Governor 751

Chapter 751: High Lord Gu Hang

The ’erratic’ behavior of the Martian Sect is quite unsettling for Zebert.

Seriously, guys, what are you up to?

According to the agreement, all the benefits you were entitled to have been given, right?

A significant portion of the orders for rebuilding the Star Devouring Cosmos have been allocated to the Martian Sect, despite having to forgo closer options.

Although Mars’ products are the best, with the highest production capacity and competitive pricing, if you add the approximate two-year transportation cycle, no matter how competitive the product is, it would become much less so.

Insisting on going through Mars while ensuring their profit means more money and time for reconstruction. These costs are meant to provide enough benefits for the Martian Sect.

Simultaneously, the Martian Sect will also gain exclusive operation rights over more than twenty mining worlds in the Star Devouring Cosmos, which include exceptionally valuable rare minerals.

Zebert even hinted at giving the green light to a proposal for punishing and sanctioning a disobedient medium-sized sect of mechanics, per the Martian Sect’s request.

According to the longstanding political understanding between both parties, such terms are already quite generous.

You oilheads, what more could you possibly want?

But soon, Zebert caught on.

He remembered that Great Sage Kao’er had met with Gu Hang.

His spies hadn’t overheard that conversation, not because Gu Hang blocked it, but because Kao’er did it himself.

However, Gu Hang shared a portion of the conversation with Zebert.

Of course, he left out the parts that shouldn’t be disclosed. Things about prophecy, future missions, or the ultimate battle—what’s there to discuss about those?

But regarding Kaoer’s revelation of assassination plot clues, Gu Hang did mention that.

Back then, Zebert thought it was odd.

Previously, there was no intelligence indicating any ties between Gu Hang or the Alliance and the Martian Sect. The two sects that had fallen under Gu Hang’s control, the Mingyang Sect and the Alamita Sect (Alfonso Sect), might have some connection with Mars, but it shouldn’t be profound.

So why would Mars, out of the blue, tell Gu Hang this intelligence?

And went out of its way to do it personally!

Is there some under-the-table deal between them?

This thought instinctively crossed Zebert’s mind when he heard the news.

But from the time Yu Jinwen’s Mansion was raided by the Imperial Guard until now, he’s been too busy and only managed to instruct his intelligence department to investigate this matter in the Alliance and Mars directions. After that, he didn’t have the time to pay attention.

Until now, no intelligence has come back regarding this matter, and he’s been so busy that he almost forgot about it.

It’s only now that he’s reacting to it.

Is Mars attempting to push Gu Hang into the High Lord position?

This can’t happen!

Damn it, I knew that kid Gu Hang was up to no good. Came to me before begging for the High Lord position, acting like a loyal servant, and now he’s turning around and getting Mars to give me trouble?

Despite his curses, this train of thought was more of a commentary than actual anger.

In his heart, Gu Hang was never a paragon of virtue. Even during their last secret conversation, where Gu Hang presented a series of arguments, especially suggesting Zebert choose a High Lord representative for him, it only slightly moved him.

Just slightly.

The saying "A good name and power cannot be entrusted to others" is one Zebert encountered while practicing calligraphy, an ancient adage from Guttara.

He strongly agrees with it.

Gu Hang is not his ally. Giving him the High Lord position, even if it’s a nominal one, in the long run, Gu Hang might eventually make it legitimate.

He no longer underestimates Gu Hang.

Especially a supremely powerful Psychic, coupled with an Alliance that requires him to pay attention after reviewing various intelligence and reports, one that is rapidly developing.

Though now it’s a nominal title, who knows what might happen in the future?

He claims that as long as Gu Hang is disobedient, he can always use a majority vote in the Supreme Council to dislodge his High Lord Chair position. But just like how it’s impossible to dislodge the National Church, Mars, or the Tribunal, if the Alliance’s power keeps expanding, and its network extends to a point where the Empire can’t handle an Alliance rebellion, to the extent that others might no longer see the Alliance’s rebellion as one and could even support it... At that time, no matter how many votes he has, he won’t be able to remove Gu Hang from the High Lord position.

He’s forced to consider this possibility, particularly after the Sect of Mechanics displayed a stance of supporting Gu Hang.

However, he’s also curious.

What did Gu Hang offer to the Mechanical Sect in exchange for support to secure a High Lord position?

Mars has never had a small appetite.

Only by figuring this out can he understand what Mars is truly scheming?

Without clarity on this point, Zebert truly doesn’t dare make any extra moves.

Right now, he’s a bit regretful.

The "Alliance Plan" was signed too early.

However, the signing ceremony, which was live broadcasted at the time, was also approved with a high vote in the Supreme Lord Council, so there’s no turning back.

If you regret it, the Alliance might withhold payment.

All budgets are now based on the extra three trillion tax coins to be generated after the "Alliance Plan" is passed; for the next ten years, they've even counted on an additional 2.1 trillion annual income.

Undoing it wouldn't be a simple matter.

Chapter 751: High Lord Gu Hang (2)

Zebert couldn't use this bargaining chip to play cards anymore.

He had no choice but to forcibly interrupt the second meeting about the Star Devouring Cosmos.

Afterwards, he called in Gu Hang, and the two held another secret discussion.

This time, he directly showed an angry attitude, questioning repeatedly.

Gu Hang responded meekly, offering explanations.

The gist was that he also didn't know what the Martian Sect was planning.

In a sense, what Gu Hang said was indeed the truth.

However, Zebert certainly didn't believe him.

Gu Hang skipped over the topic, bringing up the previously mentioned conditions again.

His attitude was humble, yet he didn't concede an inch.

Zebert told him to get lost.

Gu Hang promptly left.

Then came the third meeting a week later.

No results.

Once it ended, Zebert called Gu Hang over again, and they talked in detail for an hour.

Later, he privately conversed with various figures from the Martian Sect for a long time.

Ultimately, Zebert compromised.

In fact, if you calculate carefully, he didn't lose anything. In the short term, he even gained.

All the original benefits promised to the Martian Sect were no longer required. The Martian Sect had to pay an additional price.

On Gu Hang's side, there were also two major benefits: the sixth rejuvenation surgery and the Alliance Army accepting Zebert's conscription.

Though the High Lord position was given away, it was merely a titular one. Representing Gu Hang in Holy Terra to exercise the High Lord's power was Jon Curtis.

Gu Hang had only just met this person.

He was originally a member of Zebert's advisory group, and this could be considered a step forward, coming to the forefront.

For Zebert, he obtained everything he expected.

In fact, due to concessions from the Alliance and the Martian Sect, he gained more than originally planned.

As for potential issues... that's something far into the future.

At least for now, Gu Hang still showed considerable obedience.

Anyway, looking at it overall, after this turmoil, Zebert not only didn't lose but profited significantly.

So, let's leave it at that for now.

Zebert's focus shifted from Gu Hang to the struggle with the National Church and the situation in the Star Devouring Cosmos.

...

The inauguration of the High Lord was also a significant event.

In both name and reality, it is one of the highest positions in the Empire, among the top thirteen.

A grand inauguration ceremony was also indispensable.

This became the third grand ceremony Gu Hang attended in succession after arriving at Holy Terra.

He was the hottest figure on Holy Terra in almost a year.

Originally, it was thought that the triumph ceremony would be the peak of his fame, but unexpectedly, a series of subsequent events were even more dazzling.

For ordinary citizens or mid-to-lower-level government officials, the signing of the Alliance Plan was astonishing, but for some who admired Gu Hang, it was also cause for celebration: this meant that many previous statements about Gu Hang being a separatist force, possibly disloyal or harmful to the Empire, were all debunked.

If the signing of the Alliance Plan was unexpected for most people, Gu Hang becoming a High Lord was even more incredible.

Galaraldo was one such person.

"I really didn’t expect it," Galaraldo expressed to Gu Hang in the banquet hall, " although I wholeheartedly supported every decision and action you took along the way. Honestly, I always felt that you were on a very difficult path, and I doubted you could see it through to the end. But unexpectedly..."

He himself was a High Lord, and he rose very quickly. Thirty years ago, he arrived at Holy Terra and, in just over a decade, rose from the position of Deputy Minister of Military Affairs to the Prime Minister and High Lord.

But it was precisely because he personally experienced this process that he knew how difficult it was.

In his view, the path he planned for Gu Hang to become a High Lord was the most splendid and smooth path.

But Gu Hang insisted on taking a difficult road.

Yet he made it!

Gu Hang raised his glass: "I couldn’t have done it without your help."

His words were sincere.

Galaraldo’s assistance to Gu Hang in Holy Terra was very critical.

Without Galaraldo, the earliest legitimacy of the Alliance would have been in question. Later, Galaraldo played a significant role in securing numerous policies from the Empire for the Alliance and gaining various political support within Holy Terra for the Alliance.

What seemed like a casual move back then became pivotal in the future.

Galaraldo waved his hand, saying: "Let’s not be formal between us, the difficult road is behind us, and the stage for us in the future is vast!"

At this point, his natural attitude was that Gu Hang would eventually reclaim the power of the High Lord gradually. By then, just the two of them holding two seats in the Supreme Council would already be a force to be reckoned with. In time, perhaps they could even find a way to overthrow Zebert?

Gu Hang understood Galaraldo; he knew that his good brother was a restless and ambitious man.

And that’s quite good.

Galaraldo wasn’t Gu Hang’s subordinate, but rather a collaborator, and in their cooperation, they could say they each got what they needed, without core interest conflicts.

Of course, this might only be temporary.

Galaraldo’s ultimate goal might be the seat that Zebert currently occupies. Gu Hang could strongly feel that Galaraldo had a belief to "replace him" regarding Zebert.

If he became a centralized prime minister like Zebert, while Gu Hang remained a powerful regional feudal lord, conflicts between the two would likely become unavoidable.

This conflict isn’t something that personal friendship can erase, no matter how good the relationship is.

