

GOD'S PLAYGROUND



God's Playground covers the history of Poland from the 1400s until the 1790s, from the wars against the Teutonic Knights to the partition of Poland.

The game is specifically designed for three players, no more, no less. Each player takes the role of one of the three major noble families of the time. The white player will represent the Radziwiłłowie, the blue player the Potockis, and the red player the Sapieha family. Players must cut a careful path between self-interest and the needs of Poland.

The game last for four turns and each turn is broken down into a number of phases. The major issue faced by Poland is generally the same each turn, which of their various enemies will attempt to invade. The northern borders are threatened initially by the Teutonic Knights, then the Swedes, and finally the Prussians. To the north east lies Russia, whose strength will grow enormously over time. South east lies the land of the Tatar, a perennial nuisance. You can employ the Cossacks to help defend this region, but they are not always reliable. The ever-dangerous Ottoman Empire lies beyond the Carpathian Mountains to the south. One can gain glory by battling the Musselman, and even ride to the rescue of Vienna. Finally, to the west lies the Habsburg Empire. For most of the game this empire is 'friendly' but only in the sense that they wish to dominate Poland politically rather than militarily. However, in the final turn the gloves come off and the Habsburgs become another aggressor.






































As head of one of the great families of Poland you have many minor nobles ready to do your bidding. At the start of each turn you decide how you will allocate your nobles. Through them you will raise armies, launch campaigns, influence government, attempt to control the king, and many other actions besides. They are your most valuable resource, and should be used wisely.

You will gain money from your estates, which can be expanded over time. The value of an estate will vary depending on how peaceful things have been recently, i.e. estates ravaged by Tatars will bring in less money than those that still have peasants on them. You can also increase the value of your estates by employing land managers.

Glory can be gained by battling your many enemies, even though the war may be lost. You can also gain prominence through conspicuous consumption, endowing Jesuit schools, and building cities. Finally, the estates you control at the end of the game will add to your renown.

At the end of the game the player who has earned the most points from the above activities will be the winner.

Components

						
4 red infantry	4 blue infantry	4 white infantry	4 Polish army infantry	16 red player discs	16 blue player discs	16 white player discs
						
3 red cavalry	3 blue cavalry	3 white cavalry	4 Polish army cavalry	2 Cossacks	2 City pieces	1 treaty marker
						
1 red artillery	1 blue artillery	1 white artillery	1 Polish army artillery	8 land manager pieces	3 game markers	5 estate value markers
						
12 red Noble blocks, 2 sets numbered 0 to 5	12 blue Noble blocks, 2 sets numbered 0 to 5	12 white Noble blocks, 2 sets numbered 0 to 5		25 black strength point cubes	25 Tatar strength point cubes	25 Russian strength point cubes
						
20 red Noble cubes	20 blue Noble cubes	20 white Noble cubes	12 King cubes			
						
4 dice	22 gold money pieces	22 silver money pieces		30 Ottoman strength point cubes	20 Habsburg strength point cubes	10 Habsburg influence pieces

The Board

Place the King's cubes and Polish army pieces here.

Enemy number one, which will be the Teutonic Knights in the first turn, the Swedes in the following two turns, and the Prussians in the final turn.

Enemy number two, the Russians.

Table shows how much each type of military unit costs to build and its combat effectiveness.

Victory point track

Once you know the size of the Polish army you place the available pieces here.

Danzig

Place land managers here.

Estates

Enemy number five, the Habsburgs.

The strength of the Polish army depends on how many nobles are allocated to it by each player.

The Sejm

These are the special actions that can be chosen during the two Special Action phases.

The Cossack box, used to hold the two Cossack pieces.

Enemy number three, the Tatars.

Regions. There are five Polish regions, Prussia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Little Poland, and Great Poland.

Enemy number four, the Ottomans.

Turn track

Shows basic strength of Polish army.

Estate value track

Example of enemy box

Strength of enemy in each turn.

VPs scored if you have the most cubes in this box.

Treaty space

Starting the Game

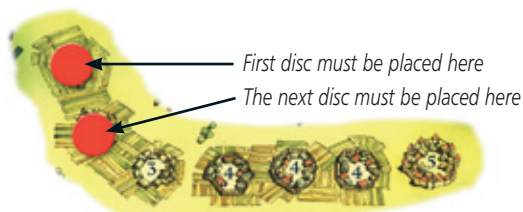
Each player should select a set of pieces. Each set will consist of



Place one estate value marker on the '3' space of each of the five estate value tracks.



Randomly determine who will be the first player using a die. Give that player a game marker to show he is the first player. Going clockwise from the first player, each player places one of their discs in one of the estate spaces. Each region contains a line of estates. The higher the value in the estate circle the closer it is to the borders of Poland, and thus at more risk in times of war. The first disc placed must be in the lowest value location, closest to the start of the estate line. If another player places a disc on the line then it must be in the next location along.



Pass the first player marker on to the next player and repeat the procedure. Then pass the marker on for a third time and repeat the procedure for the final time, so that each player places three discs in total. Discs may be placed on estates in different regions.

Place the money by the side of the board to form a bank. Gold pieces are worth five money and silver pieces are worth one money. Each player starts with ten money.

Place a game marker on the first space of the turn track, marked Jageillo. Place another game marker on the first space of the phase track, marked Income.

Place the two Cossack pieces in the Cossack box.



Place the King's cubes and Polish army units in the King's Pieces box.



Place the Land Manager pieces in the Land Managers box.



Place the enemy strength cubes and Habsburg influence pieces in a stock by the side of the map.

You are now ready to start playing the game.

Playing the Game

God's Playground lasts for four turns, each of which represents a varying period of time. The first turn goes from 1386 to 1587. The second turn goes from 1587 to 1674. The third turn goes from 1674 to 1697, and the final turn goes from 1697 to 1795.

Each turn is made up of fifteen separate phases. Each phase must be completed before the next one is embarked on.

The sequence of phases is:

1. **Income**
2. **Nobles**
3. **Elect the King**
4. **Polish army**
5. **Events**
6. **Elections**
7. **Build estates**
8. **Special actions – two rounds**
9. **Buy armies**
10. **Campaigns**
11. **Enemies attack**
12. **Poland fights back**
13. **Enemies expand**
14. **Estates**
15. **Victory points**
16. **End of turn**

Phase one: Income

Each player collects an amount of money from the bank. The amount they collect is the total of the value of their estates plus any land managers they have. Each estate disc is worth an amount equal to the estate value of the region, as indicated on the estate value track in that region.



