

Ba\$tard\$ Inc.

A satirical boardgame by Marc Röder and Nikolaus Ruf

Version 1.3 (English translation), Copyright 2004

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What is Ba\$tard\$ Inc.?

Ba\$tard\$ Inc. is a satirical boardgame about international megacorporations and their vast influence on global politics and economy. A lot of the content is rude, slanderous, and widely inaccurate. Or maybe not.

People without a sense of humor are advised to play something else.

Nevertheless, we hope that **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** is also an interesting game in its own right – something you will enjoy playing for its strategical aspect and not just its tongue-in-cheek treatment of current affairs.

We also want to thank the playtesters for giving our home-brew game a chance and suggesting improvements. Any problems still encountered in the game are of course our own fault.

*Marc and Niko
October 2004*

Legalese

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The entire game **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** – including the game board, cards, and other playing pieces which are distributed separately from this document – is Open Content as defined in the OGL. No parts of the game are claimed as Product Identity by the authors.

Credits

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An educational game for the entire family

The world today is very complicated. Who really understands how the global economy and policy making work? Are natural disasters good or bad? Does the answer depend on your point of view?

Ba\$tard\$ Inc. tries to answer such questions in an entertaining manner. Players take control of international corporations and other honorable institutions manipulating the fate of the world – just as in real life! The game mechanics were carefully designed to simulate events realistically and in accordance with state-of-the-art economic theory. Resemblances with existing persons or real occurrences are therefore by no means incidental.

Because of its immense educational value, **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** is also fit for children, as long as they are old enough not to try and swallow the game pieces. We explicitly recommend the game for social science classes in high school. And unlike most other games, **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** does not discriminate against the elderly and may be played by people older than 99 years!

Prepare yourself, your friends, and relatives for life in the 21st century – play **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.**!

Game pieces

The following components of the game can be found in a separate file, ready to print and cut out:

- 6 Business Plans
- 1 game board
- 18 Event cards
- 54 Action and Business Opportunity cards
- 1 halo
- 1 **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** sign

Apart from this, you have to supply the following things, e.g. by looting other games:

- 4 status tokens per player and 6 to place on the board [small pieces]
- 4 Vice Presidents (VPs) per player [large chips with a different color for each player]
- 3 war tokens [plastic tanks]
- a 6-sided die
- a sufficient amount of Billions [small chips that can be stacked on the VPs]
- a sufficient amount of Goodwill [small chips different from status tokens and Billions]

Before you start the game, you should be familiar with the components of the game:

Business Plan

Every player gets one of the Business Plans, which also tells the name of his company. This name has no particular effect in the game.

A player uses his Business Plan to show the strengths and weaknesses of his company. The crucial areas are

- Corruption
- Crime
- Media
- Technology

A value of 0 is pathetic, while a 6 is exceptionally good. The current score is indicated by placing a status token on the number. Values cannot be lower than 0 or higher than 6.

There is also a space called “Resources”, where you can stack Billions and Goodwill. Resources must be kept visible to all other players during the game.

Game board

The central element of the game board is the pyramid of regions. Here, the whole world is divided into 6 areas by social and economical criteria. At the top of the pyramid are the wealthy and powerful countries, whereas the base comprises the poor and the meek:

The One Superpower: This is where the greatest, best and most beautiful people live. And if there is any doubt about that, a war will serve to distract from the facts. At least, this way, nobody dares to contradict their claims any more.

The Rest: Well, not the entire rest. But the part of it that counts. The Rest is inhabited by all those people who have an equally high standard of living as the One Superpower. But there is less militarism and more sectionalism.

Corruptistan: These are formerly powerful, autocratic countries that are now hopelessly corrupt. A lot of them were part of the Other Superpower which has recently disappeared from the game board.

The Tigers: Thriving economies with industries growing almost as fast as the resulting pollution. Investors can rely on cheap labor and a traditional network of organized crime.

The Rogue State: Here, the evil enemy of the One Superpower reigns as dictator over subdued masses and a significant part of the world's fossil fuels reserves. Trading with him is very lucrative, as he keeps spending a fortune on weapons of mass destruction.

