

Roman Empire 311

Chapter 311: Constitutional

"Finally finished!"

"This is the first step, and it must pass in the state parliament before it can take effect with the approval of His Majesty!"

"Isn't it just revisions, what are you afraid of?"

...

That's right, here is the Constitutional Committee of the New Holy Roman Empire. All the people present were the government sent by the governments of the states.

The Constitutional Committee was established as early as 1854, because the parties were too divided, and the friction has dragged on to the present.

Now that the draft constitution has finally come out, before that, the new Holy Roman Empire used a unified agreement signed by the states.

The draft constitution soon appeared in Franz's desk.

Looking at it from the beginning to the end, Franz frowned slightly. This constitution is actually the result of compromise between the parties. The greatest advantage is probably the protection of imperial power.

This is an inevitable result. The members of the Constituent Committee are all royalists, with the exception of free cities, all states have kings.

The ***** determines the head. If the emperor's rights are restricted, can the king's rights be guaranteed?

From a rights perspective, the kings of the states are Franz's best allies. Both the imperial power and the imperial power stood on the same front, and both sides suffered losses.

Other terms are similar to the actual situation of the new Holy Roman Empire now.

It is almost a replica of the German Empire. The governments of the states have a high degree of autonomy. There are basically no restrictions except for the prohibition of division, the unification of the currency, and the consistency with the central government.

The command of the army belongs to the emperor and king. According to the Constitution: Franz and the king of the state have the right to command the army of the state, but the central government does not have this right.

The army was divided into the Central Army and the State Army. The Central Army is under the direct control of the emperor, and the governments of the states share the military expenses; while the troops of the states are directly under the king, and the states themselves bear the military expenses.

In theory, as long as the state government has the money, it is legal to have a million troops, and the central government has no right to interfere, but the emperor has command.

The new version of the Constitution directly cut the army and government, and the state-owned army became the private army of the emperor and king.

The same is true in taxation. The people pay taxes to the king and emperor, and the central government and state governments only manage it for them.

This is somewhat similar to the British, but the emperor is greater in power.

High-level officials of the central government are appointed by the emperor. All high-level officials must have local or departmental appointment experience and have achieved certain political achievements.

The possibility of ascending to the sky was cut off directly from the source, or that the prime minister must rise from the state department.

It is worth mentioning that the election of members of parliament has been opened, but it is a high standard version.

Franz estimates that by this standard, no more than one percent are eligible to vote, and fewer are eligible to run.

Following the British, Parliament was divided into upper and lower houses. The upper house was composed of aristocracy and the lower house was elected by the people.

Eligibility for voting rights must meet the following conditions: possess the new Holy Roman Empire citizenship, and live in the empire for a long time, or be a colony, over 30 years old, have a junior high school education, have more than 10 years of social work experience, and be in the industry It has made certain achievements, no criminal record, and correct political thinking ...

Candidate qualifications are more stringent. After meeting the above qualifications, there will be an assessment of social contribution, an assessment of personal comprehensive ability, and an assessment of political ideology and morals ...

Do not doubt, according to this standard, it is estimated that the future Congress of the new Holy Roman Empire will be harmonious.

Those who are able to get out of the siege are basically old men, and they are powerless whether they scold or fight.

There is no doubt that this election model is a heavy blow for political parties. It's useless to be good at speaking, even if it's blown up, you do n't even have the right to vote, and you do n't even have the right to vote.

Voters have a certain level of knowledge and are elites in the industry. They have already passed the secondary stage. These people have little desire to change the status quo of the society.

Even if all these conditions are met, it is only a Member. Elections are not a shortcut if you want to become a Prime Minister from a parliament or climb up from the grassroots.

These restrictions were not set by Franz, but he hinted at the most that the latter were conspired by the Constitutional Committee.

It is normal to think about it. The current constitutional committees are all vested interests and naturally they must safeguard their own interests.

Don't assume that people of ordinary origin will expand the right to vote. The end result is often just the opposite, these people are the most opposed to expanding the right to vote.

The human mind is complicated. Before gaining privileges, counter-privileges; after gaining privileges, the **** determines the head and maintains privileges.

As elites in the society, they naturally do not want more people to come in to share this right, and eventually they become elite politics.

Elite politics is good, and Franz can't answer this question. But as emperor, it was in his interest.

A group of rational and conservative social elites entering the circle of rights is more conducive to the development of the country than a group of Chinese middle and second-guessing parties.

After seeing the political contribution, Franz did not hesitate to hit a fork, and made a note: Any political contribution behavior is regarded as a bribe and strictly investigated and handled in accordance with relevant regulations.

After thinking about it for a while, he added one: prohibit the media, companies, and individuals from making related political propaganda, and offenders will be punished as crimes of manipulation of political elections.

As for the question of how to vote for voters, it is not about Franz. I want to list my resume, probably, barely!

Everyone is the same anyway, no one is taking advantage of fairness and justice.

It's better than let the power of capital get involved, and Congress becomes a slave to capitalists' money.

Since it is constitutional, there are naturally provisions restricting the emperor's rights. For example, it is necessary to abide by the Constitution and clearly stipulate the proportion of royal family pensions.

That's about it. Don't expect a group of constitutional committees appointed by the emperor and the king to really formulate a constitution that limits royal power.

These terms are tacitly acknowledged by Franz. At the very least, the rights of the cabinet have been strengthened, but the foundation of the cabinet's power comes from the emperor, which is nothing more than a backseat.

It is worth mentioning that Franz's succession law has been changed. If the first heir can not bear the emperor's responsibility because of personal physical and mental reasons, the throne is directly inherited by the second heir.

There is no way. After experiencing the reign of Ferdinand I, after almost rolling over, the Habsburg royal family was frightened, for fear of coming again. After all, not every time will be so good luck, you can save yourself.

Had it not been for the loyal ministers of the Habsburgs, Austria would have become a constitutional monarchy during the Ferdinand era, and it was not up to Franz to formulate the constitution himself.

After checking it several times, it was found that nothing was wrong, and Franz passed on his opinion. At that time, naturally someone will find a reason to carry out his will.

This is the draft, and it's still a long time after that. The central and state governments also have to play political games to fight for their respective rights.

The constitution, plainly speaking, is just a large framework. When it comes to specific provisions, it depends on the results of political games among all parties.

Chapter 312: Sudden Shift in Global Strategy

As the wheel of history continued to turn, Alexander II ascended the throne and the Russian government once again launched reforms.

However, Alexander II lacked the prestige of Nicholas I and struggled to suppress the nobility, making things politically uncomfortable.

This was the aftermath of Nicholas I's failed reforms. Everyone was very wary of the Tsar trying new tricks, and in the face of the united nobility, Alexander II was truly powerless.

Of course, Russian history books would definitely not say that Nicholas I's reforms failed. They would only say he died too early and did not have the chance to complete reforms.

Having captured Constantinople, Nicholas I had already been placed on a pedestal, becoming the greatest Tsar of the Russian Empire.

Success exempts one from criticism. People would find excuses to defend him, while all the pressure for reform fell entirely on Alexander II's shoulders.

Internal strife within the Russian government intensified, and the Russians had no energy to continue making trouble for the British.

On March 26, 1860, the British and Russians signed the India Memorandum. In exchange for a low-interest loan of 15 million pounds, the British secured Russian recognition of their sovereignty over India.

In other words, the Indian rebels were sold out by the Russian government. Although this could not be considered a good deal, Alexander II could not afford to be picky.

Reforms also require funding. Unless reforms are carried out by violent means, compensation to vested interests would be unavoidable.

Watching the miserable Alexander II battling the nobles which plunged the country into chaos, Franz breathed a sigh of relief.

A Russia embroiled in internal strife needed a stable international environment, making the Russo-Austrian alliance important.

This was exactly what Franz needed as well. At the critical juncture of completing the industrial revolution, Austria needed a stable international situation.

The British were still busy suppressing Indian rebels and had no time to make trouble. The French were also at the critical point of their industrial revolution and needed a stable international environment too.

The four great powers all needed stability, so naturally, no one would stir up trouble on the European continent. Other regions were uncertain; the Second Opium War had already erupted, and there was also the American Civil War.

Overseas matters had little to do with the Austrian government. Up till now, the scope of Austrias influence was limited to the Mediterranean and the African continent, unable to reach farther regions.

But that was soon to change. Looking at the Austrian Global Strategic Plan submitted by the Colonial Ministry, Franz could only lament that ambition was a good thing.

Regardless of whether the plans could eventually be implemented, they first had to be made presentable. Almost every colonial empire had a global strategy, so the Austrian Colonial Ministry was already late in developing its own plan.

After carefully studying it, Franz had to admit that the strategists who had created the plan had a good strategic vision. In theory, the strategies outlined in the plan could all be implemented.

Following Franz's strategic thinking, the plan aimed to avoid intense conflicts with other major colonial empires as much as possible until the colonial territories were partitioned.

There are no issues with plans to expand in the African continent and link up our colonies. The main difficulties lie with the harsh natural environments.

Infiltrating the Arabian Peninsula and gradually taking control of the region should also not be too difficult. Once the Suez Canal opens, we can effectively control these areas.

However, the Asian and American strategies present major challenges. Malaysia, New Guinea, and Kalimantan in Asia are too far from us. What level of resources can we realistically commit?

Even if these regions aren't being given much attention by other countries, they are within the spheres of influence of the Dutch, Spanish, and British. It would not be hard for us to occupy these territories, but how do we rule them in the future?

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The issues in the American region are even greater. Despite these independent countries being weak in strength and lacking qualification to survive on the European continent, in the distant Americas, we may not necessarily be their match.

War costs money, so we have to look at the issue of income and expenses. As for the plans to dig a canal in Central America, they'll be canceled immediately. We should not build infrastructure that we cannot defend, as it will only benefit others.

There are no problems with establishing colonial footholds in the Patagonian Plateau since there is hardly anyone living there.

There were several islands that Franz didn't comment on. He didn't know where they were, so he couldn't offer any evaluation.

These obscure places wouldn't even be found on future globes, so naturally, he had no impression of them.

Josip Jelai explained: Your Majesty, these plans have been thoroughly analyzed and researched, and they all have some degree of feasibility.

The Nicobar Islands, for example, are a legacy of the Austrian East India Company, now ruled by our private merchants.

