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Introduction:

First, let's me say AACW is really the best wargame (computer or boardgame) I ever played. If I'm here and there modestly modifying points in order to get a better game, I keep this feeling AGEOD has done it right. A subtle blend of strategical and operational decisions to take, covered by a clever design using both simplifications when needed and very detailed rules on crucial points, offered with great graphics and constantly patched... a real miracle.

I firmy believe a good bardgame or computer one has to be accuratly focused. Player has to be able to identify his place in the command chain. let's say there's always in a great wargame a touch of roleplaying distinguishing it from a good product.

AACW has this. Of course, you're moving armies, thinking operationnally on the way to capture Nashville, or you plan a raid like Stuart did. For gameplay reasons thta's unavoidable. but in the end, you'e really acting most of the time like Lincoln or Davis: choosing Generals, finding money, looking at public opinion, foreign powers friendness or hostility. I believe that's the real reason of the AACW special interest over other AGEOD products. WW1 could have this in some months. That's where Ph. Thibaut design is so unique; let's say he has an design instinct to create this roleplaying touch as naturally as Grant to force ennemy to surrender. Pocus has the unique ability to adapt, modify, craft, enlighten and add yet more to the computer...

The result for me has been costly buys of books about the Civil War which in turn gave always more desire to mod.

From the start, I chose to keep as closely than possible on the same design model than Ageod: the simplest way to get historical flavor with a working AI.

About balance.... I don't know. Maybe it will be, certainly not. As usual, only time will give the necessary insight about. I just hope you will get a greater historical flavor, a harder game against AI or an human opponent... and any suggestions to work out this mod.

Struggle is designed to be :

- more historical.
- more difficult against AI

PLAYING SVF

SVF may be played:

1) Against AI

- against CSA AI
- against Union AI

Both AI are built to be less prone to long deep raids. Events are allowing some variations in aggressivity and objectives choices. AI should be better to select the right objectives and protect itself of large losses.

AI should be yet more versatile than in normal game. Some actions could be taken by it or not, with varying agressivty levels, introducing some unpredictibility.

Recommanded AI settings:

- +1 bonus for initiative level. Critical for Union AI , useful for CSA AI
- +1 or +2 bonus for Fog of War. +2 seems to me to be better.
- extended reflexion time for AI

2) by PBEM:

Both players must of course have the same SVF version. The procedure is the same than for the official version.

3) 2 scenarios are available.

Both being the April 61 campaign. The scenario with no leader random removal just disables the random losses of 2 star and 3 star Generals Introduced by SVF.

DESIGN NOTES

1) First, I rejected too idiocy rules.

It's always difficult to draw the lines between more realism and « idiocy rules » forcing player to do the same errors made during a war.

By example, USA didn't formed more than 6 cavalry regiment until August 1861, considering useless to form more as the war would be very short and terrain was considered being very adverse to the cavalry.

USA cavalry was yet plagued by poor tactics, primarily lack of grouped use, in the first year.

Player is taking the place of Lincoln or Davis for the essential, relying on chosen general to execute strategic plans (even if the game let players elaborate too part of operational implementation of these strategic moves, even if success or failure is partially the result of the General ratings).

Consequently, I ' ve sorted modifications by this criterium: nothing should delay the possibility for the North to create immediately more cavalry brigades, but the tactical problems being out of the scrutiny of the high Command, I've lowered a bit some US cavalry stat for the first mid-game.

The same way about events. I will avoid any event which would have for effect to force player to act historically whatever the context. By example, I don't want to have events for a human player (Not AI) putting McClellan in charge of Army of the Potomac, but I prefer to set a leaders situation where McClellan choice is an interesting one (by his training and organizational abilities).

2) Secondly, I brought small changes to units.

a) until now, I haven't noticed sufficiently strange battle results to undermine my belief into the unit ratings (even if from time to time a strange result may occur, no proof such an occurrence comes from erroneous unit sats)

b) battle combat procedure, albeit complex, remains an abstraction. Introducing greatly modified stats, even if more realist in theory, could result in wrong results, simply by being made to a system which doesn't is a realistic portrayal of battle but a simulation destined to give accurate outcomes.

So I have made rather light changes with regards to these 2 considerations.

These changes are coming from interesting posts from McNAUGHTON

In short:

- I reduced the number of sharpshooter units, and raised their cost in manpower (reflecting not the real number of men but the trouble to find elite riflemen in quantity). It should force the player to avoid recruit in mass sharpshooters but let him possibility to do so. The number will increase with years (see Shock troops of the Confederacy by Fred L. RAY for more details).

