

Design Notes for TI3:SA

Intro

Below are some thoughts and comments on TI3:SA, and mainly the changes it imposes on the RAW TI3 rules. These notes intend to enlighten upon the justification and reason behind each of the changes and additions. Most of these are the results and consensus of longer discussions, testing and simulation over the years, and each have a specific purpose to improve balance, flexibility, dynamics, streamlining and/or flavor (and it has been a key virtue to stay true to the concept and overall feeling of TI3 and its universe).

For brevity, we only offer brief explanations, but if you have questions or comments, you're welcome to discuss them in the forum.

SA 4.2 has modular balance/compatibility with SotT, while it has integrated balance/compatibility with SE. This means that you can add or remove SotT as you like and still have a complete, balanced and functional game. The Shattered Empire is, on the other hand, required. Due to the modular nature of SotT, all modifications needed will for now be found on a separate page (appendix 6).

Chapter 1 will discuss the general approach, virtues and philosophies that has governed the development of TI3:SA, from a top-down perspective.

Chapter 2 will go in depth and comment on each individual rule present in the “patch booklet”

Chapter 3 will discuss assets not currently in the patch booklet, including redesigned races/Race-specific Technologies, Technologies, Domain Tokens, and so forth.

Chapter 1: Main design philosophies

The following base-line virtues and design philosophies has governed the development of the ruleset. All rule changes must, either directly or indirectly, or in conjunction with other rule, reinforce the baseline virtues.

- **Game Dynamics:**

GOAL: Fast paced gaming, more skirmishing, less fleets, shorter games with more meaningful choices.

The game should feature exciting dynamical play with constant skirmishes and changing board positions, with no stale fleet build-up and filling up systems with ships and units. Each game should start off with a bang, where meaningful choices and interesting

decisions, decisive events, and the need to negotiate and deal with other players appears immediately from round 1, and continues throughout the game in a race against the clock. There must be real incentives and opportunities to drive the game forward toward a conclusion and end.

Problem: Several issues in the raw game counter-acts these goals. The most obvious is the pie-slice galaxies promoting a game style where players use multiple rounds (and hence multiple hours) on just populating and reinforcing their own designated galactic pie-slice. Encroaching on a neighbor's pie-slice is easily defined as full war, which something everyone must try to avoid to stay ahead in the cold war race. This problem is also worsened by the fact that resources are so abundant that everyone can “afford everything”, which reinforces the well-known fleet-massing problem, eliminates the actual pay-off from taking land from opponents, all while removing interesting *decisions* of what to purchase and prioritize (in terms of units, techs or whatever).

Solution: Map-design plays a big role in several of these issues, and some new guidelines on map design is paramount. The pre-set maps readily available from the Galactic Chart Database, all poses specific challenges to the players; most notoriously, most of the resources reside in contested zones (equi-distant to two or more Home Systems), with no clear ownership for either player. Also, the resources abundance is general much reduced, so that making an effort to make claims, either through negotiations or military means, on these planets is crucial. This is demanding right from the get-go and gets the game rolling immediately. Fighting for scarce resources (and objectives, see below) keep the amount of ships on the table down, and makes the choice between units and technology a tough one.

Note also that more objectives are available to be scored from the start of the game, (including a “preliminary” objective that closes when someone scores it). Players are incentivized by hunting the objectives to bring the game forward as thus; every round, the player in the lead gains Trade Goods proportional to his lead. Also, Victory Points reduces the cost of race techs (which are already much cheaper in SA), which together makes early VP grabbing very lucrative – even holding Artifacts during the game and not just in the final round. Incentivizing going into the lead and grab VP also shortens the infamous game time.

- **Asymmetry + balance in design (+2 player support);**

GOAL: Another baseline philosophy is to keep the game balanced, but balanced through asymmetry, to keep pronounced edges in the system. This shines through in the game in several ways, while the most obvious one is through the map design. It was mentioned above that the maps generally feature high value systems only in contested zones, but the

maps also NEED asymmetry to be balanced, simply because asymmetry is already half-baked into the game, which is obvious from the planet tiles.

PROBLEM: There are all sorts of different values on those planets, so letting one start with Bereg-Lirta while another one starts with Zohbat-Mellon on the “corresponding” symmetrical place in the galaxy is simply imbalanced. It’s simply not the same. So since asymmetry is already in the spine of the game, right there on the printed tiles, asymmetry needs to go all the way to find balance.

SOLUTION: Each starting locations needs different advantages and disadvantages, which the players can start from. And symmetry on the map looks really awful and un-epic too, not even regarding the problems it causes with staleness and fleet massing mentioned in the previous point.

Assymetry is also found other places in the game balance. The races are different and based on specific concepts, and when balancing them, we have sharpened them more in the direction of their concepts to make them more different; in other words, we have made their strength stronger and weaknesses more pronounced. This is in stark contrast to solutions many people have adopted for balancing, say, Yssaril Tribes (race) and the Dreadnought (unit). They say that since Yssaril is so strong, they need to lose the thing that makes them unique, and remove their skipping ability. But isn’t it better to remove their expansionistic military prowess and let them keep the things that make them sneaky and in concept? Same with the Dreadnought; many people found the unit to be weak altogether, and identified the main problem as being its speed, increasing it to 2. But this only made the unit more similar to other units, instead of sharpening what was supposed to be its strength and purpose; a slow moving but powerful platform of total destruction.

- **Game mechanics must support concept and lore (but also make logical sense!)**

GOAL & SOLUTION: In order to avoid any misunderstanding or mis-conception that SA disregards this on a wide basis, I’ll repeat this. Game mechanics must support concept and lore! For all changes done in SA, lore and the TI3 universe has been the center of it. This will be most apparent through race design and Race-specific technology design in Chapter 3. Examples include Saar changing from a stagnant mass producer, to a lightweight producer which is instead super mobile and flexible. Yssaril is no longer expansionistic, but uses ninja tactics etc. Lore-friendly additions is also found in various cards etc.

Note! The chapters below were written in 2011 and is severely outdated (but is being updated). They are however still useful in shedding some light on the thought process behind every rule and worth reading if you plan to adopt or discuss this ruleset.

Chapter 2: The patch rule booklet

Chapter 3: Comments on reprinted assets

Page 1: Game Setup

1) Decide on the number of Victory Points required to win, and agree on each option at the lower page.

The framework of the game should be set as soon as possible and the Victory Point limit is the most obvious element to decide before you embark on a demanding and heavy game like this. The SE rules *suggests* playing to 9 points, but there's nothing in the game that requires this particular number. As long as all players are aware of the goal number everyone will have a fair game; more fair than running out of time and ending with the current leader. When the goal is known, whatever it may be, the players can immediately begin to evaluate their balance of short term and long term strategies. The question is simple; what kind of game are the players in the mood for? What do you have time for? If you have only one full evening, an 8-point game should easily take 6 hours with experienced gamers. If you have a full day you might go for 10-11, while 14 is fit for an epic weekend. It should be noted that VPs are usually a tad bit more accessible in SA, so games might be slightly shorter than you're used to.

This game also consists of a lot of options, both official and several from SA. Again the question is what kind of game the players are in mood for. As soon as the setting/timeframe is agreed on, go ahead and continue the startup.

2) Have each player roll a die. Take seat positions around the table going clockwise from high to low.

The order of player positions around the board does impact the game, and so these should be randomized each time. This die roll is kept throughout the start-up as it will, to as large extent as possible, spread out the starting benefits of the players which is an important foundation for a game of strategic challenge. Handing out the Speaker-Token randomly, for example, is simply unacceptable. You're investing a day in a game of Twilight; at the very least it can be a fair game.

3) Deal two Secret Objective cards to each player. One of these must be discarded during step 10.

This convention does two things. First, part of your fate is moved from chance to decision, which is a consistent aim throughout SA. Furthermore, it keeps players from complaining over getting the same Secret Objective over and over. The SOs are dealt this early in the setup process so that the knowledge of your SOs can take part in your strategy when making the upcoming choices.

4a) Starting with the highest rolling player and going clockwise in turns, each player may in turn choose any available race to command, or announce pass to wait for step 4b).

4b) Remaining races are dealt out randomly with the following advantage; they may be kept hidden and secret until the beginning of the first Strategy Phase. Upon receiving a random race the player may reject it and draw another. A third draw is allowed, but this race must be immediately revealed.

Every player gets a chance to pick the race they want to. Each race has varying strengths and weaknesses with specialized, in-depth strategic implications, and we believe that you should have the opportunity to specialize with a race of your choosing. More importantly, if you're in the mood for playing the Xxcha, why should there be a rule to say that you can't? We play the game to have fun and the rules shouldn't try to hamstring that in any way. However, those players choosing to pull a random race will have a minor advantage; they may keep their picked race anonymous until the game starts. This might be beneficial in that the other players may underestimate your starting strength and add planets close to you, or overestimate your early strength and placing a border you will surely benefit from. Personally I like picking a random race, but I would hate it if I didn't have the *option* to do otherwise when I wanted to try a specific race-dependent strategy. Again, moving stuff from chance to *options* is an important aim in SA.

