THE EARTH MAN'S BURDEN

BACKGROUND

It is the not-too-distant future – next Sunday, AD – and Earth has been on the brink of war for decades. The Secretary-General enforces an uneasy peace with the military fleets and economic clout of the UN, with contingency plans upon contingency plans and reprisals ready to inflict at the touch of a button.

Onto this scene comes the invention of a functional, efficient and powerful Bussard ramjet engine, capable of maintaining 1*g* throughout the solar system. Nations and corporations alike leap upon the design, purchasing or outright stealing it as soon as possible. Within a few years, the Outer Space Treaty is a forgotten relic as vast fleets leave Earth, equipped to terraform, colonise and if necessary even invade the rest of the Solar System…

THE BOARD, PIECES AND DEFINITIONS

- The board consists of ten *worlds* and ten *trajectories*. Each world consists of both a *locale* (wherein fleets are built, squabble and are destroyed) and between two and seven *regions* (wherein resources are claimed, exploited and exhausted). Trajectories represent not locations but the predictability of a fleet's course and the chances to redirect a fleet as it travels between the worlds (one unit in the Solar System trajectory may be travelling between Saturn and Mars, whilst another in the same trajectory may be on course between Mercury and Jupiter – the two fleets are nowhere near each other in realspace). Worlds and trajectories are connected by movement arrows. A move *skyward* refers to travelling between two connected zones up one set of arrows, against its flow; a move *worldward* refers to travelling between two connected zones down one set of arrows, with its flow.
- Pieces consist simply of *units*, all of which may be represented identically. A unit occupying a region is referred to as a *development* and is said to be *claiming* it; a unit in any world's locale or any trajectory is referred to as a *fleet*. Units may belong to a player (being in their colour) or the UN (being white). A fleet in a world's locale or a development in one of a world's regions is referred to as *on* that world.
- All die rolls are made on d6, of which you will need at least seven (but would do better to have many more).

SETUP

- Each player places one development in one of Earth's regions; UN developments then fill all remaining regions on Earth.
- Each player then takes turns placing one fleet each either on Earth or as many moves as he likes directly skyward from Earth, proceeding anticlockwise around the table until each player has placed five fleets. Ten UN fleets are then placed on Earth.
- Play then begins with the last player to place a fleet; turns proceed clockwise around the table.

TURNS

The turn has four phases, which must be taken in order. However, some actions may be taken at any time and may interrupt this sequence; these will be explained in the Extraordinary Actions section. In this section, we refer to the player whose turn it is as "you". The four phases are as follows:

1. Movement
- Each of your fleets which starts the phase on a world **may** make as many moves skyward as it likes.
- Each of your fleets which does not start the phase on a world **must** make exactly one move worldward.

2. Combat
- Each of your fleets which starts the phase on a world may open fire on one particular player who has any units at all on that world. In this way, several individual attacks may be drawn up on each world between your fleets and the units of another player thereupon. Use the rules in the Combat Resolution section to resolve each of these separately.
  The UN uses military reprisals to maintain peace on Earth. Should you open fire on anyone at all on Earth and the UN still have fleets remaining, they will open fire on your Earthly forces with all their fleets just as if it were their turn. Resolve this as soon as you have resolved all your own fire.
- Each of your developments which starts the phase on a world may attempt overthrow of one particular player who has any developments on that world. In this way, several individual coups may be drawn up on each world between your developments and the units of another player thereupon. Use the rules in the Combat Resolution section to resolve each of these separately.
  The UN uses its economic power to maintain stability on Earth. Should you attempt such a coup on Earth and the UN still have developments remaining, the player(s) against whom you attempt coups may re-roll any Earthly saves against your overthrow attempts (see the Combat Resolution rules).

3. Exploitation
- On each world upon which you have at least one development at the start of the phase, you may construct fleets. For each world, gather a group of as many dice as you have developments; this is your construction pool for that world.
- You may now split your construction pool between as few or as many projects as you like, so long as each project has at least one die assigned to it. Each project automatically constructs one fleet for you on that world, but risks overexploiting the world as described below.
- Roll the dice for each project simultaneously. Should any of a project's dice show 3 or more, all is well; however, should none of the dice do so, you have overexploited the world and lose one of your developments on that world – perhaps you have exhausted your resource veins, or raised the ire of overworked settlers (or perhaps even natives!), or overtaxed your machinery.
  The UN attempts both to support struggling factions and protect Earth's biosphere. Should the UN have any developments remaining on Earth, you may re-roll one of your dice from your Earth construction pool each turn.

4. Development
- If you have any fleets on any world(s) with unclaimed regions, you may on each such world make as many or as few attempts to claim them (sequentially rather than simultaneously) as you like whilst you still have fleets with which to claim them and there remain regions to claim.
- To claim a region, first remove one of your fleets; you must commit a vast amount of resource, industry and workforce to exploit any world to a significant extent, whether or not the attempt succeeds. Count the number of empty regions on the world and roll this many dice – should any of the dice show 3 or more, you may claim a region with a new development, but should none of the dice do so, adverse conditions, poor prospecting or simply paucity of resource means that your development attempt fails and the fleet is wasted.
  The UN will act to maintain economic balance and will intervene to restore depleted natural resources. Should the UN have any fleets or developments remaining on Earth, it will at the end of each player's development phase place a UN development on each unclaimed region on Earth (as a multinational body tasked with the preservation of Earth, it is assumed to have the reserves and infrastructure to do so without expending a fleet in the process).

COMBAT RESOLUTION

For each combat, you have **A** attacking fleets (when opening fire) or **A** attacking developments (when attempting overthrow) ranged against the units of a particular player on the same world. He has **D** units on that world (both fleets and developments, since fixed emplacements can contribute to defence, whilst military threats defences can help resist economic or cybernetic overthrow).

- Roll **A** dice. Each 5 generates one success; each 6 generates two.
- The defender may have a chance to save. He rolls one die for each success you just scored:
    - Normally, he gets no save against fire, or saves of 5+ against overthrows.
    - If **D > A**, he gets saves of 6 against fire, or saves of 4+ against overthrows.
    - If **D ≥ 2A**, he gets saves of 5+ against fire, or saves of 3+ against overthrows.
  Each of his saves which he passes cancels out one of your successes.
- For each unsaved success against your opening fire, he loses a unit from that world (if he has both fleets and developments remaining, he may (sequentially) choose which each shot destroys. Should the UN be attacked, it removes fleets first, then developments.) For each unsaved success against your attempting overthrow, he must transfer ownership of one of his developments on that world to you (by removing at and replacing it with one of yours). In each case, should you remove all the units or capture all the developments of the targeted player on that world, any overkill is wasted.

EXTRAORDINARY ACTIONS

You may at any time (in your turn, in another player's turn, before you commence a phase or whenever) undertake any of the following actions as many times as you like:

- Emergency construction: You may create a fleet on any world upon which you have a development. Remove one of your developments immediately from that world.
- Gifts and trade: You may give any of your fleets or developments on a world to another player (by removing it and replacing it with one of theirs). Note that you may not transfer ownership of units which are not on a world.
- Decommissioning: You may remove any of your units from any world. This confers no material gain. Note that you may not decommission units which are not on a world.

VICTORY

A player is victorious when all players who still have units remaining on the board (which may be just the one player) agree that he has won.