



# HEROICS

The Newsletter of the Eastern Pennsylvania Gaming Society

## CLUB INFORMATION

The Eastern Pennsylvania Gaming Society (EPGS) is the largest board game / strategy game group in the Delaware Valley. The club was founded in 1991.

Meetings of EPGS are held in the Community Room of the Oxford Valley Mall.

The address for the Oxford Valley Mall is 2300 E. Lincoln Highway, Langhorne, PA 19047.

It is located about two miles from Exit 3 of PA 295 and about one mile from the Oxford Valley exit from U.S. Route 1.

EPGS meetings are held on the first and third Saturdays of every month unless otherwise announced.

Point your web browser to [www.simon.com/mall/oxford-valley-mall](http://www.simon.com/mall/oxford-valley-mall) for information about the mall's operating hours.

## Social Media and Web Links

[www.epgs.org](http://www.epgs.org)

[www.facebook.com/EasternPennsylvaniaGamingSociety](http://www.facebook.com/EasternPennsylvaniaGamingSociety)

[www.meetup.com/Eastern-Pennsylvania-Gaming-Society](http://www.meetup.com/Eastern-Pennsylvania-Gaming-Society)

<https://groups.io/g/EPGS>

## HAPPY NEW YEAR FELLOW GAMERS!

We wish you all a safe, happy, and healthy 2024.

The Eastern Pennsylvania Gaming Society (EPGS) remains a great place to see friends and gamers two Saturdays a month. Oh yes, we also play games.

See below for our new dues structure for 2024.

### Option One

\$75 for the entire year, up to 24 meetings. This averages to about \$3.13 per meeting if you attend all of them.

### Option Two

\$40 payment for either the first or second half of the year. This averages to about \$3.33 per meeting if you attend all of them.

### Option Three

\$10 per meeting due by the end of the meeting. This is a pay as you go rate for each meeting you attend.

EPGS is a non-profit organization. Dues allow us to keep paying room rent, insurance, website, and social media fees.

For further information about dues, including discounts for family members, contact either our club's president or treasurer. Contact information is provided below. **Note that first time attendees may attend for free.**

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## Game Conventions in 2024

### Khroma Kon 2024

Friday, March 1 through Sunday, March 3  
Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor  
Baltimore, Maryland

### Zenkaikon 2024

Friday, March 22 through Sunday, March 24  
Lancaster County Convention Center  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

### Game Days 2024

Games Club of Maryland  
Friday, April 5 through Sunday, April 7  
Crowne Plaza Annapolis Maryland

### Mepacon

Friday, April 19 through Sunday, April 21  
SureStay Plus Hotel  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

### Fan Expo Philadelphia 2024

Friday, May 3 through Sunday, May 5  
Pennsylvania Convention Center

### World Boardgaming Championships 2024

Saturday, July 20 through Sunday, July 28  
Seven Springs Mountain Resort  
Champion, Pennsylvania

### EuroQuest 2024

Games Club of Maryland  
Thursday, November 7 through Sunday,  
November 10  
Crowne Plaza Annapolis Maryland

### Pax Unplugged 2024

Friday December 6 through Sunday, December 8  
Pennsylvania Convention Center

## EPGS Treasury

The club is in good financial shape for 2024 to date. We encourage participation in the 50/50 raffles whenever we hold one at a meeting. The funds from these raffles provide additional resources for our treasury so that we can more easily cover the club's rental and insurance costs.

## New Games at Recent EPGS Meetings

### Age of Innovation

Age of Innovation is a standalone game set in the world of *Terra Mystica*.

Twelve factions, each with unique characteristics, populate this world of varying terrains. Here you will compete to erect buildings and merge them into cities. Each game allows you to create new combinations of factions, homelands, and abilities so that each game isn't the same as another.

You control one of these factions and will terraform the game map's terrain into your homelands where you can erect your buildings. Proximity to other factions may limit your expansion, but it also gains you significant advantages in the game. This tension adds to the appeal of the *Terra Mystica* series.

Upgrade your buildings to gain valuable resources such as tools, scholars, money, and power. Build schools to advance in different sciences and collect books, which you can use to make innovations. Build your palace to gain a powerful new ability or build workshops, guilds, and universities to complete your culture.

### Earth

Earth is an open world engine builder for 1 to 5 players with simple rules but tons of strategic possibilities. With its encyclopedic nature and the enormous number of unique cards and combinations, every single game will allow you to discover new synergies and connections, just as our vast and fascinating world allows us to do. Players plant trees, compost soil, water these plants, and grow.

## Member Game Review

### *Imperial Struggle*

**Greg Jablonski**

Imperial Struggle is a 2 player strategic game of the Great Power struggle between England and France from 1697-1789. It was designed by Ananda Gupta and Jason Matthews and published by GMT games in 2020. The designers are famous for their earlier game, Twilight Struggle which depicts the Cold War competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. This game is also about two power competition for world power. But the mechanics and game flow are very different for this game.

In Imperial Struggle each player takes on the role of the National leader of England or France. There are 6 peace turns and 4 war turns:(War of the Spanish Succession, War of the Austrian Succession, Seven Years War, and the War of American Independence). The game contains a mounted map of 4 Regions of the World: Europe, North America, the Caribbean, and India.