- I reworked US cavalry to give CSA a real edge at start. The end of the war will be marked by the contrary. CSA units will cost more at the end of war, to show the lack of horses this side suffered then.

- I modified artillery. Basically, I enforced differences between smoothbores and rifle guns.

Smoothbores have short range, rather low attack accuracy, high defense accuracy and reinforced assault values, in order to stress their defensive use in the game system limits. The 6 pdr is cheap but weak, the 12pdr is much better and really versatile gun.
Rifled guns on the contrary have greater range and are more accurate than smoothbore in attack , less in defense, making them useful for attack. The 20 parrot is delivering more punch at higher range than the 10.

But...never forget most battles are beginning at range 4 or less (the range of smoothbores)...Lee stated the 12 pdr « Napoleon » to be the best gun not without reasons. The theorical advantage of rifled guns are so challenged .

Last, Horse artillery is now representing the 3 inch, rifled gun having the same values than the 10 parrot but with greater accuracy and better reliability (Parrot hits number being reduced by one). Price is higher too...

So, with 5 types having special functions and limits, field artillery is now without « must have « model. 6Pdr is inexpensive but of marginal value, 3 inch is the best rifled gun but is the most difficult to buy, the 20 parrot delivers on attack greatest puch, but is costly and its range isn't that useful, the 10 parrot remaining so interesting because of its lower cost.

3) Then comes the problem of Divisions.

In the current system, 1861 divisions get the same advantages than 1863 ones.

It's highly unrealistic.

What plagued both sides at start was the lack of skilled officers and the absence of HQ staff

doctrine. If the first problem was somewhat solved with time, second remained much more pregnant until 1865. Some progress was made but slowly.

For these 2 reasons, corps weren't used until the first half of 1862 and I'm seriously questioning the eistence of functional divisional HQ in the first months of the war.

In game terms, it signifies, as corps can't be prohibited, to delay the appearance of 2 and 3 stars generals, and to postpone divisions formation until the end of 1861.

So divisions can't be formed before october 1861.

The divisions in the 2 Eastern armies appearing in may 1861 have been disbanded too.

Now your leaders will move and fight with penalties. The strategic plans will so be slower to start and the first battle in Virginia (first Bull Run) a real challenge.

It will too hinder gamey tactics, like forming a cavalry division to raid into enemy land. You will be yet able to group several cavalry units under a leader in 1861 but you will get out of command penalties...

Then winter should postpone your raid projects until the spring of 1862...

4) The cohesion value of units was reworked.

I've reduced too the cohesion value of all units. First, because I think it will made units more prone to rout and so will reduce the number of destroyed regiments, a little too high. Secondly, as cohesion improves with experience, it should enforce the need for players to take attention to experienced units, peculiarly for the Union player, whose replacement penalty could be giving headaches in the last years of the war...Last, the 1861 battles should be shorter and plagued by routing units....as in reality.

So all cohesion levels have been reduced by 10.

Not only it will give real edge to experienced units, whose cohesion is raised, it will emphazize a bit more National Morale influence.

You will need both yet more.

Battles will be less costly, shorter, peculiarly in the first months, with troops routing quicker than stubbornly renewing deadly assaults.

5) On the economical front, Draft and Money Policies from the vanilla version are definitly too lenient. Players can too quickly get astronomical amount of men, money and War supply to build unhistorically huge armies.

In reality, both sides had huge problems with conscription laws and their enforcement, and printing money in the game hadn't penalties sufficient to prohibit its use each turn.

So I raised both NM and VP losses for conscription options and limited the money printing to one turn by month.

Draft isn't possible until 1862. USA side gets more volunteers (if Sufficient funds are at disposal) and less draftees. CSA will have to rely more on draft.

Global numbers of buildable troops will remain roughly the same than in the official version but this difference should create interesting dilemnas, the South being forced to get back the NM lost when USA will have to find money for volunteers and accept to lose 8 or 10 NM for a number of conscripts much lower than before...

Printing money will at last give much less money in the first months, and will raise with Victory Point total. So long for some gamey tactics at start to use printing money for building a very large army...

Last, the numbers of War supply production has been reduced for both sides. Now you will have a real interest for industrialization of blockade runners (or raising transport fleet for USA).

