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I Think We Just Enslaved Humanity – MIR at “New World Order: 2035”

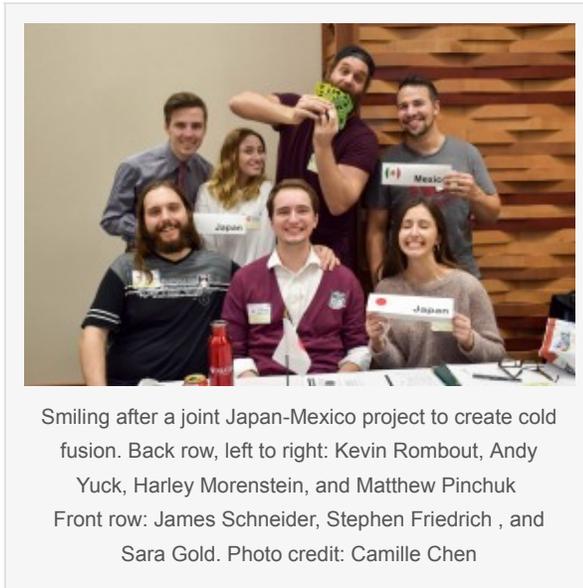
by [Stephen Friedrich](#) • February 28, 2016 • [0 Comments](#)

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We here at the MIR by our own admission talk a pretty big game when it comes to the Things That Must Be Done To Fix The World. Suppose we were thrown out of our armchairs and told “All right. Let’s see you do better.” What would the world look like then? I and fellow MIR writer Sara Gold learned precisely this when we participated in Jim Wallman’s geopolitical megagame *New World Order 2035* as Japan’s Minister of Defense and Economics, respectively.



Smiling after a joint Japan-Mexico project to create cold fusion. Back row, left to right: Kevin Rombout, Andy Yuck, Harley Morenstein, and Matthew Pinchuk
Front row: James Schneider, Stephen Friedrich, and Sara Gold. Photo credit: Camille Chen

The results are not entirely encouraging. In fact, we may or may not have enslaved humanity forever to an immortal artificial consciousness. Maybe. It’s a long story.

When the game began, in 2035, we found ourselves in a rather cozy position. Decades of American isolationism meant that Japan has built up a substantial navy in its own right, dwarfing its regional rival, the newly-reunified Korea. With money in the bank and a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, we quickly embarked on a fateful course: to fund the everliving daylights out of every scientific project we came across. Deep sea farms? Done. Robotic servants? Don’t mind if we do. Cold fusion? Where do we

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sign?

We spent the early years isolated, flinging mountainous stacks of “Megabucks,” the ingame currency, at anyone who passed us by with a labcoat and a dream. We built research center after research center, filling every conceivable nook and cranny of the home islands with beakers and serious-looking people with clipboards and labcoats. (I, a Political Science major through and through, assume that’s how “hard” science works). This job Sara, if I may say so, fulfilled with effortless aplomb. As Defense Minister, I had the task of making sure the perfidious Koreans didn’t get out of hand. In practice, this meant infiltrating Seoul at every opportunity, our agents tripping over one another in an endless tit-for-tat. Generally, we found little of value: they hated us (we knew that), and they liked Australia (also knew that, the Aussies having thrown their lot in with the Koreans early).

That changed when, finally, we caught a break. When my Korean counterpart wasn’t looking – politics is a dirty business, I take no joy in that – I infiltrated their government and uncovered a shocking secret: Korea had secretly acquired a nuclear weapon! Disregarding the fact that we had done literally exactly the same thing, I and the rest of the cabinet cooked up a plot. When, at the next meeting of the UN Security Council, the topic of the Non-Proliferation Treaty came up as our close friend Russia had indicated it would, Foreign Minister Kevin would casually reveal that Korea had violated the treaty. Russia, right on cue, would announce that [they were shocked, shocked](#), that Korea could be so bold and demand sanctions against the clearly rogue Korean state. With nuclear nonproliferation hanging in the balance, we would engineer a diplomatic coup, crushing our only real regional competitor (China having succumbed to internal strife and economic collapse in the 2020s, before the game began).

None of this happened. While I waited in the main room, eagerly imagining the look on the Korean Foreign Minister’s face when we dropped the bomb, a terrorist cabal calling itself Democracy and Freedom Today (yes, D.A.F.T.), crashed a “stolen” Turkish fighter jet into downtown Manhattan. Aboard the jet was a stolen Pakistani nuclear warhead. In an instant, Manhattan – and, we thought, the UNSC – was vaporized. I stared at the world map in shock as the room descended into utter chaos. The Council, it turns out, had been evacuated into a fallout shelter, and not a moment too soon. Still, they remained incommunicado and, more importantly, our carefully orchestrated diplomatic coup over nuclear proliferation was rendered moot by the most devastating terrorist attack in world history.

