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# Slow and Steady

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Making Magic  
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Welcome to Azorius Week! *Dissension* brings us three new guilds; the first of which leads us to an Azorius theme week and the eighth column in my series of articles about the philosophical blending of each of the ten two-color pairs (a.k.a. guilds). If you are interested to see the previous seven parts of the series feel free to check out [Selesnya](#), [Golgari](#), [Dimir](#), [Boros](#), [Gruul](#), [Izzet](#), and [Orzhov](#) respectively. Also, this series of columns was inspired by a previous series dedicated to the philosophy of each of the five colors (“[It’s Not Easy Being Green](#)”, “[The Great White Way](#)”, “[True Blue](#)”, “[In the Black](#)”, and “[Seeing Red](#)”).

This article will focus on the intersection of the philosophies of White and Blue rather than talking about the Azorius guild in particular (although I will use the word Azorius to mean White/Blue). For more insight into what makes the Azorius tick, check out Matt Cavotta’s “Taste the Magic” this Wednesday. As with each of my color pair columns, I address the following questions:

- What do the two colors have in common?
- How do the two colors differ? What is the guild’s internal conflict?
- What does the guild care about? What is its end goal? What means does the guild use to achieve these ends?
- What does the guild despise? What negatively drives the guild?
- What is the color’s greatest strength and biggest weakness?



After I explain the intersection of White and Blue, I’ll hit upon a misunderstanding of the color pair and then end the column with some pop culture examples to spur some letters and board threads. As we’re talking about the Azorius today, I guess I’d better bypass any messing around and just get to the heart of the matter.

## What do the two colors have in common?



The trick to understanding an ally color pair requires taking a look at the two colors’ shared enemy. In the case of White and Blue, that color is Red. So what does Red represent? Red is about personal freedom. Red wants to do whatever it wants to do. If something strikes its fancy, Red wants to act here and now. This makes Red very impulsive, very emotional, and very shortsighted.

White/Blue is the exact opposite of this. White/Blue is not impulsive but rather thoughtful. White/Blue is not emotional but rather emotionally detached. White/Blue is not shortsighted but rather the most far-looking guild of the bunch. White/Blue hates chaos. White/Blue hates those pesky emotions. White/Blue just wants things done in a quiet and orderly fashion.

Philosophically, the largest overlap between the two colors stems from a similar motivation. Both colors want to improve the world. White does this in its quest to promote peace, while Blue does it out of its interest in reaching perfection. The end result is the same. Both colors like to force its rules and ways upon all those around them.

## How do the two colors differ? What is the guild’s internal conflict?

The trick with allied pairs is to look at the conflict of each color’s other ally. For white that is green and for blue it is black. The conflict of black vs. green is on the surface about life and death, but if you dig a little deeper, you see that black is parasitism while green is about interdependency. That is, black seeks to subvert everything around it to its own ends while green tries to find a way to have everything work together.

This conflict plays out between White/Blue. White is looking out for the community. Thus its desire to change stems from its want to make a better society. Blue, on the other hand, is fascinated by the idea of perfection. (Remember it is the “nurture” to green’s “nature”.) It doesn’t improve things for the welfare of others. It improves things because it wants to see if it can. Blue wants to learn.

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The two colors have other differences. White is proactive. Blue is reactive. White is very centered on creatures. Blue is the most creature-light color. White is very open. Blue is guarded with its information. What this means is that White/Blue is in an odd situation where the two colors share their goals but not their motivations.

This leads us to White/Blue's internal conflict. The white half is focused on creating community. Its elaborate rule making is done to bring the people together. The blue half is focused on furthering its information gathering. The people are just means to an end. This means that Azorius is constantly conflicted about how much it cares about the people whose lives it's shaping. On one hand it is very involved, yet on the other hand, it is very detached. White/Blue cares yet is emotionally distant.

## What does the guild care about? What is its end goal? What means does the guild use to achieve these ends?

To understand the guild's goals, let's start by looking at the goals of each of the two colors. White seeks peace. White uses laws (civil and moral) to accomplish this task. Blue seeks omniscience. Blue treats knowledge as a commodity. What happens when you combine white's need for structure with blue's quest for learning? You end up with a guild that sees information as the ultimate tool to create order.

Here's how it works. White/Blue wants order. It chooses to make laws, but it doesn't make straight-forward laws. It makes laws so convoluted that no one but itself can understand them. Its form of control is through restricted knowledge. By design, White/Blue creates a system that can't be comprehended by anyone other than themselves. The Azorius stay in power because no one understands the system well enough to challenge it.

Understand that White/Blue does this with the best motives in mind. Azorius does care about the welfare of the people. The same laws that protect it also protect the people. Sure there aren't any luxuries like civil liberties, but the people in a White/Blue world are taken care of.

In the end, White/Blue is interested in making a system that both protects the people, but also ensures that the same people can't do anything like, you know, challenge it. White/Blue's greatest tools are convoluted laws, intricate processes and an immense amount of red tape. White/Blue protects the populace from itself.



## What does the guild despise? What negatively drives the guild?

The easiest way to understand what the guild despises is to look at what its shared enemy wants. Red wants freedom. Red wants to allow the people to do whatever they feel like doing. For White/Blue that is fingernails on the chalkboard. Allowing the people to do what they want results in chaos, the exact opposite of the controlled, quiet world that White/Blue craves.

White/Blue doesn't like people getting crazy ideas in their head such as the fact that they have the ability to do things like break the clearly spelled-out rules. Rule breaking leads to unrest, and unrest leads to a broken society. This fear of systems breaking down causes White/Blue to tighten the rules that much more. Any challenge to the system is treated like the cancer it is. Left unchecked it will chew away at the moral center of White/Blue's way of life.