A land manager adds two to the amount of money taken for the estate that it is stacked with.

The minimum amount of money that can be collected is ten money. If a player is due to collect less than this then he takes ten money instead.



EXAMPLE: If Lithuania had an estate value of three then red would collect eight money; six for the two estates and another two for the land manager. White and blue take three each.

During the game the estate value track will be adjusted depending on what events occur. Periods of peace will result in an increase of estate values. Invasions that are beaten back will result in no change, while periods of enemy occupation will result in the reduction of estate values.

Phase two: Nobles

As leader of one of the great families of Poland you have influence over many lesser nobles. Around ten percent of the population of Poland claimed noble status, even though some of those nobles were no richer than a common peasant.

The nobles that you have influence over are represented by cubes. During this phase you will decide how many nobles you wish to place in each region. This will determine how many actions you can carry out in each region.

In the first turn you have twelve noble blocks at your disposal. You will use six of these in the first turn. In the second turn you will use the remaining six blocks. For the third turn you will have the use of all twelve blocks again, while in the fourth turn you will only have the remaining six blocks not used in the third turn.



Poland is divided into five regions, Prussia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Little Poland, and Great Poland. During this phase you must place one of your noble blocks face down in each of the five regions. You cannot place more than one block in a region. You must also place one noble block face down in the Polish Army box. The total number of blocks that you must place on the board is exactly six, no more, no less. Players should place blocks at the same time. As they are placed face down you will be unaware of what values other players are placing on the board.

After all players have placed blocks they should be flipped face up. The value of the block you place in an area tells you how many noble cubes you must place there. You have twenty noble cubes in your stock, so it is possible to exhaust your supply. If you do not have enough cubes to place on the board then you decide which regions you will place a reduced number in. If more than one player has fewer cubes than required then they decide how to place their cubes in player order.

The block each player places in the Polish Army box will determine who has influence over the king and the size of the Polish army. You do not place noble cubes in the Polish Army box.



EXAMPLE: Here we can see the blocks placed by the three players. Once blocks are revealed each player places a number of noble cubes equal to the value of their block, as shown.

Phase three: Electing the King

Poland was unusual for this period in time for not having a hereditary crown. Instead the king was elected by the Polish nobility.

Each player will have placed one noble block in the Polish Army box. The player who placed the highest value block is regarded as having the most influence with the new king. That player takes the first player marker. If there is a tie between players then each tied player makes a bid in the fist with money. Each tied player secretly places an amount of money in their fist, which could be nothing. Players then reveal the amount they have bid. The highest bid takes the first player marker. All bids, winning and losing ones, are paid into the bank. If there is a further tie then players repeat the process until one player wins, paying all bids into the bank. In the unlikely circumstances that neither player is able to make a bid, then the player who last had the first player marker retains it.

Phase four: The Polish army

The Polish army will have a base composition determined by the present turn, as shown in the corresponding turn box, i.e. in the first turn the army will have a base size of two infantry and two cavalry units.

To this base size should be added a number of units, determined by the total value of all noble blocks placed in the Polish Army box. The total on the three blocks determines which column you should look at on the Polish Army Size table, found in the bottom left hand corner of the board. The correct column will tell you how many additional infantry, cavalry, and artillery units should be placed in the Polish Army box. Note that no artillery can be added to the Polish Army in the first turn.



EXAMPLE: Here we can see that red and blue have placed a '3' noble block each, while white has placed a '2'. Red and blue have to break their tie by bidding in the fist. Red is the higher bidder and takes the first player marker.

The total value of the blocks placed here is eight. By looking on the Polish Army Size table we can see that this means two infantry and one cavalry are placed in the Polish Army box. As it is the first turn an additional two cavalry and two infantry are placed. Note that no artillery piece is placed as it is the first turn and artillery cannot be used in the game until the second turn onwards.

Phase five: Events

Poland, situated in central Europe, was never short of potential enemies. At various times she would have to deal with the Teutonic Knights of Prussia, invading Swedes, marauding hordes of Tatars, border disputes with the Ottoman Empire, and a final reckoning with Russia.

Each region has its own 'enemy'. The strength of each enemy will vary from turn to turn. This basic strength may be increased, according to the roll of the dice.

The first player should roll four dice. Read each die separately and match with enemy boxes with the same value. Each die matched to an enemy box increases the strength of that enemy by one point, place a strength cube of the correct colour in the enemy box accordingly. Any rolls of '6' result in no additional cubes being placed.



EXAMPLE: The first player rolls a '2', another '2', a '4' and a '6'. This means that two green strength cubes should be placed in the Russia enemy box, and an orange strength cube in the Ottoman Empire. The '6' has no effect.

If it is the fourth turn and the Habsburg Empire has been taken over by the Ottomans, i.e. there are Ottoman strength points in the Habsburg area, then any '5's will result in Ottoman strength points being placed in the Habsburg area.

Phase six: Elections

For its time Poland had a well developed democracy. Each region would send a number of nobles to represent them in the country's government, known as the Sejm.

Going clockwise from Prussia determine which player wins the election in each of the five regions. The player with the single highest number of noble cubes in the region wins the election. He removes one of his noble cubes and places one of his discs in the circle in the Sejm that is named for the region.

If there is a tie in a region then nobody wins and no disc is placed in the Sejm.

A player is forced to win an election, even if he does not wish to.



EXAMPLE: The first election was held in Prussia and was won by white. The second election is held in Lithuania. Red is the clear winner. He removes one of his noble cubes and places one of his discs in the Sejm. If there had been a tie here then no player would have placed a disc in the Sejm.

Phase seven: Build estates

The basis of a noble family's power is land. Poland's borders were not fixed as they are today and land to the east would be settled by Poles, who would be subservient to one of the major noble families.

Going clockwise from the first player each player may choose to place one of his discs in an empty estate space. As with the initial placement the space filled must be the one closest to the start of the estate line. The first estate built requires you to remove one noble cube from the region in which you build the estate.

