



Though theoretically absolute, the authority of the Archonship has been challenged throughout history many times. During the Star League era, for example, Archon Kevin Steiner's decision to back the Lyran kroner over the Star League dollar prompted a nationwide strike that paralyzed the Lyran economy until he relented. More recently, the Estates General passed a vote of no confidence in Archon Alessandro Steiner, leading to his abdication in favor of Katrina Steiner. Precedents such as these demonstrate the limits of the Archon's authority, providing a natural brake on the excesses and corruption of absolute power.

THE ALLIANCE COUNCIL

Originally known as the Commonwealth Council, Katherine Steiner created this advisory body upon her ascent to the Archonship, in part to thwart other claims to the throne and establish the Steiner dynasty. Though at the time it was a political move intended to secure support from the leaders of the Skye and Tamar regions, this advisory council has since become an important part of the Lyran government, and often acts as the Archon's liaison with the Estates General while performing a number of the more mundane but important administrative tasks the Archon may choose to delegate.

Reorganized somewhat during the upheavals of the past thirty years, the Alliance Council today numbers eleven councilors, including the political leaders of all five provinces, the commander of the LAAF, and chancellors of the five main branches of the Alliance government (Department of Finance, Internal Policies, Foreign Affairs, the Lyran Intelligence Corps and the Chancellor of the Peoples). Though the Archon nominally appoints all of these advisors, the Estates General retains the right to choose the Chancellor of the Peoples, who acts as a representative of their body and helps maintain close ties between the Archon and the Estates.

The Council generally acts as a middleman in the passage of legislation between the Estates General and the Archon. In a process known as "bleeding the bill," the Council reviews, discusses and criticizes almost all major bills as they pass, recommending to the Archon whether to accept them, change them or veto them. As the saying goes, only bills with enough "blood" left in them after passing through the Council may be signed into law by the Archon, and though this process works both ways, the Archon's technically absolute authority means that any legislation passed by him through the Council is done primarily as a political courtesy to the Estates General rather than by legal mandate.

Pursuant to its role as an advisory body, Council members are chosen for their ability and knowledge rather than their family or political ties. Indeed, Council rules were amended in 2812 so that no more than one member of the Steiner family could sit on the Council. This rule was extended to all prominent families in 2821 when the Reynolds dynasty nearly placed two of its own on the Council. The formation of the FedCom forced a revision of this policy, expanding the number of Steiners on the Council to two, which allowed Duke Ryan Steiner of Skye and General of the Armies Nondi Steiner to retain their posts as Council members and as the leaders of their respective venues.

Throughout the centuries, the Alliance Council's powers have varied somewhat, ranging from a figurehead organization rubber-stamping laws passed between the Archon and the Estates, to the de facto administrative body of the Lyran government while past Archons led their armies in the field. Able to meet without requiring the Archon's presence since the reign of Michael Steiner II, Council leadership during such sessions falls to the Chancellor of the Peoples. This tradition has added strength to the Estates General as a check on the Archon's absolute authority, though more recent heads of state have taken to meeting with the Council as frequently as possible, assuring the dominance of the Archonship.

PROFILE OF LYRAN LEADERSHIP

Since its formation, thirty-two Archons have ruled the Lyran state (not counting the original nine Archons, the Triumvirate Regency or the brief rule of Duchess Margaret Olson). Their various reigns carried the nation through good times and bad, from the Age of War through the Golden Age of the Star League, and through four Succession Wars and a host of other conflicts. Despite the upheavals of the recent FedCom Civil War, the present Archon remains the heart of Lyran state, like those who ruled before him.

The Nine Archons (ruled 2346-2375)

The original Lyran Commonwealth governing structure called for nine Archons, patterned on the government of Terra's ancient Greek city-states. Though first proposed in 2341, the nine Archons were not chosen until five years later. They included the leaders of the founding three realms—the Tamar Pact, Protectorate of Donegal and Federation of Skye—and their deputies, plus a treasurer, the commander of the armies and a transportation minister. Unfortunately, this body's inability to govern, its failure to choose one among its number to rule as Archon Basileus, and ongoing corruption and inefficiency led to its demise just three decades later.

Archon Basileus Robert Marsden (2351-2395, ruled 2375-2395)

Fed up with the greed and ineptitude of his fellow archons, Robert Marsden usurped his fellow rulers' authority and declared himself Archon Basileus with the blessings of most of the Lyran people. His reign solidified and stabilized the nation's economy and infrastructure despite his occasionally draconian efforts to enforce his will on the few worlds that did not immediately follow, which earned him the nickname "the Crusher."

Archon Alistair Marsden (2361-2408, ruled 2395-2408)

A junior officer elected by the Lyran military leadership after Robert's death, Alistair led the Commonwealth through the initial years of the Age of War and moved the Lyran capital from Arcturus to Tharkad.

Archon Katherine Steiner(-Marsden) (2373-2446, ruled 2408-2445)

Alistair's wife and mother to his heir, Katherine reclaimed her maiden name of Steiner upon assuming the Archonship in 2408. During her reign, she formed the Commonwealth Council, strengthened and unified the Lyran economy and military, and signed the Ares Conventions, committing the Commonwealth to the rules of civilized warfare still honored by most nations.



