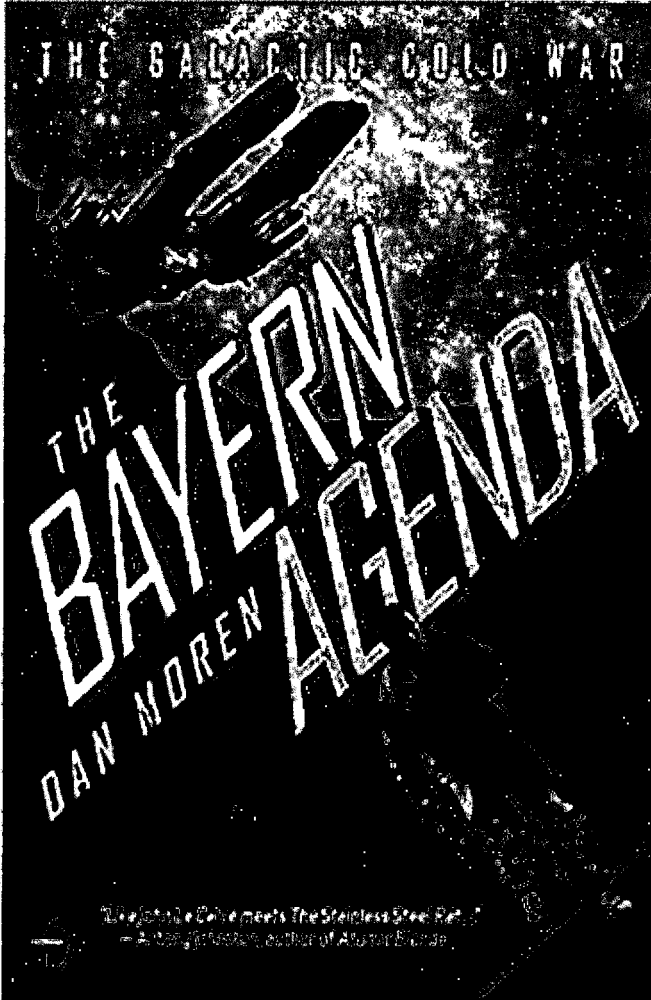


Book Review: The Bayern Agenda, Dan Moren

April 29, 2019 By scintilla.admin Fiction

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Some books are just fun. The Bayern Agenda is a fun book. It's a space opera. It's a spy thriller. It's a book with engaging, smart mouthed, characters who find themselves in challenging situations which require them to find new trust in themselves and each other. Dan Moren continues with characters we first met in The Caledonian Gambit in telling the story of the Galactic Cold War (though curiously enough, this book is labelled as "Book One" of the Galactic Cold War series despite taking place only months after the events of The Caledonian Gambit).

Simon Kovalic is a spy. Originally a soldier from Earth, he fled to the Commonwealth of Independent Systems after Earth fell to the Illyrican Empire. Now leading an elite team of covert operatives, Kovalic learns of a top secret meeting between officials from the Empire and the top bankers in the galaxy, one that could tip the balance of the cold war. Unfortunately, Kovalic is injured during the mission, so his team must proceed without him to confirm the purpose of the meeting and, if necessary, disrupt it.

When additional information comes in to Kovalic's boss, and when it becomes apparent that there is at least one leak within their organization, Kovalic must follow his team to Bayern despite his injury and warn them about the new threats. The challenges increase by the page and the response to those challenges requires each team member to use all of their skills in order to survive. And like a good spy thriller will, Bayern saves its final twists until the very end.

Although this would not be considered a young adult book, *The Bayern Agenda* would be an easy and fun read for tweens and teens who enjoy science fiction and spy novels. Its fast pace and smart tone is appealing to all ages. Moren has delivered a clever novel with great characters who interact through an exciting story. In addition to the main thrust of the story, several "interludes" are included which give some back story for Kovalic, Tapper, and the Galactic Cold War, giving context to the events which take place during the novel.

The Bayern Agenda would make a great beach or airplane read. It is fast paced, the right length, complex enough to be interesting but straightforward and easy to read. A nice cross-over spy/sci-fi novel, hopefully introducing a series with a long run ahead of it.

