Governor 701

Chapter 701

The bonds Gu Hang established with the Alliance in this war are precious.

Of course, expecting these bonds to stand by us when confronting Holy Terra is impossible. When the time comes for a rebellion, they will still come to suppress it.

The stage where these connections play a role is before the outbreak of war.

To put it plainly, Gu Hang doesn't really want to fall out with Holy Terra, nor does Terra. However, there is a fierce contradiction between the expansion of the Alliance and the security of Holy Terra.

Those so-called connections are used to reconcile contradictions and ease the situation.

However, if it's just connections, that's still a bit too loose.

Connections can gradually dissipate over time.

Gu Hang needs to take advantage of the time when the connections are still present to establish a more solid and tighter bond.

The cleanup work of the Insect War is still ongoing, but as the Commander-in-Chief of the three armies, Gu Hang is no longer interested in managing it.

Occasionally signing some reports and attending some military meetings is enough. Most of the remaining time is spent on building relationships, interacting, and signing some agreements.

Among these, the most important are those signed with various Starfighter Battle Groups.

In general, they are ’military mutual assistance agreements’.

However, depending on the nature of the target battle group, the agreements signed are different.

Regarding the Phoenix and the ’Yellow Springs Gull Battle Group’ (a rebranded Shadow Battle Group) that Gu Hang is about to promote, they are completely controlled by the Alliance, from equipment to personnel to leadership. It’s normal to give them a home planet, settle them on a planet, and there’s no need to sign any special agreements.

For the New Era Torch and Fury Flame Battle Group, the situation is somewhat different.

Although they are also completely controlled by the Alliance, after all, there is still the concept of an atonement expedition on them.

For these two battle groups, Gu Hang intends to sign a ’atonement agreement’ with them. The Alliance will have enough wars that need their participation, allowing them to serve their atonement period during this century.

The so-called sufficient wars are not entirely fictional war needs. Among the five Star Domains that Gu Hang already considers his own territory, there are clearly three Star Domain-level threats: the pest control in the Alfonso and Thistle and Mustard Star Domains, eradicating those incapacitated Insect Swarms; recolonizing planets in the Princess Star Domain not handled by the Extinction Order; and addressing areas in the northern part of the Dragonhawk Star Domain where the Beastmen left over from the Iron Fang War haven’t been cleaned out...

All require battles.

In addition to these three prominent Star Domain-level threats, there are also pirate threats in the Menghe Star Domain and Proudclaw Cosmos. With a scale of five Star Domains and four thousand worlds, the Alliance also needs to push for system reforms quickly, which can no longer be as meticulously managed as when the territory was small. Groups whose interests are harmed on their planets will cause some chaos, which is quite normal.

Many social disturbances cannot be resolved with martial force, as you cannot kill everyone. However, in this era, with the Alliance, this statement is not quite applicable.

As long as it's not chaos involving dozens or hundreds of worlds banding together in rebellion, if it's just planetary rebellions, the Alliance really can execute everyone and start over.

These rebellions are enough to summon the Atonement Expedition battle groups to fight.

In short, during their 'expedition' within the Alliance's five Star Domains, they will not be short of battles.

The Empire's requirement for the Atonement Expedition battle groups is no support, no supplies, and during the expedition period, they must unconditionally accept the Empire's war summons.

The Alliance can exploit this loophole.

The Empire doesn't provide resources or supplies, but I do;

If they must unconditionally accept war summons, I will constantly summon them, so the battle groups are always fighting, and when other forces want to summon them, they have to wait for the Atonement Battle Group to finish their current battles, right?

If it were any other Atonement Battle Group, they couldn't exploit the loophole like this. The Empire's officials, especially the forces that sentenced the battle group to an atonement expedition, will not watch them enjoy it so smoothly. If found evasive, it shows a lack of loyalty and unchanging behavior, which may bring about more severe punitive measures.

However, falling under the Alliance, there is no fear.

Who sentenced these two battle groups to the atonement expedition?

Gu Hang did.

And who is the supervisor?

Still Gu Hang.

After exploiting the loophole like this, anyone wanting to punish them would still have to get through the Alliance first.

Is there anyone willing to do this?

Besides intentionally antagonizing the Alliance, there's probably no one who dares.

The Dragon King's Spear Chapter was also sentenced to an atonement expedition, but their 'crime' is lighter, only fifteen years. However, unlike Furyflame and New Era Torch, the Dragon King's Spear is not a battle group completely controlled by the Alliance.

There are others in similar situations, like Blood Shark.

However, both of these groups have intentions of staying with the Alliance.

Blood Shark no longer wants to continue their precarious existence in the Dark Outer Domain. They desire a home planet to end their long wandering life; the Dragon King's Spear lost their home planet after being sentenced to an atonement expedition, but after fifteen years, they also don't want to wander and intend to reclaim their home planet—it lies within the Thistle and Mustard Star Field.

These, the Alliance can offer.

Even if not politically, securing a tax-exempt home planet for them. However, a single planet is challenging to support a complete battle group unless it's an exceptionally wealthy and developed world. Most battle groups assigned to a decent planet need to continuously expand their influence, using military force to provide protection to their Star Sector or even Star Domain in exchange for resources.

Chapter 701_2

The Alliance can allocate all the resources produced by a planet to the Battle Group. The Alliance Government will assist them in managing it, ensuring a higher output than they would achieve on their own. The planet must pay the Imperial Tax, but the Alliance can cover this tax.

Apart from the output of their home planet, the Alliance will also provide substantial resources based on the Battle Group's participation in Alliance battles and their contributions.

What the Battle Group wants, the Alliance has it all.

This can be called a [Battle Group Military and Economic Mutual Assistance Agreement].

Indeed, compared to the Furyflame and New Era Torch that are already completely controlled by the Alliance, their independence is relatively strong. Theoretically, they can refuse the Alliance's war summons, and even if they accept, they have the right to act independently according to their own ideas in battle.

While possessing certain autonomy, they also lose the unconditional support of the Alliance. The support they need is something they must earn through specific military achievements within the framework of the agreement.

It certainly doesn't match the abundance of resources gained by the Phoenix, Yellow Springs Gull, New Era Torch, and Furyflame.

Even personnel supplementation, which these two Battle Groups have already experienced, involves using achievements to exchange for high-quality, high-success-rate candidates for Genetic Seeds implantation surgeries provided by the Alliance.

This is actually a point of Gu Hang's...it's not really a conspiracy, but a clever idea.

Forcing personnel on them might make them suspicious and uneasy; but if it needs to be exchanged, it reassures them more.

Within these two Battle Groups, there are actually some new recruits from the Alliance. These recruits have served in the two Battle Groups for as short as a few months or as long as over one or two years. Their performance is evident to the veteran predecessors in the Battle Group.

Loyal, brave, outstanding potential, even no longer just potential, they are simply comparable to veterans.

They have never encountered such soldier quality before and have to believe that the Alliance has unique expertise in selecting and nurturing elite soldiers.

Of course, these soldiers from the Alliance have a slight 'little' problem, which is being especially friendly towards the Alliance.

But isn't that very normal?

Compared to their advantages, this slight disadvantage is really nothing.

Gu Hang hopes they think this way.

In the future, with a longer duration and more members from the Alliance, the whole Battle Group will naturally tend to stand on the side of the Alliance.

Even without the need for Alliance's comrades to rise to high positions, the benefits brought by the agreement itself and the circumstances of comparison with the four completely Alliance-controlled Battle Groups may attract them towards fully joining the Alliance.

Even if it doesn't reach this stage, Gu Hang is still satisfied with the current agreement framework.

This is the situation with the six Battle Groups standing with the Alliance.

As for those Battle Groups unrelated to the Alliance after the war, Gu Hang also put some thought into them.

The Black Cross Army, Phoenix, and Otaubis are of paramount importance.

Gu Hang has had good discussions with the leaders of all three, and each has signed a "Princess Star Domain and Spiderweb Domain Joint Defense Agreement."

This defense agreement does not have very strong binding power, only stating that the areas mentioned in the agreement might have threats existing for a long time in the future, like the remnants of armored rebels, pest infections, paralyzed insect swarms, or new Insect Races that might emerge from the Void Black Hole...

Gu Hang invites each Battle Group to dispatch a number of personnel to jointly defend this area.

The personnel do not need to be many—a symbolic three to five, or even just one person as an observer is enough.

Any expenses would be borne by the Alliance.

The Alliance surely does not actually need them to exert real effort. Currently, it seems that the situation within the Spiderweb Domain can be easily handled by the Alliance alone. This agreement is to maintain constant contact with these Battle Groups, let everyone have a common goal, facilitate more communication, and even do some business.

For each Battle Group, this area is also where they have fought and shed blood. Leaving someone behind to see the area truly stabilizing in the future is a maintenance of their own achievements.

Moreover, staying in contact with the Alliance is ultimately beneficial. Those who have goodwill towards the Alliance can communicate more; those cautious about the Alliance can use this opportunity to insert personnel to observe the Alliance’s development.

Gu Hang is not afraid of the latter.

The three Battle Groups that Gu Hang has focused on strategizing have mostly agreed to leave an observer team in the end.

And other Battle Groups have either agreed or said they would go back to discuss with higher-ups of the Battle Group before responding.

Gu Hang also holds significant expectations for them.

Like the Infinite Corps and Bat Corps, they are both newly formed groups. In this war, both have sent units to participate. If they are also willing to maintain long-term communication with the Alliance, it is certainly a good thing.

For others, ordinary Battle Groups that participated in the war have relatively ordinary influence.

But after all, there are many of them!

In the West Line and North Line, there are over twenty Interstellar Warrior Battle Groups from different places combined.

Even if not all, even if half of them could establish long-term contact with the Alliance, that’s quite a considerable force, and Gu Hang doesn’t mind at all.

As for the Anti-Extraterrestrial Alliance and Heresy Tribunal which are among the three most important factions within the Tribunal, it’s the same.

The Alliance collaborates with them to build a "Joint Supervision and Defense Agreement," also hoping that they can send branches over to oversee issues of internal corruption and alien corruption within the Spiderweb Domain.

Similarly, the Alliance pays, and they provide effort, or not even effort is needed; as long as this branch is established, Gu Hang’s goal is achieved.

The two have not agreed yet, but judging from their representatives, who are senior Judgment Chiefs with prestigious standing within their systems, their personal attitudes are relatively positive.

So the future outcome should also be relatively optimistic.

As for those Star Realm Army and Navy from various places, Gu Hang does not have a particularly good approach. After all, unlike the Interstellar Warrior Battle Group, they do not have strong independence and are more subject to the jurisdiction of the Military Affairs Department, Imperial Star Realm Army Headquarters, and Navy Headquarters.

However, a donation route is still an option, right?

Chapter 702, "Alliance Plan

Building relationships with entities like Battle Groups, the Tribunal, and local forces is a strategic diplomatic activity for foreseeing potential challenges.

However, among all diplomatic activities, the most crucial one, or rather, the one needing the most diplomacy, is none other than Holy Terra.

All other diplomatic efforts are aimed at securing a better political environment from Holy Terra.