But fortunately, that day is still far off. Zebert remained firmly seated in his position, with immense authority. Despite issues coming from his side, he not only didn't lose his faction's High Lord and Cosmic Domain Chair position but also co-opted the Empire's hottest hero Gu Hang with a mere titular position, striking a blow against political rivals...

This is how the outside world perceived the current Zebert, making his authority grow even more entrenched.

In a sense, these perceptions indeed reflected the reality.

With such a powerful figure suppressing from above, no matter how ambitious anyone is, they must keep it in check.

Moreover, will that day even come?

If the ultimate battle really exists and occurs within decades or a century, what's the point of being the head honcho?

Therefore, Gu Hang gave little thought to potential future conflicts between the two.

He wasn't even particularly worried about the conflict between the Alliance and the Central Empire.

When a massive crisis capable of annihilating the entire Human Empire arrives, all other conflicts must yield to the overarching conflict of human survival.

Moreover, regarding promotion, although Gu Hang would not be permanently stationed at Holy Terra and currently only held a titular position, who knows who will rise faster in the future?

There's nothing else to worry about.

...

"We are ready to leave Holy Terra in nine days," Gu Hang told Yelisia, bringing a genuine smile to her face.

She hugged Gu Jing, waving his small hand, and happily said: "We can go home!"

Little Gu Jing was bewildered.

To him, the concept of home didn’t exist yet. Since birth, he lived on a warship, and later spent nearly a year in the Imperial Palace on Holy Terra.

But no matter, he just wanted to stay with his mom and dad.

After putting their son to sleep, Yelisia remarked to Gu Hang: "These years feel like a dream..."

Chapter 753

"It’s truly like a dream..."

"Is it a beautiful dream?" Gu Hang asked with a smile.

Ye Lisha seemed a bit hesitant in her expression. She struggled for a while before sighing softly and said, "I can’t really say... For many people, not being able to become a High Lord, just becoming the High Lord’s wife is already quite a good thing, not to mention, for some people, the ultimate goal of their lives as a gilded cage is just that..."

"But you’re not a canary, you’re an eagle," Gu Hang said earnestly.

Yelisia laughed heartily, slapped Gu Hang lightly, and said again, "So what if I’m an eagle? Once I had high ambitions, believing that I could reach the highest position on my own, but in the end, I realized I still needed a reliance..."

Gu Hang hugged Yelisia.

Yelisia struggled slightly, but Gu Hang loosened his grip a little, and she just adjusted to a more comfortable position, continuing to half-lie in Gu Hang's arms, "But there's nothing much to talk about. The so-called highest place I once thought of, could at most reach the rank of Vice Admiral in the Imperial Navy, which would already be the pinnacle of our Fufana Family's achievements. Neither my grandpa nor the older ancestors who created this naval family exceeded this rank. In the Tianma Star Sector, in our Dragonhawk Star Domain, being a Navy General at the end also meant merely reaching the rank of Vice Admiral."

"Even the most arrogant fantasies of my youthful arrogance couldn't achieve the current level."

"Admiral, High Lord's wife... My God, I never even fantasized about reaching such heights in this life."

"But the higher I climb, the more terrified I become."

At this point, Gu Hang spoke up to console her, "There's nothing to fear. Everything you have now includes your own share of effort. You've always been the highest Commander of the Alliance Navy, and in the path of the Alliance's expansion, you've been indispensable in countless large and small battles. I need you, the Alliance needs you, and you will be one of the most important figures in the Alliance. This isn't a promise I gave you, but the power you rightfully earned with your wisdom and courage."

"Yes, I'm very proud to have accomplished all of this. But the more proud I become, the more terrified I am. It all happened so fast, how can I hold onto it all? Whenever I think about it, it feels like walking on thin ice." Yelisia's words were filled with worry.

She paused for a moment, then continued, "I used to rarely think like this, but after Xiao Jing was born, my thoughts became more and more different. Perhaps that's the change after becoming a mother? I'm more concerned about the future than before, and I want to leave a better environment for Xiao Jing..."

"Then just do as we've always done, every time we take the Alliance to a new place, we're building a beautiful world."

"You know that's not what I mean. He will inherit from us in the future..."

"No." Gu Hang interrupted his wife, saying, "He will inherit nothing from us."

Yelisia suddenly turned her head, staring at Gu Hang in surprise.

Gu Hang maintained a calm demeanor.

After a moment of looking at each other, watching Yelisia's expression slowly transform into something resembling a mother beast protecting her cub, Gu Hang finally sighed lightly and said, "We will have a very long lifespan. You gave birth to Xiao Jing in your sixties, but I can ensure that you will live beyond 560 years old and still be vigorous at that time. By the time you become sufficiently old and need a successor, Xiao Jing will already be over five hundred years old. What do you expect him to take over at that point? He will also be in the twilight of his life."

Yelisia opened her mouth slightly, but didn't know what to say.

These things, she had considered before. However, she hadn't realized her lifespan would reach such a lengthy point. After all, in her past life, family elders or local dignitaries in the Star Domain with the ability and status to undergo life-extending surgeries were numerous, but typically only underwent one or two times. After all, the cost of life-extending surgery was not cheap, and it became less affordable the more it was pursued. Only a few top dignitaries had the greatest amount of wealth, and more importantly, power, to enable a fourth or fifth life-extending surgery for themselves.

Her mind hadn't wrapped around the idea, but now, with Gu Hang's reminder, she was shocked to realize that in the view of top dignitaries of the Human Empire, the sixty-year difference between her and her son was significant, yet essentially placed them in the same generation.

Moreover, this discussion was concerning Yelisia alone, without mentioning Gu Hang himself.

He is an Eternal Life, which means that hundreds of years make no essential difference to him. By then, his son Gu Jing would be a frail old man, and his own appearance would likely remain unchanged from now.

Successor?

No heir could outlive him.

And to say that if Gu Hang encounters any accidents along the way and needs someone to succeed him, the probability is also very low. If, given Gu Hang's current strength and condition, he were to face death, what kind of successor could possibly turn the tide and reverse the situation?

Yet despite this, Yelisia was still unwilling to accept it.

"He is our son, our only son."

"So you must trust him," Gu Hang said, "You have to fully trust that he will not be a useless person in the future who can only rely on his parents' protection. In this turbulent era, the stage is already set for him, and he has a very high starting point. He will have the best education, growing up in the political center of the Alliance. He will be able to constantly get in touch with the thoughts of the highest rulers of the Alliance, who are his parents. When he grows older, he can go to places where he can apply himself according to his abilities and interests."

Chapter 753_2

"No one can embezzle his achievements, or rather, as long as he doesn't make a major blunder, he will be the most dazzling hero. Unlike normal parents, we can truly watch how his life unfolds."

"To this extent, what else is impossible?"

Yelisia: "But... what if something really happens to us? If you're held up for a while, like in the Alamita battle, when you were trapped in the brutal confrontation in Subspace, what if the situation becomes more critical and lasts longer, what then? No matter what, we need someone we can trust to take on the main role at such times. Who better than our son to assume this role?"

"This doesn't contradict what I said," Gu Hang patiently replied. "Precisely because he has to take on these roles, he needs more training. But conversely, it's not about benefits, but real responsibility. Kinship and blood ties mean nothing because, in the end, if I succeed in returning, I can bring everything back on track. If I don't return, then nothing matters. So the prerequisite for taking on important roles is to have enough capability to prevent the situation from deteriorating too badly before I return. If Xiao Jing can take on this important task, that would be the best. But if he's not up to it, then he can't be forced into the position."

Yelisia’s eyes were slightly red with tears. As strong as she was as a female general, in matters concerning her first child, she was no different from any other mother: "I just want him to live well. He’s so adorable, so intelligent..."

"He will live well; at the very least, he will lead a life of peace and prosperity."

...

The Gu Hang family, along with many high-ranking figures from the Alliance who came to Holy Terra with him, naturally had to leave together as well.

In fact, everyone who came to Holy Terra had their own work and tasks. So far, generally speaking, most of them had completed their tasks relatively smoothly.

Gu Hang’s task needs no further mention.

Yelisia was actually very busy as well. She not only had to attend numerous formal occasions with Gu Hang as his wife but also had to participate in many ’ladies’ gatherings’ to socialize with the spouses of other high-ranking Imperial officials.

Besides these, there were also some internal gatherings of the Imperial Navy system that she had to actively participate in.

Although her status as an admiral was not traditionally obtained from within the Imperial Navy system, it was a political benefit that fell onto her head as a result of the negotiations last time Gu Hang came to Holy Terra.

But no matter what, she was now within the Imperial Navy system, and no one could deny her this position as admiral.

At this time, she also had to act as a bridge between the Alliance Navy and the Imperial Navy.

There were conflicts between the two sides.

Theoretically, the Alliance Navy was supposed to be integrated into the commanding system of the Imperial Navy Central Command. Funds were disbursed from the Military Affairs Department to the Navy Central, and then to the Alliance Navy. The Alliance Navy's operations also needed to follow the commands of the higher Command Center. If necessary, the higher Command Center could even dispatch commanders to take over the Alliance Navy.

But these were all theoretical statements.

Could the Alliance Navy accept this? Clearly not.

Could the Navy Central Command accept it?

They actually could.

Although they were quite envious, if they could take control of the Alliance Navy, just like they controlled other Imperial Navy Troops, it would essentially mean gaining a powerful frontier fleet for free, which would be significant.

However, they also understood that the Alliance Navy wasn't built with Imperial Navy funding.

Similar cases were plentiful within the Empire. Many fleets built by local governments were unwilling to let the Central Empire intervene. The lower the funding ratio from Navy Command, the weaker their control.

The Alliance wasn't an easy target for aggressive plundering either. The Alliance Leader Gu Hang was now the hottest political figure in Holy Terra; the Alliance Navy, up and down, was built entirely from their own system, with no room for intervention by the Imperial Navy Command; there was no way to turn this around either.