Exclusive Interview: The Bayern Agenda Author Dan Moren

March 4, 2019

With his new novel *The Bayern Agenda* (paperback, Kindle), sci-fi writer Dan Moren is kicking off his spy-fi series, the *Galactic Cold War*. In the following email interview, Moren explains the origins and influences of this series and this first book, as well as his plan for this series going forward.

To start, what is the *Galactic Cold War* series about, when does it take place, and what is *The Bayern Agenda* about?

The *Galactic Cold War* is just what it says on the tin. In this universe, there are two major superpowers: the Illyrican Empire, a faction of human settlers who invaded Earth and its remaining colonies about twenty years prior, and the Commonwealth of Independent Systems, a loosely arrayed coalition that's made up of those who fought back against the Illyricans. Open conflict ended about six years ago, but both powers are still jockeying for position and influence in the galaxy.

The Bayern Agenda kicks off with a mission gone wrong: Commonwealth operative Simon Kovalic and his team are behind enemy lines, meeting a defector who's got intel on a shady relationship the Illyricans have with Bayern, an independent planet that's essentially one giant corporation. Kovalic's job is to make sure the Illyricans don't get a leg up in this conflict, and to stop the cold war from becoming a shooting war again. But naturally, complications and excitement ensue.

Naturally. So, where did you get the idea for the *Galactic Cold War* and *The Bayern Agenda*, and what was it about the idea that made you think should be a series as opposed to one novel?

I've always loved Cold War spy thrillers from authors like John Le Carré and Tom Clancy. Well, his earlier books. Maybe it's because I grew up in the 1980s, as the Cold War was drawing to a close, but there was something about the shadowy intrigue, the twisty plots, the idea of two sides working against each other at high levels, while daily life goes on for everyone else. There's also a real moral ambiguity to it, with all these figures operating in these gray areas: are the good guys really that different from the bad guys? It's an atmosphere that appeals to me tremendously.

As for why it's a series, well, there are two main factors. One is down to the plots, which I think are at their most interesting when they're drawn out over time — yes, there are self-contained stories to tell, but the arc of the larger conflict itself needs time to mature and develop. I like when readers get comfortable with something, because it's that much more satisfying when you shake them out of it.

The other reason is the characters. As with plots, I like the idea of developing characters over a large arc. Any good character changes within a story, yes, but a series allows you to see a much deeper and more gradual evolution of characters that. Readers get attached to characters — at least if we writers are doing their jobs right — and seeing how they grow and change is a significant aspect of any story.

The Bayern Agenda is a science fiction story, but is there a subgenre of sci-fi, or maybe a combination of them, that describes this better?

I know I'm not the first person to use the term "spy-fi," but I think it's a good encapsulation of the story I'm trying to tell. This is science-fiction, make no mistake — there are spaceships and wormholes and extrasolar planets — but it's also very much steeped in the classics of espionage fiction: intrigue and hidden agendas, betrayals, unlikely alliances, and so on. "Spyjinks," if you will. (I'm trying to make it a thing!)

The Bayern Agenda is your second novel after 2017's The Caledonian Gambit, which was also a sci-fi story, but is not part of the Galactic Cold War series. Are there any writers or specific stories that were big influence on The Bayern Agenda but not The Caledonian Gambit?

So much of my lifelong love for this genre is infused throughout my writing that it's hard to narrow down which books influenced what. But I can say both of my books were inspired by some of my favorite sci-fi series, like Lois McMaster Bujold's Vorkosigan Saga, and Timothy Zahn's original Thrawn trilogy. For The Bayern Agenda, I would particularly call out Bujold's Cetaganda, which features this huge state-level intrigue with the protagonists at risk of being crushed in between them.

How about such non-literary influences as movies, TV shows, or video games; did any of them have a big impact on The Bayern Agenda?

There are a few movies I always find myself drifting back to. You'd be hard-pressed to not find a reference to Sneakers or Star Wars in anything I write, and both this and The Caledonian Gambit owe a huge debt to the classic British spy TV series, The Sandbaggers, which I came to via Greg Rucka's comic series Queen & Country.