5) Galaxy-creation (or Home System location bidding if using a pre- set scenario) will begin with the highest rolling player and progress clockwise. This order will alternate if not using pre-set maps or the Star by Star option. View appendix 6 for some sample maps and details on the bidding system.

5b) Optional: For practical reasons, players may now change seats so that they are aligned with their HS positions.

There is an obvious advantage (less when using Star by Star game option) in placing your tile first. Again the player with the highest roll gets to place first. Choosing race first is but a marginal advantage in SA, because all races here are equally powerful in different ways, so the player with the highest die-roll will also place the first tile, but will be last in bidding for Speaker-Token. Note that the b)-step is to make the popular game option Star by Star more practical, should you place your HS on the far side of the table, for instance. The order will in this case be somewhat altered before bidding for Speaker begins, but this may even be part of a strategy. Either way, the advantage to one player for bidding first is no more than 1 TG, and should be an acceptable exchange for a more practical evening. Step b) is thus an optional step is you prefer comfort over total fairness.

6a) Bid for Speaker Token: The player with the lowest roll may now place a bid of Trade Goods (TGs) on the Speaker Token (this bid may be 0). Going counter-clockwise, players may either pass or bid over. The winning bidder is assigned Speaker, and all other players then receive a number of TG equal to the winning bid.

6b) The Speaker may now set the orientation of the Rotation Cyler.

The bidding system is the fair alternative to simply dealing the Speaker Token out randomly, which can be quite the advantage. The bidding system works by offering extra Trade Goods that other players will start with. For example, if you win the bid with 2 TGs, you get the Speaker Token and everyone else start with 2 TG extra. Whoever wins the Speaker Token also sets the initial direction of the Rotation Cyler (see appendix 2), so the negotiations should start *before*

this bidding. One may, for example, offer the neighbor one TG for turning rotation towards him, or else threaten to bid over. The market-value of the Speaker seems to revolve around 2 TGs, but some player groups are known to have greatly overestimated its value.

The Rotational Cycler will be discussed later on.

7) Normalize TG: All players now add or subtract the same number of TGs such that the player with the lowest amount starts out with 1 TG.

The purpose here is two-fold. First, it prohibits the theoretical chance that *all* players start out with a lot of TGs, which would be nonsense. Second, it ensures that all players DO start out with some TGs. TGs are important for negotiations, and open many opportunities right away in terms of closing deals, the most obvious being Trade Agreements or border drawing. If not used in this context, it opens for more options and meaningful choices in terms of ship building in the first round. Many races have very limited resources in their Home Systems and only one real option of choosing what kind of units to buy. Having TGs from the outset changes that, and gives the highly resource-limited first round a bit more impact and importance.

8) Build two separate objective decks, one for each stage, instead of the usual mixed objective deck. Then draw from the appropriate pile before adding new objectives to the common play area.

This is simply a lot less fiddly than the process described in the core rulebook, and is important for the improved Bureaucracy Strategy card to work (as well as the ninth Strategy Card, Prospect).

9) Place all Special Objectives face up on the board, along with 3 random Public Stage I Objective cards from the deck. (Stage II is initiated when eight Stage I Objective Cards exist in the public gaming area). If all Strategy Cards will be picked (4- or 8 player), include the ninth Strategy Card, Prospect.

Beginning the game with three public objectives face-up on the board kick-starts the game, because players now have a greater chance of claiming objectives and are able to plan towards them from the outset. Some information is needed to build a strategy, after all.

The ninth strategy-card is there to rebalance the game in those cases *all* strategy-cards will be picked each round, i.e., 4- and 8-player games. The problem in those cases is that there will always be a player that ends up without a choice in the Strategy Phase, and is just handed the last one. Furthermore, the SC-dependent races (Hacan, Jol Nar, Xxcha) will have a clear advantage when they know each strategy will be picked regardless. Usually they may have to bribe and negotiate to get their cards selected. The Prospect card is designed so that it otherwise interacts with the other game mechanics very little.

Comments on the various Game Options at the bottom of the page (chosen in step 1) will be thoroughly commented on later.



Appendix 1: Rule Modifications (1/4)

General:

***Any type of cargo (Fighters, Ground Forces, PDS, Leaders) may be picked up from any non-activated system (or the system just activated). This is regardless of enemy ships and cargo source (planet, carrier or space).**

Primarily, the purpose is to streamline the carrier/cargo rules and make it completely general. The FAQ (though I'm certain Corey have misinterpreted the rule, which probably refers to an active carrier) states that Ground Forces and PDS (and thus leaders!) onboard carriers in space may NOT be picked up from a ship in the same way as from planets. On the other hand, Fighters can. We believe such differentiation is fiddly and unnecessary. Why RESTRICT a pickup maneuver those few times when you have ships in space? I'd personally *like* to pick up things from my ships. Streamlining this system clears up the mess, but also adds some very interesting details.

Example 1: Your planets are being bombarded by the enemy and your Space Dock is under blockade. You make a deal with the enemy to surrender the planet in exchange for permission to safely extract your forces from the system (including precious Leaders, PDS etc.). You bring in your Diplomat who, with the enemy's permission, may bring a Carrier in, PICK UP the stuff (otherwise not allowed!) and return to safety. This gives the Diplomat, as well as Light/wave Deflector, some more subtle uses.

Example 2: In a two-planet system, one planet is yours and the other is controlled by the enemy. You move a gargantuan fleet into the system to pick up forces from your planet and invade the other, but the opponent has a single Destroyer in the system, supposedly preventing pickup. Now how is that destroyer going to stop your Carriers from doing their job when it's shot to pieces by hundreds of escorting ships? It really shouldn't. But the blockading power will of course get proportional to the strength of the fleet: In the same scenario but where the opponent has an equal sized fleet, you must yourself decide; is it worth risking all those Ground Forces by picking them up into space. Then YOU must calculate the odds and make the decision, instead of having the decision made for you. I think this is a perfect example of how lifting unnecessary restrictions from the rules and streamlining it can actually expand your choices and make it simpler and more efficient at the same time.

***Pre-Combat effects are always conducted simultaneously by attacker and defender. First both sides roll for Anti-Fighter Barrage and remove casualties. Then remaining pre-combat effects are conducted simultaneously.**

This is for three things: 1) Consistency. Different shots in normal combat rounds go off simultaneously, so wouldn't it be easier and more intuitive to technically treat pre-combat as

other combat rounds? 2) Fair to attacker; in a game that suffers from turtling, why give the defender such a strange, unnecessary advantage? 3) Sake of speed; in a game that also suffers from long play time, why waste time on choosing items from a list?

***Just before refreshing planets in the Status Phase, all players may produce Trade Goods from unused resources at a 2:1 ratio (round down)**

Some players are left out of trade, so this rule gives players not participating in trade a currency to bargain with, which is thematically necessary as it should always be possible to produce something to send to other civilizations. In addition, it is a way of saving resources through rounds when saving for a large purchase. Thus, a 4 resource empire without trade can technically build a Dreadnought if they spend more time, which is logical.

***Political Cards may not be traded or used as Trade Goods. Instead, 2 Political Cards may at any time be discarded for a new Political Card. All players also receive a Political Card during the Status Phase.**

This rule ensures that political cards exist only to add depth to the political game as they were originally designed instead of always being spent as TGs to put more ships on the board. The power of agendas is mostly in having the right one at the right time, and being able to trade two for a new one at any time greatly increases the probability of gaining a useful agenda. Playing an agenda no longer effectively costs you a TG, which encourages participation in the political game. We could refer to countless threads on the forum with deeper information on this issue, but they all boil down to this; don't let people throw away PCs for TGs.

***During Tactical Retreats, destination system is activated only if and when ships survive to perform the retreat.**

This is simply to make tactical retreats more worthwhile: if you are unfortunate enough to lose all ships on a lucky enemy barrage, you shouldn't be twice cursed to pay a CC for it as well. Note, however, that the rules for announcing a retreat are the same, and you are bound to perform the retreat after the combat round in which you called it.

***Mix and Match; when building units, one resource may be spent to buy one Ground Force and one Fighter unit.**

The explanation here is nothing more than "why not?" You get another meaningful choice to consider, and it's silly that you get your fighters in pairs when a Space Dock can hold exactly 3.

***A non-Home System planet without Ground Forces present taking a bombardment hit reverts immediately to neutral status. The bombarding player may choose to omit this effect.**

This rule is inherited from Twilight Imperium 2nd edition, a rule that first and foremost makes thematic sense; intense bombardment can destroy infrastructure and industry, suppressing enemy resources. This rule brings new ways to think when using Dreadnoughts and War Suns, and it introduces a potential resource-drain to a game which often has *too* many resources.

Furthermore, it is able to revitalize cards that target neutral planets. This rule is not an important one for the game to flow; but it's a preference we brought from TI2.