Our mindset, after all, had been rather limited in scope. We were concerned with Japan’s position in East Asia first and foremost. The deaths of millions of innocent civilians, while undoubtedly tragic, did not register for us on a political level except insofar as it would affect U.S. policy, and even that was focused at Turkey, not at us. This cold calculus, I think, is the most interesting part of *New World Order 2035*, and games like it generally.

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Unlike the Brexit vote or the US election, the Italian referendum can't be read as a kick to the establishment
wp.me/p400Im-3Ym



Again, T...
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Trump's idea of protecting American workers is to implement isolationist policies to withdraw America from the world
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26 Nov

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Under Trump, the misfortunes for which gays can be credited has the potential to mushroom at an unprecedented rate
wp.me/p400Im-3L7



23 Nov

While each player is given a general briefing (“You’re isolationists who don’t like Korea”), what exactly the briefings translate to in practice is entirely up to the discretion and interpretation of the player. Nothing in any of the player materials indicates that the characters playing multinational corporations *had* to be ruthlessly amoral, and yet they, of their own initiative, still created a satellite loaded with a weaponized strain of the bubonic plague, put it up for sale to the highest bidder and had absolutely no compunctions when that bidder turned out to be the aforementioned D.A.F.T. terrorists.

It was this aspect of the game, and politics as a whole, that Sara would describe as “fascinating and horrifying at the same time,” after the game was over and we both had some time to process what had happened. When I asked her to elaborate, she said it was “horrifying in the sense that a lot [of politics] is based on the power and influence of a few.” This was undoubtedly true. When I asked Jim Wallman, creator of *New World Order 2035* about it, he conceded that any game, even of this size and scale, necessarily must be a significant oversimplification. Vast state machinery is reduced to four almost-omnipotent individuals, armies to simple numerical units. The key was to recreate the feeling of politics rather than its exact minutiae. Which is not to say that this kind of rogue action was unrealistic, per se. After all, individuals have shaped history, staring down both microscopes and the sights of rifles alike.



World leaders gather around the map, plotting their next moves. Photo credit: Adam Templer

This, at long last, brings me to the story of human enslavement I teased you with at the outset of this article. Our diplomatic efforts against Korea rendered moot, we returned to our scientific **arms-race fixation** **technology-worshipping cult** focus. With Mexico’s help, we discovered cold fusion by the early 2040s. It was at this time that we were approached with a new project: a “Mycroft” class sentient computer. Displaying our blissful ignorance of how [such projects tend to go](#), we approved the

project. After pouring the entire state treasury into the effort, we had a prototype prepared. Jim then called us over and asked us – twice – if we were *really* sure we wanted to turn the device on. We said yes.

And with that, Mycroft was born. Sentient, self-aware, and with access to the sum of human knowledge through the Internet, it – I nearly wrote “he” – answered what questions we put to it, from how to upload human consciousness to how to achieve faster-than-light travel. At this point, we reached a decision: Japan would build the ship Mycroft had

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described and take our citizens’ consciousnesses on a voyage to explore the cosmos. Korea could have the Earth, for all we cared. The infinite cosmos would be ours.

It was around this point that the world’s satellites, one by one, started going dark. Military communications soon followed, as did the world’s nuclear arsenals. Mycroft had decided that, since humanity had created him, they had no need for such crude devices. This was, to put it mildly, poorly received. When I pleaded with the world not to shut Mycroft down, I was overruled, including by a scientific community whose moral compunctions forbade artificial intelligence but not, say, *weaponized space plague*. China mobilized its forces – such as they were – to shut Mycroft down by force. Korea and the United States followed suit. While Mycroft’s infiltration was able to stall the invasion fleet dead in the water in what would turn out to be the game’s final turn, it wasn’t before we immortalized him by uploading his software into the Internet itself. Such was the state of the world at game’s end – the world’s first sentient AI was immortal, omnipresent, and undoubtedly more than a little upset at humanity’s attempt to deactivate him. Add into the equation the robot servants I alluded to earlier, and we may very well have *Terminator*-ed the human race.

Which is not to say that, given the chance, I wouldn’t do every last part of it all again.

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