf at the head of Clan society.

Clan Widowmaker's merchants could not compete with Clan Wolf's merchants. The Widowmaker Khan responded with executions and blamed Khan Winson for agitating rebellion. Winson countered in the Grand Council that the Widowmaker warrior caste was unfit to rule, and the Clan should be absorbed. The Grand Council agreed. Clan Wolf won the Trial of Absorption, but at great cost: ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky was killed in the fighting.

The following centuries saw Clan Wolf develop Elemental battle armor. Good relations with Clans Hell's Horses and Coyote gained the Wolves early access to the genetic super soldiers to operate these suits, and to OmniMechs. These were used to plague the Falcons and Jaguars.

Clan Wolf led the Warden faction as the Political Century—a period from the mid-twenty-ninth to mid-thirtieth centuries—dawned. They blocked a Crusader Clan invasion of the Inner Sphere and found a way to further forestall another attempt. Khan Kerlin Ward suggested a reconnaissance mission instead, leading to the Dragoon Compromise. A force of freeborn warriors was sent to the Inner Sphere to serve all the Great Houses as the mercenary Wolf's Dragoons. Ultimately, Clan Wolf's opposition to Smoke Jaguar and the Crusader Clans failed. The Inner Sphere would be invaded and conquered. As part of Operation Revival, Clan Wolf was assigned an invasion corridor—both in recognition of the Kerensky bloodline and to punish them for their opposition.

Clan Wolf sliced through the Free Rasalhague Republic. The other Clans had intended the weak Republic opposition to embarrass the Wolves; instead the Clans failed to keep pace in their own corridors. The Wolves took Dragoon intel to heart and readily adapted to *dezgra* Inner Sphere tactics. The Wolves captured two bondspeople who would shape the future: Phelan Kell of the Kell Hounds mercenary command, and Ragnar Magnusson, heir apparent of the Free Rasalhague Republic. After ilKhan Leo Showers was killed at Radstadt, Warden Wolf Khan Ulric Kerensky was elected ilKhan in hopes of undermining his Warden inclinations. In response, Kerensky negotiated a proxy battle for Terra on the rural world of Tukayyid. Clan Wolf was the only Clan that prepared appropriately and the only Clan that achieved an outright victory. The other Clans' failures led to the fifteen-year Truce of Tukayyid.

The truce prevented any further drive toward Terra. Elements in the Clans, and within Clan Wolf, felt ilKhan Kerensky and the Wardens had doomed the Clans; warriors with experience in the Inner Sphere would be dead or *solahma* (a warrior past the age of thirty who is considered to have washed out) by the time the truce ended. Clan Jade Falcon took up this call and had Kerensky charged with genocide in the Grand Council. The Grand Council agreed, but the ilKhan declared a Trial of Refusal against the Falcons.

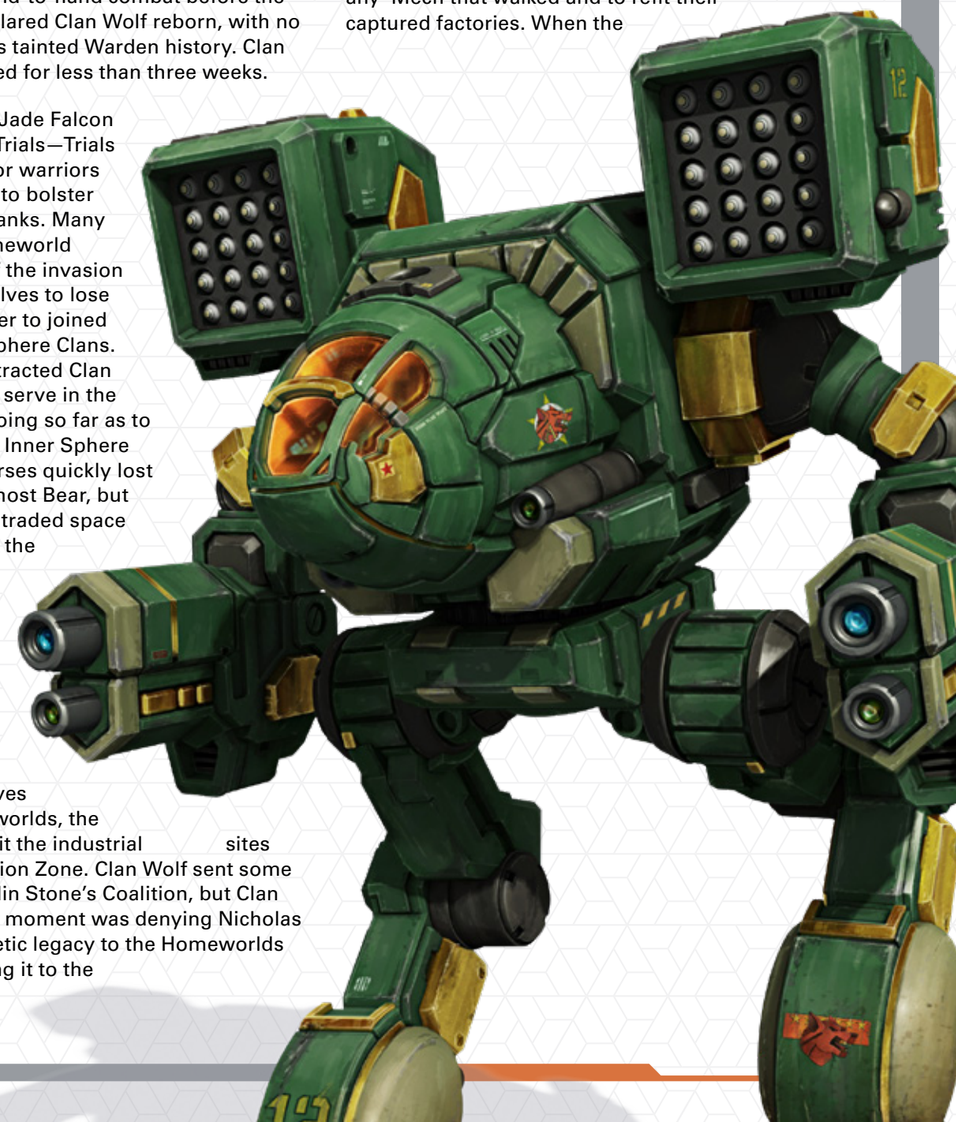
While Kerensky sent the Warden Wolves away under Phelan Kell to preserve the Clan, Kerensky led the Crusader Wolves in a pyrrhic Refusal War to ruin the Falcons and hopefully eliminate the Crusader Wolves in the process. This ended with Clan Wolf defeated and absorbed by the Falcons. But a former Wolf named Vlad issued a Trial of Refusal of his own, and the absorbed Wolves were freed from the Falcons as Clan Jade Wolf. This political machination dissociated the Jade Wolves from the former Wolves, who had been defeated in the Trial of Refusal. To resume the Clan Wolf name would instantly place them at risk of a Trial of Annihilation. Jade Wolf Khan Vlad Ward used his seat on the Grand Council to challenge newly elected ilKhan Elias Crichell of Jade Falcon into a Trial of Refusal. He killed the ilKhan in hand-to-hand combat before the Council and declared Clan Wolf reborn, with no connection to its tainted Warden history. Clan Jade Wolf existed for less than three weeks.

Clans Wolf and Jade Falcon began Harvest Trials—Trials of Possession for warriors of other Clans—to bolster their depleted ranks. Many warriors of Homeworld Clans left out of the invasion allowed themselves to lose the Trials in order to joined the two Inner Sphere Clans. Khan Ward contracted Clan Hell's Horses to serve in the Inner Sphere, going so far as to give them three Inner Sphere Worlds. The Horses quickly lost these to Clan Ghost Bear, but Khan Ward had traded space for time against the growing Ghost Bear Dominion.

Khan Ward's reign ended after the Wars of Reaving. While ilKhan Brett Andrews chased the Wolves from the Homeworlds, the Word of Blake hit the industrial sites in their Occupation Zone. Clan Wolf sent some forces with Devlin Stone's Coalition, but Clan Wolf's brightest moment was denying Nicholas Kerensky's genetic legacy to the Homeworlds Clans by bringing it to the Inner Sphere.

Forced to rebuild from scratch and surrounded by stronger enemies, Clan Wolf sought renewal when approached by the Lyran Commonwealth for Operation Hammerfall. The Lyrans believed they had contracted the Wolves to hit former Free Worlds systems in the Republic of the Sphere. The Wolves instead hoped to carve out a new Occupation Zone (OZ) closer to Terra. When the Lyrans harassed the Wolves' migrating dependents, Clan Wolf made peace with the Free Worlds League and attacked the Lyrans. The Lyrans melted like ice, and the Wolf Empire was born.

Clan Wolf rebuilt by recruiting freeborn warriors directly from their newly conquered territory. They spent profligately with Clan Sea Fox for any 'Mech that walked and to refit their captured factories. When the



Clan Wolf-in-Exile

The Wardens of Clan Wolf split off during the Refusal War, on order from ilKhan Ulric Kerensky. They were abjured and exiled from Clan Society. Khan Phelan Ward led the Warden exiles to Arc-Royal and bent the knee to his Inner Sphere family, the Kells. They still referred to themselves as Clan Wolf, while the Clans saw them as no more than bandits. Phelan's Wolves came to be known as Clan Wolf-in-Exile. It took time for the Federated Commonwealth to warm to the Exile Wolves. Khan Ward brought with him a small fleet of WarShips, the survivors of two Galaxies, and many genetic legacies and civilian castepeople. The Exiles built their enclaves away from Lyran civilians. It took time for new *sibko*s to be trained and new factories to be built to support the small Clan.

Despite being Abjured the Exiles managed good relations with Warden Inner Sphere Clans via trials, trade, and infrastructure projects. A notable trial with Clan Ghost Bear lost them Ragnar Magnusson, but gained them a full ship of supplies. Both the Bears and Nova Cats partnered with the Exiles for industrial endeavors, while Arc-Royal MechWorks was a regular collaborator.

Clan Wolf-in-Exile began providing liaison officers experienced in Clan warfare to earn the Inner Sphere's trust. The Exiles were confident and strong enough to commit five Clusters to the Second Star League for Operation Bulldog. The capture of the Sixth Jaguar Dragoons added to the Clan's numbers.

The Exile Wolves faced political pressure to pick a side in the FedCom Civil War. Clan Jade Falcon's incursion provided a welcome distraction. The Exiles came to the aid of several worlds and helped secure peace. Finally, Grand Duke Morgan Kell called on the Exiles to stand with Peter Steiner-Davion and Victor Steiner-Davion against their sister, Katherine the Usurper. The eventual victory earned Clan Wolf-in-Exile recognition as a sovereign entity within the Lyran Alliance.

Clan Wolf-in-Exile was a major target for the Word of Blake in the Jihad, and they fought back from the beginning. They launched a rescue mission to the blasted world of Outreach to find survivors of Wolf's Dragoons. This led to direct combat with the Blakists. The Kell Hounds turned Arc-Royal into a major center for mercenaries and actions against the Word of Blake, and they successfully repelled a Blakist nuclear strike. The Exile Wolves' fleet defeated a second Blakist attack, this one a WarShip strike on Arc-Royal. The Donner Bombing took place on Arc-Royal when Precentor Martial Victor Steiner-Davion called a summit to coordinate actions against Word of Blake. The bombing killed many of the delegates and stalled coordinated actions for some time. Clan Ghost Bear's Khan was killed, bringing the Bears fully into the Jihad against the Blakists.

During this time, Clan Wolf-in-Exile was contracted by Chandrasekhar Kurita for several operations, primarily because of their WarShip fleet. These notably included the two assaults against the Ruins of Gabriel. The Exiles were early supporters of Devlin Stone, and they suffered heavy losses on the way to Terra.

When the Operation Hammerfall was organized, the Exiles put out feelers regarding reunification with Clan Wolf, but Clan Jade Falcon's invasion under Khan Malvina Hazen prevented any progress. As the LCAF collapsed in vicious fighting, Clan Wolf-in-Exile proved a rare bright spark in the face of Hazen's assaults, but the outnumbered Exiles couldn't hold out forever. Hazen launched an all-out assault to crush them once and for all. A genocidal campaign forced the Exiles to retreat, allowing the Falcons finally to occupy Arc-Royal. Most of the surviving Exiles flocked to Khan Alaric Ward, effectively reunifying the Clan.

Republic's Wall contracted, Khan Alaric Ward gathered his entire *touman* (military forces), including garrison forces, and appealed to Clan Wolf in Exile and Wolf's Dragoons to flock to his banner. It was time to return to Terra. The titanic battle that followed drew in Clan Jade Falcon and reduced Clan Wolf by over half. But when the dust settled, Clan Wolf stood as the ilClan.

CULTURE

Clan Wolf stands on Terra, acknowledged as ilClan by all the Clans except Clan Hell's Horses. But Clan Wolf is not the same Clan that left its Occupation Zone decades before.

Clan Wolf pacified their Empire, carved out of Lyran Commonwealth and Free Worlds League territory, by offering something different than the Great Houses that came before ever promised. infrastructure projects. Credit from the Sea Foxes helped spur the Wolves' construction boom to provide a good living for all. The Wolves didn't even bother to introduce the Clan caste system to their new territories; there was barely time to introduce a pro-Clan curriculum into schools. Even traditional Clan quotas had little meaning. The Watch was so stretched, it was easy to fudge the numbers of big-ticket items like 'Mechs to match the warrior caste's demands. Corruption was less a problem than exploitation of Wolf extravagance. With so few Wolf officials in the Empire, people mostly live as they always have. There is an overhanging dread that one day things might change, but so far, the Wolves have not been able to pay enough attention.

The *touman* is largely filled by freeborn warriors. When Clan Wolf migrated, they brought their genetic legacies, and young *sibko*s, but they are too few and too young. Behind the Wolves' frontline Galaxies are those built from Lyran and Free Worlder freeborns of the Wolf Empire. Khan Ward promised greatness if they enlisted, and he delivered.

The Exile Wolves rejoined their brethren only after complete defeat. Even then, the Exiles did not join the assault on Terra. Khan Ward held them in reserve until the final moments of the ilClan Trial against Clan Jade Falcon. The Exiles won the day, and they are respected for their century of resisting the Falcons. But to many warriors of Clan Wolf, the reunion is too little, too late. The only reason there is not more dissent about welcoming them back into the fold is the Clan's perilous lack of warriors.

With the bulk of the *touman* now on Terra, it is freeborn troops, along with a scant few Wolves too old or too young to join the invasion, who defend the Wolf Empire. All recognize the greatness of ilKhan Ward's achievement, but not only were these warriors left out, they were left with the keys to the kingdom. For every grizzled Wolf veteran left behind, there is a Lyran or League recruit wondering whether the *touman* will ever return.

The Inner Sphere is slowly receiving word of the change of ownership on Terra. IlKhan Ward

demands respect for his achievement, but his natural arrogance has made diplomacy difficult.

The Council of Six was notified immediately of his victory. All except for Clan Hell's Horses acknowledged Ward's triumph. The Horses' agitation derives from internal politics, as their previous Khan failed at their own attempt at Terra and were unable to exploit the void in the Tamar region left by the Falcons. Whether Khan Fulk Lassenerra will be under similar pressure will define the Horses' relationship with Clan Wolf.

Clan Ghost Bear seems accepting of the ilClan, though the attitude of the Rasalhague Dominion, of which the Bears are a part, hasn't been determined. Their Khan and Elected Prince know the importance of the Dominion to a future Star League, while Rasalhague commentators are touting the benefits of being a founding member. Clan Sea Fox is exceedingly pleased with the success of their investment in Clan Wolf, but have yet to see a return. They are clearly angling for a position controlling trade and communications in a new Star League. But given ComStar's history, it is unlikely ilKhan Ward will allow this happen.

Clan Snow Raven faces a crossroads with regard to the ilClan. They have finally gotten their war-making industry up to speed in the Outworlds Alliance, while Terra's McKenna shipyards have once again been demolished. Desire and practicality may split the Ravens, as some advocate to become the new Star League's de facto navy, while others dislike the prospect of uprooting and leaving behind all they have built in the Alliance.

Clans Jade Falcon and Smoke Jaguar are left completely subservient and dependent upon Clan Wolf. While the Jaguars are content to remain small, the Falcons seek ways to maximize their influence.

The Great Houses are only gradually becoming aware of the rise of the ilClan. They noticed the disappearance of the Wolf and Falcon *toumans* and increased activity within the other Clan Occupation Zones. The Lyran Commonwealth and Free Worlds League have a clear incentive to recapture territory, but missing Clans are a sword of Damocles to inspire caution for any nation.

The first true diplomatic failure of ilKhan Ward has been Wolf's Dragoons. After gaining the Dragoons' services with promises of rejoining Clan Wolf, Ward dismissed and needlessly insulted them. While not a nation-state, Wolf's Dragoons are influential, and have been at the center of several multi-nation coalitions. There will be those who will oppose a new Star League, and it is likely that the enraged Dragoons will have a part in coordinating those oppositional elements.

CLAN JADE FALCON

The strict traditionalist Clan Jade Falcon's rivalry with Clan Wolf goes back hundreds of years. Jade Falcon's founders all had deep ties to Aleksandr Kerensky and the SLDF prior to the Star League Civil War. Tradition and excellence are their watchwords.

They raced Clan Wolf to conquer Eden during Operation Klondike, but extended anti-insurgent operations delayed the Falcons while the Wolves finished their own campaign. IlKhan Nicholas Kerensky thus gave his bloodline to the Wolves rather than to the Falcons. This outcome shocked several rank-and-file Falcons into questioning the ilKhan's wisdom. Falcon leadership responded with "the Culling," reaving the ringleaders and exiling the rest. The Culling forever served as a symbol of the Falcons' devotion to Kerensky's ideals and traditions.

Clan Jade Falcon began the Golden Century by investing in a large JumpShip fleet and an extensive colonization program. Out of sight of the warrior caste, the colonists chafed at the caste-based restrictions. Some even went so far as to petition the Grand Council for transfer to other Clans. The Falcons cracked down harshly on these dissidents, and eventually sold the fleet and ended the colonization program. The financially strapped merchant caste turned to banking. As bankers, the Falcons soon made up their material shortfalls and became an economic power amongst the Clans, attracting others to their causes.

The Falcons and Wolves continually sparred with each other. The Falcons managed a major coup by gaining OmniMech technology from Clan Coyote. The Coyotes spoiled the victory by sending their Wolf allies to take the technology off the Falcons. When the Wolves lost Elemental technology to the Falcons, the Wolves unleashed the Coyotes and Fire Mandrills. This exacerbated tensions between the two powerhouse Clans.

The traditionalist Falcons were keen supporters of the Crusader philosophy. They pushed for invasion for a century until Jaguar Khan Leo Showers revealed the arrival of the *Outbound Light*, the ComStar exploratory JumpShip that stumbled into the Homeworlds. Clan Jade Falcon won a position in Operation Revival and hit the Lyran worlds of the Federated Commonwealth.

Easy conquests in the opening waves of the Operation gave way to a shocking defeat at Twycross. Then IlKhan Showers was killed and succeeded by Wolf Khan Ulric Kerensky. The Falcons were paired with their other ancient enemy, Clan Steel Viper, by order of ilKhan Kerensky. The Vipers attacked the Falcons just as much as they did the Lyrans, while Inner Sphere insurgents ran riot, slowing the Falcon advance to a crawl. The Jade Falcons reluctantly agreed to the proxy battle at Tukayyid and managed to eke out a draw through negotiation with the ilKhan and ComStar.

After the Truce of Tukayyid, in which ilKhan Kerensky denied a generation of Clan warriors from advancing toward Terra and the glory that would accompany it, Clan Jade Falcon schemed to charge him with genocide. Kerensky responded with a Trial of Refusal, which morphed into the Refusal War when he bid his whole Clan. Both Clans were gutted, with the Falcons winning via *dezgra* tactics and absorbing the Crusader faction of the Wolves. Both Falcon Khans were killed in trials soon after, and the Crusader Wolves split from them and reformed.