## What is the color's greatest strength and biggest weakness?

White/Blue's greatest strength is its understanding of systems and its ability to extrapolate how to constantly finesse them. The Azorius is always thinking ahead. As such, it is able to be very careful when laying out its rules. Loopholes cause all sorts of headaches. White/Blue by necessity is very detail oriented. Its metaphorical boat never sink because it always thinks to check thoroughly for leaks.

White/Blue's greatest weakness is its inability to respond quickly. White/Blue spends so much time analyzing every decision that it doesn't have the ability to make a decision on the fly. When the Azorius face a problem that they did not anticipate, they are unable to act quickly. This slowness to respond can make them very vulnerable to the right kind of attack.

## Reacting Out

In each column I like to hit upon some aspect of the guild that I feel is a bit misunderstood. For White/Blue, I want to talk about White/Blue's ability to be active. Everyone understands White/Blue's defensive nature. The Azorius are the thinking guild that sits back and analyzes everything. But this desire to be passive does not preclude White/Blue from having the ability to be active. Yes, White/Blue is not going to spontaneously attack or take the offensive, but it might do so with planning.

White/Blue's telltale quality is its need to think things through before they happen. There's no reason though, that White/Blue can't think about taking aggressive action and then putting in the time to plan it out before it occurs. *Dissension* definitely plays

into this aspect of White/Blue. When you play Azorius, you will see that the cards encourage some amount of aggression.

Why did the designers/developers feel this was necessary? Because time has taught us an important lesson: decks that do nothing but keep things from happening generally make for unfun times. Yes, control decks are interesting. Yes, playing a reactive game can be challenging. Yes, matching defenses to offenses can be stimulating. But none of these things require a lack of, for a better term, winning.

We wanted Azorius to be the essence of White/Blue with many of the tools of White/Blue, but without the mind-numbing boringness (for the opponent) than often ensues. This is the same reason that we were careful in both Gruul and Rakdos not to allow the guilds too much early mana disruption. Philosophically, both guilds could have it, but it led to the other side of the unfun spectrum, the inability to do anything because your opponent destroyed all your resources before you had the chance to react.

In short, we liked the idea that all ten guilds are constantly moving towards victory. White/Blue is by far the slowest of the bunch, but we felt it was important that the tools we provided made White/Blue try to win rather than just keep from losing, be it at a different speed than the other nine guilds.



*This isn't your daddy's White/Blue.*

## Law and Order

Finally, it's time to see what White/Blue provides as far as pop culture references to make sure I get a few letters:

**Rupert Giles (from Buffy the Vampire Slayer)** – Giles is driven by two things – knowledge and his desire to live up to his responsibilities of being Buffy's Watcher. (For the *Buffy* purists out there, I'm talking mostly about "high school era" Giles – and yes I said in "[True Blue](#)" that Giles was mono-blue, but I believe now that I was incorrect. A quick aside – when I was picking characters for mono-color slots, I had no idea I would be doing these multi-color columns. Now that I'm looking at characters with this in mind, I am finding that some characters that I fit in mono-color boxes really belong in multi-color ones.) This balance between fulfilling his purpose and his passion for learning are a wonderful blend of white and blue. Whenever a crisis occurs (you know... every week), he always turns to his books as a way to keep the balance. Knowledge is his greatest weapon in his fight for good. By understanding his enemy, Giles is best equipped to fight it.

**Cliff Clavin (from Cheers)** – The core of Cliff's character is that he just wants to fit in. He wants to have a purpose and fill it. That is why, for example, that Cliff loves his job as a mailman. He sees the role as important and vital and he is good at it. That's the white half. The blue half is the part that sees knowledge as an important commodity in his quest to fit in. Cliff believes that by knowing things that others do not, he is contributing to his social circle. Knowledge, he believes, is the ticket that allows him to fit in.

**Jean Luc Picard (from Star Trek: The Next Generation)** – I believe Picard is driven by two things. One, a desire to "seek out new life and new civilization" and two, a desire to look out for his crew (and to a lesser extent the needs of the Federation). It is this balance to seek out knowledge while providing structure for his people that makes him a perfect example of White/Blue. This is another character who I originally stuck in a mono-color (white), but the more I looked into what drives the character, the more I saw the influence of blue. Picard more so than any other character on *Next Generation* is driven by a quest for knowledge. This can be seen in his near obsession for archeology. Time and time again, Picard is driven by a need to know something. That quality pushes him towards White/Blue in my mind.



**The Beast (from the X-Men)** – For those of you that aren't familiar with this character, this is who Kelsey Grammer plays in *X-Men 3*: a genius-level blue-haired beast-like mutant. The Beast is driven by a desire to understand everything he can. He is a scientist that constantly slaves away in his lab trying to solve every puzzle that comes his way. Yet down deep, his secret desire is to be like everyone else. Hank McCoy (that's the Beast's name) wants to fit in. He is very protective of all the members of the team and is selfless in his desire to look out for their welfare.

And with that we come to an end of my thoughts on White/Blue. Just two more columns before we wrap this series up. (And now that *Dissension* is here, you won't have long to wait.) As always, I'm happy to hear any feedback.

Join me next week when, as promised, I really won't talk about design yet I won't be off topic.

Until then, may you know you fit in.

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*Mark Rosewater is Head **Magic** Designer. What this fancy title means is that he's in charge of **Magic** design. This gets him a lot of mail (which he actually reads). When not alternatively destroying and saving **Magic**, he likes to spend time with his family, do stereotypically geeky things (play games, read comics, watch a lot of science fiction, etc.) and write about himself in third person.*



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