

PEAK OIL

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3 to 5 players. 6 works, but may turn out long if AP happens a lot.

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INTRODUCTION

You are the top manager at one of the large Oil Companies, tasked with leading your enterprise into a future without oil. With Peak Oil looming ahead, you squeeze the last drops from oil fields around the world to gather the resources to invest in various oil replacement technologies. While you may try to emerge from the coming crisis by standard means, your competitors will most probably not, forcing you to dirty your hands as well.

You have a workforce of Agents you may assign to the different tasks on the board. If you have more Agents assigned to a task than any other player at the start of your turn, you may take the linked action, afterwards removing all of your own Agents from that task. Actions include developing and harvesting oil fields, hiring new Agents, investing in oil replacement technologies, PR campaigns to manipulate the public opinion about those technologies and some more.

After some time, the oil, represented by a set number of small barrels you draw from a bag when developing new oil fields, will run out. This is called Peak Oil and marks the end of the game. Players tally the value of the technologies they invested in and promoted during the game. Whoever shaped the future best (i.e. in favour of his company) wins.

COMPONENTS

You will need to **print out**

- board
- 4 price markers (1,2,2,3)
- oilfields cards; these have the name of a country a large number and some stuff on them
- investments cards; these have the name of a technology investment, a corresponding symbol and the name of a start-up company on them
- the PR Disaster card
- 8 pirate markers
- 5 player aid cards

You will need **additionally**

- per player: 10 black, 1 green and 1 red „barrels“. We use wooden cylinders, cubes work as well. All barrels have to feel the same, i.e. may not be discernible by touch, only by colour, picture bottom left
- a bag to draw the barrels from. You should not be able to see from the outside what is in the bag.
- per player: 5 Agent pawns in one colour, picture on the right
- 12 black mercenaries, picture bottom middle



SETUP

- place the board in the middle
- randomly place 1 of the price markers face up on each of the price spots at the 3 refinery centers Philadelphia, Rotterdam and Singapore, place the fourth price marker aside for later use
- randomly place 1 pirate marker face up on each of the pirate spots on the board, keep remaining ones ready for later use
- place PR Disaster next to the board, ready for later use
- give each player 2 Agents and a player aid card of their colour and 1 mercenary, keep remaining Agents and mercenaries ready for later use, next to the Action Spot in the lower right corner.
- shuffle each of the 2 card stacks (oil fields and investments) and place them face-down close to the board
- prepare the barrels: 1 red and 1 green barrel per player, plus 8 to 10 black barrels per player. More barrels = longer game. A good formula is $[13 - \text{number of players}] \times 4$ black barrels per player, so in a game with 4 players you would have $[13 - 4 = 9] \times 4$ black barrels, a total of 36. Either way, you have to add 1 red and 1 green barrel per player, in a 4 player game that makes 4 of each. You will not need the remaining barrels in this game.
- from the oil fields stack, reveal one card per player and put the shown number of black barrels onto the corresponding countries. Remove those cards from play.
- from the investments stack, reveal 3 cards next to the board, close to the Investment Action Spot; put 1 black barrel on each of the corresponding technologies. Remove those cards from play. If you reveal 2 or even 3 cards of the same technology type, place 2 or 3 barrels on that single technology.
- put the remaining black barrels together with the red and green barrels into the bag. This is earth's remaining oil supply
- from the remaining oil fields stack, reveal 1 card next to the board, close to the oil field Action Spot
- from the remaining investments stack, reveal 3 card next to the board, close to the investment Action Spot
- the most stupid player is the starting player.

THE MAP - OVERVIEW

COUNTRIES / REGIONS

These represent the regions of the world richest in oil. First, they need to be developed, i.e., the oil fields in these countries need to be prospected and prepared for harvesting. As a result, a number of barrels corresponding to the capacity of the developed oil field is placed on the country. Then, these oil fields may be harvested, i.e. barrels are shipped to refinery centers, or barrels are pumped through pipelines, directly into the refinery centers. Countries are also Action Spots, i.e. spots where you can place Agents to assign them to the task of harvesting an oil field.

REFINERY CENTERS

These are the target spots for your tankers. A marker shows the current demand for oil in this refinery center, with 1 being the lowest demand and 3 being the highest.

SEA ROUTES / PIPELINES

These are the routes along which the oil moves on its way from the oil regions to the refinery centers. Some have fields that hold pirate markers. Pirates mean additional trouble of getting oil through this area, they either cost money or make using this route more dangerous, or even block a route completely.

ACTION SPOTS

You can place Agents on these spots to assign them to the corresponding tasks.