After all players have had the opportunity to build one estate the procedure is repeated, but this time you must remove two noble cubes from the region in which you wish to build an estate. This procedure is repeated, with each estate costing two noble cubes to place, until all players have passed on the opportunity. Once you decide not to build an estate you cannot then choose to do so in a later round of building.

You may build an estate in a region that contains one or more enemy strength points.

All noble cubes that are removed should be returned to the owner's stock.



EXAMPLE: In the first turn red is the first player. Red removes one cube and places a disc on the lowest available estate space in the Ukraine. White is next and builds an estate in a different region. Blue expends a cube to place an estate in the Ukraine. Red and white decide that they do not wish to place any more estate discs. Blue removes two more cubes from the Ukraine and builds another estate. Blue could expend his last two noble cubes in the Ukraine to build a third estate. However, it would be a risky decision on his part as he would have no cubes to create a defensive army and would be at the mercy of red and white to defend his estates. Alternatively, he could take a chance on making a treaty with the Tatars, but that cannot be guaranteed as red may use that option somewhere else.

Phase eight: Special actions

Going clockwise from the first player, each player may choose to perform one of the special actions available. This phase is then repeated so that players have the opportunity to perform two special actions in all. Under normal circumstances the action you choose in the first round has no effect on the action you choose in the second round. The only exceptions are those actions that have a limitation of use imposed on them, which are diplomacy and new city.

The special actions are:

Place land manager

Nobles would employ land managers to run their estates, increasing the amount of money they made from them. Very often these managers were drawn from the Jewish communities that had settled in Poland.

By removing one noble cube from a region you can take one land manager piece from the Land Manager box and place it under one of your estate discs, which must be in the same region that you removed the cube from.

You choose which estate disc within the region you wish to place the Land Manager piece under. An estate disc can only have one land manager piece placed under it.

A land manager piece will increase the income from the estate by two money.

Danzig

Danzig was by far the most important port in Poland, and much of Poland's grain flowed through it, to be shipped to distant markets.

By removing one noble cube from the Prussia region you can immediately take an amount of money from the bank equal to twice the estate value of the region. You do not have to have an estate in the region to be able to do this.

Diplomacy

With so many potential enemies the agreement of a diplomatic treaty with one of them would secure at least one of Poland's border. However, not all treaties are honoured!

To make a treaty with an enemy you must remove one noble cube from the region connected with that enemy, along with one of your discs from the Sejm. You must also pay an amount of money equal to the roll of one die plus two.

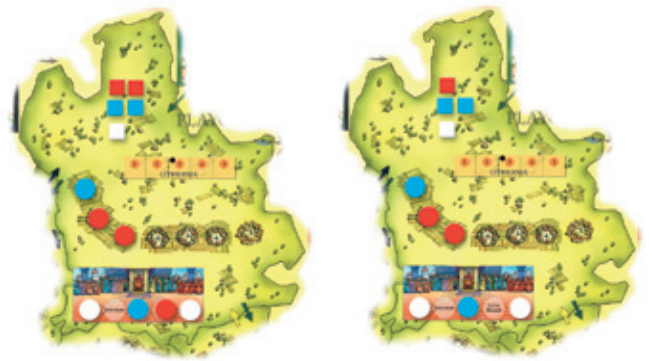
Only one treaty may be made each turn, which is why there is only one treaty marker in the game. To show a treaty has been made with an enemy place the treaty marker in the corresponding 'Treaty' space in the enemy box.



You cannot launch a campaign against an enemy that a treaty has been made with. However, you can attack enemy strength points that exist in a Polish region, even if there is a treaty with the enemy that those strength points belong to.

No treaty can be made with Ottoman Empire at any point in the game.

No treaty can be made with the Habsburg Empire in the first three turns. It is possible to make a treaty in the fourth turn, as long as the Habsburg box is not occupied by Ottoman strength cubes.



EXAMPLE: During the first turn the red player decides to make a treaty with Russia. One red disc must be removed from the Sejm and one red cube from the Lithuania region. Red rolls a die, the result of which is '5'. He must pay seven money into the bank. Note that the disc he removes from the Sejm does not have to be one that was elected from Lithuania.

Once you have decided to make a treaty you cannot change your mind, you must pay the amount indicated by the die roll.

A treaty will be broken if in the 'Enemies Attack' phase the number of the enemy that the treaty has been made with comes up twice or more on the dice. E.g. Following on from the above example, if two or more '2's came up on the four dice rolled then the treaty with Russia would be broken.

A treaty is always terminated at the end of the turn.

Move cubes

You may pick up one or two of your cubes from any region/regions and place them in any other region/regions of your choice. There is no cube cost to perform this action.

Liberum veto

Poland was unique within Europe in having a form of democracy that placed an inordinate amount of power with the nobility. The most extreme example of this power was the law that stated that any legislation must be agreed by all to be passed. A single dissenting voice was enough to block a new law or the country's budget. At first the right of veto was used rarely, however, it was not long before various enemy powers realised that they could paralyze the Polish government for no more than the price of a corrupt noble willing to use the veto.

By removing one of your cubes, it may be from any region, you may remove all of the player discs, including your own, from the Sejm. The discs are returned to the owing players.

This is a powerful action that will make Poland much weaker. It should only be used when you don't give a damn what happens to the Polish nation.

Confederation

Another interesting Polish law was that of the right of confederation, which allowed a noble to resort to violence to settle a dispute. Given that this right extended to disputes with the king it amounted to the legalisation of rebellion.

If you remove two cubes from a region you can remove one player's estate disc and replace it with one of your own. The disc you replace must be in the same region that you removed the cubes from.

The player that you target with this action must have fewer cubes in the region than you (before you have to remove any of yours).

You can only select this action if you have the fewest number of victory

points recorded on the Victory Point track. If there is a tied position for last place on the Victory Point track then this action cannot be selected. This action can only be selected in the third and fourth turns.

You must select the lowest value estate available. You cannot select an estate with a city marker on it. If there is a land manager on the estate that you select then this piece is removed and returned to the available stock.



EXAMPLE: It is the fourth turn. The blue player is in last place on the Victory Point track. He has five cubes in Lithuania. Red has four cubes and white has six cubes. By removing two cubes the blue player can remove one red estate disc and replace it with a blue one. He cannot target the white player as he has more cubes in the region.