Also, we already have colonial footholds in Kalimantan. In Malaysia, we've secured the most favored nation treatment.

Most of these are the achievements of private colonial teams rather than governmental organizations. Recently, the British occupied all of Australia, which raised their concerns, prompting them to seek assistance from the Colonial Ministry.

Since the British are currently busy suppressing the Indian rebellion, they won't have the energy to compete with us for territory in the short term, so the Colonial Ministry has agreed to this plan.

As for the plans to colonize the Americas, what we have in mind is economic colonization, the infiltration of Central America by economic means. The proposal to build a canal through Panama was made by capitalists.

Keeping these plans for now is for future consideration. If we can control the Central American countries, then building this canal would make sense.

Your Majesty, the countries in Central America are extremely weak, with virtually no industry and completely reliant on imported weapons and ammunition.

Their total population is barely 2 million. Each country averages only 300,000 people, of whom three-fifths are natives, one-fifth are mulattoes, and not even one-fifth are white.

Franz had nothing to say. It's no wonder the Colonial Ministry is turning its attention to Central America. With such terrible circumstances, it would be strange if they weren't being eyed by others.

First, there would be economic colonization, followed by gradual migration. Once the number of immigrants is sufficient, they would overthrow the local government.

And it seems that there would not even be many difficulties. This was a consequence of the small population. As long as the Austrian government was willing to invest, colonizing these areas would not be difficult.

Upon realizing this, Franz could not help but criticize the Spaniards for their incompetence. It seems that the legacy left after the Habsburg dynasty split was so generous that they did not even value it.

If only their government had a little drive, they would not have let those territories become independent either. If that was really not possible, they could still push for dominion status and build economic unions; anything would have been better than not profiting from those lands now.

All right, you've convinced me. However, let's shelve the canal plan for now. I don't want a canal improving American transportation until after America is divided.

Ever since reading the Austrian Global Strategic Plan, Franz began to pay more attention to collecting information from various countries.

You wouldn't know certain shocking facts until you researched them. If it were not for the geographical constraints that limited them, he would not even bother to develop the African continent, and would simply go over to colonize South America instead.

Just look at the populations of South American countries:

Peru has a territory of approximately 1.29 million square kilometers, with a population of about 2 million;

Paraguay has a territory of approximately 410,000 square kilometers, with a population of about 500,000;

Bolivia has a territory of approximately 1.1 million square kilometers, with a population of about 1.25 million;

Ecuador has a territory of approximately 280,000 square kilometers, with a population of about 800,000;

Brazil has a territory of approximately 8.51 million square kilometers, with a population of about 7.3 million.

With such a small population, there are still serious racial conflicts within the country. As the ruling class, whites are in the minority, with more being natives and slaves.

It makes sense when you think about it. Neither Portugal nor Spain were countries with large populations, yet they had so many colonial territories. Where exactly could they get so many immigrants from?

Without sufficient immigrants, local colonial development would naturally fail. Undeveloped colonies, in turn, further diminished the desire for immigration.

After falling into this vicious cycle, South American countries slowly missed their windows of opportunity for development. Later, when the United States rose to power, they were further suppressed and lost any remaining development opportunities.

This also has to do with the incompetence of the governments of various South American countries. If the governments had done a better job, becoming a regional power would not have been a problem.

Chapter 313: Global Voyage

It must be said that the Colonial Ministry chose good timing. The struggle for Central America between the British and Americans had dragged on for a decade, with neither side gaining an advantage as they mutually restrained each other.

To completely suppress the Indian rebellion, the British strategically reduced their overseas presence. In 1859, the British government made concessions and relinquished its sphere of influence in Central America.

Originally, the radical southerners in America wanted to incorporate Central America as slave states. However, this was opposed by northern industrialists and businessmen.

The origins of the North-South conflict can be traced back to the Mexican-American War, which was sparked by the annexation of large portions of Mexican land.

The plantation owners in the South wanted to turn these areas into slave states, while the industrialists in the North demanded that they be turned into free states.

The dispute over interests escalated into open conflict between the North and the South.

The economic crisis of 1857 exacerbated these tensions. Northern capitalists demanded higher tariffs to protect their markets, while Southern plantation owners wanted lower tariffs to facilitate the export of agricultural goods.

Make no mistake, the tariffs the Northern capitalists wanted to raise weren't just on manufactured goods; they also wanted to raise tariffs on agricultural exports to get cheap raw materials.

Cutting off someone's source of income was akin to killing their parents. Of course, the Southern plantation owners could not tolerate this. It was cutting meat off their bones to subsidize Northern industries by exploiting agriculture.

In reality, the abolition of slavery was merely a pretext for war. If the government had offered adequate compensation, most slave owners would have accepted it.

Contract labor was not much more expensive than slaves anyway. Many labor export companies were already operating in America at that time, and they could still easily obtain enough cheap labor.

Of course, the Northern capitalists did not go to all this trouble just to emancipate the slaves. Everyone's moral standards weren't that high yet.

Turning the South into a source of raw materials and a dumping ground for manufactured goods was their ultimate goal.

Since both sides knew that tensions could not be defused, the Southern plantation owners chose to strike first, having learned the lessons of past political defeats.

Now, both the North and the South were striving for the election, and things have escalated to the point where they do not even have the energy to deal with Central America.

Against this backdrop, Austria dug its claws deeper into the region. Of course, the extent was still very small and limited to commercial activities.

If the American Civil War does not occur, there is no doubt that Austria's influence, still in its infancy, will not stand a chance against the Americans. The Colonial Ministry would essentially be taking a gamble.

Unlike Britain and France, Austria had no foothold in the Americas. To intervene in the American Civil War, Austria had to prepare in advance.

The army could wait, but the navy absolutely could not be absent.

Southern plantation owners would never surrender to Northern capitalists. As long as the maritime supply lines remained open and the Europeans visibly supported them from behind, the Southerners would not easily surrender.

Although there was a huge disparity in strength between the North and the South, this gap can be narrowed. With logistical support from various European countries, they could gain an advantage in weapons and equipment.

Frankly, we were already in the Age of Discovery. A single ship could transport thousands of tons. It would only take a few months to sail between North America and Europe.

As long as they had the support of the major European powers, replenishing tens of thousands of tons of weapons and ammunition every month was not a problem.

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America was not yet the superpower it would become later on. They could not simply produce tens of thousands of tons of ammunition every month.

If the Europeans also blockaded the supply of material to the Northern government, all they would have left was manpower superiority.

Even that could be dealt with if the Southerners had money. They could mortgage cotton and tobacco to take out loans from Europe and hire mercenaries.

If everyone was shameless enough, they could first impersonate the Southern Navy, cripple the Northern Navy, and then launch surprise attacks on Northern coastal cities from time to time.

There would be no need for landings. Just bombarding the cities with several tons of shells every day would cripple the Northern economy in no time.

What the outcome would be, Franz was no prophet and could not say with certainty. But the longer the war dragged on, the greater its impact, and the harder it would be for the United States to recover after the war.

The power of hatred should never be underestimated. Once the North and the South are covered in each others blood, even if they are forcibly unified in the end, it wont be stable.

Franz asked, How much longer until the newly built ships Bavaria, Lombardy, Wrttemberg, Hesse, and Saxony are ready for service?

The naming rights for these warships were also sold by the Navy Ministry; each state government contributed one-third of the shipbuilding funds to purchase the naming rights.

Franz even encouraged each state government to form their own navy, but unfortunately, no one took the bait. They were all landlubbers, without even access to the sea, so how could they possibly be interested?

The only reason they coughed up extra money to sponsor the Navy was to save face. They could not let other states have warships named after them while they lacked their own.

Fortunately, none of these New Holy Roman Empire states were poor. They could easily raise hundreds of thousands of guilders.

So, under the persuasion of the Navy Ministry, these state governments coughed up some sponsorship money to make the Navy of the New Holy Roman Empire even bigger.

Once these ironclad warships were commissioned, Austria would leap to become the worlds third-largest naval power right behind Britain and France.

The total tonnage of the navy now exceeded 100,000 tons, and Austria also possessed ten ironclads, making it the country with the largest number of such vessels in the world.

Of course, this advantage wouldnt last long. After a few months at most, the British would likely surpass them again, followed by the French within 1-2 years.

Naval arms race? Franz wasnt prepared to continue playing that game. The primary purpose of building these ships was to sell them.

Once the American Civil War erupts, he will sell parts of the fleet to the Confederacy at high prices. Selling to the Union was possible too.

Favoring one side was only when the Confederacy was at a disadvantage. The optimal play was still to let the Americans butcher one another, maintaining a balance of power on both sides.

As for the claims that the Unions advantages would ensure victory no matter what, that was pure nonsense. Just look at how long the Civil War lasted. If there really was an overwhelming gap in strength, how could the fighting have gone on for 4 years?

The Unions advantages were in industry and population; the Confederacys advantages were in the military. The capitalists did not have the guts to personally shoulder rifles and take to the battlefields, but the plantation owners did.

America was a country of immigrants without much national cohesion. The propagandized tales of mass voluntary enlistment were in reality mostly involuntary conscription.

Especially for new immigrants who had originally fled war during the revolutions and were now being asked to go to war, it would be strange if they would be willing!

Your Majesty, the Bavaria is expected to be completed by the end of this year, and the remaining ships will likely be finished by early next year. It will take until around May of next year for all these warships to be fully commissioned, Minister of the Navy, Filkos replied.

After some calculations, Franz found that there was still plenty of time. No matter how much the butterfly effect played out, the American Civil War wouldnt possibly be over in just a few months. The Austrian Navy would still have time to intervene.

The global voyage plan of the Navy Department can be initiated now. We can dispatch seven ironclad ships to visit all corners of the world, starting with Asia, then proceeding to the Americas, and finally returning to visit European countries.

It was best to flaunt their presence overseas to avoid provoking the sensitive nerves of European nations.

By the end of the voyage, most of these ships would have been sold off too. Heading back to Europe then would avoid drawing excessive attention.

Chapter 314: Outbreak of the American Civil War

Since entering the era of ironclad ships, the Austrian Navy has been making significant strides. The continuous expansion of the Austrian Navy has forced European countries to follow suit.

If it werent for the Indian rebellion diverting the Britishs attention, the Austrian government would have long felt the pressure.

