

## ALTERNATE HISTORIES FOR THE IMPERIUM

The rebellion raging through the Imperium as a result of the assassination of emperor Strephon in 1116 has got to end sooner or later, in one way or another. A game master running a long term MegaTraveller campaign during this time period must decide how and when the rebellion is going to end. The need for this becomes obvious if your player characters are nobles or in one of the Imperium's military services. But even if your players are playing civilian characters, you will still need to determine the outcome sooner or later.

For the sake of illustration, let's say your player characters are independent merchants owning their own free trader. The first thing your characters will want to know is where the heaviest fighting is taking place, either to avoid those areas or to smuggle supplies to one faction or another. Also, while on the ground your player characters will want to know how stable the planetary government is. A stable government on a planet far from the fighting is more likely to control crime than one that's constantly being overthrown by the latest faction that happens to take control of the planet. This will also help them to determine what weapons, if any, they'll pack when they decide to go out on the town.

The political situation becomes even more important if your player characters have expressed political views. Your players are going to want to know how popular this or that faction happens to be on the planet they happen to be on. Expressing the wrong political viewpoints could get a character arrested, or worse. Also, characters are more likely to be attracted to certain factions due to their planet of origin. The list could go on and on. Need I say more?

Now that I've established the need to determine how the rebellion will end, the game master will need to consider ways to do so in a historically logical manner. Every possible ending for the rebellion will fall into one two categories; either the Imperium will be reunified under one ruler, or it will be split into any number of factions. Listed below are a number of historically plausible ending for the rebellion.

The first type of ending is reunification of the Imperium. I consider certain factions to be incapable of reunifying the Imperium and those are therefore omitted. Logically, it is not likely that Archduke Bzrk of Antares will reunify the Imperium (He is a Vargyr, not a human) or that Archduke Norris of Deneb will do so. (He is not a member of the Imperial family) Listed below are several likely reunification scenarios.

- 1) Reunification under Lucan: Lucan cuts a deal with the Daibei faction and the Daibei faction and the real Strephon, to crush Dulinor. Meanwhile, Deneb invades the Vland Sctor. Lucan's forces then help Deneb carve up Vland. After that, Lucan grants Deneb independence, and makes a peace treaty with the Solomanis, freeing his forces to know out Margaret and Bzrk. But the treaty with the Solmanis forces Lucan to cede most of the Sol Sector to the Solomanis.
- 2) Reunification under Dulinor: Dulinor forms an alliance with most of the other factions, ganging up on Lucan, capturing the capital world, and killing Lucan in the process. With his most powerful rival out of the way, Dulinor promptly turns on the other factions. The real Strephon, Daibei, and Vland are quickly defeated. Bzrk seeks protection from the Julian Protectorate, and is promptly annexed. (Like he was in 1118) Dulinor then ignores Deneb, to concentrate on crushing Margaret. This leaves the Solomanis free to push deep into the

Disapora Sector. After crushing Margaret, Dulinor finds himself too preoccupied with the Solomanis to deal with Deneb, and is forced to recognize Denebian independence.

- 3) Reunification under Margaret: Like the previous scenario, a group of factions gang up on Lucan, knocking him out of the picture. Then the factions continue squabbling amongst themselves. Vland and Dulinor carve up the territory controlled by the real Strephon. Margaret then gets Daibei and Vland to attack Dulinor, with help from her own faction. With Dulinor knocked out of the picture, Margaret makes a deal with Deneb, which allows the two factions to carve up the Vilanis. By now Daibei is under heavy attack from the fast advancing Solomanis, and is forced by Margaret to accept annexation, in return for military aid. With the Frontier with the Solomanis temporarily stabilized, Margareth turns her attention on Antares and Deneb. Bzrk of Antares is forced to accept reannexation by the Julian Protectorate. Deneb retains independence only because the Solomanis continue to make trouble on the rimward frontier.
- 4) Reunification under the Real Strephon: War weariness causes more and more fleets to join the Real Strephon, not caring whether or not he really is who he says. These desertions cause every other faction to collapse. Their own disgruntled followers kill Lucan, Dulinor, and Margaret, and the Real Strephon is welcomed back to the throne on Capital. Daibei, Antares and Deneb repledge their allegiance to Strephon, allowing the Imperium to concentrate its forces on the Solomani incursions along the rimward frontier.
- 5) Reunification under the Solomanis: The Solomanis quietly grab all of Sol Sector, and part of Disapora Sector, and then wait for the other factions to destroy themselves. The second Solomani invasion then sweeps aside all remaining opposition. Only Antares escapes reunification, by accepting reannexation by the Julian Protectorate.
- 6) Reunification through marriage alliance: Margaret could end up marrying either Lucan or Dulinor, and their combined forces could knock out the other factions.
- 7) Reunification under the Vilanis: War weariness could also cause a nostalgia for the peace created by the now defunct first Imperium (Which was Vilani dominated) Pro-Vilani forces could spring up all over the shattered Imperium, eventually overwhelming all of the factions. In the process, the Solomanis will probably have time to grab Sol Sector and large portions of the Diaspora Sector. They might also swallow up the Daibei faction.