Jesuit Schools

Until the arrival of the Swedish Sigismund Vasa on the throne in 1587 Poland was not a particularly religious nation. The general feeling was that a person's religion was their own business, leading to a degree of religious toleration unheard of in the rest of Europe. Sigismund, being a devout Catholic, was appalled by this situation and set about changing the nation through the introduction of Jesuit schools.

If you select this action then for each region that you remove one of your cubes from and pay two money, you earn one victory point. Thus if you removed three cubes from three different regions and paid six money you would score three victory points. If you are able to remove one cube from each of the five regions, as well as paying ten money, then you score a bonus of two victory points, making a total of seven victory points in all.

This action can only be selected from the second turn onwards.

Build new city

With their massive wealth and power the major families of Poland were able to create new cities at will.

By removing two cubes from a region you may place a city marker under one of your estate discs in that region. This will triple the victory point value of the estate at the end of the game.

You can only select this action from the third turn onwards.

Only one city can be built in each turn, which means a maximum of two can be built in the whole game.

Phase nine: Buy armies

Each family would have its own private army, with some being powerful enough to wage their own wars.

In this phase players will be able to buy and place armies on the board. In player order each player has the opportunity to buy a number of army units and place them in one region. This procedure is repeated until players have bought as many armies as they wish. Once a player has passed on this opportunity he cannot build any more armies in the present turn.

To be able to place one or more army units in a region you must remove one noble cube from that region. You can now place as many army units as you wish in that region.

There are four types of unit that can be purchased by a player. Each player has four infantry units which he can place. Each infantry unit costs two money. There are three cavalry pieces available to each player, the cost to place one being four money. Each player also has one artillery piece. This can only be purchased from the second turn onwards and costs six money.

There are also two Cossack units which are available to be purchased and placed. They must be placed in the Ukraine. They can be placed along with a player's own units in the same Buy Army action. One Cossack unit costs two money to buy. Once a Cossack unit is placed in the Ukraine it is available to be used by any player who also has one or more of his own army units in the same region. Any Cossack units that are not purchased and placed must be placed in the Tatar box, which means they will be fighting against Poland.

There is no upper limit to the number of army units that can be placed in a region. The only limit that a player has placed on him is the total number of units available to him and the amount of money he has to spend.

All army units will be removed from the board at the end of the turn, they do not carry over between turns.

If there are enemy strength points in the same region that you are placing army units then you halve the cost of those units, including the cost of Cossacks.



EXAMPLE: Blue removes a cube from the Ukraine and buys one infantry and two cavalry for a cost of ten money. White also removes a cube from the Ukraine and buys two infantry, one cavalry, and two Cossacks for twelve money. Red removes one cube from Little Poland and buys three infantry, two cavalry, and one artillery. As there is an Ottoman strength cube in the area the cost is halved, to ten money in all.

Phase ten: Campaigns

Players now have the opportunity to wage war against their enemies. By doing so they may stop some of those enemies from invading Poland. Even if they do not stop an invasion any minor victory will be sung about for years to come, earning glory for the family that led the army on the field of battle.

The campaign phase consists of an indeterminate number of rounds of play. In each round of play each player will have the opportunity to launch one campaign against an enemy country. The phase will end when all players no longer wish to perform further campaigns. If a player decides to pass rather than launch a campaign then he cannot carry out any more campaigns in the present phase.

The order of play will be clockwise from the first player. To launch a campaign against an enemy you must remove one cube from the region where the campaign will start from. That region must be the one connected to the enemy you wish to attack, i.e. if you wish to attack Russia then you would have to remove a cube from Lithuania. The cube you remove is returned to your stock.

To resolve the effect of a campaign you roll one die for each infantry and cavalry unit you have in the region that you have attacked from. To score a hit with an infantry unit you must roll '5' or more. To score a hit with a cavalry unit you must roll '4' or more. If you have an artillery unit in the region then you add one to each die rolled. For each hit you place one of your noble cubes in the enemy box. You take the cube from your own stock, not those already on the map.

If you roll a '1' then the unit that you were rolling for is eliminated. Note that this result stands even if you have an artillery unit in the region. An eliminated Cossack unit is returned to the Cossack box.

If there are Cossack units in the region you are attacking from then as long as you have at least one infantry or cavalry unit there, then you may use the Cossack units in your attack. You apply the artillery modifier if possible. Each hit by a Cossack unit results in one of your noble cubes being placed in the enemy area. Note that the Cossacks can only attack the Tatars.

If you wish you can force the Polish army to join in with your attack. You must remove one of your discs from the Sejm, i.e. you require political influence to convince the army to follow you. The Polish army fights in the same way as your own army except that each hit by this army results in one of the King's cubes being placed in the enemy area. One disc from the Sejm allows the Polish army to join in with one campaign, it does not mean that the army will fight for you for the rest of the Campaign phase.

You cannot attack the Habsburg Empire in the first three turns. The Empire is regarded as being a fellow Christian nation, and not one you would openly go to war with, even though it is trying to subvert your country by political means. However, in the last turn the gloves are off and war is allowed.

There are two reasons why you would wish to campaign against an enemy. If you have the most cubes in an enemy box then you will score a number of victory points, which varies depending on the enemy. Each cube placed in the enemy box also reduces the strength of that enemy when they come to attack. If the total number of cubes equals or exceeds the enemy's strength then they will not attack.

If there are enemy strength points in the region that you are campaigning from then you must attack those strength points first. Each hit scored results in one enemy strength point being removed from the region. If you remove all of the enemy strength points from the region then any further hits will result in you placing noble cubes in the enemy area, as described above. You can attack enemy strength points in a region even if there is a treaty with that enemy.



EXAMPLE: Blue removes a cube from the Ukraine and attacks the Tatars. He manages to hit with one of his own units and with one of the Cossack units. He places two of his cubes in the Tatar area. White removes a cube and attacks the Tatars as well. He manages one hit with his own units. He misses with both Cossacks and also rolls a '1' for one of them, resulting in its elimination. Red removes one cube from Little Poland and attacks the Ottoman Empire. As he has an artillery unit in the region he adds one to each die roll. He manages to score three hits. The first hit removes the Ottoman strength point already in Little Poland. The remaining two hits results in red placing two of his cubes in the Ottoman area. He also rolled a '1' for one of his infantry units, which results in its elimination, even with the +1 modifier for the artillery.



