

# Initial Concept as Context

*This design document is for a game that is meant to be a successor to another game that existed previously (not run by me), therefore:*

The Below is useful context but many of the specifics no longer hold, such as randomized state leans etc

## Roleplay Guide and Roles

Laws will be passed on 2 levels: National and State. Counties and cities will be presumed to have their laws and sometimes an event may be made about relevant information from some. NPCs will hold all non-player held positions in multiple positions. They will be grouped by region and from region sortings into faction sortings. They will vote along party lines most times, but may break away.

With each character, you may bid for election or re-election at any time, unless there are term limits. Your character will be assumed to win the primary or nomination of their party in all conditions except for two. This does not mean they will win their election, but if a state elects or un-elects multiple officeholders, human players will be prioritized to hold office. However, if a human player participates in or creates a new third party, they should be prepared for an uphill battle against the regional parts of the nationally dominant parties.

A. Their nomination proves to be too controversial, for their beliefs being considered too fringe, for them considered to be too unpopular, and the like.

B. Another player challenges for your party's nomination for the same office.

Relevant political events will happen every week. Be prepared for these.

You may create your own political party, but be prepared for an uphill battle.

## The Political Algorithm

As different issues arise and fall on a national level, states will fall on different sides of these issues, as their interests adapt and change. The national government will have to pass laws to appease one side of a topic, lest they alienate all factions from open inaction.

If a party passes, favors or introduces laws favoring one side of an issue, they will gain favor in states which align with that side, and lose favor with states which do not. Because states will have stances on several key issues, this will prove a difficult balancing game for any party. If a ruling party becomes too unpopular with several issues in several states, the states may attempt to secede or threaten nullification. It will be up to the regime to decide what happens or how to solve the crisis, since no precedents on the issue have been set.

The states' position on these issues, as well as parties favoring for or against an issue, will, along with some random statistics, decide how a state swings in an election -- or if it will be too close to call.

Beware, it will be nigh impossible to appease all factions, and if radicals of your party are displeased, they may form their own party, as well as if moderates are not appeased, they may switch parties.

Other topics may swing states as well, such as the state of the economy, inherent popularity of the incumbent President, scandals associated with the ruling party, and success and failures in war.

## How do Elections Work?

Elections here are based on trends.

A state here has a bias, and they can trend either way or in the way of the third party depending on many things; such as if they are favoring the Administration or the Administration's policies go against them or dissatisfy them. However, campaigning and movements within the state can also affect it. Nearby states' policies can also affect your state.

This is somewhat randomized and left to staff's discretion, but there is a bit of an algorithm to it which I am working out. This algorithm will add bonuses and removals to leads in states; though there will still be randomness and campaigning may work.

If you want the best shot at a House seat, try to appeal to what issues you think will be most popular and most important to the people of your state. Perhaps they want economic reform, or perhaps they want political reform. I can try to help you guess what issues would be, but I'd rather you try and guess yourself and see if what you have said affects your campaign.

If you want the best shot at a Senate seat, given that Senators are appointed by Legislators, try to do a mix of the former and appealing to the state government on why they should nominate you.

If you want the best shot at a Presidential seat, either try to campaign in states to win them over or see what issues you think may be popular to the whole nation. Beware of contradicting yourself, though, the press can be ruthless.

If you want to run at a state's level, try to campaign for what appeals to them. Every election, the number of seats from a state shall be the same for each party proportionally at the state and federal levels.

*End of Initial Concept. What follows is the design document for the successor game. If a topic is not covered below, refer to the above.*

# Statement of Principles — Principles to Maximize Engagement, Retention, and Fun

## Maximize Strategic Gameplay

Players should be given multiple avenues to play the game as if it were a multiplayer RTS game. Players should have the tools to react to the environment as it stands or make actions which change the environment for themselves and others.

## Maximize Roleplay

Players should be given multiple avenues to play the game as if it were a Choose Your Own Adventure Game, get into their chosen character's head and mindset, and act in the game as an embodiment of that character.

## Maximize Intrigue and Spectacle

Most if not all interactions between players should be viewable by the game at large. Meetings in exclusive channels and chat rooms should be minimized so that all players can enjoy the spectacle produced by palace intrigue, tomfoolery, and negotiations between various entities. Players should be encouraged to "put on a show" for other players.

## Minimize Tedium, especially Essay-ism

Players should be able to bypass mechanics which they find tedious or unexciting. For example:

- Some players may enjoy writing letters to NPC historical figures in order to secure their support and the support of the entities associated with that NPC; whereas
- Other players may prefer to post short rallies which set the scene of the rally, contain roleplay content by the player as their character, and attempt to convince onlookers of the merits of their policies; and

- Others still may prefer simply to make a statement of their beliefs.

All of the options should be in short-form, non-essay formats unless the player wishes to. Essay-ism will not be punished, but it will not be rewarded. To this end, there are no plans to grade debates or to implement any sort of “question time” ala the Westminster model. Campaigns, speeches/rallies, and bills/resolutions will be graded however, according to the model listed in the next section.

## Maximize Player Agency

Players should not be blocked from doing outlandish things that do not fundamentally alter the national playground that other players participate in. Players should have many avenues to accomplish their goals. There should not be hurdles which the player must pass through in order to affect the changes that they wish to in the electorate or other elements.

