

Crossroads of the Commonwealth:

A generic investigation RPG campaign world

#3: Major Factions

Non-Terran

The Traders. It is not that nothing is known about the Traders: it is that there is simply too much to know. Each representative from the Commonwealth comes from a different version of Earth, and while most of them are happy enough to talk about how things go on their own world, typically the information is largely meaningless. Much to the displeasure of alternate history enthusiasts, the historical divergence point of any one Trader's timeline from ours is sufficiently in the past that many nations, cultures, and histories are utterly foreign. Indeed, many have slightly different physical laws.

Still, the basic structure of the Commonwealth is known: each alternate Earth is autonomous, more or less, and ruled by two individuals in whichever way they prefer, more or less, and are strictly enjoined from interfering with other alternate Earths without express permission from the rulers of those Earths, and that is **not** 'more or less.' Individuals are free to leave their timelines and wreak havoc; governments are not. What confuses onlookers is that there seems to be little in the way of an overarching interdimensional governmental system; as far as our own Earth governments can tell, it's all tied up in maintaining the Portals as a communications network. Most intelligence agencies assume, however, that the nature of the actual Commonwealth government is being deliberately hidden from Earth; there is a lively debate as to why.

As to individual Traders: they're largely people, and generally bland about it. This is definitely deliberate: apparently one of the conditions for being a Commonwealth representative is to submit to a procedure that dramatically

suppresses the feeling of culture shock. If asked, the typical Trader will shrug and explain that the opportunity to make ridiculous amounts of money is often worth a little temporary psychological conditioning.

Terrans

The House of Clinton and The House of Giuliani: This is what the Traders call the President Clinton and Mayor Giuliani administrations; the names (alternatively, 'the Two Houses') are starting to stick with the general public, despite the best efforts of the more democratic and republican-minded staffers in each executive branch. The Two Houses are in a rather *dynamic* relationship with each other; collectively, they are easily the two most powerful organizations on the planet. In fact - and this is only now starting to really settle into popular perceptions - the Traders have decided that Bill Clinton and Rudy Giuliani get the right of first refusal over whether they shall **rule** the planet, and act accordingly.

A story from 1995 should illustrate the situation that the Two Houses now find themselves in. Clinton and Giuliani both attended a Staten Island party hosted by an exo-dimensional security/mercenary company looking to get a contract with Earth's government. President Clinton made what he thought was an idle joke about how he'd need to see the company's track record first. In response, the security company representative asked Mayor Giuliani who his city's greatest enemy was. The Mayor said it was the WTC truck bombers still at large; the representative asked the President if that was true; and the President agreed. Twenty four hours later the individuals in question were in American custody. When Saddam Hussein, the then-head of the Iraq regime, formally complained to the Traders, the Traders' official response was to ask if the Iraqi regime displeased the Two Houses. Fortunately for the country of Iraq, an Iraqi colonel assassinated Hussein before Bill Clinton and Rudy Giuliani could officially say yes.

This terrifies the more thoughtful people who work for the Two Houses. Almost as much as does the dawning realization that the Traders will continue to treat Clinton and Giuliani as potential joint Kings of Earth even after either man formally leaves office. Interestingly: as time goes on, the caliber of people who work for either House has steadily improved. The more venal and petty politicians and creatures are being quietly removed from the organizations. How long that lasts is also a matter of some speculation.

Subgroup: PILE: The Permanent Interdepartmental Law Enforcement Task Force is technically under the firm control of the Two Houses; in practice, that only applies when Clinton and Giuliani agree on something, so PILE generally has a free hand when it comes to day-to-day operations. It operates much like a cross between the FBI and the NYPD, only with no budgetary problems at all. PILE has resource access that is difficult to comprehend; about the only thing that the organization cannot readily buy is New York City real estate, and that's only because nobody will sell any of it anymore. PILE, in other words, operates much like a television show's idealized elite police investigation squad, only there's tens of thousands of them.