FAULT LINES — RULEBOOK (FIRST EDITION TEXT)

A game of pressure, coordination, and interpretation under strain

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1. GAME OVERVIEW

This is simply intolerable. We must do something to challenge all of this - and if not us, who? If not now, when?

Fault Lines is a cooperative strategy game about navigating a shared situation under increasing pressure.

Players must manage:

- external pressure
- internal coordination
- public perception
- and shifting interpretations of events

There is no single win condition - the game will shift and change with each scenario and each play through producing outcomes shaped by choices under strain.

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2. OBJECTIVE

Players assume the role of a team of activists who are challenging an action, a policy, or some other action on behalf of the structures of power. The game has 3 premade scenarios, but players can choose to create their own examples and modifiers.

Players collectively attempt to:

- achieve scenario goals
- maintain internal coordination
- avoid structural collapse where possible
- understand how outcomes were produced

Success is measured by trajectory, not score. Also recognized is that structural collapse, while considered a not ideal case in this particular game, the author does not necessarily view as a wrong direction in a real-life scenario. In real life, in a case of structural collapse, different conditions and parameters exist that are not within the container of this game in a fulsome way. The idea in the game to escalate concern while trying to navigate common systems in a neo-colonial, capitalist society.

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3. CORE METERS

There are three tracking meters shared by all player:

SUPPORT (0–10)

Public legitimacy and backing

- Low: resistance or disengagement
- High: broad support and momentum

STATE (0–10)

Institutional pressure and response

- Low: ignored or unseen
- High: surveillance, intervention, repression

UNITY (0–10)

Internal coordination and cohesion

- Low: fractured, conflicting
- High: aligned and coordinated

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4. TURN STRUCTURE

Before the first turn, choose a scenario and mark the original conditions of that scenario on the tracking meter. Choose a character card - one for each player and read the character modifiers

out loud. It is highly encouraged that the players role play the characters. Images have been chosen to represent the characters for this edition. It is the game creators' intention that gender not be assumed in the characters but only by the players - these do not have to align with the perception of the images on the cards.

Each round players will do the following:

1. Draw 1 Event Card
2. Choose 1 Action Card
3. Resolve effects
4. Apply event and trigger effects
5. Adjust meters
6. Check scenario conditions

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5. METRICS BOARD

This is where you track your progress. To set up, place the board where everyone can see it. Use coins or tokens to measure the metrics indicated (Support, State, Unity).
Take note: on the State metric - Pressure Rising and Critical indicate when these metrics gain control over the game.

Place your chosen scenario, face up on the space indicated for the scenario for easier referencing during the game.

6. ACTION CARDS

Begin with Low Intensity actions and work your way through to mid, and to high intensity. Shuffle each Action Card set and place them face down in three piles. Players choose as a group when to escalate to the next level. Players choose ONE action per turn:

LOW INTENSITY

- Letter Writing (+Support)
- Petition (+Support, +State)
- Parade (+Support, +Unity)

MID INTENSITY

- Rally (+Support, +Unity, +State)
- Protest (+Support or +State depending on conditions)

HIGH INTENSITY

- Civil Disobedience (+Unity, +State)
- Riot (volatile: high reward, high instability)
- Revolution (conditional system shift)

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7. RIOT & REVOLUTION

RIOT

Riots represent a volatile escalation point.

Effect:

- +Support
- +State
- -Unity
- triggers Aftershock phase

Outcome depends on system conditions.

REVOLUTION

Requires:

- State ≥ 8 AND Support ≥ 6

Effect:

- shifts system state
- triggers instability phase (Aftershock)

Revolution is not a win condition. It is a transformation point.

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8. EVENTS

Events represent external pressure, opportunity, or disruption. Remove at random 2 Crisis cards and set to the side. Shuffle the rest of the Event cards into a single deck. Place both decks face down. When indicated on an Event Card to apply an immediate crisis, choose one Crisis card from the two you set aside.

Categories:

- Pressure (State increases)
- Supportive (Support gains)
- Internal (Unity loss)
- Narrative (Propaganda distortion)
- Crisis (system instability)

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9. PROPAGANDA SYSTEM

Propaganda tracks interpretation of events. Cards will indicate events that will move the tracker on the Propaganda meter.

Scale: 0–5

Effects:

- alters how Support/State/Unity changes resolve
- creates framing bias
- can distort outcomes over time

At high levels:

- interpretation dominates short-term reality
- but collapses under crisis pressure

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10. MEMORY SYSTEM

The system tracks repeated actions. Escalation is a part of the game

Effects:

- repeated actions lose efficiency
- escalation patterns increase State volatility
- de-escalation restores Unity

The system “remembers” behaviour patterns through the scoring meters.

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11. AFTERSHOCK

Aftershock is a condition of deep instability. This event will occur on actions that represent a high intensity and will create a deeper impact on the actions available.

Triggered after:

- Riot
- Revolution

Effects:

- increased State volatility
- reduced Unity recovery
- delayed resolution of consequences

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12. COLLAPSE CONDITIONS

Structural Collapse

This occurs when State is equal to, or greater than 9 **AND** Unity is equal to, or less than 2

Fragmentation

Fragmentation happens when Unity equal to, or less than 2 for 2 consecutive rounds

Exhaustion

No escalation or de-escalation for 3 rounds

In Fault Lines, Collapse is not failure. It is systemic breakdown under pressure.

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13. SCENARIOS

The Scenario cards are a pre-set playable scenario that establishes the starting conditions.

Each scenario defines:

- starting meters
- special rules

- win conditions

Included in this edition:

- Development Proposal
- Urban Displacement
- Land Defense Camp
- Labour Uprising

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14. END OF GAME

The game ends with three possible outcomes:

- Victory Conditions of the chosen Scenario are met
- Collapse (Revolution) occurs
- The chosen play time runs out

Fault Lines heavily advocates for players conduction analysis and evaluation while navigating the game, but perhaps especially once the victory conditions have been met. This can be done through the game End State cards .

End of Game

- Review final state (Support / State / Unity)
- Select the card that best fits
- Place it face up
- Discuss the actions and events that led to the End State

Also possible is to choose 2 End State cards at random and evaluate the play through based on End State shown.

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15. REFLECTION (SOLO OR GROUP)

Players reflect on:

- escalation patterns
- coordination breakdowns
- interpretation shifts
- decision pressure points