***For the purpose of Action Cards, a Home System is only considered as such if the race of origin controls it.**

There are balance reasons for cards to not work against Home Systems, because they would be such easy and dead obvious targets for many Action Cards. However, this fact changes when the system is conquered by another race. This kind of protection is no longer needed, and thematically it's weird. Wouldn't an invaded home world of the great races be *especially* prone to local unrest? Like the above rule this change is not especially important, but is still one that is fair to include.

***Opponent Home Systems may not be activated during the first round of play.**

This rule was originally tied to the Star by Star setup, where Home Systems could end up pretty close, but we discovered in further play testing that in any kind of game there are chances that one player may be hamstrung by another right from the start if they are within range and the enemy manages to 'wait you out'. This also worsens when you combine the powerful SA Warfare card and strong starting races like Letnev or Muaat. All in all, it is fair that the attack will have to wait for round 2, so the rule was lately converted to a general one, not tied to Star by Star. For a thematic interpretation, one may say that the coordinates to other home systems is unknown at the beginning, and intelligence need some time to pinpoint it.

Units

***Dreadnoughts roll 2 dice during Space Battles and may bombard planets without an invasion taking place. They count as 2 units toward all production limits.**

***War Suns may use their Sustain Damage ability twice. They count as 3 units toward all production limits.**

***Any unit using the Sustain Damage ability immediately loses one combat die, to a minimum of 1.**

Dreadnoughts are a really cool idea in theory, they just need some ammo in the remaining half of their turrets to be worth it! A Dreadnought rolling 2 dice in space battles has proven to be placed perfectly on the balance scale, and fills out their concept: slow and powerful. With a lumbering movement of 1 and an outrageous cost of 5 resources, this ship needs to do what it was designed for: blast things out of space. Even with 2 combat dice, however, Dreadnoughts get eaten alive by Fighters, and it's not more than *almost* cost-effective against Destroyers (which in turn takes out Fighters). In the post-SE environment, Destroyers were the ultimate unit to mass-produce leaving Fighters nearly worthless (not just because of barrages, but because the greatly limited production capacity that came with SE). With powerful Dreadnoughts, Destroyers are more easily taken down and thus Fighters can once again fly, reintroducing them to a more interesting power circle. The new Dreadnoughts also threaten the almighty War Sun, effectively taking down this unit's monopoly on power and thereby making other technology paths than War Sun a viable choice! 2-dice Dreadnought is like a key turned in the game mechanics to unlock a whole new level.

Dreadnoughts will, however, lose one combat die as long as it is damaged. This is mainly to keep the unit from being overpowered, but may also make it less trivial as of where to assign your hits, depending on the situation.

The production capacity is a somewhat controversial change, since it actually brings an element of complexity instead of removing one. We maintain that this modification is nonetheless worth

keeping. The need for this was first discussed after it was seen how effective it was to quickly spam a number of Dreadnoughts in defense where they do not suffer from their lack of speed, but more importantly, it reduces the ability to 'bypass' production capacity by building expensive units. Production capacity should set a rough limit/potential of how many resources you can convert to ships at each place on the map (on each specific planet with a Space Dock). In duels, where imbalances surface a lot quicker than in multiplayer games, it was clear that races like Muaat and Lizix were not held back by the need of significant production capacity, since they already benefit from bigger units. It is also quite un-thematic that a planet just as easily produces three War Suns (36 resource) as 3 Destroyers (3 resource), and could use some moderation. 2-sustain War Sun that also loses combat dice on hits doesn't really power the unit up very much, but streamlines it to the same general rules as the Dreadnought (which is easy to remember: Dread, 2 dice, 2 hits, 2 production, War Sun, 3 dice, 3 hits, 3 production). Also, being able to repair 2 hits has a more long term advantage for aggressive space-campaigns and ultimately encourages attacking. We recommend using the hit-counters with War Suns to display number of hits taken. These look so cool on the board that we normally use them on Dreads too (and exhausted Diplomats, and exhausted Agents. Coming to that later!).

***Shock Troops (STs) are not formed at combat rolls of 10. Instead, one Ground Force will automatically upgrade to an ST unit after a successful Invasion (attacker only), during the following Production Step.**

***Before the first round of an Invasion Combat, the attacker may assign a number of his ST's as commandos. These do not participate in combat and cannot be taken as casualties, but they can capture 1 building each after a successful invasion. All commandos are automatically eliminated in case of a failed invasion.**

***Shock Troops may be produced normally at a Space Dock for the cost of 3 resources each.** Shock Troops were originally the kind of addition that adds quantity of elements to the game, but no quality. It brought no new strategies, but a mighty increase in luck variance and chance. You could even gain Space Docks and PDS without any planning, just a lucky die-roll! Such a heavy dependence on luck does not fit in with the guidelines and virtue of SA. If we are to add something to the game, it must be something that brings strategic depth or promotes dynamic play. This version of gaining Shock Troops is important for two things; it is something you can *plan* on, far ahead of time, and know your invasion will promote one GF to an ST. It also encourages dynamic play by rewarding an aggressive play style. In a game that suffers heavily from turtling, all such biscuits are needed to add up and increase the drama of the game. Removing the arbitrary nature of STs helped a lot, but something was still missing. It still proved difficult to gain good use of their ability to take installations, obviously because they die first in combat. Even the times you greatly outnumbered the defenders, a single hit is all it would take to hamstring your carefully laid plan. Therefore, the Commando-ability was added to give the unit a significant place in the game, and at the same time add some sense of option/choice to the otherwise straightforward ground combat. By careful use of this ability, you may either preserve your Shock Troops, gain new installations more effectively, or both. This mechanism turned out to be a highly interesting addition fit for a hard core strategy game.

When STs gained a true role in the game, it made sense to make them purchasable also, by 3 resources. This may be much, but it's okay. The primary way of acquiring Shock Troops should be the rewards of combat. Occasionally, however, the 3 resources will be a cheap investment to gain the well placed opponent Space Dock on your side.

***Space Mines are placed on a border instead of inside a system. Space Mines are considered neutral and trigger the instant any fleet crosses the system (before PDS step). Mines cannot be stacked. Upon impact roll a number of dice equal to non-fighter ships passing through the mined border. Rolls of 8+ inflicts hit on the passing fleet. Hits may be distributed by the owner as usual.**

Space Mines has been the subject of many a debate since their inception in 2007. One of the original problems was the excessive effect-variance tied to a unique die-roll per ship. A *single* die-roll would now decide the fate of a Carrier and all of its cargo, a game deciding event on its own accord. Such a massive impact simply cannot be managed by a single roll, as it would take the game too far into the realm of luck and chance. Shortly after, we gave a choice to the defender of taking TWO Space Mine hits elsewhere to negate another, e.g., to save your critical Carrier. This version of the Space Mines stood a long time, but one problem remained. Everybody built Mines, and why not? It could never be a wrong decision to make, and would greatly discourage attackers, which further promoted turtling and passiveness. The problem was mainly that placing them was a no-brainer; you didn't have to think or really decide anything, you would just place them over your Space Docks as you're supposed to. We faced the dilemma of either changing their nature or removing them entirely. The new approach was to actually make them more efficient, but at the same time required some real decision of specifying *where* they're placed. In this iteration of the Space Mines, they're easier to use as a protective buffer when diving into enemy territory, much more difficult to bunker in your Space Docks. This shifts some of the tendency away from passive strategies, and strengthening their strategic aspect.

***Facilities may only be built on unexhausted planets. The total cost of the facility is to exhaust the planet.**

Facilities, as stated in the rules, are added for people that simply want more abundant resources in their games. In general we highly recommend *reducing* resources in the game, so was there a use for facilities? First and foremost, we removed the weird original rule that forced one to exhaust the planet unless it was already exhausted, resulting in some micro-management trick to avoid this. The new approach was to have the facilities being an investment to consider, an investment that MAY pay off during the game (rather than the sole purpose of increasing resource abundance). Furthermore this version of facilities has a built-in regulating property; bad planets are cheaper to upgrade than valuable planets. These two features subtly improve the quality and playability of the facilities.

***PDS' planetary shields do not obstruct any kind of bombardment, but each absorbs one bombardment hit.**

This is the first of a handful rules aiming to streamline bombardment rules and make it more general and fluid, while shifting the general bombardment power a tad bit from Dreadnoughts to War Suns. We firmly believe the vast difference in firepower can speak for itself, and that Dreadnoughts do not deserve to be subject to special restrictions concerning bombardment. The new system is simpler in that there are no special rules or restrictions, and it's always allowed to bombard from space. PDS units, in turn, simply protect the planet by absorbing incoming hits. Necessary tweaks to Scientists and Graviton Negator are also needed (see respective modifications). At the same time, it weakened the much criticized War Sun super bombardment,

which previously ignored planetary shields completely. I'll emphasize that the War Sun is still a powerful unit, and Muaat receives a small compensation for this loss.

Technologies

***Gen Synthesis upgrades an additional Shock Troop after a successful invasion, instead of reviving your units.**

This change removes many rule problems that may occur in conjunction with Dacxive Animators, due to these two technologies highly similar nature. It is ruled in the official FAQ that Gen Synthesis takes precedence, thus they may "steal" ground forces from Dacxive Animators! Since this had to be fixed, we found it valuable to give the tech an offensive instead of a defensive nature (the reinforcement will be at the front, and not be delegated to defense), another small step counter the natural passiveness that often burdens TI3. In this iteration of Gen Synthesis, Ground Forces will no longer respawn *during combat* when fighting in Home Systems. This previously resulted in impenetrable Home Systems, which was pretty broken and above all un-thematic.

