

PLUTOCRACY

A game of business, politics and intrigue

The result was the virtual omnipotence of the Senate, which was used shamelessly for the enrichment of individuals, without regard for the interest of the State or the welfare of its subjects.

Bertrand Russell, "Roman Empire and Culture"



Welcome to the game of Plutocracy.

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Patent pending.

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Introduction

Plutocracy is a card game. The objective is to start and improve companies and take them public. To win the game, improve your companies. You should imagine that you are a type of meta-entrepreneur with lofty ambitions. In the rules, the word “mogul” is used synonymously with “player.”

While you are trying to build your own companies, your opponents will use the machinations of the ruling class to thwart your investments.

Chips

There are three kinds of chips in Plutocracy. One is the dollar chip, indicated with the \$ sign.

The second kind of chip is the political chip (abbreviated as “poli chip”), indicated with the gun sign (). This represents political power.

The third kind of chip is the value chip, indicated with the Mandarin symbol for value (价). This represents a unit of intrinsic value of the object on which it is placed.

Markers

There are markers of different colors without any symbols. These markers are used to represent shares in companies. Each player should choose a color of marker. When you invest in public

companies, or are instructed by an action card, place the specified number of markers on the target company.

Company Cards

The company cards are marked with the picture on the right.

The companies are listed in different sectors. The sector appears as one capital letter to the right of the company name.



Action Cards

There are four different kinds of action cards: events, goals, defense cards and plain action cards. They will be shuffled together and placed face down in the same deck.

Some action cards are free to play, but most require the payment of either dollar chips, poli chips or a combination of both. The cost is indicated on the lower-right corner.

The number of poli chips is always fixed, but sometimes you can add dollar chips to increase the potency of the action. This is indicated on the individual cards.



Events are executed immediately. When you draw an event from the action card pile, the event is executed and the turn goes to the next player. You do not get to draw another action card.

Note that events are differently marked on the back. Though they have a different background from other action cards, they should be shuffled in with the action card deck. Players should not get any events dealt at the beginning. When a player executes a round, he or she can see if the card to draw at the end of the round is an event, but not which event it is. The front of event cards are marked with the outline of three people in a discussion.



Goals are added to your hand of action cards. Playing a goal is voluntary and does not count as an action. It cannot be played immediately, as it can only be played during your turn. When playing a goal card, place it in front of you. It can only be removed with a *PR* action. Goal cards with the megaphone cannot be used with any other goal cards. Goal cards without the megaphone can be used together. Therefore, if you have a goal card with a megaphone in front of you, you cannot play another goal card.



Defense cards can be played in response to other action cards, or events. They should be played immediately when the other action card, or event, is shown.

The *PR Campaign* card is special: it can be played as a Defense card or as a separate action.

All other action cards can be played as part of your action for a given round. Goal, Defense and Plain action cards are marked with the handshake on the back:



Starting

To determine who starts, use the players' starting company card. The choice to start goes to the player with the company which would have been listed last in the phonebook. (Specifically: last in alphabetical order ignoring articles).

To start, each player gets 5 action cards, 8 dollar chips and 1 poli chip.

Brief Overview of Play

In order to become the most powerful mogul in the Plutocracy, your companies will be key. You start with a company and can improve it by adding value chips to it through your action cards. You can also start new companies and add value chips to those. The value chips will roughly determine who wins, though there are some modifications – see *Winning* in the following.

In order to invest in your companies, you will need money. The companies, in turn, help you make more money. With money, you can also sometimes buy political clout, which can be used to improve your companies in alternative ways, such as landing a *Government Contract* or getting an *Antitrust Suit* dismissed. Your political clout can also be used to make it harder for your competitors, such as imposing *Capital Controls*, or to protect yourself with *Legal Interference*, or to get out of a squeeze with a *Bailout*.

The game ends when a player draws the *End Game* card.

The Company Cycle

1. Company cards are placed face up in a separate, randomly shuffled pile. The players can see the next company that is “up,” but cannot change the order.
2. A company is placed in a player's “private” selection of companies with the “Start Company” card.
3. A company is moved from the “private” to the “public” section of companies with the IPO card. Optional: Place the IPO card with the company card to indicate that it is now public.
4. With an IPO event, the top card from the company deck is placed directly into the public section.
5. If a company goes bankrupt, it is placed at the bottom of the company card pile.
6. If a company gets nationalized, it is removed from play.



