**Design Goal**

I want to create a turn-based strategy game that revolves heavily on making deals with other players. Your tactical decisions will influence how other players view their relationship with you, which in turn encourages or discourages their partnering up with you. It is, however, casual and accessible for anyone who enjoys playing a semi-complex board game. This means that the choices a player has must be easy to understand; the complexity arises from emergent decision-making. One game never lasts more than an hour, making replayability and trying out different strategies an integral part of the experience.

This game is 100% deterministic and all suspense/RNG originates from not knowing what your fellow players' moves will be and anticipating their allegiance or disloyalty. All moves resolve at the same moment, strengthening this suspense.

**Pillars**

Three pillars are essential to the core design decisions in this game. All design decisions that follow must be measured to see if they work well in combination with these foundational pillars.

You don't win alone: How long can you uphold your own agenda while you convince others to help you? Communication is key in this game; this theme is carried by the decision's players make and to what extend they can convince others of their cause; everyone is free to partner up with anyone and use any means of communication.

Trust in negotiation: All agreements that players make, are based on trust, so the tension of finding out whether someone upholds their end of the bargain becomes clear at the next turn. If two players agree to trade and one does not, then this is a perfectly valid move on both parties. It will however impact others' loyalties towards this player.

Balance in strategy: The decisions that a player can choose from, generally fall apart in three separate categories:

* **Economic**: gain more resources and being able to trade with other players.
* **Military**: Create a stronger military; the military will determine whether you win wars.
* **Religion**: Your people will have something to fight for. Without religion, they are without cause and will not be productive. You also need a religion to crown your king.

There should not be a strategic advantage of choosing one of these elements over the others. Someone heavily invested in economy should have as much chance to win as someone invested in military.

Prisoner's dilemma: The anticipation from playing certain moves should always come from not knowing how another player defines their relation to you. If you both are allies, then you both gain some reward. If you both are enemies, you both get punished. If one is an enemy, while the other is an ally; then the one person gets a great reward while the other is punished hard.

**Goal of the game:**

The goal of the game is to crown a king. A king can be crowned in a city with a population of at least 50 and requires a bishop. When a king is crowned, that person will have to keep the crown for three more turns before the game is over. In that time, other players will have the opportunity to kill the king.

**Premise**

During a great war in Esnait following an epidemic, the king has been murdered. After years of suffering, the epidemic seems to be over and the townsfolk are now looking to rebuild their province to former glory. Can you crown the next king of Esnait?

**Players**

Unilateral Competition (Free For All) where teams are formed and changed during the game. At least five players should play with a preference to an uneven number of players.

**Gameboard and start of the game**

The gameboard exists of a two-dimensional hexagonal map. Every player has a position on this map and starts with a single town tile with a farm next to it. Every player is at least 4 tiles away from the next player and starts out with 20 gold and 10 food. Their first village has a population of 5.

**Resources**

There are three distinct resources in the game that you can harness to increase your wealth and being able to buy and build new structures and units. These resources are gold, population and food.

**Gold** is gathered as taxes. The more population you have, the more gold you receive every turn. A normal town generates 1 gold for every population. That number is increased by an additional 10% gold per marketplace adjacent to this town. A town with a population of 20 and 2 market places adjacent to it, will generate 22 gold per turn.

**Population** is measured in the amount of people that live in your villages, towns, cities and monarchies. Population can be invested in building units, but a bigger population gathers more gold.

**Food** is gathered using farms. Creating and maintaining units costs food; the food required to create a unit is subtracted from your pool and at the end of every turn, your alive units will subtract food from the supply. If there is not enough food for an already living unit, it will perish. Units that are farthest from the nearest farm will perish first. If two units are equally far away, the player decides which unit will perish.

**Turns**

Every turn has the same basic structure. Rural tiles and units allow you to perform actions:

1. For every rural tile you own, you can choose to do one of the following actions:

* increase the population. Towns only support a certain amount of population. When this limit has been reached, the town needs to grow in order to keep growing the population:
  + town tiles grow with 5 population and have a max population of 15.
  + village tiles grow with 8 population and have a max population of 25.
  + city tiles grow with 12 population and have a max population of 40.
  + monarch tiles grow with 20 population and have a max population of 60.

Towns/villages/cities/monarchs only support a certain amount of population. You need to upgrade in order to gain more population.

* spend population points building units. Use barracks/monastery/market place next to that town to build new units. The cost for this is specified in the section 'units'.
* Building a new structure: this can be either a farm, warehouse, barracks, church, market place or expanding the town by an additional tile. For the cost of these structures and what they do, see the section 'structures'.

1. The player can also move all their units one tile per turn. For more in-depth information about units, see the 'units' section.
2. The player receives gold and food from their villages and farms and food for units is subtracted from their food supply. If the food counter is negative at the end of the turn, it will become a net of 0 by removing some units from play (as specified under food resource).

**Structures**

For every town they have, a player can build new structures on an empty tile adjacent to the town. This can be one of six options: farm, warehouse, barracks, church, market place or extending the town with an additional tile.

A **farm** produces food. One farm generates one food every turn. Two farms built next to each other will generate an additional food every 2 turns; this means that building farms next to each other, has an advantage.

**cost**: 5 gold, 1 population.

A **barracks** produces soldiers. Soldiers are used to conquer enemy towns or to kill other units: monks, other soldiers and merchants.