Blue and white attack again, removing a cube each. Blue scores one more hit, white another two. Neither player can launch any more campaigns from this region. Red attacks the Ottomans again and manages two hits, but also loses an infantry and a cavalry.



Red decides to launch one final attack, using his last cube. He manages to score one more hit.

Phase eleven: Enemies attack

Poland's position in mainland Europe meant that it did not lack for potential enemies. During the period covered by this game there were no long periods of peace when Poland could rest easy, there was always some enemy power preparing to invade or raid.

In this phase dice will be rolled which will potentially increase the strength of the five enemy powers. These enemies may then invade, depending on circumstances.

The first player should roll four dice. These will lead to enemy strength cubes being placed in enemy areas in the same way as handled in the Events phase. However, there are two exceptions that can only occur in this phase, which are:

- a) if two or more of the dice show a number matching that of an enemy that a treaty was agreed with then no additional cubes are placed in that enemy's box BUT the treaty marker should be removed from the enemy's treaty space,
- b) if it is the second turn then each die showing a '6' results in one Cossack unit rebelling. The Cossack unit should be taken from the Ukraine region if possible and placed in the Tatar box. If there are no Cossack units in the Ukraine then one should be taken from the Cossack box and placed in the Tatar box. The maximum number of Cossack units that can rebel is two, so any surplus '6's have no effect.

Now, going in order from the lowest numbered enemy to the highest one, you resolve the effect of each enemy attack.

An enemy will not attack if there is a treaty marker in its box or if the total number of noble cubes in its box equal or exceeds its strength.

An enemy will attack if its strength is greater than the total number of Polish cubes placed in its box. An enemy's strength is equal to the value indicated in the Strength row. This row consists of four boxes, each containing a value. The first space shows the enemy strength for the first turn, the second space for the second turn, and so on. Add one to this value for each enemy strength cube in the area, i.e. those that were placed during the Events phase and this phase. Each Cossack unit in the Tatar box increases the Tatar strength by one.

The difference between the enemy's strength and the number of Polish cubes in the enemy box is the number of enemy strength points that should be placed in the Polish region.

The first thing that must occur when enemy strength points are placed in a region is that any Habsburg political pieces in that region must be removed immediately and returned to the stock. Note that even the placing of Habsburg strength points will result in the removal of Habsburg political pieces.

After that any and all Polish army units in the region just invaded automatically roll one die each to see if they reduce the strength of the enemy. Use the same combat rules as explained in the Campaign phase section. Each hit results in the enemy's strength being reduced by one cube. Enemy cubes removed from the board should be placed back in the available stock. Note that a player cannot refuse to roll for any of his defending army units

Note that the enemy strength points placed in a region will combine with any strength points of the same enemy already present there. The points already present may be removed as a result of the defensive actions of any Polish armies in the region.

If there are any enemy strength points of a different colour then the points will cancel each other out, one for one. Note that this occurs after defending armies have made their die rolls. The defending armies will first remove strength points from the enemy that is in the process of invading. Any surplus hits will go against the already present enemy strength points.

The Habsburgs

For the first three turns the Habsburg attacks are handled in a different manner. The Habsburg Empire is not trying to invade militarily but gain political influence.

The total number of Habsburg political pieces in the Habsburg area determines how many noble cubes must be removed from Great Poland. Each Habsburg piece results in one noble cube being removed, i.e. they cancel each other out. The order in which noble cubes must be removed is the same as the order of play. The first player would remove one cube, then the next player, and so on, until the number of cubes removed matches the number of Habsburg pieces. For each cube removed this way one of the Habsburg pieces is returned to the stock, i.e. one Habsburg piece cancels out one noble cube.

Any remaining Habsburg pieces should be placed in Great Poland.

The Ottoman Empire

Poland was known as the bulwark of the Christian world. It held back the ravaging hordes of Tatars and the vast armies of the Ottoman Empire. In 1683 King Sobieski rode to the rescue of Vienna, finally halting the advance of the 'Musselmen' into mainland Europe.

In the third turn the Ottomans will not attack Little Poland. They will instead advance on the Habsburg Empire. If the total Ottoman strength in the Ottoman enemy box is greater than the total number of Polish noble cubes then place a number of Ottoman strength points in the Habsburg box equal to the difference between the two totals. Note that you can still attack the Ottomans during the Campaign phase in an attempt to stop or weaken them. If any Ottoman strength points are placed in the Habsburg box then all Habsburg influence pieces are removed from the box immediately.

The only way to remove these Ottoman cubes is to attack them in the next phase. The Ottomans may then expand from here into Great Poland if they have sufficient strength.

In the fourth turn the Ottoman Empire's strength will either be three or twelve, depending on whether they have any strength points in the Habsburg box. If they do not then their strength is three. If they do then their strength is twelve in the Ottoman Empire and ten in the Habsburg Empire (to which will be added the two Ottoman strength points already in that box that were required to pacify the Habsburgs – see the Enemies Expand rules for more details on this). Note that in the fourth turn if the Ottoman's still occupy the Habsburg box they are regarded as being 'Habsburgs', i.e. purple arrows should be considered orange ones.

Once all five enemies have had their attacks resolved the game moves on to the next phase.



EXAMPLE ONE: It is the second turn of the game. The first player rolls four dice, with the results being '1', '3', '5', and '6'. This means one strength point is placed in the Prussia enemy box, one in the Tatar box, and an influence piece in the Habsburg box. As it is the second turn the '6' results in one Cossack unit switching to the Tatar side. Note that the 'live' Cossack unit switches sides.

The total Tatar strength is nine, (a base strength of seven plus one cube added during the turn, plus one Cossack). The total number of Polish cubes in the box is six, which leaves a difference of three in favour of the Tatars.



As a result three Tatar strength points are placed in the Ukraine. The blue and white army units roll once each to see if they reduce this invasion strength. One hit is scored, leaving two Tatar strength points in the region. In Little Poland the Ottoman strength is matched by the number of Polish cubes, which means no invasion takes place.