***In addition to providing additional Trade Goods, Micro Technology also allows a player to spend influence instead of resources when producing Trade Goods.**

A tech costing 6 resources is rarely worth the investment when it only yields up to 2 resources back during each round, especially in a game that is often over in 5 or 6 rounds, and even less should you have fewer active Trade Agreements or unpicked Trade II. The yellow tech path has room for a little more weight, and the new Micro Tech makes for an interesting utility; converting unused influence into something useful can benefit empires with scarce resources. Thus it also strengthens political power by making it more worthwhile to save influence for Assembly, even when Leadership is played first. In such cases influence used to be a dead currency for the rest of the round, but this technology takes care of that. Trade Goods can be spent as both resources and influence, and now both currencies may be returned to Trade Goods. It works well and is fair to the cost of a level 3 technology.

***Integrated Economy: All your planets may now produce units during the Production Step of a Tactical Action, with production capacity equal to its resource value. You may also relocate CCs at the end of your turns. As with Space Docks, planets may not produce units during the same round as in which they are claimed.**

Basically, we needed to give this technology some buff, both because it's a level 5-6 tech and because the yellow side of the tech tree could use yet more weight. We tried to think of something not only better but more interesting than "building beside your docks" and arrived at the above replacement. The concept behind both its new abilities is flexibility. It doesn't give you resources or CCs, but opens for new, flexible strategies in a way that seems natural in the game. Here and there across the map you may build 1-3 units (remember that Dreads and Suns take 2-3 capacity each, so even a 3 resource planet may only build only 1 Dread). This is not much, but can be great for getting some Ground Forces/PDS up on distant planets, or building additions to a fleet while it's on the move over friendly planets. Some may fear that the new Integrated Economy makes Space Docks obsolete, but we can assure you that it does not. Only Space Docks give a viable production value (and benefit from Enviro Compensators), only Space Docks may use Production abilities, Space Docks may host fighters etc. The new Integrated

Economy merely allows a player to dynamically supplement his force, not replace his Space Docks.

The CC-swapping ability lets you stay on guard for everything; if you need more time you may build up your Command Pool at the cost of Strategy Allocation and Fleet Supply. If you need to counter-attack, for instance, you may build up your Fleet Supply one turn in advance. All in all Integrated Economy becomes a fun and refreshing tech that is worth the effort to acquire.

***Nano Technology will repair all your units at the end of your turns, instead of granting immunity to Action Card “Direct Hit!”**

Direct Hit cards are such a nice incentive for aggressive action, especially with our strengthened Dreadnoughts; it seemed a shame to have a technology that made it obsolete. At the same time, a tech that targets a specific action card feels like a narrow ad-hoc application. With these in mind we sought to redesign Nano Tech with a broader application that encourages aggressive play style rather than turtling. Immediate ship repair after attacking is a welcomed boost for someone about to embark on an offensive conquest.

***Transit Diodes: As an action, pay one Strategy CC to move up to 6 (up from 4) of your Ground Forces *and/or* PDS units (PDS counts as 2) from the board to any friendly planets or fleets. Units in activated systems may not be moved. Transit Diodes has Hypermetabolism as a third independent pre-requisite.**

This is a simple and natural improvement to the lackluster Transit Diodes by increasing both capacity and flexibility. The third pre-requisite is there to open up the dead-end after Hypermetabolism; no other branches of the technology tree have two successive nodes resulting in a dead-end, and neither should this. See the [technology tree](#) for the new layout.

***Fleet Logistics: As an action, once per round, you may pay 1 Strategy CC to turn one of your CC’s on the board. Units within this system are now allowed to move during future activations (this round).**

The original Fleet Logistics is a joke for a top tier technology. It was situational and sometimes let you strike effectively through defensive buffers, but more often than not it was merely a way of saving CCs. We believe that a top tier tech rather should enable one to spend a CC to do something extraordinary. Inspired by the original Warfare card, the unlocking procedure seemed a natural ability for Fleet Logistics. However, players would frequently abuse Warfare to bypass production limits and “double build” in a single system, so we couldn’t allow players to simply remove a CC. Keeping the CC in the system but flipping it to permit movement prevents the double build.

***Assault Cannons are applied to Cruisers as well as Dreadnoughts. Hylar V Assault Laser does not yield bonus to this roll. The extra “shot” means one die only, regardless of number of normal combat dice.**

***Automated Defense Turrets do not gain bonus from Hylar V Assault Laser when used.**

***Graviton Negator ignores all planetary shields. It also gives Cruisers the bombardment ability.**

Destroyers have historically been the best bang for your buck which is odd for a unit that was originally designed simply to counterbalance massed Fighters. Cruisers, on the other hand, were far too weak, and generally saw the board only after players had reached their artificial plastic

limit with Destroyers. Though 2 dice Dreadnoughts are a partial answer to the clouds of Destroyers, these modifications to the red tech path were created with further balancing in mind by offering more improvements to Cruisers and slightly nerfing Destroyers.

Giving Assault Cannons to Cruisers was the first step we took toward this aim. At first glance it seems very powerful for a Cruiser to have Assault Cannon, but probability suggests that it will only result in 2 hits per 5 Cruisers. This advantage means nothing against Fighter fleets, but it does make a difference against other ships, and makes them good for precision drops where they sometimes may take out the enemy before battle to safely land the Ground Forces. It also supports the notion of the Cruiser as being an upgradable ship in various ways (cargo, guns or engines). You may argue that the Cruiser may achieve an awesome speed of 3 systems, and thereby serve a unique use. But Type IV Drive is on the *opposite* side of the tech tree, so in reality one will have to choose which path to go for; engines, or guns.

Shattered Empire recognized that Fighters were overpowered in the original box, so it fixed a number of exploits that made Fighters so superior. Warfare was replaced, as was the secondary on the Imperial Strategy Card, both of which had loopholes that enabled a player to field clouds of Fighters. Unfortunately they took one step too far in buffing Automated Defense Turrets, a move that made Fighters virtually obsolete. The Destroyer is already the greatest cost-effective unit without barrage, and Fighters will lost their capability altogether. Reducing ADT by -1 to combat rolls decreases the expected damage per Destroyer from 1.5 to 1.2 pre-combat, which is a reasonable number. It is still strong, but then again, Dreads and Cruisers do become meaner towards the small Destroyers so it all balances out.

Including Cruisers in bombardment (at 7, not stackable with Hylar V) vastly improves their utility. Graviton Negator's ability to completely bypass planetary shields is our second step in refurbishing the bombardment system.

Appendix 1: Rule Modifications (2/4)

Races

***Saar Floating Factories: Your Space Docks may now retreat and withdraw from Space Battles, and may produce units in the same activation as moving.**

I could write a page about this one, but I'll keep it short. I find the Saar -conceptually- a really, really cool race; scavenging nomads that roam about, always on the move. There's only one problem; the mechanics of the original Saar in reality does not support them to be nomadic and flexible, actually quite the opposite. Saar can only defend their precious Space Docks with ships, largely restraining their fleet to stick around. They must always be stronger than nearby fleets, and thus it's normally not worth moving the Space Docks. They can, but they shouldn't. What's the point of having such an ability? The original Floating Factory increased production capability (further increasing the reason to stay put) instead of their thematic trait; flexibility. If flexibility is supposed to be the very gimmick of the Clan of Saar, why place such heavy restrictions on them? Shattered Ascension's solution to this is simply a small change on their race-specific tech, which redefines the entire playability of the race. Instead of all the fiddly numbers, let a Space Dock move and build on the same activation (and speed). This way Saar may remobilize themselves at any time, but at a reduction in production capacity and fighter capacity making them weaker, but more flexible. More importantly, their fleet is no longer glued to their Space Docks. Since these floating things can retreat, Saar needs only escort enough to protect the

Docks for one combat round. As I said, I love the Saar. And this version of the race-tech makes me love to play them as well.

***N'orr Berserker Genome inflicts 1 additional hit at the end of any combat round, if N'orr has inflicted at least 1 hit.**

It is clear that N'orr needed, quite simply, to be a little better in some way or the other. It's natural to start with the one element that smells of bad design. The original race tech wasn't just fiddly and completely random, it was way too weak as well. Berserker Genome should be something that gives N'orr, a race whose single ability is already based on chance, something to depend a little more on. A simple bonus hit is simple, clean, and very nasty thing to face for their opponents, especially in ground combat. This improvement immediately makes the N'orr the spiky force it deserves to be. In SA, N'orr also has a few other subtle improvements such as better Generals (leader), and that it opens for the possibility of increasing the plastic limits, which means more Destroyers, which is their unit of choice.

