

THE THALMOR

The term “Thalmor” originally referred to a provisional government, set up to rule during a period of instability under the Second (previous) Aldmeri Dominion, centuries ago.¹ Today, the Thalmor are a highly secretive political party, who have come to rule the lands under the Third Aldmeri Dominion, including Valenwood, Elsweyr and the Summerset Isles. As members of this party, you will all play a role in its success, or failure, by navigating the international relations of Tamriel, as well as the internal struggles of maintaining authority.

MER VERSUS MEN

The core belief of Thalmor ideology is that Mer, or elves, are superior to men. Amongst the various elven races, it is the inhabitants of the Summerset Isles, or Altmer, who are the most gifted; many Altmer believe that by maintaining a direct genetic lineage to the original race of Mer, they have maintained a higher degree of intelligence and magical ability than other races. The Thalmor attest that this inherent superiority grants them a natural right to rule. Initially, this meant gaining the independence of the Summerset Isles from the Empire, which was achieved long ago. However the goals of the Thalmor quickly expanded to include dominance over all of Tamriel, which put them in direct contest with the Empire.² The overlapping goals of these two political entities are what led to the Great War.

AFTER THE GREAT WAR

In the immediate aftermath of the Great War, it is difficult to assess exactly how successful the Thalmor have been. The ultimate goal of dominating Tamriel has obviously not been achieved, but the advantageous position of the elves during the peace negotiations allowed for some significant gains to be made during the signing of the White-Gold Concordat. Most importantly, the worship of Talos has been outlawed, and Thalmor agents have been

¹ “Thalmor” *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. [https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Thalmor_\(Skyrim\)](https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Thalmor_(Skyrim)) ² *Ibid*

given the authority to move freely throughout the Empire, ostensibly to root out heretics.³ However, the cost of these gains should be seriously considered.

The war against the Empire cost many lives, both soldiers and civilians. While most of the fighting took place outside of the Aldmeri Dominion's domains, there was still some damage done on the front lines where the provinces of Valenwood and Elsweyr meet the Imperial province of Cyrodiil. These areas are critical because they form the first line of defense against a potential Imperial invasion. The general population in these provinces are Bosmer and Khajiit,⁴⁵ not Altmer, so they are not inherently the most supportive of the Thalmor government. Combine this with the fact that they faced the most destruction during the Great War, and one may become concerned about their loyalty to the Thalmor. There are many approaches to dealing with this potential problem, ranging from subduing to appeasing the population, but any response must be very carefully considered and planned.

Beyond the civilian element, there is also the question of the military condition in these regions, and within the Dominion as a whole. The war resulted in a heavy loss of troops, leaving the Dominion in a relatively vulnerable state; this is especially true of the border regions. Admittedly, no power on the continent could currently challenge the might of the Thalmor,⁶ so this may not be a very pressing issue. Nevertheless, if military action is going to take place in the future, armies and military infrastructure must be rebuilt. However, even this must be done cautiously; troops need to be hired and trained, and doing so openly may be threatening to the Empire. Again, this is especially true of the border regions, where increased military activity may be perceived as mobilization for war, and could lead to a continuation of violent conflict.

To be clear, violent conflict is not necessarily a bad thing; indeed, it may be the only way to achieve the ultimate goal of the Thalmor. However, military actions must be done strategically and decisively. At the moment, the military superiority of the Dominion over the

³ "White-Gold Concordat" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19.

https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/White-Gold_Concordat

⁴ "Valenwood" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. <https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Valenwood>

⁵ "Elsweyr" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. <https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Elsweyr>

⁶ "Great War" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Great_War

Empire is apparent,⁷ but not so extreme that total victory would be guaranteed; as this gap widens, the outcome of violence becomes more favorable, and war becomes a more appealing option. Strengthening your forces is therefore prudent, but not if done in a way that leads to the premature outbreak of conflict.

ACTIVITIES IN THE EMPIRE

Another way to strengthen the Thalmor position vis a vis the Empire is by weakening the latter party. The Concordat permits Thalmor agents to travel throughout the Empire and enforce its terms,⁸ and this power can be used in many ways. Officially, agents are permitted to imprison and even kill those suspected of Talos worship, and indeed they should. Talos, or Tiber Septim, was a Nord who conquered all of Tamriel under a single Empire, and was thus elevated to the status of a god by the blasphemous races of Men.⁹ However, they conveniently forget how Septim destroyed the peaceful kingdom of the Altmer in order to achieve this, murdering thousands of Mer in the process.¹⁰ It is unacceptable that he should be venerated by men, and so the eradication of Talos-worship is of great priority.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that those who fight to maintain the status of Talos as a god, namely the Stormcloaks, have been somewhat useful. Their activities in the north have served as a distraction that the Empire is now forced to deal with;¹¹ the more attention they pay in the north, the less capable they will be of monitoring Thalmor activities in the south. Furthermore, the flagrant refusal of the Stormcloaks to abide by the White-Gold Concordat provides the Dominion with just cause to interfere further in the Empire's affairs, and perhaps even to break the terms of the peace treaty.

At the same time, the Stormcloaks can not openly be supported. Aside from the issues this would cause with the Empire, it would also be very poor optics domestically to be seen

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ "Thalmor Justiciar (Skyrim)" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. [https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Thalmor_Justiciar_\(Skyrim\)](https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Thalmor_Justiciar_(Skyrim))

⁹ "Tiber Septim" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Tiber_Septim

¹⁰ "Pocket Guide to the Empire, Third Edition: Valenwood" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Pocket_Guide_to_the_Empire,_Third_Edition:_Valenwood

¹¹ "Skyrim Civil War" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Skyrim_Civil_War

supporting Talos worshippers. The Thalmor involvement in the Stormcloak Rebellion will require a much subtler hand.

DOMESTIC TROUBLES

Setting foreign policy aside, there are domestic concerns which the Thalmor should also be concerned with. As stated above, some within the Dominion are experiencing war-weariness and would not at this time support further violence, or activities that may lead to it. At the height of the Great War, the Dominion's armies were able to take the capital of the Empire itself,¹² so many within the Dominion believed that the war had been won and the goal of continental domination achieved. To have experienced such a setback after this apparent success was a great embarrassment; the terms of the Concordat were certainly favorable, but many were expecting a great deal more.

At the moment, none of these feelings have coalesced into a coherent movement against the Thalmor regime. However, the potential exists for rival political leaders to take advantage of these feelings of malcontent. Given the rise in separatist movements like the Stormcloaks, along with the decrease in Thalmor popularity, great care should be taken to avoid territories within the Dominion from becoming inspired. Once again, there are many ways that this may be done, so plan carefully.

¹² "Great War" *Elder Scrolls Wiki*. Accessed 1/20/19. https://elderscrolls.fandom.com/wiki/Great_War