**cost**: 15 gold, 2 population.

A **monastery** has a positive influence on the population of the towns it is built next to. It also produces monks. Monks can be christened into a **priest** and a priest into a **bishop** when they make a pilgrimage to a monastery of another player. This must always be a player that has not been visited yet. You can christen that monk by spending their action.

**cost**: 10 gold, 5 population.

A **marketplace** produces merchants and has a positive influence on gold (taxes) of the towns it is built next to. In order to trade resources with other players, your merchant needs to travel to their market place. This is the only way that you can trade resources with others. When your merchant is in the market place tile of another player, you can send them gold and food by spending the merchant's action.

**cost**: 10 gold, 5 population.

An additional **village tile** can always be created and doesn't cost population.

**cost:** 15 gold, 5 food.

**Units**

Units have an attack and a defense value. Merchants and monks have 1 atk / 1 def. Soldiers start out with 2 atk / 2 def. During a fight, when the attack value of a unit is higher than or equal to the defense of the other unit, it dies and is removed from play. All units in a battle can potentially die, if their defense is brought back to 0.

Per village, the player can create a unit in an adjacent structure tile:

Create a **soldier** if you have a barracks. Soldiers can attack other units and buildings. Soldiers have first strike, meaning that they will deliver damage first. A unit killed by a soldier (unless it is a soldier too) does not deliver its damage.

**Cost**: 4 food, 3 gold, 5 population, 2 food per turn.

Create a **merchant** if you have a marketplace.

**Cost**:3food, 7 gold, 2 population, 1 food per turn.

Merchants are the only way to trade resources with other players and are vital for a leverage position. Merchants can also found new towns, by spending their action. This will cause the merchant to perish.

**Cost**: 5 food, 15 gold.

Create a **monk** if you have a monastery. When they are involved in a battle, they can give high or low morale to other troops involved in the same battle. A monk that is on a monastery tile cannot be attacked.

**Cost**: 2 food, 6 gold, 4 population, 1 food per turn.

All units can move across Esnait one tile per turn, except for the mayor, who remains at the city.

A priest or merchant that is in their respective meeting place with another player, is immune to being attacked. This immunity is lost when they leave this tile.

Upgrade your village to a town. If there are no other village tiles with a mayor adjacent to this one, this action will automatically appoint a **mayor**. When you upgrade a town tile with a mayor, they will become a **governor**. Villages provide you with a bigger max population and a bigger population growth. Your mayor can be crowned to king (see table for requirements).

You need at least one additional town/village/city tile adjacent to this one to grow a town into a village and at least three village/city tiles adjacent to a fourth village to grow it into a city.

See the below table for the costs of building and upgrading your villages.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Build** | **Food** | **Gold** | **Additional Requirements** |
| New Village Tile | 5 | 8 | Built next to existing village |
| Upgrade to town | 12 | 20 | Monastery, 2 adjacent village+ tiles |
| Upgrade to city | 20 | 35 | 3 adjacent town+ tiles |
| Upgrade to monarchy | 30 | 50 | 2 adjacent city tiles, bishop in adjacent monastery, min. 50 population, governor in this city. |

**Battle**

When two or more units end up at the same tile, a battle emerges between all involved units. Whenever a battle emerges, all involved players decide what their units' actions will be; all battles resolve simultaneously.

For every unit involved, the player chooses between the following options

* their unit will attack another unit; this unit will deliver its damage to said unit;
* their unit will not attack another unit;
* if this is a priest, it can
  + give another unit a +1 / +1 advantage in battle;
  + give another unit a -1 / -1 disadvantage in battle
* if this is a merchant, its owner can pay 25 gold to bribe another unit, rendering its chosen battle action inactive (as though it wasn't performed).

Special rules in battle:

1. In principle, every single unit involved in a battle can die during the battle, when its defense is brought back to 0 or lower.
2. When a battle is decided and only one unit remains alive, that unit can move to the given tile where the battle took place. When more than one unit remains alive after the battle, all involved units bounce back to the positions they were located at before the battle began.
3. Even when a player chooses that a unit will not attack or otherwise be involved in a battle, it can still receive all actions and damages as though they were.
4. Every battle is performed in the following order:
5. merchant's special actions
6. monk's special actions
7. attacks

The following table shows the number of advantages/disadvantages that a monk can give to another player.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Advantages/disadvantages |
| Monk | 1 |
| Priest | 2 |
| Bishop | 3 |

When a soldier kills another unit, it will gain experience. The following table shows the stats of a soldier and the number of units it needs to kill to get to that level.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level | Attack | Defense | Units to kill |
| 1 | 2 | 2 | - |
| 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

**Overtaking villages**

You can overtake a village tile by moving your units onto it, which will declare a battle turn as described in the previous chapter. All units that move onto the village tile will participate in this battle, adding one additional unit; the village itself. When the defense of the village becomes less than or equal to 0 during a battle; it will have been overtaken. When multiple players are involved in the battle for said village, the player that dealt the most damage overtakes it.

When a town is overtaken with a mayor, governor or monarch on it, that head of state is removed from the game.

All structures that have villages of more than one player adjacent to it, check the amount of influence per player that is exercised on it and the player with the most influence will gain ownership of said structure. Check the table below to see battle and influence information per village.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Attack strength** | **Defense strength** | **Influence points** |
| Village | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Town | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| City | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Monarchy | 4 | 6 | 7 |