In this context, it is natural not to neglect activities involving the Central Empire and Holy Terra itself.

Gu Hang is preparing a detailed development plan document.

This document is not only a display of the Alliance’s existing resources and development potential but also a commitment to the future.

It includes the current economic and tax status of the Alliance and the Five Major Star Domains, as well as projections for these areas in the future.

Military security and political security are also among the series of topics mentioned.

With the assistance of the Governor's Office, this extensive and detailed plan report is already being drafted.

Ultimately, the most important point in this is taxation.

The Alliance promises that in ten years, the Five Major Star Domains will stably contribute 1.3 trillion in tax currency per year.

This is calculated based on a population of ten trillion. Normally, a Level 1 development is 1 trillion a year, but there are some planets with higher development levels, and the Alliance has committed in the report to develop some worlds less affected by war into higher levels to pay more taxes.

Although this pertains to ten years later, the Alliance will not avoid tax obligations during these ten years.

On the contrary, the tax amount is still quite high. According to calculations, starting next year, the Alliance will resume paying the Imperial Tax every two years. The tax amount for the first year is approximately 370 billion.

This includes the total taxes from the Dragonhawk and Meng River star domains, and from the newly occupied regions of Scythe, Alfonso, and Thistle and Mustard, specifically the worlds less affected by war, which do not require re-colonization and can immediately restore their tax contributions to the Empire.

As for those worlds severely affected by disasters, taxes are uncollectible as usual, and the Empire typically grants them some time to develop.

The Alliance has provided detailed explanations for each of these worlds that cannot complete tax payments, including a timetable for when they can fulfill their tax obligations in the future.

The Alliance believes that this proposal holds great appeal for the Central Empire.

The most important issue for the Empire is taxation.

The Empire's military, war efforts, and various institutions all rely on the supply of Imperial Tax. Without the Imperial Tax, there is no Empire.

Generally, according to political conventions within the Empire, 30% of a planet's tax goes to the Star Domain Government, 20% to the Space Domain Government, and only 50% can be called upon by the Central Empire.

This is under theoretical conditions.

In the vast span of the Empire, most taxes are paid in the form of goods, and transportation losses, fleet fuel, time, the cost of building Tax Fleets, and the risk of being plundered during transport—all these can be factored into tax costs.

The tax costs for Star Domain Governments are relatively low, being nearby; the costs for Space Domain Governments are higher, with three to four-fifths being normal; in the Central Empire, costs rise to 50% or 60% being very normal.

The Empire has already tried every method to solve this problem. For example, building central warehouses in various locations for nearby collection, storage, and deployment; or using tax currency to directly mobilize the resources of each planet, star domain, and space domain to work for the central authority, using tax currency to offset goods and thereby reducing the inevitable losses in physical transfer.

However, ultimately these methods can only be considered as mitigating strategies for high losses, unable to completely resolve the issue.

Yet, the content promised in the Alliance's development document is to find a planet in the Thistle and Mustard Star Field, the star domain closest to the Central Territory, to serve as a dedicated hub and transfer point, settling the agreed tax amount at that location in one clear transaction.

What does this mean?

The Central Empire gets to skip allocating funds to the Star Domain Government and Space Domain Government!

This single move increases the Central Government's theoretical revenue by 50%!

Additionally, a single settlement eliminates the need for individual payments and reminders, saving a vast amount of tax costs. At that time, the Central Empire only needs to focus on getting money from the Alliance every two years, making a centralized payment in one location. The Empire's Tax Fleet just needs to travel to the Thistle and Mustard Star Field once to handle all matters.

Tax costs could drop from nearly 60% to no more than 20%!

This is another huge increase!

By directly calculating the numbers, it becomes clearer.

The total tax revenue from the Five Major Star Domains was about 1.7 trillion tax currency before the war. The amount the Empire could receive annually at the central level was about 850 billion tax currency, but the portion that could actually be transported to the Central Empire for use would drop to 340 billion.

These are theoretical figures. In practice, due to the existence of the Alphonso Religion, an exempt super-institution, and Alphonso, a local stronghold that regularly intercepts taxes and reverses demands money from the Empire, even with the transportation loss factored 340 billion, the Central Empire receives far less.

According to statistics from the Central Department of Taxation, getting 100 billion a year would be considered fortunate.

In the future, if the Alliance obediently retreats to the Dragonhawk Star Domain and relinquishes other locations, and the Empire rebuilds the Space Domain - Star Domain - Star Sector administrative structure in those areas, the theoretical tax collection of the Empire would drop from 340 billion to 200 billion, with the received tax amount potentially only reaching 80 billion.

Chapter 702, "Alliance Plan"_2

This is the impact of war.

From the outbreak of the Iron Armor War to the conclusion of the second battle of Reiaductus, this continuous 15-year war devastated the Spiderweb Domain. The Thistle and Mustard, Alfonso, and Aloft Claw Star Domains were relatively less affected, but their populations still plummeted sharply.

The expected 17 trillion theoretical tax currency is certainly gone; having 1 trillion would be fortunate.

With the population base decreased, the Imperial Tax will naturally decrease as well.

Moreover, although the Iron Armor has been eliminated and the Alfonso Sect disbanded beyond recovery, leaving no one to intercept and collect taxes.

However, the Alamita Sect emerged and recently struck an agreement with Mars, ensuring their continued existence. This means that Alamita will partially inherit Alfonso's legacy and be exempt from taxes, though not as much as before. Yet, the output of a Founding World almost equals that of a hundred ordinary worlds. Not to mention, their influence will expand in the future, inevitably affecting tax revenues.

Furthermore, with so many worlds devastated, can the Empire really collect that much money according to the decimation tax standard?

Impossible.

If those devastated worlds are left unchecked, they surely won't be able to pay.

There are only two possible outcomes:

One, not paying taxes leads to treason charges, but paying taxes leads to starvation. So I'd rather not pay. Either way, it's death, so might as well rebel.

Can the Empire really punish these hundreds or thousands of stricken worlds? Do they need to spend even more money to send an army? After punishing them, what's left is an even more devastated land that still can't pay?

Two, exemption from taxes. Not just exemption, but also financial aid and reconstruction, which is the Ministry of Internal Affairs' responsibility. The Ministry will definitely lean towards doing this.

No tax means no revenue; aid and reconstruction will instead require an astronomical sum.

Whichever option is chosen, the Empire surely won't collect a penny and might even need to continuously provide financial support to these areas.

In one year, they might collect 200 billion, but in reverse, they might need to pay another 200 billion in suppression or support costs.

Now, following the Alliance's plan, all expenses are saved.

In the first year, the Alliance can provide 3700 billion, and the Central Empire can net around 3000 billion after deducting tax costs, which is quite appealing.

Compared to the past, where less than 1000 billion was collected annually; compared to reclaiming these worlds under Imperial control, where not a cent would be collected and costs would rise.

It's an even better deal when calculated this way.

Not to mention the 13 trillion annual projection in ten years as drawn by the Alliance!

Even in hand, it would be over 1 trillion.

In general, this income equals the tax revenue provided to the Central Empire by two or three complete Cosmos Domains!

And what does the Empire have to pay?

It’s what has been theoretically ravaged, a burden to be offloaded to the Alliance.

No matter how it’s thought about, it’s an incredibly beneficial deal!

The real money, the key attraction of the draft of the "Future Decade Joint Development and Taxation Plan for the Five Major Star Domains and the Alliance," is this income.

Of course, this proposal does not touch on another matter: the huge military spending the Alliance successively incurred while heading north during this Iron Armor War.

The loss of ships, personnel, weaponry, fuel, ammunition...

But one thing doesn’t relate to the other. This money has nothing to do with the future of the Alliance or the Five Major Star Domains.

Your Central Empire asked us to go to war, so you were supposed to pay for this.

This issue doesn’t concern the "Alliance Plan," so there’s no need to write it into the document.

Apart from money, Gu Hang also plans to give enough respect.

On the political level, Gu Hang expressed a willingness to accept part of the Empire’s political guidance. He plans to establish a position similar to the Empire’s Attorney General within the Alliance, jointly selected with the Empire, representing both the Empire’s interests and maintaining the Alliance’s autonomy. This approach allows Holy Terra to feel the Alliance’s respect for and integration into the Empire’s political system.

This Alliance Attorney General will not only supervise political matters but will also oversee the development of military forces.

To alleviate Holy Terra's concerns about the Alliance's military forces, the Alliance also proposed the idea of military force restrictions. Gu Hang intends to establish a military supervision mechanism within the Alliance, directly led by the Imperial representative. Other Starfighter Battle Groups and some trusted Imperial officials could also participate as observers.

This mechanism will monitor the Alliance's military size, weaponry updates, and more. It will cover everything from army numbers to the Navy size, and Starfighter Battle Group numbers and management within the Alliance's Five Major Star Domains, with various agreements in place. This ensures that the Alliance's military power does not excessively expand, and all military actions remain defensive.

In fact, Gu Hang also realizes that these measures cannot completely dispel Holy Terra's concerns. The core issue still exists—his independence is too strong, and when it comes to 'military development restrictions' or 'taxation plans,' the Empire doesn't have the power to restrain him if he chooses not to abide.

Apart from war.

But truthfully, Gu Hang doesn't intend to break this agreement in the short term.

As long as the Empire upholds its end.

He hopes that by taking such a proactive approach, the Empire can see the Alliance's sincerity and the positive impact of development on the overall interests of the Empire. It's a difficult game, with every step fraught with risk, but Gu Hang has no choice and must strive for the future of the Alliance.

...

Terran Calendar Year 10245, September.

The cleanup operations across the Spiderweb Domain have reached their final stages.

Not all issues are resolved, far from it.

Nevertheless, the biggest, toughest, and most concentrated problems were addressed when the combined forces of the Western Front Army, Northern Line Army, and Southern Line Army were still present.

At the same time, the fleet that was dispatched to leave the Reya Duches Star System through conventional space travel has also reported success.

They discovered and destroyed the Insect Race support fleet dispatched from the 'Tentacles,' which had been disabled due to the Queen's death. The cost was about as expected, relatively low.

They are now on their way back and are expected to reach Reya Duches by December of this year.

By then, it will also be the day the allied forces disband.

The Central Empire has already issued a statement.

Holy Terra received the battle report submitted by the Command Center at the beginning of the year. After obtaining authorization from the Supreme Council, the Military Affairs Department, with unprecedented administrative efficiency for the Empire, compiled and confirmed these reports within six months.

Holy Terra originally intended to hold a victory parade, but ultimately, this idea was abandoned after several weeks of discussions.

It's just too damn expensive.

The Iron Armor War cost too much money.

All troop units, whether the second Western Front Army directly organized by the Central Empire or the previous Old Western Line Army or Northern Line Army, needed funds from the Central Empire to fight.

Whether it was the support gathered from various local governments or resources directly sent from the Central Empire, the combined expenses were astronomical.

The Military Affairs Department, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Department of Taxation were all troubled over this.

Spending more money to move the army, maybe even over half a year to a year, to Holy Terra, then spending a lot more for a victory parade, plus rewarding meritorious ministers on top of that... Although relatively small compared to the cost of war, in these tough times, saving where possible is prudent.