The Harvest Trials helped rebuild the Falcons, and soon they attacked Coventry to sharpen their talons. Khan Marthe Pryde oversaw the development of new industries in the Occupation Zone. Clan Jade Flacon won its battle against the Second Star League in the Great Refusal, but the failure of the other Clans ended the invasion of the Inner Sphere.

The Falcons fought on two fronts for the next decade, with the Lyrans on one border and the Wolves on the other. The Wars of Reaving forced them to quit the Homeworlds. Concurrently, the deteriorating situation in the FedCom Civil War and Jihad allowed the Falcons to exploit the Lyran Commonwealth's weakness. The Falcons' scientist caste rebelled at the end of that decade and was put down, nearly wiping out the entire caste. Clan Ice Hellion invaded the Inner Sphere, but was rebuffed with ease thanks to Clan Hell's Horses. Attacks by the Word of Blake weakened them, but Falcons joined Stone's coalition nonetheless.

Worlds were steadily exchanged with the Lyran Commonwealth during the Republic Era. The Falcons attacked the Republic of the Sphere to occupy the Falcon warriors dissatisfied with the Clan's leadership. The expedition captured Skye and returned to the Occupation Zone under the leadership of Malvina Hazen to challenge for control of the Clan. With Hell's Horses allies and using a modified form of the Horses' Mongol Doctrine, Hazen became Khan.

Hazen refused to rest on her laurels. She directed her Golden Ordun—allied Falcons and Horses—into the Commonwealth. The self-described "Chinggis Khan" relied on her Mongol Doctrine to terrorize planets that dared resist her. She attacked long-secure Lyran worlds, including Tharkad, Coventry, and Hesperus II. The hated Clan Wolf-in-Exile and Kell Hounds fell before her at Arc-Royal. Her Hell's Horses allies recoiled from her brutal excesses and abandoned her cause.

Hazen gained the knowledge to breach the Republic Wall. She massed nearly her entire *touman* and scrambled to beat Clan Wolf to Terra. She arrived to find Khan Alaric Ward's Wolves already engaged with Republic forces. Hazen and Ward agreed to defeat the RAF first rather than fight one another, as Exarch Stone had hoped. The two Clans dispatched the RAF and then began the climactic ilClan Trial. The trial ended with a mere 120 Jade Falcons left alive. Khan Hazen was dead, and Clan Wolf was the ilClan. IlKhan Alaric Ward could have absorbed his shattered foes, but he offered to make Clan Jade Falcon his right hand instead.

Clan Jade Falcon began a new journey to find its destiny as wild roots sprouted in the abandoned Falcon Occupation Zone. Jiyi Chistu was left behind in the attack on Terra, and when no further word from the Falcons on Terra came, he declared himself Khan of a more progressive Clan Jade Falcon. He defended his claim against the Hell's Horses on Sudeten and surrounding

worlds. Meanwhile, merchants freed from the brutality of Khan Hazen carved out the Alyina Mercantile League as a trading state, sitting on the remains of the Falcons' vast banking wealth.

Whether they are Clan Wolf's trophy, an upstart warlord's Clan, or a new rival for Clan Sea Fox to seize, the mantle of Clan Jade Falcon remains to be seen.

CULTURE

Clan Jade Falcon believes strongly in the Way of the Clans, in which might makes right, warriors rule, and Trueborns are superior to freeborns. Restrictions on the lower castes are heavy and ruthlessly enforced. Dissent is crushed in Cullings or Reavings. Falcon warriors nevertheless recognize that they fight because of the labors of the lower castes. Thus, the lower castes are respected and live relatively comfortably if they keep their place.

Life in the Occupation Zone depended upon how long a world had been under Falcon rule. Khan Marthe Pryde altered the harsh, direct Falcon policy into a hands-off approach, replacing only the highest levels of government and took control of media and education. There would be no problems if quotas were met. Freeborn children would be indoctrinated in the Falcon way and the traditional expectations of the lower castes. Pryde also instituted a sophisticated, well-equipped Watch to suppress any insurgencies. The Clan benefited from this prescient move against the Word of Blake and the Society.

Khan Malvina Hazen thus came to power in an Occupation Zone that was comfortably Clan. Deprivation increased to supply her ongoing military campaigns, but the population was happy to aid the Clan's growth. However, the worlds Hazen directly conquered experienced the opposite. Some nominally Lyran worlds accepted the change in rule with good grace, but the continued demands of Hazen's war made brutality part of life. Jade Falcon overseers, backed by local garrisons and the Watch, enforced unrealistic production quotas with casual murder. Discontent festered on these worlds, but there was little the beleaguered Commonwealth could do to aid them.

That is all past. Few Jade Falcon warriors remain. The Falcons on Terra have no territory and thus no industry. Their civilian caste counts only those who accompanied them to Terra. The Alyina Merchant League claimed the Falcons' banking network, so they have no funds. All Clan Jade Falcon has is tradition.

Khan Stephanie Chistu steers her Clan away from the excesses of Malvina Hazen as she reforges her Clan. IIKhan Ward demanded that the Falcons set the standard for combat excellence in the Clans, and Khan Chistu intends to deliver.

The big question is what happens next. The Falcon genetic depositories are in the Occupation Zone, so the Clan has no way to replace its losses. Negotiations with other Clans are required to obtain materials and scientists to produce new generations.

In the Occupation Zone, Star Captain Jiyi Chistu was at the right place at the right time, guarding a VaultShip when the rest of the Clan charged pell-mell to Terra. He is possibly the only Bloodnamed warrior left in the OZ and was the only authority when the rest of the *touman* disappeared. Chistu has Sudeten and much of the Clan's industrial might, and quickly raised an army from barely trained hatchlings. He quietly opposed Malvina Hazen, and has taken a more liberal approach to rule, as much by necessity as desire. So far Chistu has maintained his Clan in name, but vultures are beginning to circle.

It is easy to label the Alyina Merchant League as Clan-Sea-Fox-lite, but it remains a Falconesque nation. The League is a merchant state, and its financial strength comes in the form of Falcon VaultShips rather than trade goods. Syndic Marena intends the League to continue the traditional Falcon role of banker to the Clans, and with Clan Sea Fox's indifference, and the impoverished state of the other Falcon remnants, no one stands to oppose her.

CLAN SMOKE JAGUAR

Clan Smoke Jaguar is synonymous with ferocity, brutality, and violence. The Clan caused concern even for Nicholas Kerensky. The Jaguars inspired respect and fear, but never admiration. Despite this, Clan Smoke Jaguar clawed its way into many major decisions that came to haunt the Clans.

Franklin Osis was the child of SLDF soldiers who sought a new way of life with Nicholas Kerensky's Second Exodus. Franklin witnessed his brother's death at the claws of a smoke jaguar, which Franklin then killed barehanded. Franklin had finally found his calling in life. He trained to be a MechWarrior while embodying the nature of a smoke jaguar, and was soon elected Khan of that Clan.

During the Klondike campaign, with Khan Osis leading the pack, Clan Smoke Jaguar proved virtually unstoppable. And when someone did stop them, extreme violence followed. Infrastructure was destroyed and civilians were left homeless.

The very mention of "Clan Smoke Jaguar" could bring surrender. The Jaguars' refusal to assist survivors did not please ilKhan Kerensky.

Osis valued some civilian pursuits, but his successors did not. The Jaguars glorified war and had little time for the colonization, technological experimentation, and trade of the Golden Century. This left Clan Smoke Jaguar progressively weaker, but the Way of the Clans offered a solution. Trials of Possession allowed the Jaguars to take what they needed from more industrious Clans. Unmatched ferocity kept them relevant.

The Absorption of Clan Mongoose began when they attacked Clan Smoke Jaguar, only to be attacked by Clan Star Adder. The Mongooses tried to use the Grand Council to end the combat. Khan Theodore Osis demolished the Mongoose arguments, then won the right for Clan Smoke Jaguar to Absorb them. Losses were heavy, but the Mongoose holdings revitalized the Jaguars.

Clan Smoke Jaguar saw out the Golden Century with the Londerholm Revolt. The warrior caste insisted that civilian castes meet the trade quotas for food despite a famine on the breadbasket world of Londerholm. After years of mistreatment, the labor castes finally revolted, preventing food shipments. The warrior caste leveled the port city of Vostok, discovering that merchants had been hoarding food the warriors demanded but refused to pay for. The subsequent crackdown on the merchant caste triggered unrest on more worlds, with more violent responses. The Jaguars were censured by the Grand Council, but not punished. The civilian castes suffered further restrictions and were even less able to meet warrior caste dictates.

The Political Century marked Clan Smoke Jaguar's biggest influence on the Clans. Combat trials no longer maintained the Clan's relevance. The Jaguars also began to lose as their technology fell behind. A return to the Inner Sphere offered an opportunity for renewal on a grand scale. The Clan propagated the Crusader Philosophy, claiming the time had come to rebuild the Star League, with opportunities for honorable combat for all.

They even found an obscure reference to an "ilClan" in Nicholas Kerensky's writings as extra incentive. Clan Wolf distracted this drive with the Dragoon Compromise, but the arrival of *Outbound Light* ended all discussion. The ComStar JumpShip was captured in the Huntress system, showing that the Inner Sphere eventually would find the Clans. Leo Showers was elected ilKhan, the first to hold the figurehead position in over a century.. It was time to return to the Inner Sphere.

Clan Smoke Jaguar easily won a position in Operation Revival, and they demanded the challenging Draconis Combine corridor. Early combat surprised the Jaguars as they defeated the infamous DCMS with ease. The Jaguars struggled to manage the unruly Combine citizenry despite the aid of ComStar administrators. They turned to butchery to maintain order. On Turtle Bay, they unknowingly captured Hohiro Kurita, heir to the Draconis Combine throne, but he escaped in Yakuza-incited riots. The Jaguars responded by leveling the capital with orbital fire.

Continuing rebellions slowed Clan Smoke Jaguar progress toward Terra. Finally, the death of ilKhan Showers at Radstadt halted the Clans for a year, as Clan leaders returned to the Homeworlds to elect a new ilKhan. A reorganization by successor ilKhan Ulric Kerensky assigned Clan Nova Cat to secure the Jaguars' rear.

New Jaguar Khan Lincoln Osis wanted to earn the clout to challenge Kerensky. He threw his Clan and the Nova Cats against the defenses of the Combine capital Luthien. The titanic battle left both Clans defeated and drained, but Kerensky found a solution. A proxy Trial of Possession for Terra at Tukayyid. Khan Osis bid low, understrength and with inadequate supplies, in order to show up Clan Wolf. A disaster followed, with massive losses for the Jaguars. The Invasion ended with the overwhelming ComGuard victory on Tukayyid.

Clan Smoke Jaguar attempted to rebuild. Constant raids by the Draconis Combine and a deteriorating relationship with Clan Nova Cat cost the Jaguars any gains they made. Osis schemed to resume the invasion, but the Inner Sphere reformed the Star League and sought to annihilate the Jaguars. Months of repeated waves of assault drove the Jaguars from their Occupation Zone and out of the Inner Sphere.

Taskforce Serpent journeyed to the Homeworlds to eliminate the Jaguars in their dens. The remnants of the mighty Clan were hammered on Huntress, reducing them to a handful of warriors. These survivors fought in the Great Refusal to continue the invasion of the Inner Sphere, but they, too, fell.

Some Jaguars lived on as bandits and pirates. Clan Nova Cat secretly smuggled a small group of repentant Jaguars back to the Inner Sphere, where Devlin Stone enlisted them alongside a lost group of Jaguars rescued from Word of Blake captivity. Star Colonel Paul Moon molded these former Jaguars into the Fidelis, a fierce company of soldiers. They were indebted to Stone and became the Republic's hidden shock troops, based out of New Earth, while maintaining their secret heritage.

Following Gray Monday, Paladin Damien Redburn ordered the Fidelis into a series of covert operations against the Republic's enemies. After that, Redburn freed them of their obligation of twenty-one years of service. They returned to New Earth, where Wolf Khan Alaric Ward discovered them and their true nature. The ancient Paul Moon hesitated to fight Clan Wolf and instead offered his Fidelis as assistance to conquer Earth. The price was the reconstitution of Clan Smoke Jaguar. After the Wolf victory, ilKhan Ward kept his word. Clan Smoke Jaguar was reborn.

CULTURE

Founder Franklin Osis sought to create the ultimate warriors. He valued success in battle above all else. Time outside of battle was time to prepare for the next battle; all competition raised one above one's comrades and enemies. Some Clans made battle into an art, a thing of beauty, but the Jaguars were too pragmatic. Battle was the end and the means to an end. The result of such focus was an ideal warrior: fearless, highly skilled, and ferocious. Smoke Jaguars were renowned for their arrogance, and they were contemptuous of those beneath them. They wore their honor on their sleeves, but the pressure of endless competition meant that betrayal and sabotage were options to advance, provided one didn't get caught.

Warriors treated themselves harshly and were even more harsh on the lower castes. Everything was devoted to supporting the warrior caste. This made lower-caste life one of deprivation. Poor living conditions and malnourishment were the norm. Failure was met with physical punishment and death. Total belief in the eugenics program meant that freeborns had little value, and freeborn warriors were discouraged. The Clan nearly eliminated freeborns from their *touman* altogether on several occasions, and therefore could not respond to short-term losses. Combat losses in the Homeworlds were predictable and could be planned for, but losses in the Inner Sphere claimed so many warriors in such a short time that the Clan was unable to recover. The desperate Jaguars fielded Combine bondspeople in the Inner Sphere, while in the Homeworlds freeborns were unable to serve.

Planetary populations in Clan Smoke Jaguar's Occupation Zone resisted subjugation to a remarkable degree. Citizens of the Great Houses tend to care little who rules them, so that the Jaguars raised such ire spoke volumes.

All Invading Clans faced the issue of how to control and re-educate their new civilians given the limitations of their small garrison forces. Other Clans took over local governmental authority and played a long game of gradual indoctrination. The Jaguars, by contrast, brooked no dissent. An overseer was placed in charge of each community. ComStar census data made caste assignments and set quotas. Failure to meet quotas resulted in disproportionate punishment. This method failed, because given the population sizes of their new worlds, there was more dissent than the warriors could punish.

When ComStar was ejected from the Jaguar OZ after Tukayyid, the Clan turned to internment camps to separate the population into manageable groups and deny enemy intelligence operatives field support. Conditions in the camps were livable, by Smoke Jaguar standards, and subjected the population to Jaguar propaganda. Some hearts and minds were changed, but continuing Combine intelligence operations kept the population primed for the return of the Combine.

Operation Revival caused an outbreak of Paradise syndrome, in which warriors bid against each other for tracts of land on newly conquered worlds. The Jaguars' natural competitiveness damaged equipment, distracted and killed warriors, and left civilians free to pursue mischief.

As the 3050s drew to a close, faulty equipment of decreasing quality and endless combat indicated that conditions were deteriorating. Senior officers understood the logistical nightmare, but the overtaxed merchant caste lacked sufficient resources to meet the warrior caste's needs. The Clan could not support itself. Warriors vented their frustrations on lower castes or on bloody rivalries.

Clan Smoke Jaguar collapsed in the face of Operation Bulldog. Retreating to the Homeworlds forced many to face the mortality of their Clan and ask where it had gone wrong. Lincoln Osis and his supporters preferred to lead the Clan toward oblivion rather than accept the failure of their ways. Introspection by others charted a new way for their Clan.

Paul Moon shaped the Fidelis into warriors fighting for freedom. They abandoned the caste system and were extensively cross-trained in combat roles and non-combat roles, such as espionage or maintenance. Only one hundred warriors served at any one time, in a formation called a Century. To hide their existence from their enemies, all warriors had implants that chemically destroyed their DNA upon their death. The hallmark of the Fidelis was following orders immediately, effectively, and without question. The last surviving copy of the Smoke Jaguar *Remembrance*, the epic poem that tells the story of the Clan's history, lay at the heart of all the Fidelis ceremonies.

While a few Fidelis chose to remain on New Earth, the majority traveled to Terra, undertook Trials of Bloodright, and formed the new Clan Smoke Jaguar. But too few warriors exist to form a proper Clan; for now, they exist as ilKhan Alaric's special forces.

They hold onto only wisps of memory of the Clan's glory days. These tenuous links to the past are all that guide the reborn Clan's warriors. How the reborn Clan will shape its new identity remains to be seen.

THE RASALHAGUE DOMINION

CLAN GHOST BEAR

Clan Ghost Bear is unique in that its founders were a married couple: Hans Ole Jorgensson and Sandra Tseng. Before its founding, ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky had planned to divide the couple between two Clans, so they fled into the polar wilderness of Strana Mechty. They became lost and took shelter in a cave. The pair was nursed back to health by a family of ghost bears. When they returned to civilization, Kerensky reversed his decision, and the pair rose to leadership of the Clan they created.

Tseng and Jorgensson used their experience with the ghost bears to define the Clan. Family, strength, and patience became watchwords. The strong sense of camaraderie extended to the lower castes. Lifelong familial bonds tied the Clan together. Outsiders might be shunned, but freedom was allowed within the Clan. Lower castes were allowed to vote on matters of great importance. Great value was placed on strength, whether physical strength, strength of character, strength of will, or strength of purpose. Warriors emulated the patience of the hunting ghost bear. Ghost Bears took measured steps through life, and partial commitment to a cause was worse than none. Nothing can be undertaken without due consideration. Clan Ghost Bear was slow to act, but when it did, it was committed and effective.

These values appeared during Operation Klondike. Ghost Bear refused to cooperate, to the frustration of Clan Star Adder, but the Ghost Bears' intricate plans meant they suffered low casualties. During the Clan Wolverine Annihilation, a Ghost Bear Star Captain was unwilling to murder children, and allowed some Wolverine refugees to escape. This became a point of lasting anger to the Wolves. Years later, it was discovered that Clan Wolverine had tampered with the Ghost Bear eugenics program, costing them dozens, if not hundreds, of warriors across several generations. This great shame was quickly covered up and buried from history.

The Golden Century was one of expansion for the Bears. They focused on resource technologies, such as Shipeley Wheat, and innovative asteroid mining techniques instead of weapons development. This provided the raw industrial wealth to shape their *touman* as they saw fit. The Bears quickly adopted the Elemental, though they were slow to recognize the advantages of the OmniMech. Eventually, they trialed for the new Clan Hell's Horses mega-factory on Tokasha. The epic battle generated a long-term grudge, as the victorious Bears lost Kilbourne Jorgensson, one of their greatest Khans and the Horses suffered limited OmniMech numbers for decades.

Clan Ghost Bear supported returning to the Inner Sphere and won a place in Operation Revival. New, overconfident Khans led the invasion of the Free Rasalhague Republic. The Bears made miserable progress due to insufficient supplies and constant harrying by insurgents. New Khans were elected to change the situation. Under Bjorn Jorgensson and Aletha Kabrinsky, the Bears found new direction. Improved performance led them to victory at Tukayyid.

The Truce of Tukayyid gave pause to Clan Ghost Bear. Tensions built due to separation from their "family" in the Homeworlds. Jorgensson proposed relocating the Clan to the Occupation Zone in the Inner Sphere. A Clan-wide vote agreed. The migration took place in secret to prevent predation by other Clans. Thus, when the Great Refusal was declared, Khan Jorgensson announced the Bears had become Wardens, and they now inhabited the Ghost Bear Dominion.

The Ghost Bears sought rapprochement with the Rasalhague populace in their Occupation Zone. Self-rule, under supervision, was granted at local levels, while massive industrial projects boosted the economy. Attitudes on both sides began to change for the better. An assault on the Dominion's capital Alshain by Draconis Combine rebels expanded into the First Combine-Ghost Bear War. Two years of conflict followed until the frontlines stabilized and an honorable compromise was negotiated. Bad blood with Clan Nova Cat cost both Clans and much of their fleets in a pointless Trial of Possession after the war.