The previous scenarios postulated the survival of only one political entity calling itself the Imperium. (Surviving rebel factions are much smaller than the reunified Imperium and eventually take other names.) The following scenarios postulate the permanent division of the Imperium into several states of roughly equal size.

- 8) Permanent division into two states: Lucan overwhelms Margaret and Antares. Dulinor overwhelms the real Strephon, Vland, and Deneb. The Solomanis overwhelm Daibei. The Imperium, under Lucan, and the Federation of Illesh, under Dulinor, square off in an indecisive war, which lasts until the Solomanis try another invasion.
- 9) Permanent division into three states: Dulinor and Vilani carve up the real Strephon. Dulinor and Deneb then carve up the Vilanis. Heavy Solomani attacks then force Daibei to seek annexation with Dullinor. As these events are taking place, Lucan makes short work

of Margaret, and then turns his attention on Antares. That forces Archduke Bzrk to once again seek annexation with the Julian Protectorate. After that, Lucan wisely shifts his forces to his rimward frontier, Driving the Solomanis out of the Diaspora Sector. The Imperium, the Federation of Illesh, and the Denebian Empire are the three nations that form out of former Imperial territories.

- 10) Permanent division into four states: Events in the Spinward half of the Imperium go pretty much as the did in the previous scenario, with Dulinor and Deneb becoming dominant. IN the trailing half, Margaret forms an alliance with the Solomanis, making it impossible for Lucan to crush her. Lucan then shifts his forces to his coreward frontier, crushing Antares. The Imperium splits into four states: The Imperium, under Lucan, the Federation of Illesh, under Dulinor, the Delphian Federation, under Margaret, and Denebian Empire under Archduke Norris.

After choosing the future history of the Imperium, it is the game master's duty to move events towards his chosen outcome. To do so, it would be helpful to fix a date for the end of the rebellion, and then develop a time line of events for the sector in which your player characters are active. List the consequences of each major event. Battles fought in the sector your characters are active could lead to a change of government on some planets in the area. More distant battles could lead to a withdrawal of fleets, leading to increased piracy. When forming this time line, keep in mind that even the fastest ships cannot travel more than six parsecs per week, with speeds of three to five parsecs being more likely. This speed limitation will slow the advance of even the most ambitious offensive.

If your characters are in the military (due to reenlistment or the call up of reserves) there is the chance they might do something that upsets the course of events you've chosen. If that happens, you will need to either change the outcome or lengthen the time line. Throwing in random events can lengthen the time line. For instance, your characters cause a faction to retain control of a planet they should've lost. You, as the game master, can cause an offensive by another faction, which forces a major redeployment of forces, causing the victorious faction to abandon the planet they just held on to.

These kinds of major alterations to the chosen course of events should be rare, unless your characters are high-ranking officers or high-ranking government officials. That's because most lower-ranking characters are under the command of an NPC, and you as the game master can neutralize unwanted developments as they happen.

For instance, let's say your characters are mercenaries, fighting for a faction that is supposed to lose control of the planet they're fighting to hold. But because of a lucky die roll, or good strategy, your player characters penetrate the enemy line, threatening to change the planned outcome. You can always rectify the situation by causing another part of the front (commanded by an NPC) to collapse, at which point the controlling faction orders the mercenary commander to pull back, in order to avoid encirclement.

With these guidelines in mind, an imaginative game master should have no trouble guiding his characters through the future history of the Imperium. But keep in mind flexibility is essential. There is more than one way to get the desired result.