The Have-Nots: Countries with almost no economical significance, prone to war and other catastrophes. While colonization was once the source of their misery, the natives are nowadays quite capable of exploiting themselves.

Each region is characterized by four attributes and a status bar. You already know three of the attributes (Corruption, Crime, and Technology) from the Business Plan. These attributes determine the minimum skill you need to do business there.

The fourth attribute, "Income", tells how many Billions are obtained by selling Stuff to this region. The status bar keeps track of the current amount of Stuff. Stuff can be anything, from toasters to tanks, and some regions are allowed to have more Stuff than others. The gray area shows the levels considered illegal. Again, 6 is the maximum.

Below the pyramid there is the Media Circus. A place for those who would rather trade in in-

formation than material goods. There are five areas to get involved in:

Consumer Education: Fool people on a large scale. Produce commercials to improve public opinion about your company.

Charity Scam: Slightly harder than advertising. Let people pay to show their (and your) humanitarian attitude. In times of crisis this pays off better than mere advertising.

Report on Corruption: This is almost serious journalism, with a bias towards hurting your competitor. If you want to be corrupt without being troubled by the other players, this is the thing to do.

Report on Crime: As with corruption, just focusing on the criminals of the world.

Report on Technology: Are you fed up with all your competitors making Billions by selling weapons to the Rogue State? Make them regret their illegal ways here!

Each field of the Media Circus section has a value indicating how hard it is to succeed there.

Finally, the game board features two VIP Lounges where idle VPs can relax with champagne and caviar, plus a few handy tables.

Cards

The game uses a stack of Event cards and one stack of Actions, including Business Opportunities.

Event cards determine special occurrences for every game turn. As it is difficult to manipulate them, players are usually stuck with what they get. However, many events are quite useful.

Each player has a hand of Action cards which he keeps secret from the others until they are played. The Actions are self-explanatory. Each card contains information on when it can be played and which requirements must be met. In most cases a certain level of Corruption, Crime etc. is required in order to play a card.

Business Opportunities are a special form of Action. After they are played, they stay on the table in front of their owner, who may use them once per turn. Players should turn the card sideways after this happens, to indicate that they cannot be activated again until the next turn.

Preparation

Before the game begins, you should shuffle the Event cards into one stack, and the Action and Business Opportunity cards into another. Mark the Stuff level for every region on the board with token in the field with the small black circle.

Each player gets a Business Plan, four status tokens, five Billions, two Vice Presidents and two points of Goodwill. The remaining Billions and Goodwill are placed next to the game board to form the bank.

Each player now secretly chooses the strengths and weaknesses of his company. To do this, distribute the numbers from 1 to 4 among the four attributes Corruption, Crime, Media and Technology, using every value once. After the decision is made and displayed on the Business Plan by status tokens, each player introduces his corporate strategies and vision.

Next, roll to determine the first player. Let's get started!

Victory conditions

The player of the first company to own five VPs is the winner. The Peace Nobel Price counts as an extra VP for the purpose of winning.

In case of a Nuclear Apocalypse, all players lose, unless one has taken precautions and built a bunker. That much foresight is rewarded and the owner of the bunker wins the game.

Basic rules

These rules are essential for understanding the game turn as outlined in the next section:

Trade and agreements

Players are allowed to trade and make agreements at any time. The only resource that may be exchanged directly is money. Goodwill, cards etc. may not be given to other players. However, you can pay another player to use an action card at a specific moment.

Note: *Agreements are only binding if they resolve immediately. A player who agrees to do something at later time can still reconsider his promise. Whether it is a good idea to cheat on your former allies is another question entirely.*

Money and Goodwill

Goodwill is harder to earn than money but more useful. Instead of paying with Billions, you can always pay an equal amount of Goodwill (or any combination of the two). Some actions are even possible only with Goodwill.

The only disadvantage of Goodwill is that it may not be given to other players. Exchanging Goodwill for money is not permissible!

Black money

As long as a VP sits on a region of the pyramid, he may collect black money. This kind of money is not accessible to his company, as it is of dubious origin. To symbolize this, black money is stacked on top of the VP. If a VP has to leave a region for whatever reason, the black money he has accumulated is lost and returns to the bank.