THE LYRAN GOVERNMENT

Archon Alistair Marsden Steiner

(2407-2467, ruled 2445-2467)

Son of Katherine Steiner-Marsden, Alistair Steiner ruled during the darkest years of the Age of War. During his reign, the Commonwealth became the first state outside the Terran Hegemony to obtain BattleMech technology. Alistair's assassination in 2567 marked the beginning of the so-called Dark Years.

Archon Michael Steiner

(2447-2476, ruled 2467-2472)

Son of Alistair Steiner, Michael Steiner's brief reign was plagued by tragedy, including the near-conviction and execution of Duke Reynolds of Fatima—a close family friend—for Archon Alistair's assassination (a crime of which he was innocent). Other blows were the suicide of Archon Michael's sister, Duchess Tatyana Steiner, and the death of his new bride, Regina McQuiston. Michael Steiner died in combat, leading an effort to reclaim the world of Nox from the Draconis Combine, in the first large-scale battle between BattleMechs in Lyran history.

Archon Steven Steiner

(2447-2501, ruled 2472-2501)

Brother of Michael Steiner, Steven Steiner's reign was characterized by the weakening of the Archon's central authority and the increase of the nobility's political and military power. This period also saw the first public awareness of Loki—Lyran "black-ops" intelligence agents—after a botched mission against House Kurita, and the rising influence of Steven's wife Margaret Olsen in the Royal Court.

Duchess Margaret Olson(-Steiner) of Gallery

(2441-2515, ruled 2501-2503)

A mystic never confirmed in the Archonship by the Estates General, the reign of Duchess Margaret Olson, who briefly succeeded Steven Steiner, sparked a civil war between the Commonwealth leadership and the dukes of Tamar and Skye. Today, many see Duchess Olson as the real influence behind Archon Steven's indecisive rule.

Archon Robert Steiner

(2470-2532, ruled 2503-2528)

Illegitimate son of the late Tatyana Steiner, Robert Steiner, though physically disabled, was an accomplished aerospace fighter pilot and officer in the LCAF when various military and political leaders called upon him to reclaim the throne. His reign saw the end of the so-called Dark Years with the defeat of Margaret Olson and the dukes of Tamar and Skye, as well as the founding of the Kelswa and Lestrade families and the restoration of the Archon's powers over the nobility.

Current Alliance Council membership includes Duke Anatoly Serfass (Alarion Province), Duke Alder Umayr (Bolan Province), Duke Thomas Bradford (Coventry Province), Duchess Nejama Beersheba-Marsden (Donegal Province), Duke Robert Kelswa-Steiner (Skye Province), Margrave Adam Steiner (LAAF Commander), Chancellor Selma Ashwater (Department of Finance), Chancellor Mallory Sandor (Department of Internal Policies), Chancellor Sherman Pierce (Department of Foreign Affairs), Chancellor Sasha Gorge (Lyran Intelligence Corps) and Chancellor Tanya Reynolds (Chancellor of the Peoples). Because of the members' pressing responsibilities to their own departments and regions, the Alliance Council rarely meets in full, even when the Royal Court is in session. During such times, this advisory cabinet may still meet so long as more than half its members are present—including the Chancellor of the Peoples—with or without the Archon.

THE ESTATES GENERAL

Originally formed as a representative forum where all member worlds could air their grievances, but with no real authority, the Estates General has since grown into a parliamentary body with much broader powers. Created under the Articles of Acceptance, the Estates General originally claimed a representative from each world in the Lyran state, but as the realm grew larger with every new colony and outpost, representation limits were imposed based on each world's population instead. Though this change limits the voice of some worlds, it has controlled the overall size of the Estates General, while assuring that the vast majority of the Lyran population is heard on Tharkad.

Under normal circumstances, the Estates General gathers in Government House during Tharkad City's spring. Sessions nominally last four months, but most run closer to six months as the assembled politicians debate laws and policy decisions from the past year. In rare cases, this body has met for longer durations or even in other venues, such as the nine-month session on Great X in 2901 after a natural catastrophe caused the disintegration of nearby Beta Regulus II and prompted a national emergency relief effort.

Delegates to the Estates General are elected to office by whatever customs or processes exist on their native world, or—in the case of less populous regions—by whatever procedures the local group of worlds can agree upon. In keeping with the Estates' self-assigned mandate as a watchdog of the aristocracy, representation by members of the nobility is limited to those whose title is baron or lower, and so this body is largely dominated by commoners and the lowest rungs of Lyran nobility. No member of the Estates General may serve who has been convicted of any major crime in the preceding fifteen years.

A representative's term of office lasts six years, during which time the individual receives a handsome salary, but all of his or her personal property is held in a blind trust—a policy built into the original Estates General to keep its membership honest. There are no term limits for representatives in the Estates General, so particularly savvy or well-liked delegates may become seasoned veterans of Government House so long as their constituents do not vote them out in the next round of elections.

Once merely a rubber-stamp committee to ratify laws passed by the Archon, the Estates General has grown in power over the centuries as past Archons entrusted more and more authority to the body for the day-to-day governance of the realm. Indeed, as evidenced by past clashes with various Archons, the Estates' influence with its constituents has grown considerable enough to defeat some measures considered unfair to the people. Examples such as the Tax Reform Debate of 2575, the Businessmen's Strike of 2623, and even the reaffirmation of the Commonwealth's existence in 2643 demonstrate the body's departure from its intended role under the original Articles of Acceptance. By the late 2700s, the Estates General had come