EXAMPLE TWO: Here we have an example of how the Habsburg influence pieces 'attack'. Four pieces were placed in the Habsburg area at the start of the turn. One extra was placed in the 'Enemies Attack' phase, making a total of five. This means that five Polish cubes have to be removed from Great Poland. The order of play is blue-white-red. One cube of each colour is removed in this order until five cubes have been removed, equal to the number of Habsburg influence pieces.



For each noble cube removed a Habsburg influence piece is also removed. As there are more noble cubes than Habsburg pieces the Habsburgs will fail to enter Great Poland.



EXAMPLE THREE: It is the third turn. Rather than invading Little Poland the Ottomans will attack the Habsburg Empire. Note that red and blue have attacked the Ottomans during the turn, and the cubes they have placed in the Ottoman box will affect the strength of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans will attack the Habsburgs with a final strength of eight, (base of twelve, plus one extra strength point, minus the five Polish cubes).



The six Habsburg influence pieces are immediately removed from the box. Eight Ottoman strength points are placed in the Habsburg box. This part of the invasion is now complete.

Phase twelve: Poland fights back

Ultimately it was the King, leading the Polish army, who was the final protector of the Polish nation. In times of crisis the army would be called on to throw back the enemy hordes.

In this phase players will have the opportunity to use the Polish army to attack enemy invaders. This will require influence with the Polish government.

The first player is regarded as having the most influence with the King and is therefore the first to have the option of using the Polish army. He may select a region containing enemy strength cubes and attack them with the Polish army. Combat is handled in exactly the same way as described in the Campaign phase, including losses for rolling '1's. Each hit scored by the Polish army results in the enemy's strength being reduced by one point, i.e. a strength cube should be removed from the region and returned to the stock.

After the first player has had the option to attack; the remaining players, in player order, may remove one of their discs from the Sejm and use the Polish army to attack in a region of their choice, using the same rules as above. Note that this means that the maximum number of times that a player can use the Polish army is equal to the number of discs he has in the Sejm, unless he is the first player, in which case he has one extra use of the army.

Any player can use the Polish army to attack into the Habsburg area if there are Ottoman cubes in it, i.e. the King is riding to relieve the siege of Vienna.

A region may be attacked into more than once. If all of the enemy strength points in a region are removed any surplus hits are wasted. The Polish army attacks on its own, not along with any player army units in the region.

This phase ends when all players have carried out as many attacks as they wish to, or are able to. If a player chooses not to use the Polish army then he cannot make any more attacks in this phase.

The Polish army cannot be used to attack Habsburg influence pieces.



EXAMPLE: Continuing from example one: the first player, who is blue, decides to use the Polish army to counter-attack in the Ukraine. One hit is scored, which removes one Tatar strength point. He does not expend a disc from the Sejm as he is the first player. The white player then removes a disc from the Sejm to allow him to use the Polish army to attack again, which results in the final Tatar strength point being removed. Any surplus hits are wasted, they do not result in any cubes being placed in the Tatar area.



Continuing from example three. The first player uses his free attack to attack the Ottomans in the Habsburg area. He then removes one of his discs from the Sejm to allow him to attack a second time. He manages to score four hits in all, resulting in the removal of four Ottoman strength points.

Phase thirteen: Enemies expand

In this phase there is the possibility for the invaders to spread into adjacent regions.

The order of expansion will go from the lowest numbered enemy to the highest one, i.e. start with any invaders in Prussia and end with invaders in Great Poland.

If the number of enemy strength points in a region exceeds the total number of player noble cubes in the same region then that enemy will expand into adjacent regions. The regions that will be expanded into are shown by arrows that match the colour of the enemy. The number of enemy strength cubes that should be placed in each such region is equal to the excess between the number of enemy strength points in the original region and any remaining player noble cubes. These enemy strength points should be taken from the cube stock, not the cubes already present in the region, i.e. the total enemy strength increases when it expands.

Note that player noble cubes are not eliminated by an enemy invasion, they remain in place.

The rules governing these expansions are the same as those dealing with initial enemy attacks, as described in the Enemies Attack section.

The Habsburg influence pieces will also expand in this manner. Habsburg influence pieces are automatically eliminated if they come into contact with enemy strength cubes, whether they be Ottoman or another enemy. When Habsburg influence pieces expand they will result in the loss of Polish cubes, in the same manner as described previously.

If the Ottomans still have strength points in the Habsburg area then they will expand into Great Poland. It is assumed that there are two noble cubes in the Habsburg area so that the number of strength points placed in Great Poland will be the present Ottoman strength less two.

An enemy cannot expand into a region that it already has strength points in.

This phase ends when all expansions have been resolved.



EXAMPLE 1: The Swedes have invaded Prussia in the second turn. The difference between the Swedish strength and the Polish cubes in the region is four.



EXAMPLE 2: Continuing from example one in the 'Poland fights back' phase. The Ottomans have four strength points left in the Habsburg box. Two strength points must remain in the Empire, as if there were two Habsburg cubes there. Two strength points are then placed in Great Poland.



The result is that four Swedish strength cubes are placed in each adjacent region, which are Lithuania and Great Poland. The two blue army units in Lithuania roll one die each to see if they hit any of the invading Swedes. They manage one hit. Lithuania is then invaded by three strength points of Russians. The two blue units roll again and manage to score one hit, reducing the strength to two.



The Russians and the Swedes now cancel each other out. All of the Russian strength points are removed, while only one Swedish strength point remains.

Phase fourteen: Estates

Players may lose estates in regions containing enemy strength points. Estate values will also change depending on whether there has been a period of peace or war.

If there are enemy strength points in a region then a number of player estate discs must be removed. The number to be removed is equal to the enemy's strength minus the total number of player noble cubes in the region. One estate is always removed, even if there are more noble cubes than enemy strength points.

Estate discs are removed from the highest value locations first, going in order down to the lowest value locations.

If the region was at peace for the turn then the estate value increases by one. At peace means that no enemy strength points were placed in the region at any point during the turn. If a region started the turn with enemy strength points in it which were then eliminated then, as long as no new enemy points are placed in the region, it is regarded as being at peace, thus increasing its estate value by one.

If the region was invaded but all of the enemy strength points were eventually eliminated then the estate value remains the same. If the region still contains enemy strength points then the value should be reduced by one.

A region's estate value can never exceed five nor go below one.

