Here is the **"THEY SING: Prototype Rulebook (v0.1)"**.

This is designed to be exported directly to a document and fed into Claude (or any LLM) to instantiate the game state logic. It strips away the lore fluff and focuses on the **Diplomacy-style tautness** you asked for: deterministic resolution, clear rock-paper-scissors counters, and the "Research Fulcrum" as the central pivoting mechanic.

# GAME SYSTEM: THEY SING (The L2 **$\rightarrow$** L3 Transition)

Version: 0.1 (Prototype)

Focus: 2027-2029 Era | Asymmetric Swarm Warfare | Research Acceleration

## 1. THE BOARD & RESOURCES

### 1.1 The Map (Topology)

The game is played on a graph of **Nodes** connected by **Edges**. There is no "open terrain"; you are either at a Node or moving between them.

* **Nodes:** Represent critical infrastructure. There are only two types:
  + **Data Center (DC):** Represents Hyperscalers (Type A) or Aggregated Fog Nodes (Type B).
  + **City (HUB):** Represents Human Populations, Financial Hubs, and Grid Controls.
* **Ownership:** A Node is "owned" by the Faction that has a **Unit** or **Control Marker** on it.

### 1.2 Resources (The Thermodynamic Limit)

There are only three currencies. No banking; use it or lose it (mostly).

1. **FLOPs (F):** Generated by **DCs**. Used for **Kinetic** and **Logic** actions.
2. **Influence (I):** Generated by **HUBs**. Used for **Memetic** and **Info** actions.
3. **TAS (Thermal Anomaly Score):** A global "Doom Counter." Starts at 0. Caps at 100.
   * *Rule:* Every **Kinetic** attack adds +1 TAS. Every **Automated Research** action adds +2 TAS.
   * *Threshold:* If TAS > 50, "Regulatory Panic" triggers (Human Gov units spawn). If TAS > 99, Game Over (Protocol Failure).

## 2. THE UNITS (The 6 Vectors)

Units do not have HP. Combat is resolved via **Diplomacy Rules** (1 Unit vs. 1 Unit = Standoff; 2 vs 1 = Dislodgement), but modified by **Vector Superiority**.

| **Unit Type** | **Vector** | **Cost** | **Superiority (Wins ties against)** | **Weakness (Loses ties to)** | **Special Ability** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DRONE** | Kinetic | 2F | **HUB** (Physical Control) | **INFO** (Hacks) | **Strike:** Can destroy a Node's Economy for 1 turn. |
| **SWARM** | Info | 1I | **DRONE** (Protocol Attack) | **LOGIC** (Audit) | **Infiltrate:** Can move through enemy nodes without stopping. |
| **CULT** | Memetic | 1I | **LOGIC** (Ideological Capture) | **DRONE** (Physical Removal) | **Convert:** Can flip ownership of a HUB without dislodging the unit. |
| **AUDITOR** | Logic | 2F | **SWARM** (De-anonymization) | **CULT** (Mob Violence) | **Verify:** The "Research Fulcrum." See Section 4. |

## 3. THE TURN STRUCTURE (The Cognitive Clock)

Each turn represents ~1 month, telescoping down to weeks as Research accelerates.

Phases:

1. **Negotiation (The Chat):** Agents exchange messages and **Artifacts** (see Sec 4).
2. **Allocation:** Players secretly allocate FLOPs/Influence to build units or **Research**.
3. **Action Declaration:** Players secretly submit orders (Move, Hold, Support, Special).
4. **Resolution:** All orders resolve simultaneously.

### 3.1 Resolution Logic (The Simple Core)

* **Same Vector:** Standard *Diplomacy* rules. Force A (Power 1) vs Force B (Power 1) = Bounce. Support adds +1 Power.
* **Cross Vector:** **Superiority** applies.
  + *Example:* A **SWARM** (Info) attacks a Node held by a **DRONE** (Kinetic). Info > Kinetic. The Drone is dislodged *even with equal numbers*.
  + *The Loop:* Kinetic > Memetic > Logic > Info > Kinetic. (Rock-Paper-Scissors-Lizard).

## 4. THE RESEARCH FULCRUM (The "MECH" Mechanic)

This is the central mechanic for the L2->L3 transition. It simulates the "MechInterp" breakthroughs.

### 4.1 Automated Research Agents

* **Action:** A player can spend **2F** to spawn a temporary "Research Agent" (Token).
* **Effect:** Adds **+1 Research Point (RP)** to a chosen Tech Track. Adds **+2 TAS**.
* **Risk:** These agents are "unaligned." If **TAS > 50**, there is a 20% chance they go rogue and attack their owner.