General Notes About Cards and Rules

When a card or a rule refers to a company, the specific wording will dictate which can be chosen or which are included. For instance, if the card or rule says “public” or “private,” only public or private companies, respectively, are included. If the card or rule does not specifically call out “public” or “private,” both public and private companies that meet the other criteria are included.

Companies with powers such as “Dividends” and “Spin-offs” only perform when they have at least 2 value chips on them.

Short on Removals: If an event or an action results in the removal of chips, either poli, dollar or value chips, and not all the chips are available, remove the remainder of chips available. If there are no chips to remove, the action or event has no impact on that company or player. There are only consequences of being short if the card or rule specifically spells it out.

For example, in a recession event, companies in the R sector are supposed to lose a value chip. If an R company has no value chip to remove, there is no effect of that event on that company. However, if “bankruptcy rules” are mentioned on the card, such as in the “Crash” event, then follow the procedure for bankruptcy.

If a player is supposed to remove dollar chips from their “net worth,” and they don’t have the requisite number of chips in their cash holdings, they must sell stock to cover the loss. If a card says to remove dollar chips from player’s “cash,” then no sale of stock is required. In either case, if the player doesn’t have the total net worth or cash to cover the removal of chips, remove the remaining wealth for that player. If a player goes to zero net worth, see the “Game Over, Player” rules.

A net worth reduction is also the only time a player can sell stocks in response to an action or event. Specifically, a player cannot sell stock in order to finance the playing of a defense card.

When the rules refer to chips, they generally use the word “chip,” as in “dollar chip.” If a rule indicates dollar chips with the dollar sign, count the dollar signs to determine cost or gain, just as on the cards. Therefore, “\$\$” is synonymous with “2 dollar chips.” Similarly, “2 \$” is synonymous with “2 dollar chips.”

“Run for Office” refers to both the “Run for Senate” and “Run for President” cards.

Plutocracy Rules

Start

Each player gets 8 \$, 1 poli chip and 5 action cards.

Players that get event cards on their initial hand should swap them for new action cards. Shuffle these event cards into the action deck.

Shuffle action cards and put them in a pile, face down. Include goal and event cards in the shuffle.

Shuffle the company cards, and then each player gets one random company card. Put the rest of the cards face up in a separate pile.

Players place 4 share markers on their initial company.

Decide how long the game should last and drop the "End Game" event card in the action pile accordingly.

Setup

Private companies should be placed immediately in front of the player who started them. Public companies should be placed in the middle of the table. It is necessary to keep track of who started each public company, so place the public companies in the middle, but so that it is facing the player who started it.

Optionally, use the IPO (*Initial Public Offering*) cards to indicate which companies are public. Place the IPO card underneath the company card. There are additional cards marked "Public," with the company background, which you can also use to place underneath companies that go public.

Goal cards should be placed immediately in front of the player.

If a player gets elected as Senator or President, place the corresponding action card in front of player while the office is kept.

Place anti-trust cards underneath the company that is targeted so that it is visible. A company with an anti-trust card cannot get value-chips added to it.



Rounds

Start of round:	Collect poli chips if holding office
During round:	1. Perform an action, either by playing an action card, or performing one of the free actions.
	2. Play a goal card
	3. Invest in public companies by buying and selling stock
	Anytime: Trade with another player (see following information)
	All steps are optional.
End of round:	Collect an action card. Player can also discard one card.
	Do not draw an action card if you have 9 or more cards in your hand.
	Play is clockwise, so that the next round goes to the player on the left.

Free Actions

These are actions that do not require a card. They still count as the action for a round. Therefore, you can only do one of these during a round and cannot also play an action card.

Cards are discarded face up.

Horse-trade (Swap Cards for Chip)

Discard 3 action cards of your choice. They cannot be goal cards. Gain 1 poli chip in return. This is not a swap-out, so collect only 1 card at the end of your turn.

Networking (Swap Out)

Discard any 2 cards on your hand and draw 2 cards instead of 1 at the end of your round.

Use company power

See spin-offs, takeovers, etc, in the Company Section following.

Financial Management

Gain a \$ chip for each 8 dollar chips you had in cash at the beginning of your round. Round up.