The following rules concerning the Habsburgs and Great Poland only come into effect in the first three turns, and only if the Ottomans have not invaded the Habsburg Empire. Otherwise the rules detailed above take precedence.

Habsburg influence pieces have the same effect as enemy strength points for determining the loss of player estates, i.e. a number of estates equal to the number of Habsburg influence pieces must be removed.

For the estate value of Great Poland to increase by one there has to be at least two player noble cubes in the region. If there are one or more Habsburg influence pieces in the region then the value is reduced by one. If neither condition applies then the value remains the same.



EXAMPLE: Following on from the Swedish invasion: as there is a difference of three in Prussia three estate discs are removed. In Lithuania there are more Polish noble cubes than Swedish strength points, so only one estate disc is removed. In Great Poland the difference is one, which results in one estate disc being removed.



The land value in each of these three regions will go down by one. The Ukraine was invaded but successfully repelled the Tatars, so its estate value stays the same. Little Poland was not invaded so its estate value goes up by one.

Phase fifteen: Victory points

Players now score victory points. The player who has the most noble cubes in an enemy area scores a number of victory points as indicated in that area. In the case of a tie then the points are split evenly, with any fractions being lost. If the King has the most cubes in the area then nobody scores any points. If the King is in a tie with any other player then the points are split as described above and the King's share of the points are effectively lost.



EXAMPLE: Here red would score five victory points for having the most cubes in the Ottoman Empire, while blue and white score one victory point each, having tied in the Tatar area. Note that blue and white still score victory points even though they did not stop the Tatars invading.

Each player scores two victory points for each disc they have in the Sejm.

Polish nobles were renowned for their conspicuous consumption. Money was spent on expensive clothes and fabulous banquets to impress ones fellow nobles rather than invested agriculture or industry. Players must place back in the bank each lot of five money they have in hand. For each lot they hand back in they earn one victory point. Note that this will mean that four money is the most that you can retain between turns.

Victory points are recorded on the Victory Point track using the player discs.

Phase sixteen: End of turn

Remove all noble cubes from each enemy box to the owning players.

Remove all discs from the Sejm and return to the owning players.

Remove all enemy strength points from each enemy box, i.e. enemy strength points do not carry over between turns.

Remove all army units and return to the owning player. Army units do not carry over between turns. Remove all army units from the Polish Army box and place back in the King's box.

Remove the treaty marker and return to the stock if it is in play.

Reduce the enemy strength in each Polish region so that it is the same as the total number of player noble cubes there.

Players must leave noble cubes in the regions they are presently placed in. They carry over between turns.

If it is the end of the second turn then players reclaim all twelve of their noble blocks.

Move the turn marker to the next space on the turn track. You are now ready to start a new turn.



EXAMPLE: Following on from the Swedish invasion. The Swedish strength in Prussia is reduced to one, to match the one white Polish cube. The strength in Great Poland is reduced to three, while that in Lithuania remains unchanged.

Prussia

The Prussian region is unusual in that the enemy it faces changes as the game progresses. In the first turn the enemy will be the Teutonic Knights, in the second and third turns it will be the Swedes, and in the final turn it will be the Prussians. To all intents and purposes these three entities should be treated as the same enemy, i.e. just think of them as the 'black' enemy. That means that any black strength points that successfully invade Poland in the first turn can be added to by further invasions in following turns, even though in reality one invader would be the Teutonic Knights and the following one might be the Swedes.

Ending the Game

The game will end at the end of the fourth turn. Players will score additional victory points for the estates they have on the board. Each estate is worth a number of victory points equal to the number marked in the estate circle. If the estate also contains a city piece then this value is multiplied by three. Land managers do not increase the victory point value of any estate.



EXAMPLE: The estate discs have been moved to one side so that the victory point values can be seen. The red player scores nine victory points for his first estate, as he also has a new city there, and four victory points for his second estate, making a total of thirteen victory points. The blue player scores ten victory points and the white player scores four victory points.

Winning the Game

The player with the highest victory point total is the winner of the game. In the case of a tie the player with the highest number of noble cubes remaining on the board is the winner. If there is still a tie then the player with the most money in hand is the winner. If there is still a tie then the tied player closest to the 1st player in play order is the winner.

Designer Notes

It may not come as a surprise to those people who know me personally but the origins of significant number of my games are linked to time spent in the pub. Und Tschüss was designed on the way to the pub, the Age of Steam Ireland expansion was designed in a pub, much of my play testing takes place in a pub, and God's Playground can trace its genesis to a regular Thursday night pub group. Nick Sekunda, an expert on ancient Macedonia and also of Polish descent, asked if I could design a game about Poland. I thought there might be some potential for a game that would tie in with a film about 17th century Poland, 'With Fire and Sword' that was in production at the time. I did some research and came up with a few ideas but the project fell through and Nick moved to Poland to take up a university post. I mentioned the possibility of a game on Poland to a German friend of mine and he assured me that no game on such a theme would ever sell in Germany. That pretty much ended the work on the game, until I was looking around for themes for the three-player Treefrog Line games. I figured that even if no German bought the game that there would be enough Poles in New York to assure the sale of 1500 copies.

If you have already read the rules then you will be aware that this is not a simple game. It draws its influences from Republic of Rome and is by far the most 'experiential' game I have designed to date. By that I mean that stuff happens to you and you just have to live with it. I'm sure that many people will be turned off by its complexity and randomness. However, I feel I have achieved my aim of packing a little of the history of Poland into a board game. If you feel like everything is going wrong and that you are fighting a losing battle then you are experiencing what Poland had to go through.

Some of you may be wondering about the title. It is taken from probably the best English language history of Poland, written by Norman Davies. The phrase apparently occurs in various places in Polish literature and can be traced back to the sixteenth century. If you wish to know more about the history of Poland then Mr Davies' two-volume set is an excellent place to start, just don't expect a happy ending.

My only tips on playing the game would be to say that it pays for players to work together for at least the first turn, in an attempt to keep Poland's borders intact. Don't forget diplomacy, it is very difficult to defend all five borders at once. If you have any questions then either check out Boardgamegeek or email me at martin@warfroggames.com.

Credits

Game designed by Martin Wallace

All illustrations by Peter Dennis

Graphic design by Solid Colour

Playtested by Andy Ogden, Simon Bracegirdle, Richard Spilsbury, Don Oddy, Michael Richardson, Chris Boote, Alan McClennahan and many kind people at Leiria Con, Stabcon, Sorcon, and Baycon.

