

Working Title: “Rebellion: Hearts and Minds”

Genre: Strategy/RPG

Background

The Flontonian Empire is facing trying times. The newly crowned Empress Felicia must prove her mettle to friends and enemies alike. After years of economic decline and palace coups, the imperial government once again sets out to regain its prestige and prove to its subjects that there is only one power in the land. Neighboring the Flontonian Empire is the Bogurian Republic, a rising power in the region led by the conniving Magnus Cronian. What it lacks in military strength the republic compensates with its economic prowess. Hoping to take advantage of the empire’s troubles, Magnus sends spies disguised as merchants to the borderlands to stir up dissent against the empire. With economic troubles mounting, some inhabitants of these territories find the republic’s offers of prosperity enticing.

At the start of the game, a month has passed and several villages in the borderlands have sent emissaries to the regional governor with a list of demands. Winter is approaching and the farmers and other villagers need to prepare their supplies for the barren months ahead. Otherwise, they say, there is a risk of famine and disease. The governor has sent a report to the empress, detailing the situation and a new development. It seems around a hundred villagers have gathered weapons and made camp in the hills. The governor fears an uprising and also requests troops be sent to his territory to deal with the threat. Due to internal strife, many of the empire’s legions on the borders were recalled to other areas, leaving no troops to watch over the villages.

Empress Felicia consults with her advisors and sends a detachment of 200 troops to the border lands commanded by the young Captain (Player’s Name).

Game Loop:

The player must quell the rebellion. To do so, they must weigh easy and difficult decisions to deal with the situation in the borderlands. Each decision will lead to different consequences for the rest of the game.

There are two meters the player will need to monitor:

Local satisfaction - how the locals perceive the troop’s presence.

Troop morale - how the player’s officers interpret their decisions.

The player’s decisions will affect these meters. It is possible to rectify bad decisions, but only if done so as early as possible. Otherwise, it could be too late.

There are three generic end-game scenarios with sub-scenarios for each:

- A) Victory - the player has quelled the rebellion and imperial control is reinstated over the borderlands. The “Local satisfaction” meter is higher than 80%.
 - a) “Hard” strategy: Victory is achieved through negotiation, where the villagers agree to lay down their arms and they give up the spies.

 - b) Balance strategy: Victory is achieved through a balance of the “hard” and “easy” strategies. While some villagers and/or villagers are destroyed, the player also employs negotiation to quell unrest. The spies are found and eliminated.

- B) Defeat - the rebellion grows, the republic intervenes, and the empire has lost control over the borderlands. The “Local Satisfaction” meter is lower than 50%.
 - a) “Easy” strategy: If the player employs a strategy of retribution and revenge on the rebels, it may appear at first that they have quelled the rebellion and restored order to the borderlands. This will play into the republic’s plans. Spies and survivors will lead the republic’s army into the borderland and the player will have no choice but to retreat. No battle is shown. The player simply loses.

 - b) Balance strategy: If the player attempts to employ a balanced strategy of retribution and negotiation, but tends to favor a hard-line approach, they also run the risk of losing control over the borderlands. The rebels will rally and the republic will send in troops.

- C) Neutral - The least likely of the scenarios. Both the Empire and the Republic send armies to the borderlands. The fate of these territories is uncertain at this point. This scenario is triggered if the “Local Satisfaction” meter is between 50%-70% and there is no clear solution to the rebellion.

Three Character Descriptions:

Captain (Player’s name):

A young officer in the imperial army was recently promoted. This is your first time commanding so many troops on such an important mission. You are loyal to the empire but are not certain that true strength lies in using your power to dominate others. With your troops, you are strict but fair. You listen to their concerns and are generally a good leader, though your lieutenants doubt your practices. Unlike most of them, you do not come from a military family. Your parents are merchants and your only sibling, Mereth, is a scholar.

Lieutenant Haridy:

Comes from a long line of military officers who have served the empire with distinction for centuries. He sees his commission in the army as his birthright. This expedition will be Haridy's first and he is hoping for a fight. Any challenge to the empire is a personal challenge to Haridy and must be dealt with swiftly and strictly. Haridy despises ("Player's name") both as an officer and the child of merchants. How such a person ever got command of this mission is a slight to the army.