During the Business Phase, you can launder black money and add it to your company's regular funds.

Extra effort

A company's abilities are often insufficient to do what its owner wants without extra effort. To temporarily raise the Crime, Corruption, etc. of his company, a player has to spend an appropriate amount of money.

A table on the game board tells you the price of extra effort based on the desired bonus. This increase applies to the next action only, but it may be bought as often as you like (and can afford).

Journalism

If a player is about to do something illegal, he can be prevented from doing so by a VP in the appropriate section of the Media circus. For example a VP on "Report on Crime" can cancel every action that requires Crime. Illegal actions for this purpose are...

- everything using Corruption or Crime.
- playing an Action card that requires Tech.
- selling Stuff if the Stuff level of the region moves into or within the gray area.

To cancel an illegal action, the player with a VP on the Media Circus announces his decision and places the VP in the VIP Lounge. The player he caught moves all involved VPs to the VIP Lounge and discards any Action cards he used. The action is canceled and has no effect.

What's worse, the accused has to pay 2 Goodwill to the player who revealed his illegal activities. If he cannot pay, he loses all Goodwill and must wear the **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** sign around his neck from now on (see below).

Note: *If the player being caught holds the Peace Nobel Prize, he loses the price even if he does not become Ba\$tard\$ Inc.*

Canceling Business Opportunities

If a Business Opportunity is canceled by journalism, the card has to be discarded. In case of a joint venture, both business partners must pay 2 points of Goodwill to the journalist.

If a player cancels a joint venture in which he participated himself, his partner pays 2 points of Goodwill to the bank while the betrayer gets away free.

Intervention

If things get ugly in some part of the world, the Rest will often decide to intervene by sending troops, development aid, or at least a condolatory note. Clearly, this is an opportunity to earn some money.

Whenever there is an intervention in a region. . .

- the Stuff level of the Rest drops by 1.
- 1 Billion of black money is placed on every VP in the region where the intervention occurs.

If an intervention happens because the One Superpower is at war with the Rogue State, only the VPs in the Rogue State collect money.

The Peace Nobel Prize

Nothing is better for a company's reputation than having a spokesman with the Peace Nobel Prize. The prize can be bought for 10 points of Goodwill during the business phase. The current holder has to wear the halo.

Having the prize has two important advantages:

- the prize counts as a victory point, i.e. as an additional VP for the purpose of winning.
- The holder of the prize has a much easier time getting into the various regions of the world. This is explained in section "Placing Vice presidents" on page 6.

Unfortunately, the Peace Nobel Prize is hard to keep: if the current holder is caught doing something illegal, the prize is gone (see "Journalism", p.4). As nobody cares for yesterday's celebrities, the same holds if another player buys it.

Ba\$tard\$ Inc.

If a player is caught doing something illegal and cannot pay the required Goodwill, he becomes **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** and has to put the sign around his neck. His reputation has been destroyed, the media use him as scapegoat, everything, and nobody likes him anymore!

The player wearing the sign cannot gain Goodwill in any way. He may still engage in investigative journalism, but his victims now pay their 2 Goodwill to the bank. Any other action that would yield Goodwill grants him the same amount of Billions instead.

The only way to lose the **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** sign is for somebody else to "earn" it.

Timing issues

If several players want to influence the same event, or are subject to the same effect, the starting player takes precedence. If he is not involved, the player next to him in clockwise direction does.

Note that this isn't necessarily an advantage: if two players are caught in a joint venture and

both are short on Goodwill (see “Journalism”, p.4), then the one sitting closer to the starting player gets the **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** sign.

Note: *If a player wants to use journalism to prevent some other player from entering a region, this happens before the battle of Goodwill (see p.6).*

The game turn

The game is played in turns, each consisting of the following phases in order:

1. Draw Action cards
2. Place VPs
3. Events
4. War
5. Business

Draw Action Cards

The players may discard any unwanted cards. After that, each of them draws cards until the number of cards he holds equals the number of VPs he controls. If he has more cards than VPs at the beginning of this phase, he need not discard any.

A player who wants to draw more cards can do so with extra effort, adding the bonus to the number of VPs he has. This decision has to be announced before cards are drawn.

