Peripheral Empires

Introduction

A peaceful empire once governed the distant region of the galaxy known as the Periphery. After a series of incompetent emperors, the bureaucracy which had mediated inter-system disputes, and the emperial fleet which had enforced the peace, fell into irreperable decline. Without the threat of emperial intervention, new kingdoms, founded on the old emperial technology centers, quickly proclaimed their sovereignty. Lacking a central authority, the intricate trade network upon which the Periphery had depended for its prosperity collapsed as each new kingdom established its own currency and trade regulations. In the face of massive shortages, the kingdoms began unprecedented military buildups as it became clear prosperity could only be acheived by reestablishing a pan-Peripheral empire. As a commander in the fleet on one such empire warring for control of the region, it is your goal to direct the reconquest of the old empire to reestablish order under a new Peripheral empire.

User Interface

The user interface is the means through which the player controls his ship and empires, and is informed of current conditions in the Periphery. Key components of the interface include: the viewscreen, sector map, computer display, update window, and keypad.

The viewscreen displays the sector currently occupied by the player's ship. To scan a ship on
the viewscreen, the player clicks the fire/scan toggle, so that 'scan' is selected, then clicks the mouse on the ship to scan. To scan a planet, the player simply clicks the mouse on that planet. Once a ship or planet has been scanned, a readout will appear on the computer display. To fire at a ship on the viewscreen, the player sets the fire/scan toggle to 'fire', then positions the cursor (which now appears as a crosshair) over the ship and clicks the mouse.

 Planets can be bombarded by clicking the center button on the keypad. The resulting effect on the planet's population can be ascertained by scanning the planet after the attack. The player may only fire once per turn.

The rate at which the game progresses can be controlled from the 'Speed' menu option. In addition to the four user selectable settings, an additiobal setting, 'Turn Mode' is automatically entered when a hostile ship

enters the player's sector. This ensures that each ship is allowed the same number of chances to fire should the player wish to take offensive action. Should all hostile ships leave the player's sector, the previously selected game speed will be reselected automatically.

The sector map provides an overview of the empires in the Periphery. The sector
map has several modes which can be selected from the menu bar: Trade Routes, Alliances, Plot Attacks, Show Empire, and Show Ally. The map displays the position of ships in the sector regardless of the map's mode. When 'Trades Routes' is selected, each empire's trade network will be displayed on the map.   The trade routes for industrial, agricultural, and medical empires will appear in blue, green, and red respectively. Setting the map to 'Trade Routes' is the easiest way of determining a planet's ownership.
Selecting 'Alliances' from the menu will show which empires are allied by linking any two allied empires with a green line.

Selecting 'Plot Attacks' will display all attacks either planned or in progress by your empire, or in progress by other empires. Attacks by your empire, and by other empires against planets not it your empire will appear in blue with a box around the target. If the target of an attack is a planet in the player's empire, the attack route will appear in red, and the target will be circled.

Selecting 'Show Empire' will display all planets controlled by the player, and with which the player may trade. Planets controlled by the player will be connected to the home world by a green line. Planets with which the player may trade, but are controlled by other empires will appear circled. Selecting 'Show Ally' produces the corresponding data for the player's ally.

The 'Empire' menu provides the player with access to three dialogs through which the empire can be directed: Trade, New Alliance, and Military. The 'Trade' option is used to exchange the player's export (grain) for resources produced by other empires. The Diplomatic option is used to form a new alliance or break the current one. To form a new alliance, the player selects the type of empire to ally with by resource, then selects the desired empire from the list of empires producing that resource. The player can break the current alliance by attempting to re-ally with the current ally. This action will prompt if the player if he wishes to terminate the current alliance. It may be necessary to break an alliance at the end of the game if the only planets which the player's empire does not control or have trade acess to are controlled by an ally. The player will be alerted if such a situation arises.
The 'Military' dialog allows the player to select the strategy used by the empire to find planets to conquer. From this dialog, the player can select three options: 'Closest', 'Closest Colonized', and 'Closest Noncolonized'. In addition the player can set the empire's method of handling trade access

requests from other empires: 'Allow all', 'Deny Allow', "Prompt'. Refusing an empires request for trade access to a planet may result in that empire attempting to take the planet by force.

The player can view the status of planets and empires in the periphery by selecting any of the options from the 'Status' menu. The 'Player Empire' option will display the amount of resources currently stocked by empire. This information is usefull, as it informs the player when it is necessary to exchange resources with other empires.

Receiving Orders:
Occassionally the empire will prompt you to make decisions about when to launch attacks and where to repell incomming attacks. When your empire starts constructing
colony ships, you will be notifed of the target of the attack. This warning will give you time to bombard the planet prior to the landing. Setting the map to plot attacks will show the location of the target. When the 1st ship is ready to launch, you will prompted to launch the attack now or to delay it. You will be prompted each time a new ship is ready until all ships have beeen constructed, at which time the entire fleet is launched. Delaying an attack may prove wise if it gives you additional time to bombard the target, or time to rearm before the attack.

In addition to notices of outgoing attacks, your will be warned of incomming attacks
against your colonies. When you receive a warning of incoming attack, set the sector
map to Plot Attacks mode, to see the attack route outlined in red. If you do intercept
and destroy the attacking ships before they reach their destination, you may lose control of colony.

