

## ***Turmoil in Thudor* Public Facing Report S3**

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### **Progress Statement**

#### **Completed**

As work continued in writing the first draft of the “Denizens of Dro Thon” one-shot adventure, we realized we had to begin development of a debate mechanic that would replace combat encounters typically found in *Dungeons & Dragons* adventures. This decision is based on our goal of fostering political conversations while balancing the game aspects of those encounters. Developing this system took up the majority of time since the previous public facing report, and while some elements still need to be tweaked, we have completed a basic outline of the mechanic, which can be found in its own discussion on our DHSS Showcase page.

Further worldbuilding and setting design has been completed. We have been hard at work detailing the four factions described in the previous public facing report. The general premise of each of them remains largely the same, although some of their aspects have been refined.

- The Ivory Conclave: There was some confusion as to what “progress” the Conclave values in the last PFR. Specifically, the Conclave values technological and economic progress, as well as some social progress as many of its members support dissolving the monarchy.
- The Order of Stone: The last PFR said the Order promotes “traditional Thudorian values.” Upon consideration, we determined the Order is in the process of its own change, trying to centralize its authority among Thudor’s typically decentralized religion while spreading its own form of social conformity.

Additionally, the factional fields that would be chosen by the procedural generators were developed. It was decided after generating a character’s factional alignment, the generators would assign the character’s core beliefs, aspects of their faction’s ideology they connect with most, and leverage, special influence that the player can use to assist them in debates. Each faction has a small number of beliefs and leverage powers, and the generators will assign one or two of each to the player. Another potential field we were considering were personal desires, possibly related to the factions, but we decided that might be best left for the player to decide when making their character.

Lastly, work has continued on the website. As of now, the homepage, project page, and setting page have been completed.

## **In Progress**

The first draft of the one-shot has been written up to the first encounter (approximately 30 minutes of playtime). Progress stalled somewhat to focus on developing the debate mechanic, but should now resume at a steady pace again. A background document was created describing the backgrounds of the fortress and important NPCs in the meantime.

Work on the website will continue as usual, with the adventures page, resource page, and accessibility options on the lineup. Refining of the setting and factions will also continue.

With the website near completion and the factions further fleshed out, development of the procedural generators will begin very soon. We decided to create the generators using Twine. After its completion, we will find somewhere to host it online and have our website direct users there.

## **To-Do**

On Monday February 14, the *Turmoil in Thudor* team will run its first playtest with the DHSS Capstone class, which will be run during the assigned class time. The primary purpose of this playtest is to test the debate mechanic with a short test encounter and see how the mechanic can be improved.

## **The Debate Mechanic**

Our primary obstacle when developing the debate mechanic was finding a way to balance between the conversational and game aspects of the project. We want players to have fun with this while not gamifying conversations beyond meaningfulness. The initial outline we have created aims to achieve this balance.

The mechanic follows a “sliding-scale model” that represents the amount of leverage each of the involved parties hold in the debate, with the ends representing the most amount of leverage a party can attain. Depending on the situation, there may be more than two parties in play, and therefore more than two ends on the scale. A party is described as a group arguing for a shared goal and is declared at the beginning of the debate.

A typical debate allows for five rounds of discussion, each ending with all parties rolling a “leverage roll” that awards a point of leverage upon a success. A typical round follows this step-by-step process:

1. Declare the parties at play in the debate and their desires/goals.

2. Allow conversation between parties where they can discuss the issue at hand and offer solutions. Players can apply their individual faction powers to gain bonuses or impose penalties to the upcoming leverage roll.
3. Each party can make an “action roll” to learn more information and gain further bonuses or impose further penalties, such as using the Insight skill to see if the opposite party is lying.
4. Allow a second briefer conversation to apply any knowledge learned from the action roll.
5. Calculate any bonuses and penalties acquired by all parties.
6. Each party makes a leverage roll to determine who succeeds in gaining leverage for this round, such success being marked as a point toward their goal.
7. Repeat each step for the next round.

The maximum amount of leverage points a party can achieve is currently three. The debate ends either after the five rounds or if a party achieves three leverage points, and the party with the most points gets to dictate terms.

However, the mechanic is designed to make total one-sided “victories” rare. During debate, if a party wins a point of leverage, the opposite party does not automatically lose leverage. Each party keeps the leverage they earn, which can lead to potential ties at the end of the five rounds. Additionally, even if a party has the most leverage, they still must make some degree of concessions depending on the opposing party’s amount of leverage.

This system attempts to reflect the nuance and intricacy that comes with political conversations, especially debates and negotiations. Such discussions rarely end with one side taking all, with participants instead agreeing on some form of compromise. Of course, the system is still in it’s very early stages and is by no means finished or perfect. We also recognize that it requires more effort on the Game Master than other D&D adventures in its current form, especially when figuring out concessions. Through playtesting and feedback, we will continue refining this system to ensure it’s both fun and informing for players.