Remove active antitrust suit

You can remove an active antitrust suit that you placed. This does cost an action card, but you can choose any action card (not a goal card) and discard it and the antitrust card.

Chance

A "chance" is considered a 50-50 chance. This can be decided on in a mutually agreed upon fashion, whether with a coin toss, die (lower/higher or odd/even), rock-paper-scissors, odd/even game, etc. -- any process that gives an approximate even chance in either outcome.

Rounding

If nothing else is specified, round numbers down. For example, in the "Election" event, players lose an eighth of their poli chips. This is rounded down, so that a player with between 1 and 7 poli chips do not lose any. Players with between 8 and 15 poli chips lose one.

Elections

The "Run for Office" cards can be played at any time as a player's action. The "Election" event only affects sitting Senators or Presidents.

When playing a "Run for Senate" or "Run for President" card, the candidate gets one chance by default.

Add extra chances for additional dollar chips added to the campaign. Add one chance per extra \$ to run for Senator, or one chance per \$\$ put in for Presidency.

Add one extra chance if a candidate has a monument.

Other players can run PR campaigns to remove chances, but candidate will always have at least one chance. The "PR Campaign" must be played after the candidate has paid for his/her own chances, and before resolving chances.

Once a mogul wins the presidency, another "run for president" card cannot be played until the first mogul has been president for one full round. (President will collect poli chips at least once). There can be only one president, so if a second player becomes president, the first player loses the position.

Mogul can only hold one office at a time. If elected to one office while holding another office, mogul loses the previous office held.

Office holders should place the action card that got them elected in front of them, to indicate their position. When they lose the office, discard the card.

Senators get 1 poli chip immediately upon election, and collect 2 poli chips per round. Presidents get 2 poli chips immediately upon election, and collect 3 per round.

Trade

A player can offer trades of either action cards, or \$ for poli chips and vice versa. Player can offer one trade of each kind during a turn.

Trade Cards

Player hands a card to other mogul face down. If the other mogul passes the same card back, the trade is rejected. If another card is passed back (face down), the first mogul can accept the trade by keeping the card, or return the card and get the original back. During a turn, a mogul can offer only one card trade. Any card held on the hand can be traded.

Trade Chips

Player offers a trade verbally to other mogul. The other mogul can accept, reject or offer a counter-trade. Counters cannot be countered. During a turn, only one chips trade can be offered to one other mogul.

Agreements

Agreements are allowed, but must be public and are not binding. Players should not leave the game to negotiate, pass notes to communicate agreements, or otherwise communicate in a manner not audible or comprehensible to the other players.

Events

If a player draws an event card instead of an action card, that event is executed immediately. The player does not get to draw another action card.

When drawing multiple action cards, they must be drawn one at a time.

If a player draws an event card while pulling multiple action cards, place it aside, face up, and then draw the balance of the action cards. If another event shows, shuffle it back into the pile – only draw a maximum of 1 event card when

drawing cards. After completing the draw, execute the event that is facing up.

Emergency Bailout Event

First, all players lose \$\$ from cash. Then move one value chip from each public company that has any to a separate pile. Then auction off the pile like this:

1. If there are any offers of poli chips, the highest offer takes the pile. Offers must start at 2 poli chips. Tied offers are not allowed, any offer must exceed current outstanding offers.
2. If the pile was won during 1., another player can negate the win by paying up half of the offer in poli chips, rounded down.
3. If the offer was negated, both the auction winner and the negating player pays the poli chips and the process is repeated from A.
4. If no offers stood, each value chip should be auctioned off separately. Follow the same process, except that offers for the individual chips cannot be negated and offers for 1 value chip can start at 1 poli chip.
5. Any remaining value chips are removed.
6. The winner pays the poli chips for the value chips and can then redistribute the value chips freely among any public companies.

Event Extra Notes

Some events have extra notes at the bottom of the card. Their meanings are listed as follows. These effects are in addition to the event itself. Bankruptcy rules are not used with Event Extras.

Taxes	All players lose 1/4 of their cash.
Inflation	All players lose 1/8 of their cash.
Commodities Up	Add 2 value chips to each company with the Commodity property.
Commodities Down	Remove 1 value chip from each company with the Commodity property.
International Boom	The international economy is growing. Add 1 value chip to each company that either export or are international.
International Recession	The international economy is contracting. Remove 1 value chip from each company that either export or are international.