6) I've introduced a few changes in strategic cities list: among others, Springfield, Manassas,Hampton Roads, Norfolk, Fort Donelson, Columbus, Lexington and Grafton have now a VP value whereas Winchester, and the region north to Fort Pickens have lost their VP value. It should help CSA AI to be less obnoxious about Harper's Ferry and Fort Pickens.

Missouri situation at start explains why I've made Springfield an objective at a period where there were no command events for AI; it was then only by such a way I could influence AI.

But I kept that because it forces:

- Union to go South...
- South to go North...

in a State heavily partaged between both sides. So in its own way, Springfield (and Lexington) forces players to get some victories in Missouri rather than remain too much of the defense,which could have encouraged the enemy side in Missourian population.

7) East Tennessee and Mountaneous North Carolina regions have now a strong US influence at start, when Southern Illinois ("Little Egypt") has a small CSA sympathy at start.

8) The mod is using the current leaders mod made by Winfield S Hancock and Ruynan99. There are more and more slight changes here and there. I guess some will be controversial (J.E. Johnston by example) but I'm ready to create tailored files for those wanting to get other values ;-)

Some examples:
-Mc Dowell decreased to 2-2-1. Mc Dowell attacked at First Bull Run because of presidential order. At second Bull run, his performance
 was poor as he lost too much time to play a real role in the battle. I know, he was a scapegoat too... But it was less than stellar anyway.

-Forrest increased to 6-6-4. Forrest direted some really competent defensive operations.

McClellan strategic rating increased to 2. McClellan after all led 2 offensives (Western Virginia, Peninsula) and attacked at Antietiam. Of course, so cautiously and so slowly but even considered the pression by Lincoln over his shoulders, McClellan wasn't totally unactive...

9) Reworked a bit Coastal/naval stuff. Land artillery is now divided into:

fort artillery: medium guns used againts land units.
Coastal artillery: can only fire on naval targets; represents the most curretn type of Columbiad and Dalghren guns
Columbiad and Rodman: the " big babies "; there are the most large guns for both sides. very lethal on defense, very costly, may fire against both land and naval units.
Brooke guns: Confederate Naval rifled guns and some English types. May fire only against naval units.

Columbiad, Rodman and Brooke has no movement ability when used by AI (AI is usually placing Columbiad in infantry division...). Players gets units with very slow movement.

If CSA captures Norfolk on the first turn, he will get some Columbid units, representing guns at the Gosport Arsenal. Some will appear at atlanta 2 (simulating the CSA capture of Federal arsenals in other States).

For CSA AI, some costal fort will randomly become level 7 fortresses from 1862. This will help AI to simulate the construction of earthern Fortifications like Ft Fisher.

10) This mod is using a slighty modified version of the cavalry mod by Jabberwock. The only difference is the new ability is only given to INDEPENDANT Cavalry units (not embedded into an infantry brigade).

12) Brigades reworked for both sides. Most Federal brigades are made of 3 infantry regiments (and cavalry or artillery assets sometimes). CSA brigades are larger. New Brigades model will appear for both sides in 1862 with only Infantry units

13) I'm using GREY LANSMANN fantastic work on historical accuracy and railroads. A very nice job and an huge task to create a more historical transportation network.

14) Creation of the Potomac gunboats units, one of the reason explaining why CSA didn't crossed the Potomac to attack Washington...

15) some flavour events added like the corruption ones (small losses in War supplies). There are other, like lab explosions now not only limited to the Richmond one in 1863

16) most 2 and 3 stars Generals have a slight risk to be removed each turn and another to get back... Simulating illness, death or any sort of retirement, these events are yet a very rough way to compensate the lack of death rules for 3 stars leaders in AGE engine... with the side effect to disband the army commanded by the leader...hence the very low probability of this sort of removal. But at least Grant or Lee aren't anymore immortal..

IMPORTANT:

If a removed leader was in command of a division or an Army, current AGE engine will left a shadow of him, ie a unit having its name. To remove this oddity, you have too:

- dissolve the Division or Army

- reform it under a new leader without integrating first the unit having the name of the removed leader
- add this unit after.

17) creation of the volunteer units, ie infantry regiments with very low stats. They're representing the really bad units created at the start of the war , poorly led, totally undisciplined. They are subjecting to improve.

18) the upgrade of units has been slowed (too easy made in normal version)

19) I modified too the march to the guns parameters. Basically, the march to the gun will be more dependant of the strategic value of leaders.

