

Solo Campaigning

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The Idea

Being a total convert to DBM, and engaged in building up as many 2nd century BC armies as time and finance allow, I've knocked up a "mini-campaign" to produce battles. It might be useful for other readers. The idea was to give extra point to casual games, without going into the complexities of a full multi-player campaign.

Campaign Set-up and Rules

I started with a schematic "map" of the situation in 200 BC with areas joined by connecting routes. The areas are Macedon, Greece, Egypt, Pergamon, Galatia, Seleucids West (Syria etc), Seleucids East (Babylonia, Media etc), Parthia, Bactria, Indian Mountains and India. I then allocated an "aggression rating" to each area, from 3 for Macedon and Seleucids West to 0 for India.

At the start of each turn, which represents five years, I throw a die for each area and add its aggression rating - the two areas with the highest adjusted scores will be aggressive that turn. I then throw a die for each of the aggressor's neighbours, deducting the neighbouring area's aggression rating: the highest resulting score is the aggressor's target.

The five year war is decided by a single DBM battle. If the aggressor wins, the defeated area usually becomes a satellite and may provide an allied contingent to the conqueror's army in future wars. There are exceptions, especially if Rome intervenes. If the aggressor is defeated, another dice throw next turn decides whether he comes back for more or gives up, or if the victim counterattacks.

There are thus two battles per turn, plus any from continuing wars.

A satellite area still throws each turn, with an aggression factor of 1. If its dice throw qualifies it to attack, it revolts.

I've built in various wrinkles, such as adjustments for sea and desert barriers so that the Bactrians, for example, are much more likely to invade India than attack Parthia, while a Ptolemaic invasion of Greece is improbable. Options in the DBM army lists can also be included, so the Parthians cannot use city militia until they've conquered Babylonia, for instance.

Rome is a brooding presence off the map. It will intervene if Greece or Pergamon is attacked, or if any power conquers an area adjacent to a Roman-held one. Eventually, if the Romans win their battles, they'll end up ruling most of the map. "Random event" dice throws bring in possibilities such as Jewish revolts or Kushan invasions.

The beauty is that I can have fun throwing the dice to determine who does what to whom, then fight the battles against any of a number of friends and ponder the developing situation. The historical course of events is quite likely but far from inevitable - Rome could be hammered early on and decide to concentrate on the west, leaving the Hellenistic world alone: alternatively, Rome could be squaring up to the Parthians a century early, and even reach India.

So far, I've played the first turn. This is how it went.



200-195 BC: Turn 1

The aggression dice throws determined that Parthia attacked the Seleucids, while Macedon attacked Pergamon. The latter could have triggered immediate Roman intervention (in which case the Macedonians would find themselves outnumbered by a Roman army with a Pergamene allied contingent), but the Romans' throw of 1 meant that they watched and waited. All quiet elsewhere - just as well, as my Indians are still based for 5th Edition and await rebasing, and I haven't painted most of the Galatians yet!

Macedon versus Pergamon

The Macedonian/Pergamene battle was fought with 350 point armies. The Pergamene player (Martyn Rogers) picked all the available artillery (lots of it) to counter the Macedonian phalanx, and maximum cavalry. Both sides used wide on-table cavalry flanking movements on their left flanks, and both were successful. The Pergamenes' (Kn(F)) destroyed the weak Macedonian right flank command, but the Macedonians swept away the Napoleonic-style artillery grand battery with a flank charge. Meanwhile, the Pergamenes' Galatian auxiliaries (Wb(O)) went out of control and got in the way of their victorious horsemen. It was close-run, but the Macedonians won without their phalanx getting into action at all.

The Romans will intervene next turn - I've assumed that the Pergamenes have retreated into their impregnable fortress to await relief. The next battle will be 300 points of Romans plus 100 points of Pergamene allies (guaranteed reliable) against 400 points of Macedonians. If the Romans lose, a further dice throw will determine whether the Senate carries on the war, sending a bigger army next time, or accepts defeat.

Parthia versus Seleucids

The other battle involved my newly-painted Parthians against a 400-point Seleucid army with minimal infantry and maximum scythed chariots and elephants.

I hadn't used Parthians or anything similar under DBM before, and had misgivings about controlling lots of light horse. I needn't have worried - compared to my usual 13th century irregular knights they're a dream! Group moves backwards, single element moves for only 1 PIP each and 300 pace moves - this is the army for me, I thought as I enveloped the Seleucid left flank cavalry and wiped them out.

I had some misgivings when the scythed chariots mowed down a few horse archers (but they didn't last long and couldn't get through to the cataphracts), and when the elephants trampled over some more, but the Seleucid cavalry reserves were "swarmed" by LH and this ensured a Parthian victory. As in the first battle, the phalanx didn't get into action.

So, the Parthians have conquered the eastern Seleucid provinces half a century early. Will they continue, and sweep westwards to the Mediterranean? Or will Antiochus the Great march east again to restore his empire? Next turn's dice throws will decide!

Conclusion

This campaign has been great fun already, and given the limited amount of time I can spend on wargaming it's ideal for me. The idea could easily be used for other periods and areas, and I hope that readers will try it and tell us the results. I'll let you know how this one develops.

