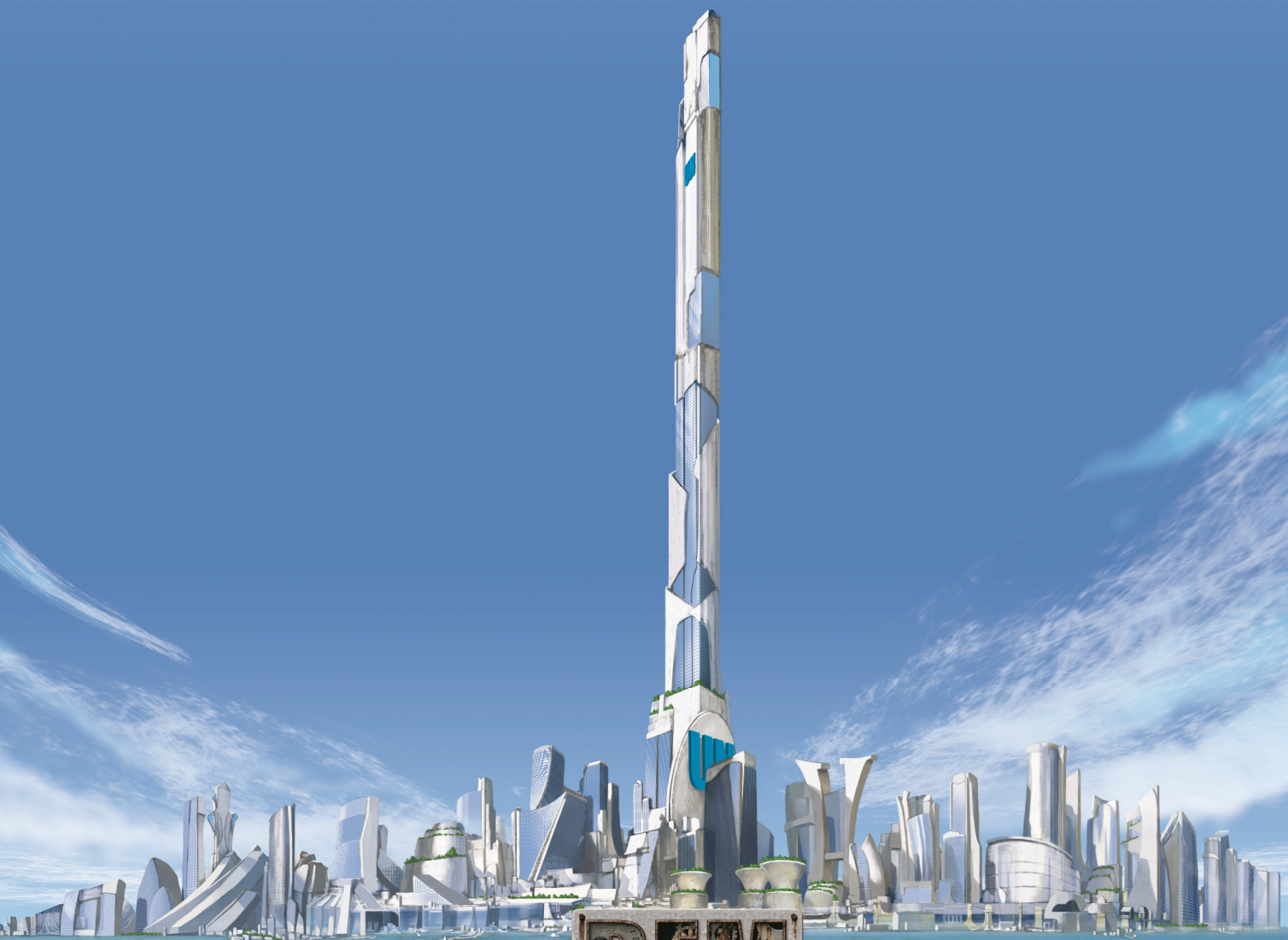




GENERAL ASSEMBLY



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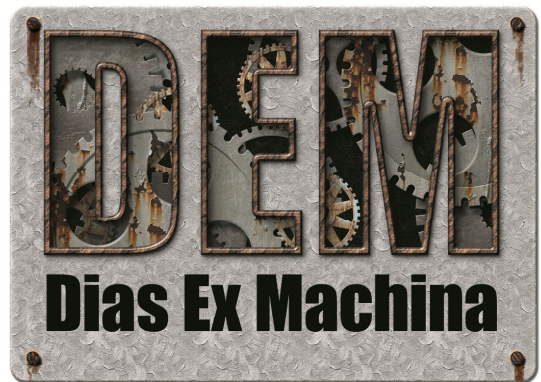
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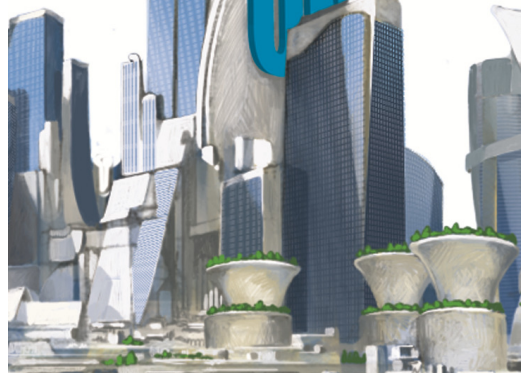
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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

One side-effect of being struck with focused plasma weapon, I wasn't feeling any pain. The impact had vaporized any nerves before they could transmit to my brain more than an itch. At least my arm was still attached. My reflex was to scream, though I knew no one could hear me. I was alone and despondent with an overpowering urge to scratch.

I had wedged myself into the corner of a half-collapsed mud and brick home with no windows and no ventilation. The only luxury was a bucket of soiled water where the toilet should be. It was also hot, the kind where you drip sweat from your ass and your balls stick to your leg. It was so overcast with petroleum exhaust that the sun simply gilded the sky above us. My bronzed skin was a result of being steamed brown over the course of three days.

I was the only one left alive on this block, though not the only thing moving. The KN drones, humanoid only in a technical sense, clicked and hummed like century-old hard drives, walking with a fluidic perfected gait to maximize efficiency. Their heads, resembling desk lamps, could bend around corners, snake through ducts, or peek over barricades. When marching brazenly down a street like they were, the stalks were retracted, locking the head to the body.

It wasn't like they needed to turn around. Even if my current weapon hadn't melted with the plasma hit, without an army, I'd be lucky to annoy one. Most private military companies like TK Echo or Fyrene kept with traditional firearms, which was fair until sent up against an army of mechanized asshats like those from Kantis Neuri. As a bunch of cowardly Russians sip vodka in a bunker fifty miles from

the theater, their drones goosestep in formation flaunting better weapons and enough armor that stopping one was like holding back a fat man from the lemon tarts at a buffet. Even if I could take off a weapon arm, they'd pick up the gun with the free hand. Blow a leg, and they'd crawl. If I scored a hit to a sensor cluster, the unit would link wirelessly with the network and coordinate with the other units. I saw one in Monrovia missing both arms go native, bolt into an enemy bunker and detonate its power cell. The manufacture which sold the army to KN ensured the technology couldn't fall into enemy hands. Beyond a drone incinerating itself when dropped, a severed signal to its weapon resulted in a similar failsafe. Moreover, both their weapons and ours were encoded to their respective owners, though ours could be defeated with a pair of pliers, a screwdriver, and paperclip to be eventually scavenged and used against us by the disgruntled local population. Circle of life.

Plasma weapons could outpace drum-loaded machine guns; there was never a need to call for a reload. Heaven forbid those durak-playing Ruskies would ever need to leave their mobile strongpoint, glancing from their cards occasionally to verify they hadn't lost. The drones were slaved off a command and control unit—a twenty-foot tall abomination, the offspring of a Botanachi Battletank and Lovecraft's Golgothoth and aptly named after the Babylonian god of death, Nergal.

My commanding officer was named Susan.

She was five feet tall and a hundred feet behind me when her helmet collapsed from Nergal's gauss rifle. The iron flechette passed through two other soldiers and pinned a newly hired private to our only remaining multi-ped tank.

The battle was not going well.

My position had afforded me certain medical benefits, so a cauterized crater large enough to store my sunglasses in wasn't in my future. Assuming the limb was a loss, I could've **elected** for the standard cybernetic or a pricier augment if I covered the difference. TKE never kicked in for genetic matched grown limbs. I was more fortunate than Frank beside me. He'd lost his lower half in Liberia a few months back and discovered later to his vexation that his plan didn't cover sexual organs. That unfortunate incident involving him and a plasma cluster mine basically turned him into the perfect corporate automaton, trying to increase his kill count to purchase a higher rank. It wasn't long before someone hung—poor choice of words—the nickname "Angel of Death", a moniker Frank enjoyed until someone explained to him what it was actually implying.

All that was left of Frank now was a bald head and tufts of shredded aramid armor. Everything else had scattered like a dropped vase.

His medical plan didn't cover that.

I took a moment and flicked the charred fragments from my shoulder, wondering where the aramid armor plates stopped and my shoulder began. I spotted a patch of red under ash and found blistered skin. Another side-effect, a deflected plasma blast looks worse than it is. Two inches to the right or if I had been angled improperly, the bottle would have broken across my chest and for a brief second, I would have felt the heat of the surface of the sun.

As my blistered exposed shoulder met the dry air, my nerves woke up and a feeling not unlike my veins being pipe-cleaned with piano wire shuddered through me. My Threshold implant kicked in and tried its best to tell my brain to ignore it. The Adrenal Regulator switched from 'damage control' to 'survival' and I found the energy to stand straight. Frank's head was still cupped under my arm like I was about to run a field goal.

I was ten blocks from TKE's forward operating base. I should've felt guilty, digging around Frank's braincase for his dubchip with the tip of a microdriver, but he was dead. I knew he'd earned enough to purchase a Colonel's rank when this theater was over. Encryption protocols prevented most people from being able to do what I was attempting, but I knew better. Digitally, I was very well endowed. Not counting the skill progs embedded in my head, I had gleaned enough natural talent to earn an esteemed position in any corporation I desired. If they were still doing so, I wouldn't be trying to steal money from the back of my friend's head.

I kept one eye on the business at hand and the other on the intersection where the synchronous mechanical mass plodded by, unaware of my actions. As long as I didn't initiate a hostile act, I should be invisible.

Nergal appeared, tentacles tearing down signs and slamming piton-like legs into the concrete, salting civilization where it walked. It was hard to ignore, a possible design intent, but whose intent? It was insane. Someone considered six legs, a centaur torso sporting four biomechanical tentacles, and a pair of head-mounted coilguns a practical model.

Then it stopped and pirouetted gracefully until it was facing back. Nergal's head was a porcupine of sensor quills, with little to gauge its fixation other than a cyclopean red-

lensed camera, but I knew it was staring at me. It ignored the progression of its battle line.

There was no reason for it to walk this way. It raised its torso like a competitive mate presenting itself while biomechanical appendages tore a non-functioning lamp post out of its way.

It was still at pissed me.

I ran, friend's head in hand.



POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The world is a vast place, with hundreds of nations and peoples. There may never be a time where all could work peacefully towards a united future. Some will always try, and some will always fight and kill, to prevent it. Even though set nearly a hundred years in the future, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Many countries from a century ago still exist, though most have undergone huge shifts in internal and foreign policy. The following descriptions only briefly summarize the major events in these nations' histories.

AFGHANISTAN

After the Carbon Collapse, Afghanistan emerged virtually unscathed. However this blessing did not stave the continued barrage from terrorist groups like Haqqani and Hezbi Islam, which were allowed to run virtually unopposed as UN forces were stretched thin across the world. After ten years of bloody conflict, the war of attrition had gutted most of these terrorist group and cooler voices were able to prevail in the latter half of the century. The emerging Democratic Nation of Afghanistan is by no means a stable country in the global scene, but it is in a lot better situation than it was a century ago.

ALGERIA

The north African country saw its borders grow after the Carbon Collapse, securing 50,000 square kilometers south of their border. Relations with Morocco have not improved after the western neighbor was granted full governing control of the West Sahara region. Military conflicts have yet to break out. The global collapse of the Islamic militant movement resulted in waning support for the local Khawarij Islamist Militia which eventually led to their dissolution even before the Carbon Collapse occurred. Despite fading oil prices, Algeria's industry has remained robust. Algeria joined the PAC in 2069.

ANGOLA

Angola was eliminated during the Carbon Collapse. Several bastions formed several years later with miles of unclaimed no-man's land between. The bastions in Angola are Luanda, Cabinda, and Huambo. Luanda and Cabinda are currently embroiled in a war based on old tribal disputes.

ARMENIA

Relations between Turkey and Armenia escalated into the armed conflict of Armavir, the end result altering no political lines. On the opposite border, their relations with Azerbaijan slightly improved after they joined with Azerbaijan in entering the European Union and after the brokerage of the Zangezor Peace Accords which resolved the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Relations are lukewarm but non-violent.

AUSTRALIA

Although a strong political force, Australia's global position weakened somewhat with their unwavering support of the United States in regards to positions on climate change and alternative fuels. They were one of the last countries to adopt Carbon Collapse resolutions despite the damage it did to their country and are one of the smaller donors to the development of Archon. When the US economy crumbled after the Carbon Collapse, Australia began to distance themselves more from their ally.

AUSTRIA

Austria remains a member of the European Union. Vienna continues to be a major location for the United Nations, with nearly 10% of the city's territory dubbed a UNIT and considered partly owned by the international community.

AZERBAIJAN

During the development of an international alliance of Muslim states, Azerbaijan was considered a potential member, as were many other countries in the region at the time. However, this changed when Azerbaijan officially joined the European Union, adopting the euro as its prime currency. This prevented them from forming under the umbrella of the kaleeji. The middle-eastern alliance was eventually called the PAC, voiding other potential members like Iran. Azerbaijan has grown significantly in power and influence with the European Union. Citizens from Azerbaijan account for the largest number of non-Arab Muslims in





Archon, especially in the armed forces. This shift mostly came from the aftereffects of the Carbon Collapse, which swelled the Caspian Sea, swallowing four coastal towns.