Lieutenant Brooks:

An orphan who came up the ranks of the army thanks to her skills and perseverance. Due to her background, despises weakness, but also despises people like Haridy who think they deserve everything without a challenge. Brooks is a hard-working and loyal soldier. She will follow orders but not before giving her opinion first. Having spent time in some of the less glamorous parts of the empire, she understands that regular people have a tough life, especially out here in the borderlands. What Brooks doesn't appreciate is their middle-ground approach. Will they fight for what they want or are they so afraid that they don't know what to do? She sees weakness and doesn't like it.

Lieutenant Salander:

Has only been a lieutenant for a few weeks, never having led troops in any capacity. He is ready to show what he's worth and prove himself to his other officers. He is ambitious and plans to reach the rank of Captain in as short a time as possible. Salander is ready to do whatever it takes to achieve his plan, even if it is morally questionable.

Two Scripts:

Scene: Inside the captain's tent

Captain (Player's name): Thank you for coming everyone. I want to start with the scouts' reports. Lieutenant Brooks, what can you tell us?

Brooks: There's a camp of rebels in the hills to the north. We couldn't get close, but we could tell that they weren't armed with more than farm tools and homemade weapons. They had sentries patrolling the forest and fires around the perimeter of the camp. Two of my scouts reported seeing some strange activity along the road leading to Bagur. They said they saw a merchant caravan on the road heading away from us.

Captain: That's odd, why aren't they camping for the night?

Brooks: That's exactly what I thought, sir. There's no tree cover out there, so my scouts couldn't get close enough to see anything, but I suggest sending a detachment to check caravans coming and going.

Captain: Player chooses a response:

- a) Yes, good idea. Let's do that. You choose the detachment and send it out first thing in the morning.
- b) I don't want to split up our forces yet until I know what we're really dealing with.

Brooks:

- a) If Captain agrees: Of course sir, I'll see to it.
- b) If disagrees: Whatever you think is best sir...

Captain: Now let's get to the matter of the unrest.

Haridy: It's rebellion sir, complete and utter treason.

Captain: That remains to be seen, Lieutenant. Let's not jump to conclusions.

Haridy: What conclusions sir!? We have proof of a group of armed rebels in the woods challenging the Empress's authority.

Captain: What we have proof of are several people who are struggling to feed their families and worried about the winter. Beyond that, we need to investigate to identify what is happening here.

Salander: What about the rumors of enemy agents? I wouldn't be surprised if the Bagurians are behind all this.

Captain: Again, these accusations require proof, which is what we will acquire while we are here.

Haridy: How do you propose we gather this information, sir?

Captain: I'm open to your suggestions. (Pointing/indicating map) What we know is this. There are three villages close to the river here, with the main bridge here (points at the bridge crossing). The road to Bagur leads through the forest to the north, past the hills where our scouts found the camp.

Haridy: My suggestion is simple. We march on the bridge and secure it by leaving a small detachment. The main bulk of our forces then marches on the hills, destroying the camp, capturing, if possible, the leaders, and eradicating the treason that poisons these lands. We take the leaders back to the villages and execute them in front of the villages, showing them what happens when you challenge the Empress!

Salander: A brave plan, Haridy, but are you suggesting we execute the leaders in each village? If I'm not mistaken, you can only execute someone once.

Brooks: We can't attack the camp head-on like that. Even with our numbers and training, the area is heavily wooded, the locals know the terrain better than us, and we'd be fighting uphill the whole time. They'll see us long before we get there. They may even run away, but that won't help us at all now, will it?

Haridy: You underestimate the effect imperial soldiers have on the common folk. They'll fall at our feet as we march straight upon them! Or maybe you've forgotten, having spent so long pretending to be an officer.

Brooks: Ha! I'm pretending!?! Then why don't you go ahead and lead the charge yourself tomorrow?

Salander: I think I can offer a middle ground. Let's gather the village elders from the three villages and bring them to the camp. We get them to convince the rebels to come out and lay down their arms.

Haridy: Or we kill the elders.

Brooks: You would kill old people.