Thanks to Julia Wallace, James Hamilton, and Nick Sekunda.

You can check out the latest Warfrog games at: www.warfroggames.com

You can contact Warfrog at: martin@warfroggames.com

The rules to 'God's playground' are © Warfrog 2009.

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Player Aid Sheet

Turn sequence

1 Income

Collect money for each estate according to estate value, plus two for each land manager. Minimum income is ten money.

2 Nobles

Place one noble block in each region and one in the Polish Army box, face down. Reveal and place cubes equal to values on blocks.

3 Elect the King

Player with highest value block in Polish Army box takes the first player marker. Blind bid to break ties.

4 Polish army

Place Polish army pieces equal to base number as shown on turn order track plus a number indicated by the Polish Army Size table.

5 Events

Roll four dice. Place strength cubes in enemy boxes according to dice rolled. '6' has no effect.

6 Elections

Player with most cubes in a region removes one cube and places one disc in the Sejm. No disc placed if tied.

7 Build estates

Place discs in Estate spaces in player order. First disc costs one noble cube. Each subsequent disc costs two noble cubes.

8 Special actions

In player order each player performs one special action. Now repeat so players perform a second action.

9 Buy armies

Perform in player order. Must remove one cube from region to be able to place one or more army units there. Repeat until all players pass. May buy Cossacks in Ukraine. Cossacks join Tatars if not purchased. Cost to build in enemy occupied region is halved.

10 Campaigns

Perform in player order. May remove one cube from region to attack connected enemy. Roll one die for each infantry and cavalry unit. Each hit results in noble cube being placed in enemy box. Repeat phase until all players pass.

11 Enemies attack

Roll four dice and add strength cubes accordingly. Treaty will be broken if that enemy's number occurs twice or more. Resolve in enemy number order. Enemy will attack if strength greater than total player noble cubes in enemy box. Place difference in connected region. All defending units roll once.

12 Poland fights back

Perform in player order. May remove one disc from Sejm to use Polish Army to attack enemy strength points in a region. First player has one 'free' attack with Polish Army.

13 Enemies expand

Resolve in enemy number order. Enemy will expand into connected regions, as indicated by arrows, if strength greater than total number of player noble cubes in region. Place cubes equal to difference in each connected area.

14 Estates

If region was never invaded then estate value increases by one.

If region contained enemy cubes that were removed and no more were placed then increase estate value by one.

If region was invaded but enemy failed to remain there then estate value remains the same.

If region contains enemy strength cubes then estate value reduced by one.

15 Victory points

Score VPs for most cubes in enemy box, as indicated.

Score 2VPs for each disc in Sejm.

Score 1VP for each lot of five money in hand. Must then discard each lot of five money.

16 End of turn

Remove all noble cubes from enemy boxes; all discs from Sejm; all enemy strength points from enemy boxes; all army pieces from board. Remove treaty marker. Reduce enemy strength in each region to match total number of player cubes. Reclaim all noble blocks at end of second turn.

Special actions

Place land manager. Remove one cube from region. Place land manager disc under estate disc. Will increase income from estate by two money.

Danzig. Remove one cube from Prussia. Immediately take money equal to twice the estate value of Prussia.

Diplomacy. Remove one cube from region connected to enemy. Remove one disc from Sejm. Pay money equal to die roll plus two. Place treaty marker in enemy treaty space. Enemy will not attack unless treaty is broken. Action can only be performed once per turn.

Move cubes. Move one or two cubes from one or two regions to one or two other regions. No cube cost.

Liberum veto. Remove cube from any region. Remove all discs from the Sejm.

Confederation. Remove two cubes. Replace another player's estate disc with one of your own. You must have the lowest VP score at present. You must have more cubes in the region than the target player. Can only be selected from the third turn onwards.

Jesuit Schools. For each region that you remove one cube from and pay two money you score 1VP. Score a bonus of 2VPs if you remove one cube from each of the five regions. Can only be selected from the second turn onwards.

New City. Remove two cubes. Place city marker under one of your estate discs. Will triple VP score at end of game. Can only be selected once per turn. Can only be selected from the third turn onwards.

Easy to forget rules

- You have no choice about whether you win an election.
- Cost to place first estate is one cube, each subsequent estate is two cubes.
- The cost of all player army units, including Cossacks, is halved if they are being placed in a region that contains enemy strength cubes.
- No artillery can be purchased in the first turn.
- You can use the Polish Army during the campaign phase, at a cost of one disc from the Sejm. Any hits scored by these units are recorded using the King's cubes.
- Rolling a '1' when attacking with a unit results in that unit being eliminated.
- Cossacks will switch to Tatar side if '6's rolled in second turn.
- Cossacks can be used by any player who has one or more infantry or cavalry units in Ukraine.
- Cossacks can only be used in the Ukraine.
- Cossacks will join Tatars if not purchased.
- Ottoman Empire will attack Habsburg Empire in the third turn.
- A treaty will be broken if the enemy number in question is rolled twice or more in the Enemies Attacks phase.
- When an enemy expands you place new cubes, not ones from the initial region.
- Do the following when enemy cubes are placed in an area – remove any Habsburg influence pieces – defending Polish units fight – enemy strength points of different colours cancel each other out.
- You must discard each lot of five money you have during the VP phase. You score 1VP for each lot of five you discard.

Habsburg special rules

- Cannot attack Habsburgs nor make treaty with them in the first three turns.
- Habsburgs use influence pieces not cubes in first three turns.
- Each influence piece cancels out one player cube during the Enemies Attack phase.
- Influence pieces removed immediately if any enemy strength cubes end in same box or region.
- Ottoman Empire will attack Habsburg box in the third turn.
- Players may attack Ottoman strength cubes in Habsburg box in the third turn.
- If Ottoman cubes still in Habsburg box in forth turn then Habsburg box becomes Ottoman box. Ottoman Empire will have strength of twelve rather than three if this is the case. Two Ottoman strength cubes are always 'tied' down in the Habsburg box.
- For the estate value of Great Poland to increase there must be two or more player cubes in the region. If there are one or more Habsburg influence pieces in region then value goes down one. Otherwise the value stays the same.