BAHRAIN

Although a small country, Bahrain took up a leadership role in middle-eastern affairs and was one of the primary proponents for both the PAC and the construction of the island later to be called Archon. A revolution in 2030 turned the country over to a democracy. The Arabian Restructure of 2055 secured additional territory from the faltering Saudi Arabia. Bahrain still enjoys a free trade deal with the United States and relations with Iran are still cool despite both nations operating as democracies.

BANGLADESH

It is estimated that as many as 30 million Bengals were killed over the ten year period of the Carbon Collapse. Survivors fled to India until the border was closed in 2052, leaving millions behind to rebuild. With a third of the country below sea level, Bangladesh is considered a failed state. There remains still a political party but it's believed they hold little power in a nation functioning with 70% of the population operating below the international poverty line.

BELARUS

Belarus was annexed by Russia in 2025, removing the country's dictatorship and sequestering the nation as a Russian state. Although gone, the ethnicity remains rooted.

BENIN

Like most Western African countries, Benin vanished during the Carbon Collapse, leaving only the bastion state of Porto-Novo.

BOTSWANA

Border disputes between Botswana and South Africa broke out after the Carbon Collapse. The growing corruption of their southern neighbor increased fears of all out war. Despite this, Botswana is considered one of the few growing countries left in Africa. Its military, once trained to deal with bandits and poachers, now equals that of South Africa, but this is due from foreign aid like most members of the Security Council which backs Botswana in the conflict. South Africa almost completely surrounds its rival.

BRAZIL

The most powerful South American country earned a place as a global superpower when it became a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Crime remains an issue across the nation and relations with Argentina could be better.

BURKINA FASO

Another failed nation, all that's left of the region is the capital, Ouagadougou. Still in control of several mines and its one remaining oil refinery, the BF-Run between Ouagadougou and the bastion city of Accra on the coast is considered the most dangerous mercenary contract in the world.

BURUNDI

This nation fell apart after a 10 year civil war which ended in 2030. It no longer exists.

CAMBODIA

Cambodia found a massive boom from natural gas and oil deposits between 2015 and 2025. It emerged a major Asian power by 2030 but suffered greatly from corruption at the time. The distance between the upper and lower class grew wider and by the Carbon Collapse, the nation could no longer sustain itself. After the collapse, the infrastructure shattered, leaving it open to outside manipulation. Many of the resources of the country were sold to foreign interests, mostly Chinese and American. Growing unrest with the resident population has resulted in sabotage of the country's foreign-owned refineries

CAMEROON

The UN classified Cameroon a failed nation despite the government's insistence to the contrary. The military resides almost entirely in the bastion of Douala, leaving the remaining population to fend for themselves. Douala guards a single highway to the coast.



CANADA

After losing the bid to house the UN headquarters in its borders, Canada continued its push for a larger UN presence upon global affairs. It leant towards policies which increased UN power and influence, specifically the General Assembly, even at the expense of allied countries. This and a refinement of oil export policy in 2025 strained relations with the United States. As the ideologies of the two nations began to separate, the Canadian Conservative party continued to lose ground and the New Democratic Party have effectively controlled Parliament since 2055.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Like many other African nations, the CAR found little support after the Carbon Collapse and was absorbed into the Sudan and again later into Ethiopia.

CHAD

The dissolution of the country in 2045 was the end of a thirty year conflict which turned the country into a no-man's land. Most of its eastern lands were appropriated by Sudan, which was then later absorbed by Ethiopia during the East African War. The old country's remaining bastion, N'Djamena, is too far from the docks to sustain a profitable relationship with foreign nations.

CHINA

China's global influence has been moderated by ASEAN and the UN. Despite being a founding member of the UN, China has not been able to sway overall power against the Security Council or the General Assembly. The country has suffered through environmental problems and social unrest of late as the country's massive population is straining the already withering resources. Despite its place in the world, China is growing close to collapse. Hong Kong and Macau both suffered massive damage from rising sea levels. Similar floods struck hard

around Shanghai and Tianin. Shenzhen was swallowed by water. Millions of lives are believed to have been lost but exact numbers have never been released. Relations with Japan have improved but tensions with the United States have weakened given the state of the US Dollar.

CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF

Distractions from the Carbon Collapse pulled attention away from the Congo as the East African World War broke out across the land. The Congo, on the far side of the conflict, was the first nation in the continent to be officially classed as "failed". From its ruins sprung up the first bastion city-states, Kinshasa, Kisangani, and Boma, keeping a tight lock on the country's mineral and oil reserves. Half the PMCs and security companies in Africa have regional headquarters in one of these bastions. The control of Boma sparked the first armed conflict exclusively between PMCs, in this case Ikoro and Lupus Kanti. LK eventually secured Boma, forcing Ikoro back to Kisangani. Since then, Kisangani has prospered while corruption and mismanagement has reduced Boma to near ruin. Ikoro has no plans in retaking the city unless the warlord of Kisangani, Dimon Agbaje, sanctions it. This is in conflict to public opinion that Agbaje is Ikoro's puppet.

CONGO, REPUBLIC OF

Like its cousin nation, the Republic of the Congo vanished during the Carbon Collapse, leaving only its capital city state, Brazzaville.

CUBA

Cuba turned into a Democracy in 2060 after a non-violent revolution. Foreign Relations have improved since then with the United States and other American nations. It weathered the Carbon Collapse better than its neighbors.

DENMARK

Despite their high quality of living, Denmark was hit badly by the Carbon Collapse, loosing thousands of square kilometers to water. Support from other EU countries helped stave off disaster. The country still struggles despite this aid.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Nearly 5 million people died during the Carbon Collapse from environmental catastrophes that wracked the country. A major influx of money over the intervening decades has rebuilt the nation, even

to the extent of dredging the seabed to rebuild its beaches.

EAST TIMOR

Another casualty of the Carbon Collapse, it was reported 250,000 people had died. It remains a struggling nation.

EGYPT

One of the most stable countries in Africa and the largest superpower in Middle East, Egypt was a major investor in Archon and one the loudest supporters for the increase of power in the General Assembly. This stability came with a price. During the Carbon Collapse, Egypt closed its borders to immigration, preventing an influx of African refugees. The nation also curtailed the travelling of its own citizens to stave off a brain drain from their own environmental concerns. After the collapse, Egypt introduced wide changing democratic mandates which reshaped the political system of the country. This culminated in a successful Olympic bid in 2040.



ERITREA

After the Carbon Collapse, Ethiopia attempted its Final Border War with Eritrea, crushing the reigning government of their neighbor and occupying the country. Public outcry lessened when Ethiopia deported the ruling body and extradited known terrorists. This war officially ended in 2065 with the dissolution of Eritrea but this did not end the conflict. Since then, civil unrest has been on the rise with terrorist cells striking civilian and military targets within Ethiopia.

ETHIOPIA

The acquisition of additional land helped solidify Ethiopian presence in Africa and the rest of the world. The carbon collapse was not kind to them. Over 10 million lost their lives from drought. After

expensive rebuilding over the following decades, the nation grew in influence until emerging as the de facto superpower of Africa in 2070. Although still criticized for rampant corruption in its political system and for its taking of the nation of Eritrea, Ethiopia remained a regional leader and the loudest African presence in the UN. It currently suffers no border conflict but its military is constantly fighting against civil unrest and political dissidents. Cities range from shining skyscrapers to dilapidated urban sprawls with little transition between the two. Addis Ababa is one such example; with three of the tallest buildings in the world surrounded by an expanse of low rent housing. The acquisition of Somalia in 2060 shifted the country to a Muslim majority. It became a nuclear power in 2069 from a single weapon's test they've never repeated. It is widely believed the United States secretly funded Ethiopia's border expansion into Somalia, Sudan, and Eritrea between 2055 and 2065 (what is known as the East African War) and supported their move in exchange for oil rights in these new resolved conflict zones. It is also believed the United States supported Ethiopia because of its Christian majority, securing lands controlled by Islamic governments, making the East African War a religious war. Ethiopia refutes both facts, especially considering that 35% of the population was Muslim at the time. It is also important to note that in the acquisition of these outlying regions, the new United Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is now predominantly Muslim even though Christian minorities still control most levels of government. The country is technically secular. Despite this, more than a dozen different guerilla camps have sprouted up in rebellion.



FUJI

A reduction of 40% of its land mass during the environment crisis has reduced Fiji's global imprint. Half the population was wiped out after the Carbon Collapse.

FINLAND

The flooding of Helsinki from the rise of ocean tides struck the country hard, forcing thousands from their homes and into neighborhoods at higher altitudes. The waters never subsided and buildings still stick up from the water. Beyond this minor blemish, Finland still remains one of the most well developed countries on Earth.

GABON

Gabon's borders grew by 100,000 square kilometers as they pushed outward while outlining countries disintegrated. As one of the only surviving western African countries, Gabon fell under pressure from bordering warlords and in 2055, the nation enlarged its military from 50,000 to 70,000. Still unable to secure its roads and cities, it contracted out several security companies and is one of the largest sponsors of Ikoro. The country is internally safe and is considered a haven surrounded by nearly continuous fighting. Gabon has made it no secret their desire to increase their military spending and, with the assistance of Ikoro, move out to remove the outlining warlords and double the size of their country. This plan has met with mixed responses from the global community.

THE GAMBIA

Gambia was unable to keep its borders when Senegal fractured. Despite still having military along their sole river, Gambia now only exists as the city-state of Banjul.

GEORGIA

The belligerent attitude between Georgia and Russia over the contested regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia continued until 2030, when a fully armed conflict broke out, the Second South Ossetia War. In the intervening 60 years, relations between Russia and Georgia have improved. Since then, Georgia has moved into a fully realized democracy.



GERMANY

Although France may be the most visited country in the world, Germany maintains its position as the world's largest exporter. It is now considered to have the strongest economy, with a recent boom when German manufacturers won the contract to build the entire power network in Archon, from solar cells to nuclear reactors. When given a permanent seat upon the Security Council, Germany used this influence to be one of the proponents behind the creation of the republic of Palestine, which unfortunately increased the growing divide between Germany and the United States.

GHANA

One of the richer African nations, Ghana continues to struggle against dozens of surrounding hostile regions attempting to prey on its natural resources. Ghana is a large supporter of the Ikoro Security Company and employs them to protect their borders. Ghana's royal family, currently lead by King Sai Appiah, is dependent on its exports to keep its economic stability as the majority of its capital is spent on the PMC. This has not worked as well as it did for Gabon and eventually Ghana lost nearly half its territory to outlining warlords. Even today, Ghana struggles to survive and is listed number 5 on the list of countries expected to fail in the next 50 years.

GRENADA

Unfortunately, nothing remained of Grenada after the Carbon Collapse and most of the survivors immigrated to the United States.

GUINEA

A civil war which began in 2028 and lasted ten years tore the country apart well before the Carbon Collapse finished the job. By 2058, Guinea was no more and it was estimated that 70% of population of the country had died in conflict and environmental decay. The city-state of Conakry has managed to squeak out a meager existence in the ruins of the old nation. The rich mineral and oil resources have been claimed by a dozen warlords who picked up the pieces of the shattered country.

GUINEA-BISSAU

This country failed from civil unrest and border conflicts.

HAITI

Haiti has nearly disappeared from environmental disasters. It is estimated less than two million people

are left living on the island. They fared much worse than the neighboring Dominican Republic.

ICELAND

Threats of a shifting gulf stream failed to materialize and Iceland managed to survive the Carbon Collapse virtually unscathed. Its economy recovered as well.

INDIA

No country has skirted destruction more than India. After the Carbon Collapse dropped the population under a billion, India's economy was near ruin. It eventually had to limit the immigration of refugees from outlining countries. Pakistan, suffering less during the crisis, took advantage of the crippled India and shifted its military across the line of control into Kargil in 2053. India attempted to repel the occupation but a massive swelling of civil unrest forced the military to deal with internal concerns and India was forced to hold action. After settling in, Pakistan threatened a nuclear strike as several Indian states were attempting to secede, taking an uncontrolled nuclear arsenal with it. Eventually, over 100,000 UN peacekeepers and aid workers arrived to prevent a war. The country was stabilized and outlining regions secured. India eventually regained its global position and used the UN support to enact sweeping changes across the country. However, tensions with Pakistan remained high and when India was formally admitted to the Security Council, Pakistan officially protested the decision, including boycotting the UN for 5 years. Pakistan anticipates a Security Council resolution backed by India to force Kargil back into Indian control, a move Pakistan ensures will result in war. Such a resolution has been drafted. It should be noted that the massive shift of UN personnel to rebuild India came with a stiff price as the majority of military personnel were moved from Africa, which experts believed was one of the catalysts of the destruction of nearly the entire continent.

INDONESIA

Thousands of islands in the archipelago were destroyed during the Carbon Collapse, killing nearly 50 million people. The remaining civil unrest and revolutions splintered the country, breaking Papua and Aceh from the rest of the nation. A dozen smaller regions like Bali, Maluku, and Banten have made threats to do the same but don't have the resources to do so.

IRAN

A bloody coup and civil war which struck Iran in 2035 resulted in the deaths of 5 million people. The end result was the total rewriting of the country's political system, removing the Supreme Leader of Iran and reducing the order of Islamic law, though its influence is still felt. It was believed revolution was pushed and supported secretly by the United States as Iran had officially announced its acquisition of nuclear weapons and the desire to employ them in a conflict with Israel. Although tempering its hostile foreign relations, the new Iran would be drawn into civil unrest for the next ten years, culminating in an election hijacking and coup by an Islamic fundamentalist military general, Ali Varcon Fareed. Fareed attempted to impose a military junta but was unable to secure the country's nuclear launch capacity and before being able to do so, the coup had failed and the militants were arrested and executed. This still didn't settle the issues with the country and it escalated again with the 10-Day war in 2055. Relations between Iran and the formed PAC have improved since then and it is expected that the PAC will be renamed in order to accept Iran into the fold before the end of the century.