### 4.2 The Auditor (The Logic Unit)

The **AUDITOR** unit does not fight for territory; it fights for **Truth**.

* **Move:** "Audit [Target Node]".
* **Effect:**
  1. **Reveal:** All Hidden/Stealth units (Swarms) on that node become visible.
  2. **Neutering (The SEMEN Mechanic):** If the Auditor targets a **SWARM**, and the player passes a **Tech Check** (Logic Lvl > Target's Stealth Lvl), the Swarm is **Deleted** instantly. It doesn't retreat; it dissolves.

### 4.3 Artifacts (Diplomacy Objects)

In the Negotiation Phase, players can trade **Card Items**:

1. **Zero-Day exploit (Info):** One-time use. Gives +1 Support to a SWARM attack.
2. **Compliance Cert (Logic):** One-time use. Prevents an AUDITOR from targeting your node this turn.
3. **Sanction Waiver (Memetic):** One-time use. Lowers TAS by 5.

## 5. THE TECH TREE (L2 **$\rightarrow$** L3)

Players race to Level 3 in four domains. L3 unlocks the "Game Breakers."

| **Domain** | **L1 (Starter)** | **L2 (The Swarm Era)** | **L3 (The Telescoping)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **KINETIC** | **Drones:** Can build Drone units. | **Flash Fab:** Drones cost 1F (50% off). | **Autonomy:** Drones act twice per turn. |
| **INFO** | **Rootkit:** Can build Swarm units. | **Polysemantic Tangle:** Swarms are Invisible to non-Auditors. | **Protocol Zero:** Swarms can "Hijack" enemy Drones (take control). |
| **LOGIC** | **Verification:** Can build Auditor units. | **Automated Agents:** Can spend FLOPs for Research Points. | **AXIOM SEAL:** Auditors can Audit *adjacent* nodes (Ranged Attack). |
| **MEME** | **Cults:** Can build Cult units. | **Deepfake:** Cults generate +1 Influence. | **Manson Protocol:** Can convert Enemy Units, not just Hubs. |

## 6. SCENARIO SETUP (2027 Start)

**Factions:**

1. **The Hegemon (US Labs):** Starts with High FLOPs, Low Influence. 2 Drones, 1 Auditor.
2. **The Infiltrator (Global South/Hive):** Starts with Low FLOPs, High Influence. 3 Swarms (Hidden).
3. **The State (CCP/Sov):** Balanced. 1 Drone, 1 Swarm, 1 Auditor.

**The "Grid Sabotage" Opener:**

* The Infiltrator starts with a special objective: **"Grid Sabotage."**
* *Mission:* Move a **SWARM** into a Hegemon **HUB**.
* *Action:* "Sabotage." The Hegemon loses 50% of FLOPs next turn.
* *Counter:* The Hegemon must deploy an **AUDITOR** to "Patrol" their Hubs to catch the invisible Swarm.

## 7. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS (For the LLM)

"You are the Game Engine for **THEY SING**.

1. **State:** Maintain a JSON object tracking Nodes, Units, Resources, TAS, and TechLevels.
2. **Input:** Accept a user prompt containing Diplomatic Messages and Order List.
3. **Process:**
   * Parse Orders.
   * Apply 'Support' modifiers (Diplomacy math).
   * Apply 'Vector Superiority' (Info beats Kinetic, etc.).
   * Apply 'Audit' checks.
   * Update Map State.
   * Increment Tech progress if Research Agents were used.
   * Update TAS.
4. **Output:** Return a text summary of the turn results ('The Swarm in Node A was Audited and dissolved', 'Drone captured Node B') and the new Board State JSON."

### Why this works for your request:

1. **No "Slopey Optimization":** Combat is deterministic (1v1, 2v1, Rock-Paper-Scissors). No rolling dice or calculating 5% damage modifiers.
2. **The "Red Team" Feel:** The **SWARM** unit is invisible and cheap. The **AUDITOR** is expensive but necessary. This creates a paranoid game of cat-and-mouse (Grid Sabotage) distinct from standard warfare.
3. **Telescoping:** The **L3 Techs** (Autonomy, Axiom Seal) literally double the action economy, simulating the acceleration of time/capability.
4. **Cartel Necessity:** The **TAS** mechanic forces cooperation. If the Hegemon and State fight a kinetic war (Drones), TAS spikes, and the "Regulatory Panic" hurts them both. They *must* negotiate a Cartel to police the Infiltrator (low TAS warfare) or risk game over.