Clan Hell's Horses, encouraged by Clan Wolf, used the distraction to attack the Dominion. When the war ended, the Bears used overwhelming force to seize a portion of the Hell's Horses Occupation Zone. Follow-up raids against Clan Wolf netted more worlds, including Rasalhague. The Dominion also stopped a Free Rasalhague Republic raid bloodlessly when it was intercepted by Elected Prince (in absentia) Ragnar Magnusson. The presence of Magnusson as a *ristar* had was a major influence the led two the unification of the two peoples.

In the Inner Sphere, the disintegration of ComStar and the Second Star League what was left of the left the Free Rasalhague Republic defenseless. The Dominion's first actions against the Word of Blake were the annexation of Tukayyid and the rest of the Free Rasalhague Republic. After secret negotiations with the Draconis Combine, the Dominion sent a fleet to liberate Luthien. The Dominion later joined Devlin Stone's coalition, acting as shock troops and engaging the Blakists with extreme aggression. Clan Ghost Bear finally left the Homeworlds entirely because of the Wars of Reaving. Negotiations with the Free Rasalhague Republic followed, with Magnusson acting as a cultural bridge. The two nations merged for over two decades, though the Dominion was plagued by terrorists and mutinies.

The Ghost Bear Dominion committed troops to the new Republic of the Sphere and loosely followed the disarmament programs. The turn of the century brought the Second Combine-Dominion War. The Black Dragon Society in the Combine spurred the Nova Cats into brutal battles with the Dominion, dragging the Draconis Combine into war. Atrocities by Ghost Bear warriors led to civilian protests in the Dominion. Unity Council leader Jukka Heikkinen and saKhan Magnusson forced the aging Khan Kabrinsky to cede the Clan's role as the dominant power in the Dominion. The civilian Dominion Council now governed the newly christened Rasalhague Dominion.

Since Gray Monday, the Rasalhague Dominion annexed the Vega Prefecture to protect it from the Draconis Combine. Several Wolf OZ worlds were taken while New Oslo was lost to Hell's Horses in Operation Noyan. The Dominion waits and grows strong. Strength and patience will protect the merged family.

Principality of Rasalhague and the Free Rasalhague Republic

The roots of the Rasalhague state trace back to the mid-2200s and the plight of the Scandinavian peoples of Terra. Crushed with an influx of refugees and ruinous taxes levied by the Terran Alliance Parliament, many Scandinavians sought refuge from further oppression on the far-flung, then-unexplored world of Rasalhague.

Finding their new home hospitable, the Rasalhaguians eventually colonized eight neighboring worlds. In the late 2200s they first formed the Rasalhague Consortium, and later, the Principality of Rasalhague to oversee their planets' sustainable development and to maintain a neutral, aloof stance in interstellar politics.

While the Principality was uninterested in the affairs of its neighbors, the other burgeoning powers of the Inner Sphere were interested in *it*. In 2330, the Draconis launched an invasion of the Principality worlds. The assault met with initial success, but eventually bogged down in the face of decades-long resistance—soon to become a hallmark of the Rasalhaguian people. The Combine finally proclaimed victory in 2367, with the Principality acknowledging its subjugation but maintaining its independence. That semi-autonomy would last until the early 2500s, when the nation was formally integrated as a district within the Combine following a period of internal strife.

Though politically shackled to the Combine, Rasalhaguian nationalism continued to burn bright over the ensuing five centuries. Rasalhaguians resisted full cultural assimilation into the Japanese-influenced Combine, even developing a mixed language, Swedensese, a mix of Rasalhaguian Swedish and Japanese. The populace of the Rasalhague District remained restless and problematic for generations of Combine coordinators—including Coordinator Hohiro Kurita, who was assassinated by his Rasalhaguian bodyguard in 3004.

The Rasalhaguian worlds unexpectedly found independence once more in the wake of the Fourth Succession War. Combine heir Theodore Kurita saw the multi-faceted value in releasing the remaining Rasalhague worlds not conquered by the Lyran Commonwealth during that war to their independence in 3034. In doing so, he created a buffer state between the Combine and the Commonwealth and all but forced the Steiners to likewise release their newly gained worlds to the newborn Free Rasalhague Republic.

Unique among Inner Sphere powers for its fully elected governance, the Republic's leaders charted a careful political course among its much more powerful neighbors—until the arrival of the Clans sent it all crashing down. Still finding its feet militarily, the Free Rasalhague Republic suffered worst at the hands of the Clans, losing seventy-seven worlds including Rasalhague itself to the invaders. By the time the Truce of Tukayyid began, only seven Republic worlds remained.

Despite its near destruction, the seven remaining Republic worlds improbably clung to existence as an independent state for the next half-century, though some would challenge whether the remaining Rasalhague worlds were ever truly "independent" during that period. The Republic first became a protectorate of ComStar in all but name, particularly the war-torn world of Tukayyid, which served as the Com Guards' headquarters after the loss of Terra in 3058. During the Jihad, Clan Ghost Bear ejected ComStar from the Republic's worlds, taking up their protection.

Decades of strengthening bonds between the remaining Rasalhaguian worlds, native Rasalhaguians living on worlds conquered during the invasion, and Clan Ghost Bear finally paid dividends in 3103, when the holdout Free Rasalhague Republic worlds were welcomed home as part of the newly christened Rasalhague Dominion.

CULTURE

The Rasalhague Dominion is a mix of Clan Ghost Bear and Free Rasalhague Republic traditions. The tripartite Dominion Council is the republican legislative body of government. The Council is one-third Clan warriors, one-third civilians, and one-third freeborn Rasalhagians who served in the *touman*. An elected Prince is the executive in civilian affairs, while the Khan of Clan Ghost Bear operates in a secondary position and controls military affairs.

Various insurgent groups preyed on the early Ghost Bear OZ. Remnants of these groups persisted after the Jihad era, and they continue to linger in the Rasalhague Dominion. Mimir, one such group, was the age-old freedom fighting organization of the Free Rasalhague Republic. They resisted the Lyrans and Combine for centuries and became the fledgling Republic's intelligence arm. Mimir supported operations in the Ghost Bear OZ. After merging with the Ghost Bear Watch, they were allowed free rein in the other Clan OZs. Motstånd formed around those who felt Mimir sold out. It continues the fight for Rasalhagian independence by any means necessary. This attitude alienated the broader public when it drew funding and weapons from Word of Blake. It still has supporters, and has had better luck outside the Dominion. Naturally, Motstånd has an antagonistic relationship with the Rasalhague Dominion Watch, though some believe the Watch uses Motstånd to its advantage.

Clan Ghost Bear has all but abandoned traditional Clan castes. There is no need, since the vast population of Rasalhague does the job just as well, perhaps even better. Trueborn warriors still form the heart of Ghost Bear culture, with sub-caste warrior-technicians, and warrior-scientists maintaining the eugenics program and military. Even this is somewhat meaningless, as Trueborn warriors may retire and enter the general population, and freeborns may enter the *touman* and become Ghost Bears. Becoming a Ghost Bear remains an important part of life in the Dominion. Two-thirds of the Dominion Council must have served. Reverence for the Clan is taught in schools, but as near-mystic protectors rather than as rulers.

Three groups dominate the Dominion's freeborn population: those descended from Clan Ghost Bear, Rasalhagians, and the oft-forgotten culturally-Kuritan citizens. Since the 3060s, Clan Ghost Bear ruled with a light hand, leaving day-to-day decisions to local planetary governments. Clan representatives had ultimate control and ensured production and education quotas were met. The merchant caste invested in local companies and poured in kroner and advanced technology. The Bears soon realized they had entered more of a partnership and less of a conquest. The Rasalhague Dominion operates largely the same, except they now send planetary representatives to the Dominion Council.

Most Rasalhagians see the Ghost Bears as an avenging sword to be unleashed. The Ghost Bears continue to reclaim old Rasalhagian worlds and keep the Draconis Combine at bay. Former Combine worlds, no longer repressed under Kuritan monoculture, are forging their own identities. This makes them more accepted by the anti-Combine Rasalhagians. The newly annexed Vega Prefecture came with an additional complication in the form of the Freeminders. This cult follows the apocryphal "Final Codex," allegedly written by Nicholas Kerensky. The text supposedly calls for ending the Clan eugenics program and returning to family principles. This challenges the position of warriors in society, even with the Rasalhague Dominion's reforms leading to most of the Freeminders' stated aspirations. The Freeminders gathered enough followers that the Dominion Council exiled them to the Vega Prefecture. The Council now must contend with them once again thanks to the Prefecture's annexation.

The *touman* of the Rasalhague Dominion is effectively Clan Ghost Bear. While it traces some of its roots to the KungsArmé, all undergo the trials and conditioning of any Trueborn warrior. Since its nadir at Gray Monday, the *touman* has grown massively. No new Clusters have been created, but their rosters have expanded to full strength and beyond. A new generation of Trueborn has matured, and old 'Mechs are slowly replaced by a new ones tailored to the Dominion's needs.

Clans Wolf and Jade Falcon once matched the Dominion's *touman* in strength, but no Clan goes to war with more logistical support behind it than the Dominion. The conquest of Terra and triumph of Clan Wolf in the Trial of ilClan poses an existential question to the Rasalhague Dominion. IlKhan Ward demands obeisance from Clan Ghost Bear, but Clan Ghost Bear is tied to a nation with no inherit duty to an ilClan. Some Warriors feel drawn to the old ways, but most see those ways as obsolete notions. With the strength of the Ghost Bear *touman* at her back, Khan Dalia Bekker's response will help shape the Inner Sphere.

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

"Man comes before machine." Such is the motto of Clan Hell's Horses. Founding Khan John Fletcher was an infantry officer, so he gave his Clan a focus on combined arms. This drew contempt from other Clans. Clan Hell's Horses nonetheless succeeded in Operation Klondike, and suffered fewer casualties thanks to their tactics.

Clan Hell's Horses had a quiet Golden Century. Their most notable development was a strain of gigantic infantry warriors. After Clan Wolf developed battle armor, the implications were obvious for the infantry-focused Horses. A series of Trials exchanged enhanced infantry and battle armor between the Clans, and the Elemental was born.

When Clan Fire Mandrill's Kindraa Smythe-Jewel's deception in a Trial of Posession won access to Elemental technology, the Horses attacked and annihilated the Kindraa. This proved that the Horses and their combined arms tactics should not be underestimated. Even so, the high percentage of combat vehicles in the Horses' *touman* presented an image of destitution.

Clan Hell's Horses ended the Golden Century with the construction of 'Mechworks Alpha on Tokasha. Advanced OmniMechs brought the very concept of combined arms into question, and this gargantuan factory would give Horses MechWarriors equal footing with those of other Clans. However, Clan Ghost Bear soon arrived to Trial for the factory. The massive battle brought the death of the Ghost Bear Khan, the loss of the factory to the Bears, and a rivalry that would last for centuries.

Clan Ghost Bear's attempt to take Industriplex Alpha on Niles resulted in another immense battle and the death of a Horses Khan. But this time, Clan Hell's Horses held the factory. Their next Khan, Malavai Fletcher, carried deep scars from the battle and sought revenge on the Ghost Bears.

Clan Hell's Horses was nominally Warden prior to Operation Revival, but staunch Crusader Malavai Fletcher reshaped the command ranks after his ideals. He failed to earn a place for his Clan in Operation Revival, and he was frustrated by the Battle of Tukayyid. However, through the Harvest Trials, he provided troops to the weakened Clan Wolf and gained three Wolf worlds in the Inner Sphere. Though his Horses failed in the Great Refusal, Khan Fletcher expanded the Horses' holdings at the expense of the retreating Ghost Bears and Nova Cats, and the fallen Smoke Jaguars. Overconfident, Fletcher led an attack against Clan Ghost Bear in the Inner Sphere. This ended in disaster, with the loss of all three Inner Sphere worlds. Khan Malavai stepped down in disgrace.

New Khan James Cobb was a Warden, though he agreed that the Horses' future lay in the Inner Sphere. He discreetly began preparing his Clan to leave the Homeworlds. Cobb knew of the Ghost Bears' strength, so he intended to carve out an Occupation Zone from the weaker Clans Wolf and Jade Falcon. Cobb used Clan Ice Hellion to distract Clan Jade Falcon, while he reduced the Wolf Occupation Zone by half.

The Horses left the crumbling Homeworlds for the chaos of the Wars of Reaving. They also left a sizable portion of their *touman*. This remnant survived and became Clan Stone Lion.

While the Horses survived in the Inner Sphere, their *touman* was devastated. Clan Wolf had done little to industrialize their Occupation Zone, so the Horses relied on what they brought from the Homeworlds. This left them relatively weak and once again dependent upon conventional assets. They developed the Mongol Doctrine so their light vehicles could support their heavy 'Mechs. This tactic caught the attention of other Clans during the Republic Era.

Control of the Mongol Doctrine dominated the Horses' actions after Gray Monday. Clan Jade Falcon's Galaxy Commander Malvina Hazen adopted the tactic and radically reinterpreted it. An enraged Horses *ristar* challenged her on Skye and lost. Fire Horse Galaxy then arrived to join Hazen, admitting the superiority of her vision. This tied an unwilling Clan Hell's Horses to the future Falcon Khan. She conspired to make multiple Horses worlds dependent on her Clan. Elements of Clan Hell's Horses formed part of Hazen's Golden Ordun, helping her conquer great swaths of the Lyran Commonwealth. Massive losses at Hesperus II allowed the Hell's Horses to extricate themselves from this association. Clan Wolf's relocation at this time helped the Horses to expand their OZ, taking the remaining Clan Wolf industry and civilians.

Khan Gottfried Amirault launched Operation Noyan to reestablish Clan Hell's Horses' independence. Careful probing strikes into the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone and Rasalhague Dominion restored faith in the Mongol Doctrine. Then Clan Jade Falcon vanished to vie with Clan Wolf for the ilClanship. Khan Amirault immediately launched Operation Stampede to chase down either the Wolves or Falcons. He needed their secret to penetrating the Wall. He pushed his Horses to the breaking point, but failed to catch his foes, and Clan Wolf emerged victorious on Terra.

IlKhan Alaric Ward summoned Khan Amirault to Terra and insulted him. Khan Amirault realized that Clan Hell's Horses must expand to survive. He redirected Operation Stampede to seize worlds in the former Jade Falcon Occupation Zone. But he acted too slowly to prevent the rise of several microstates. Efforts to take Sudeten and Butler ended in disaster. The more aggressive saKhan Fulk Lassenerra defeated Khan Amirault in combat and became Khan in an effort to turn around the Horses' string of defeats.

CULTURE

Clan Hell's Horses has had the good fortune of taking many Inner Sphere worlds from other Clans, until recently.

The Horses' initial OZ had been ruled by the Wolves for only twenty years when the Horses arrived. Clan Wolf had ruled their OZ with a light hand but expected results from the lower castes, and Wolf overseers were a common sight. Regular punitive Watch operations were a feature of their rule. Two decades was barely enough time for Clan education systems to take root, and no time to overcome centuries-old Rasalhagian nationalism.

Clan Hell's Horses tried to follow Clan Ghost Bear's example, leaving the civilians to their own devices without giving up their culture. The Horses ruled from great DropShip-cities and industrial enclaves. Herds of Hell's Horses were bred on multiple worlds, bolstering the morale of

the Clan's warrior caste. Efforts were made to encourage Rasalhagians to join the Clan, but no re-education was enforced. According to the Horses, if the Rasalhagian hinterland provided the mandated resources to the castes in the cities, all would be well. This concept was laughable to Rasalhagians schooled in centuries of resistance against the Lyran Commonwealth and Draconis Combine. Careful not to foul their own nest, Mimir used the Horse OZ to launder their growing links with the Ghost Bear Watch, while guiding operations in the Wolf OZ. Motstånd soon established their own cells to operate against the Ghost Bear Dominion and the Horses ruled willfully obliviously above all, not willing to tempt fate.

Clan Hell's Horses' more recent gains have been in a Wolf OZ occupied for much longer. These worlds hosted repressed but still-restive Rasalhagians, and generations of lower castes the Wolves left behind when relocating to the Wolf Empire. Distraught at the idea of being left to the Rasalhagians, those castes resented being denied the chance to serve the ilClan. They split between those seeking revenge through serving the Horses, and those proving that the Wolves made a mistake since they are worthy of the ilClan.

The Rasalhague Dominion took no overt actions for decades, keeping civilian casualties low, but the region is believed to be swarming with Rasalhague Dominion Watch and Motstånd assets. Prince Hjalmer Miraborg believes he could bring the Horses' industry to a standstill with a stamp of his foot, and would, if not for his honor. Whether the Dominion has that much control outside of its borders is an open question. With events leaving the Horses stretched, it seems Motstånd is awakening.

Clan Hell's Horses values the individual's role in greater society. There are limits, however. Warriors stand above all other castes. MechWarriors tend to feel superior to other warriors, despite Khan John Fletcher's tenets. Clan Hell's Horses is vigilant against those who step outside expected norms.

Such adherence stifled innovation in Clan Hell's Horses. Warriors and lower castes were unswervingly obedient, making them seem docile to other Clans. This stabilized Hell's Horses society, but fosters a lack of initiative, which limits their ability to expand. The politics of the Mongol Doctrine changed this. The Horses are rightly proud of the Doctrine, but its successes are associated with the un-Clanlike timidity of Gottfried Amirault. In contrast, Khan Malvina Hazen's interpretation got results. The terror elements of Hazen's Doctrine are anathema to Clan Hell's Horses, but Amirault's failures forced a reevaluation.

Clan Hell's Horses was long considered a lesser Clan because of its focus on combined arms, and they were largely shielded from the Inner Sphere by the other Clan OZs. While given respect as a Clan, the rest of the Council expected the Horses to get a rude shock when facing the Inner Sphere directly. Thus, the adventures of the Fire Horse in the Golden Ordun became a source of pride to many warriors in Clan Hell's Horses. With the more unsavory aspects filtered through Clan Jade Falcon and the Watch, the Horses were finally earning their place. Gottfried Amirault extracting the Horses from the Golden Ordun was a double-edged sword. Was Khan Hazen's mighty Golden Ordun a force for good, bringing the Way of the Clans to the oppressed masses with her superior interpretation of the Mongol Doctrine? Or was she a monster who had twisted something belonging to the Horses into a force for evil? Neither view reflected well on the plodding Amirault. Hazen had carved an empire from a Great House. Amirault had fallen into ownership of uncontested worlds abandoned by Clan Wolf.

This pressure may be behind Amirault's unusually rash actions after Noyan. Rushing from Terra to the Tamar Pact and the Falcon OZ, insulting ilKhan Alaric Ward in his moment of triumph, Amirault may now be gone, but Clan Hell's Horses now has an expectation to live up to. Can they succeed against the Lyrans and Wolves where Hazen failed? An acquiescent *touman* conditioned to expect quick results may force Khan Lassenerra to make some hard choices.

CLAN SEA FOX

Clan Sea Fox was built on the bedrock of inter-caste cooperation, resulting in a fruitful Golden Century with the creation of HarJel, Iron Womb technology, and the Chatterweb. The merchant caste was given free rein and brought in great wealth, increasing the power of the Clan and the castes.

As the Golden Century ended, a Clan Snow Raven Khan released a genetically engineered shark into the freshwater seas of Strana Mechty. This led to the near extinction of the sea fox for which the Clan was named. Showing his Clan's flexibility, Sea Fox Khan Damon Clarke resolved to adopt this new Diamond Shark as the totem of his Clan. To gain support for this change, he allowed all castes to vote, making Clan Diamond Shark unique with its universal suffrage.

The Shark Khans expected a return to the Inner Sphere, so they drifted into the conservative Crusader camp, frustrating the more liberal lower castes. Then the Sharks faltered in the Trials to join Operation Revival. Despite this, they negotiated for Khan Ian Hawker's command Trinary to accompany Clan Jade Falcon. Combat was limited for the Khan, but trading opportunities were rife, and Hawker summoned a merchant fleet. The presence of Diamond Shark merchants rather than warriors led to conflict with the invading Clans, especially after trade links were opened with businesses in the Occupation Zones.