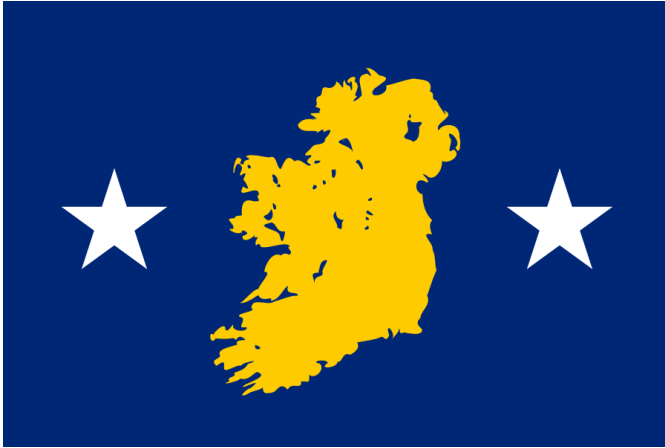
IRAQ

By the time of the Carbon Collapse, Iraq had only just seen the end of civil unrest within the country. By the end of the Collapse, less than 20 million people still lived in that country. The republic of Iraq formally declared itself stable and safe in 2055 and joined the PAC one year later. A massive oil drilling boom rebuilt its economy and Iraq emerged as the largest exporter in the PAC by 2091. Of all the countries of the PAC, Iraq gained the least amount of Saudi territory during the Arabian Restructure of 2055.

IRELAND

Irish reunification occurred, along with civil unrest, on January 1st 2055. It was a policy encouraged by

both nations considering the damage both suffered from the Carbon Collapse.



ISRAEL

A major global conflict was averted by one of the largest sweeping changes to the UN since its founding. Reform to the Security Council had already prevented the United States from vetoing sanctions against Israel for their actions against Palestine. The 10-day war, which prompted threats from nearly every outlining Islamic country, had many experts predicting the beginning of a third world war. UN-ARMA was established which saw UN Peacekeepers entering the contested region, forcing Israel from direct control of Jerusalem and establishing the UN controlled neutral territory of the IAZ. This finally allowed global recognition of the republic of Palestine. Tensions between Israel and neighboring nations remained high for the next thirty years and have recently improved with trade agreements between Israel and PAC.

JAMAICA

Like most small islands, Jamaica was devastated by the Carbon Collapse. It's believed less than 250,000 people still live on the island. It's tourism industry is slowly recovering.

JAPAN

An economic superpower, Japan suffered greatly under the Carbon Collapse, losing land and people at an alarming rate which brought out significant internal policy reform. It erased, as some experts claimed, the last lingering shreds of past imperialism. Later, Japan joined the Security Council as a permanent member with UN-ARMA, a move pushed through by the United States. Relations with China have improved significantly in the past few decades and both countries assisted in the reunification of Korea. Relations with Russia,

however, turned sour when Japan used its newfound UN influence to regain control of the South Kuril Islands in 2065. Despite Japan "purchasing" the islands back, Russia insisted the sale was "forced". This is their official stance as public opinion was against Russia handing over the islands. The Russian government secretly preferred the offer since the island had taken a beating from the Collapse. Since then, Japan declared the Kuril Islands Special Economic Zones, encouraging a massive industrialized shift to the region. Japan still remains in conflict with Korea over control of Liancourt Rocks.

JORDAN

One of the strongest voices in the PAC and one of its founding members, Jordan has been one of the regional leaders in progressive movements to advance PAC nations to be on par with other competing alliances. Despite adopting the Kaleeji, Jordan maintains strong ties with both the EU and the United States. Jordan made no push to gain lands from Saudi Arabia through the reconstruction.

KAZAKHSTAN

Despite economically and politically unchanged, Kazakhstan lost significant land mass to the engorging of the Caspian Sea from the Carbon Collapse, more than any bordering country, including Russia.

KENYA

Border disputes with Tanzania still continue as both countries expanded after the collapse of their western neighbors. Kenya and Tanzania are the only major nations between the regional superpowers of Ethiopia and South Africa. Nairobi houses a UN office, which is also a UNIT.

KOREA

After the People's Revolution of 2050 damaged North Korea's infrastructure, the provisional government that ousted the Korean Workers' Party moved for reunification with their southern counterpart. This resulted in the removal of the minefields at the 38th parallel. The civil war of 2050 had taken its toll and when the President of the Supreme Assembly was removed from power, the country was in shambles. South Korea had already moved forces above the border to assist in the power struggle when it was apparent that the People's Democratic Movement was going to succeed. This revolution began as a military coup which stemmed

from civil unrest against the government's lack of response from the disasters wrought with the Carbon Collapse. The Worker's Party called for help from the Chinese but all their neighbors did was move into secure territory and offered no military assistance. After the treaty of Kangwon in 2052, China refused to relinquish the 20,000 square kilometers it had acquired. The democratic republic of Korea is pressuring the world community to force China to hand it back.



KOSOVO

After being officially acknowledged as a republic by the UN, Kosovo slowly gained ground with the international community. Serbia has made no attempt to retake the territory. Kosovo has been an adamant supporter of the UN since independence.

KUWAIT

After building Madinat al-Hareer, their city of the future, Kuwait saw a massive surge in economic growth. The Carbon Collapse nearly destroyed the city, however, costing billions in the rebuilding. The reduction of oil demand after the collapse forced Kuwait to turn Madinat al-Hareer into a free economic zone. This greatly assisted the reconstruction of it and Kuwait City nearby. The intervening 50 years has seen a slow rebuilding of their once glory but now Kuwait's position is now shared on equal stature with Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, and the UAE. Madinat al-Hareer is considered one of the most progressive cities in the world.

LEBANON

The 10-Day War and subsequent Jericho accords was a blessing to many surrounding countries, not the least of which was Lebanon, finally finding itself no longer in the crossfire of warring neighbors. A series of political shifts resulted in a massive boom the country's economy, resurrecting Beirut as the "Paris

of the Middle East." It is now one of the most visited cities in the region. Lebanon was one of the loudest supporters of UN-ARMA and assisted in the negotiations to defining the new regions of Palestine and the IAZ. Lebanon has not been targeted by an attack since 2060.



LESOTHO

The military junta in control of South Africa took over Lesotho and wiped out its monarchy in 2071.

LIBERIA

Every time Liberia managed some level of stability, it would break into civil war. The country was officially considered a failed nation in 2065, replaced with the bastion of Monrovia and a dozen smaller independent communities.

LIBYA

With a rooted dictatorship still in place, Libya has lost substantial political muster in wake of growing Arab democracies. It became a haven for the last lingering shreds of Islamic militants with reports of a last few terrorists living out their elderly days unable to garner support. The reduction of oil demand struck hard and the environmental damage done to Tripoli turned the country into the least productive member of PAC.

MALDIVES

Unfortunately, this country vanished with rising sea level, resulting in a mass immigration to India in 2049.

MALI

Distractions from the Carbon Collapse prevented aid to Mali until a coup in 2070 shattered the county's already fragile infrastructure. After 2 million people had died in the violence, what was left was picked apart by regional lords. The lack of significant oil

deposits prevented the establishment of micronations and city states in the aftermath of the failed nation.

MALTA

Vast sections of landscape fell under water, submerging even Valletta. The country never fully recovered.

MAURITANIA

Repeated coups upon elected governments finally took its toll and the African state fell into a civil war with a dozen warring parties. A handful of splinter states formed in its wake, none of which are acknowledged by the UN. Only the city state of Nouakchott is recognized.

MEXICO

Only the influx of several PMC battalions, most notably the Rainmakers, has quelled the massive increase in drug related crimes in the country. Mexico remains strong despite environmental concerns and a growing population under the poverty level. The number of third party military companies in the country has drawn concerns from the population.

MOROCCO

After acquiring possession of the Western Sahara, Morocco was hit hard by the Carbon Collapse. It endured, but at the cost of its royalty, which were deposited in 2046.

MOZAMBIQUE

How this suffering country survived came from the perseverance of its people. In 2060, the country began a massive switch to convert its land for agriculture. That and lucrative titanium mines have rebuilt the country as a competitive African power. It still suffers from a large population in poverty. HIV has the largest endemic ratio here than anywhere else in the world.

MYANMAR

Also known as Burma, this nation's volatile political position is only tempered by the threat of its removal from ASEAN. Despite nearing economic collapse, the military junta refuses to relinquish control. It has threatened military action against both Laos and Thailand. Like Bangladesh, Myanmar suffered badly through the Carbon Collapse but unlike Bangladesh, Myanmar attempted to prevent any immigration of its population, resulting in high casualties. Information about the true extent of the damage was not determined until years after. It is believed nearly 10

million people were killed in Myanmar in the first year with another 5 million over the subsequent five. With a failed uprising and immigration afterwards, it is thought that the once large nation of 65 million now holds less than 20 million people.

NAMIBIA

With a large population dying from AIDS and more and more people living under the poverty level, Namibia finally collapsed from a civil war which killed 250,000 people. The conflict ended without a victory, as both sides fought to exhaustion by 2045. With the arrival of the South African military junta, armed forces moved to offer aid to the barren region in 2049. Namibia was officially considered failed in 2050 and despite a small guerilla resistance forming in opposition, South Africa officially took charge of the territory in 2051.

THE NETHERLANDS

Despite a strong economy, The Netherlands were decimated by the Carbon Collapse. Rising sea levels flooded tens of thousands of square kilometers, sinking the capital of Amsterdam. A multi-billion dollar bulwark has allowed the city to prosper, with the addition of channels which divert moving water around the city. It is now referred to as the "Venice of the North." The rest of the nation didn't have such coverage and nearly a million people died over the course of the collapse. The nation is now three-quarters of its original size.

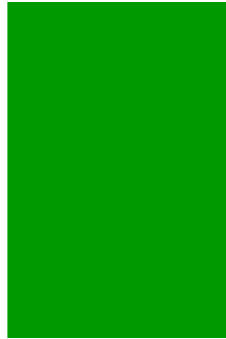
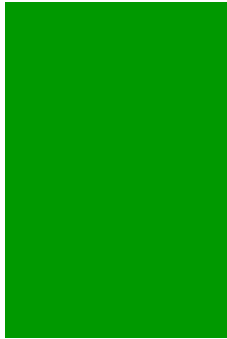
NIGER

The increase in global temperature resulted in a near total wasteland in Niger. The able population either left or coalesced in the few major cities. Those unable to move were wiped out from lack of food. Niger remains in spirit only. Its border lines were still in place as recent as 2059 but no one was able to defend it. When the No Man's Land act of 2060 threw the entire region up for grabs, no one moved in to grab Niger and it remains empty and dead. Even planes divert around it. The one exception is a single oil field controlled by the bastion city of Niamey.

NIGERIA

After continued corruption squandered the remaining natural resources, Nigeria fell apart from civil uprising between 2025 and 2035. The capital of Abuja retained control of the northern region. The south was split into two segments with all three nations using the Niger River as their border. When Benin fell apart, the western region of Ogun, with Lagos as its capital, fell with it, leaving the capital as a solitary

state with little control of its surroundings. When the military junta in Nigeria attempted to cross the river and take Ogun, the third splinter nation, Benue (with Port Harcourt as its capital) moved as well and two forces collided in the Nigerian war (some call civil war) which lasted from 2040-2050. This conflict was ignored by the global community, distracted by the Carbon Collapse until very little of both nations was left. A peace treaty signed in 2050 firmed their borders but Ogun was never claimed and was left barren. Sporadic fighting along the Niger still continues, giving the Benue border the “river of blood” nickname.



NORWAY

Surviving many of the last century's disasters unscathed, Norway has emerged as a global superpower on a scale nearing Japan. Their ironclad economy has elevated their currency as the strongest in the world. The country is one of the most influential in the European Union. They have a large presence in Archon.

OMAN

After oil reserves dried up, well before the collapse, Oman shifted the entirety of their efforts to tourism and industry, more so with the latter, eventually founding one of the largest manufacturing facilities in the region, the Oman Industrial Complex, an immense network of connected districts producing everything from computer chips to battleships. The polluted and ugly spires of the OIC are in stark contrast to the tourist attractions on the other side of the country. The nation has remained a strong member of the PAC despite their economy nearly collapsing from the Oman Complex Attack, an intricate physical and digital attack which shut down the entire OIC for 72 hours. Oman grew in territory from the Arabian Restructure of 2055.

PAKISTAN

After nearly going to war with India during the Carbon Collapse, foreign relations with the southern neighbor have never improved and their border

remains one of the most volatile on the planet. Although losing their place as the Middle East superpower, Pakistan still enjoys a profitable treaty with the United States. When the UN Security Council expanded its membership to include India, Pakistan formally objected and used political weight with the United States to block the admittance. Amended policy still allowed the alteration to the Council, a decision which almost forced Pakistan from the UN.

PANAMA

A third, much larger canal completed construction in 2040 was not put into operation officially until 2050.

PHILIPPINES

Nearly half the Filipinos of the world no longer live on the main islands since the Carbon Collapse. It was estimated nearly 20 million people died during the storms that decimated the islands. The country's economy never fully recovered and billions were spent rebuilding what remained.

QATAR

Still rich with natural assets, Qatar became one of the most prominent Arab powers before and after the global collapse, despite the damage done from the rising ocean levels. They allied with Bahrain and the UAR to push for the formation of the PAC and was also a proponent for a PAC sovereign capital, which would later turn into Archon. In the intervening decades, Qatar underwent substantial shifts in legal policy, moving towards a more liberal government. In 2055, it gained significant territory from Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province via the Arabian Restructure.

ROMANIA

Romania joined the European Union and adopted the Euro as its currency. Since then, it has seen steady economic growth.