20) AI will get for free some forts in Richmond,Petersburg, Washington....Permanent forts may now be built at level 8 maximum

21) The end of the term for the 3 years engagment for US troops in 1864 is now simulated by losses of XP and cohesion...The USA will lose too 200 conscript points. It should help CSA to resist longer.

22) Raised the death probability for one and two stars leaders.

23) raised the value of inactive status to 40%

24) NewLeader abilities: poor administrator, giving malus in cohesion for some notorious unpar generals (Burnside, Fremont, VAn Dorn). Poor Cavalryman, poor tactician

Some political generals (like Butler, Pillow, Sigel) will get special malus in battle and random events...raising their seniority levels....

25) Removed elite status for most brigades created by events.

26) New scripting of Kentucky events in 1861

a) At start, Kentucky can't be entered by any side (blockstate set to 1)
b) Kentucky will secede if foreign intervention level raises to 30;
c) Kentucky will secede if Union troops decides to enter Kentucky
d) on the contrary, Kentucky will join Union if attacked by Confederates;
e) if Kentucky hasn't seceded on 1st of October 1861, it will join the Union

To choose to invade Kentucky, each side will have to buy an unit (from turn 2, support category) (named Invades Kentucky) whose presence will be checked each turn. This unit will enable an event removing the blockstate status of Kentucky...

Union will get too some other units:
- blocus of the Kentucky: lower revenues and WSU for confederates but add to Foreign level entry
- Fremont declaration : Union will gain some NM and VP points but will lose loyalty in some states; the Foreign level entry will be slighty raised

For AI: each of these events will have an AI version, based on probability. AI can't get a thinking about but it's the only way to create variation against Athena.

27) added Petersburg mod by Gray_Lansman

28) added for A. S Johnston Hood some randomness for their 3 stars stats...Now, each can get better or worse stats than the vanilla ones when commanding an army.

29) implemented the autogarrison feature for AI

30) moddded OOBs for both sides in Missouri and Eastern Theater.

31) added Potomac gunboats

32) added some fluvial garrisons on the Tennessee for Union at start.

33) Move in some montaneous terrain (Ozark, West Virginia) is now harder.

34) Genius attribute added to some leaders: Lee, Jackson, Forrest. They get more than 4 abilities

35) in the first months, Manassas is a primary objectives for both sides.Then its value will come back to 0. Beyond the "Forward to Richmond " issue, I feel Southern opinion would have been upset by the loss of the town when anayone was believing only one battle would suffice to end the war.

Union will have conquer Manassas before late August 61 or will lose 8 NM. If Federals take Manassas, they will have to place an army in the vicinity of Richmond before the late October 61 turn.

36) Ironclad and Monitor have now a random turn of entry, simulating for both sides either the technical difficulties or the lack of interest into armored navy in the first months. CSA ironclads have a very slow construction rate.

37) Introduced some new potential CSA 3 star Generals (currently only CHEATHAM, mre to come). These Generals may be better or worse...Hood and Lyon has variable 3 star ratings too

38) US units have higher ammo and general supply levels of stockage and consommation. Union will need more supplies but will stock more.

39) If CSA seizes Harper's Ferry by turn 1, it will add to the Richmond industrial level

40) Created the Great Train Raid event, Jackson's raid in 1861 on the B&O

41) Reworked cavalry. I strongly disagree with the last changes in official version for CSA cavalry. Confederate lacked good horses after 1863and on the whole CSA cavalry quality lowered a bit from 1864. On the contrary, Northern Horsemen were on the rise after mid-1862 and got from 1863 more and more repeating and breechloading carbines which gave them a real firepower advantage at close range. On the contrary, CSA kept for a part of units muzzleloading rifles giving an advantage in range. So values of cavalry are really different from the officila game...

42) added for Union mounted infantry from 1863. a few units can be recruited in Illinois and Indiana. Very expensive too as the cost in horses was really big and even USA were unable to raise more than an handful.... In 2 words, infantry values with higher speed. 43) from 1862, USA infantry brigades will only be made of Infantry regiments, with the exception of 2 ,one in the East, the other

in the West.

46) The 1st Bull Run events have been modified: If North doesn't control Manassas at the end of August 61, McDowell will be demoted to 2 stars rank and McDowell promoted to 3 stars one. North will get a NM penalty if it earns no victory in a great battle causing CSA to lose 1 NM. This simulates the necessity for Lincoln to launch a victorious offensive under public pressure.