It’s just worth noting, the Empire has too many areas to spend money.

In recent years, the biggest news in the Empire has been the Iron Armor Rebellion and the Princess Campaign, that’s true.

But a few years earlier, the death of the Sun Lord led to turmoil in the Solaria Domain, which remains unresolved, with all factions, whether loyalists or rebels, or ambitious opportunists, engaging in conflicts. The Chaos Sect and alien forces are also involved, creating a gigantic black hole. The entire Southern Border of the Imperial is unstable.

There has been large-scale rebellion in the Imperial Western Empire Border, and a powerful Beastman Legion has emerged in the Northern Border...

The entire Empire is experiencing a tumultuous period.

But on the other hand, when has the Empire not been in a period of turmoil?

Sometimes, the term ’sustainability pill’ is not just a joke.

Against this backdrop, Gu Hang and the think tanks of the Governor’s Office, along with the high-level Alliance Government Office, finally completed the "Alliance Plan" and sent it to Holy Terra.

A single stone sends a thousand ripples.

Chapter 703: What exactly do you want to do?

"What exactly do you want to do?"

Galaraldo’s words were filled with heavy skepticism.

To be honest, he couldn’t believe that Gu Hang would go against the Empire.

He used to think that way, but the Iron Armor War largely cleared many doubts surrounding Gu Hang.

Because, at the beginning of the Iron Armor War, Humphrey Paolo, disregarding past grudges, extended an invitation to the Alliance. If the Alliance had been willing to rebel together with the Iron Armor Battle Group, it would’ve been an excellent opportunity.

Looking at the subsequent developments reveals a lot.

The Iron Armor alone, along with the later Insect Swarm, already caused repeated defeats for the North Line and West Line. It was only thanks to the Alliance’s performance on the Southern Line that they managed to turn the tide.

Without the Alliance, the Alfonso Sect wouldn’t have been destroyed, which was another strong military force; the defeat of the North and West Lines could still be expected, plus the proven strong Southern Line Alliance’s reversal, the Empire wouldn’t just need to rebuild the battlefields of the North and West Lines to confront the Iron Armor threat, but also establish a powerful army to counter the Alliance.

Would they still be able to maintain their offensive then?

I’m afraid not.

The combined forces of the Iron Armor and the Alliance could potentially disrupt not just the Spiderweb Domain and the neighboring three domains but potentially turn the entire Eastern Territory into chaos. Even if the Empire could amass forces from various sides to respond, the form of warfare might very well turn into a stalemate.

When dealing with the Iron Armor, regardless of how tactically they failed, how they lost territory and men, the Empire's overall strategy was still on the strategic offensive, aiming to eliminate the Iron Armor as a rebellious regime.

And if it really escalated to the level of cooperation between Iron Armor and the Alliance, whether they ultimately had the ability to destroy the Empire is another matter, but at least, for a long period, the Empire's assembled various forces could only remain in strategic standoff, possibly even a strategic defensive stage, until after long-term attrition could they consider other approaches.

At that time, although Gu Hang used various reasons to delay participation in the war, causing some murmurs within Holy Terra, ultimately he neither pledged allegiance with the Iron Armor nor, after engaging in the war, immediately showcased outstanding performance, rapidly becoming the greatest contributor to the fifteen-year war victory.

Now calling Gu Hang a traitor, having a rebellious heart?

That truly wouldn't make sense.

He didn't rebel then, so why now?

Achievement towering over the master?

Although the Empire is named 'Empire', the Emperor had long since seated in the Divine Realm, and the ones in charge of the Central Empire are the High Lords of the Supreme Council. Gu Hang wants to seize power?

It's perfectly feasible!

This is even what Galaraldo hoped for.

At this moment, he expressed these thoughts during the conversation with Gu Hang.

After questioning with the phrase ’What exactly do you want to do’, he earnestly continued, "Now, our path is utterly correct, our future is exceptionally bright! Given your current achievements and ability to get things done, you have various paths to choose! Moving forward, I can find ways to promote you and your wife to higher ranks as Marshal of the Star Realm Army and Admiral of the Navy."

"The next step could be competing for the Supreme Marshal position within the Star Realm Army. Really speaking, the Alliance’s current infantry troops can also act as a top-tier Star Realm Army Corps. With their support, you would fully qualify to compete. Don’t worry, whether considering the current Supreme Marshal Xue Yongsheng or other Grand Marshal candidates, none can rival you in achievements. At that time, I will fully back you."

"Once securing the position of Supreme Marshal of the Star Realm Army, you can naturally step into the Imperial Supreme Council, logically becoming one of the Empire’s masters."

"Even if finding the Star Realm Army Commander path a bit challenging, after all, you didn’t entirely rise from the Star Realm Army system. But taking a step back, you still have the choice of the Psychic Cultivator’s Association path. The Chief Grand Mentor of the Psychic Cultivator’s Association can also contest for a seat in the Supreme Council. With the spiritual power you demonstrated, is there anyone stronger in the entire Empire?"

"Although, the Psychic Cultivator’s Association hasn’t secured this seat for many years, as long as you qualify, we can maneuver. Moreover, precisely because of not securing a seat for so long, the Psychic Cultivator’s Association is eagerly anticipating a powerful leader to lead them back to the Empire’s top political stage."

"Ultimately, you have choices. You have the chance to become that person on the Empire’s highest stage. Even..."

Speaking to this point, Galaraldo lowered his voice and said, "Even, once our power strengthens further in the future, one seat for you, one for me, then finding ways to get a few more, join forces with several

others... We might just have a shot at toppling Zebert from the prime minister position! You'll become the Sun Lord, while I act as your deputy; re-achieving past glory isn't impossible!"

Hearing this, Gu Hang almost laughed aloud.

Galaraldo, this guy, is truly a card-carrying schemer.

When following the Sun Lord he didn't have much opportunity to display, but once the Sun Lord died, he was the most alert and the fastest runner; after joining Holy Terra, clinged to the former Minister of Justice, Ou Juren's thigh, but when there appeared a thicker thigh in Zebert, he did not hesitate to sell Ou Juren. Now, while in various respects expressing respect for Zebert, internally there already harbors thoughts of overthrowing him in the future...

Yet, through this discussion, Gu Hang reconfirmed one thing: Galaraldo still sees him as a close trusted ally, otherwise 'will deal with Zebert in the future' such talk, given his character, would never be spoken to anyone.

High stakes.

Precisely because of this, Gu Hang decided he could slightly disclose his thoughts to Galaraldo.

"You're asking what I want?"

"Actually, it's quite simple: the highest position in the Alliance never changed, it's called Governor, representing a genuine part of my intentions."

"I just want to be a Governor."

"Like a Planetary Governor, I will steadily pay the taxes due to the Empire; I will promise the Empire to address all threats harmful to humanity within the Alliance territory. The Empire can oversee me and assess me, but should not dictate my methods."

"That’s just it."

After hearing this, Galaraldo became even more puzzled: "But... why? I understand what you’re saying, but... being a super-scale Planetary Governor? Comparing that with the thirteen-member Supreme Council seat?"

In his concept, these two aren’t equivalent at all.

He understood Gu Hang’s meaning, but was even more perplexed.

Gu Hang chuckled, "If entering the thirteen-member council, of course, that’s better. But I only accept one method of entry: as a Cosmic Domain Chair, sending delegates."

Galaraldo was silent.

Chapter 704, Chairman Gu?

What Gu Hang told Galaraldo were words that came straight from his heart.

In his view, entering the Supreme Council through the two routes mentioned by Galaraldo was not stable.

Becoming the Supreme Commander of the Star Realm Army to gain a seat among the Thirteen?

Not to mention that Galaraldo understated the difficulty, but even if it succeeded, it would be a rootless source, a leafless tree.

Gu Hang did not rise through the ranks of the Star Realm Army. Even if one were to say the Alliance Army is part of the Star Realm Army, it would be nonsense. Although the Alliance Army is quite powerful, its influence is ultimately limited to the vicinity of the Alliance; fundamentally, it is still the base of the Alliance. The Alliance Army is not like a renowned legion within the Star Realm Army that would campaign across the entire universe to establish achievements.

With an unstable foundation, as an outsider relying on political means to seize opportunities that belonged to the Star Realm Army insiders and took one of the Thirteen seats, can this position be secure?

It's unstable.

Gu Hang is not a three-year-old child. He fully understands that it's not about sitting in that position to have power, but rather having power to sit in that position.

Forcing his way up there would mean relying on the achievements established through the Alliance, using political means and facing massive internal friction. The Star Realm Army system might not be an asset but a bomb under his seat.

Gu Hang would have to spend more energy suppressing internal chaos and would have to rely more heavily on those political forces that put him in that position. In that case, at best, he's a puppet; at worst, he wouldn't last two years before being ousted.

If he abandons the Alliance, what then?

Start all over again?

That's nonsense.

As for the second route Galaraldo mentioned, relying on his status as arguably the strongest Psychic in the Empire, to unify the Psychic Cultivator's Association and enter the Thirteen-member Council as the chief grand mentor, it also has hidden dangers.

Possibly even greater.

The Psychic Cultivator's Association is an even more fragmented organization with no actual power.

Or to be precise, they have power, but whether the battle group think tanks, Tribunal's psychic experts, various Star Realm Armies, Navy's psychic troops, or the psychics on various planets... would these so-called 'bases' listen more to the Psychic Cultivator's Association, or their original superiors?

Undoubtedly, it would be the latter.

The Psychic Cultivator's Association has long been fragmented by the various subordinate organizations.

This power has practically no possibility of unification.

In a narrow sense, the Psychic Cultivator's Association might have just one A-level psychic in a Star Domain, even worse than the Alliance's Storm Mage Corps. Depending solely on them, what can be achieved?

Certainly, it isn't hard to unite them, but their power is too weak to support a seat in the Supreme Council.

Past chief grand mentors couldn't secure a top seat for hundreds of years for precisely this reason: they nominally had the qualifications to campaign but lacked concrete power to hold the stage.

Even if Gu Hang went, the result would be the same.

Unless he were willing to start from scratch, spending who knows how many years and facing unknown difficulties and obstacles to elevate the responsibilities of the Psychic Cultivator's Association to the broadest stage, meaning to manage and deploy all spiritual power throughout the entire Empire's battle group think tanks, Tribunal's psychics... then it would be a formidable force.

The difficulty is immense.

Relying solely on the haphazard position of chief grand mentor to enter the Thirteen-member Council would mean relying not on his own base but on the political forces driving him.

If so, the outcome would be the same as taking the Star Realm Army path to the Supreme Council; those who could push Gu Hang in today could oust him tomorrow. Gu Hang wouldn't wield real political power from the highest seat: voting, proposing, and executing would all depend on others.

Such a High Lord, for many, is an unreachable dream. A puppet High Lord is still a High Lord, nominally one of the Empire's highest and most powerful Thirteen.

But to Gu Hang, it means little.

Of course, if the position of High Lord was there, and if Gu Hang could truly sit in it, he would welcome it.