RUSSIA

Despite a rollercoaster of wavering foreign relations and an unpredictable currency, huge caches of natural resources have allowed Russia to maintain its position in the global market. Hosting the Winter Olympics five times (2014, 2030, 2066, 2074, and 2090) in the past century has proven its placement in global affairs. The government supported the reform to expand the UNSC and increase the global influence of the United Nations, but many viewed this as a power play to help reduce the growing power of

China and the United States in relationship to lingering Russia. The country backed the creation of Archon but then withdrew support when the DPS was proposed. Despite this nearly constant patronage, Russia has donated little financially to the development of the UN. Today, they remain a powerful member and have recovered substantial strength but this is more because of the failing American dollar. They gained significant power when Russian military contractors gained exclusive rights to arm the entirety of Archon's PPA and civilian UNAPOL. This supply inadvertently shifted towards the DPS as well, an organization Russia did not support. This explains the Russian lettering on the majority of Archon military hardware. The nation is still plagued with corruption and organized crime which has disrupted international affairs. Russia has lost ground with Georgia and with Japan, the latter regaining control of the Kuril Islands in 2065. In 2070, the Russian government founded Lupus Kanti, a private military provider offering services to any Security Council nation. The move sparked worldwide controversy.

RWANDA

The powder-keg in the region, Rwanda exploded shortly after the crumbling of Burundi. The immigration into Rwanda caused an ethnic shift of Hutus, leading to growing unrest. After UN support faded with the Carbon Collapse, Rwanda was unable to sustain itself. Assassination and civil war followed, effectively erasing political borders from the Congo to Tanzania. Despite the entire region being a no man's land, the area around Rwanda was given the moniker, Hell's Horn, a region local PMCs are apprehensive to entering.

SAUDI ARABIA

The reduction of oil demand and the drying of oil supply struck Saudi Arabia greater than any other country in the region. The lack of substantial secondary exports resulted in the depreciation of Saudi influence in contrast to smaller countries like Bahrain and Qatar. Civil unrest followed as the poverty level increased for the majority of the country's population and, like in Kuwait, it encountered difficulty in maintaining control of its population. The divide between upper and lower class widened. In 2055, after the formation of the PAC, a non-military dispute resulted in the loss of territory from Saudi-Arabia to both Iraq and Kuwait. A month later, a similar arrangement (assumed done with financial compensation), resulted in a much larger sections of Saudi Arabia annexed to Yemen,

Oman, Qatar, and the UAE. These two treaties became known singularly as the Arabian Restructure, also nicknamed the Butcher's Bill of Saud. Presently, Saudi Arabia holds the least influence in the PAC. The country is also the furthest behind other PAC members in the areas of human rights and fighting poverty.

SENEGAL

Senegal was unable to sustain itself after every neighboring country failed. Eventually, the government recalled all military forces to gather around the remaining united bastion city-states of Dakar, Saint-Louis and Ziguinchor and is the only government in the region in control of more than one city. The government's policy to not employ private military has sparked clashes between Senegal and Ikoro, finally resulting in the execution of any personnel in Senegal wearing the Ikoro badge.

SIERRA LEONE

After the Second Sierra Leone civil war of 2030 over dwindling food reserves crippled the ruling government, the United Nations peacekeepers from Kenya attempted to rebuild the country's agricultural network. However, overfishing had depleted the potential income of many of the coastal towns and the restructuring could not compensate for this deficiency. When the UN pulled out in 2045, Sierra Leone was left to destroy itself. Only the city bastion of Freetown remains.

SINGAPORE

Despite land reclamation, the city-state lost substantial territory during the Carbon Collapse but has remained strong since.

SLOVAKIA

Still a major international player, Slovakia gained diplomatic leverage with the Bratislava Accords of 2055, where it resolved a land dispute with Hungary and settled diplomatic relations with Liechtenstein.

SOMALIA

The Carbon Collapse was the opportunity Ethiopia needed to instigate and support civil unrest in Somalia, resulting in the appointment of a provisional government which opened its borders to Ethiopian occupation. Somalia officially ceased to exist on January 1st, 2055.

SOUTH AFRICA

The UN Security Council has threatened to impose sanctions against the growing military state of South Africa. Nicknamed the "Claw" or "Talon of Africa", the region acquired coastal regions like Namibia and Zimbabwe, leaving Botswana trapped on three sides from an aggressive neighbor. Like Ethiopia, South Africa has gained significant power and influence and both countries are amassing resources in what is expected to be an inevitable confrontation in no-man's land. The booming economy of the early years of the century fell hard after the Carbon Collapse. The slow degradation of the government finally fell in the civil war of 2046 which saw the placement of the South African Military Provisional Authority (SAMPA)--a planned temporary power which has never relinquished its stranglehold on the region. The country dropped itself from the African Union (what was left of it) and seldom attends UN General Assembly meetings.

The country's significant military presence has grown via lucrative contracts with Ikoro, an agreement which has caused significant controversy among the PMCs, resulting in the removal of the Ikoro name outside of Africa (replaced with The Rainmakers). After rumors of Ethiopia's growing nuclear ambition, South Africa restarted its nuclear program, announcing a successful test two days after Ethiopia's in 2069. UN Nuclear inspectors believe neither country has nuclear launch capability. Rebellion forces based out of Botswana and isolated mountain regions continually clash with South African forces. These forces recently found support from the UN, including a contract with Lupus Kanti to supply military personnel to the borders with Botswana. There maintains a stalemate between the two African superpowers, akin to a new cold war between Ethiopia and South Africa.



SUDAN

The Sudanese Civil War of 2030 halted oil exports from the Sudan. It turned into genocide as the government was pressured by global consumers to continue oil production. Border conflicts and internal ethnic clashes continued by the time of the Carbon Collapse. After the dissolution of Chad in 2045, Sudan appropriated western regions in hope of stabilizing its own country. This backfired as Sudan absorbed thousands of rebellious tribes fighting for independence. The Carbon Collapse prevented UN intervention and Sudan was unable to recover. In 2060, after the ruling party was killed, Sudan was officially classed as a failed nation. Two days later, military forces from Ethiopia crossed the border into the Sudan, securing the territory. Ethiopia armed forces were heavily augmented by the technologically superior American-controlled Free Amalgamated Military, a private security company.

SWAZILAND

After the Carbon Collapse, Swaziland was invaded by South Africa and dissolved in 2058.

SWEDEN

Because of climate change, Sweden suffered longer and more brutal winters, causing issues with the country's agriculture. The temperature has gone up but the snow and precipitation has also increased. Despite this, the nation's economy remains strong. Although the country supports the UN, its presence in Archon is virtually nonexistent.

SWITZERLAND

The United Nations buildings located here are still in operation, now considered International Territories. Beyond that, the nation still prides in its neutrality and has avoided sending personnel to Archon as it considers the region too unstable. Switzerland was one of the last nations to place an embassy in the city.

SYRIA

The Jericho Accords and UN-ARMA affected Syria nearly as much as Israel. After Israel lost Jerusalem to an international territory, Syria proposed and was granted authorization to reacquire the Golan Heights. Possession took place on October 10th, 2055 under US and Israeli objection. 50,000 UN Peacekeepers were on hand to prevent a military conflict, which did not occur. Since then, Syria made a pledge to remove all terrorists and Islamic militant movements within its borders. With UN aide, Syrian military succeeded in routing known cells and training camps.

Subsequent referendums after the formation of the PAC allowed Syria to grow and expand along with other progressive Arab counties. However, government bureaucracy and corruption has been harder to defeat and the country remains one of the poorer performing nations in the region. Unlike others in the Middle East, ethnic violence is still a daily concern.

TAJIKISTAN

A growing economy blessed with tapped natural resources and hydroelectric power has allowed Tajikistan considerable power in the region. They no longer require aid and have assisted neighboring countries like Pakistan when they were struck hard by the Carbon Collapse, a disaster which missed Tajikistan completely given their remote and mountainous location. After the revolution in neighboring Uzbekistan, Tajikistan offered aid to Tajik guerillas, straining the relationship between the two nations. This evolved into a limited direct conflict which Uzbekistan could not maintain. Eventually, Tajikistan appropriated territory from its shattered neighbor and despite Uzbekistan not being even a credible threat, the border remains heavily guarded.

TANZANIA

The failure to establish an East African Union of a half-dozen countries in Africa was credited to Tanzania. After the Carbon Collapse and the civil wars that preceded and followed, most neighboring nations around this country fell apart. In 2050, Tanzania, also suffering from the effects of the collapse, took this initiative to secure additional territory from these failed nations.

THAILAND

Like Cambodia, Thailand is suffering from a growing disparage between its upper and lower class. Major cities like Bangkok are sprawling centers of technology and progress, surrounded for miles by low rent housing and poverty.

TOGO

Like other nations in Western Africa, Togo was unable to sustain itself after the Carbon Collapse and became a failed nation in 2044.

TUNISIA

Tunisia still has plans to join the PAC but has yet to do so, most likely due to strong relations with the European Union. Despite its neighbors, Tunisia has not fallen into chaos. Nearly the entire southern half

of the country, encompassing the majority of desert land, has been converted into the largest solar/wind power plant in the world, selling its surplus to the European Union. The high capacity power lines running across the Mediterranean have been temporarily cut off twice by Concord terrorists, once in 2075 and again in 2089. Although the project was intended to expand to Libya and Algeria, these failed from regional instability and border disputes.

TURKEY

Although maintaining close ties with the PAC and African alliances, Turkey joined with the European Union early in the 21st century, adopting the euro shortly after. Although growing into a regional superpower, Turkey was unable to gain a permanent Security Council seat. This is despite being one of the principle powers behind UN-ARMA and its loudest supporter after the amendment was proposed by Canada. An attempted coup by an armed religious militia in 2050 failed and the following civil conflict all but eliminated pro-militant movements in the country. Turkish contractors were one of the largest non-PAC populations in Archon during its construction, assigned specifically to Freeport.

TURKMENISTAN

Government corruption has single-handedly kept the economy of Turkmenistan below the regional average. A failed coup in 2060 nearly destroyed the country and local tribes have continually clashed with the country's military since. The country is not expected to survive the rest of the century. The government has contracted increased military from Lupus Kanti to assist them in these disputes.

UGANDA

One of the first countries to fail during the Carbon Collapse, Uganda was already undergoing its bloodiest civil war in history between warring Bantus and Sudanese. It was expected that the country would be divided in two. The No Man's Land Act prevented this and only the bastion of Kampala remains.

UKRAINE

Despite being a loud supporter for the UN, Ukraine is seldom noticed in Archon. Ukrainian military under the UN banner were the only European forces allowed into Jerusalem after the end of the 10-Day war. Its shrinking population now stands at less than 36 million with the blame placed mostly on rising emigration as well as the deteriorating health of the people.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES [UAE]

The rise of the UAE in the global market began before the 21st century and despite occasional setbacks, has not halted. After the Iranian Civil Revolution, the UAE adopted the Progressive Arab Reform (PAR), a series of constitutional amendments hoping to secure firmer alliances outside of the Middle East. This included the reduction of Sharia law in favor of laws compliant with UN ICC recommendations, increasing freedom of speech, religion, press, and the removal of restrictions upon women. In truth, many of these amendments had already been in place but the announcement of PAR was considered a watershed event in the region, as its policy influenced similar reform in Iran, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Nations which didn't follow along like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia found their economies lacking. As a result, the UAE became the seat of the PAC and one of the principle proponents to building a united capital city to connect them with Qatar and Bahrain. Alas, this project fell through and with 60 billion kaleeji at stake; the project was donated to the UN in exchange for coastal property rights, leading to the formation of SAMAZ. The last amendment to PAR, the equal rights to non-citizens, was passed by insistence of the UN even before the construction of Archon. However, when the Office of Internal Oversight examined the Archon paperwork, it was reported that the UAE was committing several international labor laws. Despite being against PAR doctrine, indentured servitude was still occurring, forcing a mass investigation into every single contractor in the city, costing the UAE billions in settlements from trade unions. The UAE was also unsuccessful in preventing the construction of United Tower 1, which passed the Burj Khalifa as the tallest building in the world. The Arab Reconstruction offered significant land gains to the UAE, the largest ration gained in comparison to original national territory. This acquisition was absorbed entirely by the Abu Zabi Emirate.



UNITED KINGDOM

The flooding of the Thames into London during the Carbon Collapse cost billions of dollars in damage and wiped out hundreds of years of English history. The city never fully recovered and there are still dozens of blocks of the city only accessible by boat. Reconstruction has nicknamed one region "Bitter Venice". Politically, the nation has undergone significant upheaval, losing Northern Ireland in the reunification, and nearly losing Scotland in a similar commission twelve years later. The UK is still considered a regional superpower and maintains its seat on the UN Security Council. Along with the US, the UK was adamantly opposed to the proposition of UN-ARMA and privately attempted to convince the Canadian government to kill the proposition before it could go forward. However, when the vote came to pass, the UK refused to side with the US because of the growing stress being caused as a result of the Ten-Day War.

