



WELCOME TO THE

DYSTOPIAN AGE

From the Badlands of North America to the icy realm of Antarctica, the world of the Dystopian Age is a wild and dangerous place. It is a generation since the end of the Union Civil War and Queen Victoria has been on the throne for over forty years. While Napoleon builds an alliance in Europe, the nations of the Far East are roused to action against the growing threat from the West. Now the greatest scientific minds of the age have unlocked secrets that the human race was unprepared for, as super science and alien technologies bring the world perilously close to annihilation.

THE DIE IS CAST

An ancient power has been subtly influencing humanity for thousands of years. This interference has enabled an alliance of scientists known as the Covenant of the Enlightened to make great leaps forward in technology and industry for the world. Combining the newly discovered Element 270 with a limitless power source known as RJ-1027, the Enlightened have ushered in an age of phenomenal scientific advancement in areas that were the stuff of dreams only decades before. This unearned and disjointed scientific progression has, however, come with neither morals nor safeguards and the world has been plunged into a Dystopian Age.

Through manipulation, fear or conquest, many nations throughout the world have

formed alliances with mutual economic and defensive benefits, often around common cultural or geographic ties. The remaining great industrialized nations of the world, while powerful in their own right, found that they were over-matched and driven to join larger alliances until, as the end of the century draws near, seven distinct geopolitical forces have emerged alongside the Enlightened. The Imperium, the Sultanate, the Latin Alliance, the Celestial Empire, the British Crown, the Commonwealth, and the Union of Federated States.

Within each of these great power blocs, there are a number of proud and distinctive nations in possession of their own traditions, culture and politics. For example, while the Imperium draws on the rich heritage and culture of Scandinavia, Prussia, Austria and



others, the neighbouring Commonwealth binds the Russian, Mongolian and Polish Lithuanian spheres of influence together. Tensions and infighting cause paralysis at times for each of the eight powers and these are seized upon by their rivals as opportunities for advancing their own agendas. Such conflict between allies is regrettable but, unfortunately in the Dystopian Age, unavoidable.

These eight, great powers appear evenly matched in their war-making potential and this brings a grim prospect: If a total global conflict were to erupt there would likely be no clear victor. As the world teeters on the edge of such a globally catastrophic world war, the great powers battle tirelessly to gain a decisive advantage and emerge triumphant with a mix of military, subterfuge, diplomacy and economics.

While there are times of detente between them, more often than not any one of the eight powers will be involved in clashes and conflicts over resources, territory and the actions of individual commanders in the field making the right (or wrong) decision. To stave off a global Armageddon, a network of ambassadors, diplomats, bannermen, marshals and emissaries can be found crisscrossing the globe attempting to smooth over the countless brutal and bloody proxy wars, sabre rattling, land grabs, insurgencies and state-sponsored terrorism that are a daily occurrence in the Dystopian Age.

THE CRIMEAN CRUCIBLE

One such conflict began as a series of minor skirmishes in the Balkans in the early 1850s between forces of the newly established Commonwealth and Ottoman patrols.

Matters quickly escalated and, led by Omar Pasha, the Sultanate Janissaries successfully held off Russian reprisals through Bulgaria while a separate Commonwealth action laid siege to the fortified bastion of Kars in Western Armenia. Sultan Mehmed demanded that the city not fall to the Commonwealth and large battlegroups of aging warships were immediately dispatched to relieve the beleaguered defenders. This might have ended matters had it not been for the timely arrival of the Russian White Navy which sunk the Sultanate fleet before it could reach the garrison at Kars and cost the Sultan his city.

In early 1854, frustrated by this defeat, and with demands for action from their citizens, the Sultanate pushed out from their massive fleet base at Propontis in a direct assault on Sevastopol in the Crimean peninsula, the Commonwealth's main naval facility in the Black Sea. The Sultanate fleet comprised of Ottoman, Greek and Persian elements. A tactical alliance with the Crown enabled the attack on Crimea to also call on British artillery and cavalry to supplement the offensive. The Russians counterattacked later that year in what became known as the Battle of Balaclava and were repulsed, but at the cost of seriously depleting the British forces that bore the brunt of the charge. It was in the field hospitals in the aftermath of this conflict that the first bionic augmentations began to see widespread adoption by the Crown as a means of returning soldiers and sailors to the fight.

Dozens of naval and coastal battles raged on over the next year as neither side would concede until finally, after eleven months of near constant siege, Sevastopol fell to the Sultanate. Having lost such a strategic



position in the Black Sea, and not wanting the Crown or the Sultanate to press their advantage further, Tsar Nikolai sued for peace in late 1855. This was a painful defeat made all the more humiliating as Russia and the Commonwealth were forbidden under treaty from basing warships in the Black Sea. The Commonwealth suffered another blow in December of that year with the untimely death of the Tsar, but the ascendancy of his son Vladimir promised a new era for the Commonwealth and he swore the indignity inflicted at Crimea would not go unanswered. He also noted that the treaty did not prohibit Commonwealth skyships from the Black Sea...

THE CARIBBEAN HURRICANE

Despite the best of intentions and most meticulous of strategies, events can quickly spiral out of control. In 1867, shortly after the brutal Ore War, the Union entered the world stage and ended up in a three-way running battle with their old adversaries the British Crown and an unfortunate first contact with the Celestian Empire. To seize valuable Element 270 deposits found in the waters nearby, the Japanese fleet, commanded by Admiral Hariken, had overwhelmed the Crown garrison at the Falkland Islands. Such was the swiftness and totality of Admiral Hariken's victory that she ordered her forces to push northwards along the South American coast for an audacious assault on the Crown's Caribbean holdings. The Caribbean was regarded as neutral territory by both the Crown and Union, so the build-up of a retaliatory Crown fleet near Bermuda was interpreted as a breach of the region's neutrality by the Union.