But another big inspiration for The Bayern Agenda was actually music. There are definitely scenes in this book that I composed in my head while listening to movie scores, which are my favorite music genre. Specifically, in this case, Daft Punk's Tron: Legacy score, which is just a phenomenal piece of work. I like to play these scenes in my mind's eye, unspooling them like I'm watching a movie, before they ever make their way to the page.

Now, as we've been discussing, The Bayern Agenda is the first book in your Galactic Cold War series. What can you tell us about this series?

I think I can safely say that you haven't seen the last of Simon Kovalic and his merry band of operatives. I'd love to keep writing these books for as long as people want to read them. I've

long had ideas sketched out for several more stories in this universe, including how the overall arc of the series — the characters and the war itself — will progress, and I would love to be able to get all the way there. But so much depends, as always, on how well this book does.

Earlier I asked about the movies, TV shows, and video games that may have influenced The Bayern Agenda. But has there been any interest in making a movie, show, or game based on The Bayern Agenda?

To my knowledge, the only person currently interested in developing a movie, show, or game based on my books is me. I watch a lot of movies and TV, and play a decent number of video games, and I would love to see it adapted into any of these forms. Heck, I play a lot of D&D, so a tabletop RPG would be supercool. TV in particular holds a lot of interest for me, because I love serialized storytelling: it really gives stories like this so much room to breathe, gives you time to explore side plots, other characters, and the rest of the world in a way that you don't always have time to do in a film. That said, find me a writer who hasn't wanted to see their creation on the big screen; there's absolutely something thrilling about that idea.

If The Bayern Agenda and the Galactic Cold War series was to be adapted into a movie or TV show, who would you like to see them cast in the main roles?

Oh, fantasy casting. It's funny, the more central these characters, the harder it is to pin them down to just one actor. Which is nice in some ways, as it gives everybody the chance to picture those characters in their own way. But I will say that I think F. Murray Abraham would be a great choice for "the general," Kovalic's mysterious boss. Not only does he have the right look for the part, but his role as Dar Adal on Homeland is exactly the kind of puppet master-y figure that I imagine the general being.

Okay, one more: I love the idea of Jerome Flynn [Game Of Thrones] as Kovalic's right-hand man, Tapper. He's got that craggy countenance, the perfect voice, and just the right amount of attitude.

Finally, if someone enjoys The Bayern Agenda, what would you suggest they read while waiting for the next book to come out?

First off, if anybody likes the idea of space and intrigue, I am always obligated to recommend my favorite series of all time, Lois McMaster Bujold's Vorkosigan Saga. It's a sprawling space opera that nevertheless hops genres and it is utterly delightful. Plus, I guarantee that its cast of characters will become some of your favorite in fiction ever.

If you're looking for something more on the espionage end of the spectrum, I devoured my friend Antony Johnston's techno-thriller The Exphoria Code, which came out last year...and, due to some recent events, now feels remarkably prescient. And hey, if you haven't read it yet, there's always The Caledonian Gambit.

Thanks to the folks at Angry Robot, we have the cover reveal for Dan Moren's galactic cold war novel *The Bayern Agenda*, designed by [Amazing15](#)! The spy-fi tale hits shelves in March next year, and here's the plot synopsis...

Simon Kovalic, top intelligence operative for the Commonwealth of Independent Systems, is on the frontline of the burgeoning Cold War with the aggressive Illyrican Empire. He barely escapes his latest mission with a broken arm, and vital intel which points to the Empire cozying up to the Bayern Corporation: a planet-sized bank. There's no time to waste, but with Kovalic out of action, his undercover team is handed over to his ex-wife, Lt Commander Natalie Taylor. When Kovalic's boss is tipped off that the Imperium are ready and waiting, it's up to the wounded spy to rescue his team and complete the mission before they're all caught and executed.

Now, over to Moren, who has presented us with five reasons why James Bond is a terrible spy...

"The word "spy" conjures up images of tuxedos and martinis, suave sophistication and fabulous gadgets, all of which can be laid at the feet of Ian Fleming's legendary creation James Bond. And while there's no problem with escapist fare sensationalising what is very often less than glamorous, the bigger affront of Bond is much simpler.