Place VPs

All players take those VPs from the game board which they want to place somewhere else. Beginning with the starting player and going clockwise around the table, each player has to place one VP on the board if able. The last player places all of his VPs and the other players follow counterclockwise. No VP may be held back, but it is legal to send VPs straight to the VIP Lounge.

To place a VP in a region, the player announces whether he uses Corruption or Crime to do so. His company's score has to be at least as high

as that of the region in question. For the Media circus, the same rule applies w.r.t. the Media score.

Players may not remove their VPs from any region with a war counter on it, nor can they send more VPs there.

Battle of Goodwill

If a player wants to place a VP into a region or Media square that is already occupied by VPs of other players, each of them has to decide if he wants to keep the newcomer out. All players who decide to do so pay an amount (even 0) of Goodwill to the bank.

The challenged player can now choose to place his VP in the VIP Lounge or to pay more Goodwill then the other players combined. In the latter case, all opposing VPs are sent to the VIP Lounge and the newcomer enters the desired square. VPs of players who did not participate in the battle of Goodwill are not affected.

Note: *The loser of a battle of Goodwill has no VPs left in the region (or Media square) in question. In particular, if a player is prevented from entering a region (or Media square) the VPs he placed there previously are sent to the VIP Lounge, too*

Benefits of the Peace Nobel Prize

The holder of the Peace Nobel Prize may freely send or remove VPs to resp. from a region at war. Additionally, he needs neither Crime nor Corruption to enter a region and can not be kept from entering by a battle of Goodwill. However, if he tries to keep somebody else out, his VPs still have to leave if he loses.

The Peace Nobel Prize grants no advantage in the Media Circus.

Events

The starting player turns over the topmost Event card and carries out the instructions. If a new war breaks out, he places a war counter in the respective region. If the One Superpower attacks the Rogue State, mark only the latter one.

If all Event cards have been used, the starting player reshuffles the deck before revealing the new event.

War

The starting player decides the order in which any ongoing wars are resolved. He rolls a die for each region with a war counter and adds the Stuff score of the respective region. Look the result up on the war table on the game board.

In most cases, the region at war loses Stuff and may be subject to an intervention (see p.5). A war in the Rogue State also causes the One Superpower to lose the indicated amount of Stuff. Nuclear Apocalypse ends the game and all players lose (except if someone has a bunker).

If a 1 or 6 is rolled for the war outcome, remove the war counter after resolving the effects. For now, this war is over.

Business

All Business Opportunity cards on the table become available again. To show this, the relevant cards are turned upright. Now, one player after the other performs one action each. The starting player begins and the others follow clockwise. This phase lasts until all players pass for one round. After that, the player to the left of the starting player becomes the new starting player, and the next game turn begins with drawing cards.

The following actions can be taken during the business phase:

- Play an Action card
- Use a Business Opportunity
- Launder money
- Sell Stuff
- Media campaign
- Buy a VP
- Buy the Peace Nobel Prize
- Pass

VPs in a war region may not undertake actions that require them to leave the region – except if their owner has a Peace Nobel Prize!

Play an Action card

An Action card that says “Play as an action during business phase” can be played now.

Use a Business Opportunity

To use a Business Opportunity, you have to play a card from your hand or use a card already played by you. Each Business Opportunity requires a minimum score in an appropriate attribute and one or two VPs in certain regions. If you meet these requirements, place the given Income on all involved VPs. Turn the card sideways to show that it has been used and may not be used again before the next game turn.

A business that requires two VPs can be done as a joint venture by two players. The owner of the Business Opportunity card has to provide one VP and meet all other requirements. His partner only provides the second VP (regardless of other requirements) and gets his share of the profit.

Launder money

Collect the black money from one of your VPs and add it to your reserve. The VP goes to the VIP Lounge. Money laundering is not easy: you need to beat the region’s Corruption or Crime value to succeed.

Sell Stuff

To sell Stuff in a region, your company has to have a Tech value equal to or greater than the printed requirement. Place your VP in the VIP Lounge and collect the given Income. Increase the Stuff level of the region by one.

If a region has a Stuff level of 6, you cannot sell them any more Stuff. As soon as the Stuff marker enters the gray area, selling Stuff is illegal and can be prevented by investigative journalism (see p.4).