In what became known as the Caribbean Hurricane, after the ambitious Japanese Admiral, President Johnson dispatched a taskforce of armoured paddle-steamers from New York to contest the Crown forces massing in the Caribbean.

It was a proud moment for the Union as its forces, once riven by internal conflict, came together for the greater glory of their new nation. What the Union found there was a meat-grinder. Entire island chains were engulfed by the running battle between the Crown fleet and the invading Empire who did not expect them to be present in quite such force. The Union ploughed in between them and engaged both sides with the full fury of the Federated States. The islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico became shattered battlegrounds, torn by massive war engines, columns of tanks and fierce aerial bombardments. When the Empire's ships withdrew the Dragon had learned a valuable lesson; not to underestimate either the old Lion or the young Eagle. The Crown permitted the Union to establish facilities throughout the Caribbean to help regenerate the shattered communities.

It is a region hotly disputed and, when the Union then annexed the territory a year later, it was the cause of another naval campaign which this time saw the Union forces withdraw and the Crown exert control over the islands. The Union immediately began preparations to retake the territory once more...

THE SECRET OF SAINT-PIERRE

While the Covenant of the Enlightened have established a formidable independent military presence in the southern hemisphere thanks to their industrial



fortress complex in Antarctic, their presence in the Northern hemisphere has been restricted to bases permitted under treaty with the other Great powers. Following their betrayal by the Commonwealth double agent Markov, the Covenant agreed that an independent staging ground was required for Northern military projections of power.

In 1868, a large taskforce led by Commodore Rebecca Gould-Nares was despatched to lay claim to Île-aux-Chiens, an uninhabited island twenty miles off the coast of Canada. Though the small landmass was ostensibly part of the Latin Alliance, it had remained uninhabited since the end of the Union War of Independence a century earlier. Territorially, the Enlightened estimated that it was remote enough that it's occupation would not be seen as a threat to the wider Alliance, nor the neighbouring Crown or Union. The scientific cabal were wrong on both points, and this miscalculation would cost them dearly.

On approach, the fleet came under sustained bombardment from concealed Alliance gun batteries. The presence of such heavy defences had not even been hinted at in reconnaissance the previous year. The Covenant fleet used their esoteric technologies to evade much of the fire and prepared to silence the guns only to find their battle line unexpectedly disrupted by aerial attacks from a pair of Imperium skyfortresses. This was wholly unexpected and threw the Covenant ships into disarray causing widespread carnage.

In secret the island had in fact been leased for fifty years from the Alliance by the Imperium in exchange for ceding claim

for the same length of time to the Alsace region on the French border. Certain mineral deposits on the island were of value to the Teutonic Knight Luminaries for the development of their wundertech and so their presence and operations had been conducted in utmost secrecy.

Such was the necessity of this secrecy that none could be allowed to escape to bear witness and the Imperium were relentless in hunting down and destroying the Covenant flotilla. Few prisoners were taken and once interrogated were disappeared into the labour camps on the island. As agreed under the arrangement, an Italian battlegroup would later claim to have seen the destruction of the Covenant fleet thousands of miles to the south east in the naval minefields off the coast of Vila Do Corvo, with wreckage and salvaged personal effects to prove it. The Enlightened were frustrated that the Imperium and Alliance's extraordinary deception would have to be believed. Because the alternative would have been to have revealed their ability to track their vessels in real-time around the world. Or to acknowledge that Commodore Gould-Nares made use of secret void engine technology to transport herself to safety moments before her flagship was destroyed.

THE SINGAPORE INCIDENT

Such is the volatile nature of global affairs that an internal trade dispute in South East Asia with the Crown Raj of India brought matters perilously close to world war once more. The disagreement drew in the Empire and finally, in the summer of 1869, the whole region exploded into violence. Even as the proud trading hub collapsed in flames, a fleet of mighty Crown war-gyros and warships raised



steam across Queen Victoria's domains to inflict righteous retribution. The conflict was brief but bloody, with thousands killed as the great naval powers clashed. Finally, the Empire withdrew, but not before the city had burned to the ground beneath the fury of the Empire's cannons and rockets. Retribution, at a time of their choosing, was promised by both sides.

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

After the turbulence of the 1860s the world has entered a period which has come to be known as 'the Interbellum' – a time of retrenchment, of consolidation, of detente. But only the naïve and the foolish take this to mean the end of the conflict across the globe. There are regions around the globe that offer the potential to grant a decisive advantage to those that dare claim it. It is an opportunity to explore new resources and seize the otherworldly artefacts that are being discovered with troubling regularity.

The Interbellum of the Dystopian Age is time where individuals can make their mark with opportunities for personal gain as well as the national interest to defend. Whole regions have been devastated by conflict,

and yet others are relatively untouched, transformed instead into hives of activity, with the massive expansion of industry and technological development to feed this terrible struggle. Each year, mighty steel behemoths rise from fleet yards in increasing numbers - marvels of mankind's ingenuity. Weapons of war thought the stuff of penny dreadfuls and lurid tales now become commonplace on the blood-drenched tides of the world.

More concerning still, is that it appears the world itself is changing, as if the roiling conflict is enveloping the natural order as well as that of humanity. Bizarre weather events erupt with increasing regularity, mighty storms blow up and then suddenly dissipate. At sea and in the air, ships and flying craft mysteriously vanish; only to reappear miles off course, their crews having no recollection of the missing time.

And so, back and forth, the great powers of the world grind against each other looking for some decisive advantage to swing the Dystopian Age in their favour. It is clear that the Interbellum does not mean peace, but only preparation for greater conflict to come!