There were even people in the British government clamoring for the three-power standard (exceeding the combined tonnage of the worlds second, third, and fourth-largest navies).

Of course, these figures were all talk without any real action on the part of the British. They had never achieved such standards before.

Now, not to mention the three-power standard, Franz doubted that the British could even meet the two-power standard.

The combined tonnage of the French and Austrian navies has already approached that of the Royal Navy. Taking the ironclad ships into consideration, the Royal Navys strength was no longer capable of maintaining a dominant advantage over France and Austria.

Once the Indian rebellion is suppressed, however, the British should be able to achieve a two-power standard for a considerable time. Franz was not prepared to massively expand naval spending in the short term, lest he provoke the British.

Or rather, he had already provoked them, but they currently do not have the time to address it.

If not for insufficient finances plaguing the Russian government, Franz would have aided Russian naval expansion efforts to provoke Britain even more.

There was no contradiction here. Provoking the British would encourage them to devote more resources to ironclads. In reality, these warships were only transitional products. The more that were built, the greater the losses when newer models appeared.

If it werent for intervening in the American Civil War, Franz wouldnt have built so many ironclad ships. Considering the performance of these warships, they will soon be obsolete.

It was precisely because of the possibility of an arms race leading to war that Franz didnt want to stand out for the time being. Since Britain and Russia were the ones competing for hegemony, of course, the Russians had to take the lead.

Before the unification of Germany, Franz wasnt willing to confront the British directly; it would be more trouble than it was worth.

Washington

The pivotal elections that would decide Americas fate had concluded. Franz's butterfly effect did not influence this election. Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected as the 16th President of the United States by an absolute majority.

The emergence of a representative for the interests of Northern capitalists had caused panic and resentment among Southern plantation owners. To protect their interests, they began to form alliances.

On December 20, 1860, representatives of Southern plantation owners convened a meeting in South Carolina and decided to secede from the Union.

They also issued a declaration supporting slavery and welcomed states to secede from the Union and join the newly formed nation the Confederate States of America.

The news caused a sensation in Europe. Franz immediately convened a cabinet meeting to discuss countermeasures.

Foreign Minister Wessenberg analyzed: The conflict between North and South in the United States has been going on for a long time. The result of this election has shown that the Southern plantation owners have completely failed in the political struggle.

To protect their own interests, they had to secede from the Union and form a new country. Legally speaking, these states have the right to secede from the United States.

But the Northern capitalists would certainly not agree to that. They still want access to cheap industrial raw materials and markets in the South. If these states seceded, all their previous efforts would be for naught.

Unless the Northern government compromises, the Southern plantation owners will not return. Lincoln's appeal is all for show. This division between North and South is not just about the abolition of slavery, but also about core issues like tariffs, which he doesn't even mention.

If Lincoln had promised to reduce tariffs on agricultural products, the Southern plantation owners' determination to be independent may have wavered. Right now, both sides can only resort to war.

With the outbreak of the American Civil War, our strategy for the Americas was already half-realized, as a divided America suits our interests more. However, there is a significant gap in the comprehensive strength between North and South. With only seven states currently joining the Southern government, they may not be a match for the Northern government.

Splitting up America Austria was absolutely supportive. Especially after unveiling the colonization strategy for the Americas, this became even more necessary.

Minister of the Interior Windsch-Gratz calmly remarked: On the surface, the Northern government does appear to be stronger. But in reality, not all northern states are willing participants in this war.

Most Americans do not wish for war to erupt. Mobilizing citizens to the frontlines relied on capitalist-controlled media outlets manipulating the masses.

It's different for the Southern states; they have been pushed to a dead end. When it comes to their own interests, the enthusiasm of the Southern people to enlist is much higher.

In the short term, there is a greater likelihood that the Southern government will have the military advantage. If the war drags on, then the Northern manpower advantage will gradually translate into military strength.

I believe that as long as the Southern commanders are clever, they can take Washington as soon as the war breaks out and then negotiate with the Northern government.

After all, everyone does enjoy seeing upstarts meet their downfall. European countries would absolutely support America's division.

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Prime Minister Felix questioned: That would be very difficult to accomplish. Militarily, it is indeed possible for the Southern forces to seize Washington initially. However, they have no way of preventing the US government from evacuating.

Clearly, there are more states leaning towards the North. Southern military actions might instead stimulate neutral states to band together against them.

The Southern government is limited in strength; they cannot conquer several states without becoming exhausted. The Northern government, on the other hand, with its strong capabilities, will ultimately overpower the South.

The crux now was not how North and South would duke it out, but which side could rally more allies.

The United States has a total of 35 states, 16 of which are slave states. Currently, only seven have declared independence. The subsequent political activities of both sides will determine the outcome of this war.

If the Southern government can persuade all 16 slave states to join them in independence and sway several neutral states, then the balance of power between the two sides will narrow.

If the strengths of both sides are evenly matched, with the intervention of European countries, there will be no chance to peacefully resolve this issue.

Foreign Minister Wessenberg explained: Prime Minister, the ideal scenario will likely not happen. The diplomatic efforts of the Southern government are simply inadequate. I don't know where they derive their confidence from, as they have not sought our assistance thus far.

I'm not optimistic about how many states they can persuade to join them. With public opinion dominated by Northern capitalists, even many of the agrarian states may side with the federal government if Confederate diplomacy proves inadequate.

After all, some slave states also have quite strong capitalist presences. If the response is slow, states that were initially inclined towards them may also be swayed by the Northern government.

What is the source of confidence for the Southern government? Of course, its cotton!

In this era, about one-fifth of Britain's population directly or indirectly depends on cotton textiles for survival, with 80% relying on supplies from several Southern states.

The British government would never tolerate disruptions in the cotton supply chain, but unfortunately, they overlooked the abundant cotton harvest of 1860, which led to cotton piling up 50% above normal levels in London commodity markets.

This small oversight proved exceedingly fatal. Many capitalists treated northern blockades as opportunities to clear excess stocks and profit immensely.

With these individuals hindering them and without immediately fatal impacts on the textile industry, the British government found itself embroiled in controversy and did not immediately intervene in the American Civil War.

Subsequently, after finally reaching agreements with France and Spain to intervene, they faced another obstacle when the French turned their backs on the agreement. Coupled with the Northern government's public relations efforts, the British government once again found itself hesitant.

After several hesitations, cotton from India and Egypt had been cultivated. The interest of British capitalists in cotton from the Southern government declined significantly, and international intervention was thus delayed.

By the time the British government made a decision, the Southern government was already beyond salvation.

Faced with such diplomatic incompetence on the part of the Southerners in the face of their clear advantages, Franz was also deeply troubled. They did not know how to capitalize on the strengths they had been handed on a silver platter, completely ruining their chances.

If only the Confederacy were more proactive, whether out of strategic necessity or for their interests, they would have garnered support.

Nevertheless, to undermine the Americans, Franz could only pinch his nose and provide voluntary aid to the Confederacy.

The Foreign Ministry should communicate with Britain and France in working together to persuade more agricultural states to join the Confederacy. Surely they would not mind sabotaging the Americans.

Additionally, feed intel to some newspapers on bumper cotton harvest and sales stagnations. Also highlight exploding cotton outputs in places like India, Egypt, and West Africa.

Get a few experts and scholars to analyze the severity of the situation, to enlighten the Southern government leaders about the unreliability of their weapon cotton.

In addition to cotton, many other American agricultural commodities served as powerful trade weapons even though other regions could produce them as well.

Franz even entertained notions of hiring saboteurs to set Britains cotton stockpiles ablaze before discarding the idea. Mainly because there were simply too many warehouses for a handful of people to completely incinerate.

Currently, most of the Southern cotton hasnt been shipped out yet. As long as the Southern government remains vigilant and suspends further cotton shipments, the British government will have no choice but to rely on the Southern government.

After all, whether in India or Egypt, growing cotton still takes time. Domestic factories could hardly afford delays.

Historically, there were proposals within the Northern government to intercept these cotton shipments in the early stages of the war to cut off the Southern governments trade.

However, to avoid offending the British, the Lincoln administration chose to let the shipments pass. Even during the Civil War, the Northern blockade of cotton shipments was not very tight.

Otherwise, if John Bulls cotton supply was truly cut off, the British would have already invaded.

Theres no need to doubt it. Though the British Army may not be anything special, its still adequate to deal with Americans. With the Royal Navy blockading the American coast and a bunch of Indian soldiers sent over, they could easily overwhelm the Northern government.

As for logistics, its not as daunting as one might think. The most crucial supplies, like food, can be provided by the Southern government, so theres no shortage there.

The only things that need to be transported from the mainland are weapons and ammunition, and the ammunition consumption in this era of warfare isnt that significant. As the worlds largest industrial power, the British can easily afford it.

Frankly speaking, the Northern government only consists of around twenty million people. Once the war breaks out, they will quickly lose several states to the South. The war potential that the Northern government could muster would now be limited.

Just the force the British used to suppress the Indian rebellion would be enough to change the outcome of the Civil War. The American troops, who barely got their hands on rifles before being sent to the battlefield, essentially have no combat capability.

Chapter 315: International Recognition

By the end of 1860, the total population of the United States had reached 31.6 million. The Northern free states had a population of about 18.7 million, while the Southern slave states had a population of 12.9 million, of which 5 million were slaves.

Franz's butterfly effect still played a role, and there had been a slight change in the balance of power between the North and the South, but it couldn't change the fact that the North was stronger than the South.

In the Austrian Embassy in Washington, representatives from Britain, France, Austria, and Spain gathered together. The Austrian ambassador to the United States, Drucker, was the first to speak: The reason we've gathered today is primarily to discuss the issue of Southern independence. In such a critical juncture, we need to remain united to better safeguard our interests.

It's unclear when everyone realized the benefits of the principle of unity among the great powers. Typically, whenever they acted in unison, everyone could reap substantial rewards.

The group paused, weighing whether joint action would yield greater benefits or if acting alone would be more profitable.

Whether or not to abolish slavery was simply not on the table. No matter how loudly the European countries shouted for the abolition of slavery, in reality, everyone just wanted to watch the show.

In recent years, America has been expanding like a balloon, which has caused many people to worry. The American threat theory has also become a hot topic in Europe.