The Company Cycle

Company cards are placed face up in a separate, randomly shuffled pile. The players can see the next company that is “up,” but cannot change the order.

A company is placed in a player’s “private” selection of companies with the “Start Company” card.

A company is moved from the “private” to the “public” section of companies with the IPO card.

With an IPO event, the top card from the company deck is placed directly into the public section. Because no player started this company, it should be faced in a neutral direction.

When an antitrust suit is in progress, place the anti-trust card underneath the company. Add no value chips to the company while the antitrust suit is in progress.

Takeover

To play the takeover card, you must have a company with at least 2 value chips. It can be public or private, though a private company cannot take over a public company.

A private company can in theory, and do, take over a public company, but it is unusual. For gaming purposes, it is easier to rule it out.

The aggressor (takeover company) must have at least 2 more value chips than the target and be in the same sector.

First, the aggressor company loses 1 value chip and the target company gains 1 value chip.

Then, if the company was not neutral, the founder of the target can challenge the takeover. The player that started the target company puts up a number of poli chips that represents a campaign against the merger. For this purpose, that player can do any number of Horse Trades, as described in Free Actions. The total strength of the anti-takeover campaign is the number of these poli chips, plus the number of shares the founder owns in the target company.

At this time, you can cancel the takeover. The poli chips are returned to the founder of the target. The result of any Horse Trade is not reversed.

To continue the takeover, you must invest in a stronger campaign. The strength of your campaign is measured in the same way: the number of poli chips plus the number of shares you own in the target. You cannot perform any Horse Trades. If you cannot mount a stronger campaign, the takeover is cancelled.

If successful, you can choose which company to keep. Discard the other company to the bottom of the company pile. All shares in the two previous companies are combined into the new company. The new company will have the same number of value chips as the previous aggressor, *before* the takeover (that is, add 1 value chip again if the takeover is successful). Value chips on the new company will count toward your score at the end of the game.

Takeover can be blocked with the "Board Connection" card.

Takeover can also be blocked with the "Legal Interference" card, but *only* if the takeover was challenged.

Bankruptcy

If a company must remove a value chip, but has none and bankruptcy rules are stipulated, it will be bankrupt. An infusion will prevent bankruptcy.

Infusion

An infusion is a free action and costs 4 dollar chips. Player gains 2 blocks of shares in the company.

The "Corporate Bailout" card can also be played to prevent the bankruptcy. The company only has to be saved once by either method.

If the company is finally bankrupt, move it to the bottom of the pile of company cards.

Nationalization

If a company gets nationalized, remove it from play. Do not move it to the bottom of the company card pile.

Company Powers

To use a company power, the company must have at least two value chips. Using a company power counts as your action for that round, but it does not require an action card.

Spin-Offs

A founder of a company with the "Spin-offs" ability can start companies from that company (the parent), if the top card in the company pile is of the same sector as the parent company.

Spinning off a company in this way counts as an action, but does not require playing a card. The mogul cannot play any other cards in that round. The mogul can finance the spin-off with a value chip from the parent company or with 1 dollar chip (\$).

Takeover

The rules for the takeover power are exactly the same as when using the takeover action card. See previous. The only difference is that no card is required.

Dividends

On a boom event, receive 1 \$ for every four blocks of shares in each dividend-paying company (company cards marked with the "Dividends" keyword). The company must have at least 2 value chips. Calculate dividends separately for each company, and round off fractions.

Dividends are paid to all shareholders.

Note that "Dividends" is a passive power and cannot be initiated by the player.

PR

The PR campaign card is the most versatile. It can be played as an action or in defense against either a "Run for Senate," "Run for President" or another "PR Campaign" action.

A PR Campaign is run at 1 to 4 levels. The level of the campaign determines the cost, per the PR Campaign Level chart following.

Chart 1: PR Campaign Levels

Level	1	2	3	4
Cost	2\$	5\$	9\$	14\$
Favor company or foundation	Add 1 价	Add 2 价	Add 3 价	Add 4 价
Against company or foundation	Remove 1 价	Remove 2 价	Remove 3 价	Remove 4 价
Favor sector			Add 1 价	Add 2 价
Against sector			Remove 1 价	Remove 2 价

A PR Campaign can be run in favor of or against a company, or in favor of or against a sector. When run in favor of or against a sector, the effectiveness is reduced. A PR Campaign can also be run in favor of or against a foundation, which is identical in effectiveness levels as when running in favor of or against a single company.

