

Final Decrees

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So you can copy, change, and even sell Final Decrees. It should still be identified as my work.

The House War universe was designed by Dillon Burke and is used with his permission.

Here are all my details for contact. Feedback is appreciated.

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Files you need

Final Decree – cards.pdf Contains 60 cards. You will need to print these on cardboard, or insert them into card slips. Black backed Ultra Pro card slips are ideal for the purpose.

Final Decree –deptmats.pdf Contains the 6 departmental mats, and 5 control arrows. Ideally printed on card and cut out.

Final Decree –decrees.pdf Contains the 5 decrees. You will need a set of these for each time you play. Note: the text that describes the decree does not have an effect on game play. These are part of the game background.

Final Decree –help.pdf Contains 2 summary sheets, one on the turn order, the other on stamping decrees. Its all stuff covered in the rules, but is probably useful to have a summary in play.

Final Decree –rules.pdf This document here, it has the rules of the game, and some other information.

A note on the background

This game is set in the House War universe, invented by Dillon Burke. I was thinking of changing the setting to something most people are a little more familiar with. I was thinking of setting the game “in a small pacific nation beset by management books,” or possibly a software company trying to release various products. Instead I decided to go with the original setting, soon to be seen in a game in a town near you.

To fill in those who don't know, House War is a series of games by Dillon Burke. A number of noble houses compete with varying success for power prestige, and the imperial throne. The latest incarnation is set in a time when the empire is collapsing. Technology is disappearing, the Emperor is a figurehead, and the noble houses are fighting tooth and nail to build monuments to themselves. This game is set just before then, the decline has started but the current Emperor has a chance to stop it, but not if the Emperor's bureaucracy behaves like every other bureaucracy in the history of humanity.

Introduction

Many historians have studied the House War III period. It always captures the imagination. How did such a great empire fall? Many notable historians (See D. Burke's excellent simulationist history) place great importance on the Great Houses and their quest for glory. While this is certainly a valid point Burke and others overlook the 5 Decrees issued by the last Emperor before hostilities broke out. All our best models suggest that if any one of these decrees was acted upon, then war may well have been averted. This would suggest that a large portion of the blame falls on the executive bureaucrats of this era. The purpose of this historical simulation is to assess who was to blame, and why.

Components required

5 players. (You could play with 4 players, but then remove the Department of Reform.)

A coloured pawn for each player. These pawns are placed on departmental mats to represent which department a player is head of.

6 departmental mats : Department of Reform
Executive Branch
Human Resources
Treasury
Secret Service
The Admiralty

The Decrees (5). A set will have spare sets of these. Print out a set for each time you play.

Blame counters – (Huge numbers, ideally black, like black go stones)

Control markers- A bunch of arrows that can be used to indicate which department controls (theoretically) which department.

A stamp – for stamping decrees (A pen for ticking would do)

Definitions

Blame: A black token. The player with the least blame in their personal blame pool at the end of the game wins. Blame not currently assigned to a player or department is kept aside in a bank.

Departmental Blame: Blame assigned to a department. The blame is kept on the departmental mat.

Personal Blame: Blame assigned to a player, also called Personal Blame Pool. These blame tokens are kept directly in front of the player.

Department: There are six departments. The department which a player is head of is referred to as being theirs. (That is, all references to “your department” refer to the department the player is currently head of. Departments can be controlled by other departments. Arrows are used to represent control.

Departmental mat: This represents the department. Departmental blame tokens are placed on the mat. Any decrees at the department are placed on or under the mat. The head of the department is represented by the appropriate player’s pawn.

Decree: Decrees are represented by decree slips. A decree consists of a number of steps which must be performed. Each step must be performed in order, and by the correct department. When a step is performed it is represented by a stamp on the appropriate check box. When all steps have been performed the decree is said to have been enacted. See the section on Decrees.

Empty Department: The department that currently has no head.

Stagnation and decline card: This card must be played immediately. It represents the Empire falling apart. When it is played five cards are immediately put into the discard pile. All departmental blame goes to the departments’ current heads. The Stagnation and decline card is then reshuffled into the deck. Note: the discard pile is not shuffled in too. When the deck is exhausted the game ends. I am toying with having the drawing player get to choose one of the 5 discarded cards for their hand. Altering the number of cards discarded can easily control the length of the game. Why is this card in the game? It means the game is of undetermined length. I also think the game is much better as a short game than as an epic.

Set up

The Emperor has issued his decrees, he has restructured the bureaucracy, now all he needs to have happen to save his empire is for his executives to do their job!