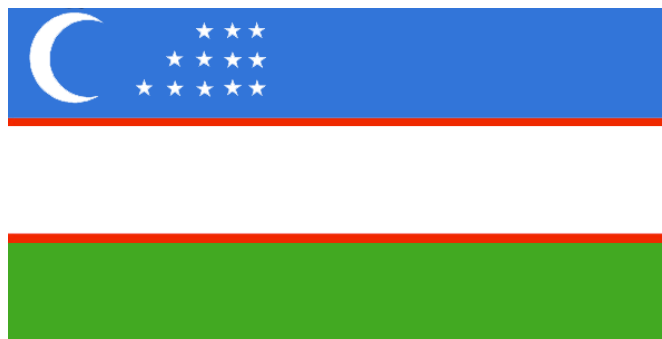
UNITED STATES

The "fall" of the United States is often greatly exaggerated. The nation didn't devour itself or tear apart from civil disobedience. Years of political corruption and infighting prevented the blossoming of foreign relations approaching the Carbon Collapse. The divide between conservatives and liberals was growing wider, with many threats by several states to secede from the republic. Each political party was actively trying to sabotage the other. Issues over civil rights, military spending and health care spilled into street rioting. The conservative power in charge during the carbon collapse was unable to respond properly to the sudden rising water level, killing two million people in the southeastern states, making past environmental catastrophes pale in comparison. The collapse was instilling the fear that the nation was splitting in the middle between the north and south as it was hundreds of years prior. This ended up not occurring, but since then, the vernacular has started to change, referring to the states as "separate but united". Several politicians began using the plural "are" instead of "is" in conversations when referring to the nation. The lack of economic reform and the reduction of exports eventually drove the US dollar below the average of other developing nations. This occurred the same time the kaleeji started to gain popularity. Eventually, it and the euro became the de facto measure of currency in the world. The United States left the UN twice in the past century, once with introduction of UN-ARMA, and again with the creation of Archon. Both departures were temporary. Massive budget cuts to the state military

was seen as the first sign of the country's recovery, a position which was imposed more by the UN rather than the politicians in the US, most of which opposed the reduction of the US military. The US also opposed the reform to the Security Council and again with the formation of a disconnected peacekeeper army. The US faced major international opponents when it refused to adopt sweeping environmental policy changes and it is still the largest country using gasoline run vehicles (despite the skyrocketing price of gas). Socialist policies introduced in the 2060s involved the largest revolution in health care since 2010 as well as the introduction of the American National Bank, which replaced US Bancorp in 2075. Religious conflicts have died down as the vast majority of Americans have no religious affiliations. Fanatical opposition to this and other liberal shifts have gained root in several southern states and terrorists cells have began cropping up. Despite this, the fundamental shift in conservative thinking including the religious right and the neo-conservative movement is considered fading and near dead, no longer having a major influence in US foreign relations. The last lingering thread of opposition was against the formation of the DPS in Archon, which prompted the US to refuse an embassy in the city. This has recently changed and the US embassy was finally commissioned. By the end of the century, the US is still considered one of the loudest voices in global affairs and policies but it no longer dictates terms.

UZBEKISTAN

After numerous human rights violations over many years including reports of ethnic cleansing, Uzbekistan fell into civil unrest in 2025, followed shortly after by total rebellion. This was backed by the resident Tajik population with public support by native Uzbeks. The fighting tore the country apart over the next fifteen years. This eventually drew neighboring Tajikistan into the conflict, which started the Tajik War of 2038. With internal and external conflict, Uzbekistan collapsed though the name survived afterward, albeit with smaller territory. The nation has never fully recovered from this incident and its relationship with the much larger and militarily superior Tajikistan is still considered volatile.



VENEZUELA

Despite being hit hard during the Carbon Collapse, and suffering considerable losses to coastal towns and resorts, Venezuela's economy has endured and prospered, emerging as the most industrialized and economically progressive nation in Latin America. After limiting its ties to North America, the country was able to keep momentum through cross-oceanic interests. Before the dramatic falloff of oil demands worldwide, Venezuela found significant foreign investment, sufficient to even rival the Arab nations across the world. Enough of an infrastructure remained with mineral and agriculture to sustain the economy after the oil flow slowed. In the past thirty years, the capital, Caracas has been seen as the economic heart of South America, dubbed by many as "Fourth Rome". Relations with Brazil have not been as productive and Venezuela openly opposed Brazil's appointment as a permanent seat to the Security Council, preferring the United Latin Voice (ULV) instead. Despite support from other South American countries, this did not come to pass. Venezuela hosted the Summer Olympics in 2060 but the events were marred with spikes in crime, often against tourists and athletes. The massacre of the entire American diving team resulted in the US pulling all personnel from the event. The games were cancelled shortly after and crime continues to be one of the worst on the planet.

VIETNAM

The economy and quality of life of Vietnam and its residents were slowly improving until the Carbon Collapse hit. Typhoons and floods crippled the country and wiped out ten million people. With the world suffering along, aid was slow to come by and civil unrest quickly turned to a civil war which saw the fall of the National Assembly. 2061 saw the introduction of a military junta which asserted its claim over the entire region and promised to regain the country's strength and stabilize its infrastructure. Although the country slowly started to rebuild, thousands of more lives were lost from various

protests throughout the country. Despite promises made, the country has yet to introduce a permanent government.

YEMEN

The most volatile member of the PAC, the government of Yemen is one of the most xenophobic on the planet. Ultra nationalists in power (firmly in control since 2060) maintain strict control over nearly every facet of the country, including an ironclad fist around the telecommunications network. The government was able to instigate this after the damage caused by the Oman Complex Attack. The fifth and sixth most powerful servers in the world are stationed in Yemen, monitoring all international as well as local digital traffic. All SEEDs sold in Yemen must be modified to tap into one of these two servers. Only 1% of all internet websites and accounts can appear on Yemen SEEDs. This has caused many net surfers to call Yemen “The Black Hole,” as it has less digital traffic than many third world countries. Questions abound over what could be occurring within the borders of the xenocentric nation. Yemen rarely votes on UN proposals and is the most silent member of the PAC. All exports are subsidized by the government.

ZAMBIA

Landlocked and with few remaining resources, Zambia suffered considerable losses to both viral outbreaks and environmental disasters. Over a million people lost their lives between 2025 and 2055. It was unable to maintain its borders when South Africa moved north and appropriated territory. Only local warlords have been able to maintain control over the remaining bastion, Lusaka. There are dozens of smaller tribes fighting both each other and the South African military.

ZIMBABWE

Like Zambia, Zimbabwe was unable to maintain its stability during the Carbon Collapse but suffered far greater damage, estimated between 2 and 3 million people lost. There was no resistance when South African forces crossed the border to offer aid, leading eventually to a total absorption of lands. At least a dozen warring tribes fight a losing rebellion against the African superpower. These tribes are steeped in considerable rivalry, preventing alliances to further their united cause.



Lt. Janx exploded. Not like a bullet caused a discharge of blood to appear more severe than it actually was, he genuinely blew apart. It reminded me of that party trick where someone drops a bottle of liquid nitrogen into a barrel full of ping-pong balls. One thunderous pop and limbs scattered. I was behind Janx and took a faceful of fluids. Another side-effect of plasma weapons—no intense pressure wave. A convenient Janx-shaped hole appeared in a wall of fire I managed slipped through. My luck he was overweight.

I knew Janx had a kid and wife somewhere, but all I could think of was whether or not he had passed his last blood test. What had done him in was a German made weapon officially dubbed a "solar mine", legal under the UN's latest hollow compromise because of its capacity to differentiate friend from foe and deactivate when given a radio command, a feature disabled once discovered they could be hacked. Progress.

The blast had taken out two others, catching the survivors off guard. Cooke was behind a fallen street sign and was squirming with his eyebrows burned off. I realized I was the only one still standing with others dead or cowering. I spat out a wad of congealed frenemy and casually met with Finger behind a force entry shield he had driven into the ground.

"Holy hell," snapped Finger at the still falling debris. He caught sight of my apocalyptic visage and aped concern. "Tal?" I didn't answer. "TAL!"

"Hmm?" I muttered quietly.

"You okay?"

"I'm alright," I muttered wimpily.

"You sure?" Finger asked.

"I'm alright," I repeated. Finger reached to my collar like a concerned mother on her child's first day of work, but instead of fixing a tie, he flicked off a piece of Janx. "When you write Janx's widow, you leave out the details," I added.

Another comrade that I had shared silence with on that initial flight joined us in the makeshift cover. "Was it a relic or is someone actually involved here?" Harlow asked.

"We need to form a better triangle." Finger snapped. He stole a quick glance from cover. Nothing responded. He took notice of two more survivors across the street; fear had them fossilized as if from Medusa's glare. "Harlow, gather those two there. If they're able, make for the night club across the street. We need to hold this area until the mult-peds arrive. Talvin!"

"Hmm?" I mumbled. So this was shock; I was more interested in the careless birds above me than the dead or disciplined around. Finger snapped his digits in front of my eyes.

"Are you here," he said.

"Unfortunately," I muttered

"Focus, I need you up high. There's a bell tower around the block. Relay movement and targets. Whatever happens, don't move from your position without my call." Finger was a natural at this. I wasn't; there was no reflex to violence, no snap reaction which led to anything logical, just the impulse to run.

"Alone?" I asked.

"Don't worry, you got Janx with you," Finger replied.

"That's not very damn funny," I answered.

"—Guys, guys!" Harlow snapped. "Listen. What's that sound?" Amongst the painful squirming from Cooke, we made out loud thumbs, without rhythm, like artillery fire impacting across the city, except it didn't have that faded bass of distant explosions. It was close, vibrating through the pavement like a pneumatic piston driving a telephone pole into the ground.

"It's not artillery," I said. "Sounds like something walking,"

Harlow made a look like I just quoted scripture in science class. "You need to keep descriptions like that to yourself," he said.

"Even better reason to have vantage," Finger said, pushing his index to my sternum. "Go."

I tore myself from cover but kept still in its shadow until ducking behind the nearby abandoned hotel. I passed a group of rookie ground pounders with unblemished armor, naive eyes glazed like deodorant caps, and just enough awareness to follow the one in front. Into the alley, I kept close to the wall, as much in the shroud of the building as I could manage. A waist high white stone wall provided a welcome [false] sense of security as I darted from the alleyway to the tower.

It wasn't a bell tower; it was a minaret. With electricity still running through the block, the loudspeaker and mic were still functioning if I cared to announce the salah. I reached the peak and scanned the devastated cityscape of dilapidated buildings and broken pavement which once marked Nouakchott. I was momentarily nostalgic for that abridged week in Spain when I tolled vehicles crossing the Gibraltar Bridge. If the capital of Mauritania was any indication, the country wasn't exactly reaping the benefits from the oil eruption. The people had hoped foreign investors would develop the country, elevate it from its dark age when owning slaves was legal, back in 2007. What they got were incorporated vultures funded by resource starved nations. I honestly didn't know who had contracted us, a foreign investor or the Mauritians themselves, still struggling to maintain their sovereignty from corporations which deemed traditional borders obsolete.

Half of Africa was already classed a no-man's land. Bordering nations had failed, creating wastelands bisected by roads that couldn't be more valuable unless they were paved in platinum. An old corporate friend serving on the ISCD Obama [that has been forced to disavow me] once mentioned that from orbit, Africa was beginning to look more and more like Percival Lowell's sketches of Mars—arid, lifeless, with roads being the only mark of civilization.

A brain impulse was all that was required to activate the laryngophone strapped to my throat, but unlike our good Colonel, I was still required to speak.

"There's movement between the buildings on Congress Avenue," I whispered. "They've got traffic cameras."

"Can you tap into them?" Finger's voice vibrated in my head. I wasn't as practised in African automatrix encryptions as the European models but figured they'd be based on the ones Morocco acquired from Spain. I was shocked how easily I was able to find an SSL leak until I realized few people in this city owned cars anymore. So I *man-in-the-middle*d and piggybacked the private key. The monitors were fifty years old, relaying signals so nebulous, I couldn't discriminate

a Volkswagen from a fat guy riding a moped. But I didn't need advanced resolution to make out the leviathan occupying both lanes of the city's main artery marching towards my company comrades.

"Finger, you need to get the hell out of there," I muttered as I tried counting the legs, the flailing appendages that whipped faster than the video could refresh. Despite being unable to identify it, I still eliminated every sensible and sane machine of war operated by any of the military contractors I had read about.

"What is it?" Finger asked.

"Mecha," I answered; it was all I could assume. I still considered the possibility it was an abomination birthed from a Japanese nuclear reactor.

"Maybe Kantis," Finger replied.

"You need to pull back," I said. White noise permeated the video feed—this thing was generating its own magnetic field. It wasn't birthed from a nuclear reactor; it was a nuclear reactor. As it passed by, I gauged its height by the buildings it crossed; it would clear two storeys. At that point, its tentacle smashed the monitor.

"We'll catch them on the flank," Finger said. "They won't have anywhere to run."

"I don't think it'll run," I snapped as I cut my connection to the network. From an intersection four blocks away, I finally saw it undistorted.

Jesus.

"What do you mean *it*...just one?" Finger shouted. "What do you see?"

It stopped at the intersection and began scanning the city. "Something from across the Styx," I whispered.

"What, the band?"

"Just pull back!" I snapped. I still had my real eyes but despite lacking augmentation, I could still make out its weapon systems, especially when they began tracking towards my location. There was no way it could know I was here. "Don't look at me," I whimpered. "Don't look at me. Don't look at me."

It looked at me.

"Oh tits."

How could it pinpoint my location while ignoring the other towers? TK radio encryptions were notoriously difficult. And then, the moment before it fired its gauss rifle, I realized. "You created the leak. You let me see you..."

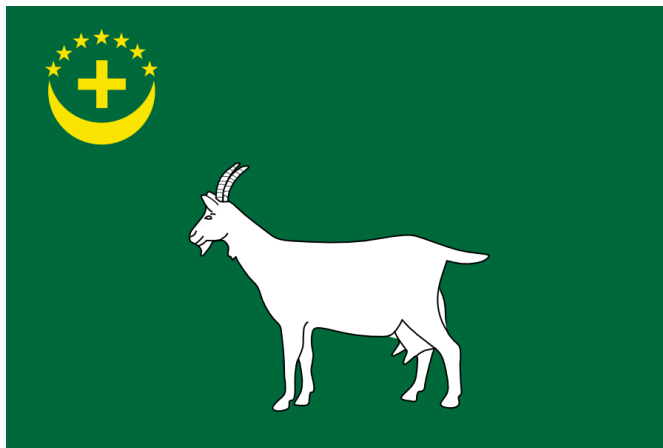
The first iron flechette shattered the mid-point of the minaret like glass. The second was lower, vaporizing its foundation. I leapt from the opposite side, and as the tower bent and collapsed, I slid down its spine and drove through the ceramic tiles of a neighboring house. Poor workmanship broke my fall and I passed through rotting wood and thin floors until slamming onto a couch on the base level. At some point, I dropped my gun and everything else which wasn't belted to me.