However, despite this, it didn't stop them from leveraging these matters for some easy benefit.

The heavier approach involved transferring power from the Alliance Navy; the lighter, hoping to insert officers and commanders.

Gu Hang gave clear instructions: They can dream on!

If the Central Command didn't contribute a penny, they shouldn't expect anything from the Alliance Navy.

No power to transfer would be given, and no commanders would be provided. As for some officer positions on the ships, those could be considered for negotiation, but personnel needed to meet certain quality standards.

This was to leverage some talent from the Imperial Navy at no cost.

However, it required maintaining a certain proportion, undergoing a probation period, and finding opportunities for retraining at the Alliance's Loyal Heir Academy.

All the coordination work with the Imperial Navy Central in this regard had to be handled by Yelisia.

She was truly busy.

But fortunately, the outcome was quite good.

Sean Edwards, the Supreme Commander of the Imperial Navy, personally had a meeting with Yelisia, and they also brought in an emissary sent by Prime Minister Jia Lerd of the Military Affairs Department to finalize many details together.

All parties were somewhat satisfied. The Navy Central didn't go overboard; a regiment of officers, totaling about a thousand in number, would depart for the Alliance to serve; the Alliance purchased some decommissioned warships from Navy Central at a relatively high price; the Alliance Navy and Navy Central established rather smooth communications, setting up a 'Joint Command Center' that was more symbolic than practical...

Similar collaborative arrangements were made with the Star Realm Army, along with the Alliance Army generals.

On the government side, some officials from the Alliance Government brought by Gu Hang were tasked with discussing detailed implementation issues under the broad framework of the "Alliance Plan" with the Imperial Taxation Department.

Even among the Interstellar Warriors, Martins and Youwin, these two Battle Group Leaders had their own work to do.

Martins was tasked with bringing Phoenix's glory back to the Phoenix family, to re-establish the battle group's glory among the progeny of Phoenix.

The now-Phoenix Battle Group was gradually assuming the secondary position after the Phoenix lineage. Except for lacking a Glory Queen-class Battleship, truth be told, they were stronger than the parent group, which had been severely weakened and was unlikely to be stronger than Phoenix before its reconstruction.

And Youwin, as the Battle Group Leader, had to represent the Blood Shark Battle Group, which had just returned to Imperial Territory, in re-establishing relations with various official empire channels.

He also had some different personal ambitions.

Although in the last war, the cooperation between Blood Shark and the Alliance was quite satisfactory, who wouldn't want to aim for a better future?

The strong comprehensive capabilities demonstrated by the Blood Shark Battle Group also caught the attention of many. Indeed, no shortage of forces approached Youwin for engagement.

Gu Hang allowed this freedom.

Feel free to discuss.

Yet after extensive contact with politicians on Holy Terra, Youwin's optimism turned to disappointment.

They all spoke eloquently, but in reality, the offers they provided surpassed those from the Alliance so sparsely, it was hardly noticeable.

Chapter 754: Wait and See

Gu Hang has left Holy Terra.

This news once again became the biggest headline on the Imperial Capital, the Human Ancestral Star.

In the eyes of the vast majority of Terrans, they were very reluctant.

'The most popular IP protagonist', a legitimate Empire hero, how could he be leaving?

Originally, when Gu Hang accepted the position of Grand Honorary Master of the Psychic Cultivator's Association, and then became a High Lord, the people of Holy Terra believed that Gu Hang was going to stay for a long time on Holy Terra and become one of the eminent rulers of the Empire.

They were highly anticipating this.

Gu Hang was not born in Holy Terra, which was his downside. The Terrans have a strong sense of superiority.

However, starting from the very beginning, Gu Hang's deeds were spread throughout Holy Terra via various artistic works. It can be said that the people of Terra watched Gu Hang grow, and found him quite endearing. His outsider origin, initially a detractor, was largely counterbalanced.

The Terrans could fully accept Gu Hang.

Moreover, in the general mindset of the people, having a hero lead the Empire is a better choice than a politician.

Thus, his departure made the Terran populace quite reluctant.

But it could be understood.

After all, the borders were not yet secure, and there were many hidden dangers that could evolve into threats to the entire Empire, requiring a hero to resolve — as hinted by numerous artistic works.

Outside of the general public, for the high officials of the Central Empire on Holy Terra, Gu Hang's departure was also a major piece of news.

Among these political figures, not many were truly welcoming of Gu Hang as the leader of the Empire.

Of course, they also recognized that Gu Hang was not going to stay on Holy Terra. His title as High Lord was nominal, and the power in name that could be exercised over the Central Empire was actually in the hands of the Prime Minister; the Psychic Cultivator's Association had instead relinquished some large but useless titles, opting for a low-profile developmental path.

But although Gu Hang was not staying, his nearly year-long journey to Holy Terra brought profound changes.

For those with sharp eyes, the authority of Prime Minister Zebert was increasingly imposing, further strengthened by acquiring the great general Gu Hang within his camp, suppressing the National Church with his left hand, while aligning the Sect of Mechanics, Tribunal, and Assassin Court with his right hand... In the political scene thirty years post the Sun King's demise, a new substantial figurehood was visibly rising. Given this trend, if no major disruptions occur, Prime Minister Zebert could firmly wield the Empire's power for a century.

Those with a far-sighted vision could see a powerful feudal lord from the Empire's borders bringing a profound impact on the Imperial political stage. Having traversed through warfare, Gu Hang had now crafted a solid foundation and gained centrally recognized legitimacy, reputable and substantial.

The Empire had many local feudal lords, but Gu Hang was the only one of his caliber.

An entire Cosmos Domain along with two Star Domains, completely under his control, nominally subject to centrally appointed officials, but in reality, entirely self-appointed... Has there been such a feudal lord in Imperial history?

There probably has. After all, the Empire is too vast in scale, and the system inevitably becomes rigid, where sometimes communication from certain places is severed, or critical navigation nodes face issues, isolating large regions from central communications.

However, firstly, the scale of directly controlled territory by the alliance is unprecedentedly large in history.

Secondly, the uniformity is extremely high.

Even the current powerful Cosmic Domain Chairs aren't necessarily able to control all their underling Star Domain Heads; even if they do, they more resemble 'Alliance Leaders' or 'Feudal Lords' rather than having established a unified regime, and mostly have to obey the Central Empire, at worst, they can only practice covert defiance but dare not act recklessly.

But Gu Hang is different. His independence and legitimacy were entirely affirmed after signing the "Alliance Plan", acquiring the title of High Lord Chair with his Spiderweb Domain Chair status. This implies that within the Alliance, disregarding the Empire's official stance is legitimate.

As long as Gu Hang doesn't openly revolt, as long as his High Lord Chair position is not abolished, as long as the "Alliance Plan" is not nullified by the Central Empire... the existence of this independent kingdom within the alliance remains legal and reasonable.

Currently, doing so is more beneficial than detrimental to the Central Empire. Originally, the Spiderweb Domain devastated by war was a significant reconstruction burden, a fiscal black hole. Now, it's entirely shifted to the Alliance, and the Central Empire can still receive two trillion in annual income from the Eastern Border. Although those two trillion are to gradually increase over ten years, the clear three hundred billion in income now is higher than the net income of a typical Cosmos Domain after tax costs and losses; ten years later, it's equivalent to the income of ten Cosmos Domains.

The Alliance's controlled area counts fourteen Star Domains, much larger than a typical Cosmos Domain. That's because the Spiderweb Domain itself is comparably large, having twelve Cosmos Domains, while a typical Cosmos Domain usually doesn't exceed ten, with smaller ones having even just six or seven. Adding the Meng River and Dragonhawk Star Domains north of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, there are fourteen in total.

This even amounts to the administrative division of two smaller Cosmos Domains.

Chapter 754: Wait and See (Part 2)

However, it must also be considered that the Spiderweb Domain is the main battlefield of the Iron Armor War and the Insect Swarm War, with the flames of war almost engulfing thousands of worlds across the entire domain, many places even suffering from the blow of Extinction Order weapons, rendering them unusable again and requiring a very large reconstruction investment.

From this perspective, it drew back a little.

Yet, quite a few believe that Gu Hang's claim of a future tax revenue of two trillion tax coins is purely a boast to grab power, an impossible promise.

The Alliance cannot complete such a high level of tax collection under the premise of maintaining governance, post-war reconstruction, and bearing tax losses.

Even if it can be maintained, what else can the Alliance do?

Probably nothing.

Thus, many central officials supporting the Alliance are not hoping to see the emergence of a separation regime. Rather, they believe Gu Hang is showcasing efficient administrative performance through the political form of the Alliance, providing the Central Empire with enormous tax revenue. If this form proves successful, with the territory of two normal domains, it can pay taxes equivalent to ten domains to the central government. In the long run, this achievement may not even be smaller than winning a war.

This is what many who pride themselves on being clever perceive: Terra remains the most important political stage, Gu Hang sacrifices the Alliance, leveraging the two trillion a year central financial revenue to gain greater power in the center.

Moreover, if such a form is promotable, can this virtuous statesman rightfully step onto the grand stage of Holy Terra? Might the Prime Minister want him to expand the "Alliance Plan" policies to other parts of the Empire, implementing political and economic reforms on a whole-Empire scale?

That is hard to say!

In that process, how will the relationship between Gu Hang and Zebert, between the Alliance and the Central Empire, develop?

There are many variables.

The astute aristocrats now subtly turn their gaze toward the Imperial's Eastern Frontier, an area portrayed as the 'Land of Hope' in literary works.

They are watching what achievements this very young High Lord, Great Mentor, Cosmos Domain Chair, and Marshal of the Star Realm Army, Gu Hang, can still make in the Eastern Border.

That place has become a focal point for politicians' attention.

Besides ordinary citizens and politicians, there is another group greatly interested in the Eastern Border.

They are even planning to set sail, heading to the East in groups.

This group is Empire merchants.

Unlike ordinary commerce, engaging in cross-galaxy trade in the star era is very costly.

