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# Disorderly Conduct

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Making Magic  
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Welcome to Boros Week! This is the last of the *Ravnica* guild theme weeks and the fourth of ten of the *Ravnica* block guild theme weeks. Come *Guildpact*, I'll dedicate three different weeks to the black/white (the Orzhov Syndicate), red/green (the Gruul Clans) and blue/red (The Izzet). Then as *Dissension* rounds the bend, I'll touch upon black/red (The Cult of Rakdos), green/blue (The Simic Combine) and blue/white (The Azorius Senate). As always I feel obliged to point out that the ten two-color philosophy articles are based on a series of mono-colored philosophy articles I did – on obviously white, blue, black, red and green. ("[Seeing Red](#)" has links to the other four, so all you need is that one link to find all five articles.)

But enough of the past and future. There's no time like the present. And in the present we're talking about red/white (aka The Boros Legion). Note that I'm talking about the philosophy of the intersection of red and white and not about the Boros Legion in particular. You'll have to wait for Matt's column ("Taste the **Magic**") later this week for that. To explain color pie intersections, I always answer the following questions:

- What do the two colors have in common?
- How do the two colors differ? What is the guild's internal conflict?
- What does the guild care about? What is its end goal? What means does the guild use to achieve these ends?
- What does the guild despise? What negatively drives the guild?
- What is the color's greatest strength and biggest weakness?

Sound good? Then on with the show.

## What do the two colors have in common?

The key to understanding an enemy color pair is to examine what conflict defines them. For red and white that is the eternal conflict of chaos and order. White is all about structure. White wants peace and harmony for everybody. To ensure this happens, white lays down the law, quite literally. White knows that its rules upon rules will make sure that everyone is doing what they should to guarantee a peaceful community. Red, on the other hand, is very much about following its heart. Red does what it feels it should do. Now, when everyone acts on their own wants and desires it causes some conflict. Red's okay with that. Conflict is an essential part of life. If two people disagree let them smack each other around. Ideas like this lead to chaos. Once again, red's okay with that.



So how does the force working towards order commingle with the force working towards chaos? The answer is to let each part have its role in how the guild functions. One half picks the goal while the other half chooses the tools to accomplish the task. This leads to two possibilities. A group with a moral center using whatever it feels is necessary to get the job done (this is the Boros for those that care). Or a group bent on creating anarchy that uses careful planning to bring it about.

The two colors actually have more in common than you might first think. First, both colors are very driven. True, by different things (morals for white and emotion for red), but nonetheless both create fervent followers willing to die for their cause. Second, both embrace the military although at opposite ends of the spectrum (the orderly platoon versus the ragtag mob). And third, both colors have a very aggressive "attack first, ask question later" streak that seeps out into deck archetypes (white weenie and sligh).

White and red might be on two different sides but they do share the same coin. Their actions are often so similar that you need to understand their motivation before you can tell whether they're red or white.

## How do the two colors differ? What is the guild's internal conflict?

As stated above, red and white want diametrically opposed things. White acts as a means to bring the community together. To safeguard the needs of the many. Red acts to ensure that each individual has the freedom to do whatever it wants even if that freedom imposes on others. White makes rules. Red breaks rules. White carefully builds structure. Red

breaks down structure wherever it can find it.

The internal conflict of the guild stems from this divergence. Red/white is always focused on its goal but its ends don't always match its means. Red/white often finds itself breaking the very rules it has set out to create. To

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create peace, it will kill. To ensure freedom, it will enslave. Its long term strategy and short term tactics are constantly at odds with one another.

This internal disconnect makes red/white hard to understand. Sure, red/white knows what it's up to but those around it are always a little taken aback at what it is willing to do to get the job done.

## What does the guild care about? What is its end goal? What means does the guild use to achieve these ends?

To understand what red/white seeks, we need to look at the desires of each of the colors separately. White wants peace. Red wants freedom. White wants everyone to have security. Red wants everyone to have choices. The balance is that red/white seeks all of these things for some of the people. Red/white is king of rationalization. That is, red/white comes up with reasons to explain why chaos is in fact order. And why order is in fact chaos. Red/white is also the master of compromise (to itself, that is). To save some, it will sacrifice others. To establish a rule, it will break the very rule it is trying to establish. It will live up to its high ideals no matter how low it has to stoop to live up to them.

Red/white's end goal is to have a purpose that it uses all its energy to reach. What is that end goal? Ironically, it is to either create peace or to create chaos using the opposite as a tool to do so. In the end, red/white is trying to find a way for order and chaos to co-exist without any uncomfortable side effects. And when those happen, it brushes them under the rug or rationalizes why they aren't such a problem.

While red/white is conflicted in what it wants, it is not conflicted in how it hopes to accomplish it. Take your people. Give them the same goal. Give them the same means to reach that goal and then get out of the way. The drive of red/white's followers is so fanatical that red/white doesn't need to spend any more time indoctrinating them. Red/white just paints the bullseye and let's the force that is their legion do what it must.

## What does the guild despise? What negatively drives the guild?

The key to understanding what an enemy color pair despises is to look at the other enemies of the two colors and see what those two colors have in common. Red's other enemy is blue while white's other enemy is black. What do blue and black have in common? Sneakiness. Indirectly and subtly accomplishing one's goal. Red/white hates that. Red/white is all about being open and honest about what you're doing. If I'm planning to cave in your skull, I tell you to your face what I'm going to do.