He's a terrible spy.

Yes, I said it. James Bond, the character synonymous with espionage, is *bad at his job*. Frankly, the fact that he's managed to survive the last fifty-odd years can only be attributed to some sort of divine intervention.

I've been rewatching a few of the Bond films of late for a [podcast series](#), and while there are parts that I expected not to age well (for example, the character's blatant misogyny, which verges into sexual assault more than once), I didn't expect the character's ineptness to shine out quite so much. Here are just five reasons that James Bond ought to be dismissed or, much more likely, dead.

1. **Not thoroughly trained:** Sure, Bond can shoot a Walther pretty well, and he does some fancy driving, but when it comes right down to it, he often seems underprepared for the situations he finds himself in. Witness the end of *Goldfinger* where Bond, trapped in Fort Knox with a dirty bomb, is unable to defuse the device and instead has to wait for help. More than anything, Bond seems to rely on luck, and while it's having fortune on your side is always a plus, good training's going to win out every single time.
2. **Frequently captured:** Look, any job that's as risky as a spy's means that one can expect things won't always go their way. But pretty much every single mission Bond goes on, he gets captured. Often more than once. By [one estimate](#), Bond is captured or held at disadvantage in 26 out of 27 movies. You might be able to argue that it's all a clever ruse on Bond's part, encouraging a false sense of security so that the villain has time to monologue their evil plan in full, but that seems to fail almost as much as it works. More importantly, if you're MI6, why would you ever give this man *any* sensitive information?
3. **Vast collateral damage:** In *GoldenEye*, Bond drives a tank through St. Petersburg, destroying several buildings that are no doubt historical sites. And he looks downright *gleeful* while doing so. That's not even the worst of it: in 2015, the *Scotsman* quoted an insurance report that, during Roger Moore's tenure as the character, Bond caused £4.6 *billion* in damages, including destroying five space shuttles and a space station. If I may paraphrase Oscar Wilde, to destroy one space shuttle may be regarded as a misfortune; to destroy five looks like carelessness.
4. **Poor judge of character:** Trust is in short supply in the espionage game, and a spy's best asset is their gut. Setting aside the appropriateness of Bond's frequent liaisons, the number of times that he ends up having relationships with women who either work for his adversary or subsequently try to kill him is...high. Frankly, his libido is more of a liability, for both him *and* the women he sleeps with. There are praying mantises with less lethal relationships.
5. **Uses his real name all the time:** All. The. Time. *Skyfall* conclusively indicates that James Bond is his real name and not an alias, but even if it were a fake, giving it out at the drop of a hat to everyone you meet is bad protocol and really ought to end more conversations quickly:

"Bond. James Bon—"

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"Oh, yes the English spy! ... Kill him."

It's pretty clear that Bond's longevity can only be due to his charm, luck, and whatever dirt he's accrued on his superiors over the last five decades, rather than any out-and-out skill.

But after more than fifty years of serving the British Government, perhaps it's finally time to put the old boy out to pasture.

And if you're looking for a replacement for your super-spy fix, might I suggest ***The Bayern Agenda***'s Captain Simon Kovalic?"

Author Interview: Dan Moren



Today I am interviewing **Dan Moren**, author of the new science-fiction novel, ***The Bayern Agenda***, first book in the ***Galactic Cold War*** series.

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DJ: Hi Dan! Thanks for agreeing to do this interview!

For readers who aren't familiar with you, could you tell us a little about yourself?

Dan Moren: Hello! Absolutely. By day I'm a millionaire playboy, by night I fight crime dressed as a bat. Wait, sorry, wrong interview! I'm a sci-fi author, freelance tech journalist, and podcaster. My first book, *The Caledonian Gambit*, came out in May 2017 from Talos, and my latest book is *The Bayern Agenda*, which is now out from Angry Robot. For my day job, I write about tech for places like *Macworld* and *Six Colors* and host tech podcasts [Clockwise](#) and [The Rebound](#). And, in my "spare" time, I also host a few shows on [The Incomparable](#) podcast network, including nerdy quiz show [Inconceivable!](#)