He could formulate strategies beneficial to himself and the Alliance from the level of the Central Empire.

But this position must be supported by sufficient and personal power to be viable.

So, the last thing he told Galaraldo was about this.

And this is what he plans to do next.

Firstly, he intends to contend for the position of Cosmic Domain Chair.

He has two ideas, yet to be decided.

Either to seize the chairmanship of the Spiderweb Domain or the Eastern Cosmos Domain. By then, with a strong Alliance as tangible support internally and the official recognition of the highest administrative officer in the domain externally, he could wield significant power within the entire domain.

And as a Cosmic Domain Chair, he can dispatch representatives to participate in central affairs at Holy Terra. Some domain representatives, like the incumbent chair of the Star Devouring Cosmos, even sit in a High Lord's position.

If Gu Hang achieves becoming a High Lord in this way, he would truly be someone of significance and authority.

The Alliance controlling a domain; influencing the entire Imperial's Eastern Frontier's dozen domains from a single domain, meaning anything concerning the Imperial's Eastern Frontier, equivalent to one-fifth of an Empire, would need Gu Hang's approval. Such power is required to truly support a substantive, non-puppet High Lord position.

And why is Gu Hang so persistent about local interests?

Because of the system.

Gu Hang possesses this tremendous, decisive tool that played a crucial role in his historical ascent. His task is to continue leveraging his advantage.

Abandoning this advantage, leaving the foundation established over decades, to fight political battles within the Star Realm Army or to attempt seizing psychic authority from nearly all other Empire forces within the Psychic Cultivator's Association... now that would be forsaking a righteous path for deviant ways.

Of course, the matter of the system is something Gu Hang cannot divulge to Galaraldo.

However, matters of local interests, local foundations, and needing sufficient strength to uphold a true high chair position can be discussed.

But for Galaraldo, it's quite challenging.

He understands Gu Hang's intention yet also expresses:

"Promoting you to become the chair of the Spiderweb Domain or the Eastern Cosmos Domain is exceedingly difficult. That report of yours really threw Holy Terra into chaos."

Galaraldo detailed to Gu Hang about the current situation in Holy Terra regarding alliance affairs, and the opinions of the various bigwigs.

Before Gu Hang's "Alliance Plan" was delivered, the attitude was quite unified: acknowledging Gu Hang's merits but extremely wary of Gu Hang becoming a larger, stronger new Ironclad.

The overall strategy was roughly to divide and dismember the alliance.

Don't say that this is unfair to the meritorious, the Empire is so vast, history is so long, and countless heroic figures have emerged. Those who have achieved supreme merit, then have their desires fulfilled and end well, are few.

Those who die heroically on the battlefield and receive posthumous honors are already doing well.

Merits being ignored, sacrifices in vain, being falsely credited, wronged, sacrificed, used and discarded, interrogated as traitors... There are too many.

Gu Hang doesn't think he will be a special exception.

Now that the war is over, the alliance, a thing that was originally an erroneous product, should also come to its end.

Moreover, it can't be considered as completely shortchanging Gu Hang.

Although the alliance needs to be dismantled, Gu Hang's personal situation depends on whether he understands the circumstances.

This has also been Galaraldo's effort direction for some time now.

Preventing the alliance from being dismembered is something Galaraldo cannot manage. This matter has become an overwhelming trend, even if Galaraldo forcefully tries to block it, he would just end up being crushed in the wheels.

He can only very arduously try to delay it.

Even in delaying, in essence, he does not wish for Gu Hang to continue maintaining the alliance.

Compliantly dismember the alliance, show loyalty to the powerful figures of Holy Terra, then express some grievances, then maneuver and find a way to get into the core... In his view, this process is much better than staying in the Empire's Eastern Frontier as a rural landlord.

He delays the disintegration of the alliance to gain more maneuvering space.

But, the "Alliance Plan" disrupted everything, directly shifting the inclinations of the various powers on Holy Terra by a significant margin.

The most drastic change was in the Imperial Taxation Department.

In a blink of an eye, there would be more than 300 billion in tax coins, ready to be obtained next year; with a prospect of 13 billion over ten years presented to them.

How enticing!

The Imperial Taxation Department's responsibilities aren't confined to just collecting taxes; fiscal expenditures are also within their duties.

They should be called the Finance Department, but the task of collecting taxes is too important for the Empire, overshadowing the other parts of their responsibilities.

The two things that most trouble the Taxation Department: insufficient tax collection, and money being spent too quickly.

Gu Hang’s "Alliance Plan" instantly resolved both of these issues for them.

Lots of money, so the deficit is filled;

Smooth collection, at least it is promised to be smooth, the Taxation Department only needs to go to one place to collect all the taxes from five Star Domains, so there won’t be issues of insufficient tax collection.

Thus, they became the force with the biggest and fastest attitude shift.

Of course, the Minister of Taxation is not an independent political faction, but part of Prime Minister Zebert’s group. If the Prime Minister had a clear, strict decision, no matter how much they crave Gu Hang’s money, they would have to honestly cast a negative vote.

But hasn’t Zebert remained silent?

Before that, the Minister of Taxation, Xu Fuzhen, was actively working, trying to have the Prime Minister take their side.

It’s actually a good thing.

On the other hand, the Prime Minister of the Administrative Council, Luo Fei, is a strong opposition figure.

The most important power of the Administrative Council is in the appointment of officials. Locally, the five Star Domains’ positions are all vacant, all given to Gu Hang, so they’ve lost the authority to meddle in the governance of those five Star Domains, and naturally are unhappy.

Even if the Taxation Department says more money could be given to them, or more budgets could be approved, it couldn’t convince Prime Minister Luo Fei.

Conversely, Luo Fei is even planning to use the appointments of some direct officials from the Taxation Department to pressure Xu Fuzhen's throat.

By the way, Luo Fei is also Prime Minister Zebert's right-hand man.

There is internal conflict within Zebert's faction because of Gu Hang's windfall.

Galaraldo definitely stands with Gu Hang.

The remaining High Lords haven't yet made clear statements. Although previously, they approximately expressed opinions supporting not allowing the alliance to develop unchecked in the Eastern Border, the internal conflict within the Prime Minister's faction makes many others less eager to voice their stance.

Simultaneously, the connections and even interest exchanges Gu Hang built during the war are playing a role at this time.

Representatives of the Interstellar Warriors, the Martian Sect, the Grand Judge of the Tribunal, the Commander of the Star Realm Army... all subtly shifted their attitudes.

Furthermore, Gu Hang is tentatively pushing something: hoping to let Su Lie replace E'er Ganglong as the representative of the Interstellar Warriors.

He discussed this matter with Su Lie earlier.

The Phoenix Legion, as a founding legion, has no political obstacles to becoming the representative of the Interstellar Warriors itself.

If he becomes the representative of the Interstellar Warriors, gaining a seat on the Supreme Council, it would greatly help in mobilizing Imperial resources and finding ways to restore his war-torn legion.

As for E'er Ganglong, who currently holds the position of Interstellar Warriors representative, and is also the Grand Master of the Death Angel Battle Group, he is a negotiable figure.

The internal ecosystem of Interstellar Warriors is somewhat different from others. Due to some historical reasons, they are not very keen on pursuing positions. Most legions qualified to take the representative role see being the representative of the Interstellar Warriors as a heavy burden. They aren't too eager to become entangled with mortal politics.

Chapter 705, Firm Path_2

Contrary to most situations, because Interstellar Warriors are so crucial, many matters must involve them; therefore, the High Lord Council must have a respected representative among the Interstellar Warriors, serving as a communication channel.

It's the Empire that eagerly wants the Interstellar Warriors to attend this meeting properly.

Otherwise, without this constraint sometimes, the Interstellar Warriors might do something outrageous, leaving the Empire in a bad spot.

Su Lie can certainly go and communicate well with E'er Ganglong—they are relatively familiar with each other—and negotiate a position change, which is quite possible.

The entire Interstellar Warrior community should support the Phoenix Legion's swift reconstruction. As representatives of the original creation, their position is quite different.

Su Lie promoted, and part of Gu Hang's selfish interests were achieved.

Su Lie wouldn't have the face to vote against me in the Supreme Council, right?

Moreover, over in Mars, Gu Hang has his communication as well.

In the previous Western Expedition Army, there were also forces from Mars. The leading Great Sage had particular interest in some technologies left by the Alfonso Sect, especially those related to the Insect Swarm.

They haven't even left yet.

Gu Hang plans to open convenient doors for them, even offering a black box as a gift if necessary, in exchange for some support from Mars.

Regarding the Tribunal, although simple wartime friendship isn't very effective, the subsequent collaboration with the Heretic Tribunal to establish offices within the Alliance territory to monitor corruption is something the Heretic Tribunal is pleased about. The Extraplanar Tribunal is also establishing some cooperative contacts with the Alliance. Gu Hang plans to donate generously, even to deploy troops within the two major Tribunals. If these collaborations can be agreed upon, the Tribunal might change their attitude.

At the National Church, connections are relatively sparse; the Holy Mercy Lily Battle Nuns are smoothing relationships with them, albeit with limited hope. However, similarly, they inherently lack personal interests, so their opposition isn't very strong.

Ultimately, Gu Hang is contemplating various methods to sway the thirteen High Lords, one by one.

Thus, preserving the Alliance and obtaining the Five Major Star Domains is not entirely hopeless.

Furthermore, Gu Hang has even gone a step further, aiming for the position of Cosmic Domain Chair in the Spiderweb Domain.

The current chair of the Spiderweb Domain can be disregarded. The official Empire forces in the Spiderweb Domain were crushed at the start of the war, and although Ironclad's rise might be blamed on the Spiderweb Domain Government being a bit outlandish and nonsensical, someone must take the fall for this matter, and he has unavoidable responsibility.

The chair of the Spiderweb Domain, who is destined to step down, added to the Space Domain Government being largely dismantled; rebuilding is inevitable.

Moreover, in the Spiderweb Domain, the very central Princess Star Domain has undergone an Extinction Order sweep, while other areas either fall within the Five Major Star Domains planned by the Alliance or lie in the Northern Line and Western Line battlefields, with thousands of planets brawling chaotically.

After the devastation by Ironclad and Empire troops, insect plagues, the incapability of the Star Domain Government has led to the outbreak of inherent issues in various Star Domains. Rebels are rising, Chaos Cults are exploiting the situation, and there have even been appearances of the Spirit Clan Pirates...

Currently appointing the Cosmic Domain Chair of the Spiderweb Domain is already troublesome.

Promote locally?

There's no one left.

Appoint from the center?

This hot potato of a position is downright lethal.

High-ranking officials are unwilling to go; those slightly lower-ranked might be willing to take the chance for a better future, but the Prime Minister is also worried and reluctant to use such people.

The Central Empire hopes for a political strongman to go, carrying resources, to tidy up the mess in the Spiderweb Starfield. Sending someone with limited resources, who hasn't demonstrated exceptional abilities, could they accomplish anything? At that point, the Empire won't see progress despite significant sacrifices, and that's troubling.

What if Gu Hang is willing to take this on?

He is that political strongman, with his governance abilities already proven.