Haridy: In the service of my empress, yes.

Brooks: That'll take too long and how can we be sure they care about a few old people? Maybe the elders are in the camp with them. Let's give them an ultimatum at dawn - disarm or we burn their villages one by one.

Salander: Why wait? If these are traitors, then showing any hint of hesitation may be interpreted as weakness. By taking up arms against the empress they are already condemned along with their families. Let's burn one village to prove that we are here to dictate and not listen. Then give them an ultimatum. We shall show mercy where they have shown fallacy!

Brooks: Salander, I didn't expect that from you. We can't show weakness!

Haridy: I'd burn all the villages at once, but I like it. I volunteer to throw the first torch!

Scene: Village hall with elders

Captain: Good morning dear sirs and madames. My name is Captain (Player's name) of the Imperial Army. I am here in the hopes of avoiding conflict between your people and their sovereign, Empress Felicia.

Elder 1: If her highnessness is so keen on avoidin' conflict, why don't she come herself?

Elder 3: Afraid we'd infect her with something, probably.

Elder 4: Or that we bite! (laughs and other elders laugh as well)

Captain:

- a) How dare you make such jokes about the empress! You will all apologize and change your tone at once.
- b) If you bite, then I am and my troops are the empress's teeth. Be aware that we are sharp and bite back.
- c) The Empress cannot be expected to attend to all the matters in her lands, but the fact that we are here shows that your grievances have been heard. So let's talk.

For this sample, the dialogue will continue as if the player chose option "B."

Elder 2: Then what're you waiting for? Bite. Burn down our village for opposing the magnificent Empress Felicia.

Captain: My lieutenants would like that.

Elder 1: And you, captain?

Captain:

- a) I came on the orders of my empress. I will see this territory returned to the full control of the empire, no matter what it takes.
- b) I came to listen and talk. I want to find an understanding.

Player chooses "B."

Elder 3: Then you listen. Taxes've been raised twofold over the past three months alone! That means we need to grow more crops to just make ends meet around here. But how're we supposed to do that if we don't have enough money for seeds and equipment?

Elder 4: Not to mention the price of renting land!

Elder 2: Yeah, the governor or his friends own it and they like to charge a pretty penny.

Captain:

- a) Ok, and why did you think it was a good idea to take up arms against the empress?
- b) I understand. Can you tell me about the villagers in the hills to the north? Who are they?

Player chooses "B."

Elder 2: They're our teeth!

Elder 3: Settle down now. Not all of us like what they're doin'.

Captain: What do you mean?

Elder 4: Most of them are out of work and bored. The others are just upset and want to provide for their families. They aren't warriors.

Elder 2: But they could be!

Captain:

- a) What do you mean by that?
- b) (Ignoring the comment) Will they speak with me?
- c) (Ignoring the comment) Will they listen to you if you tell them to throw down their arms?

Player chooses "B."

Elder 1: Not if you march an army to them. You need to show them you want to talk and listen.

Elder 2: Why should they even believe a word you say?

Captain: I'm speaking with you, aren't I?

Elder 4: You should talk to Mercher, he's reasonable enough. But be careful of Zells. She's a tough one and is the one who got them all to the hills in the first place.

Captain: Tell me more about them.

Elder 4: Mercher is from the village over. He's a blacksmith by trade and a good one at that. You can say he's up there with them to keep the younger ones from doing anything stupid. I heard they wanted to attack the governor's manor, but Mercher convinced them to let us go and deliver our demands.

Elder 2: Much good that did.

Elder 3: Zells' has had a hard life. Her father died when she was young from the plague. Her mother did what she could to provide for them, but the laws back then forbade her from gaining any apprenticeship since she was a woman. Then some brigands came through the area and robbed them, raped them, and left them for dead. The mother died soon after. She blames the empire for it all.

Elder 2: As well she should!

Captain:

- a) They're playing a dangerous game. Thank you for your time and information. I must go now to consult with my officers.
- b) The empire didn't do those things to her family. I want to talk to Mercher.
- c) I'm going to talk to them both. Thank you for your time and information.

Player chooses "A."

Elder 1: Good luck, captain.

Elder 2: Good riddance, I say.