***Jol Nar Spatial Conduit Network: Your ships may “teleport” (move as if it was an adjacent system) to the destination during the movement step of an activation, if the activated system contains no enemy planets or units.**

In SA, “control of a system” is not a requirement for use of abilities, because this was a cumbersome thing that also produced a lot of conceptually weird situations. The original game did not have game mechanics dependent on “control of a system” aside the couple of Objectives that stated these terms themselves. Among the few abilities that needed a workaround was the Conduit Network. In this form it is more of a teleport-like ability the Jol Nar can use into deep space. Sometimes the games develop so that only close neighbors interact, and people on the opposite side of the galaxy play separate games. This teleport ability is an interesting element that ties the galaxy closer and suddenly can influence/involve more players. It is a very expensive ability, and this lives up to its cost.

***Mentak Salvage Operations yields only 1 TG from *lost* Space Battles. War Suns may be salvaged, but will default to a movement value of 1 without the War Sun Technology advance.**

This modification gives Mentak a small nerf in exchange for the possibility of improving Cruisers (Assault Cannon & Graviton), which directly affects the potential of Mentak. At the same time, it goes in the long line of changes that reward aggressive play more than turtling; Mentak should not earn 2 TG if you shoot down one of their Destroyers somewhere. Neither is it thematic that they can salvage as much when the space is occupied by enemies. But it IS fair that they can salvage a War Sun if they're brave enough to take it down. Again, reward for taking action (for the sake of game dynamics. And coolness).

***The Mentak ability to steal Trade Goods is now an action and costs 1 CC from Strategy Allocation to execute.**

Again, we had for several reasons for this change. First off, this ability was obsolete in its original form if the other players simply made sure they had less than 3 Trade Goods in the bank at round start, the one time where you're the least likely to have any Trade Goods at all. All other abilities in the game are at the hands of the owner, but not this ability. Another weird thing about it is that it would directly influence the compensating starting TG in 5, 7 and 8 player games,

which should be totally disconnected from race abilities! To patch this up and to make Mentak a more interesting race, we agreed to let them steal TG as a strategic choice, but at the cost of a Strategy CC. This is a mechanic that already is quite normal in the game, and was tempting to use. In addition to stealing, it would give the Mentak a limited stall ability, which fits the race; They are pirate-like renegades, which will wait and gather intelligence of enemy doings before surprise striking at the opportune moment. The CC cost seems to be perfectly balanced compared to the total effect, considering the stalling power and the fact that you hamstring opponents at the same time.

***Naalu initiative ability is replaced with the following ability: Before the Action Phase begins, you may take one Tactical Action. The Action Phase will then continue as normal. Naalu starts with no Cruiser unit.**

This modification to Naalu emerged with SA4.0, after a long line of duels revealing Naalu's true battle power. One of the perceived problems was their ability to set a Strategy Card in motion before its intended order. For instance, they were better with the Diplomacy card than were Xxcha because they could trigger it before the enemy could move; even worse was when they used their initiative in conjunction with the new Warfare card. It became clear that this part of Naalu should be slightly tweaked, and at the same time we could get rid of a real headache; to remember Naalu's special initiative every damn turn in every round, all game. This version is simpler, more streamlined, more balanced and causes fewer headaches.

***Telepathic Mind Weapon triggers whenever an opponent activates a system containing one of your planets.**

This is another change to get rid of the cumbersome “control of a system” game mechanic. Naalu needs only a planet in the system now, but in exchange they can no longer use this with a single ship in space. We find it more fitting and more thematic too, that this mind weapon radiates from the collective force of a planet, not a small fleet. All in all, Naalu has been subject to some changes in SA, some boosts and some nerfs to make them compatible and balanced enough to be used even in 2-player games. We stress that 2-player games is the absolute best way of measuring a race's power, because imbalances are easily overshadowed in larger games.

***While Muaat War Suns have only 1 movement, they also have only 1 bombardment die until they develop Deep Space Cannon.**

This is simply a necessary precaution to reduce Muaat's ability to completely trample an opponent at round 2. Their resourceful Home System in addition to their ability to produce fighters on the go makes it easy for them to decimate most opposition early in the game. Reducing their bombardment capability in the first rounds made it less lucrative for Muaat to enter opponent Home Systems early. Note also that when using the Star by Star variant, Muaat has a special rule in that their home system must be placed on the outer rim.

***Xxcha may use either the resource or influence value of a planet when counting votes.**

***Xxcha's race specific tech works in any system in which you control a planet. It does not cost a Command Counter to use.**

This is essentially a simple power-up for the Xxcha. There is a broad consensus that this race is indeed too weak, so many varianters go ahead and strengthen their starting army. In SA, we keep focus on strengths and weaknesses. If the Xxcha are to be made better, it should be in a way that

makes them more unique and in line with their thematic concept as diplomats and politicians. This modification does exactly that. First, it assures that they normally have a few votes extra, regardless of the type of planets they gain. Furthermore, we improved their race-specific technology. The reason is that it was too situational for its steep cost; it was effective if Xxcha had enough forces and were in the position to repositions themselves while an attack was delayed, but if this was not the case, using the technology would cost as much for the Xxcha as for the attacker. This ability can only be used once per game round, and it is clear that this limitation is more than enough.

***Yssaril starts with 1 Carrier less, and Light/Wave Deflector as their only Technology. Shuttle Logistics: During the movement step of an activation, you may move up to 2 Ground Forces in from adjacent inactivated systems. This limit is increased by 2 Ground Forces for every Strategy CC spent. Such units may participate in planetary landings as normal. If they for any reason are unable to land, immediately return them to their original position.**

This is a big one, and it completely reshapes how the Yssaril works. The obvious incentive for a different approach was that this race was way overpowered, to the extent that many gaming communities chose not to include them at all. The problem was mainly that while they had powerful abilities that fit very well in with their sneaky/roguish/spy concept, they were also the ideal expansionistic race, quite against the concept. Many varianters have nerfed their stalling-waiting ability, which was at the core of their power. Again, in the doctrine of SA, we would rather keep the part that is UNIQUE about the race, and drop the expansionistic potential that doesn't really fit in the picture. They were described as a low-tech cloak'n dagger race, and this is exactly what we tried to accomplish while balancing them. We let their ONLY starting technology be Light/Wave Deflector, which supports their stealthy nature, and also has some cool side-effects. They still have very easy access to Transit Diodes, a technology that works very well in conjunction with Yssaril's other abilities (e.g., stall, stealth, grab planet, transit forces to reinforce, then shuttle forces further next round). The next tech on that branch of the tech tree, X-89 Bacterial Weapon, is a natural barrier for Yssaril. One of their best abilities is the unlimited hand of Action Cards, and wasting them all on using such a tech would be self-harming. Thus there is no problem with the Yssaril having their one starting technology so close to a top tier one. Lastly, this variant of Shuttle Logistics nicely rounds out the Yssaril's unique play-style. Being able to move Ground Forces around on their own can easily surprise your opponents and open for many new ground-based strategies. This version of Yssaril has been playtested through dozens of games, and it is clear that it is a demanding race to play that thrives on finesse rather than brute power.

Strategies

***During Assembly, a player chosen to play an Agenda always has the choice of drawing one random card from the pile instead of his hand. Any player may call a Voice of the Council election before the agenda voting, but this costs 1 CC from Strategy Allocation.** Voice of the Council was a great idea, but poorly conceived and implemented. The reason is that any player activating Assembly would have little reason to NOT call a VoC roll as long as they didn't have this position themselves. That way the VoC would easily shift from player to player without actually having an impact before last round, and every election taking precious time

from the game. By adding a cost for calling the vote in the first place, and adding a new incentive for wanting it (+5 votes), a VoC election will rather be seen every now and then when the active player has the requirements to perform such a coup; superior votes, dealings with other players or helpful action cards. This makes VoC a strategic element to the game rather than a no-brainer time consumer. It was added that any player could make the investment and call the vote in order to make it more accessible.

***Executing Bureaucracy Primary ability: 3 Stage I Public Objectives are drawn openly for all to see. One Objective is chosen to go to the public gaming area, while the two others are each placed either at the bottom or the top of the deck. One influence may now be spent to flip/turn the orientation of the Rotation Cyclus.**

This is to give the user more actual influence in how the game will be played by granting the ability to choose *which* Objectives will come into play, not merely *when*. The Rotation Cyclus exists to eradicate the "down-stream" bias inherent in TI3 (i.e., that you have a persistent advantage if you go to war to your left, and disadvantage to your right). The Cyclus reverts this back and forth based on player choices, and take a natural part in the strategic game.

***Using Warfare II Primary, the owner may take a tactical action after secondaries are conducted. This Command Counter is paid from reinforcements instead of the Command Pool. The High Alert token yields bonus to all friendly combat rolls in its present system, not just during Space Battles.**

This improved Warfare II is yet another link in the long line of things that promotes an aggressive play style. A stronger Warfare card makes it a more viable choice. If it works better, you lose fewer units, and a conquest against other players is immediately far more lucrative. When this card is played, opponents get a chance to prepare for an imminent attack by buffering up using the secondary ability. The power of the primary ability depends on the power of the secondary ability, which has gotten quite an improvement in SA, see below:

***Warfare II secondary requires only that the destination systems do not contain enemy ships. Any type of cargo may be picked up during this movement, but as always, no planetary landings may be initiated.**

This simple improvement for Warfare II's secondary allows the ships in question to move to unoccupied systems, not just systems you control, which allows not for only reinforcements, but permits a maneuver to buffer up against attacks, or simply to advance two ships one step further. This is an important modification that brings with it a lot of new strategic options and dynamic gameplay.