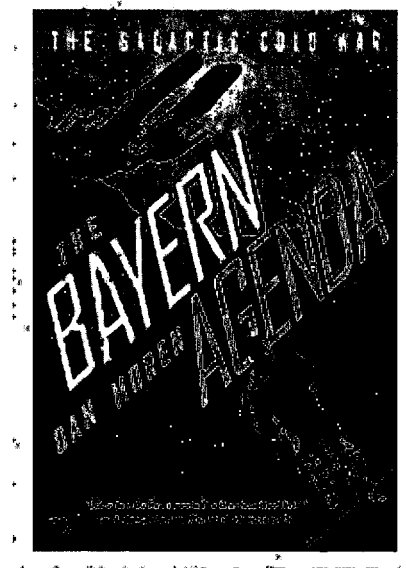
DJ: What is *The Bayern Agenda* about?

Dan: *The Bayern Agenda* is a sci-fi spy thriller, set against the backdrop of a galactic cold war between two rival superpowers: the Illyrican Empire and the Commonwealth of Independent Systems. Our story follows Simon Kovalic, a covert operative for the Commonwealth, as he tries to get to the bottom

of mysterious ties between the Illyricans and the independent financial hub of Bayern. Unfortunately, when he's wounded on a mission, his team of operatives is put temporarily under the command of his ex-wife. Intrigue ensues!

DJ: What were some of your influences *The Bayern Agenda* and the series?

Dan: Sci-fi and spy stories are two of my favorite genres, so the opportunity to mix them together was hard to resist. On the espionage side, I love the works of John Le Carré, TV shows like *The Sandbaggers*, the *Mission: Impossible* film series, classic Hitchcock thrillers, Greg Rucka's *Queen & Country* spy comics—pretty much any great espionage story. On the sci-fi side, I tend towards fun space adventures that are full of intrigue and complicated characters, including the works of Lois McMaster Bujold, John Scalzi, and James S.A. Corey.



DJ: Could you briefly tell us a little about your main characters? Do they have any cool quirks or habits, or any reason why readers with sympathize with them?

Dan: We've got two main characters in *The Bayern Agenda*: Kovalic, the veteran cover operative, and Eli Brody, a pilot who finds himself drafted onto Kovalic's team out of necessity. What I enjoy about having these two characters' perspectives is their contrasts: Kovalic is self-assured, confident, and, frankly, a badass. But as good as he is professionally, he falters when it comes to his personal life. (And don't we all at times?) Eli, on the other hand, is comfortable in a cockpit, but when he's thrust into a world of spies, he's definitely out of his element, which he covers with snark and bravado. Sometimes that works to his advantage, and sometimes, well, it just gets him into trouble. I think people sympathize with his fish-out-of-water situation; he's the reader's window into this unfamiliar realm of spycraft and intrigue.

DJ: Aside from the main characters in the story, who is a favorite side character or a character with a smaller role for in story? Why?

Dan: I hate to play favorites—what happens when all my other characters hear I didn't pick them?—but I've got a couple that I love. Sergeant Tapper is Kovalic's mentor, and they have a long history, which you get some glimpses of in *Bayern*. He's a gruff bulldog who's just a pure joy to write. His voice has a way of taking over: I can always hear his lines in my head, clear as day. I'm also fond of a character we meet in this book, Sarah M'basu, a Commonwealth spy who's ostensibly on the same side as our heroes, but resents them stomping all over her turf. Having that kind of foil-like relationship was a lot of fun to tease out.

DJ: What is the world and setting of the *Galactic Cold War* series like?

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Dan: Unsurprisingly, the Galactic Cold War is very much an homage to, you know, the Cold War. There a relatively small number of systems in our galaxy (which is only populated by humans); farflung solar systems are connected by wormhole gates, a melding of naturally occurring phenomenon and human technology. But for the past twenty years, there's been a line drawn: the Illyrican Empire was a militarily dominant power that not only controls their own worlds, but has also conquered Earth and its colonies. However, it lost a big chunk of its military force in a disastrous battle and, as a result, it's pulled back to defend its borders. Meanwhile, the Commonwealth is a bit more ragtag, made up of a mix of people who had been going about their lives on these independent planets before they were flooded with those who fled the Illyrican conquest of Earth. But the overriding atmosphere is one of a highly-charged stalemate, holding by a thread: these two superpowers might, at any moment, tip into open hostilities that would deeply affect every planet in the galaxy, including the ones that have remained out of the fight.