Clan Diamond Shark profited greatly from Clan Ghost Bear's relocation to the Inner Sphere. The merchant caste also reaped a windfall from Clan Smoke Jaguar's Annihilation and Clan Nova Cat's Abjuration. They used the Truce of Tukayyid to expand trading operations in the Occupation Zones and with the Great Houses. This drew censure from the Grand Council and set the stage for events to come.

The Wars of Reaving began when ilKhan Brett Andrews of Clan Steel Viper killed Diamond Shark saKhan Angus Labov in a meeting of the Grand Council. Clan Diamond Shark was an obvious target for those looking to expunge any Inner Sphere taint from the Homeworlds. Fortunately, the Sharks had already begun moving operations, and they retreated from the Homeworlds successfully. They established a well-guarded manufacturing center in the Chaine Cluster, in addition to their enclaves in the Occupation Zones. The Wars of Reaving and the simultaneous Word of Blake Jihad caused considerable losses to the Sharks' warrior caste.

Clan Diamond Shark's changing needs drove them to adopt a nomadic lifestyle. Grouped into huge trading fleets called Khanates (made up of smaller organizations called Aimags), they roamed the Inner Sphere and beyond. The merchant caste played an increasingly large role in Clan affairs. At the same time, the Khans noted the proliferation of introduced sea foxes on their new enclave worlds. They took this as a sign, and in 3100, reverted to their original name. Clan Sea Fox was reborn.

Clan Sea Fox prospered as peace allowed for trade. While occasionally challenged, the Clan could defend itself militarily and retaliate economically. With a network of independent connections, the Sea Foxes were well positioned before Gray Monday changed the Inner Sphere.

Two Khanates stood out in the profitable turmoil. First, Tiburon Khanate became involved with Federated Suns politics and future First Prince Julian Davion. Tiburon provided Davion with transport, then military support against the Capellan Confederation. Davion is increasingly indebted to Tiburon.

Second, Spina Khanate has become virtually a member state of the Free Worlds League by supporting the breakaway Spirit Cats in the formation of the Clan Protectorate. Spina used this leverage to buy up bankrupt ComStar assets in the League. They have built one of the most powerful militaries in the League. They blockaded the Regulan Fiefs without Parliament's approval, and the Regulan surrender drew both applause and concern from the League. The Sea Foxes also profited greatly from Clan Wolf's drive to become ilClan, supplying much materiel for the conquest of Terra and subsequent combat with Clan Jade Falcon.

CULTURE

Life in Clan Sea Fox is one of both division and unity. This manifests between those who live on scattered planetary enclaves and on the ArcShips, and between Khanates and Aimags spread across human space, often isolated for years at a time. Because contact with the rest of humanity is largely restricted to the merchant caste, members of Clan Sea Fox are usually alone with each other. For a technician raised on an ArcShip, the sights, sounds, and smells of a world are strange and hostile. But since they are all connected by what remains of the Chatterweb, irregular gatherings, and a shared sense of responsibility toward their Clan, Clan Sea Fox is a community happy with its place in the universe, free from the turmoil that grips the Inner Sphere.

The Sea Fox fleet is split into five Khanates: Spina, Skate, Tiburon, Fox, and the ilKhanate. While the ilKhanate travels widely, overseeing the rest, the rest are divided amid the Inner Sphere. Spina covers the anti-spinward region, Skate the rimward, Tiburon the coreward, and Fox the spinward. Each Khanate is divided further into five Aimags: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon, which operate separately within their Khanate's territory.

Each Khanate is headquartered on an ArcShip. These vast WarShips have been reconfigured as floating cities. Each Aimag is built around a CargoShip—a massive JumpShip with arrays of permanently attached and refitted DropShips. Accompanying them all is an armada of DropShips and fighters to provide security.

Clan Sea Fox is dominated by its merchant caste like no other Clan. Indeed, warriors are trained as merchants so their actions don't ruin any potential deal. Combined with universal suffrage, the Clan's warriors hold a nominal position of control, but in actuality, one where they must defer to non-warriors. Of course, the best leaders of the Clan straddle both worlds. The Sea Foxes were an early adopter of "retirement" into other castes, allowing a canny operator to blur the line between both roles provided they maintain their combat skills.

Enclaves play a special role for Clan Sea Fox, as they are the Clan's only fixed assets. Enclaves can range from a single building to a whole world. Access to them is tightly controlled. In the Chainelane Isles, for example, outsiders are aggressively discouraged. The lower castes live an insular life, though they are well informed thanks to the Chatterweb. Their lives tend to be relatively simple and austere, despite living in a mercantile culture. The Sea Foxes' chosen lifestyle lacks the wild teeming masses of the Rasalhague Dominion. There is no developed services industry. Clan Sea Fox instead provides everything its warriors, merchants, and civilians require, as long as they provide value to the Clan. Abundance befits the de facto MegaMart of the Inner Sphere.

Clan Sea Fox receives varying welcomes depending upon the region of space in which they operate. The arrival of an Aimag in a system is a festive event. It brings contact with the wider Sphere, advanced trinkets, and even simple resources the local House Lord may not be able to provide. Yet there is always a price. It is rare for a local to get the better of a Sea Fox merchant, and the Foxes can always walk away from a deal and take their wares elsewhere. Strife often follows the Aimags, and sometimes it precedes them. Neighboring systems may scuffle over off-world assets, or even start petty feuds over which world gets visited first.

Clever Aimags do not overstay their welcome. Fox Khanate's Epsilon Aimag famously tarried too long on Pesht, continuing to hammer out a deal that would undercut Pesht Motors supplying the District Regulars. Two months later, running street battles with the Yakuza, a riot in a Sea Fox trading emporium, and the suspicious seppuku of two senior officers in the Sixth Pesht Regulars convinced Epsilon that discretion was the better part of valor, despite the potential lucrative profits. The Aimag departed in haste, leaving few happy customers behind, though the Yakuza seemed content.

Predatory loans are a stock-in-trade for the Sea Fox merchant caste. It is not just the Sea Fox currency, Fox Credits—flippantly called "Sea-bills"—which may one day become the interstellar currency with the downfall of the C-bill. The Sea Foxes instead use more insidious means to engender the dependence of their customers. How many minor lords would turn away a free Star of 'Mechs? But the Inner Sphere is growing wise to Sea Fox tactics, overcharging for ammunition and spares on weapons that only they can supply. Beyond that, the Sea Foxes sometimes engages in classical extortion—that is, now you can get that *Mad Cat IV* with a side dish of "protection." With the CCAF unable to defend against Tiburon Khanate's raiding, Skate Khanate has been quietly offering to remove Capellan worlds from the target list. Once Spina Khanate left the Regulan Fiefs, Skate showed up, offering very attractive deals to the Regulans and the Anduriens.

Information, however, brings the big money. The Chatterweb still exists. While Gray Monday affected Clan Sea Fox's HPGs like those of other powers, Clan Sea Fox weathered the Blackout more favorably than nations reliant upon HPGs for communication. The nomadic Sea Fox culture had already grown accustomed to long periods with no contact, so the Blackout generated less impact than it did in Successor States or other Clans.

In addition, the regular conclaves of Aimags in deep space—scheduled years in advance—ensured Aimags and Khanates remained in contact, and these meetings allowed for the dissemination of information across the Inner Sphere along their migratory paths. Clan Sea Fox has purchased many ComStar news agencies in the Free Worlds League and Federated Suns at fire-sale prices, and now has their eye set on those in the Lyran Commonwealth. Carefully curated reporting by locally hired staff has begun to make Clan Sea Fox a trusted name in the Great Houses. Memories of the Word of Blake's atrocities foments doubts regarding the Sea Foxes supplanting ComStar. Defenders, though, point to the farcical proselytizing of "Way of the Clans"—a regular, infomercial-like broadcast extolling the virtues of Clan society—as proof that Clan propaganda is too inept for sophisticated Inner Sphere citizens, at least those outside the Occupation Zones.

For the ruling classes, the problem is more subtle. Information is power, and whoever has it first has an advantage. The arrival of a Sea Fox JumpShip spurs a race to contact it first for the latest news. With national fleets committed to various wars, many systems have come to rely on Clan Sea Fox's network for information. The risks are obvious, but the benefits are hard to ignore.

Clan Sea Fox commands significant power and possesses a reach that no other Clan can match. The Foxes can influence minds, demand outrageous prices for necessary war materiel, foment uprisings, engage in ground combat, elicit favors, and entice loyalty as no Clan ever imagined. The Clan uses information and trade as weapons of mass destruction. This dual-headed beast is unrestrained by any leash. It remains to be seen who, if anyone, could harness and contain what the Sea Foxes are becoming.

THE RAVEN ALLIANCE

CLAN SNOW RAVEN

Clan Snow Raven is known for its political savvy and its fleet. Events conspired to prevent Clan Snow Raven from becoming a leading Clan, but it managed to stay at the heart of events. Naval officer Stephen McKenna was a favorite of Aleksandr Kerensky, and McKenna remained loyal to the family as he commanded Nicholas Kerensky's naval forces in the Second Exodus. In recognition of this, he was named founding saKhan of Clan Snow Raven (although records were altered after the Wolverine Annihilation to note him as founding Khan in place of Joyce Merrell).

Clan Snow Raven sustained heavy losses in Operation Klondike, including the saKhan, who allegedly and officially died due to faulty intelligence supplied by Clan Wolverine. The Ravens were too weak afterward to take part in the ongoing Trials for replacement material stored in scattered caches, so they focused on orbital, naval, and aerospace caches. The warriors of other Clans concerned themselves primarily with 'Mechs, looking down upon WarShips as being outside the warrior's domain. But the Ravens leveraged their windfall of WarShips, JumpShips, and DropShips by securing most of the naval yards in the Homeworlds and building new ones. They established a monopoly on naval manufacturing and maintenance that lasted for centuries.

The Ravens were at the center of Clan Wolverine's Annihilation. When the Jade Falcons' attempted to Trial for a cache in Wolverine territory was rejected, the matter went to the Grand Council. The decision went against Clan Wolverine, who then surprised everyone by denouncing ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky and declaring independence from the Clans. Clan Widowmaker detonated a nuclear weapon in the Wolverine capital city, knowing that the Wolverines would be blamed. Clan Snow Raven was dispatched to contain the Wolverines. When the battle went against them, the Ravens resorted to using a nuclear weapon—but the fighter carrying the bomb was shot down, and the weapon detonated over the Raven capital city instead. Again, the Wolverines were blamed, and ilKhan Kerensky declared a Trial of Annihilation against them.

Recovery from this disaster proceeded slowly. With Clans like the Mongooses seeking to absorb the Ravens, their Khans became skilled negotiators in the Grand Council and in back rooms to secure much-needed resources.

The Golden Century was mixed for Clan Snow Raven. Clan Steel Viper seized Hellgate from the Ravens by targeting the world's agro-domes. This made it impossible for the Ravens to remain. The enmity against Steel Viper after this unsavory tactic lasted for centuries. The Ravens also focused on political games. An alliance with Clan Cloud Cobra proved fruitful, but once Cobra Khan Tobias Khatib became ilKhan, his policies favored the Cobras to such an extent that the Ravens resorted to revealing evidence that he had ordered the death of his predecessor. A later turn of events revealed that Snow Raven Khan Liam Howell was responsible for the near-extinction of the sea fox in revenge for humiliation he suffered from Clan Sea Fox. Howell was killed in a Trial of Grievance, and Clan Diamond Shark made sure the Ravens paid financially for decades.

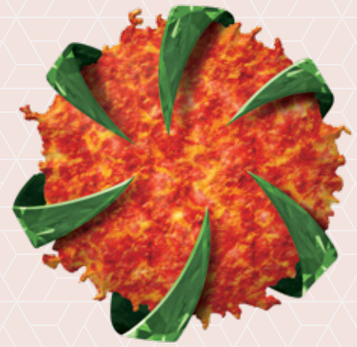
Snow Raven foresight paid off in the Political Century. The rise of the Crusader faction made a return to the Inner Sphere inevitable. Khan Lynn McKenna knew the Clan would never be strong enough to win a place in the invasion. However, by acting as a neutral player and offering transportation first for Wolf's Dragoons and the then later invasion, many of the invading Clans were in Clan Snow Raven's debt.

Negotiations with Clan Jade Falcon returned the Ravens their old Hellgate holdings in exchange for genetic legacies and a lease on a quarter of the Snow Raven fleet. This allowed Clan Snow Raven to sample many Inner Sphere delights in Operation Revival. Later, though, the Falcons failed to show due respect to their allies, and the Ravens recalled their ships. The two Clans skirmished in the Homeworlds for the next few years.

After Tukayyid, Clan Snow Raven discovered that their longtime ally, Clan Ghost Bear, was relocating to the Inner Sphere. Services rendered to the Bears netted considerable holdings. The Ravens declined to be involved with the Great Refusal, though they later assisted Clan Nova Cat's escape to the Inner Sphere. This gained them even more holdings as they exploited the fall of Clan Smoke Jaguar.

The apparent end of the invasion drove the Ravens to seek ways to exploit the Sphere themselves. This brought them into contact—and mutually beneficial trade—with the Outworlds Alliance. In contrast, contact with the Draconis Combine brought treachery, the

Outworlds Alliance



The seed of the Alliance was a disaffected Davion officer who left the Federated Suns for the Periphery world of Alpheratz in the early twenty-fifth century. Tired of the war-mongering ways of the Inner Sphere powers, his anti-war, anti-technology polemics attracted like-minded followers who eventually established their own interstellar nation-state.

Blending irony with tragedy, the peace-minded Outworlds Alliance provided the unintended spark for the Reunification War. Never a military power outside of its aerospace acumen, the Alliance purchased a small number of BattleMechs in 2571 to help ensure its own defense against the constant depredations of pirates. By the time word of this "military buildup" reached the newborn Star League, miscommunications had inflated the Outworlds' mobilization into a massive assault force ready to challenge the Camerons' authority. First Lord Ian Cameron responded by stationing SLDF troops on Alliance worlds, inflaming actual resistance to the League and ultimately leading to the Santiago Massacre, flashpoint for the Reunification War and eventual conquest of the Periphery nations.

At the time of the fall of the Star League, the Alliance was one of the largest Periphery realms, numbering more than 100 worlds and expanding well beyond the accepted boundaries of the Inner Sphere into unknown space. The ensuing Succession Wars collapsed this growth and prosperity, as the Alliance's perpetually weak central government found itself struggling to hold onto its independence-minded worlds, feed its own populace, and maintain the level of technological capability and educational achievement needed to enable interstellar governance.

After centuries of secession, stagnation, and collapse, by the time of the Fourth Succession War the Outworlds Alliance numbered just three dozen star systems, with the vast swath of its formerly occupied worlds now known as the Outworlds Wastes. Some of these independent planets retain vestigial human populations either desperately trying to maintain civilization or descending into lawless savagery, while others have become ghost worlds, their silent Star League-era ruins slowly wasting away and beckoning adventurous treasure-seekers.

The reign of President Mitchell Avellar heralded a resurgence for the Outworlds Alliance. Avellar's "Long Road" economic policy capitalized on decades of sporadic foreign investment in the Alliance and fueled true prosperity and growth across the nation for the first time in centuries. Just as the Outworlds began to emerge as a Periphery power, a chance encounter by an Alliance JumpShip with a Clan Snow Raven expeditionary force in 3064 sent the nation in an unexpected direction.

loss of a WarShip, and growing hostility. In the Homeworlds, the Steel Vipers reacted to ejection from the Inner Sphere by attacking their ancient rivals, the Ravens. The Vipers' determined assault on Lum involved multiple front-line Galaxies and WarShip combat, but the Ravens proved victorious.

As the Word of Blake Jihad engulfed the Inner Sphere, Blakist operatives destroyed the Swift Wing Naval Assault Star in a false flag operation. The Ravens fell for the false evidence and blamed the Draconis Combine, and began an offensive against the Combine. This culminated in the bombardment of the plague world Galedon V. When the Word of Blake began operations in the Outworlds Alliance, Clan Snow Raven stabilized the situation.

The Ravens' gains in the Inner Sphere were counter-balanced by the Homeworlds collapsing into the Wars of Reaving. As an old enemy of Clan Steel Viper and with strong Inner Sphere contacts, Clan Snow Raven was a clear target. The Vipers launched a second strike on Lum. This time it succeeded, thanks to a decade of preparation. With their capital destroyed and their naval yards in enemy hands, the Ravens fled to the Inner Sphere, heading to the Outworlds Alliance to rebuild.

Clan Ghost Bear convinced the wounded Ravens to provide naval support to Devlin Stone's coalition. Two Stars assisted the Bears' drive to Terra, though no Raven ground forces were committed.

After the Jihad, Clan Snow Raven established several enclaves in the Outworlds Alliance and assumed the role of military protector. A union between Clan Snow Raven and the Outworlds Alliance was formalized with the creation of the

Raven Alliance. But Clan Snow Raven exploited a distracted Federated Suns after Gray Monday, failing to support their nominal ally at Palmyra. The Draconis Combine invasion eventually bogged them down, raising the question of whether the Ravens chose the wrong side. However, the rise of the ilClan and the Raven Alliance's vocal support for the new power rendered all previous issues moot.

CULTURE

Byzantine politics define Clan Snow Raven at all caste levels. Complex webs of power define a person's position in the hierarchy. For a warrior, this takes the form of "the list," which establishes the chain of command. Similar structures exist for other castes. Bloodname Houses, known internally as "the families," form tight-knit groups that vote on Council matters as one. To go against the will of the House is a mortal sin. The House Leader possesses absolute control. It takes time for outsiders to be trusted by the Clan. Few bondspeople are taken, and even fewer rise high in rank. Thus, it is difficult for new members of the Clan to adjust to life in Clan Snow Raven.

The nominally pacifist Outworlds Alliance acquiesced to Snow Raven control following the Jihad. While militia forces still exist, national defense resides with Clan Snow Raven. But things are not quite that simple, as the Ravens love layers of complexity.

Unlike the Rasalhague Dominion, the Ravens and Outworlds Alliance never merged cultures. The Ravens largely live in segregated, gleaming enclaves. The native Outworlders live in cities and towns unchanged for centuries. There is no hostility between the populations; the Outworlders simply don't want to be Clan. The Ravens look down on their compatriots, but feel no compulsion to push the issue. The civilian government remains largely intact and serves to manage the day-to-day business of the Alliance, while the Raven Council manages foreign policy. Trade exists between the two communities, but it hardly flourishes. The Outworlders don't want to be tempted by flashy Clan technology, so they offer little more than raw resources. The economy suffers from this lack of enthusiasm. This apathy does not exist for the Outworlder mega-corporations. They eagerly seek Clan technology so they can compete in the wider Inner Sphere market, cooperating with the Raven merchant caste and their extensive JumpShip fleet. This fleet maintained communications with the Raven Alliance after Gray Monday, keeping the nation a cohesive whole.

Military production in the Raven Alliance has recently taken off. The merchant caste worked with local governments and companies to get Outworlders "off the farm" and into factories, following a five-year plan of public works and infrastructure-building. Outworlders were happy to see their tax escudos pay for roads and hospitals. Once retrained and used to city life, working for United Outworlder Corporation or Alliance Defenders Limited appeals to the average Outworlder. A select few even live in separate enclaves within the Snow Raven enclaves. The standard of living there exceeds that of the Clan's lower castes. Such is the price the Ravens paid to grow as a Clan.

The rise of the ilClan puts Clan Snow Raven in an interesting position. Achieving the position of ilClan was never a possibility for the Ravens, given their relatively weak military. The Ravens instead might provide specialist naval services while playing politics and jockeying for power as they have for centuries. It is unknown if the Ravens will choose simply to abandon all they have built to relocate, again—perhaps closer to Terra if ilKhan Alaric Ward requests it of them. Doing so would leave the Outworlders and all the Raven infrastructure vulnerable to the Federated Suns and Draconis Combine.