***Diplomacy II has an additional effect; until you take your first hostile tactical action this round, any player doing such action against you must exhaust one of their own planets. (Hostile action is defined as an action that would break Trade Agreements).**

In an effort to slightly improve diplomacy and make it a better option, we made sure it was always usable; sometimes when picking this card, an opponent could grab initiative, play a First Strike card, or something that forfeited the entire point of picking the card. All other Strategy Cards would pay off in some way, and Diplomacy should too. It now also yields some limited protection when facing multiple opponents, or may protect several fronts on the same time.

***Diplomacy II secondary works adjacent to or inside any system in which you control planets or units. You may never target an enemy Home System for Peaceful Annexation.**

The premise for using the secondary is changed because, as previously mentioned, “control of a system” as a game mechanic is taken out in SA. The restriction on Home Systems should be an obvious one, considering all the other restrictions there are on this field. Thematically, that the entire native population of one of the great races should willingly switch sides to another race while their government fights on is simply absurd.

***Technology II primary has an additional option b), to execute the secondary ability up to three times without paying the CC cost. The resource cost of the secondary ability is 5.**

Oftentimes one would pick Technology II mainly to save resources for other things. It would be more reasonable if you chose the Technology strategy those times you wanted to make an investment to dive into technology advancement. Furthermore, this ability ensures that the one using the primary ability gets as much use of technology specialties (percentage wise) as when activating the secondary ability.

***If using Trade (SA); when Trade Agreements are broken as a result of combat, the attacker discards all Trade Goods present on his Trade Contracts, while the defender may collect them for free.**

This is used only in conjunction with the unique SA Trade card, where Trade Goods pile up on the actual cards and are collected through the use of the secondary. This gives the Trade Agreement an additional role as a “peace treaty” as well.

Miscellaneous Cards

***Friendly Fire: During this combat round, opposing fighters will inflict a hit on their own forces at natural rolls of 1 through 4. You may target any fleet, regardless of fighter-to-ship ratio. Play: Just before a combat round begins.**

This is a simple moderation of the overpowered Friendly Fire action card. In in this variant the victim fighters at least get to shoot before they go down. It is more thematic as well; they hit each other during the actual dog-fight and not before the space battle even begins.

***In the Silence of Space is not restricted by enemy units. Fleets containing Dreadnoughts or War Suns will not benefit from this card.**

This card was very limited, and this tweak gives it a little broader use. It is an offensive card, and improving it promotes warfare. The limitation is, though, that only smaller tactical fleets may stealth past the enemy. This keeps the card from getting too strong, and encourages those smaller skirmishes that tend to keep the game pace up without completely devastating players.

***Faulty Targeting System obstructs all PDS fire during movement step instead of re-rolling 1 PDS die.**

This is another offense-based Action Card that needed at boost. A card should be either specific and powerful, or flexible and less powerful. This card specifically targets PDS and should have greater effect. PDS grids are in many cases responsible for making a static game where anything but defense is impossible. Some kind of anti-PDS weapon was needed, and now this card fulfills that role.

***Signal Jam: Your opponent's Command Counter must be placed ship-side up (for rules on flipped Command Counters, see Fleet Logistics). Friendly Home System may be targeted.**

Signal Jam is the perfect example of faulty design. If a card is easy to use and sets no requirement and premises, it cannot be super strong. This point-and-die card was obviously always used against a production center, in addition to locking down all ships and units. In 2-player games, where such imbalances appear more clearly, whoever got this card would simply win the game. This crosses the virtue of SA, and was reduced to *denying an opponent a specific activation*, but does not lock down anything. The actual mechanic is the same as that of Fleet Logistics (where the CC is turned).

***Rare Mineral: Receive 3 Trade Goods. Play: Immediately after acquiring any planet.**

This one is obvious for two reasons. First, it makes the card work through the entire game, not only the first two rounds. Second, it is part of the long line of small elements in SA that promotes a dynamic game. Since this can be used against opponents, it rewards taking action and create a more dynamic game.

***Privateers: Choose an opponent, and claim half of his current Trade Goods (round down). Play: As an action.**

This is a simple nerf to an overpowered card. The vanilla version was probably to hinder stockpiling of the highly limited accessible Trade Goods, but we believe such meta-game incentives is the wrong way to go about things and besides, this is no longer needed with the endless Trade Good supply in SA.

***Secret Objective "Merciless" may be accomplished against any opponent.**

This is an already very difficult objective in a game where defense is often the only way to win. Furthermore, a peeve in the vanilla "pie-slice" galactic layout was that the intrigue and conflicts most often happened between neighbors while people opposite of the board often had little interaction. This card should not support and drag this tendency further.

***Secret Objective "Threatening": I control 6 ships and 4 Ground Forces adjacent to two opponent Home Systems (may not "overlap," and units adjacent to own HS is not threatening in this context).**

Threatening was the easiest Secret Objective to begin with, and non-symmetrical layouts as are common in SA-maps or in Star by Star games sadly made it even easier, so a modification was needed to turn the card into a challenge.

Appendix 1: Rule Modifications (3/4)

Leaders

***For movement purposes, Leaders are considered Ground Forces that takes no capacity. Thus, Technology Advances or Action Cards that allows movement of Ground Forces may also move Leaders (e.g. Transit Diodes and Shuttle Logistics). Leaders may also be moved freely within their system between the steps of your own turns, if the system contains no**

enemy ships.

First this is a strengthening of the mobilization technologies and a logical one at that; if they can move a gazillion troops (planetary scale), they should be able to move an individual and his staff as well. In SA Leader movement rules are streamlined, removing the logistical challenges of moving individuals completely, which feels more reasonable. Note, however, that Leaders cannot be two places during the same step, e.g., a General cannot add bonus battles on two different planets within a system.

***Generals may use both Invasion Combat abilities (re-roll and +1) in both attack and defense.**

The General has to be better during Invasion Combat than an Admiral in Space Battles to have equal value in the game; after all, Generals cannot work offensively if you lose in space. At the same time we saw no reason for the General to have a different effect in attack and defense, which is an unusual trait in this game. A combination seemed to make the General good enough at his field to match the other leaders in prowess. N'orr earns the most on this change considering they have two Generals, which also makes this change an important step in balancing N'orr.

***Agents may only use their Sabotage Action Card effect in their current system. After doing so, an Agent may not Sabotage other cards this round or through the entire next round. This Sabotage action does not sacrifice the Agent. In respect to this ability, all political oriented Action Cards (e.g. Thugs) are considered to take place on Mecatol Rex, and all cards targeting the race sheet (e.g. Insubordination, Cultural Crisis) takes place within your Home System. Enemy Leaders are automatically captured when defeated in a Space Battle or Invasion Combat with an Agent present.**

Some gamer groups I know never played with Leaders, mainly because they thought the General was too weak and the Agent too strong (due to their sabotage-ability, both in practical and preventive power). This tweak introduces a more active play style and forces the Agent out on the map along with the other Leaders, instead always being positioned safely at his Home System, waiting to jump in front of a missile somewhere in the galaxy or whatever was the thematic explanation for his original ability. In this version, he must be where it happens, but is only exhausted after sabotaging a card, much like the Diplomat. The Agent will have to be careful not to sabotage minor AC effects and be exhausted when bigger ones may follow. This change definitely made the Agent a notch more intriguing and fun to use, at the same time not being all-powerful against all forms of Action Cards. "Action Card effects that happens in their current system" sounds vague, but gives up very few grey zones. Rare Mineral, Signal Jamming, Friendly Fire, Morale Boost etc., are all cards that take place in a particular system. All political-influencing Action Cards takes place on Mecatol Rex, and all general cards that affect your race (sheet) in some way or the other, (e.g., Cultural Crisis, Insubordination etc.) take place in your Home System.

***Diplomats may, in addition, let an active enemy fleet pass through a friendly fleet present in the same system. When present with an attacking fleet, Diplomats may allow opposing fleets to retreat before the Space Battle begins. This will not break Trade Agreements. A Diplomat delaying an invasion obstructs the entire Invasion Combat sequence, including all Bombardment. This ability, (to obstruct an invasion) may be overturned by the enemy**

at the cost of 10 influence. When this happens, the Diplomat will escape, unexhausted, to another friendly planet or fleet.