He also owns sufficient resources; the Alliance Five-star Domain is right next door, capable of steadily stabilizing the Spiderweb Domain's situation and further supporting its reconstruction.

By all accounts, this looks good.

Except, the existence of the Alliance itself is the biggest obstacle.

If not for this troublesome entity that's a sore point to the lords on Holy Terra, Gu Hang's quest for the Cosmic Domain Chair in the Spiderweb Domain would have no hindrances.

However, on the flipside, it's also due to the Alliance's presence that makes Gu Hang the more suitable candidate.

It's a difficult position on either side.

But Gu Hang believes these challenges come with opportunities.

Effort makes it feasible; fighting for it is key.

At least, a "Alliance Initiative" letter has already redirected the originally destined situation where the Central Empire would target the Alliance to some extent.

This was Gu Hang's analysis after listening to Galaraldo talk about the current political situation on Holy Terra.

So why not take this opportunity to strive for more?

Once he secures the position of Cosmic Domain Chair in the Spiderweb Domain, Gu Hang can expand his influence while gaining a vital ticket—a chance to be elected through the Cosmic Domain Chair group and enter the Supreme Council on Holy Terra.

"You've chosen a path far tougher than I envisioned."

Galaraldo commented thusly.

To which Gu Hang replied:

"But walking this path is the most resolute."

...

After concluding the important call with Galaraldo, Gu Hang returned to his immediate tasks.

Various military missions are no longer the focus; they proceed slowly by inertia.

Diplomatic work needs acceleration; all plans are built on the foundation of making connections.

But the good news is, a promising start has been made.

Subsequently, the Alliance's diplomats and liaisons have already begun working hard, with many specific matters not requiring Gu Hang's direct oversight.

And his own attention returns to another matter needing his personal supervision: post-war reconstruction.

At this point, he becomes down-to-earth, no longer fantasizing too much. The role of Cosmic Domain Chair in the Spiderweb Domain is still uncertain, so he doesn't plan to manage other areas of the Spiderweb Domain.

Darkly envisioning, the greater the chaos, the better.

When the Empire senses that this post-war wasteland holds countless nerve-wracking threats needing resolution, recovering profits but instead continuously hemorrhaging resources, Gu Hang will become increasingly crucial.

Additionally, concerning the reconstruction of the three star domains of Proud Claw, Thistle and Mustard, Alfonso, Gu Hang doesn't plan to focus extensively.

Mainly applying suppression; if each place can settle according to the Pest Control Office’s old methods, that suffices. Post-war reconstruction follows the status of each planet.

More focused construction relies on Dragonhawk, Meng River, these two star domains.

These are genuinely considered Gu Hang’s stronghold.

If, taking many steps back, the Alliance is really disassembled in the future, then whether it’s political and economic opposition or deteriorating to military confrontation, the stronghold is his most reliable core.

Even if in the future the "Alliance Initiative" is recognized, those hefty taxes need the Alliance to bear.

This money ultimately requires a strong and wealthy Alliance to pay.

Building the stronghold is crucial above all.

With conventional construction methods, he doesn’t need to worry personally; the Alliance Government has existed for decades, able to operate stably and even compared to the Empire’s bloated system, it can be called efficient.

What Gu Hang himself needs to do is to add vigor to the construction efforts, back the Alliance’s development—install several more engines.

This means utilizing the accumulated and already substantial Gift Points in the system.

The last time he spent Gift Points liberally was over three years ago when stabilizing the Alfonso Star Domain.

And the actual great battle erupted from that point, including the Western Line counterattack, Southern Line march into the Princess Star Domain, and most critically, the second battle of Reiaductus.

Following successive war victories, the accumulated Gift Points have reached astronomical numbers.

Chapter 706, Over 100 Million Blessings

Gu Hang now has accumulated a significant amount of Gift Points at his disposal.

The steady monthly income has been accumulating for more than three years, resulting in a rather impressive figure.

Currently, Gu Hang's fixed monthly income is five hundred thousand.

Although the climb has been tough, the growth is not substantial compared to the past.

Primarily, the worlds that have been absorbed are mostly suffering from three major debuffs.

Firstly, there's a lack of legitimacy; these areas are only military occupation zones in the process of pacification and not yet part of the Alliance.

Secondly, the actual control is weak. Although the Alliance Government has intervened and started reforms based on the alliance system, it's still in the early stages, and the control is indeed not strong.

Thirdly, the turmoil on the surface of these places is far from over, varying only in the severity of chaos.

Economically, these worlds do not provide much support to the Alliance. In Gu Hang's system, this is reflected by the very limited Gift Points they can offer to him. In fact, many post-war worlds with extensive turmoil, reducing populations, and large numbers of disabled Insect Swarms not only fail to provide bonuses but actually deduct Gift Points.

Overall, despite the addition of so many worlds into control, with all these debuffs, the monthly income has still increased by a hundred thousand.

Even though the newly added worlds are not very promising now, in Gu Hang's view, as long as there's enough land and population and these populations are not low-level, many planets were considered civilized, industrial worlds with a certain level of population quality before the war.

As long as the chaos is resolved and the scars of war are healed, and the alliance system reforms catch up, these worlds can quickly transition from being a burden to generating positive gains.

Moreover, with the Alliance's technical support, they not only can be restored to their former state but also have significant development potential and can become more prosperous.

Otherwise, how could Gu Hang dare to promise an empire tax in the trillions?

Once social stability, productivity, and economic recovery are achieved, these planets will also quickly contribute positively to Gu Hang's fixed monthly income.

Even now, accumulating five hundred thousand monthly over three and a half years amounts to just over twenty million.

This is already not a small sum.

However, the twenty million Gift Points are almost entirely spent.

As soon as he receives them each month, he spends them.

The purposes are many.

They are mainly divided into two areas: people and productivity.

The former is used to replenish troops or even further expand the military.

With the war being so massive and the Alliance constantly winning, victory comes with costs. The destruction of a single Navy ship, even the cheapest patrol ship, means a thousand casualties; an Escort Ship means tens of thousands; losing a massive troop transport ship results in the loss of millions...

On the ground, as the intensity of war heats up, a two million-strong army group under the Alliance's regulations could be wiped out in a matter of days; an army group handling the total battle situation of a region with a total size of twenty million can be severely depleted in combat.

Since the war began, the Alliance's total troop casualties have exceeded two hundred million.

And the Alliance has supplemented five hundred million troops into the war, increasing the number from the initial ten billion to thirteen billion as the war progressed.

Furthermore, the quality of the troops has become stronger as the war drags on.

Enduring the fires of war is certainly an important factor; Gu Hang's relentless expenditure of Gift Points to strengthen the troops is also necessary.

Just on these T5 Levels, at a price of 100 people per point, and at the T4 Level, at a price of 10 people per point, Gu Hang has spent more than seven million Gifts.

Newly formed reinforcement units and strengthening the training of existing troops require continuous spending.

Having troops alone is not sufficient. Altogether, there are more than two hundred new army groups. A large number of lower-level officers can be trained after producing the Soldier Card, as it comes equipped with some excellent individuals who can become officers. Although senior officers can barely manage like this, as the scale of the military expands, especially to the level of commanders and generals, there will inevitably be challenges.

At this point, the hero interface is needed to inspire talents.

Inspiration for talents must also remember those responsible for production, technical development, administrative management, and commercial operations in the rear. Although they are not direct combat forces, they are the capital for war. Engineers, researchers, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs... a basic inspiration of 10 points, or if this talent is exceptional, starting at a level beyond LV1, the price will be higher, generally not below LV3, usually around 50 points.

Inspired talents can upgrade themselves through training, but the 'experience points' required are very high. They can also be upgraded using Gift Points, provided the individual's talent is sufficient, reducing the required experience by more than half.

However, Gu Hang is more inclined to let people upgrade slowly on their own, spending Gift Points to leap a character only in few cases.

Having those higher-level enlightenable characters is a welcome prospect. For instance, recently, a young administrative graduate was promoted; upon entering the Alliance's official system, Gu Hang discovered that the initial inspiration cost was 10,000, immediately making him a ready-made LV7, with excellent talent, which Gu Hang promptly noted. His name was sent back to the rear, and as long as he performs well on the job — which is almost certain — subsequent promotions will be swift.

Inspiration for officers, generals, and talents in the rear, along with minor upgrades, has cost a total of three million Gift Points, resulting in eighty thousand inspired [Heroes].

Whether it's in the military, production lines, administration, or the service industry... these people will contribute to the Alliance's development and victory in their respective roles.

Another expense is in the special expenditure for Interstellar Warriors. Although selecting and screening from new blood involves inevitable waste, training costs at T1 Level, Genetic Seed exchange, rapid growth of superhuman organs, veteran level, or even higher level training costs... all totaled it comes to about fifteen hundred Gift Points per person. But given the limited scale, replenishing personnel gradually in the hundreds, the costs are just tens of thousands or just over a million at most.

In the past, it might have seemed expensive, but now, with a monthly income of five hundred thousand, the expenditure is entirely within his bearable range.

There's not even a need for extra calculations.

...

Besides the expenditure on talents, half of the more than twenty million in periodic expenses is also spent on productivity improvement.

Over a hundred thousand [Construction] panel factories, from low to high levels, were exchanged by Gu Hang and placed on production lines primarily in the Dragonhawk Star Domain, supplemented by the Menghe Star Domain.

The greatly improved efficiency continuously produces enough military supplies and processed fuel to support the front lines of war.

Such twenty million-plus Gift Points have been spent this way, but Gu Hang has no regrets.

The fixed monthly income is just a baseline; the majority of Gift Points comes from the victories in war.

Currently accumulated, it’s over a hundred million.

Chapter 707, Holy Artifact Technology

The hundreds of millions of Gift Points were mainly acquired through war victories.

Matins supported the West Line, and the Alliance became one of the main participants in the final battle on the West Line, nearly destroying and eliminating the Iron Armor.

The Alliance independently entered the Princess Star Domain from the southeast, fighting against the Insect Swarm along the way. From rescuing the remnants of the North Line to intercepting the Insect Swarm’s reinforcements... the battles that occurred one after another contributed a significant amount of Gift Points.

The biggest contribution, of course, came from the victory in the second Reiaductus battle.

Thus, through victory in one battle after another, the accumulated Gift Points reached one hundred and twenty million.

Leaving twenty million, Gu Hang planned to use them as resources for subsequent development.

Once the Alliance plan is approved, he will use all of these for the enlightenment of production, management, and research talents, as well as for the exchange of numerous factories, academies, and research institute buildings, to rapidly expand production and undertake the reconstruction of planets newly incorporated into the Alliance territory, in addition to coping with high taxes.

As for the remaining one hundred million Gift Points, he planned to use them on the most Gift Point-intensive activity: technology extraction.

The good news is, he has as many as one hundred million Gift Points.

The bad news is, the million-level prize pool has already been exhausted by him.

Although technologies like Elite-level and Advanced-level still have a pretty good drop rate. Even the Epic-level probability still exists.

However, these levels of technology have limited enhancement for the current Alliance. Even if some Epic-level technologies are drawn, they can’t be considered useless, but at most, they are just a cherry on top.