DJ: What was your favorite part about writing *The Bayern Agenda*?

Dan: So, those who have read my first book, *The Caledonian Gambit*, know that it's set in the same universe as *The Bayern Agenda*. (Don't worry, though: you don't need to have read it before *Bayern*.) What I loved about writing this book was the chance to revisit the same universe and some of the same characters, and really dig into them further. I've always loved serial works, because I enjoy the chance to develop characters and plots over long arcs that have a payoff down the road. So being able to spend some more time with this world I'd created was a real delight, as well as the ability to start building out more aspects of what this galaxy—and the conflict in which it's embroiled—look like.

DJ: What do you think readers will be talking about most once they finish it?

Dan: This story's all about intrigue. There are going to be some questions left unanswered at the end, for readers as well as for our protagonists, about what's *really* going on here. It's all about the layers: peel one back, and there's another right underneath. I'm also trying to drop some breadcrumbs along the way to lead towards some developments down the road, which is a fun and challenging exercise as a reader. (I will say: I do have an idea of what the single most contentious element in the plot will be, and I'm fascinated to see how readers react!)

DJ: Did you have a particular goal when you began the *Galactic Cold War* series? *The Bayern Agenda* is only the first book, but is there a particular message or meaning you are hoping to get across when readers finish it? Or is there perhaps a certain theme to the story?

Dan: You know, theme is one of those things that's very personal. A lot of writers — me included — don't set out trying to hit a certain bullseye on the theme dartboard, because they find it gets in the way of all the other stuff you need to be thinking about. And, in the end, readers are going to take their own meaning away from a story. So, while I do have an idea of something that I see as a recurring theme of these books, I wouldn't try to impose it by fiat. I'm just hoping to write a great, entertaining story, and I'm always interested to see what others take away from it.

DJ: When I read, I love to collect quotes — whether it be because they're funny, foodie, or have a personal meaning to me. Do you have any favorite quotes from *The Bayern Agenda* that you can share with us?

Dan: Without any context to spoil things, I'll just give you this anonymized exchange, which I enjoy:

"I think we'd both better get in the habit of checking for that knife every morning."

"You assume, captain, that I ever stopped."

DJ: Now that *The Bayern Agenda* is released, what is next for you?

Dan: As one of my favorite sayings goes: "The reward for a job well done is another job." I try to remind myself to take a moment to enjoy an achievement like getting a book out there, but there's always another book or two on the horizon. Right now, I'm finishing up two different books: another Galactic Cold War installment, and an urban fantasy set in my hometown of Boston. And after those are done, it'll be on to the next thing!

DJ: Where can readers find out more about you?

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Amazon Author Page: https://www.amazon.com/Dan-Moren/e/B00QQW9HP0/ref=dp_byline_cont_ebooks_1

Author Newsletter: <https://dmoren.com/subscribe/>

Blog: <https://dmoren.com/news/>

Goodreads: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/11631604.Dan_Moren

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/dmoren/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/dmoren>

Website: <https://dmoren.com>

DJ: Before we go, what is that *one thing* you'd like readers to know about the *Galactic Cold War* series that we haven't talked about yet?

Dan: I think one of the most important things to take away from the series is that even though we have our protagonists and our antagonists, I don't see the central conflict in this story as necessarily about "bad guys" and "good guys." Like the real world, there are a lot of shades of gray, and most people—heck, *all* people—are neither entirely good nor entirely evil. Everybody's got a lens that they see through, their own particular shade to a story. That's worth bearing in mind.

DJ: Is there anything else you would like add?

Dan: Just that I could not have gotten here without all the support from my friends, my family, my fiancée, and everybody who's ever bought one of my books. I love telling stories, and I'm just glad that people enjoy them. That's the biggest reward as a writer. As long as they're reading 'em, I'll keep writing 'em.

DJ: Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to answer my questions!