The Diplomats had very little general use, except their water-proof stall ability. The fact that this ability was impossible to overcome potentially made the game a lot more static and passive. The SA solution was to give them more interesting utility when working around on the board, and make their block/delay invasion ability possible to pass through, but at a steep cost. It is important to realize that even if the ability is bypassed with political countermeasures (10 influence), it costs the opponent dearly. In fact, utilizing the Diplomat, you will want this to happen as often as possible. The main difference is that you no longer leave a single person to defend your Home System, but an army instead. The Diplomats aren't nerfed much, but the dynamic and tactical part on how you use them is different and more exciting. The ability to let the opponent escape without battle is an intriguing ability important for taking territory and shaking up board positions without necessarily losing a lot of ships or starting an open war. Instead you can get far with some negotiation and/or intimidation. Again, the bottom line for the change is to replace static game elements with dynamic elements. While the big changes, like the maps, are the most critical, a lot of smaller tweaks eventually play their part.

***Scientists, instead of restricting War Sun bombardment, may absorb one extra bombardment hit when together with a PDS unit (this does not count as a planetary shield).**

This is the final tweak needed to achieve the streamlined bombardment system. The extra hit they can absorb works even if the enemy has Graviton Negator.

***Consult these Fate Rolls when a Leader falls in either Space Battle or Invasion Combat: 1 Killed, 2-8 Captured, 9-10 Escaped.**

Many players complained about the differentiating between Leaders dying on planets and in space because it's a fiddly mechanic and nearly impossible to memorize. We also think Leaders were too easy to kill; when it is possible to rescue them again from the clutches of the enemy, it adds a new layer of intrigue to the game and opens more negotiation for captured Leaders. Thus, we wanted to open up that possibility a bit more. See next rule modification about captured Leaders.

***Captured opponent Leaders are marked with a flag, and retain their position on the board, whether on a planet or in space. Such captives simply work as passive cargos that take no capacity. If the planet (ship) that holds the captured Leader is invaded (destroyed), a new fate roll is in order. When a Leader "escapes" or is "captured" by friendly forces, simply put the Leader back to play normally within the system.**

This handles captured Leaders concretely instead of abstractly, designed to create more tension and intrigue on the board, and more opportunity to plan rescue operations. If the captor wishes to keep the Leader safe and locked down, he might want to actually move him with a ship to his home system. This is a fun detail to add. Of course, there would be no reason for keeping them alive at all if it weren't for the next rule (and the SA Objective card that rewards taking down opponent Leaders).

***When executing an opponent Leader during Status Phase, you must choose and exhaust one planet.**

This is an incentive to keep opponent Leaders alive, and thereby keep the drama, negotiation and rescue-plans for them going. The thematic reason that you must exhaust a planet is of course that the leaders are eminent individuals known throughout the galaxy. A brutal execution would cause uprising against your rule on certain planets, thereby exhausting the planet for one round.

Distant Suns:

***Native Knowledge: Before the game starts, all players may secretly look at any one Domain Counter.**

***Deep Space Probing Vessels: During the Strategy Phase, each player may freely probe one planet in a system adjacent to each friendly Space Dock on the board.**

***Fighters may perform either a Low Orbit Probing, or a High Orbit Probing (quick probing). The first works exactly as normal rules from probing. High Orbit probing works as follows: Distribute all available Fighters to planets being probed. Immediately before the Planetary Landings step of the activation, roll 1 die for each Fighter. On an unmodified roll of 8+, the planet is successfully probed.**

The above three rules removes the sharpest edge of the randomness associated with Distant Suns, by yielding a hint of knowledge to plan a bit of strategy with. Then some slightly bad luck can be compensated with good playing. We think that playing the casino with who gets screwed and who doesn't is a waste of time. This at the very least puts some moderation to it.

***All Domain Counter units are treated as regular units. Such units can be bombarded, converted or captured just like corresponding plastic units.**

Streamlining, easy to remember. Racial abilities have the same effect against neutral as against other players. Quite natural.

***Lazax Survivors are subject to no special rules/effect when probed. They must be encountered normally.**

We highly disapprove of handouts, and especially of Victory Points! VP's should be earned through a strategic game, and the many hours it takes to complete the game, can at least be as fair as possible. There is no apparent *reason* for it either, the rule seems to be totally random. Specialty rules are bad enough on their own, and specialty rules with bad effects are removed with prejudice.

***Natural Wealth only yields 1 Trade Good upon encountering the Domain. Place all remaining Trade Goods on the planet. The controlling player may take one such TG from the planet when activating the system (during the Production Step), and one during each Refresh Planets step of the Status Phase. Whenever an opponent successfully invades a planet with existing Natural Wealth he may immediately take one of the Trade Goods present.**

This is among the most important of the Distant Suns modifications, because it improves both the balance and dynamic gameplay at the same time. Domain Counters can make as much as 4 Trade Goods dump right into the bank of the player, which often is enough to completely overpower a neighbor. The value of 4 Trade Goods would be good enough spread over a longer time, but is simply too much as an instant value that kick starts one players game to an unfair degree. Another perk with this change (besides it being logical that it takes time to drain a planet

of natural resources), is that it will encourage other players to go in and take some of the spoils for themselves. This is fairer, and will add some sense of suspense and intrigue at the same time.

***Instead of “Hostage Situation”, roll a D10, divide by 2 and round down. This is how many Natural Resources and Hostile Locals there are in this Domain. Place the number of TG counters on the Domain Counter to keep track.**

Hostage Situation reeks of silly design. First of all, how do they take hostage many millions of troops? Why does this invincible army disappear when you pay the "ransom," are they moving to outer space? Why is this Domain Counter so f% ridiculous? Looking at the picture, the first thing I thought was; "Wow, BOTH Hostile Natives AND Natural Resources. Folks defending a rich planet! How cool and logical!" It wasn't, but it should be; a Domain Counter that can both be an obstacle as well as a reward (depending on how you approach it) is something completely different and is a very refreshing element to a casino like Distant Suns.

***Hidden Factory: You have discovered an ancient factory with old ships worth repairing. You may immediately build ships in the system for up to two production capacity. You receive 1 resource discount on this build.**

I mentioned that the Trade Goods from Natural Resources came too fast out on the table, and this is actually even worse. With 4 free production capacity worth of instant units, right at the borders, opponents should be graveled fairly quickly. This truly is a broken component. As mentioned earlier, SA disapproves handouts but favors choices. This version gives less for free and decreases the maximum number of units, but gives you a wider choice of units to find/invest in.

***Settlers always belong to a random opponent (roll as usual). The discovering player may choose to land immediately.**

This one simple change adds to the long line of "no hand-outs," but in return gives the player a chance to land and fight it out instead of having all his Ground Forces floating onboard a carrier for an entire round. Not a very important modification, but it's more straightforward.

Appendix 1: Rule modifications (4/4) (conventions)

Objectives and Victory

***All Objective cards, including Special Objectives, are claimed simultaneously by all players in the Objectives-step of the status phase.**

***Victory occurs the moment the number of required Victory Points (VP) are attained by any player.**

***If this happens simultaneously, victory goes to the player ending up with the most VP.**

We firmly maintain that this absolutely is the fairest and most reasonable way to deal with victories. A player reaching 10 VP winning over a player ending on 15 VP simply because of the Strategy Card he happened to have at the moment is unacceptable. You might suggest that this is all part of the strategy, but the argument cannot be taken that far in this case; Strategy Cards selection is largely based on other's choices; what happened to be your neighbor's unrelated plan, who happened to get the Speaker last round, etc. The truth is that the initiative number is largely

out of your hands if the game has more than 2 players, and thus shouldn't be decisive in matters of victory in a hard core strategy game.

***In addition to the Ascension-specific Objective Cards, include Objective Cards from both Shattered Empire expansion and the original box.**

Many of the new SA cards reward an expansionist nature and add much dynamic drive to the game. An example is the Pioneer Objective rewarding a number of ships to go 4 spaces away from your Home System, surely into enemy terrain. This is a tough challenge in a free-for-all multiplayer game, but needed to see skirmishes on the board. This mixes the board up a lot and loosens up the usual static situations on the map. There are also anti-fleet massing objectives and other stuff that helps the game roll along.

Race-specific Technology Acquisition

***There are only two ways of acquiring Race-specific Technologies: a) Driving Force of Progress: When a race reaches a number of Victory Points equal the extra cost printed on the Race Specific Technology card, they may acquire this card for free during the Status Phase.**

b) Exigent Research: The Race-specific Technology may be purchased during Status Phase for the resource cost indicated on the card.

***When a Race-specific Technology is acquired, increase the cost of the remaining ones by the cost of the card just acquired.**

Race specific technologies were a great addition that came with SE, mostly because the races became more unique, and gained abilities in line with their concept. However, many of these technology cards never saw the light of day because it was hard to justify getting these technologies instead of the cheaper standard-technologies, which often were just as powerful. The result was an addition to the game that was very little in use. We wished each of the race-technologies to be a true power-up to each of the races, almost like an extra ability that you could actually use, without regretting you didn't buy something else. The result was an entirely different approach, where the race technology could be unlocked with sufficient Victory Points, a reward for taking the effort and claiming objectives and pushing the game forward. Weaker race techs would be acquired earlier, and vice versa, so it balanced out surprisingly well. The result was revitalized incentives for taking chances and making sacrifices to score objectives, and it was like a mad dash around the board to obtain the precious Artifacts that would help in unlocking your race tech. Just what a once-stale game needed.