Alliances
In addition to alerts of attacks, the player will receive requests for alliances. Alliances are benficial to the player's empire in two ways. An ally will not attack the player's territorial possessions. In addition there will be an automatic exchange of resource between the player's empire and its ally. An alliance therefore produces a steady influx of resources which can be used to construct ship to attack the remaining empires.

Empires
Planets in the Periphery produce one of three resources: grain, vaccines, or machine parts. There are three types of empires each corresponding to a different resource
type. Empires which produce machine parts are the most aggressive. An industrial

empire will seek to expand its territory by searching for the closest planet with a
resource it needs. If a planet is found and it is independent, the empire will annex it.
If the planet is owned by another empire, the industrial empire will start building assault ships for an attempt to take the planet by force. Industrial empires are fiercely territorial and will not allow other empires to trade with their planets. The aggressive nature of these empires will compel them launch attacks even when their fleets are not at full strength.

   Empires which export grain are less aggressive than industrial empires, but more
aggressive than empires which produce vaccines. Agricultural empires, like their
industrial counterparts, seek to expand their territory, by identifying the closest planet with a needed resource.   If the planet is independent, the agricultural empire will
annex it. If the planet is owned by another empire, the agricultural empire will
attempt to negotiate for trading access. If the negotiations fail, the empire will
start building ships for an attack.

   Empires producing vaccines are the least aggressive in the Periphery. A medical empire will never attack or negotiate for a planet if an unoccupied planet producing the same resource exists on the map. If no unclaimed planets exist, the medical empire will start building ships for an attack on the closest occupied planet. Empires of this type will allow unconditional trade access to their planets by other empires in an attempt to dissuade them from attempting a military solution. Medical empires compensate for their passive nature by constructing more ships than the other empire types, and launching attacks only when their fleets are at full strength.

Resources and Trading
Each planet in the periphery produces one resource for export and imports two others. Each turn the stockpiles of imported resources are consumed and converted into the export resource. Therefore, a planet only produces a resource as long as there is a constant flow of resources to it from the other planets in an empire. The cessation of resource production on a planet for an extended period of time can ripple through an empire and force the shutdown of both resource and ship production on the empire's home world. Should this situation occur, an empire will attempt to trade with other empires for the resource required to restart production. When an empire attempts to trade with the player's empire, the player will be
prompted to allow or deny the trade. When the player's empire has depleted its stocks of resources, the player will be prompted to select the amount of

the current stocks of grain to
trade for the needed resource. If there are planets within the empire
producing the needed resource for whose trade routes freighters have been
constructed, and there are no empires
producing that resource with which to trade, the player has no hope of
conquering the Periphery and the game will end. The production status of
planets within the player's empire can be viewed by selecting 'Production
Status' from the menu bar.
The constant flow of resources through the region provides opportunities for
piracy for both the player's empire and others.   The player can affect this
by destroying freighters, half of whose cargo will then be transfered to the
player's ship and transfered to the empire the next time the player returns
to the home planet. Other empire effect piracy through special ships
detailed below.

 Ships
      Ships are the means through which empires move their resources and
attempt fulfill their military objectives. The player will encouter several
types in the Periphery based on old emperial designs.

Freighters:
      Freighters are the most ubiquitous class of ship. This type of ship
travels
between two planets transferring resources. Scanning a freighter will
reveal its registry, cargo, cargo quantity, and trade route. Freighters carry
no
weapons or armor, and are easy prey for the player's ship and the assault
ships
of other empires. Destroying an empire's freighters will prolong the time
needed
to accumulate the resources needed to mount attacks.

Frigates:
      These speedy ships appear in two configurations: privateer, and
minelayer. Privateers travel between hostile planets preying on freighters
and colony ships. Once a privateer has filled its hold with resources from
the ships it has destroyed, it will return home and transfer the resources to
its empire. Minelayers travel between hostile worlds deploying mines which
disrupt trade routes and attacks. Frigates are the fastest ships in the region
(except for the player's ship) but carry no armor.

Cruisers:
      Cruisers are constructed by non-player empires to conquer planets
which

are not independent. These durable ships carry both weapons and armor, and will attack the player's ship, his colonies, and any other ships not launched by the assault ship's empire. If an assault ships successully attacks a planet, the planet will become a
colony of the assault ship's empire. The ship will then return to port and await further
orders. Scanning an assault ship will reveal its registry and target.

Colony Ships:
        Colony ships are constructed by the player's empire to capture planets which are not
independent. Once a colony ship is constructed, it will transport colonists to its
destination. If the population of the target is less than 100,000, the planet will become a colony of the player's empire, and the ship will be dismantled for
resources, otherwise the ship will be destroyed. It is therefore imperative to bombard a target prior to a colony ship attack. Scanning a colony ship will produce its registry, target, and number of colonists.

System Damage
        Repeated encounters with hostile ships may result in damage to various ship's systems. Vulnerable systems include: space weapons, planetary weapons, sensors,
and view screen. Damage can be repaired by returning to your empire's home planet, where you will also be rearmed.