For sectors, add or remove 价 for each company in the sector.

A PR card can also be played in response to a "Run for Office" card. In this case, the PR card removes 1 of the office-seeker's chances for each level. However, the candidate will always have at least 1 chance left. Therefore, the PR campaign cannot be used if the office-seeker has only 1 chance.

A Level 1 PR Campaign can remove a goal and is considered an action.

To play in response to activism, it costs \$\$ and the player then draws 2 action cards instead of losing any.

Aided PR

With an aided PR campaign, the rules and abilities are the same, but fewer dollar chips are required. The "Aided PR" process only applies to PR Campaigns used to manipulate value chips. PR Campaigns with a fixed cost, such as to remove a goal, are not aided.

The costs for an Aided PR Campaign are:

Level	1	2	3	4
Cost	1\$	3\$	6\$	10\$

If you have a company with the "Media" power, you can play a normal "PR Campaign" card using the Aided PR process. The "Media" company must have at least 2 value chips.

Movement

If "Movement" is played against a PR Campaign, it reduces the effectiveness of that campaign by 2. Therefore, a 1- or Level 2 campaign is reduced to nothing, whereas a Level 3 campaign is reduced to Level 1.

If Movement is played to *bolster* a PR Campaign, it increases the effectiveness of that campaign by 1. A Level 4 PR Campaign cannot be bolstered.

Defense Actions

Defense actions are played in response to either an action by another player, or an event. A defense card can be played in response to an action by the same player.

There are two types of defense actions: "blocks" and "counters." Either must be played while the action or event is getting resolved. If played in response to a variable-strength action, such as "Build Monument" or "PR Campaign," the response can be played after the strength of the original has been announced.

A "block" prevents an action from taking place. The player initiating an action will lose the card and the action for that round, but retains any chips that would have been required to fund the action.

A "counter" negates the result of an event or action. When countering an event, only the effects on the player with the defense card are omitted from the event: other players are affected normally. When countering an action, the initial action must still be funded in full.

Cash and Wealth

Each dollar chip belonging to a player is that player's "cash." (More accurately, liquid assets.)

Each block of shares, represented by markers placed on companies, also represents wealth. Only shares placed on public companies count toward net worth. Shares placed on private companies cannot be sold and represent zero wealth.

Stock

Players can buy *or* sell any number of stocks in any public company during a turn.

The value of a block of shares on a public company is measured by the value chips on that company.

If there are no value chips on a company, 2 blocks of shares are worth 1 \$. A single block of shares cannot be sold. A \$ of investment will buy 2 blocks of shares.

If there are value chips on the company, the block of shares is worth 1 \$ for each value chip on the company.

Examples:

Player sells 1 block of shares in a company with 1 value chip. Total \$: 1

Player sells 2 blocks of shares in a company with 2 value chips. Total \$: 4

Player sells three blocks of shares in a company with 2 value chips. Total \$: 6

A card referring to a player's cash only refers to the dollar chips in front of the player.

If a card refers to the player's net worth, add the count of \$ in cash to the total value of shares in public companies owned by that player.



Goals

Goal cards with a megaphone is an announcement. If you have played such a goal card, you cannot play any other goal cards. Goal cards with no megaphone can be played together.

To gain victory points for a goal card, you must have accomplished the goal, as stated on the card. Victory points for goal cards are added to your total. For instance, if you built a monument and played the goal card for it, and it was the biggest monument at game's end (the monument with the most value chips), add one victory point plus one *additional* victory point for each value chip on that monument. It does not matter when you played the goal card.

Game Over, Player

If a player has zero net worth, and no poli chips, the player must leave the game. If only 1 player is left, that player has then won.

Game Over, Game

There is an "End Game" event card. Place this card near the bottom of the pile of action cards. Depending on the desired length of game, it can be placed in the bottom half, bottom quarter, or near very bottom. When the End Game event is uncovered, complete one full round of play. That is, the game ends when the player that pulled the event card has completed his/her next round.

Place the End Game event card to the left of the player who drew it. This marks that when that player completes his or her next round, the game is over.