## Maximize Player-to-Player Interaction

While Players should be able to interact with NPCs and abstract elements such as the electorate, Interest Groups, and Ideological Factions, the main avenue of gameplay should be directly between players. Players should engage with each other as directly as possible. Debate should be intense, Players should feel welcome at all times to negotiate, collaborate, and compete directly with one another and it should be the foremost focus in adding any new elements to the game.

## Aim for Accessibility Wherever Applicable

Elements of the sim should be easily comprehensible, and easily engaged with. Although some steepness in regards to the learning curve is inevitable, this should always be kept in check.

Sim Staff should aim for realism wherever possible, and within reason, in determining the success/failure of any player action and to what degree. The progression of historical divergences on the global scale should err on the side of real history wherever it will not be immersion-breaking.

# Concepts and Under-the-Hood/the-Backdoor

## Interest Groups

In the country, there are a variety of Interest Groups. Each Interest Group exists under specific economic and social conditions which they will attempt to influence in order to maximize their own social and economic dominance in the country (in relative terms) or at least maintain the current conditions under which they exist. Some examples of Interest Groups would be the Antebellum Planter Class, Industrialists, Ethnic White Catholics, Merchants, etc. Interest Groups are not single-issue special interests.

Every Interest group has a level of Political Clout in every state, which is aggregated regionally and nationally. Political Clout is the ability to influence the results of elections, and it is determined by the economic and social dominance the Interest Group in question has.

Therefore, the goal of every Interest Group is to maximize its own Political Clout relative to other Interest Groups. To that end, they endorse specific positions on specific policy questions. Each Interest Group lends a percentage of its overall support to specific Ideological Factions.

## Ideological Factions

Ideological Factions are associations of like-minded individuals who endorse specific positions on political issues. They arise out of partial alliances between Interest Groups and exist only due to the dynamics of and between elections and legislative session (i.e. representative democracy).

Each Interest Group in an Ideological Faction tries to pull the other adjacent Interest Groups in the same Ideological Faction towards their preferred position positions in order to maximize (in relative terms) the impact their political clout has in any given instance.

Political Parties are alliances of discrete Ideological Factions. Ideological Factions act mostly as a bloc at the Ballot Box and in the Legislative Chamber, and hold more loyalty to themselves and their preferred policies than to any Political Party the Ideological Faction may be a member of.

Therefore, if Political Party A fields a candidate from the most radical Ideological Faction of a Political Party in a FPTP election, and Political Party B field's a candidate from its most moderate Ideological Faction, then the most moderate Ideological Faction from Political Party A will vote for Political Party B and hand them the win. Same concept holds for bills in the Legislative Chamber.

## Player Interactions

### Passage of Government Policy and the Effects thereof

Acts of Congress and their accompanying Executive Orders, as well as Constitutional Amendments and Supreme Court decisions (conceived of as "Government Policy"), serve to transform the economy and society. This changes each Interest Group's relationship to the economy and society, not just in ways that affect their political clout, and they will shift their political positions accordingly.

Given that fact, players, usually acting through or alongside a Political Party, (and hopefully not SCOTUS Justices) can attempt to cause shifts in Government Policy through the above methods (hopefully not through SCOTUS decisions) which will maximize the chances of their preferred policies being passed.

### Player-to-NPC Relationships and Player Clout

Each Player has a level of Political Clout in each Party, Ideological Faction, and – perhaps at a later date – Interest Group. Political Clout is the degree to which they can influence how the above act when it comes to how they vote on whatever issue and how they might react to policy that the player has a hand in. There exists a variety of ways to gain political clout.

Players and NPCs run for available offices (limited to President, Governor, Representative, and Senator) every 2 in-game years. Theoretically, an NPC could win against a player if the player performed poorly enough in the election. State Legislatures will be filled exclusively by NPCs.

## Player Actions

Exclusively during Campaign Season, Players can write open letters, in order to make the case for why a particular candidate or type of candidate should be elected, to

- The State Legislature and its constituent State Legislators (if that is the method of election for the particular office),
- Constituents (in the case of popular vote elections), and
- Elites, who have influence over an electorate.

Within the Legislative Chambers and Executive Offices during Term Time (i.e. not during Campaign Season), players may submit Congressional and State legislation, debate such legislation, and publish Executive Orders.

Through such actions, Players, Parties, and Ideological Factions can gain favor and the good will with Interest Groups. Players and Parties, but not Ideological Factions, can gain favor and good will with Ideological Factions as well.

Players and Parties can give up a certain amount of Clout with those Interest Groups and Ideological Factions to get them to go along with Proposals that they would otherwise not be favorable towards.

During the Term Time but Outside of the Legislative Chambers and Executive Offices, Players can:

- Write open letters to convince the electorate and the elites of the merit or lack thereof of certain policies, as well as NPC and player characters' personal honor or appeal.
- Write letters to each other
- Write newspaper articles
- Make Speeches and hold Rallies
- Set up and maintain state-based or region-based Political Machines that turn out and enfranchise Interest Groups (increases political clout of the Interest Group) who are somehow disadvantaged in the



state or region in question

All of this is graded on:

- How convincing their arguments are to the Interest Groups and Ideological Factions they appear to be targeting;
- How well articulated it is;
- How in-character it is; as well as
- How much interest, intrigue, and spectacle it contributes to the game.

Some of these criteria will apply more to some forms of interaction than others and certain forms of interaction will be rewarded more than others. These are the ways that players, as well as their Parties and Ideological Factions gain political clout.