THE TECHNOLOGY TRACK

This track shows which technology is currently regarded as most important in overcoming peak oil problems by public opinion. At game start, up to 3 of these already have PR tokens on them, these are considered valuable by the public. The value of a technology when investing in it and at game end is solely set by the number of PR tokens on it. It is your task to diligently tell everybody how valuable your technologies are to emerge the most influential in the end. The technology track is not an Action Spot, to influence it you need to take the PR Action.

TURN ORDER

You take turns clockwise. Each turn consists of 2 steps; You **must** take both:

- 1 **Reassign** one of your **Agents** OR take an **Action**
- 2 **Reassign** one of your **Agents**. You may **not** do anything else optionally



REASSIGN AN AGENT

Take one of your Agents from anywhere on the board or from your personal stock and place it on any Action Spot on the board. Place the Agent next to any other Agents or oil barrels that may already be on that spot.

You may not re-assign the same Agent in both steps. You may not re-assign an Agent in step 2 to a spot you assigned an Agent away from in step 1. You may assign an Agent in step 2 to an Action Spot from which you removed Agents in step 1 by taking the corresponding action.

You may only assign Agents to Action Spots. Countries count as Action Spots. You may not assign Agents to any other spots (piracy spots, refinery centers, technology track, for example).

You may assign Agents back to your personal stock, i.e. un-assign them.

You may assign as many of your Agents to any given action Spot as you have available, there is no other limit. For example: at game start you have 2 Agents in your stock, on your first turn you may assign both of them to the Action Spot 'develop oil field', if you want to.

You may assign Agents to actions spots even if that does not give you a majority there, to block other players for example or whatever.

All Agents on an Action Spots are all trying to bribe the authorities there, haggle for the best price for something, hindering the other player's Agents and so forth. Once they have succeeded in doing so, you may take the corresponding action, see take action below.

TAKE ACTION

Instead of reassigning an Agent in step 1, you may take one Action. You may only take an Action if you have more Agents assigned to the corresponding Action Spot on the board than any other single player. All actions are detailed below.

Example: Valdez has 2, Barnabas has 2, and Fred has 1 Agent on the Action Spot 'investments'. None of them may take the corresponding action 'investments', since none has more Agents assigned to it than any other player. Valdez or Barnabas could use a mercenary, see below, to break the tie and take the action all the same.

Example 2: Valdez has 3, Barnabas 2 and Fred 2 Agents on the Action Spot 'investments'. Valdez turn starts. Valdez may take the corresponding action, since he has more Agents assigned to it than Barnabas and he has more Agents assigned to it than Fred.

After you have taken an Action, you remove **all** of **your** Agents from the corresponding Action Spot and take them back to your personal stock. Agents of other players remain assigned to the Action Spot.

In step 2 of the same turn, you may reassign one of your Agents to that Action Spot, since you didn't remove the Agents from there by reassigning them but by taking the corresponding action.

FIRST ROUND

During the first round, you may only assign Agents, and only from your personal stock, not from other Action Spots. At the start of round 2, all players have placed their 2 available Agents on the board and the game begins for real.

MERCENARIES

If, at the start of your turn, you do not have Agents left in your personal supply, and can not take any action because you do not have the majority anywhere, before taking your first step, you may take a Mercenary from the supply, if there is one left.

You may use a mercenary pawn to take an action in step 1 of your turn you do not have the majority for but are tied for with one or more other players. You must be tied. Put the mercenary back next to the board, it becomes available again.

This does not grant you an extra action but merely makes taking an action during step 1 possible where it otherwise would not be.

You can not pay multiple mercenaries for one action. You may hold as many mercenaries for later rounds as you like.



ACTION: DEVELOP OIL FIELDS

Draw as many barrels from the bag as noted on the current open oilfield card. For each **green barrel**, draw 2 additional barrels from the bag.

Put all the **black barrels** on the country spot on the board corresponding to the oilfield card. This oil has been prospected and awaits being harvested and shipped to refineries. Put all remaining red and green barrels back into the bag.

If you draw at least one **red barrel**, you are caught »saving money« by circumnavigating official safety and environment regulations or receiving »bonus payments« from local officials: You suffer a PR Disaster, see below.

Take the oilfield card into your personal stock; See „local connections“ and „victory points“, below.

Then reveal a new oil field card and place it next to the . If it bears a skull symbol, you must switch two markers, either two pirate markers or two price markers. One of the two markers must be on the board.

2-1



ACTION: HARVEST OIL FIELDS

Select which sea route or pipeline you will use and which refinery center you deliver to. Check the current demand in your target refinery center; That's the number on the price chip currently placed there. From this demand, subtract 1 for each „-1“ piracy spot on your route. Take the resulting number of barrels from the country to your personal stock. Those represent the money you made shipping and selling this oil.

Some pirates completely block off routes: you may not chose this route at all to deliver oil to refinery centers.