Red/white is all about being focused and direct. It doesn't get subtlety. It wants to see its enemies coming because it enjoys a good fight. Being sucker punched or stabbed in the back is so not what red/white wants to have happen. Red/white wants things played by the rules. You know, the rules it made. If its enemies don't understand its rules, that's okay. But at least red/white has them. Playing without clear-cut rules is cheating. And red/white does not condone cheating. At least not what it defines as cheating.



## What is the color's greatest strength and biggest weakness?

Red/white's greatest strength is its focus. When it decides to do something there is no hesitancy. It acts forcefully and brutally. It does what's needed to get the job done. Whatever it takes.

Red/white's greatest weakness is its complete lack of subtlety. Red/white's enemies always know exactly what red/white is up to because red/white tells them. To their face. Multiple times. Red/white doesn't hide anything. And quite often that's a big liability.

## “You Like Me, You Really Like Me”

In Aaron Forsythe's Friday column (“Latest Developments”) he always does a poll at the end. Sometimes, R&D uses those polls to gather information on some topic we've been discussing. Knowing that *Ravnica* was coming up, Aaron asked what were people's favorite two-color combinations to play. Red/white finished last. It was even beat out by “I don't play two-color decks”.

What this meant was that we knew we had an obstacle on our hands when we were designing red/white. It came into the *Ravnica* block as the least favorite color pair. What could we do to give it some love? The answer, it turned out, was to play into the most positive area that the two colors overlapped in. And that was the weenie deck. Both white and red have mono-colored weenie decks that have been popular for many years. What if the Boros put white weenie and sligh together and made a cute little love child? Every other *Ravnica* guild seemed to have forces that made them want to slow the game down. What if one guild, we thought, just went for the throat? Who doesn't love over-aggressive decks? They have a singularity of purpose that is very refreshing to play.

And it turns out that our plans have worked even better than we hoped. Our data (things such as decks played in key events, sales of pre-constructed decks, feedback in e-mail and on the boards, etc.) has shown that red/white has been the sleeper guild of *Ravnica*. Players are embracing it with a love I've never previously seen for red/white. I know the *Ravnica* design and development teams are quite excited about it.

## Orderly Chaos

I couldn't end without the ever-so-controversial examples from pop culture.

**The Punisher** – For those of you that don't read comics (or see really bad movies), the Punisher is a man named Frank Castle whose family was gunned down by mobsters (they were accidentally caught in some crossfire). To make amends, he has vowed to stop all people like those that took his loved ones. How? By killing them, of course. Aha, you say, he kills, doesn't that make him black? No, killing for selfish gain is black. What the Punisher does is not for himself but for society as a whole (yeah, yeah, I know that can be debated but it's how the character is written). The Punisher is guided by a very strict set of ethics. He truly believes he is making the world a better place. (That's the white part.) But he feels he is above the law and he accomplishes his task as he sees fit most often by blowing the bad guys away. (That's the red part.)

**The A Team** – As you can see vigilantes feel right at home in red/white. The A Team is no exception. The A Team is out to do good. They have a strong moral center and are clearly guided by the desire to right wrongs. That said, they are in no way constrained by anyone else's rules. They do what it takes to accomplish their task (and other than BA getting shot every eighth episode no one ever seems to get hurt).

**Worf** – Worf is a Klingon (heavy red) raised by humans (heavy white). He has great respect for structure as a member of the Federation yet still understands the primal emotions that guide his people. His whole character is based on the internal conflict of these two forces.

**V from V for Vendetta** – This is another comic book reference (and a good one at that – way better than the Punisher in my comic tastes – although to be fair Garth Ennis does write a mean Punisher). I chose it for two reasons. One, the movie (with Natalie Portman) is coming out soon so hopefully this reference will make sense to more people within the next year. Second, he is the best example of a character that flip flops the means and ends. V is trying to create anarchy and chaos but through very tight and structured means.



## Fight the Good Fight

And thus we come to the end of the philosophy of the *Ravnica* guilds. But fear not, *Guildpact* is not too far off on the horizon, and then I'll have three more two-color combinations to wax philosophically about.

But, before I go, I'd like to first offer an apology to Steve Bishop. I think my comments in last week's column came across a little harsher than I intended. I was trying to set up a contrast between the first World Championships and modern Organized Play. Of course Steve was inexperienced in running high level events. Everyone was. It was the beginning. And to Steve's credit, the job he was asked to perform wasn't the job he was initially hired to do. So, when I critique early Organized Play, please be aware that I am commenting on the situation more so than the people themselves. Once again, sorry Steve.

Join me next week for Topical Blend #2 where I take all of your number one choices of a **Magic** and a non-**Magic** theme, which I will weave together into what I hope will be a memorable column (and no you don't get to know what those two topics are until next week).

Until then, may you know what you're fighting for and know the joy of being absolute in that belief.

Mark Rosewater

*Mark Rosewater is Head **Magic** Designer. What this fancy title means is that he's in charge of **Magic** design. This gets him a lot of mail (which he actually reads). When not alternatively destroying and saving **Magic**, he likes to spend time with his family, do stereotypically geeky things (play games, read comics, watch a lot of science fiction, etc.) and write about himself in third person.*



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