To attract immigrants, the propaganda put out by the Americans, under the guidance of those with ulterior motives, has all become evidence of the American threat.

Due to crude communication methods, the negative impact on public opinion has left the American government powerless. Several attempts to influence public opinion have backfired, leaving them in a sorry state.

British representative Mark Oliver spoke up: All four of our nations have significant trade relations with the United States. A stable America is more in line with our interests. By intervening together to prevent the outbreak of civil war in the United States, it will be beneficial for global peace and stability.

The British stance was not surprising. The British Empire depended on cheap industrial raw materials provided by the Americans, especially cotton.

Not only the British, but also the three nations of France, Austria, and Spain were major cotton importers. Even with a bumper crop of cotton in West Africa, Austria is barely self-sufficient.

The Spanish representative Francisco added: To maintain world peace, a divided America is necessary. From 1783 to the present, the territory of the United States has expanded from 800,000 square kilometers to nearly 8 million square kilometers. If they are not contained, it won't be long before they gradually take over the entire American continent.

We are all aware of the potential for development in the United States. At their current rate of progress, they will catch up with Europe in less than fifty years, and then surpass us with their vast size.

It should be noted that the total area of our four countries combined is less than one-third that of the United States. They have almost all the resources they need, and there is little we can do to restrict them. Now is the only opportunity; if America resolves its internal issues, the future world hegemon is already determined.

Francisco's argument was almost a verbatim copy of the American threat theory. With the development of the United States in recent years and their constant foreign expansion, Spain was the biggest victim.

Especially as Americans have extended their hand into Cuba, attempting to seize another colonial territory from Spain, it has further fueled Spanish resentment.

While America's expansionist movement had little effect on Austria, Britain and France suffered losses. The French were forced to sell the Louisiana territory, while the British lost even more territory.

The French representative Alfredo mocked, Isn't this too alarmist? Could America really become the world hegemon?

Drucker, the Austrian representative, chuckled and said, Who knows? But it's undeniable that in recent years the pace of American development has been remarkable. They are constantly sucking the blood out of Europe.

Haven't we all wanted to send immigrants to the colonies, only to have them poached by the Americans? Tens of thousands of Europeans immigrate to the United States every year. Everyone should be aware of what this means!

If the Union succeeds, it will possess the richest resources in the world, the cheapest industrial raw materials, and abundant labor. They will quickly complete their industrialization.

We will have another competitor in the commodities market. Perhaps before long, American-made goods will permeate the American continent.

Capital knows no borders. Perhaps many capitalists are already thinking of moving to America. If these people also move there, our technological superiority will cease to exist.

It should be known that they have also cornered our industrial raw materials such as cotton.

Even if we find new sources of raw materials, it will be hard to compete with America in terms of production costs. It's only logical for capitalists to build factories in America.

Drucker's words were full of meaning. Everyone present was part of their respective ruling classes, vested interests who didn't want to see their own country's interests harmed.

Mark Oliver's face changed greatly. He could guarantee that if he did nothing this time, he would face retaliation from domestic capitalists when he returned home.

Capitalists immigrating to America? This was actually the privilege of major capitalists and financial conglomerates. For small and medium-sized capitalists to move to an unfamiliar place, they'd be lucky not to be completely swallowed up by others.

It was true that capital knows no borders, but that would only be realized once order was established and everyone became mindful of their appearances.

Druckers purpose was still to remind everyone to sit up straight and not be swayed by the Northern governments money, or their political stance would lean toward the Americans.

Having calmed down, Mark Oliver smiled and said, Indeed, America is too powerful. Its better to weaken them a bit. I remember the Declaration of Independence granting the right of secession to the federal states. Since now seven Southern states have already seceded, lets acknowledge their status!

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This was a fatal blow. Once European countries recognized the independent status of the Southern government, the Civil War would no longer be an internal conflict in America but a war between two independent countries.

Politically, its undoubtedly a devastating blow to the Northern government. Once the legitimacy of the Southern government is established, it will be easier for countries to find excuses to intervene in this war in the future.

If everyone is willing, as long as the Southern government sends out an invitation, everyone can intervene militarily to mediate.

The Unions plan to manufacture public pressure through the abolition of slavery and cut off European support for the Confederacy would fail right from the start.

The British decision also involves the issue of Canada. The continuous expansion of the United States has long been resented by the British. After the War of Independence, conflicts between Britain and America did not cease.

In 1812, former President Jefferson boasted, This year, Canada will be annexed... and ultimately British influence will be completely expelled from the American continent!

Soon the Americans attacked Canada in an attempt to dominate the mainland Americas alone.

John Bull, enraged, immediately took military action to make the Americans feel the iron fist of the British Empire. The Americans were badly beaten on the battlefield, and even the White House was set on fire.

Time was the best weapon. Gradually, the terror of the British was forgotten by the Americans. In 1844, the campaign slogan of the 11th president, James K. Polk, was: (Britain) must give up Oregon or face war!

By this time, the United States was no longer weak and easy to defeat.

At that time, after weighing the pros and cons, the British government backed down and relinquished the Oregon territory. However, this left a lingering sense of resentment.

Resentment could be suppressed, but the threat posed by the United States was felt by the British. However, the capitalists, for their own interests, exerted influence on Congress, reconciling the Anglo-American conflicts.

No matter how it was said, grievances were written down. After discovering the anti-American stance of Austria and Spain, Mark Oliver immediately decided to deal a heavy blow to the Americans.

French representative Alfredo opposed, saying, Directly intervening in American internal affairs might not be wise. European public opinion overwhelmingly supports the abolition of slavery, and such actions could easily cause us trouble.

Interests determine position. The French had very little interest left in North America, so naturally they would not mind Americas rise. After all, the British would bear the brunt of Americas rise.

The Austrian representative Drucker gave a righteous explanation: This is just a minor issue. The Southern government can also abolish slavery. Currently, theyre protecting the rights to private property, which is sacrosanct and inviolable.

Withdrawing from the United States is also entirely legal. Theres no provision in the US Constitution prohibiting states from seceding. We must uphold the spirit of contracts!

In essence, the main cause of the North-South conflict is still the tariff issue. The Northern governments proposal to raise tariffs has seriously undermined the principle of fair trade!

Trade fairness was merely a facade, but the harm to everyones interests was real. Once the Americans raise tariffs, not only do they lose access to cheap sources of raw materials, but they also lose a market for their goods.

Even the French, who supported the Americans in causing trouble for the British, had to admit that the actions of the Northern government damaged their interests.

That is why there have been frequent policy changes within the French government on the issue of the United States. Often, they didnt even know what was the right thing to do.

French representative Alfredo asked in disbelief, Are you serious? Youre not joking, are you? The Southern government is going to abolish slavery?!

After the propaganda of the Northern government, in the eyes of many people, the Confederacy was simply evil slave traders. Weren't the plantation owners making profits by exploiting slaves? How could they possibly give up their source of wealth?

Drucker confidently replied, Nothing is impossible. Plantation owners can also learn from the capitalists business model. In this world, there are plenty of unscrupulous capitalists who pay minimal wages, or even no wages at all, right?

On the surface, the slaves are indeed given free status, but in reality, the wages they are paid are barely enough for these people to survive.

If they get old or sick, they will still be driven out to fend for themselves. Would the cost really increase after merely changing the employment method?

What plantation owners are worried about is that after the slaves obtain free status, these people will leave. This problem can be solved by employment contracts.

What Drucker was talking about was the social reality of the time. The same thing was happening all over Europe. On the surface, serfdom was abolished by everyone, but in reality, the living conditions of those at the bottom of society didnt improve much.

On the surface, after they were turned into workers, they earned wages and their standard of living rose. But in reality, it was due to the increase in workload.

In times of economic crisis, one could easily become unemployed. If a worker fell ill and couldn't afford treatment, it often led to financial ruin and had no safety net whatsoever.

Mark Oliver agreed: Indeed, from a cost perspective, changing the employment model can be a viable option. With so many labor-exporting companies in the United States, plantation owners will never lack labor.

As leaders of the civilized world, we have a duty to help the Southern government gradually abolish the evil system of slavery and join the global civilized community.

Once the issue of slavery was addressed, the French representative no longer objected. Whether or not the Southern government abolished slavery was not important; they simply had to make a gesture indicating their intention to do so.

The Spanish representative proposed, To abolish the evil institution of slavery sooner rather than later, and for the sake of world peace and stability, we must now persuade more slave states to join the Southern government.

Even though the true intention was to balance the power between the North and the South, it sounded noble and righteous when spoken by politicians.

As for whether the Southern government would accept everyone's goodwill, there was no need to consider it; they had to accept it.

It was just a political gesture, there was no immediate action required. Merely putting on a show could gain them recognition from the international community. Who would have the courage to refuse?

The French representative Alfredo said, This is an excellent proposal. France is willing to help these slaves obtain freedom.

On February 11, 1861, despite the opposition from the Northern government, the four nations of Britain, France, Austria, and Spain jointly issued a diplomatic statement recognizing the independence of the Southern government and establishing formal diplomatic relations.

Chapter 316: The French Response

On March 26, 1861, the Austrian navy set sail from the Port of Venice to embark on a global voyage, with its first stop being the Ottoman Empire.

Unfortunately, the Ottoman government had relocated to an inland region, otherwise they could have experienced some pressure. Nonetheless, even with the capital moved, the Ottoman government was greatly shaken.

Seven ironclad warships plus a dozen auxiliary naval vessels formed the world's most powerful fleet, which wind-powered sailing ships could not compare to.

This time, Franz had no intention of overdoing it; having frightened the Ottoman government, they made a brief visit to the Mediterranean countries before heading straight for Asia.

Paris

Stimulated by the situation, Napoleon III announced at a government meeting, We must build a larger ironclad fleet to show the world the power of France.

Napoleon III could not help but react strongly. It was fine that the French navy was inferior to the British because he could console himself with the fact that Britain was purely a naval power, while France was both a naval and land power. But he could not tolerate being weaker than the Austrians.

Currently, the advantage of the French navy over the Austrian navy was only in terms of tonnage and combat experience.

Unfortunately, much of this experience was stuck in the era of sailing ships, and many things became obsolete with the advent of ironclads, including changes in tactical concepts. Even with several times the tonnage, sailing ships couldn't defeat ironclads.