47) added some events for CSA human player invading Kentucky:

a) The sooner he will invade the bigger loss od support in Kentucky population he will get.
b) 10 events having different probabilities to fire will give or retranch VP for CSA side after he has invaded Kentucky. The negative ones may fire from April 61 to October 61, the positive will fire mostly only after July 61.

So why CSA should invade Kentucky? Above military reasons, I've given back to Kentucky its status of rather industrialized State in 1861. So Confederates could get some WSU so much needed....with a price...

48) integrated Nickel's gfx about Columbiad and Rodman. Many thanks for his help

49) AI should be more cautious during Winter (from October to February). But it could too adopt sometimes an offensive attitude.

50) Introduced a new series of events replacing those forcing US player to keep a force around Washington in 1862. I was never easy with that as AI wasn't really understanding the event and the strategical situation could be really different from the historical one. Last, why 1862 only?

So I reversed the problem. Now, If CSA place some forces around in the regions neighbouring Washington (Not Alexandria) or Baltimore, US player will lose each trun 3 or 5 NM... This rule doesn't apply against Union AI.

51) Marines and Sailors have no more pontooner ability. Pontoneer ability has ben added to Engineers units, btoh for simplicity and AI...

52) Fortifications may be built up to level 8. Beware, AACW hinders upgrading a fort above level 2. So any fortification efforts will result in a fort level 8 for a cost of 18 supply and 4artillery units. To ease the build process, I've introduced Fortification ressources units containing each the supply units needed to build one level 8 fort. You will have to add 4 artillery unis to one fortification ressources to begin Fort construction

Why build forts when units may entrench? Because until late game, only Forts giv a 8 level you will appreciate around Washington or Richmond. At a huge cost...

53) partisan units movement allowance lowered: partisan units are locals, not bands raiding several hundred kilometers away...

55) Introduced Northern fluvial patrols . Union player will get in the first turns 8 free gunboat groups. They have very low combat value and can't leave Missouri and Ohio rivers. One such unit prevents the crossing of the region it occupies. To ease micromangement, these units need no ressupply.

Created for simulating the Union naval superiority which prevented Confederate crossing of

Missouri and Ohio rivers by large armies. These units are otherwise helpless for battle and can »t leave this aera in order to avoid any side effects. Raising WSUs for Union to give player a possibility to build more « normal » gunboats could have led to other side effects.

Use them to protect Cairo, Cincinnati and Saint Louis...

56) Union will be able to create one union infantry brigade and 2 cavalry regiments if he controls both Ft Smith and Fayetteville in Arkansas.

57) 2 supply units are needed to build a depot. Creation of logistical chains was really difficult, especially in the Western and TransMississipi theaters. AI gets some helper events to overcome this difficulty.

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SPECIAL THANKS

PRAISE FOR SVF

"Overall a commendable product. My only complaint is that SVF confederate sharpshooters couldn't hit an elephant at this distance…"
General John Sedgwick, Spotsylvania

"In great deeds Struggle for a Vast Future abides."
Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, 20th Maine

"If I could save the Union without patching up to SVF, I would do it; if I could save it by downloading SVF, I would do it; and if I could save it by playing the Public beta patch 1.13e (RC5d), I would also do that . . . My paramount object in the struggle is to save the Union…"
Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Horace Greeley, August 22, 1862

"The trouble with being educated is that it takes a long time; it uses up the better part of your life and when you are finished what you know is that you would have benefited more by going into banking, or like Clovis becoming a fabulously successful modder of AGEOD's American Civil War."
Philip K. Dick

Athena, Silicium City, Artificial Intelligence: *" I never felt myself so smart as in SVF"*

G.McClellan, Ohio, Army Commander: *" SVF is really the only mod where I feel I could take some offensive one day"*

Van Dorn, Arkansas, Cavalry Leader: *" I can't play SVF anymore. I just can't resign myself to be forced to think about my supply lines"*

Nathan B. Forrest, Tennessee, autodidact: *" It's a bloody damn mod and I like that"*

Robert E Lee, Virginia, Icon of a Nation : *"With SVF, I may strike these people a blow, even with Ewell and Anderson"*

Ulysses S Grant, Illinois, meatgrinder : *"I've unconditionnally surrendered myself to the charms of SVF mod"*