1. Set up the new regime. Place the departmental mats on the table. Arrows are used to show which department controls which

department. Point the arrow from the controller to the controlled. Initially the Department of Reform controls Executive Office, which controls Human Resources and Admiralty. Admiralty controls Secret Service. Treasury is independent. [In a four player game the department of reform is omitted]

2. Initial blame, and Human Resources. Each player gathers between 1 and 6 blame markers in their hand as a bid.
 - a. The players that do not bid the least or the most as gain their bid as personal blame. If all players bid the same they are treated as having bid the most, not the least.
 - b. The player or players that bid the least gain their bid, plus five more blame tokens as personal blame. This is for their lack of team spirit and go get 'em attitude.
 - c. If one player bids the most they gain their bid as personal blame, and become head of Human Resources. Place their pawn on the Human Resources mat.
 - d. If more than one player bids the most, then those players gain 2 blame, and go through another bidding round according to the same rules, until a single player is declared head of Human Resources. Note: Players in rebids who bid the least in the rebid gain 5 extra blame just as low bidders in the first round do.
3. Assign positions. The head of Human Resources assigns the remaining players to departments. The Department of Reform is not assigned at this point. A department can only have one head at a time, so all departments aside from Reform now have heads.
4. Separate the Stagnation and Decline card from the deck. Shuffle the deck and deal 1 card to each player. Deal another twenty into a pile, and deal another pile of 5. Shuffle the Stagnation and Decline card into the remainder. Place these cards on the pile of 20 cards. Place the pile of 5 cards on top of those cards. The deck is now set up.
5. The Emperor issues his decrees. All five decrees are placed on the Executive Branch.

Play

The player controlling the Executive Branch goes first, from there on play proceeds clockwise. When the last card in the deck is drawn the game ends. The game also ends if all decrees are enacted. The player with the least personal blame wins.

On his or her turn each player goes through the following sequence.

1. The department they are head of gains 1 blame for general incompetence.
2. The player draws a card, and places it in their hand, unless it is the decline card, which is played immediately.
3. The player may perform 3 actions. A list of actions follows.
4. The department the player heads gains 1 blame for each decree on their mat.

Actions

All players in their turn may use their three actions to perform any combination of the following:

- draw a card from the deck. This is placed in the player's hand, unless it is the decline card, which is played immediately. This action may be used only once on a player's turn.
- play a card. The text on the card is followed. Rules on cards supercede other rules.
- spread the blame. Move any blame in your department or in any department below you in the control structure, to department/s below your department in the control structure. Any amount of blame may be moved with this action. Departments without departments beneath them cannot spread the blame. [Example: Reform controls Executive Branch and Admiralty, Admiralty controls Secret Service. If you are head of Reform when you sue this ability, you may shuffle blame freely between all four departments. If you are head of Admiralty when you use this ability, you may shuffle blame freely between Admiralty and Secret Service]
- forward a decree to another department. A decree is moved from the player's department to any other department. If you move a decree onto the department which is next on the list of steps to be checked, then you lose 1 personal blame.
- move a player to the empty department. The player can move any player's pawn to the empty department. The player may choose to send him or herself, in which case they continue their turn as the head of the new department.
- stamp a decree. See the Decrees section.

Departments also allow players to perform special actions. These are like any other action, only the head of the department in question can perform them.

-Treasury, the head of Treasury may spend an action to gain 2 extra actions for their turn. This may only be done once on a players turn. (It is worded this way so you know what to do when players are only head for part of their turn.)

-Secret Service, the head of Secret Service may investigate another department. All blame on that department is transferred to the personal blame pool of its head.

-Admiralty, the head of Admiralty can go on maneuvers. This action removes 2 personal blame and 4 departmental blame from the admiralty, this action may only be performed once on a players turn.

-Human Resources, the head of Human Resources may use an action to reassign players to departments. All players can be changed, or not, as the head of HR decides. The player may move themselves with this action, in which case they continue their turn as head of their new department.

-Executive Branch, the head of Executive Branch may restructure. You may move remove, move, reverse, or add a control arrow. An arrow cannot be added or moved so that control loops. If you can follow a department's control arrows back to itself, then it is an illegal placement.

-The Department of Reform has no special power.

Note that a player can be head of more than one department in their turn. They are allowed to perform special action when they are head of the appropriate department. For example a player may start off as head of Admiralty and use their three actions to do maneuvers, move to the empty Treasury department, and then spend an action to get another 2 actions.

Decrees

A player may use an action to stamp a decree, the following rules govern this action:

- 1) The department must have the decree on them to stamp it.
- 2) The department must be next on the list of steps to stamp it.

- 3) If a step is stamped as done, then the player who stamps it loses 1 personal blame.
- 4) If the last step on a decree is stamped then the decree is said to be enacted. In addition to the blame removed as above additional blame is removed.
- 5) If the department that enacts the decree is uncontrolled by another department then the head of the enacting department chooses where additional blame is removed.
- 6) If the department that enacts the decree is controlled by another department, then follow the chain of control up to the department that is uncontrolled. The head of that department chooses where the additional blame is removed. If that department has no head no extra blame is removed.
- 7) The amount of extra blame removed depends on how many decrees have already been enacted. The first decree allows 10 blame to be removed. The second 20, the third 30 and so on.
- 8) The blame can be removed from any player's personal blame pool, and from any department. The removing player can choose not to remove the full amount of blame.

Decrees can be forwarded to another department as an action. If the department is the next one with an unstamped step, then the forwarding player loses 1 personal blame.

Deals and Trading

Players may freely trade ~~personal~~ blame between each other, as long as both parties agree. Cards can also be traded between player's hands.

No deals are binding. A player's personal blame total is public knowledge.

Credits

Game concept and development: Carl de Visser

House War universe: Dillon “Grand Vizier” Burke

Playtesters:

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