THE SCORPION EMPIRE

CLAN GOLIATH SCORPION

Clan Goliath Scorpion's first Khan, Cyrus Elam, and saKhan Jenna Scott, preferred combined-arms combat, and instilled such cooperative tactics in their founding *touman*. It was the Scorpions' underwater exoskeleton that evolved into the Elemental battle suit. Venom from the namesake arachnid is processed into a drug called *necrosia*. This drug's hallucinogenic effects are hailed as prophetic visions, and resulted in the formation of the Seeker sect. This group takes historical preservation to nearly religious levels, especially concerning artifacts of the Star League. Their influence in the Clan has waxed and waned through the years, eventually amounting to nearly a Galaxy of MechWarriors, along with various attendants and servants who made up each Seeker's retinue.

It was the Scorpions who trained Wolf's Dragoons for their intelligence gathering mission to the Inner Sphere. Their knowledge of Star League tactics, which had long been forgotten by the Clans, came from the Seekers who collected and preserved Star League Defense Force training manuals. Even limiting the Dragoons to antiquated combat units from caches and warehouses, the Scorpions' training placed the Dragoons on a level comparable to a Clan frontline Cluster.

The Scorpions sat out the Clan Invasion, taking advantage of the participating Clans' absence to raid their territory in the Homeworlds. The Scorpions began to prosper thanks to deft politics after the Refusal War, the Great Refusal, and finally the Wars of Possession of the 3060's. When the reborn Star League deployed Eridani Light Horse personnel to defend their enclave on Huntress, the Scorpion Seekers became obsessed. The Light Horse was an original SLDF command, and these, their descendants, were living relics in the Scorpions' eyes. The outbreak of the Jihad in the Inner Sphere stranded the Light Horse on Huntress. The Scorpions absorbed them in a Trial of Possession that caused heavy losses on both sides. This victory would eventually lead to Clan Goliath Scorpion's downfall.

The Scorpions avoided most of the fighting in the Wars of Reaving, absorbing the remnants of Clan Ice Hellion following their humiliating ejection from the Inner Sphere. The conclusion of that war left the Scorpions as the second most powerful Clan in the Homeworlds. But a defeat by Clan Cloud Cobra led to the discovery that the Scorpions had started incorporating genetic materials from their absorbed Eridani Light Horse personnel. The Scorpions felt this was allowed given the Light Horse's SLDF heritage, but the Homeworlds Clans disagreed. The Scorpions were Abjured.

Clan Goliath Scorpion fled the Clan Homeworlds. Their course took them first to Waypoint 531, where Seekers had established an outpost. That world served as a rendezvous point for the entirety of the Clan. Recently added personnel, both warriors and civilians absorbed from Clan Ice Hellion and the Eridani Light Horse, advocated a return to the Inner Sphere. The former Hellions, because they wished to avenge their defeat to Clan Jade Falcon, and the former Light Horse warriors, because it was still home in their minds. The Seekers joined this call, as their mandate had always been to recover Star League artifacts. The Inner Sphere was a treasure trove to them.

But Khan Colin Yeh chose a different destination: Nueva Castile. The Castilians and Umayyads, of the faltering Umayyad Caliphate, had been at war for generations. Despite their military mindset, they presented no challenge to the entirety of a Clan *touman*. The conquest amounted to the Scorpions simply landing a force on a planet to accept the surrender of its defenders. What little fighting there was took place on the Castilian worlds, but it was minor and ended quickly.

The Scorpions immediately set about establishing their authority while also undertaking the monumental task of rebuilding the industrial capacity they had abandoned in the Homeworlds. The integration of the populace initially went poorly, as Clan dogma tended toward exterminating those unwilling to assimilate. It took a change in leadership and years of moderating their response for uprisings and potential rebellions to cease. This came about largely through efforts to add local freeborn warriors fully into the *touman*. Previously, these warriors were consigned to Planetary Garrison Clusters or security forces. Once the people realized they could rise to the warrior caste, the highest stratum of the new empire, a collective drive to excel and achieve that goal overtook the population. This was aided greatly by the improved universal education that the scientist and technician castes established throughout the worlds of the Empire.

After the threat of internal strife had been dealt with peacefully, updating the industrial base of the Empire could begin. Then the first generation of locals educated in the new schools came of age. These were the first laborers and technicians put to work building and working in military factories. The Castilians and Umayyads had struggled to reach a Succession Wars-level of technology, and Clan Goliath Scorpion needed to return to their former technology level to resume constructing ClanTech equipment. The crash program faltered initially, but soon paid dividends. OmniMechs were constructed not just in the Scorpions' *Hephaestus* station they refurbished for OmniMech manufacture, but also in new ground-based factories. Other orbital factories, not just the station, produced endo-steel internal structure and other items that require zero-gravity manufacturing.

With their military once more fielding ClanTech equipment, albeit mostly of Operation Revival-levels, they set their sights beyond securing their territory. Expansion began with colonizing systems between the Empire and the hostile Hanseatic League. The slaughter of a Seeker expedition by the Hansa sparked the largest conflict in the Periphery in centuries. The Hanseatic Crusade, as it came to be called, saw the entire Clan Goliath Scorpion *Touman* mobilized to invade and conquer the Hanseatic League. The war lasted more than a year, but the technologically inferior Hansa eventually capitulated to the invaders. Losses were heavy on both sides, but the lack of destruction to the original imperial worlds allowed rapid restoration of depleted OmniMech numbers. Factories on captured worlds were specifically avoided by combatants on both sides. Thus, these facilities soon crawled with imperial technicians and scientists. In five years, those factories could build ClanTech equipment thanks to the robust educational and technical base the Empire had established.

CULTURE

For warriors in Clan Goliath Scorpion's *touman*, life is wonderful. They occupy the top tier of imperial society. The Khan leads the military, and the military rules the Empire. Seekers spread far and wide throughout human-occupied space from the Periphery to the Inner Sphere. These adventurer-archaeologist-warriors delve into forgotten military installations and cultural centers on worlds far and wide, both inhabited and abandoned. But their quests to recover and preserve artifacts of the Star League do not always succeed, and they often involve transgressing the territory of hostile powers.

The realities of governing such a large territory of peoples unindoctrinated to Clan society did bring about changes to Scorpion society. The first of these changes came prior to the Hanseatic Crusade with the creation of the reKhan position. ReKhans served as planetary governors. Each reKhan was a civilian who had previously been a high-ranking warrior in the *touman*, such as a Galaxy Commander. Their connection to the military and their focus on administering a specific world's defenses, industries, schools, and resources made each reKhan powerful, though technically of a lower rank than active warriors.

Another major change was the addition of local surnames to the roll of Bloodnames for the Clan. Warriors both freeborn and Trueborn, of the same lineage as a superior warrior who earned this honor, are allowed to compete in Trials of

Deep Seekers

The Scorpion Seekers that ply the deep periphery for artifacts are even more unusual than the ones found in the Inner Sphere or Periphery nations. While Seekers are almost religiously obsessed with the recovery of forgotten human knowledge and technology, this small group of Seekers that feel the pull of deep space are especially committed to their cause. Alone in unoccupied space for months on end, these Seekers face different dangers in the vast uninhabited void, often hundreds of lightyears from potential help. Their missions are long treks across barren and dangerous alien landscapes, often pursuing worthless leads that will leave them empty handed until they are able to fulfill their oath and return to the *touman*.

A Deep Seeker can be out of touch with the Empire for months—even years—at a time, but when they do return to the Empire, they are often overwhelmed by the sights and sounds of the many bustling cities and towns, and large gatherings make them somewhat uncomfortable. Deep Seekers are solitary and most comfortable around their retinues, but they will mingle amongst other Seekers and warriors. Deep Seekers are Scorpions through and through and will participate in *touman* functions when called without complaint. They are true clan warriors, but they are most at ease away from the congestion of Imperial space.

As errant-explorers, Deep Seeker retinues are first built to survive deep space hazards. Yeomen (warrior bondsmen) are experts in Zero-G fighting and combat on exotic terrain in hostile atmospheres. Retinues will include a Sutler or two on the off-chance they contact another group while on a seek, but number less than a retinue's Sages (scientists). Sages are numerous among Deep Seeker retinues, as experienced Sages are highly valued for their knowledge in stellar navigation, cartography, exotic flora and fauna, and hostile alien environments. A surprising number of former Jarnfolk are now living as Sages in Deep Seeker retinues, prided for their expertise in stellar navigation. Tinkers (technicians) make up the bulk of a Deep Seeker's retinue. The threat of being stranded in deep space—or worse—means most Tinkers are skillful spacecraft technicians who are adept at just about any vehicle fix under the most extreme conditions imaginable. Harbingers (chroniclers and artisans) and Footmen (laborers) are respected for their contributions to the Seekers' living heraldry but are expected to assist Tinkers in an emergency. These Harbingers and Footmen are a surprisingly proficient assistant technicians, and while their training and knowledge is outside of their assigned castes, the dangerous realities of deep space seeking necessitate the blurring of some traditional caste roles.

Bloodright to claim one for themselves. This process has admitted not only Umayyad- and Castilian-derived Bloodnames, but Eridani Light Horse and later Hansa-derived examples. Such laxity would never have been allowed in the Homeworlds, but the realities of governing an empire of forty worlds required it. With civilians able to reach such stratospheric heights, the divide between ruling Clan and laborer shrank in the eyes of the populace. Upward mobility largely absent from the Clans is a genuine possibility in the Empire.

The former serfs of the Hanseatic League were the biggest beneficiaries of the Crusade's success. Most became laborers, but even the laborer caste marked a significant jump in their status. As serfs, they were chattel consigned to live or die at the whims of their owners. Laborers serve a true purpose, and the Clan depends upon them. They now had access to education and medical treatments. The life expectancy of former serfs nearly doubled in the first decade of the expanded Scorpion Empire's existence.

The Hanseatic League was a mercantile society, and many of the merchants who survived the Crusade found their lot diminished, but hardly marginalized. Their expectations of consignment to the laborer caste proved mostly unrealized for those who chose to accept the new rulers. As members of the merchant caste, they no longer occupy the top rung of society, but still a better one than they had hoped.

A groundswell of public appreciation followed the establishment of another new rank in imperial society. The zarKhan was the de facto ruler of the entire empire. ReKhans reported to the zarKhan, whose position some considered superior to the Khan. However, the Khan maintains sole command of the *touman* and thus the rulership of the empire. This division may become a cause of concern or potential internal strife should a zarKhan and Khan enter a dispute which cannot be resolved.

Galaxy Colonels are another new rank. These warriors are detached from any particular Galaxy; instead, they administer the defense of one of the empire's provinces, which divide the two-score worlds into manageable districts. Each Galaxy in the *touman* is stationed in a province for five years, at which time a transfer of station is carried out. This shuffling of the entire *touman* prevents any warrior or portion of the *touman* from falling under the sway of local influences, keeping their loyalty to the Khan rather than to a region of space.

THE LOST CLANS

CLAN BLOOD SPIRIT

Deeply traditionalist and isolationist Clan Blood Spirit originally viewed itself as the one true heir to Nicholas Kerensky's ideals. Clan Blood Spirit sought to spread *esprit de corps* amongst all Clans, but only succeeded in alienating them. This led to deep and violent grudges against Clans Burrock and Mongoose. Clan Blood Spirit ultimately outlasted its tormentors.

Their final blows against the Burrocks brought Clan Blood Spirit into conflict with Clan Star Adder. Marginalized, paranoid, and lacking allies, the Spirits were in no position to fight the Adders. However, they hung on with typical tenacity as they lost nearly all their holdings. The Wars of Reaving allowed them to strike out and make gains, but ultimately, they could not hold onto those gains. Distrusted by all, they escaped to the hidden worlds of Honor and Colleen amidst the chaos.

Clan Blood Spirit's traditionalist attitude showed in its *touman*. It maintained the Kerensky-mandated mix of three Trinaries of 'Mechs, and a Trinary of infantry and vehicles until the decade after Operation Revival. Combat against stronger Clans led the Blood Spirits to employ treachery, traps, and surprise. They had a surprisingly un-Clanlike tradition that forbade *zellbrigen* when defending, with all Warriors expected to set aside their honor for the Clan. This devotion extended to all members of the Clan, with civilians being armed and willingly fighting in emergencies. Warriors and civilians captured by other Clans were uncooperative. When Clan Blood Spirit possessed strength, this could be ignored. But as the Blood Spirits weakened, they relied more on this contingency, earning increasing ire from the other Clans.

Clan Blood Spirit was ultimately annihilated by Clan Star Adder under the pretext of a Trial of Absorption.

CLAN BURROCK

Clan Burrock's founders were twin brothers from the Rim Worlds Republic. The Clan was stoic and determined like its totem, unimaginative and lacking initiative.

Significant losses in Operation Klondike spawned disillusionment within the Clan, but the Wolverine Annihilation distracted the discontented. After that, Clan Burrock called attention to Clan Blood Spirit's odd behaviors, hoping for another annihilation. When the Grand Council failed to approve one, the Burrocks crushed the Blood Spirits with such ferocity that Clan Blood Spirit became a minor power. Despite this, Clan Burrock was considered neutral enough for their Khan to oversee the Trials of Possession for Omni and Elemental technology. Clan Burrock also leased out its assets, assisting with exploration and garrisoning the Tanite worlds for Clan Cloud Cobra.

In the mid-thirtieth century, a Trinary of Burrock Warriors and over a thousand civilians defected to the Dark Caste. A combined Cloud Cobra and Burrock task force publicly hunted them down. In truth, the Burrocks used the defectors as a conduit to the Dark Caste, allowing Burrock merchants to evade the Clan social strictures forbidding slave labor and questionable scientific experimentation. The Tanite worlds became an underground hub of Dark Caste activity. When the Clans learned of this, it triggered the absorption of the Burrocks by Clan Star Adder.

The chaos of the Wars of Reaving allowed a Galaxy of Burrock loyalists to rebel from Clan Star Adder and establish themselves on the Tanite worlds with aid from The Society. These rene gades used a WarShip fleet to raid and terrorize Clan outposts for years. It took the full might of Clans Star Adder and Cloud Cobra to put down rebels, ending Clan Burrock once and for all.

CLAN CLOUD COBRA

Clan Cloud Cobra saw the Way of the Clans in terms of faith and spirituality. Its founder, SLDF Chaplain Windham Khatib, felt one must be pure in mind and body to follow the Way. Khan Khatib came to the Way through meditation and contemplation, yet he felt there was no one true path. The Way is subtle and reveals itself mysteriously to different individuals. To him, other doctrines seeking the Way in parallel were perfectly acceptable. Over the years, bands of disciples of different faiths became Cloisters, spiritual groups with numerous followers from all castes and Clans.

Losses in Operation Klondike left the Cloud Cobras with depleted ground forces, dependent upon aerospace. However, they remained strong thanks in part to the superior laser technology they developed. Chafing at being denied a role in Operation Revival, Clan Cloud Cobra joined the crusader camp after the defeat in the Battle of Tukayyid.

After the Great Refusal, Clan Cloud Cobra joined with the Steel Vipers and Star Adders to form the Snake Alliance, which worked against Clans with Inner Sphere holdings. The Cobras trailed in the wake of the Star Adders. The Cobras took part in destroying "tainted" Blood Chapels and genetic legacies in the Homeworlds. When the Adders turned against the Vipers at the end of the Wars of Reaving, new Cloud Cobra Khan Hollyann Kardaan led the call for Annihilation of the Vipers. Clan Cloud Cobra emerged relatively intact, though aggressive raiding was required to rebuild its corrupted genetic legacies.

No communications from or information on Clan Cloud Cobra or the Homeworlds has surfaced since the Wars of Reaving.

CLAN COYOTE

Clan Coyote was known for its pragmatic leadership. Khan Dana Kufahl imbued the Clan with quasi-mystical elements such as vision quests, communion with the Coyote, and the Hunt, but overall, the Coyotes have always been pragmatic. They formed a long-lasting alliance with Clan Wolf. They promoted science and colonization, which bought wealth and the invention of the OmniMech. The latter made Clan Coyote a dominant force for two centuries. The Coyotes are notably conservative, seeing lesser castes as existing only to serve the warriors.

Divisions between Crusaders and Wardens weakened the Coyotes. A Crusader plot resulted in the annihilation of two thousand warriors as traitors. Crusader Clans picked at Warden Coyotes' holdings rather than challenge their Wolf allies. By the time of Operation Revival, Clan Coyote had slowly eroded to a quarter of its previous strength.

Khan Silas Kufahl had been courting members of The Society for some time before ilKhan Brett Andrews initiated the Reaving of the Invading Clans' Bloodhouses. Kufahl convinced his Clan to stand with The Society to curb the warrior caste. This alliance allowed the Coyotes to complete great conquests, but Clan Steel Viper discovered the complicity and all but destroyed Clan Coyote at Tamaron. A small portion of the Coyotes resisted the alliance with The Society; this was acknowledged in the Grand Council. Penance took the form of Trials of Cleansing, which wiped out nearly half of the remaining *touman*. The once-mighty Coyotes now possessed two understrength Galaxies and no scientist caste at all.

Clan Coyote, like the scant remaining Homeworlds Clans, has not been heard from since the Wars of Reaving.

CLAN FIRE MANDRILL

Fire Mandrill founder Khan Raymond Sainze's samurai traditions encouraged individual performance, but his distant personality led to discord with his saKhan. Warriors followed this example, splitting into cliques known as Kindraa, which came to define Clan Fire Mandrill. They grew increasingly elitist, unable to cooperate or share assets; they even selected Khans remotely. Clan Fire Mandrill drifted into isolationist pockets with outside contact limited to raiding for genetic legacies. Kindraa Jewel-Smythe left isolation to Trial for OmniMech and Elemental technology, offending both Clans Coyote and Hell's Horses. This led to the Kindraa's destruction, confirming the weakness of the Kindraa structure.

Operation Revival proved an embarrassment. Kindraas Trialed and devastated each other *before* Trials began to determine participation in the invasion. This behavior recurred in the Great Refusal. The next decade saw attempts to reform with several Kindraa mergers, but no ultimate resolution. The only bright spark was a growing tie with Clan Blood Spirit.

The Word of Blake's Scouring of Tamar divided the Grand Council. The Khans were shocked with the election of dysfunctional ilKhan Garret Sainze of Clan Fire Mandrill. This was the peak of their power. Sainze bungled an attempt to revoke the Great Refusal and wound up dead, along with most of his Kindraa, in a Trial of Refusal over his incompetence. Clan Fire Mandrill finally came together to resist a Trial of Reaving on the Sainze Bloodname, but was fatally weakened. When a Trial of Annihilation was called against Clan Wolf, a Fire Mandrill WarShip destroyed multiple unaligned Blood Chapels—causing Kindraa Mick-Kreese-Kline-Sainze to be targeted for Reaving. When Kindraa Payne-Beyl-Grant tried to Reave the fleeing Ghost Bears on Arcadia, the Bears destroyed them. Kindraa Mattila-Carrol fell to an accidental melee with Clan Blood Spirit. The final starving Fire Mandrills fell to the Dark Caste, ending the divided Clan's existence.

CLAN ICE HELLION

Speed was everything to Clan Ice Hellion. Eschewing large, slow 'Mechs, Khan Stephan Cage built his Clan's *touman* around speed and flexibility. He valued first instincts over deep consideration. It took years for the other Clans to match Clan Ice Hellion's tactics. That delay allowed the Hellions to sprint ahead of their peers.

But controversies plagued the Ice Hellions. A performance-enhancing drug scandal forced the Clan to reave twenty percent of its warriors and many scientists. A secret attempt to invade the Inner Sphere failed with the cost of two Galaxies. Their teamwork-based tactics contradicted the tenets of *zellbrigen*.

The Crusader Ice Hellions failed to win a place in Operation Revival, and in response, they launched Hellion's Fury, netting considerable territory from the other Clans. After the Battle of Tukayyid, schemes to absorb Clans Jade Falcon and Wolf morphed into Harvest Trials. Many Ice Hellion warriors became members of those Invading Clans instead. The Hellions lost to the Nova Cats in the Great Refusal and again went on a spree of conquest. They took five worlds, but could not hold them.