There was no way around it; the cannons on sailing ships were designed to deal with other sailing ships, and suddenly facing ironclad ships rendered them insufficient.

The Minister of the Navy, Ducos, confidently replied, Your Majesty, please rest assured. We have already begun building an ironclad fleet. Currently, two ironclad ships are in service, and by the end of the year, three more will be in service.

The Navy Department plans to construct ten ironclad ships, and they can all be completed within two years at most, letting the world know of our strength.

The technical hurdles had been overcome, and building ironclads was no longer an issue. This was the speed of shipbuilding in peacetime if rushed, a single warship could be built in a matter of months.

During this period, the tonnage of ironclad ships had not yet skyrocketed. The largest were only 8,000-9,000 tons, while the smallest were only 2,000-3,000 tons. No major changes to the docks were needed; they could basically handle the shipbuilding demand as is.

Napoleon III expressed his satisfaction, saying, Excellent!

While they couldn't claim the title of the world's greatest navy, they couldn't afford to lose their status as the world's second-greatest navy. The French still had to save some face.

Currently, both the French Army and Navy rank second in international military power rankings, with Austria closely following in third place for both land and sea forces. The apparent military strength of the two countries appears to be very close.

Before the era of ironclads, Austria's naval power hovered around sixth, seventh, or eighth place. With the advent of ironclads, however, Austria suddenly surged ahead, surpassing Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and even the United States.

Today, many people believe that the Austrian navy can rival the French navy. This idea has gained considerable ground, especially in the Mediterranean. Napoleon III also felt uncertain in his heart.

In terms of naval tonnage, the Austrian Navy is nearly seventy percent the size of the French Navy. Considering the combat effectiveness of ironclad ships, this argument is quite convincing.

As a result, the French Navy Ministry has announced its long-planned shipbuilding program. Once these warships are commissioned, the naval strengths of the two countries will once again diverge.

As for Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal, they have fallen behind at this point and lack the capacity to participate in this naval competition.

After a brief pause, Minister of the Navy Ducos added, Your Majesty, our navy budget is insufficient. To build so many ironclad ships, the government needs to allocate additional funds.

Obviously, the French Navys intention to have Napoleon III personally inspect the Austrian Navys fleet was not without purpose. While it may seem that the French navy has lost face, its actually about securing funds for shipbuilding.

Ignoring the Navy Ministrys machinations, Napoleon III inquired, How much more is needed?

Navy Minister Ducos solemnly replied, We need at least another 120 million francs to complete the plan.

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The cost of shipbuilding alone is certainly not that high. It also includes basic training, personnel allocation, research and development of new technologies...

The funds allocated are primarily for initial costs, and once construction is complete, the Navys future maintenance costs will also increase. In other words, naval expenditures will increase.

Before Napoleon III could respond, Finance Minister Monnier eagerly interjected, No, this wont do. Youre asking for an exorbitant sum. How much does it cost to build a single ironclad ship? It couldnt possibly require 120 million francs. At most, it wouldnt exceed 80 million francs, and with careful spending, 70 million francs might even suffice.

The fiscal revenue of the French Empire now stood at a staggering 172 million francs (equivalent to about 68.8 million pounds), giving the French a sense of confidence. By comparison, the British fiscal revenue for the same period was only 70 million pounds.

(Authors Note: I checked the statistical tables, it seems they only counted domestic revenue)

However, no matter how high the fiscal revenue, there never seems to be enough money. The Ministry of Finance still needs to cut costs and decisively combat such excessive demands.

Minister of the Navy, Ducos, solemnly explained, Count, how can we possibly cut costs? The reason we lagged behind the Austrians in entering the era of ironclad ships is primarily due to insufficient military funding.

If we cut the budget now, how can we develop new technologies? Ironclad ships are different from traditional sailing warships. After they enter service, our sailors need to undergo retraining to operate them proficiently, which incurs additional expenses.

Moreover, ironclad ships have much larger tonnages than sailing warships. Many of our existing military ports need to be renovated, which also requires funds.

Count Monnier, the Finance Minister, remained unconvinced: Dont speak nonsense. Apart from research and application of new technologies, other projects receive annual allocations. Dont expect to duplicate budget requests.

Even if the Ministry of Finance allocates funds to you, you wont pass the governments future audits. Its better to redo a detailed budget, and then we can discuss the issue of funding again.

This statement showed great political cunning. While it was certain that ships would be built as Napoleon III had willed, the shipbuilding funds would still be squeezed, otherwise how could the Finance Ministry show its diligence and responsibility?

Although it was clear that the argument between the two was more for show than anything else, Napoleon III watched the spectacle nonchalantly. Clearly, this Emperor was still skilled in the art of political maneuvering.

If the subordinates were to band together, the emperors days would not be easy. Even if he knew this kind of minor conflict was just routine, over time the contradictions would still deepen in peoples hearts.

The Ministry of Finance wields considerable power, as all departments need their funding allocations. Offending the god of wealth is not an option. If there were no conflicts and the Ministry of Finance was allowed to offer everyone favors, the Emperor would lose sleep.

As if seeing the right timing, Napoleon III interrupted the two mens argument: Enough, if you want to quarrel, go back to your own offices and quarrel slowly, dont affect my mood. I recall that the United States seems to be on the brink of division. How did the Foreign Ministry respond?

Foreign Minister Auvergne replied, Your Majesty, our envoy in Washington has reported that we have reached an agreement with Great Britain, Spain, and Austria to maintain unity in our approach to American affairs.

We have convinced the Southern government to agree to abolish slavery, and the four nations have officially recognized the legitimacy of the Southern government. We are currently lobbying for more slave states to join the Southern government.

If all goes well, the United States should split this time. If we are lucky, it may present an opportunity for us to return to North America.

Napoleon III asked, puzzled, If the Southern government is willing to abolish slavery, then why are they seeking independence? Havent the Northern government made any concessions?

Foreign Minister Auvergne explained, Your Majesty, the main conflict between the North and the South is still tariffs. In recent years, the population of the Northern states has grown rapidly, while the population growth in the South has been slow, widening the gap in strength between the two sides.

The current Northern government in the United States represents the interests of the capitalists, and their promises are fundamentally unreliable. If the Southern states do not take action, their interests will gradually be encroached upon.

After the Southern states declared independence, the neutral faction proposed adding another slave state to balance the difference in strength, but this was rejected by the Northern government.

Some have also proposed a dual tariff system, with trade barriers and higher tariff rates in the Northern states, while the Southern states implement free trade and lower tariff rates.

The person who made this proposal now has grass growing on their grave. The capitalists refused to compromise on this issue, as they wanted to gain cheap industrial raw materials and markets.

Napoleon III nodded, this explanation made more sense. There is no love or hate in the world without cause. If there were no interests involved, could capitalists be expected to fight an internal war for the benefit of black slaves?

If they were so saintly, why wouldn't they treat workers better? They treated their own kind like this, let alone slaves.

So, you mean, the Austrian navy's global voyage this time is also aimed at the Americans?

Clearly, Napoleon III's political insight was astute; he immediately discerned Franz's true intentions.

Under normal circumstances, even if they wanted to conduct exchange visits, they would not dispatch such a large force. Naval voyages were also very expensive.

There should be factors like that. There's also the fact that the Austrian government is preparing to establish prestige. In recent years, Austrians have been frequently establishing colonies overseas and have encountered many troubles; they may aim to resolve some of them during this visit, Foreign Minister Auvergne replied.

After a moment of contemplation, Napoleon III made a decision: We cannot remain idle either. In recent years, our overseas expansion has been somewhat slow. This American Civil War is an opportunity, even the Austrians want to fish in troubled waters.

If we miss the chance again, we will truly fall behind. Quickly come up with a plan. France must have a stake in the interests of the Americas.

In reality, the pace of French overseas expansion was not slow at all. It was just that in the past two years, the strategic focus had been on the Kingdom of Sardinia, which had slowed down the pace.

This slowness was only relative. Apart from Austria, currently, the French were expanding most rapidly on the African continent.

Chapter 317: Butterfly Effect

If the French response could only be considered moderate, the British were greatly provoked.

On May 12, 1861, the British Parliament passed the Navy Act, and the controversial Two-Power Standard was officially established.

The Royal Navy began to mobilize, planning to build 18 new ironclad ships over the next three years, surpassing the combined total of ironclad ships owned by France and Austria.

Faced with the British display of strength, Franz pretended he hadn't seen anything. Despite the seemingly similar fiscal revenues of the three nations, Austria's ability to spend paled in comparison to that of the British.

The Royal Navy's military expenditures were not solely borne by the British government; colonial governments overseas could also contribute, something Austria couldn't match.

Since they could not compete financially, they might as well pretend not to see it. After all, no challenges had been issued, and the Austrian government had never stated any intention to surpass the British in naval power.

Silence is the best weapon, and for the British government, it's the best outcome. Engaging in an arms race over the two-power standard would cost lives.

Compared to the reactions of Britain and France, the performance of the Spanish was disappointing. Isabella II was not a strategic genius nor did she possess the ability to restore Spain's glory.

Faced with the dawn of the ironclad era, Isabella II decisively chose to yield. The shipbuilding plans announced by the Spanish government left the public feeling unsatisfied.

As a traditional naval power, their shipbuilding plan consisted of only six ships, falling far behind Britain, France, and even Austria.

Outside observers believed the Spanish were helpless in this matter. They were forced into this predicament. As their colonial system collapsed, this colonial empire was declining.

Although the overseas colonial faction reluctantly opened new colonies on the African continent, their progress was still slow due to their limited strength.

If these were the only problems, they could be solved. The most troublesome problem is domestic strife; Isabella II's rule is unstable and rebellions are rampant.

In 1860, for example, there was a rebellion in Sicily that the Spanish government had to suppress at great cost.

This is partly due to France's butterfly effect. The international peacekeeping force took over the Kingdom of Sardinia, and the famous Redshirts weren't organized, otherwise, the outcome wouldn't have been so favorable.

Of course, the success of the Redshirts led by Garibaldi in history was inseparable from British support.

Without the support of the troublemaker, they could not have stirred up such a storm. The Spaniards were not stupid. Without British protection, the Redshirts would probably be swimming with the fishes before they even landed in Sicily.