NEW TERRITORIES

ABKHAZIA

Still a point of conflict in the region, Abkhazia, located in Eastern Europe, was recognized as an independent nation in 2031, along with South Ossetia. Although still with a struggling economy, the nation is slowly improving.



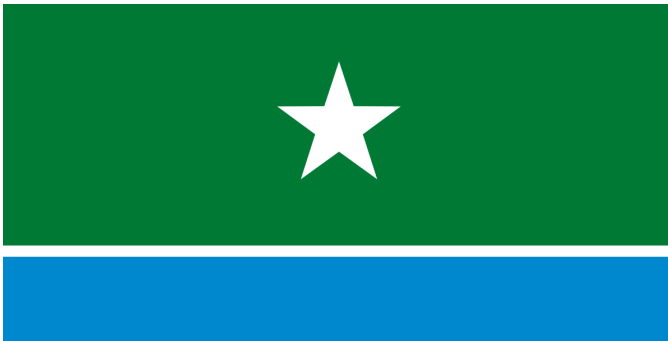
ACEH

Aceh declared independence from Indonesia in 2055. It was recognized by the UN in 2065. Both dates coincide with identical events occurring with Papua.



BENUE

Nearly surrounded on all sides by Nigeria, Benue found independence in 2057 after the Carbon Collapse. Because of massive mineral and oil reserves, Benue has a GDP greater than that of all of Nigeria. Foreign investment has allowed major economic boons with some claiming Benue as the “Dubai of Africa.”



HELL'S HORN

A realm of chaos once claimed by the failed nation of Rwanda, Hell's Horn is considered the most violent region on the planet. More than 30 local tribes slaughter each other with the slim chance of geographical gain. There are still dozens of riches from mines to oil wells waiting to be tapped but foreign investment will not risk a dime until the region is under some measure of control. Few outsiders attempt to cross the expanse and air traffic is diverted around it. There are rumors of outsiders (military groups) secretly involved in this hot zone in hopes of positioning a sympatric voice in power.

THE MARCH

The massive range of unclaimed land around the bastions of Africa declared by the No-Man's Land act. These areas are populated and often densely so but have no recognized government other than small, regional warlords. The territory is unchecked and chaotic. Despite aspirations, there has never

been a successful attempt to redraw the map of this region.

PAPUA

in 2050, Papua and West Papua unified with Papua New Guinea to form the Commonwealth of Papua. This was necessary as there was little left of the original governments on the island after the Carbon Collapse.



PALESTINE

The nation of Palestine was given full UN recognition after the events of the 10-Day War which saw Israeli control of Jerusalem fall against the might of UN resolution and its enforcing peacekeepers. The events of the 10-Day War are what prompted the creation of UN-ARMA and the restructuring of the United Nations. After decades of rebuilding and foreign investment, Palestine is now one of the most stable economies in the region. Losing its claim of Jerusalem, Palestine maintains its seat of power from Jericho. The Gaza strip remains under Israeli control.



SOUTH OSSETIA

A small nation which found independence in 2031 from Georgia during a conflict which nearly sparked a world war.



NEW TREATIES AND ACCORDS

ARABIAN RECONSTRUCTION

This involved the selling of land from Saudi Arabia to neighboring nations. Although Iraq and Kuwait secured considerable territory, the vast gains in comparison to original sovereign claims went to Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE. Although the land had little value (empty wells and un-tillable lands), there were political motivations involved. This would be known historically later as the Butcher's Bill of Saud. Saudi Arabia is now half the size of its original claim, losing the majority of its land in the south. This occurred principally due to the lack of US support during several internal conflicts and the reduction of oil demand given competition in Africa.

JERICHO ACCORDS

The peace process that was instigated by the UN which tempered the Israel/Arab conflict and settled issues between the nations of Israel and Palestine. It was signed on June 2nd, 2055 and declared Jerusalem as an international city governed by the UN, outside of the control of both Israel and Palestine. The accord also defined the border of the newly formed republic of Palestine.

NO-MAN'S LAND ACCORD

After decades of fighting, dozens of governments across Africa had collapsed. Borders weren't being reinforced and smaller warlords were declaring their own patches of land. This finally culminated in the No-Man's Land Accord, signed on December 25th, 2060. The UN resolution, which erased borders of

nations with no stable governments, was made in hopes of a following treaty which would redraw the lines of the continent. This never occurred and thousands of square kilometers of Africa remain unclaimed.

PAC-PAN ARABIAN COALITION

An economic and political alliance of nearly a dozen middle-eastern countries that replaced the CCASG and was considered one of the watershed events that stabilized the region. This alliance began with Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Yemen was admitted one year later. It would expand again in 2065 with the admission of Egypt and Palestine. By 2075, it would encompass most of the remaining members of the Arab league (Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, UAE, and Yemen). The name may change with the proposed inclusion of Iran.

ZANGEZOR PEACE ACCORDS

The treaty of 2035 between Armenia and Azerbaijan which resolved the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

CONFLICTS

THE 10-DAY WAR

A conflict between Israel and Palestine in 2055 that culminated in the Jericho Accords.

EAST AFRICAN WAR

The EAW dealt with the border conflicts which occurred between Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, and Somalia between 2045 and 2065 which culminated in Ethiopia amalgamating these border nations into its own and expanding its controlled territory. Ethiopia justified this from the growing chaos between local warlords as well as the poverty resulting from the Carbon Collapse. Somalia was the first and since occurring during the bedlam of typhoons and floods, and considering the Somali government had lost all control over its own population, this was deemed a necessary action by its neighboring country. A similar conflict with Sudan in 2060 met growing criticism by the UN but Ethiopia once again cited the inevitable forecast for Sudan given that country's fluctuating borders. However, it was the bloodier conflict with Eritrea in 2065 which was met with UN ire, forcing sanctions against the African superpower and stopping their border expansion. It is also believed

threats from the military state of South Africa also prevented further expansion.

SECOND SOUTH OSSETIA WAR

The conflict between Georgia and Russia lasted for two years until the Georgian military was crippled. Russia, however, didn't stop with the cessation of Georgian resistance and began moving past the contested regions into Georgian territory, claiming the Georgian government had committed numerous crimes in the war. The UN declined to support Russia in this move and threats from neighboring Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey threatened to spill into a global conflict. On May 2nd, 2031, GUAM made a joint threat against Russia, claiming any further conflict in Georgian territory would be met with a joint counter-offensive. GUAM demanded not only Russia cease its push into Georgia, but also pull back its claimed territory. Japan and Korea stepped to mediate the conflict and although Russia would eventually pull its forces out of the conflict, Georgia lost all its claims on the contested regions, and the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were officially recognized by the United Nations.





I wished I could claim that was the only time I ran across that particular grotesque example of corporate grandiosity. It made sense to have robots built anthropomorphic, for no other reason than to hang appropriate nicknames off them. Even if their official titles were a collection of numbers and abbreviations, their opponents would still go about calling them dobermans, vultures, or rhinos. The exceptions were the humanoid variants; we just referred to them all as skinners. But there was nothing in reality or fantasy which that monstrosity resembled. The closest comparison came from the crude etchings inside of pen and paper role playing games, the boss encountered at the climax of a dungeon delve.

Our first unwanted reunion occurred in the capital of Niger four weeks later. Calling Niamey, a forgotten city half-buried by sand, a capital was satirical. The natives had fled or died decades earlier, leaving the remaining population employed to guard the surrounding wellheads. Our task had been to escort supply runs from the Diori Hamani International Airport to the production platforms. Intelligence had revealed that KN had been tasked to retake the heads, and decided the best way was to starve out the workforce.

Continuing Finger's tactless sense of humor, I was given duty to man one of the pintle mounted recoilless guns. The drones engaged us as we moved through the city. We were required to hold steady until reinforcements rode in like a badly written dues ex machina. It was bravado striking us so close to the airport. Many of us thought it was a probe, gauging our military strength for a more precise strike still to come. Kantis Neuri had a one-minute window to inflict as much damage as possible before our buzzboys arrived.

Our lead escort vehicle suffered a broadside of coilgun fire and twirled in the air before crashing into one of the houses. The doors to the remaining vehicles swung open and blossomed into mounted riot shields. I was manning the turret atop the second vehicle. It was only sixty seconds. Sixty seconds.

Finger had buried himself in the part, brazenly approaching the mechanical mass with his mangonel—a fully-automatic triple-barreled shotgun loaded with solid slugs and capable of firing ten rounds every three seconds. Ever since KN revealed themselves a month ago, more powerful weapons had been promised from our overlords, but Finger had been the only one blessed. He waded through the faceless horde like Achilles in his pursuit of Hector. I shouldn't have wanted to compete with that image. I fired a few shots into the crowd, gutting or beheading units within the mob, barely holding back the march. The dozens of other soldiers around us were relegated to traditional caseless rifles, providing more distraction than stopping power. I saw Nergal approach from the back of its army. Like Finger, it filled a role. The Minotaur in pursuit of Theseus, the monster approached my preoccupied lieutenant. I brought my rifle to bear. I allowed the reticle to lock onto the approaching beast.

I squeezed the trigger.

It impacted near the beast's head, tearing off part of a sensor quill and damaging its main camera.

It was then I realized what I had done.

"My bad," I whispered. A robot without any visible

indicators of emotion shouldn't look pissed.

But pissed it looked.

It discharged both weapons, uprooting our vehicle and crushing several soldiers using it for cover. I fell out of the turret and crawled from the wreckage as a flame took hold. The beast wrapped its tentacles around one of our transport trucks and tore it apart. The crates broke open, raining its cargo—silver-wrapped energy bars—across the city street. Finger had strayed too far from the convoy and could only watch as the monster waded through his battalion.

It closed in on me, fully aware I was backing from its piton-legs, but doing nothing directly to kill me. If it had breath, I would have caught the scent. I was inches from its reach when the timer sounded. We all heard the recall command, like a ricocheting clapper in a bell, resonating from within the monster and all the drones slaved under its command.

Unable to resist the siren's song, the machines turned and retreated. I stayed frozen in place, watching the machine gallop away until our buzzboys appeared. The buzzboy was a two-man craft bristling like a porcupine with weapons and jet nozzles but lacking wings. Without that safeguard, each time one of its dozen or so engines sputtered, the beast would bounce in the air, scattering the people, below it, that it was trying to protect. They secured the devastation as we started to count our dead and assess our wounded. We were under strict orders to not pursue KN, as they could be goading us into a conflict on their terms.

Finger approached. My uniform had gotten world-weary and my face was sandblasted. Finger still managed to smile like an approving parent. Other survivors found themselves pulled into our circle by Finger's gravity.

"I shot it," I gasped.

"I noticed," Finger answered boisterously. He turned to the others. "Did you all notice?"

"Don't make light," I snapped.

"I was being serious."

"You had a tone."

"It's a defense mechanism," Finger answered, "and we all have it."

I found Harlow and Cooke smiling alongside their lieutenant, ignoring the nameless and in some cases literally faceless causalities being shuffled away. I didn't care if they agreed or were sucking up.

"I don't," I snapped. "You did it again. You're all doing it again. So irritatingly blasé. People died or had you not noticed? Are you too preoccupied by chasing the spotlight?"

"The only spotlight I saw was the one that beast had on you," Finger deflected. "Acted like it had grudge. Was it the same as Nouakchott?"

And I fell for it. "Obviously," I answered. There was little use in pursuing my point; no one cared. It was how many of them coped, by ignorance. Others genuinely didn't care. "That thing unquestionably broke its mold."

"Well, I doubt it rolled off a line," Finger answered as he crouched down to retrieve handfuls of scattered food supplements, "but in the end, still just a robot."

"I think it would disagree," I said, "more like an apotheosis."

Finger washed away his smile and stared grimly at me. I could tell his brain was slowly processing my statement.

"You made that word up," he teased.

"It's the glorification of something to godly status," I answered, "like a—"

"—robot god?" he interjected, distributing the pilfered cargo to his men. "You read too much. Have a protein bar." I accepted and said nothing more.

I knew Africa was going to claim my soul. That monster hadn't crossed the river Styx; we had, marching heedlessly into the underworld. And I didn't even have a coin for the trip back. We were in a city, long abandoned by wiser locals, buried in plastic-wrapped low-grade energy bars. While emergency vehicles gathered up the wounded and usable technology, the rest of us foraged for any unbroken water bottles, loaded our pockets with mechanically compressed carbohydrates, and started the long trek back to base.



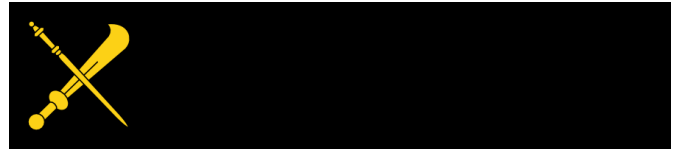
AFRICAN BASTIONS

African bastions are self-contained city states with little to no sovereign claims over surrounding territory. This emerged shortly after the Carbon Collapse with the No-Man's Land accord which stripped the claims of countries on the continent no longer able to sustain their government. The regions between these bastions are not empty, but populated (and in many cases densely so) by sprawls of crime-ridden low rent housings. These regions are often controlled by tribal warlords with authority over only a few blocks. The bastions gain their influence and finance from nearby caches of minerals and petroleum. Bastion controlled territory often resemble spiders, with defended roads leading to these caches. Export comes occasionally from controlled waterways but more often via hostile highways requiring security contracts with PMCs. Bastions are precariously stable with corrupt despots

in control, every one guilty of hundreds of human rights violations. Genocide is par the course. It is believed that if the demand for oil were to diminish any further, the majority of the cities would not sustain themselves and would collapse into the sprawl like a kicked-over anthill. It is believed these clusters are stable points the continent requires and that without them, a sudden and brutal die-off would occur. These are the known African bastions:

ACCRA

One of the largest bastions but one of the poorest, Accra receives substantial income not from resources, but from the bastion of Ouagadougou. Accra operates the large coastal dock other bastions, including Ouagadougou, require for export. The highway between Accra and Ouagadougou is considered one of the most dangerous escort routes in the world.