If your route crosses any questionmark barrels icons, draw as many barrels from the bag as the total number of these, check them and return them to the bag. If at least one of the barrels drawn is red, a tanker you hired has a disaster unfortunately linked back to you, or you have been caught „saving money“ on this shipment by having the crews work triple shifts without payment, exploiting non-union crews, not maintaining ships and so forth; You suffer a PR Disaster, see below.

You may not take this action if there are no barrels on the country. If there is at least 1 barrel on the country, you may take this action. You can not collect more barrels from one shipment than there are on the country the moment you take this action. All additional barrels you would be allowed to collect otherwise are lost.

Example: You want to ship from Nigeria to Philadelphia, which at the moment has a demand of 3. You need to cross over one „1 random barrel“ spot on the route (crossing the ocean is always dangerous), and the „Gulf of Guinea“ piracy spot currently has the „-1“ marker. You only take (3-1=) 2 barrels from Nigeria into your personal stock as money. Then you draw 1 random barrel from the bag. It's a green one, so you have to draw two additional ones. One is black, one is red, which means you have been caught trying to cover up a disaster. You must take the PR Disaster from whomever holds it and place one of your Agents on it. You return all barrels drawn to the bag.

LOCAL CONNECTIONS

If you want to take the action „harvest oil field“ in any country, you may count each oil field card in front of **you** with the name of that country (from earlier „develop oil field“ actions), as one of your Agents in that country when determining majorities.

This represents how your connections in the local government help you getting stuff done in those uncivilized countries.

You need to have at least one Agent in that country to take this action. The „additional Agents“ will not work for you, they only make stuff go smooth.

All local connections of other players are always ignored. If any other player wants to take an action in this country, they have not to take your oil field cards into account when determining majorities. While the government will certainly give you a bit of an advantage for old times sake (well, and all the hard currency you promise to keep „spending“ in their country), it will not actively hinder other players that want to pay them good money as well.

BARRELS

Barrels in the bag and on oil fields represent crude oil. Each barrel roughly represents 1 trillion tons of oil.

Barrels you collected to your personal stock using the action „harvest oil fields“ are used as currency to invest in technology companies and are not worth anything at game end. They roughly represent 1 trillion euros each.

Barrels placed on the technology track are now PR tokens and represent the „worth“ of that technology in the public view. Each barrels represents roughly 1 trillion euros in market value for that technology.



ACTION: INVESTMENTS

Take one of the 3 available Investment cards. Check this technology on the technology track: Pay (=remove from the game) 1 barrel from your personal stock per PR token on that technology. Then reveal a new Investment card from the stack to the open display, if possible.

You may not take this action if you do not have enough barrels to pay any of the currently available Investments.

If there are no PR tokens on the technology you invest in, this is free. You may still only buy one of the Investment cards.

When you buy an Investment card, clearly declare what it is, and, on request, repeat until everybody interested has understood. After that, keep your investment cards face down, they are now secret information. You may claim anything you want about these cards, but not show them until game end.

Each investment card represents a promising start-up company specializing in some futuristic technology. Bright minds with a grand idea of how to save the world through the use of science. It is a wise and good thing to buy these companies. As soon as the world runs out of oil, you will want to be in possession of knowledge and, more importantly, patents to things you kept telling the public would save the world one day. You will also want to keep telling the public that indeed this technology saves the world a lot better, if a bit more expensively, than that other stuff.

Example: Currently, the open display consists of the three investment cards "Sha Future", specializing in "Methan-Ethen-Katalyse" (which currently has 0 PR tokens on the technology track), "naturaw", specializing in "Bio- und Erdgase" (currently at 3 PR tokens), and "Ruby Globe", specializing in "Hydrogentreibstoffzellen" (also at 3 PR tokens). You could take "sha Future" for free, as there are no PR tokens on the corresponding technology. Or you could buy one of the other two for a price of 3. Since you already invested in "Bio- und Erdgase" before, you buy "naturaw", take that card, declare that you bought it, place it face down in front of you and reveal a new card from the stack to replace it in the open display.



ACTION: PR

Place 1 of the barrels from your personal stock as a PR token on one of the technologies on the Technology Track.

OR Pay 1 barrel and move one PR token from one technology to a different one. Draw as many barrels from the bag as there are now PR tokens on the **target** technology. If any of the barrels are red, take the PR Disaster.

Each Investment card is worth 1 VP per PR token on the corresponding technology at game end, see below.



ACTION: HIRE AGENTS

Take one of the Agents of your colour from the common stock into your personal stock.

You may not take this action if no Agents of your colour are left in the common stock.

OR Move all Agents you placed on the Action Spot „Hire Agents“ to a different Action Spot: You must immediately take the target action, if possible. You may spend a mercenary to do so.

If you can not take the target Action, you may still move your Agents to the Action Spot. In this case, do not take them back to your hand as you would after regularly performing an Action, even though technically you performed the Action „Hire Agents“.