While merchant ships and transport ships are not as expensive as warships, even ordinary powers find it difficult to gather such money. Moreover, interstellar trade is under Empire official control and requires permits.

Furthermore, with the threat of pirates, risks during Star Realm transitions, risks of getting lost, the huge demand for manpower and energy over long journeys... these all make survival very difficult for small merchants.

Thus the Imperial General Chamber of Commerce came into being, responsible for issuing permits, collecting commercial taxes on each permit, and directly managing large, specifically working Chamber of Commerce fleets.

The President of the Empire Commerce Guild is even qualified to run for the High Lord chair position, a top aristocrat.

Moreover, unlike the Psychic Cultivator's Association, which has long been declined and without a High Lord Chair position for a long time, the President frequently holds such positions, it's just that in recent decades they haven't.

The Empire Commerce Guild has a strong interest in the Eastern Border. Economically, they are much more sensitive than politicians.

The reconstruction in the Spiderweb Domain and the exceptionally developed manufacturing industry in the Alliance... these are business opportunities one can sense.

When Gu Hang and numerous Alliance officials were still in Holy Terra, many clerks of the Commerce Guild stationed in Terra, and even guild leaders personally came to discuss and provisionally sign a lot of trade contracts with officials sent by the Alliance Commerce Department accompanying Mr. Gu.

The reason for provisional signing is that merchants also have to examine policy risks. What if the "Alliance Plan" fails to be officially signed, wouldn't that be a loss?

But now, the dust has settled!

A large number of adventurous merchants have already set sail on merchant ships loaded with goods, headed eastward.

Some, who acted quickly and decisively, even urgently organized merchant fleets and traveled eastward alongside Gu Hang's party, returning home from Holy Terra.

...

No matter how all parties think, Gu Hang has indeed left Holy Terra.

In a grand farewell ceremony, Gu Hang smiled and waved to the crowd and cameras. The doors of the orbital elevator closed, and he, along with the accompanying large contingent, ascended to the grand starport of Holy Terra, then boarded his vehicle - the Emperor-class battleship 'Golden Pass'.

This time coming to Holy Terra, he brought the Golden Pass.

As for security, with Gu Hang himself present, unless he turned against the Central Empire, the journey would be very safe.

The Golden Pass, stationed in the starport long prepared for departure, with all personnel dispersed for recreation recalled, and all required supplies, long assembled on board for several weeks, was ready to set sail. At this moment, Gu Hang's Golden Pass slowly sailed out from the starport.

A fleet consisting of approximately twenty cruisers, destroyers, escort ships also sailed out following the Golden Pass. Although small in scale and quantity, it would not evoke any sense of crisis, yet it provided the right impression, sufficient in dignified form.

Commercial fleets journeying eastward alongside valued the sense of security as well. Although they all had escorting fleets, besides armed merchant ships, some powerful guilds had powerful warships for escort. However, in emergencies, where could they possibly find such strong escort ships? It was undoubtedly safer to travel with a battleship.

After leaving the port, the Golden Pass, accompanied by numerous escort ships, passed through the 'Triumph Gate'.

This was an honor befitting a hero.

Those following Chamber of Commerce ships certainly had to take a detour far away, only to rejoin later.

Standing on the bridge, Gu Hang gazed at the gradually diminishing Holy Terra on the big screen without moving for a long time.

This time, coming to Holy Terra, his goals were mostly achieved, albeit to varying extents.

In general, he was quite satisfied.

The major worries had been resolved, and he had also gained a High Lord seat, though it was merely honorary.

Leaving this time, he was satisfied. Moving forward, the Alliance should be able to obtain a substantial period of development time.

Back home to focus on farming.

As for Holy Terra, it is a temporary goodbye.

This will not be Gu Hang's last visit to Holy Terra.

He is bound to return.

Looking back, every visit to Holy Terra saw a change in his identity.

The first time he came, he was an unknown, rising to fame on the victory of the Iron Jaw War, gaining support to counter the threat of Iron Armor, receiving an honorary marshal title to pull up the Southern Line against Iron Armor. At that time, no one expected the Alliance to be the main force in the Iron Armor War, with the powerful people on Holy Terra merely considering him a sacrificial pawn, worthwhile only if he had some containment effect on the Southern Line.

They all underestimated you, yet you exceeded expectations.

The second time he came, riding on the victory of the Iron Armor War, he became an Empire hero.

He led the triumphant army through the Triumphal Arch, receiving cheers from the global population;

He secured a legitimate status for the Alliance;

He became the honorary Great Mentor of the Psychic Cultivator's Association, substantively controlling this now declining yet still influential organization.

He shone on the Empire's political stage, even becoming a High Lord.

So, on returning to the Alliance, after another wave of development and achievements, what then?

The third time coming to Holy Terra, what kind of identity will he have?

Gu Hang looks forward to this.

Chapter 755: The Empire Has to Pay Me Too

Lingze Star had never been this busy.

This is a planet located in the Spiderweb Domain, Tanggu Star Domain, to the west, serving as the capital of the Lingze Star District.

Before the war, this planet had a developed starport system, serving as the transportation hub connecting the Imperial Central Territory and the Spiderweb Domain.

During the war, it also became a key target, but fortunately, after a battle, the Empire managed to repel Iron Armor. From then on, this place remained under the Empire's control, even during the Iron Armor's counterattack phase. The ground and starport parts of the planet were always guarded by the Imperial Army, as Iron Armor's fleet bypassed this planet.

Later, when the Western Front Army reorganized, Lingze Star became an important logistics hub. Countless transport ships delivered various war supplies here, which were unloaded and then redistributed to different frontline battlefields by small transport fleets.

At this stage, the originally war-damaged Lingze Starport system not only underwent urgent repairs but also further expansion and construction.

With a good location and the planet's inherent hardware conditions as a transportation hub, after being taken over by the Alliance, it was chosen as the place for exchanging Empire Taxes between the Alliance and the Central Empire.

Previously, as a transportation hub and wartime logistics center, Lingze Star already saw numerous ships coming and going, with incredibly bustling routes.

But all past prosperity cannot compare with the level of prosperity it achieved after becoming the Empire Tax exchange site!

Although the "Alliance Plan" was signed less than a year ago, the work of exchanging Empire Taxes had already begun.

The agreed tax cycle between the Alliance and the Empire is once every two years. However, given the Alliance's current scale, controlling nearly ten thousand worlds, it's impossible to wait for tax officials to handle matters as in the past with a smaller scope of control.

The "Alliance Plan" stipulates that the Alliance is to concentrate the taxes of fourteen star domains together for payment. This task cannot be started closer to the tax period, or the tax work will certainly not be completed.

In fact, even before the "Alliance Plan" was signed, the Alliance had a special work group for Empire Tax stationed on Lingze Star, starting to work.

This work group is specially set under the Alliance Ministry of Finance and reports to both the Alliance Premier and Finance Minister. It is a high-level work group with substantial authority.

The responsibility is also significant.

It’s fully in charge of the Alliance’s Empire Tax collection work.

A large number of transport ships, including Chamber of Commerce Fleets within the Alliance, have been reassigned for the work group’s use.

The Alliance’s official transport ships can be directly mobilized by them; those of the Chamber of Commerce require payment and operate in the form of transporting orders undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce Fleet.

Currently, the head of the work group, Director Guo Chenyu, is accompanying Gu Hang, who is on his return journey and has made a detour to Lingze Star, inspecting the tax situation.

It has been seven months since Gu Hang left Holy Terra.

Tax work is certainly very important, such that Gu Hang needed to make a stop to check it while returning to the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

"...Our tax work is progressing relatively smoothly. The accumulated materials transported from various parts of the Star Domain have reached 432.7 billion tax coins, with more ships continuously arriving for material transport, stockpiling on Lingze Star."

"A batch of ships from the Central Empire is expected to arrive in three months to transport away 160 billion tax coins of materials. Subsequently, an estimated batch will come every month, taking eight months to transport all remaining 640 billion tax coins of materials, marking the completion of the Alliance's initial tax work."

According to the "Alliance Plan," the initial year's tax amount for the Alliance is 300 billion, and the second year's is 500 billion. The first tax payment totals 800 billion.

Then, in the third year, it will increase to 800 billion, and in the fourth year to 1 trillion... and so forth, nonlinear growth. Each year's growth amount results from arguments between Alliance officials and officials from the Imperial Taxation Department, but ultimately by the tenth year, it will grow to 2.1 trillion, maintaining this number henceforth.

Gu Hang nodded slightly, quickly browsing through the documents with his eyes, while Spiritual Energy enveloped the vast starport system of Lingze Star, swiftly verifying if the contents of the documents matched the actual situation.

There are bound to be discrepancies.

But Gu Hang is not someone who excessively nitpicks.

Such a large-scale operation of material transfer and statistics naturally comes with some errors.

Giving a few pointers and gentle reminders is necessary; however, imposing severe penalties is not needed.

No one is flawless.

As long as there are no major issues.

Subsequently, Gu Hang inquired about the status of the second batch of Empire Taxes and the large-scale infrastructure development undertaken on Lingze Star for the Empire Tax.

Guo Chenyu answered each inquiry confidently, clearly having a firm grasp of the situation.

The first batch of tax coins requires only 300 billion, but currently, more than 400 billion worth of materials have been stockpiled on Lingze Star. The surplus is obviously in preparation for the next tax payment.

In reality, the ships from the Central Empire will also not stop transporting after the first batch of 800 billion tax coins are delivered. Imperial ships will run a batch each month, possibly even shorter cycles in the future, transporting the total of 1.7 trillion tax coins for the second period during the third and fourth years back to the Imperial Central Territory.

Chapter 755: The Empire Still Owes Me Money_2

By analogy,

when stability reaches 2.1 trillion in the future, it will be the same.

Transporting such a huge amount of material at once, even for the Central Empire, makes it difficult to immediately allocate that many ships.