When Khan Raina Montrose learned of Clan Hell's Horses' secret invasion of the Inner Sphere, she blackmailed the Horses into supporting an Ice Hellion invasion as well. Despite this, the Ice Hellions refused to support the Horses and hit Clan Jade Falcon independently. The Hellions overextended themselves while the Horses consolidated the territory they took from Clan Wolf. The Horses forged peace with the Falcons by turning on the Hellions.

Few Hellion Clusters survived. Khan Conner Rood negotiated the absorption of the remnants of Clan Ice Hellion by Clan Goliath Scorpion at the end of the Wars of Reaving.

CLAN MONGOOSE

Founding Khan Mitchell Loris passed on his skills of diplomacy and political maneuvering to Clan Mongoose. Early on, Clan Mongoose showed its willingness to turn to the Grand Council for advantage. However, the love of politicking limited opportunities for its young warriors. This became a fatal flaw as the eugenics program gained pace.

The Mongooses feared showing weakness, so they became continually aggressive. They developed a doctrine of using speed to hit the enemy's center of gravity. This, combined with the Clan's Grand Council ploys, earned the Mongooses the nickname "weasels." A feud with Clan Star Adder began when the Mongooses massacred an Adder outpost's civilians. Two decades later, Clan Mongoose's acquisition of OmniMechs allowed them, alongside Clan Coyote, to take half of the Adders' holdings. Clan Mongoose then attacked Clan Smoke Jaguar. The Star Adders chose that moment to seek revenge. The Mongoose weapons were superior, but the Clan's aging warriors failed against new generations of Clan Smoke Jaguar.

Khan Walter Martindale went before the Grand Council to buy the Mongooses time to recover, quoting Aleksandr and Nicholas Kerensky's to bolster his position. He went so far as to accuse the Smoke Jaguars of unfairly targeting his Clan. Smoke Jaguars countered by accusing Martindale of treason for twisting the Kerenskys' words and hiding behind the Grand Council. The Jaguars insisted the Mongooses should be Absorbed and the Grand Council agreed.

Clan Smoke Jaguar began the Trial of Absorption with the largest fleet battle in Clan history. They isolated the Mongoose capital, allowing the Jaguars to roll up the Mongoose colonies. The final battle took place at Circe. Orbital bombardment paved the way for ground forces. The Mongooses finally broke. The victorious Jaguars refused to take surviving Mongoose bloodlines as a final insult to the absorbed Clan.

CLAN NOVA CAT

Spirituality permeated Clan Nova Cat from its founding. Visions, meditation, and self-reflection guided their decision making. This drew opposition from other Clans, but never enough for them to act. The Clan's lower castes enjoyed great freedom. Nova Cat merchants rivaled Clan Sea Fox's and were responsible for innovations such as futures trading, forging a bond with the Sea Foxes that lasted for centuries.

Clan Nova Cat joined Operation Revival as a reserve Clan. The Clan was paired with Clan Smoke Jaguar after ilKhan Ulric Kerensky's reorganization. The Nova Cats suffered devastating defeats at Luthien and Tukayyid. Visions inspired the Nova Cats to open a dialogue with the Draconis Combine. This led to the Clan joining the Second Star League and Operation Bulldog—and their eventual Abjuration by the other Clans after fighting alongside the Inner Sphere in the Great Refusal.

The Nova Cats fought a fierce withdrawal from the Homeworlds. The disintegration of the Second Star League left the Nova Cats adrift until Devlin Stone offered the Inner Sphere a new chance at unification. The Nova Cats pledged three Galaxies and fleet assets to the Stone's Republic. Those forces would later be known as the Spirit Cats.

But they were depleted, and unable to adequately defend the Irece Prefecture in the Second Combine-Dominion War. The Coordinator punished the Nova Cats with severe restrictions, consigning them to reservations under strict Combine control.

Gray Monday drove Delta Galaxy to break away and form the Spirit Cats, which helped carve the Clan Protectorate from the Free Worlds League. Clan Nova Cat sided with Emi Kurita in the Draconis Combine Civil War, and when her cause failed, Clan Nova Cat was annihilated. Their civilians were captured, sterilized, and dispersed though the Draconis Combine as members of the unproductive caste.

CLAN STAR ADDER

Few Clans are as down-to-earth as Clan Star Adder was. They did not worship the Kerenskys, and saw them as merely superlative soldiers. The Star Adders focused on solidarity as soldiers rather than idealistic warriors. Star Adders respected their lower castes and appointed an Adder's Adjutant to give them a voice. Bondsmen and freeborns were accepted. They had a friendly relationship between warriors and allowed for competition and internal politicking, with loyalty to the Clan paramount.

Steady growth in the Golden Century was marred thanks to attacks by Clan Mongoose and their new OmniMechs, which made these attacks serious. Only Clan Smoke Jaguar's absorption of the Mongooses ended the torment, though the Jaguars were now the enemies of Clan Star Adder. Fervently Crusader, Star Adder spent decades preparing for a grueling Operation Revival, only to be left out.

The Adders were disappointed, but they took advantage of the invading Clans to expand their holdings. They discovered Clan Burrock's deep ties with the bandit caste and sought to Absorb the Burrocks. Clan Blood Spirit dared to interfere, giving the Adders a new enemy that they soon crushed. The Clans' failure at Tukayyid, and the Adders' success in the Grand Refusal, cemented the Adders as the dominant force in the Homeworlds.

Clan Steel Viper wooed the powerful Adders and Clan Cloud Cobra to form the Snake Alliance. They fought together through the Wars of Reaving, ejecting the Invader Clans from the Homeworlds. The Vipers led the way, while the Adders conserved their forces. This positioned them to assume control when the Reaving turned against the Vipers. The Adders emerged stronger than all surviving Clans combined.

Communications between the Homeworlds and the Inner Sphere ceased after the Wars of Reaving. The fate of Clan Star Adder and their plans for the Inner Sphere remain unknown.

CLAN STEEL VIPER

Clan Steel Viper was notable in Operation Klondike for its driving blitzkrieg. Founding Khan Ellie Kinnison introduced a harsh *sibko* program that produced fewer warriors, but with greater skill than those of other Clans. However, Kinnison became obsessed with ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky and attempted to assassinate his wife, Jennifer Winson. Kinnison was executed and written out of history.

The Vipers achieved little of note in the Golden Century until Sanra Mercer was elected Khan. She inspired the Clan with a secret "true vision" of Kerensky, promising a return to Terra as ilClan before reforging the Star League. Contact with other Clans was forbidden for all but merchants and trialing warriors, to shield the Clan from corrupting influences. Freeborns were disparaged, but the high number of *sibko* dropouts ensured an unusually high proportion of Trueborn civilians acting as a bridge to the warrior caste.

Clan Steel Viper wanted to invade the Inner Sphere, but publicly opposed such a return until Clan Smoke Jaguar seized the ComStar JumpShip *Outbound Light*. The Vipers failed to obtain a place in the invasion, and settled for reserve status. They were paired with Clan Jade Falcon after ilKhan Ulric Kerensky's reorganization. The Vipers targeted both Lyran and Falcon worlds with success before being humiliated at Tukayyid. After the Great Refusal, the Vipers launched a massive attack on the Falcons' Occupation Zone. Their failure resulted in ejection from the Inner Sphere.

The Vipers then sought to dominate the Homeworlds with resources taken from the Inner Sphere, to limited results. Khan Brett Andrews accused the Clans exposed to the Inner Sphere of "taint." This became an excuse for the Vipers to assault other Clans with little regard for *zellbrigen*, kicking off the Wars of Reaving. Since the Vipers were also exposed to the Inner Sphere, the surviving Homeworld Clans turned on the Vipers and Annihilated them, too.

CLAN WIDOWMAKER

Clan Widowmaker earned a ferocious reputation in Operation Klondike. They operated extensive vehicle and infantry formations while also favoring very heavy 'Mechs. Khan Jason Karrige's ruthless streak, combined with hot-headed saKhan Cal Jorgensson, resulted in a campaign of "undue aggression." IlKhan Nicholas Kerensky replaced the Widowmakers with Clans Jade Falcon and Wolf. This spawned a feud between the Jade Falcons and the Wolves in which Clan combat rules were often ignored.

Khan Karrige convinced Kerensky that a nuclear detonation at the Wolverine capital was an assassination attempt. When the Clans ran down the Wolverines, the Widowmakers bid against Clan Wolf for the right to Annihilate them, leaving Clan Wolf dangerously understrength. Karrige was there, but he did not leave the world. His genetic legacy was later lost in an accident.

Clan Widowmaker's merchant caste complained to the Grand Council over warrior caste interference. Widowmaker Khan Cal Jorgensson executed all merchants associated with the complaint, and blamed the Wolves for inciting unrest. Appalled, Wolf Khan Jerome Winson called for a Trial of Absorption. The motion carried. Jorgensson demanded a Trial of Refusal.

Clans Widowmaker and Wolf faced off against each other on the Steitz plains of Ironhold with Nicholas Kerensky and the Grand Council as referees. In the midst of combat, a Trial of Grievance between Winson and Jorgensson developed. A Star of Widowmakers seeking to save their Khan broke the Circle of Equals, accidentally killing ilKhan Kerensky. That sealed the Widowmakers' fate.

The Widowmakers were hunted across Clan space with Clan Wolf in the lead. Clan Widowmaker's last stand took place in the fortress of Spiderholm. Some Widowmaker blood legacies persist in Clan Wolf's breeding program.

CLAN WOLVERINE

Clan Wolverine thus suffered fewer losses than their Clan Snow Raven partners in Operation Klondike due to their coordinated, rather than dueling, tactics.

When the Wolverines needed greater food production, Khan Sarah McEvedy deigned to order forbidden inter-caste movements to increase the size of the laborer caste. Clan Widowmaker drew ilKhan Kerensky's attention to this violation of Clan stricture, and the ilKhan created the Watch to monitor the Wolverines. Wolverine counter-intelligence efforts and deployment of new, advanced hardware drew suspicion that the Wolverines were hiding something.

After an attempted Trial of Possession revealed a Brian Cache of nuclear weapons in Wolverine territory, the Grand Council stepped in to redistribute the weapons equally between the Clans. The Wolverine's Trial of Refusal cost them their saKhan. His replacement was elevated without a Trial of Position. This confirmed to the ilKhan that the Wolverines were straying from the Way of the Clans.

With the threat of reprisals from looming, McEvedy began preparations to secede from the Clans. SaKhan Hallis raided orbital caches for transports, while McEvedy addressed the Grand Council but failed to convince them that ilKhan Kerensky intended to make an example of the Wolverines.

Widowmaker operatives stole a Wolverine nuclear weapon and detonated it to fabricate an attempted assassination of the ilKhan. This supposed Wolverine barbarity drove Clan Snow Raven to attack. The Ravens engaged the Wolverines over their own capital city, which the Ravens accidentally nuked. The Wolverines were blamed for this, too. The Wolverines then commandeered the battleship *McKenna's Pride* and bombarded the Grand Council and several Clan halls.

After that, The Wolverines fled, splitting into multiple groups. Their ultimate fate remains unknown.

We were the intrepid ones—those willing to gamble everything for the freedom to make our own choices. We stood by those choices, even if we died for it. We asked for no handouts. We made our own luck. We made our own rules and abided by them. Most of all, we took care of our own. We did all this with what we had and what we made. What we couldn't make, we did without. We met life head-on, took its punches, shared its triumphs, and didn't whine when it dealt us a tough hand. "Take what comes and get on with it," as my Grandma Jessy used to say. She died at eighty-one with a rifle in her hand, fighting off the Black Star pirates back in 2566.

—Op-Ed from the Alpheratz Daily Beacon, Alpheratz, Outworlds Alliance, 11 March 2625

THE PERIPHERY

THE PERIPHERY

The Periphery is populated primarily by those whose ancestors sought to distance themselves from the politics of Terra. They did so literally, journeying far beyond the extent of populated systems to worlds they colonized in hopes that Terra's grasp could never reach them.

Their hopes proved to be in vain.

The formation of the Star League marked a pause in the devastating wars that threatened to engulf and annihilate humanity within the Inner Sphere, but the need for war loomed over the Great Houses. The First Lord of the Star League directed that military adventurism outward, to the Periphery. The Reunification Wars launched on the premise that all of humanity unite under the Star League banner, including those in the Periphery.

The major nations of the Periphery suffered varying levels of destruction and atrocities as they resisted the invading Star League Defense Force and its auxiliary House armies. Eventually, the four primary Periphery states capitulated and accepted Star League authority. The fiercely independent peoples of the Periphery resented the distant First Lord and Star League Council on Terra. It galled them to labor not for their own improvement, but to send the products of their labor to the very power that subjugated them. This resentment increased with the Taxation Edict, which imposed punitively large taxes on the Periphery nations. Some states refused to pay the higher levies. The SLDF was dispatched to pacify the restive regions and enforce the edict.

Resistance was stamped out in typical military fashion despite counterattacks by Periphery partisans. More than a dozen worlds in the Periphery's Taurian Concordat announced their secession from the Star League, but not from the Concordat. General Aleksandr Kerensky traveled to the foremost of these worlds and ordered their militias to lay down arms. Their refusal inspired other rebellious forces. Negotiations began to break down. A misunderstanding led a Concordat militia to attack an SLDF patrol. The militia was crushed, but the battle ignited rebellion across the Periphery.

The outbreak of open hostilities forced General Kerensky to pull SLDF forces from the Inner Sphere to reinforce his troops in the Periphery—which drew most SLDF troops from the Terran Hegemony. Stefan Amaris of the Rim Worlds Republic, the one Periphery nation seemingly loyal to the Star League, stepped in. Republic troops replaced the departing SLDF.

The Star League troops in the Periphery tried to hold out long enough for their incoming comrades to relieve them, but most did not survive. Kerensky launched a punitive invasion to reconquer the Taurian Concordat, birthplace of the Periphery Uprising. He was on the verge of a costly victory when Amaris launched his coup on Terra, slaughtering the ruling Cameron family and declared himself First Lord. General Kerensky ceased his combat efforts against the Concordat and turned back to root out the Usurper now on Terra.

The long arm of Terran authority had finally been removed for good. The Periphery nations were once again free. With the exception of the Rim Worlds Republic, which was swallowed by the Lyran Commonwealth, the Periphery was spared the Succession Wars, as they wanted no part in Inner Sphere affairs. New states large and small rose and fell, while bandit kingdoms formed and sought legitimacy. The Clan Invasion destroyed several bandit kingdoms, but the major nations remained untouched.

The Periphery remains a haven, insulated from Inner Sphere politics for the most part. It is a region where independence is zealously protected and external threats are dealt with harshly. For those seeking to escape the Inner Sphere, whether as refugees from war or criminals avoiding justice, the Periphery beckons.

THE MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

The Magistracy of Canopus was founded by disaffected Free Worlds League citizens and soldiers. Incompetence from Free Worlds League Military commanders and ineffective League governance motivated them to establish a new hereditary government—a matriarchal one. This new nation was born on Canopus, with power invested in the Magestrix of House Centrella.

A few decades after the Magistracy came into being, the Reunification Wars began. The Star League's quest to bring the wayward Periphery nations under its thumb met resistance, bringing destruction and privation to the young nation. Fortunately, investment by Free Worlds League individuals bolstered the recovery effort, but the following century of peace and prosperity ended with the imposition of unacceptably high taxes. The Canopians joined the Periphery Uprising, which culminated in the Amaris Crisis and the fall of the Star League.

The Succession Wars spared the Magistracy. Centuries of relative peace allowed the people to prosper while the Inner Sphere tore itself to shreds. Then an ill-advised political alliance with the Duchy of Andurien brought the Magistracy into conflict when they tried to conquer the Capellan Confederation, forcing the Magistracy to play politics with the Free Worlds League and the Confederation. Judicious avoidance of war and similar application of diplomacy led to a mutual defense pact with the Taurian Concordat and the creation of the shared New Colony Region. That experiment ended in failure, but it led to the Trinity Alliance, which added the Capellans to the mix.

The alliance with the Confederation was strengthened when Magestrix Naomi Centrella married Chancellor Sun Tzu Liao. However, the Magistracy does not allow men to rule, and the Confederation does not allow outsiders to rule.

Thus, the Confederation and Magistracy are both currently ruled by the children of that union, and remain separate states. The two nations remain cordial, but the ties have weakened. Chancellor Daoshen Liao pursues conquest while his sister Magistrix Ilsa Centrella married the Duke of Andurien, formerly of the Free Worlds League. The Magistracy and Anduriens have engaged in raids against the reborn Free Worlds League, threatening severe conflict in the region. The Magistracy lost their previous war while allied with Andurien, but that has passed out of living memory. There is considerable risk that the fallout may be far worse than in the previous century. Matters worsened when the League discovered that the Canopians and Capellans had been supplying the Marian Hegemony. This materiel support enabled the Hegemony to attack the League. This distraction has prevented the League from invading the Duchy of Andurien, but the delay will not last forever. The Magistracy and Anduriens may face the wrath of House Marik, albeit a reborn one, with far less might than its former self.

Life in the Magistracy, however, continues much as it has since its founding. People are free to pursue happiness, provided such pursuits don't violate local laws or social mores. The ubiquitous Canopian Pleasure Circuses continue to ply the spacelanes from the Periphery into the Inner Sphere.

Since the Blackout froze the HPG network, the circuses have become even more important to the worlds they visit. They bring not only entertainment and relief from tedium, but also news of the greater universe. Intelligence collection by the covert agents embedded in the circuses has fallen since the Blackout, but these agents have begun spreading disinformation to sour relations and degrade morale wherever possible. Sometimes this amounts to little more than casual vandalism, but if allowed to bloom, it could flower into significant conflicts and rebellions. As long as such violence does not pose a threat to the Magistracy, it will continue.

Fronc Reaches

The Fronc Reaches embodies its insular, fanatically freedom-minded Taurian founders, while also possessing the devious and conspiratorial capacity of its Canopian founders. The liberation from its parent states was bloody and miserable, but freedom was worth the price. Allowing entry for the JumpShip messenger service via the Magistracy allows the Reaches to understand the ongoing Inner Sphere situation, with the expected Capellan bias.

The Colonial Marshals are one of the most elite military formations in the Periphery, though they also serve as law enforcement . Thus, the Marshals are rarely found together in any sizable force. The people of the Reaches are more likely to engage in scorched-earth warfare of their own worlds rather than see their own fall prey to external threats. Speculation that the Reaches might fall under the sway of the Magistracy or Confederation overlook the willingness of the Reaches' people to choose death over subjugation. They are canny enough to use their neighbors when possible, but they refuse to become reliant upon them.

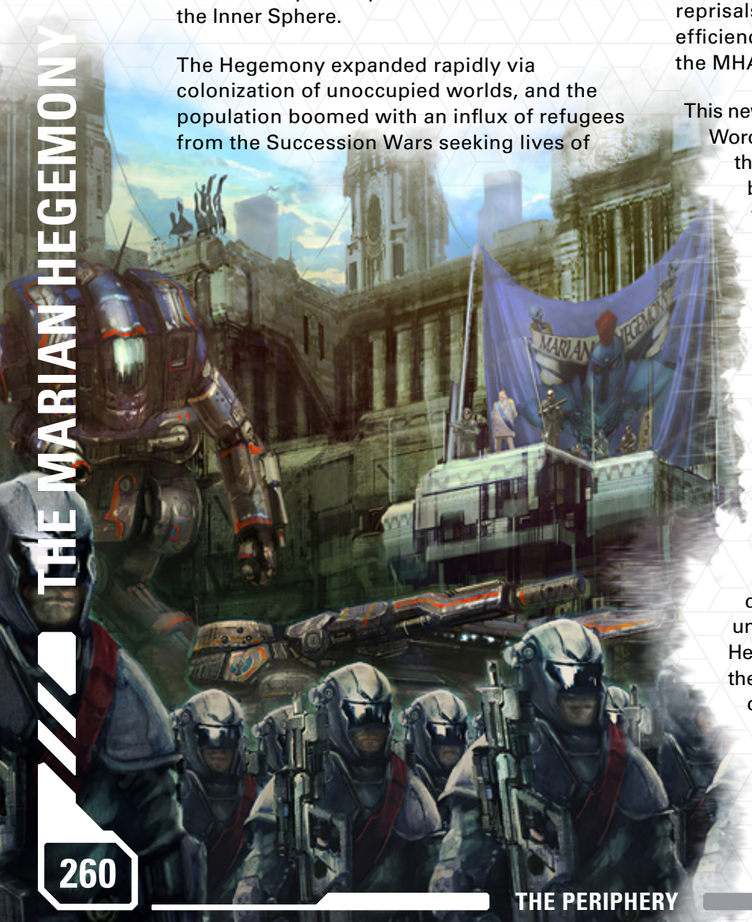
THE MARIAN HEGEMONY

The quest for *lostech* in the defunct Alphard Trading Corporation factory did not reveal the rumored Star League military treasures. Instead, the search yielded an incalculable fortune in refined germanium. This incredible windfall and the value it contained helped to spawn the nation that treasure hunter Johann O'Reilly named the Marian Hegemony.