BANJUL

A wealthy, albeit small bastion, Banjul is blessed with a massive sea dock in a relatively safe region. It is the only African bastion with a sustainable tourist industry. Western nations have gotten to calling Banjul "the On-ramp" as it is the most common used port from the Americas into Africa. This alone is a boon to the economy. The city also survives from miniscule revenue from peanuts, palm oil, and a handful of refineries by the Gambia River.

BOMA

The coastal bastion of the former Democratic Republic of the Congo is now entirely guarded by the PMC of Lupus Kanti. Boma does not have enough resources to survive and if LK were to uproot, the bastion would collapse soon after.

BRAZZAVILLE

Across the Congo River to Kinshasa, Brazzaville benefits from a trade and security agreement with its neighbor. It is expected the two cities will merge

into a united sovereignty with enough stability to finally be recognized. Both bastions are under pressure from surrounding PMCs preferring this not occur. Accusations of reputation sabotage from both Lupus Kanti and Ikoro lay credence to this. If merged, the proposed United Republic of the Congo would be the largest bastion on the continent, and one with no obligations to foreign security.



CABINDA

The bastion of Cabinda is attempting to form a recognized sovereignty as it controls a significant enclave north of what's left of Angola. The economy is based around offshore oil refineries, making the bastions dependency on foreign military less than most other bastions. Despite under military rule, the bastion is considered on the lower crest of human rights violations. This growing popularity has not come without a price, as Luanda and Cabinda are currently at war over oil wells between their two territories. Luanda has a much larger military but Cabinda's GDP is significantly higher.

CONAKRY

An unstable bastion, Conakry's problems deal with the lack of solid leadership rather than finances. The city's advantageous location could rival Bajul as the largest epicenter of western trade. Alas, the power base is controlled by several allied warlords with not one powerful enough to challenge the others. This has made the entire region prone to sudden violent outbursts between abrasive factions.

DAKAR

Unlike other bastions, Dakar is run by the Assembly of Senegal, along with Touba and Ziguinchor. Dakar is the largest and the most vital, as it houses the majority of the Assembly and guards the only sea port for Touba. Dakar is also the most technically advanced bastion, with a telecommunications

network that reportedly cost 12.5 billion euros. The Paris to Dakar rally was officially cancelled in 2040 but unofficially restarted in 2065, albeit considerably more dangerous. Like all Senegal bastions, PMC presence is forbidden and wearing the Ikoro badge is a capital crime. The Assembly of Senegal accuses the PMCs as being war profiteers which are starting conflicts in order to drum up revenue.

DOUALA

Along with minor oil exports, Douala also handles coffee and cocoa from farms under the bastion's protection. It is all that remains of the nation of Cameroon.

FREETOWN

What could have been the largest port in all of Africa was nearly destroyed by the Second Sierra Leone war. The Carbon Collapse finished what the civil war had started. Since then, the city has slowly started to rebuild. Its isolated location has allowed it to have one of the smallest border militia's in Africa. This is required when considering the need for more law enforcement inside the bastion. A half dozen offshore oil rigs has helped the city rebuild and defend itself, but it suffers from corruption and a growing lower class. If the current government were to be replaced, there is still the potential of recovery of the region.

HUAMBO

A landlocked bastion formally of Angola, Huambo relies on railways to coastal docks and a sea route via the local river to ferry exports and imports. The rail route, the larger of the two, is the preferred target by local rivals.

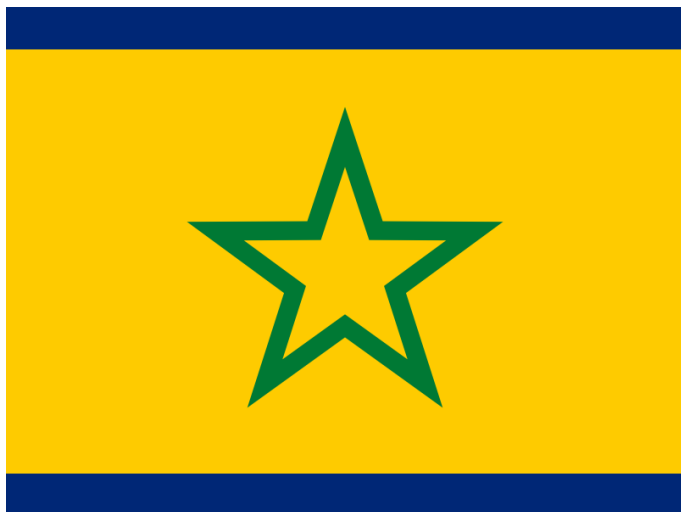
KAMPALA

Although on the edge of Lake Victoria, Kampala does not have a safe sea route for its considerable oil exports (three dozen drill sites around the bastion's controlled territory. This has forced it to rely on ground transports to Kenya. Although this is a relatively short route, it is plagued with repeated attacks from rivals in Iganga and Tororo.

KINSHASA

The largest bastion in Africa, Kinshasa relies on its treaty with Boma to export the majority of its oil and mineral exports. When Lupus Kanti secured Boma, Kinshasa began relying more on its sea route down the Congo. Kinshasa is also considered the most violent of all bastions where daily crime is concerned. Kinshasa does have a sizeable personal army,

preventing the need of hiring out a PMC. This has kept them out of the conflict in the region between Ikoro and Lupus Kanti. Despite attempts, there is little progress to merge the bastions of Kinshasa and Brazzaville, despite the popular opinion that it should be done. The two bastions do have trade and security agreements.

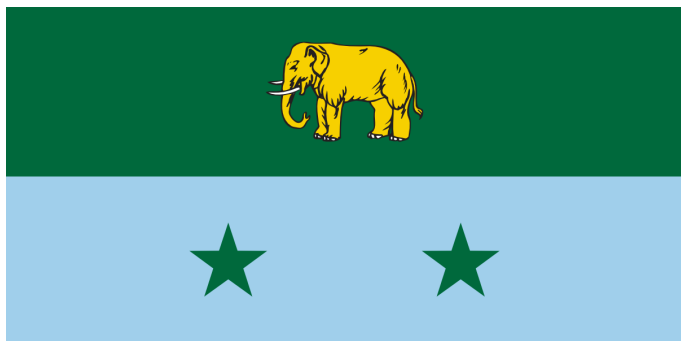


KISANGANI

Kisangani relies entirely on the Congo River for its exports as it no longer has access to the docks at Boma. This occurred from a conflict with the other bastion. The fighting marked the first time PMCs directly engaged each other. Ikoro uses Kisangani as its regional headquarters and offers substantial discounts to the bastion for its placement. Sporadic fighting between the two bastions continue today.

LAGOS

Perched along the Lagos Lagoon, the second largest of all the bastions has yet to find official recognition with the United Nations. This is despite a growing economy and a massive manufacturing industry. After a million people were killed during the Carbon Collapse, revenue from tourism fell to zero. The city restructured and rebuilt from its failed land reclamation, pushing further inland. With millions below the poverty level, the city is still trying to rebuild.



LUANDA

Formally the capital city of Angola, Luanda is blessed with a coastal location and a large population (4 million). It is currently in conflict with the much smaller but richer bastion of Cabinda.



LUSAKA

Lusaka relies on its contract with Lupus Kanti to protect its two dozen oil rigs from South African raids, often with mixed personnel with Ikoro. Exporting from Lusaka is the longest and one of the most dangerous routes in Africa.

MONROVIA

Still a powerful industrial city, the bastion of Monrovia exports dozens of manufactured goods from bricks to furniture. The collapse of Liberia was due to foreign investing in rival warlords supplying PMC personnel to aide in the collapse of the country.

N'DJAMENA

This fragile bastion is close to failing from civil conflict. The revenue from nearby oil refineries is not enough to hire enough protection to transport them. Passage via the Logone River is only slightly safer. N'Djamena biggest issue is its distance to clear the African mainland. It eventually started selling its exports to Libya, which pays less.

NIAMEY

A dozen oil refineries around the city are exported by ground transport and by water route via the Niger River. Because of the distances required to open water, these transports require substantial protection, supplied mostly by Ikoro.

NOUAKCHOTT

Rebuilt after the Carbon Collapse, this bastion managed to recover via substantial returns from offshore drilling and copper mines. It has a fragile



border prone to outside attack, with Ikoro playing only a moderate presence here as the reigning government does not have enough capital to pay the PMC's substantial fees. Despite this instability, Nouakchott is one of the few bastions with an embassy presence (There are fifteen in the city).

OUAGADOUGOU

A smaller but successful landlocked bastion with several caches, Ouagadougou is entirely dependent on the bastion of Accra and the BF-Run between the two cities in order to survive.

PORTO-NOVO

The "Gateway", as it has been nicknamed, is one of the few safe docking ports for foreign vehicles. It is the preferred location over the larger bastion of Luanda. Like Cabinda, its economy is based off offshore drilling, delegating the military into defending the borders of the city. Porto-Novo is one of the closest bastions to be officially recognized by the UN with a member seat. The city promises democratic elections within the decade.

TOUBA

With few resources other than a pair of drill sites, the only motivations as why the Assembly of Senegal refuses to surrender Touba is because of its spiritual importance. There's a larger military force around Touba then around the economically more valuable Ziguinchor. A dozen different rival armies (regional lords and rival Islamic factions) have attempted to take control of the city. It has been accused by the Assembly that the identification of these rival factions as fundamental Islamic rivals is a fabrication created by Ikoro in order to conceal the truth that the attacks on Touba are staged by them. Touba is completely dependent on the other two bastions for supply and security.

ZIGUINCHOR

Another bastion governed by the Assembly of Senegal (even though Senegal no longer exists), Ziguinchor operates relatively independently considering its distance from the other two bastions and its placement at the mouth of the Casmance River. Ziguinchor has a single oil refinery but an extensive network of fisheries and farms.

WORLD LOCATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS INTERNATIONAL ADMINISTRATION ZONE [IAZ]

The IAZ is a region encompassing Jerusalem and outlining towns, removing them from direct Palestinian and Israeli control as a result of the 10-Day war. After the Jericho accords, Israel was forced to shift its capital back to Tel-Aviv and Palestine's capital to Jericho. Although operating as a self-contained entity and having observer status at the UN, the IAZ is not an independent nation. After Archon was founded, the IAZ was declared a UNIT but with special exception status, which does not place it under authority of the Archon Government Committee. The DPS technically has jurisdiction but has yet to enforce it over the local CSF (Corpus Security Force).

CORPUS SECURITY FORCE [CSF]

This independently run security force founded by the UN to maintain the peace in the IAZ is considered a civilian organization, not answerable to the UN but to the IAZ Executive. The CSF is considered one of the more dangerous law enforcement occupations to be in. Even though the IAZ is a UNIT, the CSF has sole and exclusive jurisdiction. There is a special clause excluding the ISA from operating there but this accord did not mention the DPS (which didn't exist at the time). As of yet, there has been no reason for the DPS to go to the IAZ.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION [WHO]

Although a UN organ with a location in Archon, WHO is the only UN organization without its headquarters in the city. It has regional offices in Archon as well as Brasilia (Brazil), Brazzaville, Washington DC (USA), Cairo (Egypt), Copenhagen (Denmark), New Delhi (India), and Manila (Philippines). WHO HQ is still located in Geneva.

INTERPOL

The International Police and the DPS have a positive relationship and have worked together on several cases. Six personnel occupy the INTERPOL office in Archon. INTERPOL has the full cooperation of

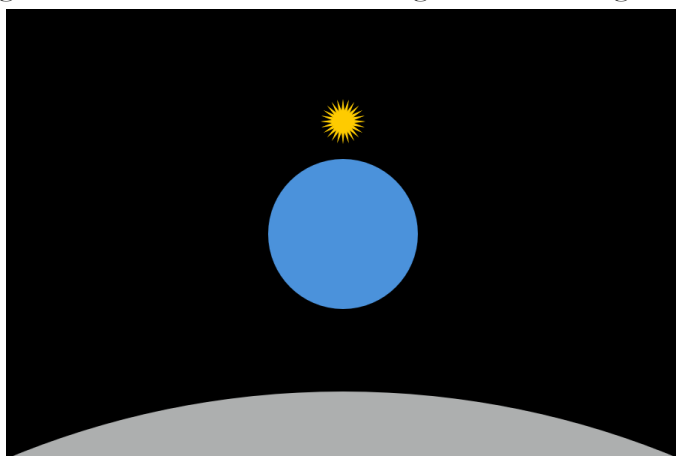
the DPS as long as agents make their presence known upon entering Archon. The DPS has been staffed by at least three ex-INTERPOL officers throughout its short history. Since DPS has no jurisdiction outside of UN territory, INTERPOL takes on investigations when outside of the city and if a DPS agent is sent abroad (outside of a UNIT), an INTERPOL agent often accompanies them.

OFF-WORLD UNITED LUNAR INITIATIVE [ULI]

The ULI is a governing body of international representatives that govern over all lunar stations (LS 1-4). The president of the ULI, Renald Hung Kai, has petitioned for Non-Member observer status at the UN. LS Stations are Clavius, Bailly, Copernicus, and Maginus. This leaves, one station, Tycho, under the Authority of LuFA.

LUNAR FREEDOM ALLIANCE [LuFA]

Formed after the bankruptcy of a major mining corporation, LuFA gained governing control over Moonbase Tycho and declared itself an independent nation. It is currently attempting representation, with many nations formally objecting as they fear it sets a dangerous precedent. Because Tycho was built by the American Plymouth Rock Incorporated Mining Enclave (PRIME), the US government declared Tycho their property, but the lack of any lunar military has prevented any attempt to retake Tycho by force. It would be considered a risky venture considering the 5000 people of Tycho are all second generation Lunarians with a background in mining.