Apocalypse-level technology is the most crucial.

Unfortunately, the probability of getting Apocalypse-level from the million-level pool is less than one percent.

No other choice but to move on to the ten-million level.

The probability of getting Apocalypse-level from the ten-million level is 30%.

One hundred million Gift Points can afford ten draws in a row.

Gu Hang was eager to get some top-tier goods.

Closing his eyes and clicking continuously, the one hundred million Gift Points were consumed like flowing water.

During the fourth draw, an Apocalypse-level technology appeared.

[Apocalypse-level Technology: Holy Artifact Technology]

Upon careful inspection, Gu Hang found it was a technology category for creating what is called 'Holy Artifact'-level weapons.

The value of a Holy Artifact is quite exaggerated. The Otaubis Spear and the Shield of Otaubis in Lu Salis's hands are both Holy Artifacts. This person, perhaps on par with Matins in combat power, can basically secure victory with these two pieces of equipment.

Similarly, the 'Sanctified Sword' wielded by Marshal Leroux of the Black Cross Army played a significant role in the second battle. Without this sword, it's feared he couldn't have beheaded the Insect Nest Overlord.

Without the victory from that battle, humanity would probably have had to pay a higher price and spend more time to make breakthrough progress.

Moreover, even Holy Artifact-level equipment, weapons, and items are helpful to Gu Hang. A complete scepter or sword, emphasizing Spiritual Energy enhancement, would still provide some increase, even at Gu Hang's level.

Though not much, the ability to make him feel a noticeable enhancement is already quite rare.

Holy Artifacts are very helpful in enhancing top-tier combat strength.

However, after looking at the production conditions, Gu Hang found them rather harsh.

Generally, for a normal Holy Artifact to form, it not only requires top-notch materials and craftsmanship to make a top-tier weapon, but more critically, it also needs to undergo a key event, making it an important part of some heroic deed or grand scene.

For example, killing the enemy leader in a battle that decides the fate of a star system; or a hero holding a treasured sword, alone on the battlefield, drinking the blood of thousands of aliens, turning the tide of a crucial battle...

From then on, it fulfills the basic conditions to become a 'Holy Artifact.'

But even then it's not complete; it still requires centuries of nurturing, with important figures wearing and using it, and countless people extolling its virtues to endow it with a symbolic and ceremonial meaning.

After the long passage of time, it can finally be sublimated, becoming a symbol of belief, faith, and emotion, transforming into a 'Holy Artifact.'

In Gu Hang's view, it essentially symbolizes a weapon, even elevating to the point of leaving a mark in Subspace, having Subspace essence. The attributes and effects of a Holy Artifact are often mysteriously and directly related to the major event that forged it and to people's impressions over the long years.

Producing it from a black box simplifies the process considerably.

There's no need for major events or long periods of nurturing.

However, unlike product black boxes of other technologies needing only basic materials, it still requires one thing: Subspace essence.

This thing, the black box can't produce; it can't be conjured up by inputting random energy or materials.

But Gu Hang can manage it.

His Storm God Kingdom possesses Inferior Deity power in Subspace. By cutting a portion, although it might lose a bit of the Divine Realm's origin, it is a real Subspace essence that can be used to manufacture a Holy Artifact.

The lost part will have to rely on consuming strong Spiritual Energy units or let the Divine Realm upgrade and repair itself over time to be raised back.

Is it worth it?

It's definitely worth it.

Not to mention others, just crafting an enhancing Spiritual Energy Holy Artifact Scepter for himself will significantly surpass the loss of that Divine Realm essence.

Making a Holy Sword for Matins would also result in a noticeable increase in combat power.

Gu Hang will still craft some.

However, the crafting speed... is quite poor.

The finished product from the black box can produce a 'Holy Artifact' at a pace of roughly one every two years. The form is selectable; it can be a firearm, a sword, a war axe... but ultimately, the size of the finished product won't be large, implying it can mostly only be used as personal armament.

Due to the consumption of the Storm God Kingdom's Subspace essence, mass production is already impossible, yet the low output of one every two years still disappoints Gu Hang—the plan to wholesale Holy Artifacts at critical moments has fallen apart.

As for the master black box... there isn’t one. It’s a set of design blueprints, essentially teaching how to manufacture and how to speed up Holy Artifact forming through special rituals. The significance is in lowering the standard for significant events and even employing media and public opinion forces to artificially create them; it can also shorten the nurturing time from a century to fifty years.

Is it useful?

It’s definitely useful.

Just a bit underwhelming.

Retracting his focus slightly, Gu Hang continued with the extraction.

Chapter 708

As for holy artifact technology, Gu Hang was actually a bit disappointed.

Of course, it can be considered apocalypse-level technology, with very clear effects.

However, it’s not the kind of apocalypse-level technology Gu Hang wanted.

The application is too narrow.

The enhancement of peak combat power plays a decisive role in some battles. But it is not the kind of thing Gu Hang wants that can transform the Alliance; he needs something even more powerful.

The rate of getting apocalypse-level technology has dropped by another 10 points. Only six draws remain. Can he get it?

Again, there were four more draws, and another piece of apocalypse-level technology emerged.

Even upon seeing its name, Gu Hang, who had long since become very composed, couldn't help but show an expression of ecstatic joy!

[Apocalypse-Level Technology: Glory Queen Battleship]

The Queen of Glory needs no further explanation.

Gu Hang had only seen it in action once during the great battle of annihilating the Insect Swarm support fleet. A 'Phoenix Crown Feathers', which had undergone a long Subspace journey and was in much worse condition than its peak state, leapt out of Subspace directly into the core formation of the vast Insect Swarm fleet.

The destructive power it exhibited in that instant played a decisive role in the battle. It destroyed several key enemy ships in an instant and survived the concentrated fire for a long time.

Having even one of them is a stabilizing force of the Navy!

The entire Empire's total of Glory Queens is a fixed number. Only the major founding battle groups have the Queen of Glory left by the Emperor to each corps during the Empire's establishment. Later, when the corps were transformed into battle groups, the founding groups naturally took over the Glory Queen.

Now, not even the Imperial Navy has a Queen of Glory!

Even when the technology was obtained, Gu Hang realized that with the black box for finished products and the assembly line pulled out of the mother machine black box for parts of low technical content, combined with the current Alliance's production capabilities... In short, using all available means and matching resources, even if the entire Alliance is fully committed, it would take about fifteen to twenty years to build a Glory Queen.

It's quite a long time, but so what?

If the Empire could get one Queen of Glory every twenty years, both the Supreme Commander of the Navy and the Imperial Prime Minister would probably die of laughter!

Of course, even if this great weapon is built, it cannot be used lightly.

The rest is fine, but such a top warship, which even the Empire and Mars Headquarters of the Sect of Mechanics cannot build now and is said to be personally designed by the Emperor during the Empire's founding, cannot appear in the hands of the Alliance without causing explanations.

So, whether during the construction or after being built, the Glory Queen project must be kept strictly confidential.

Moreover, under normal circumstances, the Alliance's naval strength doesn't require deploying the Glory Queen.

And when the Glory Queen is needed, it's almost a matter of life or death, leaving no room for secrecy.

But what Gu Hang hopes for most is another possibility: secrecy is no longer necessary.

When Gu Hang has one Glory Queen, he needs to keep it secret;

When he has three, he can act more boldly;

When he has ten, he can openly advance towards Holy Terra.

That might take two hundred years.

But that's okay, Gu Hang can wait.

Even ordinary mortal aristocrats, after undergoing life extension surgery, can live to 200 to 500 years, let alone Gu Hang.

He even suspects he has reached the level of an Eternal Life.

Perhaps he might be killed, but he should not die of old age.

He has enough patience to wait for the flower that takes a long time to bloom.

...

Two remaining draws of ten million levels didn't yield anything.

It's not too much of a pity, as after drawing the Glory Queen, the chance of obtaining apocalypse-level from the ten million level dropped to 10%.

To get another one would either require exceptionally good luck for a single hit, or steadily save up for another ten draws, equivalent to one-hundred million Gift Points, then it would be relatively stable.

But how easy is it to save up a billion in Gift Points?

Gu Hang relied on the huge sacrifices made by the Alliance Army and Interstellar Warriors, achieving consecutive victories over several years, to accumulate so much.

And right now, it looks like peace is about to arrive — at least in general. Without wars of star domain scale, it's very difficult to gather so many Gift Points.

Of course, it's not necessarily a bad thing.

If he truly gets a long period of time to slowly develop, monthly fixed income could steadily rise.

Every ten to twenty years, a new Queen of Glory, plus multiple battleships, aircraft carriers, and warships could join the Alliance Navy.

Overall, it will get stronger and stronger.

After obtaining the Glory Queen Battleship, Gu Hang was in high spirits, and his outlook on the future became optimistic.

Gu Hang worked for a period, delegating the production tasks of the holy artifact and Glory Queen Battleship, including the black boxes, to the rear.

It's time to get things going.

The holy artifact weapon is planned to be made with two initially, one for his own use, in the form of a scepter; another for Matins.

As for the construction of the Glory Queen, that won't be achieved in a short time.

Raising the confidentiality level, and proceed slowly.

Of course, the estimated cost of this thing is about one trillion.

But it's not something that needs to be paid at once. The black box can significantly reduce costs, and other unavoidable costs will be paid over the fifteen-year-plus construction cycle.

It is indeed a big project and will create a lot of noise. But there's no need to worry too much.

Maintaining confidentiality is one aspect; even if some information leaks out, no one would suspect that the Alliance is building the Glory Queen.

To the outside world, that seems impossible.

After finishing these tasks, Gu Hang finally had time to return to the governor’s suite aboard the starship.

He had been working hard for quite some time, and in good spirits, it was time to rest.

But as soon as he entered, his brow furrowed.

Someone, and a stranger at that, had been here.

They brazenly left without erasing any traces and even left something behind.

It was a letter placed on his bedside table.

In an instant, Gu Hang extended his psionic perception outward.

Under his senses, there were no enemies or dangers nearby.

The letter was just an ordinary note with no traps.

At least, Gu Hang hadn’t detected any.

The contents were exposed under psionic perspective, needing no unfolding to be seen:

"Greetings from Jefferson Clement, Great Mentor of the Assassin Court, to Mr. Gu."

Gu Hang certainly remembered this name.

Clement currently ranks as one of the thirteen High Lords of the Empire.

And the reason he holds such a position is due to his undeniable base: the Assassin Court.

He is the Great Mentor of the Assassin Court.

Silently, an assassin from the Assassin Court entered the Emperor-class battleship 'Golden Pass,' used by Gu Hang as an office and palace, bypassed countless defenses, placed a letter on his bedside, and then left without alarming anyone?

Their movements were so elusive that even Gu Hang's psionic tracing struggled to track them clearly!

What does this imply?

A warning.

If instead of leaving a harmless letter, it was a meticulously planned ambush and assassination?

With the abilities displayed, even Gu Hang with his powerful psionic abilities could be caught off guard and be in danger.

Not to mention life or death, perhaps injury?

If they can silently place a letter, what about poison?