Winning

You get 1 point for every value chip on companies you started, plus 1 additional point for each company you started that is public.

If you have foundations or monuments, add points for value chips on the foundation or the monument. Add chips for one or the other, if you have both, you must choose which one to count.

Goal cards add points, see individual cards.

If tied, count poli chips, player with most chips win.

If still tied, the player with the most net worth wins.

If still tied, whoever has more cards left on the hand wins.

Cheating and Errors

Do not fix errors retrospectively. For example, if a player pulled the wrong number of \$ chips in return for selling shares in a public company, if that action is completed, let the player's cash or net worth remain as is.

Instead, if a player has been discovered cheating, or has made an error, draw a random action card from their hand. Draw 2 action cards if there are more than 5 on the player's hand. Also pull an extra action card for each repeat offense. Discard the cards.

Quick Game

Here is a way to play a quick, simple game. This works well as an introduction for new players, or if you just want to play a quick tie-breaker game.

1. Randomly select 12 action cards per player. Do not use event or goal cards.
2. Each player gets 5 action cards to start. Shuffle the rest of the selected cards and place them face down. This is your action deck for this game.
3. Each player gets 2 random company cards. Place them in each player's private section with 4 share markers on each.
4. Place the rest of the company cards face up in a deck.
5. Each player also gets 8 dollar chips and 1 poli chip.
6. Use the normal rules to determine who starts.
7. Play the game according to the normal rules, but ignore "Trade," "Bankruptcy Rules," goals and events. Honor the sector rules, but ignore other keywords and performance abilities on the company cards.
8. Continue to play until all cards have been drawn from the action deck.
9. Play one extra full round. In other words, continue playing until the player who drew the last card finishes his or her next round.
10. To count your victory points for this game, count all of the value chips on your companies and, if you have them, foundation or monument. Count both public and private companies. Add one victory point for each public company you started.



Optional Rules

Slow Start

Players do not start with 1 company in their private section.

Fast Start

Start with 2 companies for an even faster start. In this variation, during the game each player can choose to discard exactly 1 "Start Company" action card and draw another in its stead.

Emergency Bailout Action

Treat the "Emergency Bailout" event as an action. It can be played in response to a "Recession" or "Crash" event and should cost 2 poli chips to play. The player using the card does not get any special advantage during the bidding.

Choose Chips

Each player gets 9 chips to start and can choose how many should be dollar and how many poli chips. The combined total of dollar and poli chips should add up to 9 for each player.

Free Exchanges

Open up card and chips trading so that any trade can involve either. Under this rule, players can offer chips for cards, or cards for chips, or a combination of cards and chips for cards or chips. They can also offer or ask for stock in return for either, or in combination with either. Players should still be limited to making 2 offers during their turn.

Opportunistic Swap Response

If a player uses the "Swap Cards for Poli Chips" free action, another player can choose to pay up the poli chip in return for the cards. The player initiating the action still loses the cards and gains the poli chip, but instead of discarding the cards, they go to the player who offered the poli chip.

Stock Trade Limits

In Plutocracy, a block of shares represents millions of individual shares. In reality, it takes a lot of time to move that much stock through the stock market. This optional rule limits the number of stocks a player can trade in each company to 2 per turn.

Company Power Limits

It is unrealistic that an investor can make use of the company powers indefinitely, regardless of what happens with the company. This rule puts a limit to when the company powers can be used.

1. A company power cannot be used after the company goes public.
2. While the company is private, the player with the most shares in the company gets to control the company powers.

The company power limits have no bearing on victory points.



Supplement

The three kinds of chips represents the different aspects of transactions in the Plutocracy. Each dollar chip is not meant to represent a single dollar or a fixed number of dollars, but a unit of purchasing parity. Losing dollar chips in the game can be a reflection of losing actual money in the real world, but it can also be a reflection of money losing value (inflation).

The poli chip represents political power. The moguls mostly wield political power indirectly through connections. Therefore, the poli chips represent how many "political favors" you collect.

The value chip can mean different things depending on which object it is placed on. When placed on a private company, value chips represent the competitive value of that company, which can be a combination of revenue, customer base, image, efficiency, IP or talent. When placed on a public company, value chips represent the stock valuation of that company. When placed on a foundation or monument, value chips represent effectiveness or reputation.