It can only be done batch by batch, with a new batch of ships being dispatched either every month or even every week.

Of course, there are costs to this, and the Empire still needs to bear the transportation costs from Lingze Star to the Central Empire.

However, these costs are completely controllable.

Unlike in a typical Cosmos Domain, where one has to haggle with local governments, including both Star Domain and Space Domain levels, about how much remains and how much is taken. Although this is quota-based, a small oversight might lead to situations where your 40% is 100 billion while my 30% is 150 billion. Local governments have every incentive to use false reporting, withholding, or rational calculations of losses... a series of tactics to pull and tug with the Imperial Taxation Department.

All require negotiation, compromise, threats, and, if necessary, the use of martial force.

All are costs.

Not to mention there are many trivial matters, like who bears the cost of tax transportation between Star Domains; who bears the cost of escorting in between; and who holds responsibility for things like food spoilage and mishandling during transport...

With the Alliance, none of these need to be considered.

Quota, set points.

Tax officials come to tally the amounts, and once the counting is done, the fleet comes to transport the goods, straightforward and clear.

However, there are also issues; the infrastructure of Lingze Star has little problem handling the taxes for these two years.

But in the future, in the third and fourth phases, the tax amount that the Alliance will need to pay will surge to over a trillion.

At that extent, Lingze Star's infrastructure will start to struggle.

In Guo Chenyu's plan, a new Starport named 'Tax Port' is being constructed on Lingze Star. Simultaneously, a massive tax storage Space City on the surface is also under construction. The Space Storage City, ground storage city, and Tax Port will be interconnected by cargo space elevators for direct rapid transport of goods. There will also be less expensive fixed ship orbits for larger-scale goods transport.

Once completed, Lingze Star's cargo throughput will be three times what it is now, fully shouldering the future tax cargo throughput for the Alliance.

It will even have surplus capacity to offer for the Empire Commerce Guild's trade fleets for bulk trades with the Alliance here.

It is worth mentioning that this 'Tax Port System' carries a very steep overall cost. Divided into four phases, it will take a total of eight years to complete, with a portion becoming operational at the end of each phase. The total cost is projected to reach 70 billion tax coins, equivalent to the cost of a battleship.

This money, however, doesn't come from the Alliance.

When the Alliance's officials discussed the many execution details of the "Alliance Plan" with officials from the Department of Taxation in Holy Terra, this matter was mentioned.

After intensive discussions, the Alliance officials bargained for one benefit: the construction funds for the Tax Port on Lingze Star would be provided by the Imperial Taxation Department.

The Department of Taxation was naturally not going to allocate funds directly, nor were they willing to spend money to directly hire construction teams to do the work on Lingze Star.

That's not a problem; the Alliance can do it as long as they pay; if unwilling to pay, then it can be deducted from the taxes.

The Taxation Department agreed.

After all, this too is a necessary investment and construction for the smooth conduct of tax operations.

Moreover, even though they are spending the money, calculating it as deductions reduces the pressure a lot.

And speaking of deductions, the Alliance's tax deduction expenditures are not limited to the construction of the Tax Port.

billion is not a small amount, but it really is not crucial.

The crucial point is the war expenses during the Iron Armor War and the Insect Swarm War.

Doesn't the Central Empire need to reimburse those?

This was a promise given during the formation of the Western Front Army, and it is also an imperial political tradition.

Within the Empire, local rulers have the responsibility to ensure peace and safeguard their territories. Planetary Governors should ensure their worlds are stable, and the Star Sector and Cosmos Domain governments also have the responsibility to ensure the security of their respective jurisdictions.

This is also the fundamental reason the Empire leaves a portion of the Imperial Tax for Star Domain and Cosmos Domain governments.

Without money, how is one supposed to build and fight?

However, this portion of responsibilities mainly remains limited to defending the homeland.

For example, the safety within a planet is addressed by the Planetary Governor; if the Planetary Governor fails to resolve the issue, then they are relieved and shot if necessary, and then the Star Sector seeks intervention from the Star Domain Government to mobilize troops from other planets for support, or the Star Domain Government directly intervenes. Naturally, the troops coming from other planets to support cannot fight for free; the Star Domain Government needs to foot the bill.

Problems inside the Star Domain are solved by the 30% Imperial Tax the Star Domain Government receives; if that doesn't suffice, they seek help from the Cosmic Domain Chair, and the 'Alliance Leader' will either intervene personally or convene troops from other Star Domains to resolve the issue. This portion of funds will then be provided by the Cosmos Domain Government, which also retains 30% of the Imperial Tax.

By analogy, when the Cosmos Domain Government itself cannot resolve the issue, or when the Empire advocates for an imperial-level war in a particular direction, then Holy Terra will mobilize core troops from the Sun Zhou Domain or summon troops from other Cosmos Domains to participate in the war. Naturally, the central government will fund these expenses.

The Iron Armor War was undoubtedly a trans-cosmos domain war, requiring significant troop mobilization from other regions, and the Spiderweb Domain itself was completely incapable of resolving the issue internally.

The Alliance's responsiveness to the Empire's call was a loyalty behavior beyond reproach. The Iron Armor War was entirely outside the Alliance's obligation scope, and naturally, it should be funded by the Central Empire.

Of course, due to the emergency of the situation, even if the Central Empire had funds, it was challenging to distribute resources to all the places needing deployment in a short time.

Moreover, the Central Empire often does not have that much money.

This also results in the supporting troops often needing to prepare their own provisions.

The Northern Line Army and Southern Line Army in the Iron Armor War were in this situation.

Other regional troops participating in the war had some political demands on one hand, and on the other hand, the combat expenses were to be reimbursed by the central government.

If they couldn't be paid afterward, then tax coins would be provided to offset taxes.

This is the usual practice.

And the Alliance's expenditure on war was no small amount.

The cost of forming armies need not be borne by the Central Empire, but all the shells consumed, the warriors sacrificed, destroyed ground forces equipment, naval ships, fuel consumption... all these need to be accounted for, right?

The wear and tear on equipment, the rewards for victory, the distribution of war allowances... all needs to be accounted for, right?

Moreover, when the war broke out, and the Southern Line Army was still fighting in the Menghe Star Domain, Holy Terra clearly promised the Alliance to quickly move north and act as cannon fodder to attract the Iron Armor's attention.

Clearly stipulated, political precedents, war-time promises... adding all these together made it impossible for Holy Terra to renege.

This money should logically be expended by the Military Affairs Department.

But the Military Affairs Department obviously does not have that much money.

Conservative estimates put the Iron Armor War's demand for over a million trillion tax coin-worth in resources from the Empire. Among these, the establishment of the Western Front Army twice was almost entirely funded directly by Holy Terra, accounting for fifty trillion by itself.

The Empire didn't pay for the North Line and South Line, but calculated down, another fifty trillion was involved.

On the side of the Alliance, by calculations, the total amount comes to sixteen trillion in expenditures.

This is after being slashed over and over by the Military Affairs Department. The victory rewards were cut significantly, and unlike the North Line, the Southern Line Alliance's forces didn't lose many men or ships, nor much ground forces, requiring substantial compensation and condolence payments.

Even with these calculated figures, the Central Empire finds it hard to accept.

Sixteen trillion, what does that mean?

The Alliance's total tax revenue, increasing from 300 billion to 2.1 trillion, over ten years, totals only 12.7 trillion!

The implication is, after signing the "Alliance Plan" and bestowing you with Gu Hang High Lord, will my Holy Terra still end up giving you 3.3 trillion?

Chapter 756: Eyeing the Pot While Eating from the Bowl

According to the calculations, within ten years, the Central Empire not only will not receive taxes from the Alliance but will instead have to pay 3.3 trillion to the Alliance?

That is absolutely impossible.

Whether the Empire is willing to pay or not is beside the point; they simply cannot come up with that amount of money.

On the contrary, the Department of Taxation, as well as various Imperial departments that require funding from the Department of Taxation, are all eagerly awaiting the substantial taxes paid by the Alliance to fill their financial holes.

The Central Empire's total annual tax revenue is roughly between fifteen to twenty trillion - this is after deducting what is left for various regions and taking 40% of the total taxes collected from all regions, minus substantial taxation costs, resulting in net income.

This is quite a large figure, but the Empire is simply too vast, with too many expenditures. No matter how much revenue, there's never enough. There are holes to patch everywhere, wars to fight everywhere.

They cannot afford to pay the Alliance, and they can't even do without the Alliance's money.

However, this war expenditure that should be paid to the Alliance is clearly laid out there, and it can't be dismissed just because they choose not to acknowledge it.

This issue was also a crucial point repeatedly negotiated by Alliance officials on Holy Terra with the Central Empire before signing the "Alliance Plan."

Initially, the price calculated by the Alliance differed from that calculated by the Imperial Military Department.

The Alliance calculated roughly 29 trillion, emphasizing bonuses for the Alliance's military achievements and combat results, along with full battle allowances. The Military Department did not acknowledge this amount.

The first version calculated by the Military Department was only 21 trillion.

After much haggling, Galaraldo even personally approached Gu Hang, smiling bitterly, asking Gu Hang not to push too hard, as 29 trillion was simply impossible.

No matter how much he sided with the Alliance, that figure was too exaggerated to agree to.

If he dared to nod in agreement, he would immediately end his tenure as the Premier of the Military Affairs Department.

But even so, Galaraldo was urgently called by Prime Minister Qi Bodu and was scolded, being told that 21 trillion was also unacceptable, as it was a price the Empire couldn't afford.

A crestfallen Galaraldo could only return to negotiate with Gu Hang.

Gu Hang then told Galaraldo something, which sent Galaraldo back:

"Let's not discuss this issue directly between us. You should understand that I cannot abandon the Alliance's earned interests, nor do I want to make it difficult for you to be caught in the middle, and I certainly don't want this issue to affect our relationship. Since the Prime Minister insists on having you negotiate, then discuss it with the Alliance's officials."