Special poisons that target powerful psychics or can harm even Great Demons, doesn't the Assassin Court have such poisons?

Even taking ten thousand steps back, if Gu Hang is unharmed, what about others in the Alliance? Those high-ranking generals in the Starfighter Battle Group, senior commanders of the Alliance Army, high-ranking government ministers... can they hide?

That’s the terror of the Assassin Court.

They don’t wage wars, nor do they go to battle. But they can almost achieve who they wish to kill will surely die.

Repeated physical eliminations, even if unable to destroy a regime, can bring tremendous disruption.

In the history of the Empire, a Great Mentor of the Assassin Court temporarily wielded the Empire’s power through assassination and political espionage.

Of course, it was eventually rectified. Simultaneously, the Assassin Court’s power was caged.

But regardless, possessing such control, the Mentor is naturally respected, holding a place among the High Lords.

Back then, when Gu Hang first and only traveled to Holy Terra, the then Military Affairs Department Prime Minister Norberto was expelled from the Supreme Council, and after his trial, Clement replaced him, joining the Supreme Council.

On that occasion, within the Imperial Palace, Gu Hang even experienced an assassination attempt from the Assassin Court, later proven unrelated to Clement, executed by individuals utilizing assassins for private motives.

Later, the Mentor of the Assassin Court in the Supreme Council also granted Gu Hang the identity of a ’sponsor,’ allowing him to pay money or other costs, under the premise of not breaking the Empire’s laws, to assassinate targets.

Legally hired killings.

Of course, there are limitations based on the permissions of assassination targets which the Assassin Court will review.

Although Gu Hang had acquired the sponsor identity, he has never used it.

He doesn't need it.

For dirty work, the Alliance has its own espionage department.

But despite not using it, Gu Hang has consistently directed diplomatic personnel stationed in Holy Terra to send money to the Assassin Court. Not much, maybe thousands, tens of thousands, fulfilling his 'sponsor' duties.

Not to have them work, but purely for relationship-building.

Gu Hang even occasionally has private communications with Clement, chatting about current affairs.

Occasionally, he would respond, expressing a willingness to maintain closeness.

In fact, according to some messages returned from Galaraldo, within the High Lord Council, Clement's presence has consistently been low-key, rarely speaking, quietly voting. Concerning matters regarding Gu Hang, the Alliance, and the Southern Line battlefield during the previous war, Clement's stance is generally neutral, with a slightly friendly attitude.

This is quite good, making Gu Hang feel his money wasn't wasted; not pursuing the assassination attempt by the Assassin Court years ago was returned with some benefit.

So now, what does this situation imply?

Greetings?

He and Clement have a private communication channel; if greetings were intended, why not do so normally?

Why use such a sensitive method?

Chapter 709, Gu Hang Becomes Popular

Gu Hang first attempted to contact Clement.

The call went through, but the person who answered was a high-ranking mentor from the Assassin Court.

His status was undoubtedly high, essentially serving as Clement's right-hand and belonging to the upper echelons of the Assassin Court.

His speech was quite polite, not like the cold impression people typically have of an assassin.

Upon hearing Gu Hang's purpose, he apologized, saying that the Grand Mentor Clement was presiding over a very important trial and couldn't speak with Gu Hang personally.

When asked when he would be available, the response was a bit uneasy, saying it was uncertain and might take quite a while.

Gu Hang thought for a moment, then decided to get straight to the point and asked about the letter by his bedside.

The other person expressed surprise and said he didn't know.

But he didn't offer further explanation, only remaining silent.

Gu Hang understood the meaning.

He politely ended the conversation:

"Alright, please send my regards to Grand Mentor Clement."

"Certainly will."

After the call ended, Gu Hang pondered for a moment, realizing the so-called ’presiding over a trial’ was just an excuse.

At such a sensitive time, with an assassin sending a letter, if Clement wanted to say something, he wouldn’t be absent.

There must be more hidden behind the scenes.

After pondering for a while, he reached out to Galaraldo.

Galaraldo was extremely shocked upon hearing the news from Gu Hang.

He stated that he knew nothing about this matter, fearing that someone had bypassed the Supreme Council and issued an assassination order to the Assassin Court for Gu Hang.

But unlike the previous instance, this time the order wasn’t some underhanded scheme, but rather a legitimate request following ’benefactor’ or other hidden pathway conditions to the Assassin Court.

Otherwise, it wouldn’t be like this now.

However, the order was likely blocked by Clement, and the Assassin Court did not carry it out.

Otherwise, what awaited Gu Hang would be more than just a letter.

The contents of the letter were also quite intriguing.

Clement, regards?

That seems like a reminder.

Clement should be acting with goodwill. He did not execute the assassination task but instead warned Gu Hang in this manner: Someone is eager to overturn the table and intends to target him.

But then, who did it?

No evidence, hard to confirm.

But no matter, a few suspects can be guessed.

If both of them are almost right in their guess regarding the whole event process, few in the Empire could instruct the Assassin Court to move against Gu Hang.

The authority with the highest power is the Supreme Council. If the Council deliberates and approves, requesting the Assassin Court to move, this wouldn't have happened later. The Assassin Court would go all out, and such niceties like 'sending regards' wouldn't exist. Even if Clement was close to Gu Hang, he couldn't defy the Supreme Council's orders.

Moreover, Galaraldo, the High Lord, confirmed that this matter was never discussed in the Supreme Council.

It means an individual or a position requested the Assassin Court to move.

Only this way could Clement, as the Grand Mentor, have the leeway to veto the task after the process was approved.

But the statement 'process approved' is also noteworthy.

That means the person who issued the directive indeed has the authority to have the Assassin Court take action.

Gu Hang's status is high. Ignoring his ambiguous Alliance Leader role, officially, he is the Dragonhawk Star Domain Head and Empire Marshal.

Besides, he already holds the 'benefactor' title with the Assassin Court, adding another layer of protection.

Other benefactors wanting the Assassin Court to assassinate an Empire Marshal benefactor, how high must their status be?

It can almost be locked down as one of the High Lords.

Only a High Lord's order could be blocked at the final stage by Clement, forcing the Grand Mentor to avoid suspicion and not communicate directly with Gu Hang.

The meaning is almost clear: Doing nothing is benevolent enough, I cannot offend my opponents, you two fight it out, the Assassin Court remains neutral, don't involve me in the dispute.

Which High Lord would do this?

Prime Minister Luo Fei is the biggest suspect.

He's always standing against the Alliance, demanding its dissolution and criticizing Gu Hang's overreach, expanding the 'Alliance' into this unregulated political entity unchecked. Even after the "Alliance Plan" reached Holy Terra, his attitude hasn't changed.

If Prime Minister Qi Bodu wants to kill Gu Hang, he has enough power to push for an assassination formally through the Supreme Council; he could also decisively pressure the Department of Taxation to abandon immediate profits and advocate for disbanding the Alliance.

Anyway, it wouldn’t come down to needing personal orders to assassinate Gu Hang.

Xu Fuzhen from the Department of Taxation wouldn’t do that either, for reasons similar to the previous point—simply not supporting the Alliance suffices.

Other High Lords, such as the Mars Representative, National Church Representative, Star Realm Army, and Navy’s Supreme Commander, their conflicts aren’t at such a level yet.

Looking at it this way, besides Luo Fei, others don’t seem highly suspicious.

At least, Galaraldo now basically believes it’s Luo Fei.

Their relationship is very antagonistic.

Luo Fei not only attacks the Alliance but viciously criticizes Galaraldo personally. He condemns the Alliance, naturally denouncing the reason it was initially established: Back when Galaraldo was the Apostle of War, he used privilege to grant the Alliance the green light. At that time, no one could foresee that a ’special coalition’ normally involving a few planets for mutual support and warmth in times of crisis could drive the Alliance to its current level in a few decades.

Chapter 709: Gu Hang Became Famous_2

Luo Fei naturally had to criticize as well, claiming that Galaraldo had overstepped his authority back then and illegally arranged a special union privilege for the Alliance.

In response, Galaraldo also showed great anger.

He assured Gu Hang that there would definitely be an explanation for this matter.

Gu Hang also comforted the Minister of Military Affairs with a couple of words.

It was actually his sincere belief:

"Their actions reveal their weakness. They have run out of options politically, which leads them to resort to such meaningless tricks. This proves that we have already gained the upper hand in the situation! It's good news, too."

Listening to Gu Hang's slightly relaxed attitude, Galaraldo calmed down a bit.

He said coldly, "Next time at the High Lord Council, I will bring up this matter. Heh, secret actions? I will not let him have his way and will bring it out into the open, let the sunshine reveal it!"

Gu Hang pondered for a moment and agreed with Galaraldo's opinion: "Then let's do it that way."

To be honest, Gu Hang was a bit uncertain.

Was it really Luo Fei who made the move?

The action was quite clumsy.

Would Luo Fei really be foolish enough to use the "sponsor order" channel to have the Assassin Court target Gu Hang?

It would be impossible not to know that with no conflict of interest with the Alliance, in the current political whirlpool of Holy Terra, the Alliance, having achieved victory in the Iron Armor War, is at the center of a storm. The Assassin Court, which has no conflict of interest and has a rather good relationship with Gu Hang, is very unlikely to want to get involved.

Even if he really wanted to do it, wouldn't his first step be to deal with Clement?

Before dealing with Clement, using the "sponsor order" to carry out an action likely to be stopped, to stir the pot, and even to exacerbate conflicts, attracting all of Gu Hang's hatred onto himself...

How could it make sense?

But in this line of thought, Gu Hang caught a fleeting inspiration.

"Exacerbate conflict..."

He sighed: "Someone doesn’t want peace."

Despite having thought of this layer, Gu Hang still agreed with Galaraldo’s idea of expanding the matter and discussing it in the Supreme Council.

Someone secretly handed over a knife, so it might as well be used.

Of course, using someone else’s knife naturally comes with risks.

But in such matters, one can simply adapt accordingly.

Investigation is necessary, but whether there really is a mastermind and what their purpose is, and how to respond, are all part of one issue.

Dealing with Luo Fei is another issue.

They do not conflict and can be handled together.

...

On Holy Terra, a lengthy High Lord meeting was taking place.

There were many topics to discuss — in such a vast Empire, if topics were to be discussed, the matters requiring Holy Terra’s decisions would be too numerous, and each one seemed quite important.

The majority of them would not make it to the Supreme Council for discussion.

Those that did, were either matters of enormous consequence for the entire Empire, or matters that were closely tied to the vested interests of certain High Lords.

Galaraldo kept his word and brought up Gu Hang's "assassination attempt" during this meeting, without troubling the Assassin Court, and instead, strongly criticized the Prime Minister of the Administration, Luo Fei, for using assassination methods against an Empire hero, saying it was disgraceful.

Luo Fei firmly denied this accusation.

He had to deny it.

Whether or not he did it, he could not admit to it. Issuing an assassination order through the Assassin Court is legal, but silently killing without evidence to prove who did it—that would be one thing; now, the person is not dead, and the target is still alive, a hero who has gained massive renown following an undeniable victory in a major war, how could he admit it was him?