Media campaign

You can use a VP committed to the Media circus to earn 1 Goodwill. If there is a war, natural disaster or famine somewhere in the world, a VP on “Charity Scam” is worth 2 of Goodwill. In any case, place the VP in the VIP Lounge.

Buy a VP

A new VP costs 12 Billions and begins play in the VIP Lounge.

Buy the Peace Nobel Prize

The Peace Nobel Prize costs 10 Goodwill. Put that halo on your head.

Pass

If you pass, you can still take actions later in the phase. However, if all players pass in turn, the business phase is over.

Hints on Tactics

The following points have proven useful in most of the games we played

- You should not buy the Peace Nobel Prize if you have only two Vice Presidents.
- Action cards are very useful. Having more Action cards is even more useful. At the beginning of the game probably every player will buy an extra card.
- Keeping a card at your hand for several game turns tends to be harmful in most cases. Even the “bunker” may be discarded if the player holding it does not actively try to provoke a Nuclear Apocalypse.

- A player with a high level of Crime and Corruption is forced to earn money by using Business Opportunities. He almost inevitably becomes **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** This isn't necessarily bad.

- If a player has no no Goodwill, he is a very unattractive aim for media campaigns (it's not interesting seeing bad people do bad things). So if you are **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.**, be bold!

Alternate Rules

Raising Attributes

To compensate for the general deterioration of attributes the following rule may be used: The Action card “Synergistic Realignment” is removed from the game and every player may spend 5 Billions as an Action during the Business Phase to permanently raise one of his attributes by one point.

Cheaper Vice Presidents

The speed of the game can be increased by setting the price of a Vice President to 10 Billions. As the step from 4 Vice Presidents to victory is very small with this rule, this results in a pretty rapid endgame.

Quick Reference

Setup

At the start of the game each Player gets

- 1 Business Plan
- 4 status tokens
- 2 Vice Presidents
- 5 Billions
- 2 points of Goodwill

The game turn

1. **Draw Cards:** Draw cards up to your number of VPs.
2. **Place VPs:** Place one VP each in clockwise direction, the rest counterclockwise.
3. **Events:** Reveal topmost card and follow orders.
4. **War:** Roll and add Stuff level for each war, compare result to war table. A roll of 1 or 6 ends the war.
5. **Business:** Execute actions in clockwise direction, until everybody passes.

Business

Possible actions during Business phase:

- **Use Business Opportunity:** Meet requirements to put black money on the VPs involved.
- **Launder money:** Requires Corruption or Crime. VP goes to VIP Lounge.
- **Sell Stuff:** Requires Tech and increases Stuff value. Earn income and send VP to VIP Lounge.
- **Media campaign:** VP in the Media Circus earns 1 Goodwill (2 on Charity Scam during war, famine or natural disaster) and enters VIP Lounge.
- **Buy VP:** New VP costs 12 Billions and starts in the VIP Lounge.
- **Buy Peace Nobel Prize:** Prize costs 10 Goodwill.
- **Pass:** Do nothing.

VPs in war zone may not do anything that requires them to leave (except if their player owns the Nobel prize).

Basic Rules

Journalism

Preventing illegal actions requires VP on the right Media field. VP is placed in the VIP Lounge afterwards. The following is considered illegal:

- everything that requires Corruption or Crime.
- playing an Action card that requiring Tech.
- selling Stuff if the Stuff level moves in(to) the gray area.

The accused player places all involved VPs in the VIP Lounge. All Action cards and Business Opportunities he used are discarded, and he pays 2 Goodwill to the Journalist.

Intervention

- Stuff value in the Rest drops by 1.
- Place 1 Billion on each VP in the region.

Peace Nobel Prize

- Prize counts as an extra VP for winning.
- VPs may enter regions without using Corruption or Crime and cannot be kept out with Goodwill battle. VPs may be sent to and removed from war regions.

Ba\$tard\$ Inc.

Player with **Ba\$tard\$ Inc.** sign cannot earn any Goodwill. Targets of his journalism pay 2 Goodwill to the bank. Other actions that would yield Goodwill grant him an equal amount of Billions instead.

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