Moving your Agents and taking the target Action does not count as both of your steps but only as step 1.

This is the only case where you may spend 2 mercenaries in a turn: 1 to break a tie on the Action Spot "hire agents" and one to break a tie on the target Action Spot.



~~ACTION: HIRE MERCENARIES~~

~~This Action exists no more. Ignore it.~~

~~Take one of the mercenary pawns into your personal stock. Then switch two markers, either two Pirate ones or two Price ones.~~

~~You may hold as many mercenaries as you like. You may not take this action if no mercenaries are available.~~

~~If playing with 4 or more players, this is a separate Action Spot. If playing with 3 players, this is an optional part of the hire Agents Action Spot.~~



BARRELS IN A BAG

When drawing barrels **for any reason**, draw two extra barrels for **each green** barrel you draw.

After drawing barrels for any reason, red and green barrels drawn are returned to the bag. If you have drawn more than 1 red or green barrel, remove some first: For each 2 or more green barrels you drew, remove one of them from the game. For each 2 or more red barrels you drew, remove one of them from the game.

If you draw barrels for any other reason than developing an oil field, return all barrels you drew to the bag after you have finished the action, except possibly some green and red ones, see above.

The black barrels in the bag represent the remaining oil supplies of the world. Each time a new oil field is developed, more of these supplies are being used up. The bag is also used as a randomizer each time a player does something „dirty“, in which case the draw of a red barrel means a failure. The later in the game, the higher the ratio red/green barrels to black barrels. The closer Peak Oil gets, the more closely the large companies are watched and the more likely you are caught with your hands dirty, resulting in a PR disaster.

Removing some of the red and green barrels from play if multiple are drawn counteracts this to some extent. Worst case it comes down to 3 barrels left in the bag (1 red, 1 green, 1 black) before Peak Oil happens.



A PR DISASTER

The PR Disaster is a card that represents the public awareness of how evil, relatively, the holder's oil company is compared to all other oil companies. Since the public can never focus on more than one thing at a time, there is only one PR Disaster. As soon as any other company fucks up or is thought to do so, the PR Disaster changes hands. As long as you have the card, you need to keep Agents assigned to it, to prevent it from getting out of control.

Drawing **one or more red** barrels from the bag for any reason means you suffer a PR Disaster. If you do not hold the PR Disaster card, take it and place it in front of you.

Then, no matter if you just acquired the card or had it from an earlier PR Disaster, you must immediately assign one of your Agents to it. You may freely choose which Agent to place on the PR Disaster card, either from your stock or from some Action Spot. Agents assigned to the PR Disaster may not be used for anything else and remain on the card until you get rid of it. Each time you suffer a PR Disaster, add another one of your Agents to the card. You may also assign more agents to the PR Disaster, as if it was an Action Spot.

If, at the start of your turn, all of your Agents are assigned to the PR Disaster, you may take the action **Whitewash**: Reclaim all your Agents to your personal stock and return the PR Disaster card to the middle.

You automatically get rid of the PR Disaster if another player has to take it: Immediately reclaim all of your Agents assigned to it to your personal stock.

Holding the PR Disaster at game end is bad. It gives you -2 VP.

PEAK OIL

When a player draws the **last black** barrel from the bag through any action, even if it is returned to the bag afterwards, and even if there should be non-black barrels left in the bag, Peak Oil is reached. Big mayhem ensues. The game ends.

Every player may at any point in the game examine the barrels left in the bag.

The next player starts the last round: In this round each player has their regular turn, followed immediately by a free action which must be one of: Investment, PR, Whitewash. No Agent prerequisites have to be met for this extra action, the player just decides which one he uses. The player who initiated Peak Oil is the last to take his turn. Then, tally victory points.

This means you pick any of those three actions, regardless of if you have assigned any agents to it or not and how many other players have agents there. This also means that you potentially may take two actions on this last turn, once regularly and once "free".

Cost associated with the "free Action" still has to be paid, investment cards cost their current PR value, you need to have money to place PR tokens etc. You also need to check for PR Disasters as regular, possibly resulting in receiving the card from some other player...

Do not remove Agents from the board for your free Action.

VICTORY POINTS

All players reveal their Investment cards. Each Investment card is worth 1 VP per PR marker on the corresponding technology plus 1 VP per oil field card with the corresponding symbol the owner holds.

For example, there are 3 PR markers on technology X. Valdez has 3 copies of technology X, and Barnabas has 2 copies of technology X. Barnabas holds two Oil Field cards with the technology X symbol. Valdez gains 9 (3×3) VP, Barnabas 10 (2×(3+2)) VP.

The PR Disaster is worth -2 VP.

Whoever has the most VPs wins.

Break ties by: most investments, most oil fields, no PR Disaster, oiliest skin.