Moreover, Gu Hang was not simply a solitary war hero. He was not only not a lone hero, but he also had a strong fundamental base under his command, had made many friends, and had political allies in the Central Empire. Assassinating such a person had already departed from the basic logic of political struggle.

If it were confirmed that Luo Fei did it, not only would he not win in political struggles, but he would also risk losing his position amid the enormous whirlpool of public opinion.

The role of "reputation" shouldn't be underestimated.

Thanks to years of Galaraldo persistently spreading the word for Gu Hang, he had already gained some fame even before the war, and some people indeed knew that a hero had emerged in the distant Imperial's Eastern Frontier.

Afterwards, the Iron Armor War exploded decades of accumulated reputation in one go.

Originally, the Iron Armor War had already attracted the attention of Holy Terra. Whether commoners, mid to low-level, or high-level individuals, they were all aware of and concerned about this war.

The Empire was indeed constantly at war, but for the Central Territory, or even the Sun Star Domain itself, to muster troops and form an Expeditionary Force to go abroad was not that common.

Moreover, the strength assembled for forming the Expeditionary Force was not minor, which naturally drew the attention of all groups at the central point.

Not to mention, they lost...

The First Western Front Army, led by Su Lie's Phoenix Legion, was defeated, and there were even rumors that the Iron Armor might invade the Central Territory.

If said that in the troop structure of the First Western Front Army, the Central Territory's troops accounted for only two to three-tenths, then for the Second Western Front Army led by the Otaubis Battle Group and commanded by Salius, the Central Territory's troops essentially formed the absolute main force.

That drew even more attention.

The people of Holy Terra, constantly following the progress of the Iron Armor War, thus witnessed someone turning the tide.

That someone was Gu Hang.

He immediately became a figure that Holy Terra discussed from top to bottom.

Simultaneously, due to his sudden rise to fame in Holy Terra, along with his association with various heroes, his reputation began to spread throughout the entire Empire.

This aspect had actually been thoroughly reported by the Alliance ambassador stationed at the Holy Terra office, and Gu Hang himself had personally reviewed it. But to him, at most, he merely understood it; having no first-hand experience, he didn't truly feel how "famous" he had become.

But the one managing the Administration in Holy Terra, Luo Fei, did.

He opposed the Alliance but didn't dare to oppose Gu Hang directly.

No matter how operations were conducted in secret, facing him openly, when the reputable war hero was prominently in vogue, he would look nothing short of a clown.

Thus, Luo Fei had to fervently defend himself.

Even his attitude bordered on intense.

Galaraldo hadn't made any demands yet, but it was Luo Fei himself who strongly demanded that Clement reveal the issuer of the assassination order.

Clement remained silent and unresponsive, not uttering even half a word.

The rules of the Assassin Court are known to all.

Galaraldo seized the opportunity to sarcastically point out that Luo Fei, knowing full well that the Assassin Court would never divulge such secrets, was putting on a show.

Ultimately, it was Prime Minister Zebert who put an end to the squabbles over this matter.

In his capacity as Prime Minister, he demanded that the Assassin Court not accept any more assassination missions against Gu Hang.

His prestige was immense at the time; not only was Luo Fei nominally his right-hand man, but even Galaraldo was essentially under his command. Back then, Galaraldo had switched sides to join Zebert, contributing to the ousting of the former Minister of Justice, Ou Juren, and thus entered the High Lord Council.

Even a dog must behave properly.

When he spoke, the two most vocal individuals, including Xu Fuzhen who occasionally chimed in to support Galaraldo, fell silent.

Then, the session transitioned to the conclusion phase, initiating a vote.

It passed by a large majority.

Gu Hang was relatively safe, and regardless of who schemed in the shadows, he no longer needed to worry about actions from the Assassin Court in the future.

The next topic, proposed by Luo Fei, was about the candidate for the Cosmos Domain Chair.

Since the war had largely ended, the subsequent focus was naturally on reconstruction, particularly restoring tax collection.

A Cosmic Domain Chair was needed to oversee these efforts.

There are positions like the Cosmic Domain Chair, each akin to a regional governor with significant authority, and such appointments naturally required Holy Terra's approval.

However, the power to nominate candidates had always been vested in the Administration.

Luo Fei proposed five names, including high-ranking central officials, and chairs or vice-chairs from other Star Domains.

But there was also a special name among them.

The centerpiece of the previous topic’s argument: Gu Hang.

Chapter 710, Only Money

When Galaraldo first heard Prime Minister Luo Fei nominate Gu Hang to become the Cosmic Domain Chair of the Spiderweb Domain, he hadn’t reacted instantly.

What for?

Surrendered?

Immediately, he realized that was impossible.

Luo Fei had other plans in mind.

However, Galaraldo didn’t rush to speak.

Someone would speak up.

Sure enough, a High Lord raised a question: "The matter of the Alliance hasn’t been resolved, and now you propose Gu Hang to govern the Spiderweb Domain. Has the Executive Council considered this appropriately?"

"Not at all, in fact, we’ve been deliberating on this for a long time." Luo Fei appeared quite confident and assured.

Then, he presented his ideas to the audience.

Clearing away the decorative and insignificant long-winded statements, the key point was Gu Hang taking over the position of Cosmic Domain Chair of the Spiderweb Domain.

Gu Hang performed exceptionally in the last war and was the greatest hero of the war, a fact that could not be erased by anyone. Therefore, achievements must be rewarded, and naturally, he needs to be promoted.

Isn't Gu Hang's primary official title the Dragonhawk Star Domain Leader?

Then, he directly steps up, rising to the position of Cosmic Domain Chair, becoming a governor of regions, governing the Spiderweb Domain.

Moreover, the Spiderweb Domain happens to need a political strongman to lead the thousands of worlds through post-war crises.

Isn't Gu Hang suitable?

As for the Alliance, which has been under discussion for a while, Luo Fei did not mention it again.

But the current intention was already very clear.

Regarding these two issues, there is no related regulation within the Empire's rules. There's no rule that says someone who leads a unified political entity cannot assume the position of Cosmic Domain Chair.

In reality, within the Empire, there are actually a few Cosmic Domain Chairs under similar circumstances.

Of course, the political entities they command typically consist of only a few planets, several dozens of planets, formed into a military, economic, and political integration, usually located in the core areas controlled by the Space Domain Government, so that the Space Domain Government can manage a core area, wield core power.

Gu Hang, at such a scale, definitely does not exist.

But what of it? There's precedent, others have done it before, the Empire has no stipulations, so why can't Gu Hang?

Isn't it just a tiny bit larger?

But Galaraldo couldn't bring himself to say this openly.

At this moment, he silently shrank back, saying nothing.

He had to first observe the situation.

Actually, the present situation was already somewhat clear.

Luo Fei was advancing by withdrawing, throwing out the idea of a Cosmic Domain Chair as a strategic retreat, letting people thoughtfully consider what kind of might Cosmic Domain Chair plus the Alliance would possess?

How much power would Gu Hang wield?

Both Alliance and Cosmic Domain Chair, would Gu Hang push the already troublesome Alliance further? Expand it to encompass the entire Spiderweb Domain, thus becoming a gigantic, powerful, politically and economically advanced political entity from military to political aspects?

It's quite possible indeed.

Even Xu Fuzhen, who had always been greedy for the substantial tax revenue the Alliance could provide, hesitated.

Desire for money is one thing, but a simple Alliance exists as it does, after all, it's just five Star Domains; after all, the Alliance has existed for several decades, and Gu Hang's attitude towards the Central Empire has always been relatively obedient...

Nevertheless, regardless of the situation, the combination of Cosmic Domain Chair and Alliance leadership was still overly extravagant, the powers too vast, and internally it could form a power loop, virtually unregulated from the outside.

Xu Fuzhen also remained silent.

A staunch supporter of Gu Hang fell silent, a supporter greedy for the Alliance's money fell silent, the situation tended to become one-sided.

No need for Luo Fei to say anything more, rather, those High Lords with no relevant interests cautiously spoke one by one, expressing that Luo Fei's proposal was unreliable.

Luo Fei, being rebuffed, was not angry but instead smiled cheerfully, explaining one by one, agreeing with the views of the dissenters.

Subsequently, he proposed, whether to dissolve the Alliance.

In that case, wouldn't it be a win-win situation?

Gu Hang gets promoted.

Without this opportunity, it would be extremely difficult for a typical Star Domain Leader to advance to the position of Cosmic Domain Chair, with numerous hurdles in between, each hurdle potentially causing a politician to spend their entire life in vain.

Now, let Old Gu step over at once, and do not let his wartime achievements go unappreciated.

The Alliance is dissolved, letting the lords on Holy Terra be reassured without facing a new ironclad entity.

For Luo Fei, once Gu Hang became Cosmic Domain Chair, he entered the Executive Council’s appointment system overnight, transforming from a political adversary to "one of us," potentially even becoming a friend in the future.

Even in Galaraldo’s mind, this was a good thing. Were it not known that Gu Hang absolutely would not want to abandon the Alliance for the position of Cosmic Domain Chair, he would vote in favor himself.

Isn’t it a win-win situation?

"I disagree!"

Finally, someone stepped out.

"I disagree with dissolving the Alliance." The speaker was Xu Fuzhen.

This Minister of Taxation, with a cold face, tossed out a document, ignoring all other High Lords, her gaze fixed solely on Qi Bodu.

She reported in a detached tone, saying: "By preserving the Alliance, we harvest not only the current 300 billion a year but also a future income of 1.3 trillion annually. Meanwhile, through the Executive Council’s appointment system, we instead need to exempt the Star Domains within the Alliance, including the entire Spiderweb Domain, from taxes for ten or even twenty years. We need to support a military to manage and suppress; we need to annually invest more than 300 billion to rebuild the Spiderweb Domain."

"Specific datasets can be found in the files; I just want to inform everyone, taking ten years as measurement, the comprehensive income and expenditure gap will reach 20 trillion."

"This financial gap cannot be remedied by the Department of Taxation from any other source."

"In other words, whether Gu Hang takes the position of Cosmic Domain Chair and whether the Alliance remains preserved, I don’t care. I’m merely telling everyone this one fact, if Prime Minister Luo Fei’s proposal comes true, then Solaria’s current annual investment of 700 billion must be halved..."

As she spoke, Luo Fei’s face darkened.

Solaria’s dozen Star Domains, tens of thousands of planets, are appointed by the Executive Council. This territory from the Sun Expedition has always been the greatest increment of power from the Executive Council through the years.

Xu Fuzhen ignored him and continued, saying: "All reconstruction investments for the Starfighter Battle Group will be halted entirely; the Navy’s plan to rebuild and supplement the Solar Fleet needs a thorough re-examination; the Tribunal’s budgetary allocation must reduce, it can’t support punishment on planet after planet; Holy Terra’s production orders to Mars need reduction..."

She continued to name several places.

A point advised, silently none.

"Hence, my suggestion is not only shouldn’t the Alliance be dissolved, but why can’t the Spiderweb Domain be given to Gu Hang?"

"Give! It’s all possible! Just as long as Gu Hang pays!"