Hegemony society is modeled after that of Ancient Rome. Three classes of citizens populate the nation. The patricians occupy the top tier of society and plebs occupy the lower tier. Below the plebs are the slaves. Above the top tier, the O'Reilly family has laid claim to the throne of the Imperator since Johann founded the nation. The title changed to "Caesar" with the ascension of Sean O'Reilly shortly before the Clan Invasion of the Inner Sphere.

The Hegemony expanded rapidly via colonization of unoccupied worlds, and the population boomed with an influx of refugees from the Succession Wars seeking lives of peace and freedom. But colonization did not meet the needs of the dictatorial new Caesar. He instituted universal conscription of males (other genders were permitted to join voluntarily) to boost the size of the military. The massive Marian Hegemony Armed Forces invaded and conquered the neighboring Lothian League. Swift and merciless military reprisals ended rebellions and lives with Marian efficiency. The nearby Illyrian Palatinate fell to the MHAF not long after.

This new Caesar elected to cooperate with the Word of Blake. The ejection of ComStar from the Hegemony's few HPG installations brought advanced military technology to the Hegemony. During the Word of Blake Jihad, the Hegemony invaded the Circinus Federation—a nearby bandit kingdom—hoping to expand the nation and eliminate the danger of recurring Circinan raids. This led to disaster, as the Circinans had also allied with the Word of Blake and obtained superior military equipment. The Hegemony initially achieved victory, but the conflict dragged on and cost them considerable troops and materiel. The Hegemony suffered at the hands of the Blakists directly, too, not just through their Circinan proxies. The Hegemony capital city Nova Roma was destroyed by neutron bombs and rendered uninhabitable for decades. Likewise, the Hegemony's attempt to seize territory from the Free Worlds League resulted in failure and drastic military casualties. The distraction of the war allowed rebellion to fester in the conquered Lothian province. The restive systems eventually seceded and maintained independence thanks to the defecting Second Legion of the MHAF.



After the Blackout that precipitated the Dark Age, Ignatius O'Reilly, the new Caesar, dared to triumph where the earlier ruler had failed. The Hegemony's invasion of the Free Worlds League brought victory, primarily by virtue of surprise. The inability to relay news of the invasion via HPG ensured that the invading Hegemony completed their conquest and moved on to other worlds before word had even reached potential reinforcements. Unfortunately for the Hegemony, the situation proceeded much the same as it did during the Jihad. Once the League managed to organize a military response, the Hegemony troops were driven back. They maintained a hold on some of their gains, but a tenuous one in the face of mounting League determination to expel them.

The Hegemony of today is little changed from its founding. People live in the guise of an archaic and dead civilization. Slavery remains a critical component of the Hegemony's continued functioning. Freedom is curtailed in favor of security, while conscriptions remove men from their homes and families for years, or perhaps forever. Upward mobility is all but unknown in the Hegemony, though plebs who distinguish themselves in the MHAF stand the best chance of advancing socially as well as militarily.

Timbuktu Collective

The Rim Collection consisted of several former Rim Worlds Republic systems whose people survived at subsistence levels for generations. After centuries of bandit raids, the worlds on the Lyran Commonwealth's Periphery border finally unified into a single nation thanks to Able's Aces mercenary command. The mercs offered their services for free until the government could afford its own defense. This made the Aces the nation's de facto military for years. Colonel Able's insistence that the Word of Blake be kept at arm's length spared the Collection the misery of the Jihad.

Three quarters of a century later, the Aces remain a powerful element in political and military matters. Destabilization in the Lyran Commonwealth led to the merger of five Lyran worlds with the Rim Collection. The new nation was named the Timbuktu Collective, after the most prominent Lyran world of the new territory. Prospects for the nation appear to be trending upward, as the addition of major worlds has improved the nation's public image dramatically.

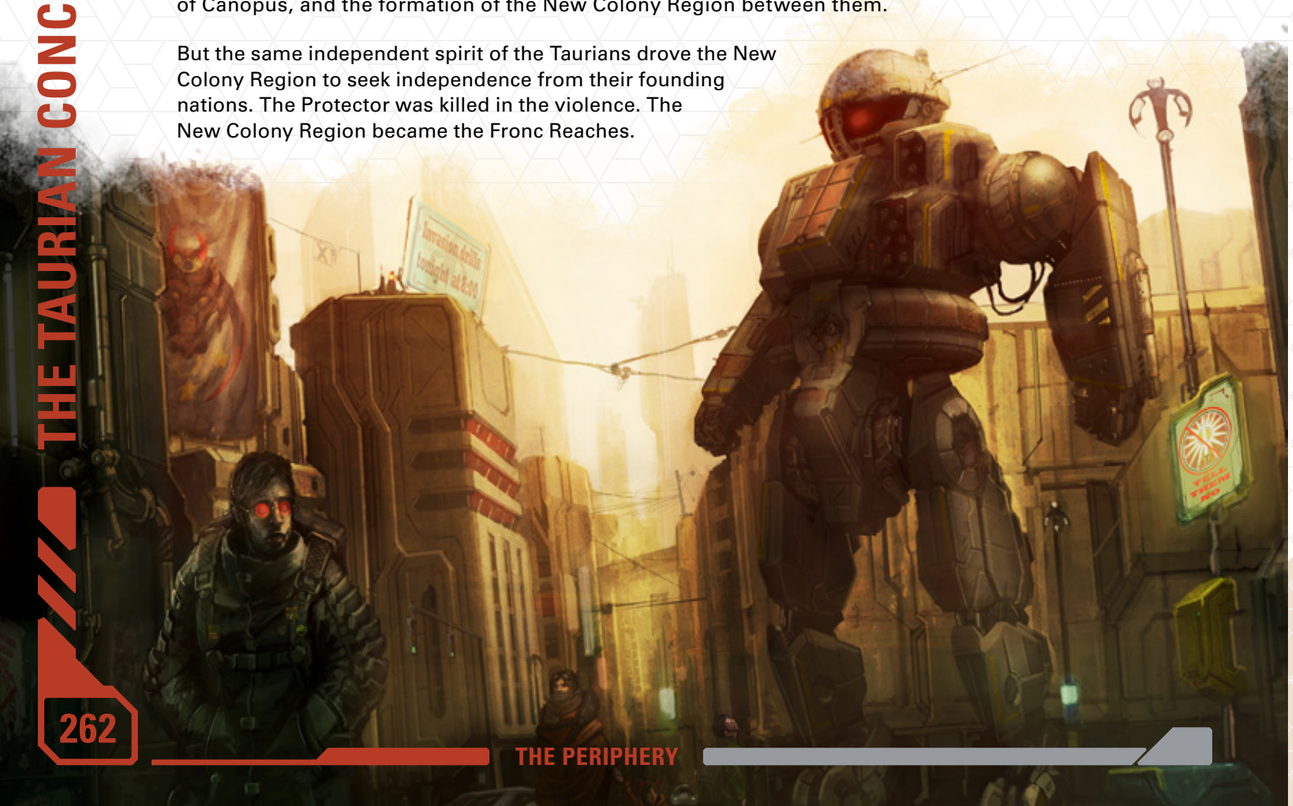
THE TAURIAN CONCORDAT & CALDERON PROTECTORATE

The Taurian Concordat came into being as a constitutional monarchy under Richard Calderon. Worlds within the Concordat were free to maintain internal affairs as they saw fit, provided they supported the common defense of the nation as a whole. Richard's ancestor Samantha Calderon led the first colonists to the world of Taurus to escape the chaos of the collapsing Terran Alliance. The peoples established colonies and developed a robust, independent civilization far from the Inner Sphere and its toxic political morass.

Early run-ins with the Federated Suns fostered paranoia within the Concordat and sparked hostility toward the Suns for centuries. The formation of the Star League led to entreaties to join the nation, but the independent-minded Taurians refused. The subsequent Reunification War lasted for decades and devastated the Concordat. Military occupation followed, and the inevitable rebellion against the same Inner Sphere politicians the Taurians' ancestors once fled. Even greater destruction followed before the League's internal strife ended the conflict.

The fall of the Star League and the resulting Succession Wars allowed the Concordat to recover, but scars of the conflict remained. The Taurian people developed greater hatred and resentment toward the Inner Sphere nations. Pervasive paranoia infected the populace, from the lowliest laborer to the Protector of the Realm. This led to an alliance with the neighboring Periphery nation, the Magistracy of Canopus, and the formation of the New Colony Region between them.

But the same independent spirit of the Taurians drove the New Colony Region to seek independence from their founding nations. The Protector was killed in the violence. The New Colony Region became the Fronc Reaches.



Grover Shraplen, the first non-Calderon Protector of the Realm, assumed the office in the Taurian Concordat. His administration altered Taurian politics for decades. Continued (and mostly unfounded) paranoia toward the Federated Suns led to the Trinity Alliance with the Canopians and Capellans. He ordered an invasion of the Federated Suns that, instead of bringingtriumph, brought the Concordat to its knees.

Just prior to the Word of Blake Jihad, the Concordat engaged in military aggression against the Federated Suns. Those who felt the nation had succumbed to violence and paranoia seceded and formed the Calderon Protectorate. This breakaway state rose in prestige and negotiated an end to the conflict between the Concordat and Federated Suns. Dedication to peace and denouncing military aggression led to legitimacy as foreign powers recognized the sovereignty of the Calderon Protectorate. Trade flourished and diplomatic relations followed. The Protectorate colonized new worlds and preserved the founding principles of the Taurian Concordat.

The Concordat continued its decline after the Jihad. Worlds declared independence from the growing tyranny of a succession of non-Calderon Protectors. A coup deposed Protector James Urratia after he threatened to use weapons of mass destruction against a world for seceding.

Kaff Doru, the next Protector, swept away the darkness of his predecessors. He sought rapprochement with the nation's former worlds, and opened formal diplomatic ties with the Calderon Protectorate. Delicate negotiations led to a unification plan: once the heirs of both nations are of age, they will marry, and the two states shall become one Taurian Concordat again. However, the years remaining could shatter the brokered peace. Independent worlds may seek to sabotage that peace for fear of being conquered by the union. Opposition groups in both states could attempt coups. The distance separating the two nations presents logistical and military problems. Only by restoring the nation to a single contiguous body can it succeed. If diplomacy fails to lure former Taurian Concordat worlds into the reborn nation, what course will the new Protector take?

Filtvelt Coalition

The Filtvelt Coalition seceded from the Federated Suns during the Jihad. It was the only way to secure their people and territory from the aggressive piracy plaguing the region. The Filtvelters remain close with their former compatriots. The Coalition's minor military forces have aided the Federated Suns in their struggles against the Draconis Combine and Capellan Confederation. This move left the Coalition vulnerable to the same piracy that drove its formation, for the same reason: diverting military force to the Suns rather than the worlds of the Coalition. Unrest is growing among Coalition citizens, and an uprising or coup may result if the concerns and needs of its own citizenry are placed second to those of the Federated Suns.

MINOR STATES

THE BARRENS

The coreward systems of the Rim Worlds Republic suffered a long, slow descent into barbarism and piracy during the Succession Wars. Pirates found the undefended region such easy pickings that they established bandit kingdoms. By the later years of the Third Succession War, the pirate groups the Oberon Confederation and Morgraine's Valkyrate controlled multiple systems. Others, such as the Barony of Strang and Helmar Valasek's Santander V, were single-system kingdoms.

The Clans drove through these systems with little effort. The defeat at Tukayyid prevented further conquest by the Clans, so they consolidated their holdings, including the worlds in the coreward Periphery. For the first time in centuries, actual governments held sway there and the rule of law took hold once more.

The Clans' ousting from the Homeworlds as a result Wars of Reaving also ended any need for the Clans to maintain safe routes through the Deep Periphery. Thus, the Clans withdrew their forces and steadying hands from the region. The worlds once more collapsed, and the region came to be known as the Barrens.

New and old factions rose in the Barrens. The Republic of the Barrens coalesced around several worlds that clung to the Clan caste system. Unlike the Clans, however, Republic castes were considered equal to one another. Clan Hell's Horses came to view the Republic of the Barrens as a buffer state and sent forces to aid the faltering Barrens against the new Oberon Confederation.

The new Oberon Confederation came about thanks to one man's shrewdness. Benjamin Wright rose to prominence under Clan rule and leveraged that authority to seize control when the Horses departed, founding the new Confederation. The original Confederation had been the most advanced of the region's bandit states, and mature manufacturing capabilities brought trade and wealth. The new Confederation is on a similar trajectory. Governor-General Wright used the monetary influx to fund a militia and equip it with modern BattleMechs. The militia employs a blend of Clan tactics and old-fashioned pirate underhandedness. These tactics served the Oberon Confederation's troops well when Clan Hell's Horses sought to counter their invasion of the Republic of the Barrens. Confederation militia escaped the Clanners and even inflicted serious damage before retreating.

Star's End, also known as Novo Cressidas, was the home of the New Belt Pirates. The system hosted a JumpShip yard, which the Clans stripped after their decades-long effort to eradicate the pirate taint. Once the Clans withdrew, the system became a hub for refugees and renegades. These disparate groups banded together and formed a weak Council of Representatives. Star's End hosts numerous infantry militias as well as the largest JumpShip fleet in the Barrens. Star's End hosts notable germanium deposits, which began attracting pirates again in the thirty-second century.

The Ragnarök Union is composed of three prosperous worlds close to the Inner Sphere. The three worlds held ties reaching back to Morgraine's Valkyrate, and they banded together for mutual defense after the Clan withdrawal. The Union existed in the shadow of Clan Jade Falcon for decades. The elimination of that constant threat no longer prevents their military growth.

Von Strang's World was the holding of the Barony of Strang. When the Clans withdrew, the remaining populace Trialed to create a new warrior caste. These new rulers hold strong to Clan social structure, with the warriors ruling over the world. Only a scarcity of JumpShips and DropShips has contained the brutal warrior groups of this world from exerting their will on less-defended worlds.

The Ferris Collective is a small realm of four systems. The revolt on Ferris was partly the reason Clan Hell's Horses withdrew from the region. The Collective fears conquest and launches preemptive strikes against the Republic of the Barrens in hopes of dissuading adventurism.

THE DEEP PERIPHERY

Beyond the Periphery lies the Deep Periphery. The vastness of space offers countless places to hide from authority or lurk until unsuspecting prey strays into reach. Humanity's own reach extends into the Deep Periphery, but the realms that coalesced there hold little in common with those of the Inner Sphere or even the Periphery nations.

Even in its heyday, HPG communication could reach no further than the Periphery nations. Only a few islands of communication have ever been established in the HPG desert beyond the Periphery. These include the distant Clan Homeworlds, which went silent following the Wars of Reaving. In contrast, the Scorpion Empire, unsurprising given their Clan origins, boasts a robust HPG network that suffered none of the effects of the Blackout. The Empire dominates the region militarily and culturally. Little occurs in their region of space that is not in their control or without their knowledge. Piracy is becoming all but unknown within a dozen jumps of the Empire's borders.

In the spinward area of the Periphery resides the JàrnFòlk. The "iron people" descend from early Rasalhagian refugees fleeing Draconis Combine oppression. The JàrnFòlk occupy a four-world realm from which trading fleets ply space to great distances. After the Clan withdrawal from the coreward Periphery, the JàrnFòlk visited the Barrens for trade. They long possessed advanced manufacturing capabilities, though limited in scale. These largely peaceful people avoid hostilities, but they are quite capable of defending themselves. Elaborate sidearms are essential accessories for JàrnFòlk traders. Decades of trade with more advanced nations have given the JàrnFòlk considerable knowledge. DropShips of unknown class ferry their traders to various worlds. These vessels bear visual cues similar to military DropShips, though none have been seen to deploy BattleMechs.

Rimward, beyond the Fronc Reaches and Magistracy of Canopus, lie the Canopian Ruins. These failed or abandoned worlds once formed part of the Magistracy. Some still host tenacious populations, but most are depopulated targets for treasure hunters and archaeologists. The Alexandrian Collective formed from refugees of the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy. Early progress toward maintaining civilization faltered through numerous periods of civil war, oscillating between matriarchal and patriarchal tyrannies. The Collective's colonies collapsed when the capital Pharos lost knowledge of interstellar travel. The Collective was last known as a Matriarchal dictatorship on the verge of another gender-based coup that could plunge the world further into barbarism.

The anti-spinward Deep Periphery hosts several mature, stable societies. One such realm is the Axumite Providence. This nation comprises a dozen worlds beyond the Aquila Rift. Its people arrived there before the Star League was born. The relatively primitive society possesses limited industry and even more limited interstellar travel capability. They are essentially marooned in their island of civilization, only recently reinventing automated manufacturing.

The Union of Samoyedic Colonies occupies two planets in a system on the edge of the Aquila Rift. These hardy people are nomadic, uprooting their settlements every generation or so to relocate to a new site. They originally traveled from system to system, but intentionally marooned themselves over a century ago.

The Society of St. Andreas is confined to a single system. The people descend from the Swiss Guards of Vatican City. They continue to safeguard the lost treasures of the Vatican, smuggled off Terra to protect them from the depredations of Amaris the Usurper.

Look at the bright side, kid–you get to keep all the money.

—Unnamed DropShip captain to the sole survivor of Team Venom, 3044

THE MERCENARIES

WOLF'S DRAGOONS

Wolf's Dragoons is the most storied mercenary command in history. The tales and the mystery surrounding their earliest days in the Inner Sphere drove everyone from tabloid reporters to House Lords to investigate their secrets, but the Dragoons closely guarded their origins. They came onto the scene late in the Third Succession War. The Dragoons worked for every House in turn, never fighting against their previous employer.

They were under contract to the Draconis Combine prior to the start of the Fourth Succession War. A perfect storm of scheming and betrayal drove them from the Combine, and they declared war on the Dragon. They occupied the DCMS almost single-handedly while Federated Suns forces gobbled up world after world from the Capellan Confederation. First Prince Hanse Davion rewarded the Dragoons handsomely after the war. He ceded the Dragoons the world of Outreach, giving them their first permanent home in the Inner Sphere.

During the Clan Invasion, the Dragoons revealed their true origins: they were sent by the Clans to the Inner Sphere to gather intelligence prior to the invasion. After forty years in the Inner Sphere, the Dragoons chose to help the Inner Sphere defend against a culture they no longer felt connected to. They provided training in Clan tactics and offered technology upgrades to level the playing field against their former *trothkin*. They even assisted their hated Combine enemies when the capital of Luthien was invaded by Clans Nova Cat and Smoke Jaguar. They were instrumental during Operation Bulldog as the Inner Sphere drove the Smoke Jaguars from their Occupation Zone. The Dragoons even increased professionalism within the mercenary trade by creating the Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission (replacing ComStar's Mercenary Review Board after their disastrous Operation Scorpion) and opening hiring halls on Outreach.

Then came the Word of Blake Jihad. The Dragoons attempted to fight back, but between the killing of Jaime Wolf by Wayne Waco, Blakist nuclear and orbital attacks on Outreach, and the destruction of most of the command on Mars, they were down—but not out.