Turns are grouped into 3 Eras: succession, empire, and revolution. Each Era has both Peace turns and War Turns. At the start of Each peace turn, awards in Victory Points or Treaty Points are randomly assigned to each region on the map. 3 Global demand chits are also drawn for each peace turn showing which products (furs, spice, fish, tobacco, sugar, and cotton) are in high demand. Each non-European region has two products: North America (fish and furs), Caribbean (tobacco and sugar cane), and India (cotton and spices). The global demand and award values incentivize a player to focus their activities on specific regions giving the highest VPs that turn.

Each Peace turn, Players alternate taking 4 Investment tiles to give them action points that allow them to perform different actions: Economic, Military, and Political. The investment tiles show the number and type of action points that can be used to perform activities to increase each country's power and influence. They do this by expanding from their overseas colony territories (squares) and taking control of overseas market spaces (circles), claiming diplomatic influence in European or overseas political spaces (diamonds), and deploying fleets and building forts (hexagons) to protect their overseas possessions. Players show ownership in a space by placing a marker with their flag in the space.

Players use the action points shown on the investment tile to perform actions that have a cost shown for each space on the map. If the investment tile doesn't have enough points to perform an action, players can take on debt to add enough points to the tile's amount to perform the action. There is a debt limit that restricts how much debt a player can have and may only be exceeded by giving victory points to the other player.

Players can also prepare for future war turns by purchasing bonus war tiles. A country's military strength is the total of their basic war tiles, bonus war tiles, diplomatic support, and military units like fleets and forts. Each War turn, players total up each side's military strength based on the resources allocated to each of the war's 4 theaters, diplomatic alliances, and conflict markers. The side with the higher military strength total wins the theater conflict and can gain Victory Points(VPs), Conquest Points(CPs) and Treaty Points(TPS) that can be used to take over enemy territories, remove enemy forts, or displace enemy fleets.

This game also uses cards to depict events and manage government activities in each Era.

Event cards - are divided by era. Players get a hand of 3 cards to use each peace turn.

Ministry cards - can be used to show how a government is being run. Players can use 2 ministry cards per era. Event cards can be only used if a player chooses an investment tile with an event symbol that matches the action point type shown on their event card. These cards may allow a player to perform different special actions that help them get more done faster or hinder their opponent.

There is one more special type of resource that players can get to help them do more. By using Diplomatic actions to claim certain spaces in each region, Players can also earn advantage chits which can be used any time during their turn to help themselves or hinder their opponent.

For example, the French start with the Iroquois raids advantage that allows them to place a conflict marker on an opposing player's market making it cheaper (and easier) to take over.

This is primarily a resource management game where players select chits to allocate action points to do things that earn themselves victory points. Each player also has a 3 card hand of event cards that can be used to better their position on the board. At the end of the action phase of placing Investment tiles, there is a Victory point check phase. Players tallying their victory points based on markets and regions controlled and their diplomatic alliances and prestige in Europe. The victory point track ranges from 0 (British automatic victory level) to 30 (automatic French victory) and the game starts at a VP level of 15 with France moving first.

The challenge in the game is deciding which investment tile to use and what to do with those action points since there are so many choices it can be difficult to decide what to do. When I counted, there were at least 8 goals players had each peace turn (4 regions and 3 markets plus global prestige). Players also must be aware of the interaction between Peace turns and War Turns. During peace turns, players must make military investments in fleets, forts, and improving their army. These actions will help increase their chances of gaining military victories in the next war. After the war is over, players use their conquest points to take over enemy territories allowing their own markets to be more secure and providing entry points into enemy controlled markets. So in Peace Turns, players must invest in their military and in war turns, they must use their victories to conquer enemy territories to expand their controlled markets.

The game passes the reality test where it seems to follow the historical record: players open up and control overseas markets, try to protect them with military resources, and periodically have wars against their rivals to defend their own possessions and take them away from the enemy. Players should be aware that this is a no holds barred competition where they need to use strategies like slavery to build cheaper navies, cause Indian and slave rebellions to start conflicts and weaken/destroy enemy markets, and exploit resources using the British East India Tea Company. Competing for global dominance is not for the faint of heart.

There very good play aids to guide the players through each step in the turn sequences for peace turns and war turns. The rules are well written and have an index to help make looking things up easier. The only thing missing is a solitaire bot system for solo play but there are a couple of user provided solo bots on the BoardgameGeek web site. There is also a very helpful playbook with an illustrated walk-through the first peace turn and the first war turn. There is also a page of designer's notes and a bibliography for further reading on the period.

Playing the game well means using as many of the game resources (investment tiles, event cards, ministry cards, and advantage tokens) as you can to achieve your goals. The more resources you can use, the more things you can accomplish. Getting these resources and preventing the enemy from getting them or taking them from the enemy is at the heart of Imperial Struggle.

After playing this game 7 times, I feel like I'm starting to understand how to play it but am not close to knowing how to consistently win. I am ready to continue playing it more so that I can improve. Each game is different so it won't get boring. It has historical flavor, easy to understand game mechanics, beautiful components, and a reasonable game length. All of these factors make it one of my favorite games. For a two player strategy game that takes about 3-4 hours to play, this game is now at the top of my play list.