Now that the Kingdom of Sardinia was at a critical juncture of survival, who would still care about liberating Sicily? As soon as they raised their banner, the French would have crushed them.

Now the French already regarded the Kingdom of Sardinia as their possession, and under diplomatic pressure from the French government, many countries tacitly accepted French actions.

In a manor on the outskirts of Turin.

Garibaldi, filled with indignation, said, We can't go on like this. We can't count on the international coalition. It won't be long before the Kingdom of Sardinia becomes a French colony!

Cavour hurriedly persuaded, Calm down, the situation isn't that dire yet. Unless absolutely necessary, we cannot resort to armed conflict. If we stage an armed resistance now, no country will support us!

Over time, patriots within the Kingdom of Sardinia became increasingly unable to tolerate the usurpation of sovereignty.

Apart from flexing its muscles, the international coalition has done nothing and controls only a limited area. The only force preventing the expansion of French forces, the British, are stretched thin and unable to play a decisive role.

Garibaldi sneered, Cavour, all you know is to endure, endure, endure. Don't forget that now more than half of the Kingdom of Sardinia has already been swallowed by the French!

The so-called international investigation team is actually led by Britain, France, Russia, and Austria. The Russians are too far away to intervene, and even if they want to, they need Austrias approval.

You know how our relationship with Austria is, right? Plus, with this assassination matter, Franz, that tyrant, would love nothing more than to wipe us out. If the French government is willing to pay the price, selling us off is just a matter of time.

As for the British, theyre just putting on a show. If they really wanted to intervene, they wouldnt be so half-hearted. Wake up! We cant rely on anyone now but ourselves!

Cavours face looked very unpleasant. According to his analysis, with the mutual restraint between France and Austria, plus the support of the British, no one had the capability to annex the Kingdom of Sardinia.

He also intended to provoke conflict between France and Austria and pay the price by supporting the French annexation of Lombardy and Venetia in exchange for their support. However, one assassination attempt completely ruined everything.

The infuriated French have already come knocking, and the Austrian government is merely focusing on apprehending the assassin, turning a blind eye to the French expansion into Italy.

Under such circumstances, no matter how capable he is, he cannot make a move. The French appetite is too big, leaving him no room to maneuver.

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Cavour countered, Why did all this happen? Isnt it all because of your reckless actions? When the assassination occurred, you idiots treated the assassins as heroes, and even organized activities to celebrate.

Did you not have brains back then? Everyone was afraid of being implicated in the assassination, we tried desperately to absolve ourselves of suspicion, and you lot went and invited trouble.

The situation has deteriorated to this point, all because of your actions. And now you want to continue causing trouble? Dont you think the current pretext of the French annexing us is enough, that you want to give them another one?

Dont act heroic in front of me. I know better than anyone the strength of the Kingdom of Sardinia. With just a small Austrian detachment in the past, they almost wiped out our nation. Do you think the French cant do the same?

They were all part of the three Italian heroes, but Cavour and Garibaldi had long-standing conflicts, each representing different political ideologies.

Cavour always held the upper hand until foreign troops took control of the Kingdom of Sardinia, paving the way for the rise of radical ideologies, with Garibaldi emerging at this time.

However, the radicals faced severe repression, with many members being arrested by the international investigation team. Essentially, anyone who was too outspoken got caught up in the assassination affair.

Resorting to force to expel the French was a last resort for the radicals after being cornered. If they continued waiting, they wouldnt even have a chance to fight back.

At this stage of the investigation, several participants and informants have been identified. However, these individuals are only mid-level members of the Carbonari, and neither France nor Austria believes that they are the masterminds behind the scenes.

Unfortunately, none of the higher-ups are willing to risk their lives, and no one is willing to step forward to take the blame. While some are willing to be scapegoats, they don't have the qualifications.

Reality is so absurd. They clearly found the real culprits, but everyone chose not to believe them, or at least pretended not to believe them for their own interests.

Kentucky, the birthplace of President Lincoln, remains a stronghold of slavery. Its population is over one million, more than a quarter of whom are enslaved black people, illustrating the considerable power held by slave owners.

But the influence of capitalists is just as significant. After the Southern states declared independence, Kentucky experienced internal division.

Some advocated joining the Southern Confederacy, while others favored remaining in the Northern Union. The relatively even strength of the two factions made it difficult for either side to dominate.

The final outcome came down to the diplomatic efforts between the North and the South. Whichever side could garner more supporters would sway Kentucky's allegiance.

Historically, the Northern government successfully persuaded Kentucky to remain with the Union. However, circumstances have changed, with international influences impacting many people's positions.

Fortunately, as a landlocked state, Kentucky's susceptibility to the influence of European powers is limited. Otherwise, under the public relations efforts of England, France, Austria, and Spain, it would have switched sides long ago. As it is, the situation has become increasingly complex and ambiguous.

To persuade Kentucky to support the federal government, Lincoln not only sent representatives but also personally wrote letters to prominent figures in Kentucky, promising various benefits.

Of course, he could not possibly have written all those letters himself such was standard practice, with every leader having multiple secretaries; anything bearing his name simply represented his stance.

By comparison, the Southern government's performance was much worse. They only targeted plantation owners in their activities and rarely attempted to court the capitalists.

If it weren't for Austria's intervention, they would have continued to neglect this aspect.

Connor, a representative of the Northern government, persuaded Sabat, what are you hesitating about? It's obvious that the Southern government is colluding with England, France, Austria, and Spain, attempting to divide the great United States.

As a capitalist, Sabat had no patriotic sentiments. Whether the United States split or not was less important to him than practical interests.

Originally, he had supported the Northern government, but the offers of the Southern government also tempted him. After all, capitalists were powerful in the federal government, with whom he had no particular advantage.

Although the Southern government was dominated by plantation owners, capitalist strength there was weak and competition was not as intense. In addition, they could obtain cheap industrial raw materials. Joining the Southern government seemed to offer greater advantages.

If not for concerns about the Southern governments low tariff policies leading to competition from foreign industrial and commercial products, he would have made up his mind long ago.

Clearly, the intervention of European countries influenced his judgment. From the outset, Sabat believed that the Southern government could achieve independence.

Not just him, many Americans believed that the Northern government would compromise. In this era, Americans did not yet have enough confidence to say no to the united forces of the great powers.

Sabat pondered for a moment before saying, Mr. Connor, I am definitely in support of the federal government. However, the plantation owners in Kentucky are formidable. If we rush into a decision, Im concerned they might resort to drastic actions. It might be better to wait and see.

Of course, when hesitating, it is best to drag things out. When personal interests are at stake, theres no turning back once a wrong decision has been made.

Ironically, the Southern government was trying to lure capitalists with market tactics, but thats the irony of reality.

Wasnt the Northern government also trying to appease the plantation owners? Lincoln repeatedly promised not to abolish slavery and assured that everyones rights would be protected.

Whether they can fulfill these promises, just think of the integrity of the politicians. Both sides are making empty promises; its a matter of who can paint a more enticing picture.

Chapter 318: Pig Teammate

The reforming Russian Bear was also restless. Without opportunities for expansion on the European continent, they went to stir up trouble in the Far East instead.

First, they took advantage of the Second Opium War to wrest away vast territories from the Qing Dynasty. Then they set their sights on Japan.

In 1861, Russian warships intruded into the island of Tsushima (an island in Nagasaki Prefecture), attempting to occupy it as a bridgehead for invading Japan.

With Japan in disarray, it was unable to resist the Russian invasion. The shogunate sought help from the Western powers, hoping to use their strength to deter Russian ambitions.

To contain Russian expansion in the Far East, countries like Britain, France, and the Netherlands expressed their support for the Japanese government. The British even sent warships to counter the Russians.

If history had not changed, under pressure from the British, the Russians would have had to back down.

But at this juncture, the Austrian overseas fleet entered the East Asian region. Not wanting to admit defeat, the Russians turned to Austria for assistance.

The Austrian ambassador to Japan relayed the message to the Austrian fleet, and Fleet Commander Aleister was troubled. The political implications were too much for him to handle.

According to the Russian-Austrian alliance treaty, the two countries were obliged to provide mutual assistance within their power provided that their own interests were not involved.

However, the extent of this assistance was hard to gauge. In the colonial era, strength was everything, and currently, the Austrian fleet was the most powerful force in the Far East.

Before the arrival of the Austrian fleet, only sailing warships existed in the Far East. Ironclad ships were only the stuff of conversations, with many considering them mere rumors.

The arrival of the Austrian fleet undoubtedly ushered in a new era. This global voyage of Austria had a significant impact, showcasing Austrias presence to the world. It made it clear to all nations that Europe still had a top-tier power Austria.

Due to the aftermath of the Second Opium War, the Qing governments fear of foreigners became even more severe. Even though this was just a routine diplomatic visit, many people still lost sleep over it.

After declaring their purpose, the Austrian fleet easily obtained supplies, and officials along the way treated them like the plague, fearing they might cause trouble.

The overseas fleet did not come to make trouble. Usually, they would just cruise around ports, replenish supplies, and then move on to the next stop.

Currently, the fleet was anchored outside the Dagu Forts while the diplomatic envoy, Hmme, in charge of diplomatic affairs, made routine diplomatic visits to the capital. Due to communication difficulties, this troublesome issue has fallen on the shoulders of Fleet Commander Aleister.

The Fleets Chief of Staff Chandler suggested, Commander, since this involves diplomatic matters, why dont we let the ambassador in Japan decide?

Anyway, we still have to visit Japan, so we can deal with any issues then. Even if there were a conflict between Britain and Russia, we could go over to mediate.

At present, the Russian government is busy with reforms so they will not engage in a full-scale war with the British. Even if there were to be a minor conflict, it would still be manageable.

Chief of Staff Chandlers political sensitivity was evidently higher. A conflict between Britain and Russia did not equate to a conflict between Britain and Austria. This time, Austria did not expand its influence in the Far East, so there were no clashing interests that could lead to conflict.

Verbal diplomatic support for Russia was no big deal. In the envoys absence, handing the reins to the ambassador in Japan complied with regulations.

Fleet Commander Aleister rubbed his forehead and said, Alright, lets leave diplomatic matters to the diplomats then!

To be appointed commander of the Austrian overseas fleet, Aleister was naturally no fool. His poor political insight was only because he avoided politics.