However, we also recognized the interesting strategies one could pursue by investing in the race technologies early, so we kept the possibility of buying them instead of waiting for them to be granted freely. The cost was greatly reduced compared to the original, as we wished to see the race techs in use most of the time.

When the second (and third) race tech was planned, the accumulative cost system was added to spread out the acquisition of various race techs, without greatly differentiating their cost. This introduces some interesting new decisions to be made, of which technology to prioritize, and perhaps choosing not to unlock the cheapest one when you are able to, because you are aiming for the slightly more expensive one right away.

It should be mentioned that a very serious project of designing new race-specific technologies

commenced in the ti3wiki.org forum long before Shards of the Throne was announced. All the contributors made great effort to make the proposed technologies flavorful, interesting, balanced, creative and dynamic, and all in all be a good addition to the game. Half way into the project, when it was announced that SotT would feature such race tech, the project was put on hold. At the day of release, however, the community was very disappointed in the poor craftsmanship done by FFG. Some were uncreative, some were imbalanced, and several had printing errors and really didn't fit the concept of the race. We decided to use them, but tweak them where it was needed. Further, it was little question whether or not we would use the high quality race techs discussed at the ti3wiki community. The result was each race having three race-specific technologies to choose from, further defining the strengths of each race.

Progression Feedback

***During each Strategy Phase the player with the most Victory Points receives a number of Trade Goods equal to the difference in Victory Points obtained by the player in second place.**

This is another incentive to collect Victory Points and to drive the game forward. It also compensates a little for the "all vs. leader" tendency in all free-for-all games, often referred to as "second is the true first." This is a subtle but important rule to inject some punch and activity to your game.

Action Cards

***It is not required to announce the playing of an Action Card to wait for other Action Cards. Simply play the card during the proper time, and the effect is immediately carried out.**

This is simply to save time and keep the speed and fun of the game flowing. Announcing cards is utter nonsense and unneeded, except that we need some clarification in these potentially colliding cards: *"Emergency Repairs" will not obstruct the effect of a "Direct Hit" card, and "Cultural Crisis" will not obstruct the effect of a "Multiculturalism" card.* There you have it. Smack down your Action Cards in front of your opponent and game on. Do not "announce" stuff.

Galactic Trade

***Trade Goods received through Trade Agreements are acquired simultaneously by all players. TGs are always accessible, even if the cardboard pile is dry. In this case use replacement counters.**

***In 3 and 4 player games, players may trade one of their Trade Agreements with themselves (simply flip the card around to show the active side). In 2-player games, both trades can be self-traded.**

The notion of a player being denied the Trade Goods he should have because some cardboard counters went dry is the kind of despicable meta-gaming effect we hold in high contempt. This was a sensible mechanic in the abstract game Puerto Rico (Rio Grand Games), but going for the same approach in highly thematic Twilight is idiotic. Also, if every little simple thing like grabbing for some Trade Goods happens in some specific order, things will take longer time, and

people will spend extra time searching for Trade Goods when they find none. We are very disappointed in many of the decisions made at FFG designing this game, but luckily a lot of counters came with both expansions, mostly eliminating this problem.

The self-trade rule was necessary to make 2-player games work, but later it became clear that it could (partially) be transferred to 3 and 4 player games as well. This change is needed because you have no potential enemies left when you trade with most of them. This could sometimes add to the static nature of the game because you could not perform offensive maneuvers without losing the trade income, right at the time you would need it most.

Rotation

***The Rotation Cycler: The order of Strategy Card selection (and secondary activation) is executed in the direction of this marker, starting with Speaker.**

The Cycler itself is nothing but an arrow, a pencil, a fork, anything that can point to indicate which direction the Strategy Card selection proceeds. TI3 always moves this process in a clockwise direction, so if you're going to wage war you should do it left and not right. This "upstream imbalance" is bigger than one initially realizes, and we believe that this small yet significant flaw needed to be addressed. When two neighbors start waging war, one of them will have the advantage of pulling strategy cards first. The SA solution is to enable players to alter which neighbor this is through use of the Bureaucracy Card, eliminating yet another meta-game mechanism.

Artifact Research

***Artifacts also work as Tech Specialty of the indicated color. These work even if they exist on an exhausted planet. A Scientist may as usual double this efficiency if placed on the same planet or space system as the Artifact. Artifacts do not count toward Objectives based on acquiring Tech Specialty planets, however.**

***Empty Artifacts are worth 2 Trade Goods upon discovery.**

One of the problems with the Artifacts as written was that they held no real value until the moment someone actually won the game. In this variant they become something worth holding during the course of the game, especially together with other bonuses rewarded in SA for VP, and become something to fight over and worth making an effort protecting. Since they conceptually are based on the various technology types, it was too good an opportunity to miss to make them work like technology specialties of the indicated color.

Global Fleet Supply

When playing with increased plastic limit include the following rules:

***Every Strategy Phase, players must pay an "upkeep" in Resources, equal to how much his Fleet Supply exceeds 8. For example, a race with Fleet Supply of 10 would have to pay 2 resources every Strategy Phase. Any such Fleet Supply that are not paid "upkeep" for are immediately removed.**

Some gamers may have extra plastic pieces at hand, or you may be playing online with an unlimited amount of pixels. The question, then, is whether or not we should increase the plastic limit. The reason SA regards this as a good idea is that you get more choice of building the ships

you want (there are only 8 resources worth of Destroyers, but 25 worth of Dreadnoughts in the box!), and it enables you to wage warfare over a larger area against more players (4-ring maps comes to mind).

This should *not* be used without SA, however, because Destroyers are relatively stronger (and have the plastic limit as a meta-gameish limitation), and games are more prone to stalling and passive fleet massing. Only in an SA environment do we advise the use of extra plastic and CCs as described in the SA manual.

Appendix 2: Extras and Variants (1/3)

Below is a set of game options that will affect the game in a number of ways. A few of these are mostly for a fun change, while others are quite fundamental, but integrated into the core rules because of complexity or other things. Star by Star and The Twilight Council are among the most acclaimed variants.

Star by Star

See [forum thread](#).

The idea with this variant is to loosen up the traditional map layout (pie-slice setup) which regrettably bogged down the game. The problem with pie-slice is that there are next to zero contested systems between them, and all players have their own real estate in the galaxy that is seemingly justified to them. The result is that people fortify this slice for hours, and few will try to take planets from another man's galactic slice, because that would mean open war (not good in a free-for-all). With the Star by Star variant, the notion of "yours and mine" is greatly reduced, as many more systems exist equidistant from several players. Now negotiations, skirmishes and diplomacy are once again the driving factor. Besides, the map looks a lot less synthetic when the Home Systems lie scattered across the galaxy, and adds a nice touch to the feeling of the game: more probable, and less like a simulator.

Dimension Rifts: Whenever a blank Artifact is discovered, draw a random double sided wormhole token (if available) and place it in the system. The active player chooses which side is face up. Whenever a fleet enters such a wormhole, flip the token around. Wormholes of this type are ignored for all Objective purposes, but are affected by Political Agendas.

Dimension Rifts was an idea inspired by the double sided wormhole tokens that came with Shattered Empire. The idea is first off that we want more wormholes in key positions to tie the galaxy together. In large galaxies players may soon feel they are playing different games on the same board, which steals away a lot of tension. While more wormholes are good, the idea of shifting wormholes when a fleet enters that changes poles could open for some very interesting situations and negotiations. A player might want another player to send a ship through to open the needed passage, for example. Another gain is that players must consider a little more where they place their Artifact, knowing that it might just be a wormhole instead! At the beginning we considered this to be a crazy idea that would be fun, but nowadays we use it all the time, because it increases the pace of the game and make things flow really well in galaxies/maps that would otherwise be stale and passive.

Simultaneous Action System

This is actually a rarely used option, even in advanced groups, though we believe it will be used more as people become more familiar with Shattered Ascension. The idea for the SAS came up in the days where the Transfer Action was in big debate, and its questionable ability to build a Space Dock in the "off-system" as well. This made us go back to the original purpose of such a weird specialty rule as the Transfer Action and ask; why do we have such a rule in the first place? While the activation system is ingenious, it has logical flaws. A ship cannot go from A to B while another ship goes from B to A! The Transfer Action was seemingly a quick fix to this. But alas, the Transfer Action "patch" is all too narrow to fix this general problem. What about two ships two spaces apart wanting to change places? What about those times you have 3 systems that would like to exchange units? There are a number of *logically* possible movements that are restricted by the activation system and not covered by the Transfer Action.

The Simultaneous Action system is a much more general system in which every logical movement is possible, where the Transfer Action is simply a basic example of simultaneous movement. However, the cost of SAS has increased since the first version. All in all, the game feels richer and more alive with this system, even though you very seldom see it used, mostly because of the steep CC cost. The knowledge that you CAN perform whatever brilliant movements your strategy and intuition comes up with gives a certain peace of mind, and it opens the strategic table a whole new degree.