Galaraldo accepted this reasoning and, from then on, did not approach Gu Hang again. Even if he did, it wasn't to discuss this issue but to talk about other matters.

After the Military Department's officials racked their brains calculating algorithms, with Prime Minister Qi Bodu personally paying attention, the finally agreed amount reached the figure of 16 trillion.

Honestly, the Empire did not want to pay this amount either.

But they had no choice but to pay.

The political conventions stood there; defaulting on this payment to the Alliance would be simple, but what about other domains and star domains? In the future, when the Empire recruits armies from other places to cross domains for warfare, those local armies will have to weigh things carefully.

If they fight too well or the sacrifices are too great, would the Central Empire renege on paying?

In comparison, this loss of reputation is substantial, potentially directly affecting the Central Empire's legitimacy.

In the end, the arranged result was that in the first term, i.e., the first two years, the Imperial Tax from the Alliance was to be handed over as usual.

In the second term, i.e., the third and fourth years, out of the total 1.7 trillion in taxes, only one trillion needed to be paid.

After that, the Alliance would need only to remit one trillion in tax currency every two years as the Imperial Tax. The remaining portion would be deducted as war expenses paid by the Central Empire.

Until the 16 trillion in war expenses was fully deducted, the Alliance would resume normal Imperial Tax levels.

All in all, this deduction would take about 15 years!

This means, for roughly 15 years, the Alliance would only need to pay five hundred billion in tax currency annually.

Such help to the Alliance is certainly not as high as directly giving these 16 trillion to the Alliance, allowing them to pay taxes normally.

After all, if they had the 16 trillion in cash directly on hand, the Alliance could do a great many things. Leaving some for taxes, the bulk could be invested. In that way, the Alliance's development speed would significantly increase.

Yet achieving such a result was already quite good.

After all, toward the end, even Prime Minister Qi Bodu personally intervened, repeatedly summoning Gu Hang and applying pressure, even resorting to the brink of a fallout.

Gu Hang had no choice but to agree.

As a whole, during the fifteen years before the 16 trillion in war expenses were fully deducted, the Alliance's tax pressure would be greatly reduced.

As the Alliance Premier, Osenia, upon hearing this news, found her hair had grown a few more strands.

She breathed a huge sigh of relief.

...

After inspecting Lingze Star, confirming the smooth progress of the Alliance's first-term tax work, and verifying that Lingze Star's key project, which is the construction of the Tax Port, was advancing as expected and could be completed on time and with quality, Gu Hang did not stay long on Lingze Star and continued his journey.

His ultimate goal was to return to the Dragonhawk Star Domain, the place where he started.

The Alliance's capital remains Rage Owl Star, with the Dragonhawk Star Domain still being the most core area of the Alliance.

Previously, someone had suggested whether the Alliance's ruling center should be moved a bit north?

After all, the Alliance's ruling area now covers the entire Spiderweb Domain. The highest position Gu Hang held was granted by the Spiderweb Domain Chair as High Lordship.

It was indeed somewhat inappropriate to keep the Alliance Central Government in the Dragonhawk Star Domain. Among the fourteen star domains under the Alliance's control, the Dragonhawk Star Domain is at the southernmost end. It is a bit far from the Spiderweb Domain, especially the northern parts of the domain, making governance difficult.

However, Gu Hang still rejected such notions.

Firstly, the Dragonhawk Star Domain has been the Alliance's headquarters for decades, with Gu Hang having invested heavily in construction resources, whether in funds or gift points, largely concentrating there. The productivity of just the Dragonhawk Star Domain is nearly comparable to the other thirteen combined.

Of course, this would change in years to come as the Spiderweb Domain gradually recovers.

Moving isn't quite suitable.

Moreover, who says the Dragonhawk Cosmos isn't suitable as the core?

Gu Hang's vision is always directed outward.

The Spiderweb Domain in the bowl isn't fully consumed; he is already eyeing what's in the pot.

And in that pot, fragrant and enticing, is the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Chapter 757: Thoughts on the Eastern Cosmos Domain

Gu Hang certainly has aspirations for the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

The Eastern Cosmos Domain isn't particularly large, certainly not as large as the 12 Star Domains of the Spiderweb Domain.

It has only 9 Star Domains.

And, these Star Domains themselves aren't particularly large either.

Overall, the Eastern Cosmos Domain is considered a medium-sized, or even moderately small-sized, Cosmos Domain.

Secondly, the Eastern Cosmos Domain isn't particularly wealthy.

The population isn't large, much like the territory, it's considered moderately small.

When the population is low, production capacity generally doesn't rise.

There are exceptions, but not many.

Nevertheless, it is still an entire Cosmos Domain, with a population exceeding five trillion, totaling over 3,500 worlds.

Although two of the Star Domains are already in Gu Hang's hands, if the remaining seven can also be acquired, connecting the Eastern Cosmos Domain and the Spiderweb Domain, then the Alliance's influence across the entire Eastern Border would be more stable.

Additionally, the Alliance has a natural advantage in seeking the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

The core territory of the Alliance is right within the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Of course, the aspiration to acquire the Eastern Cosmos Domain is certainly not to be completed through warfare.

With the Alliance's current political landscape throughout the Empire, armed expansion is nearly impossible.

However, besides armed expansion, there are naturally other routes.

Political, economic, cultural, all of these paths are viable.

This is the reason Gu Hang did not move the Alliance Central Government from the Dragonhawk Star Domain to go north.

As the economic conditions of the Dragonhawk Star Domain become increasingly developed, when it moves south to engage in trade with the many other Star Domains of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, or even with Wuji Star at the center of the Cosmos Domain, their economic situations get intertwined.

This is not something that can be completed overnight. But fortunately, the Alliance has been advancing this work for many years.

From the south of the Spiderweb Domain, the west side of the Gu Totem Sector can move towards the Artisan Star Domain; from Heigu Ridge it can go to the Eagle Silk Starfield; from the Border Horse Sector it can enter the East Adjoining Starfield... From the south of Dragonhawk, it can fully connect to the heart of the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

The Alliance has also constructed numerous shipping routes in these three Star Sectors. As the productivity of the Dragonhawk Star Domain becomes increasingly prosperous, the scale of trade with the southern heart of the Eastern Cosmos Domain also becomes larger and larger.

This nourishes a large group of interest groups living on single transactions.

The Alliance's business with the southern part of the Eastern Cosmos Domain is relatively fair. As long as it's not that kind of exploitative economic colonial trade, normal trade overall benefits both sides.

These groups, profiting greatly from economic trade with the Alliance, begin to emerge in their respective governments, or are simply the largest faction within the government conducting such business.

Their relationship with the Alliance is naturally quite good.

Moreover, the political environment of the Eastern Cosmos Domain is also very friendly to the Alliance. The Chair of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, Mr. Zuo Zhaofeng, isn't a feudal lord who particularly focuses on local territory conditions but is more like a politician intoxicated by power. For him, becoming the Cosmos Domain Chair is a step forward in his political career, and he never treats the domain land as his own; the development situation of the domain is 'political achievement' to him, a tool for career advancement and wealth accumulation, rather than his own possession.

The difference between these two mentalities inevitably leads to significant differences in strategy decisions.

Furthermore, although Zuo Zhaofeng and Gu Hang have never met in person, their relationship is not bad; it can even be considered a political alliance. Zuo Zhaofeng's position as the Eastern Cosmos Domain Chair was facilitated by Galaraldo, and Gu Hang undoubtedly has a very strong relationship with Galaraldo. Thus, the two are naturally considered 'family'.

During the Iron Armor War, the Eastern Cosmos Domain provided a lot of assistance. In the Southern Line Corps, the Alliance is undoubtedly the main force. Yet, aside from the Alliance, the Eastern Cosmos Domain also sent at least three hundred ships and over fifty million ground troops to participate in the war.

While many of these ships are only transport ships, among the remaining warships, there are no giant ships of a battle cruiser level or higher, with the highest only being cruisers.

Those army troops are indeed all Star Realm Army, but an entire Cosmos Domain fighting for over a decade, accumulating only fifty million troops participating, truly doesn't count as exerting effort.

However, materials were indeed transported quite abundantly. Various war materials accumulated from the seven Star Domains of the Eastern Cosmos Domain were transported in value exceeding a trillion tax coins.

And these things were thanks to Zuo Zhaofeng's support.

Otherwise, at the beginning of the Iron Armor War, the battlefield mainly concentrated on the reclamation territory of the Spiderweb Domain; the Eastern Cosmos Domain wasn't like the Star Devouring Cosmos Domain being directly threatened by the military. Even if troubled, the north still has the Alliance-controlled Dragonhawk and Meng River Star Domains standing, which do not pose a threat to the many southern Star Domains. Many local feudal lords indeed lack sufficient motivation to assist the war.

Only politicians like Zuo Zhaofeng have made significant contributions after personally communicating with Galaraldo for the sake of their faction's future.

Of course, Zuo Zhaofeng gained benefits from it. The deployment of troops and materials by the Eastern Cosmos Domain demands compensation from the Central Empire, accumulating a total of several trillion roughly. After all, the battle was won, everyone shared a bit; each contributed personnel and effort, inside and out, still earned some. Moreover, waging war for the nation also yields political benefits. Those commanders participating in the war, rank promotions, elevation of status in the Star Domain or Cosmos Domain Government, can exert pressure on local forces that contributed little or not at all, further reaping some local benefits.

Having gained benefits, the appreciation for the Alliance naturally heightens: after all, they led us to victory! Without much cost, there are no grievances.

Zuo Zhaofeng himself, as the arbitrator distributing the benefits dispatched by the Empire, further solidifies his position.

Meanwhile, he also obtained some promises.

The victory of the Iron Armor War has a slight relation to him but is not substantial; he cannot, like Gu Hang, leverage this victory to gain supreme honor; he can only gain a small share, insufficient for him to further advance past the position of the Spiderweb Domain Chair.