While he cared a bit about European affairs, the Far East was beyond his scope. If it weren't for the necessity of coming here in person, he would have regarded the Far Eastern countries the same as African tribal kingdoms subconsciously.

His indifference to politics was also an important factor in his successful career advancement. Military officers with exceptional political talent often didn't fare well.

In Austria, it was customary for military personnel not to engage in politics. If one wanted to enter politics, one had to retire from the military first.

Like most emperors, Franz also preferred military personnel to remain simple-minded; thinking too much often led to problems.

After years of bitter fighting and at a great cost, in mid-October 1857, the British forces captured Delhi, taking the Mughal Emperor as a prisoner.

With the nominal leader of the Indian rebellion gone, the bonds that united the rebel forces were severed, and they descended into a state of disarray.

Subsequently, the British troops successively captured regions such as Lucknow, Kanpur, Gwalior, and other areas. The rebel forces suffered heavy losses and were forced to resort to guerrilla tactics.

Taking advantage of their expertise in political maneuvering, the British seized the opportunity to issue the Letter to the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India, aiming to win over local princely states, landlords, and religious groups.

Seeing the tide turning against them, these princely states, landlords, and religious groups switched sides, leaving the rebel forces isolated and without support.

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By March 1858, this massive Indian rebellion had been crushed. The British Empire finally freed up its hands to continue implementing its global strategy.

For Franz, who was considering intervening in the American Civil War, the fact that the British had freed up their hands was undoubtedly good news.

In America, thanks to the diplomatic efforts of Britain, France, Austria, and Spain, the number of states joining the Southern Confederacy had increased to fourteen, narrowing the gap with the North.

The Northern states were unprepared for war. Many federal states were already resigned to compromise, given that the four great powers all supported Southern independence.

In the eyes of many, using force for reunification would easily provoke joint intervention from other countries, potentially leading to a repeat of the embarrassing situation of the burning of the White House.

During this period, most officers in the US military came from Southern plantation owner backgrounds. Capitalists were not accustomed to fighting wars, and the military leadership remained largely in the hands of Southern plantation owners.

After the Southern government declared independence, much of the US Army disbanded, leading to a severe shortage of officers.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, even if President Lincoln wanted to resolve the Confederacy issue through military means, he would not have enough officers available in the short term.

As long as it dragged on, the North-South division would become an established fact. Regardless of whether the Northern government acknowledged it or not, they would eventually be powerless.

At this point, the Southern government did something stupid that sparked the war.

On April 12, 1861, the overconfident Southern government attacked Fort Sumter in an attempt to force the Northern government to recognize Southern independence through violence.

The South struck first, undoubtedly provoking the Northerners. Capitalists immediately manipulated public opinion, portraying the Northern government as the victim.

The opportunity Lincoln had been anxiously waiting for had arrived. Immediately after the outbreak of war, he issued a call to arms.

States that had originally resisted resolving the Southern issue through force now stood behind the Northern government, supporting the Federal government in suppressing the rebellion.

The various Northern states, which had originally been persuaded to maintain neutrality in the Civil War by the combined efforts of various countries, now wavered in their position under the influence of public opinion.

Upon receiving the news, the ambassadors of Britain, France, Austria, and Spain all cursed their pig teammate.

According to their prearranged plan, after the South declared independence, they would leverage the American public's opposition to civil war to create a *fait accompli* through foreign intervention.

Now, most of these diplomatic efforts have gone down the drain. Aside from persuading three more slave states to join the Confederacy, the Northern states that were finally persuaded to remain neutral were drawn into the conflict.

Austrian ambassador to the United States, Drucker, grimaced and said, Given the current situation, dwelling on these matters is of no use. Let's focus on what to do next!

The French ambassador to the United States, Alfredo, sneered, What else can we do? Since these unreliable Americans want to fight, let them fight to their hearts' content. When they're spent, we can come in and clean up the mess. As long as we stay united, even if a winner is declared, we can still reverse the situation.

Obviously, Alfredo was very unhappy with the Southern government. Starting such a big war without consulting the powers was unacceptable.

It's worth noting that the current situation of the Southern government was only made possible through the combined efforts of the four nations. Just as they gained the upper hand, the Southern government became arrogant.

The powers didn't really care whether the Americans fought or not. But it's different when it affects their own gains. Now that the war had broken out and the situation was out of control, any future intervention could only be through force.

The idea of dividing the United States by military means is quite different from dividing it by political means. If the division of the United States were achieved through political maneuvering,

the four of them here would have performed a diplomatic miracle. With such an achievement, it wouldn't be surprising if they became foreign ministers.

In other countries where politics is stable, there's a clear hierarchy and it's difficult to become foreign minister. But France is different. You wait a few years at most, and then it's your turn.

This is still the era of Napoleon III, with relatively stable politics. If it were during the Republic period, it wouldn't be surprising to see seven or eight changes in a year.

The British envoy to the United States, Mark Oliver, shook his head and said, Reversing the situation is not that easy. It's best for both the North and the South to fight to a draw, and then we can step in to mediate.

But it's hard to strike the right balance. If things go wrong and one side wins the war, the price we'll have to pay to intervene will be much higher.

The Spanish ambassador to the United States, Francisco, complained, It's all because of that fool Jefferson Davis. All he thinks about is fighting, he doesn't understand anything about politics!

If he wasn't a fool, why would we support him? It's better to support a fool to lead the Southern Confederacy than to support a tyrant, reassured the Austrian ambassador to the United States, Drucker.

Undoubtedly, Jefferson Davis, the large plantation owner, could not have become the president of the Southern Confederacy without the support of the four nations.

For Jefferson Davis to stand out among numerous competitors, he must be someone exceptional. He had fought in the Mexican-American War and served as Secretary of War (the predecessor of the Department of Defense).

In a time of war, it's natural to elect a national leader who knows military affairs. As for other aspects of ability, a slight deficiency is not a problem. Moreover, the ability to serve as a Secretary of War is enough to prove that his political competence is not lacking.

The French ambassador, Alfredo, proposed, In that case, let's support these fools in the South first. Their strength is limited anyway. Even if they were to capture Washington tomorrow, they wouldn't have the capability to unify the United States.

Then, we can support the Northern government to fight back. By going back and forth several times, we can exhaust their national strength as much as possible, to prevent them from becoming a threat.

The British ambassador, Mark Oliver, thought for a moment before saying, Since the Southern government dares to defy us, we must teach them a lesson. How about we now jointly declare neutrality and call for a peaceful resolution of the dispute between the two countries?

There are many ways to show support, with the most impactful being direct intervention. Obviously, everyone is extremely dissatisfied with the foolish actions of the Southern government, so direct intervention is unlikely.

Declaring neutrality is undoubtedly a warning to the Southern government not to play with fire.

Calling for a peaceful resolution of the dispute between the two countries, from another perspective, can also be seen as creating a pretext for armed intervention.

When everyone is ready to intervene, the implication becomes: whoever refuses to peacefully resolve the North-South issue, the four nations will use force to make them agree.

Chapter 319: Endeavors

Washington, Government Building

US Secretary of State Seward frowned as he reported: Mr. President, the current situation is very unfavorable to us. The Southern government has leveraged cotton diplomacy to win over the support of Britain, France, Austria, and Spain, resulting in overwhelmingly biased international public opinion.

It's not that Seward didn't try hard enough, but the enemy was simply too powerful. Since the Southern government promised to abolish slavery in the future, this civil war has become a tariff dispute.

The North's supposed moral high ground was rendered worthless by public opinion. This was the fault of the US Constitution, which provided the legal basis for Southern independence.

If the Southern government hadn't started the war, they wouldn't know what to do now. In this era, the states in America have considerable autonomy, and without their cooperation in preparing for war, the central government is completely powerless.

The European cultural system places great emphasis on legality. With a legal basis, various governments directly recognized the legitimacy of the Southern government.

The public relations efforts of the Northern government were unsuccessful; the importance of the textile industry to the British was too great, and the national economy was held hostage.

France and Spain were also hit hard. The Northern government's tariff barriers undoubtedly increased everyone's production costs, essentially taking money out of the pockets of the capitalists.

Lincoln asked puzzledly, I recall the Austrians have already ceased importing cotton from the South, so why would they still support the Southern government?

Not only did they stop importing cotton, but the United States and Austria were also competitors in the agricultural sector. The plantation economy of the South still posed a threat to the Austrian agricultural system.

From a standpoint of self-interest, the Austrians should support the North government in weakening the Southern plantation economy at this time.

Secretary Seward stated, According to the intelligence we've received, the South has promised to relinquish interests in Central America in exchange for Austrian support.

However, this is just a superficial factor. Based on our analysis, it may be related to the industrial market. Austria's industrial development has been very rapid in recent years.

While the Southern plantation economy has impacted their agricultural exports, the effect is not significant since Austria exports finished goods.

Austrians have the largest share in international agricultural trade. Currently, the largest grain-importing regions in Europe are Germany, Italy, and Britain, with the first two being influenced by Austria.

Under the Southern plantation economy, there's a significant need for imported industrial and commercial products, making this market a battleground for various countries.

It was inevitable. The North government's industrialization is bound to compete with the major industrial countries in Europe, while the Southern government produces industrial raw materials and provides an export market for industrial products.

This is a matter of tangible interest, and all diplomatic efforts are futile in the face of interests. The Northern government cannot offer better conditions than those of the South, so naturally, it cannot win over the other countries.

After pondering for a moment, President Lincoln said, Then focus on cultivating relations with the Russians. Surely they don't need industrial raw materials and markets?

It's not easy to endure international isolation. The current United States is still a small fish that can't ignore international pressure.

Secretary Seward replied, Winning over the Russians is not difficult, but their influence in the American region is too limited. Besides providing diplomatic support, they cannot offer substantial assistance and may even bring us trouble.

This was the reality; the boastful Imperial Russian Navy was useless here. Although influential globally, its influence was limited to its immediate surroundings.

Don't be fooled by the fact that Russia has a territory on the American continent; in this era, even Alaska's total population is less than ten thousand. Even if the Russians wanted to make trouble, they were helpless.

President Lincoln countered, Do we have any other option?

There are only a few powerful countries in the world, and even if the remaining countries were won over, with just a glance from Britain, France, Austria, and Spain, all efforts would be in vain.