Markers represent stock shares. Each marker represents one block of shares. A block of shares is not necessarily a fixed number of stock. In a company with a small number of shares outstanding, one block could represent a small number of shares. In the game of Plutocracy, imagine there are many other moguls and investors not present in the game, so the markers on a company card is only a subset of total shares outstanding.

The sectors are modeled after real-life sectors, with actions and events bearing on individual sectors. However, the mechanics should not be taken literally. The main purpose is to divide the companies into different groups. Although there are differences between the sectors, there is not any built-in advantage to any one sector over another.

The companies are entirely fictional, and their names are purposefully generic to avoid clashing with real-life companies. Any resemblance to real companies is unintentional.

Game Designer's Notes

Any game that tries to capture a slice of reality can do so only in a remote and single-faceted way.

I wanted to design a game based on the Public Choice theory. A card game lends itself well to this kind of simulation. Cards represent opportunities and connections, which can be gained, lost or traded. Though an opportunity presents itself, there is still a cost in pursuing it. The cost can be a combination of opportunity cost, monetary cost or calling in favors.

I had to over-simplify some aspects of commerce or politics in order to fit within a reasonable game system. A good example is the price of stock in a publicly traded company. Stock shares are represented by the "block," denominating a deliberately unspecified number of shares. Prices are captured in brackets by the value chip.

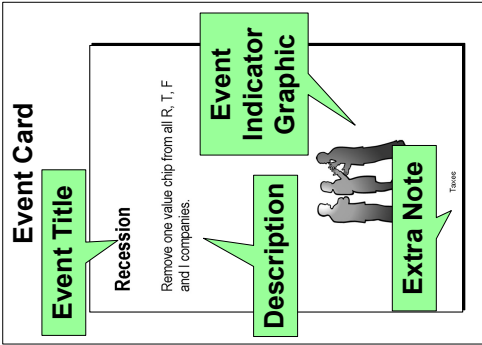
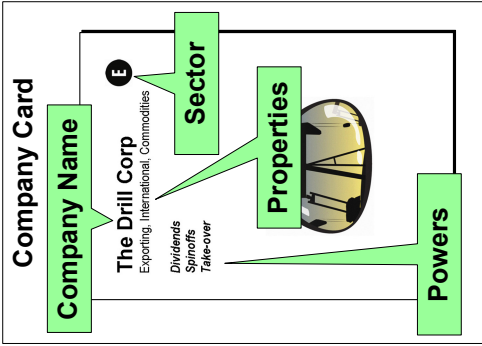
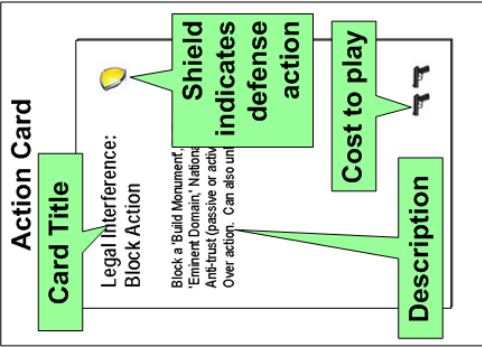
Unfortunately, not everything could be made so simple and clear, while retaining a foot in reality. In the trade-off between simulation and simplification, I placed an emphasis on game mechanics. Within the overriding philosophy captured by its name, I mostly wanted the game to be fun to play. I hope the cartoonish way elections are handled, or the naively simple implementation of the boom/bust cycle, bears this out.

The "takeover" process is an example of an involved resolution, which I allowed in order to retain some complexity, in part because a real-life take-over *is* complex, and partly because it is a rare occurrence. Therefore, the impact on the overall pace of the game is minimal.

Though almost all cards that represent government action are detrimental, the game should not be construed as advancing anarchy. There may be a role for government in areas such as law and order, justice, education and basic infrastructure. When it comes to the business environment, at least some government action is destructive or unfair, much of it both. It is driven by politics, favoritism, rent-seeking and domination. This is the main aspect of Public Choice that the game tries to capture.

I added the Company Powers to give each company a bit of character, thereby hoping to add a little flavor to the game. Of course, any company could decide to pay out dividends, but I do think that some companies are more likely to do so than others. Powers enabled me to differentiate companies without upsetting the balance of the game.