However, Galaraldo did say, work for some more years, perform well, achieve more results, and he will have a place on Holy Terra.

The move from Cosmos Domain Chair directly to High Lord is not impossible; after all, Gu Hang succeeded in doing so? But overall, the gap between the two is still substantial. Zuo Zhaofeng merely seeks a deputy prime minister position.

He still has many opportunities.

Where does this opportunity lie? Of course, it needs good management of the Eastern Cosmos Domain's economic and security conditions.

And these require contact with the Alliance.

Chapter 758: Alliance Values

Chairman Zuo Zhaofeng and the Alliance have forged strong political alliances, coupled with the robust economic strength of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, creating many communities of shared interests. This has become a core element for the Alliance to build influence in the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Simultaneously, it has also established favorable conditions for the Alliance to carry out cultural promotion in the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

With frequent economic and political exchanges, various high-end consumer goods produced by the Alliance have entered the market in the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Especially some luxury goods produced by the Alliance.

The industrial capability of the Dragonhawk Star Domain is highly developed in many aspects, including agriculture. Some planets reclaimed from the Green Skins have relatively good environments and vast fertile lands. After clearing out the Green Skins, the immigrant population is sparse, often allowing for large-scale farming and agriculture. The massive production of food not only serves as military supplies and can be transported to industrial planets as food, but also has a large surplus that can be used to pay taxes.

However, using primary food to pay taxes is quite a loss, with not much money gained. Instead, processing primary agricultural products into high-quality food with various flavors improves the situation significantly; Furthermore, when agricultural products have a surplus, luxury ancient brewing can take place.

The wines and craft cocktails produced in this way far exceed industrial products in terms of taste.

While common civilians and ordinary soldiers may find them unaffordable, the middle class and above, and especially the wealthy elites, have no such issues.

The value of these items makes them less useful for paying Imperial Tax. The pricing of luxury goods is not highly valued in Imperial Tax. But exporting them to the elites in the Eastern Cosmos Domain is a very good choice.

Luxurious brand cars, hovercraft built by a developed vehicle manufacturing industry; custom-made luxurious interstellar cruise ships from the shipbuilding industry; In the textile industry, crafted by artisans with expensive leather developed from breeding industries, surplus fine gold materials fashioned into clothing and accessories... These items have become hugely popular in the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

And the reason for their popularity, besides their good quality and scarcity, is largely due to cultural influence.

The Alliance’s propaganda department spares no effort in promoting Alliance values in various locations across the Eastern Cosmos Domain. The most important method is through various literary and artistic works.

Across the Empire, the recognition of Holy Terra, the Human Ancestral Star, is unparalleled. Things popular on Holy Terra easily cause substantial influence elsewhere.

Some commodities, lifestyles, fashion pursuits, etc., may be slower to propagate. After all, even if one wants to pursue them, it's necessary to have the means. However, popular literary works are much easier to replicate.

A series of films about the Iron Armor War, praising Gu Hang and the Alliance lifestyle, are popular on Holy Terra and are even more successful elsewhere.

Within these films, drinks, cigarettes, clothing, equipment, decor styles, luxury brands... Everything is deliberately embedded with Alliance products during production.

It's not hard advertising, but when Mr. Gu reaches for that luxurious brand cigarette while contemplating, why not try one too?

Even though Gu Hang doesn't actually smoke, it doesn't prevent him from endorsing the brand.

This is, after all, the favorite cigarette brand of a true Empire hero, High Lord of Empire!

Moreover, amid developed agricultural production, its quality is indeed quite high.

Using similar methods, the Alliance's products naturally have an advantage in opening markets.

All these consumer goods, all these literary works, collectively create a cultural influence across all strata in the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

With additional economic exchanges and strengthened political friendships... These three forces combined are called 'Alliance values'.

These values already have influence on Holy Terra. On Holy Terra, the capital citizens have seen it all. Yet, they still embrace the Alliance's approach, even more so than in the frontier Eastern Cosmos Domain.

The effect is exceptionally good.

Of course, the effect brought by the transmission of 'Alliance values' cannot be as direct as military measures.

It's a gradual and silent process.

Moreover, no matter how much values are transmitted, it is impossible to directly transform the entire Eastern Cosmos Domain into the Alliance.

But as long as this peaceful transformation process continues and the Alliance maintains its strength, the future outcome will be quite promising.

It doesn't need to turn the Eastern Cosmos Domain into a replica of the Alliance.

Sometimes direct rule may not be as effective as indirect 'colonialism'.

The advantage of direct rule lies in the ability to fully mobilize the manpower and resources in the ruled area, guiding its construction in the desired direction.

But similarly, if direct rule is established, the Alliance will have to bear a huge political and fiscal burden, just like with the Spiderweb Domain.

Indirect influence lacks the ability to mobilize and construct, but also doesn't carry such significant burdens. With increasingly frequent economic exchanges, although not outright economic exploitation, the Alliance can still earn a great deal of money. The Eastern Cosmos Domain will become a dumping ground and raw material source for the Alliance.

With enough money, more surplus funds can be invested in the Alliance's own development, used to pay taxes, and support the military...

And when the Eastern Cosmos Domain is filled with the Alliance's allies, with a series of economic agreements signed or in the process of being signed, then signing a series of military mutual assistance agreements will naturally follow.

During wartime, the Eastern Cosmos Domain will easily side with the Alliance.

As long as it's not against the Central Empire.

Yet even this may not be inevitable.

If the connections between the two sides deepen to a certain degree, perhaps one day, even if the Alliance falls out with the Central Empire, the Eastern Cosmos Domain might stand by them?

At least, when the Alliance Army advances south, it won't face particularly strong resistance.

Just as during the Iron Armor War, when the Iron Armor Battle Group launched from the Princess Star Domain, the Empire's troops within the Spiderweb Domain almost shattered upon contact. This was due to the inherent disparity in strength, but it was also a result of the Iron Armor Group's persistent influence over hundreds of years, making many forces within the Spiderweb Domain reluctant to fight Iron Armor to the death.

Now, the Alliance holds greater mass and advantages than the Iron Armor, achieving similar outcomes is not difficult.

Regardless, the core of expanding influence outward remains the necessity of being strong enough.

You have to be able to stand on your own before forging ahead.

The continuous development of the Alliance is crucial. Without maintaining strong economic, political, and military capabilities, everything is futile.

When Gu Hang returned to the Dragonhawk Star Domain, back to his old base, Rage Owl Star, the first thing he witnessed was Alliance Premier Osenia leading numerous high-ranking members of the Alliance Government in a government work report for the Alliance Leader who had been away for nearly three years.

Chapter 759: Is the Alliance Going Bankrupt?

Gu Hang looked around the large conference room, noting that the attendees were numerous and complete, a rare occurrence indeed.

The Alliance now has a very expansive territory, and its high-ranking officials bear significant responsibilities. Even central officials often have to travel to specific locations due to the different tasks they are in charge of.

On Rage Owl Star, such a full gathering is actually uncommon.

The last occurrence of such an event... seems like it has never happened before.

For within the Alliance, only Gu Hang has enough prestige to summon a complete assembly of all department heads from the Alliance Government for a meeting.

The reason for not holding such meetings in the past is that after the Iron Armor War began, Gu Hang personally led the troops into battle.

Before the war, the Alliance was not as large as it is now.

The war lasted for a long time, during which Gu Hang barely found time to return for similar gatherings, nor was it feasible to convene so many people during the war, as it was difficult for everyone to travel and prone to errors.

After the war, Gu Hang went to Holy Terra.

Since the Alliance expanded to fourteen Star Domains, there has truly been no opportunity to hold such a comprehensive assembly.

Luckily, Gu Hang's [Political Commissar] training has never been neglected, ensuring key positions within the Alliance are at least filled with loyal personnel, regardless of their ability. This guarantees that whether they are political officers or administrative officers, no ideological issues will arise, allowing the principles and vision of the Alliance to be effectively implemented.

Without this, the Alliance's highly centralized and bureaucratically dependent system could never sustain such a large scale without collapsing due to corruption and institutional rigidity.

Many other imperial forces have secretly planted spies within the Alliance, trying to figure out how to maintain such large-scale effective centralized governance. However, the Alliance's system is straightforward and doesn't require much research, yet no one can emulate it.

Forget about managing fourteen Star Domains, thousands of worlds, trillions of people with a unified, semi-planned centralized system; for ordinary forces, even applying a similar system on a single planet wouldn't resolve the sharply rising governance costs with increased ruling scale.

This is Gu Hang's golden touch, impossible to replicate.

It is precisely because of this set of things that Gu Hang, despite not holding assembly for many years, or even absent from his ruling center during a three-year journey to Holy Terra, the Alliance still functioned without problems.

Ultimately, meetings of this nature must still be held.

Although he can view much information from the system panel, there is still much he cannot see and must rely on the Alliance's bureaucratic system to report to him to understand clearly.

Similarly, he also needs a comprehensive assembly like this to effectively convey his intentions.

Osenia, as the Alliance Premier, started the meeting.

In the first part, she provided an overview of the current status of the Alliance.

Currently, the Alliance governs 14 Star Domains, with 577 Star Sector-level administrative divisions, totaling 7109 worlds.

The total population lacks precise statistics, only estimated to be approximately 11.8 trillion.

Across all 14 Star Domains, last year's total output is estimated at 16.1 trillion.

Among them, the core territory of the Alliance, the Dragonhawk Star Domain, holds the largest share. Just the output of the Dragonhawk Star Domain alone reached 5.2 trillion, accounting for 32.5%. When considering residents' consumption, development investment, Star Domain military expenses... including all expenditures, the total is 3.9 trillion. In the Dragonhawk Star Domain, the Alliance's surplus is 1.3 trillion.

Apart from this, the strongest is the Alfonso Star Domain. Its annual total output reached 1.4 trillion. The main contributor to raising the Star Domain's total output is Founding World–Alamita. Unfortunately, two other Founding Worlds were destroyed; otherwise, even after experiencing warfare, as long as they were largely preserved, the entire Alfonso Star Domain's output could at least reach three trillion.