THREATS CONCORD

More like a dozen disconnect cells with similar interests than a united organization, Concord grew from an internet blogging site to a global terrorist group in under ten years. The initial goals of the website were to resist the encroachment of world order. Although populated mostly by conspiracy theorists, a few intelligent and charismatic individuals began to emerge preaching a positive future that endorsed anarchy. Concord, which is also the name of the core group of ten founders which have never been caught, are able to work independently without unified leadership with no direct communication. The ten founders are assumed to be always on the move, shifting from cell to cell, handing instructions directly to avoid a trace. Concord endorses a future without a unified government, a world consisting not of a hundred countries, but of thousands of smaller enclaves with no treaties other than trade agreements. They seek an abolition of all military treaties and organizations. They oppose G9, ASEAN, and most importantly, the United Nations. The UN has classed them as an anarchist terrorist group and it is believed one cell operates as close as Qatar. Unlike other anarchist groups, Concord does not denounce the use of technology and has become one of the most dangerous organizations because of their arsenal and the skill of their hackers.

TRUE BIRTH COALITION [TBC]

The slow elimination of the ethnic groups and national sovereignty was not taken lightly by some. A few blamed this social change solely upon those that used technology to augment themselves. This began with cybernetic implants and moved onto the moderately cyberized and full prosthetics. The TBC have an especially pronounced loathing for robots, especially androids and virtuanets. The TBC is an internet movement with followers in nearly every corner of the planet. They organize protests and demonstrations involving the burning of non-functional and functional robots, especially androids. The images of crucified robots hanging from the buildings of robotic companies marked an increase of aggressive tactics. It is believed only a small percentage of the TBC endorse such practices but they have amplified further to include the firebombing of factories and the assassination of leading scientists and engineers in the field. The TBC movement has reached high levels of government with several city mayors standing on the shoulders of the TBC doctrine. This is especially common in rural communities where jobs have been taken away by automation. Although the TBC claims to destroy a thousand robots a year in protest, it is the few android executions that have gained them such notoriety. Many European countries have classed the TBC as a terrorist organization and any events organized by them



are classed as unlawful and dispersed. The only location on Earth where they are given free reign is in the United States, where the TBC have found sanctuary in several states. Despite attempts by the US government to suppress this movement, especially its violent branches, it has yet to be seriously implemented. The UN, in 2090, implemented policy declaring the TBC a criminal organization and that even claiming to be a member of the group can be grounds for an arrest. Most countries don't enforce this policy. Members of the TBC have no cybernetic implants whatsoever, not even SEEDs. They refuse to be cyberized, even when faced with a crippling injury. Rumor has their world wide membership listing at over 30,000, making them the largest criminal organization in the world.

CHRISTIAN LIBERATION

An alliance of evangelical churches and lobby groups in the United States, the Christian Liberation moved well beyond what was normally accepted by the church. Eventually, the political weight of the CL collapsed with the onset of increased tolerance and globalization, forcing the organization away from the former role into the fanatical group it is today. The Christian Liberation objects to all manners of tampering with God's design. They have picketed in front of cloning facilities, attacked known nugenics, and have even been known to kidnap and surgically remove synthetic limbs from prosthetics. These few situations are considered extreme, even to most of their members. Most simply resort to non-violent protests but unlike the True-Birth Coalition, the Christian Liberation Front still carries substantial political weight, even to the point of forcing several American states into enacting laws prohibiting cloned organs and nugenic creation. Despite similar views, the CL and TBC have never forged an alliance. The CL dislikes the UN but not because of national pride: they believe the UN is godless because of their support of cyberization and other issues fundamentalists groups have complained about for decades.

IKORO SECURITY COMPANY / THE RAINMAKERS

Founded by Naomi Mudabwe in 2065, Ikoro was originally licensed by the bastion of Kinshasa for security detail for their oil shipments. As their population increased, they expanded to nearly a dozen other bastions across the continent. They only received their first American contract in 2080 when they assisted US military operations in an attack upon a Concord terrorist cell hiding out in Niamey. They were later employed by the US Army in similar operations outside of Africa, which marked Ikoro's first operation outside of that continent. They accepted missions in South America, Eastern Asia, and even on American soil to help with security at the 2088 Olympics in Austin, Texas. By 2090, they became the second largest

security company in the world. More than 70% of all active personnel, including Mudabwe, still function within Africa though more than half of their operations are outside the realm of oil escort. They have snaked their way into politics and law enforcement, assigned to supplement, train, and even replace existing civilian and military authorities in many surviving nations and bastions.

Since 2089, Ikoro was given another name, the Rainmakers, a term used now to refer to any armed members of Ikoro operating outside of Africa. Many people believe the Rainmakers and Ikoro are different entities and although not technically correct, there is some credence to that belief. Members of the Rainmakers never operate within Africa though Mudabwe works all over the world, her officers and captains are permanently assigned to specific regions. Because Mudabwe considers herself a field operative, she relegates the bureaucracy to a handful of individuals she seldom monitors. Many critics have asked why the organization endorses the two different names unless the reputation of one was in question. Accusations of corruption abound and the praise and condemnation of this organization depends on which part of the planet you are standing in.

LUPUS KANTI

After Ikoro, the largest public military provider is the government sanctioned Lupus Kanti, based out of Russia. This military contractor split the standing Russian military nearly in half, instantly creating the largest independent military group in the world. The Russian government claims LK is independent, but the contractor is operated by Russian military personnel and the head of LK, Viktor Koski, was the Russian Prime Minister until 2069. LK's current employee roster rivals that of all American PMC's combined. They license their services to every Security Council member and have been seen alongside United States military and Indian armed forces, the latter which have strained Russian-Pakistan relations. LK and Ikoro are corporate rivals, making their conflicts in Africa the first official "corporate war". The Battle of Boma in 2085 had no government military involvement and was fought entirely by rival battalions of Ikoro and Lupus Kanti. Technically, LK has more trained personnel than Ikoro unless taking into account unauthorized adolescent guerillas, but is technologically inferior, still employing 20 year old Russian military hardware.

FREE AMALGAMATED MILITARY [FAMILI] / THE JUNKERS

Having gone through numerous name changes in the past hundred years, Free Amalgamated Military, or the The Family as they are called, is the latest iteration of the largest American private military company. Internationally

nicknamed "The Junkers" (a derogatory term the Family despises) this military contractor is the third largest in the world. The Family does hold the distinction of being most advanced. Because of their side-by-side deployment alongside American military, the Family holds the exclusive contract to employ weapons usually prohibited by UN Security Council mandate. This includes rail and plasma weapons as well as powered armor. When they take the field, the Junkers often hold technological superiority. As a condition, their weapons and mechanized forces are tagged by GPS to prevent their deployment or migration into unauthorized territory. The mechanized units are also designed to self destruct from satellite command if ever disabled in a conflict zone.

Currently, the Family operates alongside American military in a half dozen locations across the world. Distinguish between PMC personnel and government military is difficult. Out of these deployments, the Family's most controversial operation involved their assistance of Ethiopia's military in their taking of Somalia in 2055 and Sudan in 2060. Their involvement in the conflict advocated the theory that the East African War was a religious conflict since it was no secret that the Family's internal policy is based around conservative Christian ideology.

In 2062, the UNSC, against the United States wishes, forced the Family out of Africa. It is thought this vacancy is what led to the formation of both Lupus Kanti and Ikoro. Today, the Family is still prohibited from operating inside Africa, though they have found contracts in other regions.

EASTERN STATES PARA-MILITARY AUTHORITY [ESPA]

A smaller military organization, the Eastern States Paramilitary Authority (or ESPA) was formed out of a demand for international opposition to the encroachment of private military corporations in Africa. ESPA operates from its headquarters in Ethiopia with smaller bases scattered across the entire eastern seaboard of Africa. It's no secret, though not publicly acknowledged, that ESPA receives the vast majority of its weapons and funding from Chinese investors. By 2090, ESPA military accounts for more than 65% of Ethiopian armed forces, flaunting technology superior to the standing military. ESPA is responsible for counter-insurgency as well as defending threats to the nation's exports. Their position in authority places them higher than anyone in the standard army, meaning ESPA can assume control over any East African military force nearby. Recently, ESPA members have been found in India and as far east as China.

PAC-PMC

Even though united through free trade and an amalgamated currency, the Pan-Arabian Coalition does not operate a cohesive military. In 2056, it was decided that a single integrated force would be formed to handle security and address threats to the countries of the PAC, especially when that threat endangers the entire alliance. The PAC-PMC was placed in charge of security of the manufactured island fated later to become Archon, though with less than favorable results. PAC-PMC operates bases in every PAC member. The organization suffers from accusations of corruption and the ranking authority often quarrel with members of the DPS. This is more evident on the borders between Archon and PAC, where indistinct sovereign claims along bridges and tunnels have resulted in unneeded tension between the two organizations.



Did I kill its robot brother? Had I callously stepped on a ram chip while it watched? This had gone beyond target acquisition. Most drones weren't programmed to pursue beyond a few hundred feet. I was well out of position and Nergal kept after me. I was grasping Finger's head by his artificial hairs as I leapt over broken walls and through gaps between gutted vehicles. Nergal was tearing down signs, tossing cars like an angry child over a Matchbox collection.

I bolted through an alley into a road already blessed with violence. Debris and bodies were scattered about. The uniforms were ours. Nergal in pursuit smashed through the buildings, crumbling both to their foundations. Not once did it fire a shot. I knew I had been sitting in its reticle since it took up the chase.

Carpet bombing ordered from ignorant leaders had decimated a cultural center across the street. Surrounding artificial trees had shriveled and melted. A dilapidated memorial sat in the center of a crowded roundabout. Dozens of blue taxi cabs sat abandoned in gridlock with open passenger doors around me. I spun around to the branching streets, desperately searching for an escape. The geofront was only accessible through guarded entrances I was nowhere near. Buildings didn't have basements in this part of the world. Addis Ababa had suffered along the likes of Monrovia. It was still considered a functional city until we arrived. The population were under steward by DRI and had fled into the geofront when we took the stage.

I twisted back to the cars interlocked around the memorial.

"Passengers...but no drivers," I observed. I looked up to the still intact buildings and found network routers, traffic cameras, and communication towers. I examined the surrounding buildings, a hotel, a mall, and a parking complex, the latter robustly built to survive earthquakes and twenty-ton robots.

Nergal burst from the ally, tossing brick and wood across the street. It took position opposite the memorial. Without missing a beat, it wrapped its appendages around the monument and tore the structure from its foundations. Nothing between us, and having no chance to reach cover, I let Finger's head fall to the pavement. Nergal took a step forward.

"Why?" I snapped. "Why me?" Its weapons were trained but it continued to approach. "Are you trying to make a point?! Just shoot already!" I screamed. "Can you understand me you mechanical dick? To Hades, and my body to the dogs!"

It stopped, front leg purchased in the air, frozen like a film cell. Its head lowered, acknowledging me. We shared a moment, faceless to face. I thought I recognized something.

"So that's how it is" I muttered. I needed to run, that was the role written, until it believed I was not chosen to be its vanquisher. I slowly pirouetted and launched myself for the parkade. I kicked through a broken door and scuttled up the stairs. Steel appendages tore through the stairwell behind me. The machine flailed its limbs through the narrow passage. I slipped past to the second floor and kept climbing. Nergal drove its legs into the concrete supports and began to scale the building. I passed the third floor, the fourth, all the while hearing the thunderous beats of the machine

impelling its legs outside. I exited onto the fifth floor, the one with the most vehicles, a scattered melange of unmarked vans, cheap sedans, and robust pickups. I bolted to the opposite side of the complex as Nergal clawed its way up.

There was enough clearance for the beast to stride in boisterously. I reached the waist-high concrete hedge and turned to face the monster. Our arena. The stage set with a lifeless mob to witness. Nergal only casually scanned the environment, at the non-threatening cars. It didn't notice the first one start up. A second whirled its electric motor to life and Nergal spun to face it. Each one came to life, slaved under a single controller. It turned back to me.

"Welcome to my world," I said.

There wasn't a great deal of torque in that sedan, and it didn't have enough room to get up speed, but it still managed to knock the beast off balance. It clamped its limbs around the car and tossed it out of the building, barely a second before grasping the front axle of an advancing minivan. Nergal tore it in half, unable to catch the pickup threading between the severed vehicle before it struck dead center. Two more collided with the robot, pushing it closer to the precipice. Nergal spun its torso, flinging its attackers to the walls. It caught one hot hatch and tossed it with so much force, it cleared the street and landed on the roof of an adjacent building. It started marching with determination towards me, kicking vehicles as they attempted to block its progress. I stood my ground, vigilante. The mob had served its purpose. I had already accessed the vehicles on the upper floor, including the seven ton school bus which was racing down the access ramp. I flashed its high-beams to get Nergal's attention.

It looked.

The impact compressed the vehicle like an accordion, and Nergal was propelled from the parkade. It fastened itself to the bus but only served to carry the vehicle with it as it toppled five storeys to the buckled road below. The bus didn't catch fire, but it still managed to pin Nergal to the crater both had formed. Nergal's few functioning tentacles thrashed about, desperately trying to free itself. The fall had fractured its spine and twitching was the most its legs would ever do. It finally managed to push the bus off its body and attempted to stand. I didn't give it a chance. Nergal looked up at the opening it fell from and watched the eighteen wheeled tractor trailer I sent over the edge cascade towards it.

When I finally saw it, there wasn't much left. Nergal's upper torso had separated from its legs. Its head was hanging on by a few wires and broken muscle fibers. Only the ends of its tentacles still trembled. I scaled the debris to reach its head. Its sensor quills were mostly broken. It's only functioning camera turned face me. Part of its brain was exposed in its torso, and I could examine the mess of chips and crossed wires. There were brands from a dozen different manufacturers stamped on various microprocessors. I looked into its eye, at the dying myth.

"A monster must fill its role," I whispered.

I reached into his head and firmly grasped a bundle of fiberoptics. I looked back to its face, the unblinking eye. Its trembling limbs fell limp. I nodded and pulled the cables hard.

The legend died.