Winning over the Russian Empire may not be the best choice, but it's the only choice.

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Poor Southern diplomacy left them an opening. Had the South also drawn in Russia, Lincoln strongly suspected that the domestic capitalists would have simply surrendered.

For many Americans at the time, national identity meant little. Ask a random person on the street and they will claim to be British, French, German, Irish.... but never American.

The true establishment of national self-confidence came after World War I. At the Washington Conference, the Americans achieved naval parity with the British, solidifying their status as a great power and gaining widespread public recognition.

The outbreak of the American Civil War was an opportunity for many countries. The active intervention of Great Britain, France, Austria, and Spain in the American Civil War was actually aimed at breaking through the Monroe Doctrine barrier.

Since the rise of the United States, the interests of various countries in the Americas have suffered significant losses. Spain was no exception, having Florida forcibly taken by the Americans.

If it weren't for the intervention of various countries, the Americans were planning to conquer Cuba as well. Although Spain's military strength still exceeds that of the United States, its ability to deploy forces in the Americas is very limited.

This is also why Spain is actively participating in the intervention alliance. Only by sticking together can everyone suppress the Americans and protect their own interests.

The Spanish Governor of Cuba, Prez, eagerly asked, Ambassador, now that the American Civil War has broken out, can we regain control of the Spanish Island?

Spanish Ambassador to the United States, Francisco, replied, Rest assured, Governor. I have already coordinated with Britain, France, and Austria. They will support our military actions, and the Southern government has already recognized our sovereignty over the Spanish Island.

However, you must act quickly. If we cannot occupy the Spanish Island in a short amount of time, we will miss the opportunity to carve up Mexico.

(Authors Note: The Spanish Island here refers to Hispaniola)

No country willingly accepts decline, not even Spain. With colonies rebelling left and right, and domestic development lagging behind, Spanish intellectuals initiated their own self-strengthening movement.

Governor Prez and Ambassador Francisco are among them. To salvage this declining colonial empire, they decided to seize more fertile land.

Now, Britain, France, and Spain have set their sights on Mexico, the kingdom of silver, while Austria has targeted Central America. Seizing the Spanish Island is just an appetizer before the feast.

Governor Prez replied nonchalantly, Don't worry, at most, we'll need some time to reconquer the Spanish Island. It won't delay our plans.

Since breaking away from Spanish rule, the island of Hispaniola has produced two nations, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Despite its later impoverishment, Hispaniola remained a rare and prosperous land during this period, second only to Cuba in the Caribbean.

Being weak yet prosperous became their original sin, and in this era of survival of the fittest, Haiti and the Dominican Republic became prey to the great powers.

Once the decision to act was made, Governor Prez returned to Cuba and immediately organized a force of five thousand soldiers, appointing Colonel Galileus as the commander to invade and occupy the Spanish Island.

As the vast expanse of the deep blue sea stretched endlessly, waves constantly crashed against the warships, emitting the roar of the ocean and splashing white foam.

Colonel Galileus, commanding independently for the first time, stood on the deck of the warship and gazed into the distance. It seemed as if he was admiring the charm of the sea, feeling anxious and excited at the same time, full of passion...

A guard reminded, Colonel, we are only twenty nautical miles away from reaching the island of Hispaniola. There may be enemy warships ahead, and it's unsafe on the ship's deck.

Colonel Galileus chuckled, Dont worry, little Andre. Our enemies this time are just two indigenous kingdoms, they dont even have a navy.

However, these indigenous kingdoms are not to be underestimated; they have some degree of strength, having achieved independence from the Spanish colonial rule.

However, this independence was established with the support of the Americans. Now that the American Civil War has erupted and external support is lacking, these two small nations revealed their true colors.

In the end, Colonel Galileus accepted the advice and returned to the command room. Haiti and the Dominican Republic may not have organized navies, but that doesnt mean they are defenseless.

There are still a few shore cannons, and if luck isnt on their side and a cannonball happens to fly their way, it will be too late to cry then.

Colonel Galileus hadnt lived long enough to joke with his own life. The fleet slowly sailed toward the island, the docks already visible to the naked eye.

Without hesitation, Colonel Galileus immediately gave the order: Attack!

Chapter 320: Ocean Fleet

On June 18, 1861, the Austrian Ocean Fleet visited Korea. Both sides reached an agreement on friendly exchanges between the two countries, and diplomatic relations were upgraded to the ambassador level.

During this period, Korea, under a feudal system, rejected foreign trade. Previously, Austria had little interest in Korea and did not establish an embassy, only a consulate.

Following this friendly visit, Himm signed a friendly trade agreement with the Korean government, granting each other the most favored nation (MFN) status.

This was customary; Austria had already signed commercial most favored nation treaties with about a dozen countries, including Britain and France.

Incidentally, several military procurement orders were also secured. In addition to army equipment, Himm also marketed five ironclad ships.

Thailand and Vietnam each ordered one, while the Qing government ordered three at once. Clearly, they were alarmed by Britain and France and sought to strengthen their maritime defense. However expensive ironclad ships may be, they were preferable to being caught off guard.

Austria had no plans for expansion in the Far East, but when business opportunities arose, they naturally pursued them. As for whether this would cause trouble for European colonial empires, it was not within Himmels considerations.

Failing to sway the Korean government left Himm somewhat dissatisfied. He could only hope to make some gains with Japan, the last remaining option in East Asia.

With everyone selling military equipment, profits had already been squeezed due to competition. Selling ironclad ships was unique to Austria, but the profit margin was not particularly high, barely double the production cost.

If someone was willing to pay a high price, even active equipment like this ocean fleet could be sold off. As long as someone offered over 30 million guilders, Franz wouldnt mind selling them off.

Anyway, the production cost of these warships will not exceed 7 million guilders, and it would only take a little over a year to build such a fleet.

With Austria adopting the gold standard, the international exchange rate between gold and silver has also been impacted, with silver depreciating to 15.3:1 against gold. Now, one guilder is equivalent to 1.5 taels of silver.

Obviously, countries capable of producing 45,002,000 taels of silver at once are extremely rare in this era. Unless absolutely necessary, no one would be willing to play the fool.

In Edo, Himmell had just conducted a friendly visit with the Shogunate, adding another most favored nation to Austrias list.

The resident ambassador, Charles, asked with a puzzled expression, Sir, why not take the opportunity to expand our interests in Japan?

Himmell smiled slightly and replied, Havent we already expanded them? We have signed a treaty granting each other the most favored nation status. Any expansion of rights by any great power here automatically extends to us the same privileges.

This was a fact. On the surface, its a completely equal treaty, but because of the difference in national power, the final outcome may not be the same.

The most favored nation treaty signed with Britain and France is a purely equal treaty where each party takes what it needs. After all, in this era, no one has the power to force them to sign an unequal treaty and sacrifice domestic commercial interests.

But its different with Japan. If the Japanese government grants commercial privileges to any country, then Austria automatically enjoys them as well.

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However, compared to the practices of other countries, Austria is actually relatively moderate. There is no use of force or coercion, no infringement on everyones sovereignty, just limited to commercial cooperation.

Ambassador Charles shook his head and said, Mr. Himmell, thats not enough. We could easily establish concessions, and ports, or even occupy a few islands here.

Himmell explained earnestly, Ambassador, indeed we have the capability to do so now. The ocean fleet is currently the strongest armed force in East Asia. Even turning Japan into a protectorate is not a problem.

However, the ocean fleet cannot stay here forever; we will leave sooner or later. At that time, will England and France watch us occupy so many interests?

Without the use of force, will the local natives accept our rule? With only our strength in the Far East, we cannot handle such large benefits.

In that case, its better to establish good relations with everyone from the beginning. East Asia is not our focus of expansion; doing business here is enough.

Ambassador Charles unwillingly said, But dont we still have Russia as an ally? If our two countries join forces, holding onto these interests shouldnt be a problem.

Not long ago, Charles helped the Russians occupy the island of Tsushima, with this consideration in mind. Bringing Russian influence in was aimed at jointly seizing the biggest piece of the pie.

Hmmel sighed and said, The Russians are too greedy; one Japan wont satisfy their appetite. If we cooperate with them, well be tied to their war chariot in the future.

This place is too far from Austria, its beyond the scope of our power projection. Lets not forget that the ocean fleet was able to reach East Asia without a hitch by using ports in various countries along the way.

The greed of the Russians is an acknowledged fact by everyone. When it comes to territorial expansion, the Russian government has never seemed satisfied.

The dissolution of the Russo-Austrian alliance has garnered significant support within the Austrian government. Many Austrians believe that cooperating with the Russians is more trouble than its worth and that working with the English and French to suppress the Russian Empire would yield greater benefits.

After pondering for a moment, Ambassador Charles remarked, Alright, youve convinced me. But if we do nothing, it wont be long before the Russians find themselves in trouble.

Screwing over the Russians? That shouldnt be considered as such. Charles is a seasoned diplomat; he has never made any promises to the Russians.

Out of obligation as an ally, Austria unconditionally helped the Russians occupy Tsushima. Now, the Nagasaki region has fallen under Russian influence, with Austria gaining nothing in return.

Once the Austrian ocean fleet departs, whether the Russians can withstand the pressure and retain control over Nagasaki will be solely their problem.

After the departure of the ocean fleet, the closest Austrian fleets are stationed in the South Pacific. By then, Austrias support will be limited to mere verbal assurances.

After taking stock and ensuring that there were no hidden dangers left, Charles couldnt help but let out a sigh of relief.

With a slight smile, Hmmel stood up and took two steps forward, speaking with his back turned to Charles, Ambassador, dont you think that the recent relations between Britain and Russia are a bit too good?

Charles paused for a moment, then quickly grasped the implication. Stirring up tensions between Britain and Russia was also one of the responsibilities of the Austrian Foreign Ministry.

It wasnt just tensions between Britain and Russia; it included conflicts between Britain and France, Britain and Spain, and France and Russia all part of the Austrian Foreign Ministrys work.

Every countrys foreign ministry was engaged in similar activities. If it werent for the European countries poking each others wounds, where would all these conflicts in the world come from?

However, all these activities were conducted behind the scenes, and on the surface, everyone maintained a gentlemanly demeanor. In this era, many still believed that the various European countries were united.