Not as good as the Dragonhawk Star Domain but still quite a significant assistance.

Regrettably...

Following that are the Menghe Star Domain and the Proudclaw Cosmos Domain.

These two Star Domains, after the last war, suffered relatively minor disasters.

Menghe is the smallest, with only the northern Star Sectors engaged in large-scale battles, and during the war served as the Alliance's rear stronghold. The Alliance invested considerable resources in the

Menghe Star Domain, boosting its overall development considerably. Menghe people benefited from adversity.

Although Proudclaw Cosmos was entirely engaged in combat, the war between the Alliance and the Fury Flame Battle Group was primarily fought in the Star Sea, with few instances of total planetary ecological and population destruction, preserving the Star Domain's vitality significantly. Furthermore, in the war's later stages, Proudclaw Cosmos essentially became the rear, and once spared from insect infestations, recovery was rapid.

These four Star Domains represent the Alliance's fiscal profit Star Domains.

The Imperial Tax is now unified and calculated by the Alliance, and when calculating fiscal surplus, the Alliance Government excludes taxes, focusing solely on how much it earns from individual planets/Star Sectors/Star Domains.

From these four Star Domains, the Alliance's annual fiscal surplus can reach 1.55 trillion.

Among the remaining ten Star Domains, aside from the Fox Moon Star Domain, which similarly wasn't significantly involved in the war and can essentially break-even, the other nine are losing.

The nine deficit Star Domains, combined, total a loss of 1.27 trillion.

Adding the first year's mandatory 300 billion empire tax, plus the Alliance's military expenditure, and some special fiscal projects of the Alliance Central Government... the Alliance is nearly bankrupt.

Who would have thought that the splendid and self-proclaimed earthly paradise Alliance nearly drove itself to bankruptcy?

This is Osenia's most burdensome phase.

The overall fiscal deficit is significant, approximately two hundred billion.

Fortunately, in earlier years there was some surplus, and by cutting military readiness from the now non-combat military, expenditures are reduced on one hand, while the equipment from disarmament can be used to offset taxes on the other.

This is quite a substantial amount.

Only in this way could the most challenging year be weathered through.

Those nine deficit Star Domains essentially comprise the entirety of Spiderweb Domain.

Gu Hang captured Spiderweb Domain, which indeed became a massive fiscal burden; from this perspective, this is correct.

Otherwise, Dragonhawk Star Domain alone would have an annual fiscal surplus of 1.3 trillion, and without Spiderweb Domain, the Alliance's Imperial Tax wouldn't be so high, greatly easing pressure.

However, Gu Hang does not regret.

Osenia also explained the reasons for the deficits in those nine Star Domains.

The most important reason is that the war tore those nine Star Domains into shreds.

Chapter 760: Finance and Development

The Spiderweb Domain has truly suffered the anguish of war, its entire realm, nearly every Star Domain has been afflicted with the calamities of war.

And if any disaster is more grievous than war, it is the subsequent insect swarm disaster.

The Alliance fought rather well on the Southern Line; Proudclaw Cosmos didn't face much trouble and soon recovered.

The Thistle Muster Star Field, which was later taken over by the Alliance, was not much involved in warfare, but the subsequent insect infestation issue was significant, yet it was fortunately controlled in the early stages. Now, although it's still losing money, the population remains fairly large, and the losses are minimal, to the point where profit can soon be turned.

For other Star Domains, however, problems were immense. The Empire and Iron Armor Army repeatedly contested the three Star Domains on the West Line; the four Star Domains on the North Line were not fought as fiercely as the West Line, but the insect swarm disaster was even more severe due to strategic errors on the North Line.

The worst of all is, of course, the Princess Star Domain.

This is evident from the population.

Dragonhawk Star Domain has 1.2 trillion people, Menghe Star Domain has 1 trillion people — both are considered normal population scales for an ordinary Star Domain. The twelve Star Domains in the Spiderweb Domain should have roughly similar scales.

Even more.

For example, Princess Star Domain before the war should logically have over 3 trillion population; Alfonso Space Domain should also have 2 trillion. The others should typically have over 1 trillion population.

But in reality, except for Alfonso Star Domain, which naturally had more people, all other Star Domains now have less than 1 trillion population. Even Alfonso Space Domain has only 1.4 trillion.

The most devastated Princess Star Domain, which should have been the essence of the Spiderweb Domain, now has only 257 billion population.

Besides the sharp population decline, industries everywhere were shattered beyond recognition.

These are all impacts of the war.

However, if devastated then devastated, if population sharply decreased then it sharply decreased. If the Alliance wanted, it could intensify the extraction from those still alive, utilizing the still viable industries to exhaust resources.

After all, the war is over, and there's always some profit to extract. If truly dire, just feed them enough to fend off starvation and freezing, then ship them all as blood tax to the Empire, isn't that done?

But the Alliance didn't do this, instead it squeezed out a lot of fiscal expenditure to invest in these worlds.

The aim is to quickly restore the vitality of the Spiderweb Domain.

If coerced into extraction, what would the Alliance gain from holding the Spiderweb Domain?

Taking over those numerous Star Domains is to paint well on the virtually cleansed white canvas after the war.

Of course, doing so meant enduring hardships before sweetness.

The so-called hardships are not limited to fiscal pressures but also encompass the comprehensive pressure on political governance.

The post-war reconstruction of the war-ravaged territories, although unlikely to face major counterattacks from existing forces on various planets. Even if they still exist, their powers are greatly diminished, and during the process of regaining and rebuilding planets, under the Alliance's support and control, they can't stir up much trouble.

Yet similarly, without those local forces, the Alliance can't leverage the wealth of various forces originally present on the planets. Not only must it establish its governmental systems from scratch, but many places genuinely need to build from a blank slate.

Fortunately, many planets still have remnants of the 'Pest Control Office' that managed the insect infestations back then. Using the Pest Control Office as a foundation to build new management systems would slightly lessen the difficulty. Back when fighting parasitic infectors, they had conducted some emergency reconstruction to utilize the planets' manpower and resources locally. Although the main focus was on essential goods like food, medicine, and military supplies, higher-grade productivity couldn't be developed in time, yet there was somewhat of a foundation.

But precisely due to the blank slate, after enduring the hardships, sweetness would follow.

This is what Osenia emphasized after providing an overview of the Alliance's current overall situation: the Alliance's development plan for the next two years.

It splits into two parts, one concerning the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

This is the core region of the Alliance, although it represents less than a tenth of the population, it accounts for over 30% of the overall output value.

The Alliance comprises four revenue-generating Star Domains, but to put it bluntly, Proudclaw, Menghe, and Alfonso merely earn small profits. They maintain fiscal surpluses, but they don't significantly impact the overall picture. Only Dragonhawk Star Domain, with a fiscal surplus of 1.3 trillion, can practically sustain the entire Alliance with its strength alone.

It not only shoulders the tax duties for the Empire but also almost entirely supports the Alliance's extensive military expenditures and fiscal support for the nine deficit Star Domains, primarily relying on Dragonhawk Star Domain's massive production capacity and fiscal surplus.

Further construction of Dragonhawk Star Domain is thus an inevitability.

In reality, Dragonhawk Star Domain is the pioneer of numerous major productivity upgrades within the Alliance, especially regarding large-scale production and application of various new and advanced technologies produced by the Alliance Central Research Institute (the Black Box Factory led by Wu Jiarong).

From scientific research, to shipbuilding industry, to advanced warfare weapon production, to advanced engineering machinery manufacture, to advanced energy development and manufacturing... Dragonhawk Star Domain is unrivalled.

Meanwhile, some low-grade industries, ensuring overall employment rate within Dragonhawk Star Domain, are relocated as much as possible.

Honestly, Dragonhawk Star Domain handling these so-called low-grade industries is actually the most efficient, and the profits are decent too. Not only is the scale large, but critically, the industry categories are comprehensive, and both upstream and downstream supply chains are well-equipped, providing strong cost and scale advantages.

However, industry updates are inevitable, and the brothers outside clamoring for sustenance need a sip of soup too. On the other hand, even the so-called low-grade industries remaining in Dragonhawk Star Domain must further upgrade.

Take the simplest raw material processing industry for example, with more advanced engineering machinery and production lines, whether it's refining metals or initial chemical product processing, the aim is to reduce labor input and enhance efficiency.

Freed-up manpower could be invested in the tertiary sector if nothing else works.

Larger outputs in cultural industries, services sector, and luxury industry, on one hand to earn money, on the other to enhance life quality for those in Dragonhawk Star Domain's heavy industries and pillar industries.

Even in agriculture, it must follow the path of large farms, efficient production. Various latest agricultural genetic technologies and agricultural machinery can notably enhance the productivity in both livestock breeding and crop cultivation. Furthermore, on several key agricultural planets in Jiang Meiyu Sector, the Alliance extravagantly deployed climate reconfiguration technology.

Using climate reconfiguration to revive a barren planet is costly and somewhat insignificant; however, optimizing the climate for planets already blessed with good natural conditions to make them better suited for agricultural development is much more economical.

And if Dragonhawk Star Domain has surplus engineers, whether in bioengineering, mechanical engineering, or other fields, they can be dispatched to other Star Domains for technical aid, yielding remarkable results.

The gradually crowded upward channels within Dragonhawk Star Domain can also be alleviated through such approaches.

In conclusion, Dragonhawk Star Domain essentially continues progressing along its established path, advancing towards more refined, efficient directions.

For the other thirteen Star Domains, the emphasis lies on quickly achieving profitability, with a strict mandate to aim for ’developing productivity,’ forbidding any dubious practices.

Alliance officials dispatched to various Star Domains, Star Sectors, and even planets each carry explicit targets, with strict orders.

They will receive full support from Dragonhawk Star Domain and the Alliance, aimed at boosting the output value!