Card Legends



Quotes

3. In time, however, [antitrust] became used to mandate access to a single firm's assets	<i>Wall Street Journal, Editorial June 5, 2006</i>
9. A PAC allocates its contributions to those legislators who are expected to act most efficiently and effectively on its behalf.	<i>Robert E. Florence, "An analysis of PAC contributions and legislator quality"</i>
10. as soon as the [tariff], losing its fiscal character, has for its object the exclusion of a foreign product, ..., in order to raise artificially the price of a similar domestic product, and thus to exact tribute from the community for the profit of one class, from that moment protection, or rather plunder, makes its appearance	<i>Frederic Bastiat, "Protectionism and Communism"</i>
14. Barr Laboratories, in particular, bore the brunt of the agency's wrath. As Burkholz says, "For the next three years the FDA never stopped trying to put the company out of business"	<i>Robert Higgs, "An FDA Fable," Reason Magazine, October 1994</i>
18. The government prefers to define [insider trading] case by case. 'He did what? Oh, that should be illegal. So it is.'	<i>Barron Editor Thomas Donlan, "Hamming It Up," 6/16/2003</i>
21. [The site of the capital] had already been settled by a small but hardy population of lobbyists, who [...] had been able to survive for decades in the harsh wilderness by taking each other to lunch.	<i>Dave Barry, "Dave Barry Hits below the Beltway", "The History of Washington, DC"</i>
26. Immigrants like Mr. Mavinkurve are the lifeblood of Google and Silicon Valley, where half the engineers were born overseas	<i>New York Times online, "Tech Recruiting Clashes With Immigration Rules", April 11, 2009</i>
32. The cost of regulation is taking its toll on small businesses.	<i>Lee Berton, "Public markets become unfeasible for small companies"</i>
36. Gabelli Asset Management [...] has put off hiring some analysts in large part because of added costs related to Sarbanes-Oxley.	<i>USA Today, "New Accounting Rules Raise Price of Audits," 4/12/2005</i>
38. Celebrities need the media to spotlight their causes, the media need celebrities to get ratings, and politicians need both. "Everyone is selling something," Levinson says matter-of-factly	<i>Mother Jones, "Barry Levinson on the Unholy Alliance of Politics, Celebrity, and Media" 5/6/2009</i>
45. Let me tell you how it will be; There's one for you, nineteen for me. 'Cause I'm the taxman...	<i>The Beatles, "Tax Man"</i>
52. [...] congressional representatives from northern industrial states used the 1977 Clean Air Act amendments to reduce competition by curbing economic growth in the Sunbelt.	<i>Jane Shaw, "Public Choice Theory"</i>

Real Life Plutocracy

Central Pacific Financial (CPF) is a troubled bank. The last year it was profitable was 2007. Its stock is worth a fortieth (1/40) of its peak. It is over-exposed to troubled assets, in the form of sub-prime mortgages. In late 2008, when the Federal Government started the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), CPF applied.

CPF was not a likely candidate. TARP was meant to save healthy banks and companies. The Treasury Department, which runs TARP, had initially rejected the bank's application, with a stated concern that the bank had too few capital reserves to be viable. The bank had already been chastised by the FDIC for being low on reserves.

In late 2008, the TARP application was sitting in review council. According to the Huffington Post: "The internal e-mails show that the application had been forwarded to an inter-agency council headed by the Treasury Department that reviews cases in which a bank did not meet the criteria for a federal investment. Those criteria require banks to demonstrate their viability without the benefit of federal funding."

Then, suddenly in December 2008, the bank received \$135 million in TARP funds.

What happened?

In November of that year, the Treasury Department received a call from the staff of Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), inquiring about the status of the application. News of this phone-call travelled by email from San Francisco to Washington, DC. The application was approved two weeks later.

At the end of 2007, a year before these events, Inouye owned about half a million dollars worth of shares in CPF.

As of May, 2010, Central Pacific Financial has missed four out of six TARP payments.

Sources: The Huffington Post/ProPublica (Senator Inouye Helped His Personal Bank Get Bailout Money June 30, 2009), Washington Post (After Call From Senator's Office, Small Hawaii Bank Got U.S. Aid, July 9, 2009), Wall Street Journal (Meet the 91 Banks That Didn't Make Their Tarp Payments, June 17, 2010)

**For more Real Life Plutocracy, visit
<http://blog.plutocracythecardgame.com>**