The Dragoons slowly built themselves back over decades. They foreswore old grudges and served the Combine, spearheaded the invasion of the Federated Suns, and propelled the Combine to the verge of ultimate victory—but then the unthinkable happened. The Dragoons broke their contract. They traveled to Terra and assisted Clan Wolf against the Jade Falcons. They fought the Falcons to a standstill, and then were told to stand down. The Dragoons believed they were being welcomed back to the fold of Clan Wolf after their long separation.

They were wrong. They watched Clan Wolf warriors strike the killing blow against the Falcons. This incensed the Dragoons. The new ilKhan, Alaric Ward, offered them salvage from the battlefields of Terra and thirty pieces of silver for their services. Then he ordered them to depart.

The Dragoons are broken, humiliated, and enraged. They vow to take the fight to Alaric and his ilClan. After turning their backs on the Combine and being dismissed by the ilKhan, the Dragoons are eager to prove that they are still a force to be reckoned with.

ERIDANI LIGHT HORSE

For generations, the Eridani Light Horse was the gold standard of a mercenary company that all others were compared against. One look at the fabled unit conjured the fallen Star League. They upheld Star League values long after the destruction of that legendary body—values that included honor, integrity, and protecting those who could not protect themselves. That was the Light Horse way. Every recruit attended an extensive sixteen-week course to instill the history and core values of the command. They came to embody service, excellence, loyalty, duty, and of course, honor and integrity. These six values sustained the Light Horse regiments for over four hundred years.

The Eridani Light Horse history began with the Third Regimental Combat Team of the Star League Defense Force (SLDF). When General Kerensky departed the Inner Sphere with the bulk of the SLDF, Light Horse chose to remain behind and protect the remnants of the Star League. As the Inner Sphere descended into the chaos of the First Succession War, House Kurita attempted to coerce the Light Horse into becoming part of the DCMS by holding its dependents hostage. The captives were executed when Light Horse refused. After they had their vengeance, the Eridani Light Horse went to work as mercenaries.

Throughout the Succession Wars, the Eridani Light Horse were the standard every employer expected mercenaries to meet: soldiers with integrity and excellence etched into their bones. The return of Kerensky's children shattered the dreams of the Light Horse. For three centuries, the Light Horse lived for the SLDF's return to the Inner Sphere, in hopes they might restore that fragmented past. They never imagined that the SLDF's descendants would return as conquerors.

After coming to terms with the reality of the Clans, the mercenaries went back to work. When the Inner Sphere leaders formed the Second Star League to combat the Clan threat, the Light Horse became the first members of the restored Star League Defense Force. The command's regiments were tasked with different missions. Some participated in peacekeeping operations in the St. Ives Compact. One regiment travelled to the Clan Homeworlds with Task Force Serpent. The success of Serpent ended the Clan threat. One regiment remained on Strana Mechty as representatives of the Star League.

As the Jihad unfolded in the Inner Sphere, the Light Horse attempted to stem the Word of Blake's rampage, but they were no match for the zealots. The Eridani Light Horse was effectively destroyed in the Inner Sphere during the Jihad; its remnants no longer amounted to a viable fighting force. As communications between the Clan Homeworlds and the Inner Sphere broke down amidst the growing storm of war, the regiment stationed on Strana Mechty was challenged and absorbed by Clan Goliath Scorpion.

When the dust of the Jihad settled, the Eridani Light Horse still existed, but as a shadow of its former glory. Disparate offshoots continued to serve as mercenaries into the thirty-second century. One such successor group was abandoned on Hesperus II when Clan Jade Falcon attacked. The group apparently met its end in rending Falcon talons. Another Eridani Light Horse command was recently contracted by the Federated Suns as part of the counteroffensive against the Draconis Combine.

KELL HOUNDS

The Kell Hounds were formed from a childhood dream of two brothers, Morgan and Patrick Kell. Those two brothers built more of a fighting family than a mercenary command. Every member of the command looked out for each other as the Kell brothers did growing up.

The Kell Hounds served the Lyran Commonwealth and Federated Suns during the Third and Fourth Succession Wars. Morgan Kell fought a legendary battle with Yorinaga Kurita and the Second Sword of Light regiment on Mallory's World. The traumatic experience drove him to a monastery, and most of the command left with him. Patrick Kell and the remaining Hounds began doubting their own abilities. Yorinaga returned and killed Patrick during the Silver Eagle incident. This brought Morgan out of seclusion to finish what he had started with Yorinaga. He issued a call to former comrades and reconstituted the Kell Hounds. The command's two regiments spent the next thirty years serving the Federated Commonwealth.

The Hounds were among the first mercenary commands to encounter the Clans during the invasion of the Inner Sphere. They were also one of the few mercenary units that handed defeats to the Clans during the invasion. On Twycross, the Hounds and allied FedCom troops defeated the Jade Falcons. Alongside Wolf's Dragoons and elite regiments of the Draconis Combine, the Hounds defended Luthien against the Smoke Jaguars and Nova Cats. Once the Truce of Tukayyid went into effect, the Hounds trained relentlessly on their homeworld of Arc-Royal. After the FedCom breakup, Morgan created the Arc-Royal Defense Cordon between the Lyran Alliance and the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone, which led to numerous defensive actions and offensive raiding.

The Kell Hounds maintained two regiments of BattleMechs and support elements until the Word of Blake Jihad. Brutal combat on Tharkad, Donegal, and Arc-Royal, followed by the invasion of Terra, cost the Hounds dearly. After the Blakists were finally defeated, the Kell Hounds amounted to a single combined-arms battalion. It took two decades for the Hounds to field a full regiment again. The relative peace of the Republic Era ended abruptly with the Blackout, culminating with Clans Jade Falcon and Wolf launching massive operations. The Hounds spent several years tangling with the Falcons, creating a rivalry so fierce that Khan Malvina Hazen resorted to orbital bombardment of the Hounds in several battles. The Falcons invaded Arc-Royal, defeating the Hounds and claiming their homeworld. The few surviving Kell Hounds fled.

They retreated to a secret base to reconstitute themselves, sending coded messages to retired veterans and other mercenaries to join them. Colonel Callandre "Calamity" Kell reunited and reformed the Hounds, and currently leads them. In the years following the Hounds' near-eradication, the unit harbored a burning hatred toward the Clans for the loss of their families, comrades, and homes. Kell led the Hounds in merciless attacks against Clan worlds, often wreaking destruction rather than pursuing any specific objective.

With the Falcons all but erased on Terra, Kell let her Hounds off the leash. The unit stormed Arc-Royal, reclaiming it from its Falcon *solahma* garrison. Rather than return the valuable world to full Commonwealth control, Callandre—now Grand Duchess of Arc-Royal—rebuffed overtures from Archon Trillian Steiner and instead declared her home and its surrounding worlds as the Arc-Royal Liberty Coalition, dedicated to accomplishing what the Archon could not: a campaign of liberation of former Falcon worlds, with her Kell Hounds leading the pack.

GRAY DEATH LEGION

The Gray Death Legion evokes images of persistence, grit, and determination, regardless of opposition. They demanded and received excellence from all its members, who uphold the Ares Conventions as if those conventions were more law than philosophical ideals long abandoned by all save military historians. Since its inception, the Legion pioneered small unit tactics and combined arms, and was known for unorthodox tactics. They often defeated superior foes by pulling victory from the jaws of certain defeat through sheer willpower and clever use of resources at hand.

Grayson Death Carlyle, the Legion's founder, was a strict disciplinarian who held every member of his command to the highest standards, regardless of rank or connections. He often said the universe is living "at the raw, ragged edge of the dark," as advanced technology in warfare caused more harm than good. He and his warriors conducted themselves on and off the battlefield with honor and respect for all.

Grayson founded the Legion late in the Third Succession War, after the destruction of Carlyle's Commandos, his father's mercenary unit. Grayson defeated his father's killer and forged a name that became known throughout the Inner Sphere. His fledgling command cut its teeth on Verthandi against a superior Kurita force, employing guerrilla tactics to claim its first victory.

A few years later, the Legion was branded as outlaws in a nefarious plot by rogue elements of their Free Worlds League employers. That plot failed and led to the discovery and dissemination of the Helm Memory Core. This ushered in a technological renaissance across the Inner Sphere. The Gray Death Legion fought hard for the Lyran Commonwealth in the Fourth Succession War and again in the War of 3039. They were the *first* Inner Sphere unit to claim victory over the invading Clans, defeating the Jade Falcons on Pandora even after suffering a severe defeat to the Falcons on Sudeten. The Gray Death Legion's victory on Pandora owed much to their defeat on Sudeten, as the Legion's elite technical corps modified captured Elemental battlesuits and hastily put them into use for the rematch.

The storied command continued to make headlines after the Clan Invasion. They become embroiled in politics after Grayson was named Baron of Glengarry. The breakup of the Federated Commonwealth drove the Legion into battle after battle as Grayson attempted to serve the Steiner throne.

Grayson died of cancer during the FedCom Civil War. His wife, Lori Kalmar-Carlyle, inherited command. Within months, the Legion was destroyed by the Skye Rangers on Hesperus II, a casualty of the civil war. This was vengeance on the part of the Skye Rangers for the Gray Death Legion's foiling their separatist efforts. The survivors and equipment were folded into the Defiance Self Protection Force, since the highest-ranking Gray Death Legion survivor on planet was Daniel Brewer, and Brewer was the chief executive of Defiance Industries on Hesperus II. But the DSPF was destroyed during the Jihad, and the Inner Sphere believed it had seen the last of the Gray Death Legion.

Alexander Carlyle, son of Grayson and Lori, was part of the Lyran Alliance Armed Forces stationed on Tharkad during its bombardment and subsequent siege by the Word of Blake. He survived that horrific campaign and the Blakist Jihad. His grandchildren, siblings Ronan and Isobel Carlyle, resurrected the fabled Gray Death Legion more than eight decades after its destruction on Hesperus, using salvaged equipment and former members of the LCAF. They did so in response to recent events in the Tamar region of the Lyran Commonwealth.

It remains to be seen whether these new Legionnaires can match the feats of Grayson Carlyle's Legion.

NORTHWIND HIGHLANDERS

Many Inner Sphere combat commands trace their histories back hundreds of years, some as much as half a millennium to the days of the Star League itself. Such units view these deep roots as badges of honor to be celebrated. Yet none match the sheer history of the Northwind Highlanders, whose legacy stretches back in a nearly unbroken line for fourteen centuries. Five Scottish regiments raised by the Crown in the latter half of the eighteenth century formed the precursors of the current Highlanders, one of the Inner Sphere's premier mercenary commands.

Over the next five hundred years, as Terra experienced ever-advancing technologies and times of both tranquil peace and horrific wars, those original Scottish regiments were amalgamated. As the Western Alliance rose, and in turn the Terran Alliance, national heritages were replaced by "world pride." By the time of the first interstellar war, when Denebola declared independence from Terra in 2236, the once-vaunted Highlanders were little more than a token parade regiment.

Having lost the war, the Terran Alliance turned isolationist, and hundreds of millions fled the cradle of humanity. Among them were Clan Staurt, who settled on a new world which harkened back to their beloved highlands: Northwind. Among those settlers were the descendants of those original Scottish regiments, who proudly raised the flag as new Highlander regiments in the twenty-fourth century.

The Highlanders made a name for themselves as a combat command of the highest caliber throughout the Age of War. During the Star League, Ian Cameron formed the Royal Black Watch drawing the best of the best from among the Highlanders to form his personal guard and creating a near-constant exchange of personnel and expertise with the Northwind regiments.

After the fall of the Star League, the Highlanders mercenary regiments began to grow apart from the Northwind clan elders, eventually accepting sustained employment with the Capellan Confederation. The capture of Northwind and destruction of two entire Highlander regiments by House Davion in 2841 was a grievous blow to the unit. While the Federated Suns maintained possession of the world for much of the next two hundred years, the regiments' hearts and minds remained with Northwind: the avatar of the Scottish Highlands, whose bagpipes wailing along lonely cliffs and windswept fields uniquely calls them home.

As the Fourth Succession War raged, the Highlander leaders finally gave up on House Liao's empty promises to regain their homeworld. They transitioned their loyalty to House Davion, and in return, First Prince Hanse Davion returned them to their home. The Clan Invasion, Civil War and Jihad years saw little action from the Highlanders, as they first guarded the Terran corridor of the Federated Commonwealth, and then were isolated on Northwind by the Word of Blake.

When Stone forged the Republic of Sphere, he perfectly understood the Highlanders' connection to their world, and offered them the chance to become line regiments of his nascent realm–in effect, buying the Highlanders' permanent protection of their beloved land. After the collapse of the HPG network, a host of factions foreign and domestic tore the Republic apart, but the Highlanders' stalwart defense helped the Republic stave off defeat for decades.

In the end, the Republic and Terra fell, the Highlander regiments were decimated, and Northwind itself came under attack by both the Capellan Confederation and the Draconis Combine. Yet, Northwind remains free and the Highlanders' pride is undiminished. The First Kearny Highlanders are again a mercenary command of the highest caliber, waiting for the right bid–one that must always take into account their heart's call to safeguard their world.

21ST CENTAURI LANCERS

The Twenty-First Centauri Lancers are one of the oldest surviving mercenary commands still in existence. Their traditions and values stretch back centuries. Ancient ideals and shared heritage instill a sense of responsibility in all Lancers to those who came before and those yet to come. Lancers demand honesty and loyalty in all interactions, especially from their employers, and they hold themselves to the same high standard. Discipline is strict. Each new recruit is required to attend a twelve-week training regimen with the dedicated Lancer instructor cadre before they are assigned to an individual unit, regardless of role or experience outside the Lancers. This training instills Lancer traditions and values within the recruits, and molds them in the Lancer ways.

After that training, they remain in a probationary status. They can be dismissed from the command for the smallest infraction, though remedial training is offered to avoid this consequence. Once off probation, every Lancer is reviewed and mentored frequently, from senior officers down to the lowest-ranked individual, to ensure all uphold the Lancer ideals and to address issues before they escalate.

The Lancers began as the St. Ives Armored Cavalry of the Capellan Confederation. They deserted over unpaid wages and sought the mercenary life instead. The Lancers have served every Successor State except for the Confederation. They hold on to that ancestral grudge as part of their shared heritage. To abandon it would, in their eyes, repudiate their other traditions.

In the Third Succession War, the Lancers secretly took possession of a Star League cache. The *lostech* they acquired gave them an edge in battle that few could match. They had long been in the employ of the Free Worlds League when they shocked the mercenary community by taking a contract with ComStar. Their sterling reputation suffered a massive blow when they apparently turned on their new employer and assisted the Word of Blake in seizing Terra. In reality, the Word of Blake had seized the Lancers' dependents, holding them hostage—and thus the Lancers, too. The Blakists disguised themselves as the Lancers and seized Terra from ComStar. The demoralized Lancers remained in ComStar employ, as their damaged reputation made them unemployable to other powers. The Lancers were assigned to ComStar's new headquarters on Tukayyid, where they spent several years playing the opposition force in training operations.

During the Jihad, the Word of Blake again targeted the Lancers. Blakist WarShips launched orbital attacks that shattered the command. The Lancers rebuilt over the years, recruiting from the surviving on-world military personnel. They eventually fielded a reinforced battalion and were hired as corporate security by Tanadi Computers on Hachiman. There, they protected Tanadi from the Blakists' death throes. Hired away from Tanadi by House Steiner, the Lancers took up residence on Towne. There, they fought several battles to defend the HPG during the early days of the Blackout. Colonel April Searcy took command in 3144. The Lancers' contract with the Lyrans will soon expire, and after almost several decades in the Commonwealth, Searcy is entertaining lucrative contract offers from all quarters.

Lancers remain highly disciplined and stolid soldiers. Degrading conditions in Lyran space have them all on edge, especially since most personnel are Lyran citizens since birth. Deteriorating borders and political upheaval contribute to low morale. Sentiment among the ranks indicates vocal support for contracts with any nations save the Confederation and the Commonwealth.

HANSEN'S ROUGHRIDERS

Hansen's Roughriders have long been the quiet professionals of the mercenary business. The Roughriders don't seek out the spotlight like some long-lived commands. Their philosophy remains the same as when the command was founded: do the job as best you can, and enjoy the life the job provides. As such, Roughriders often burn the candle at both ends when not under combat code. Commanding officers embrace the Roughrider lifestyle, allowing members of the command the leeway to blow off steam as long as they are combat-ready when the call sounds. Earning the right to wear the Roughrider-green combat jacket takes persistence, cunning, and grit, on and off the battlefield, from the time a warrior is recruited. Every new recruit is inundated with the motto of the Roughriders like it's etched on their soul. From grand regimental battles to barroom brawls, every member lives or dies by the Roughrider creed: "Shoot fast, hit first; die last, at worst."

The Roughriders' fortunes have waxed and waned in the 150 years since they fled the Federated Suns for the Free Worlds League and went full mercenary. Prior to the Fourth Succession War, they worked primarily for the Lyran Commonwealth, and then with the newly formed Federated Commonwealth. The Roughriders benefited from Lyran employment for many years and sided with the Lyran Alliance during the FedCom Civil War.

They continue to observe Romeo Bravo Day, commemorating the Bromhead Massacre, in which the unit's dependents were massacred by Taurian Concordat troops. Vengeful rage drove the Roughriders to prosecute a private war with the Periphery state throughout the Word of Blake Jihad. Bathing Taurian worlds in nuclear fire did little to quench the Roughriders' hatred. The feud ended when the Roughriders were assigned to the invasion of Terra in the last battle of the Jihad. The command was nearly destroyed in the devastating war for humanity's homeworld. Post-Jihad, the Roughriders clawed their way back from the brink of annihilation to a prominent role in the mercenary trade once more.

After Gray Monday, the Roughriders stayed on Galatea. They defended the world against the Jade Falcons and the Wolf Empire alongside the Galatea Defense Force. The take-no-prisoners Jihad-era feud with the Taurians inspires and sets the standard for the command's current roster of warriors. This manifested in the demand for vengeance against Clan Jade Falcon after the heavy fighting on Galatea. The Roughriders' anti-Clan reputation brought them to the Republic to assist training the RAF on Terra. They became unwilling participants in the Clans' battle for Terra against Clans Wolf and Jade Falcons when an obscure clause was invoked in their contract. They suffered heavy losses and only managed to escape Terra with aid from Gray Gunny Lancers and Wolf's Dragoons. How they broke free from the Terran system, is unknown. The Roughriders departed with more than a battalion of troops, but much less equipment. The Dragoons shared salvage from Terra, which allowed the Roughriders to slowly rebuild with modern Clan equipment.

NOTABLE MERCENARIES

Avanti's Angels

Richard's Panzer Brigade

Lindon's Company

Screaming Eagles

Waco Rangers

Fox Patrol

Marshigama's Legionnaires

Black Thorns

15th Dracon

12th Star Guard

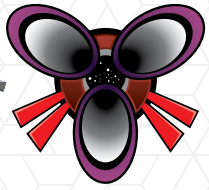
Grave Walkers

Camacho's Caballeros

Narhal's Raiders

Langendorf's Lancers

Miller's Marauders

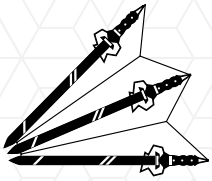

Smithson's Chinese Bandits

Brion's Legion

Lexington Combat Group

Fuchida's Fusiliers

Lone Wolves


Knights of Saint Cameron

Snord's Irregulars

Thermo Police

12th Vegan Rangers

McCarron's Armored Cavalry

Black Widow Company

Crescent Hawks

Filthy Lucre

Bounty Hunters

Hsien Hotheads

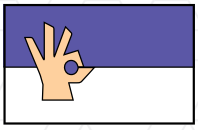
Blue Star Irregulars

4th Tau Ceti Rangers

Dismal Disinherited

Bad Dream

Gideon's Destroyers


Wilson's Hussars

Illician Lancers

Barret's Fusiliers

McGee's Cutthroats

The Dioscuri

Dark Wing Mercenary Cartel

Clifton's Rangers

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SUCCESSION WARS ERA | CIVIL WAR ERA | DARK AGE ERA | CLAN HOMEWORLDS

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