

KURSI

RULEBOOK



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From the designer's desk...

If you are reading this, most likely you have purchased our game 'Kursi'—thank you for supporting indie board games; you have excellent taste!

In my quest to effect change, I explored social entrepreneurship, private solutions, and policy approaches, but I discovered that the fundamental issue lies in a lack of principled public leadership. Concurrently, I have observed a troubling trend of disengagement, disinterest, and distaste towards politics among our nation's youth. A bright, young woman once confided in me, saying, "Politics is a dirty profession." This sentiment is deeply concerning. Rather than shunning politics, we need the finest minds and hearts of our country to embrace public service and transform it. This, I believe, is our only hope to effect change.

'Kursi' is a small step in this direction. Through the enjoyment of a strategy game, we aim to spark positive conversations around progressive politics, strategic thinking, and democratic values. Our vision is to elevate electoral awareness and inspire a new generation to view politics as a noble path to public service. Sidhant and I have meticulously crafted this game to provide a fun experience with your friends and family while subtly nudging your curiosity towards politics. We have also tried to capture the diversity of India in a subtle, unobtrusive manner. This game is a nonpartisan abstract simulation of an election, and does not promote any political party or ideology in any manner. Therefore, we invite you to simply relax and enjoy the game without looking for any political bias.

This one is dedicated to our great nation, our democracy and We, the people of India. So, I would like you to join our mission by playing 'Kursi' and spreading the word about it. We at Zenwood are eager to hear with delight your stories of play, learning, and change at hello@zenwoodgames.com.

*Jai Hind,
Manthan Anand*

As the great Indian election dawns, the stage is set with the declaration of the model code of Conduct. Alliances have been forged, and narratives, along with political rhetoric, are intensifying the fervor. Amidst this chaos, the true battleground emerges on the elusive swing seats, the linchpins that will determine who ascends to the KURSI of power.

You, a sought-after political strategist hired by one of the nation's major parties, are entrusted with securing victory by navigating the treacherous terrain of swing seats. To emerge triumphant in this power game, your mission is clear: secure the most seats out of the five swing seats.

Achieving this goal requires strategic maneuvering. You must adeptly field candidates, allocate resources for impactful rallies, and wield influence to control key political assets. Balancing popularity with media control is paramount, as is preserving a delicate reputation to deploy game-changing strategies at precisely the right moment.

With the weight of the nation's hopes and aspirations resting on your shoulders, it is not only a battle of wits, strategy, and political prowess but also of integrity and responsibility. Therefore, ensure that **Every Vote Counts**.

Objective & Components

1

Objective: Win the maximum number of seats (from 5) among all the other political parties (represented by players) to win the overall game. Each seat is won if your candidate has gained the maximum number of votes for that seat, by the endgame.



Position Tokens (25)



Candidate tiles (24)



Round Tracker
tile (1)



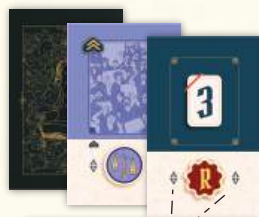
Seat tiles (9)
3 x 3 National Issues



Asset cards (52)
Dark blue background

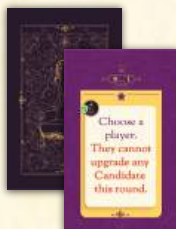


Rally cards (51)
17 x 3 National Issues

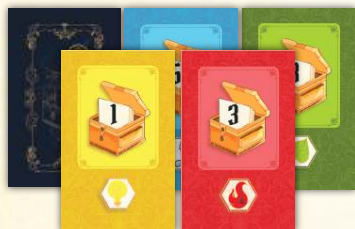


Distinguished by symbol

Starter cards (24)
6 per player: 3 Rally and 3 Asset cards



Masterstroke cards (16)



Vote cards (132)
33 cards x 4 Colors



Reference
Cards (4)



Tracker
disc (1)



Media
Pawn (1)

2

Setup



For an introductory game, we recommend having at least 1 Seat tile of each of the 3 National Issues.

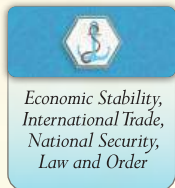


First, shuffle each of the following card and tile decks, separately: 24 Candidate tiles, 9 Seat tiles, 52 Asset cards, 51 Rally cards, and 16 Masterstroke cards.

- 1 Place the Round Tracker tile at the top center of the table. Place all shuffled Rally cards on the left and shuffled Asset cards on the right, as indicated by the orange **Capital** /blue **Influence** edges. Keep space beside the 2 decks to create respective discard piles. Place the round tracker disc on the number '1'.
- 2 Place all Masterstroke cards to the left of the Round Tracker tile, facedown. Open the top 2 Masterstroke cards for display. Place the Media pawn nearby.
- 3 Randomly select 5 Seat tiles and keep them face-up in a row, below the Round Tracker card. Return the remaining Seat cards to the box as they won't be used in this game. Mark the 5 Seats with 5 distinct position tokens from left to right: A, B, C, D and E respectively.

- 4 Each player picks a Party symbol & color from Red, Green, Blue or Yellow. Players can create their own Party names for the color they choose. They take all the Vote cards of that color, arrange them as per denominations, and keep them in their play area as their supply.
- 5 Each player is given the same set of 6 Starter cards (as shown) as their starting hand. It includes 3 Asset and 3 Rally cards, marked by double arrow symbol.
- 6 Each player also draws a random Masterstroke card from the Masterstroke deck. Each player is given a 2-sided reference card for ease of gameplay.

Party Thematic Priorities:



Game Overview - Phases & National Issues

The game of Kursi has 3 phases, as follows:

- **Phase 1 - Candidate Fielding:** Players begin by drafting 5 candidates to field them on the 5 seats, representing their party symbol.
- **Phase 2 - Campaigning:** Spread over 8 rounds, this phase is the heart of the game just like any elections. Players run multiple rallies to gain votes for their candidates while accumulating and bolstering political assets.
- **Phase 3 - Elections & Results:** Once the campaigning ends, additional votes are allocated to the most deserving candidates on each seat. The game reaches its thrilling climax when votes are tallied to determine seat winners for each seat and finally the ultimate game winner, with the most seats won.

The game of KURSI revolves around the interplay of 7 icons - 3 National Issues and 4 Political Assets.



Economy



Welfare



Development

The three National Issues are Economy, Welfare, and Development. These icons are present on Seat tiles, Candidate tiles, and Rally cards. On Seat and Candidate tiles, they represent constituents' priority issues and candidates' expertise, respectively. On Rally cards, they signify the issue being addressed by the rally. To be effective, players must synergize Candidate, Seat, and Rally cards based on these issue icons throughout the three phases as described in the subsequent pages.

Game Overview - Political Assets

The four political assets are **Capital, Influence, Reputation, and Popularity**. These icons are also present on Seat and Candidate tiles, but are mainly present on Asset Cards! Each political asset offers various unique benefits during Phase 2: Campaigning, explained in detail on Pages 6 - 11:



Capital

In Campaigning Phase, you **draw Rally cards** equal to the total number of Capital icons across all your Candidates.

In today's political arena, the language of power is money! Extensive resources fuel extensive campaigning, providing both the volume and quality needed to make a significant impact.



Influence

In Campaigning Phase, you **draw Asset cards** equal to the total number of Influence icons across all your Candidates.

Indeed, the adage "It's not what you know but who you know" rings true in politics. Through leveraging connections and various means, one can accumulate political assets, fostering a cycle of influence and empowerment.



Reputation

In Campaigning Phase, you **play Rally + Asset cards** equal to the total number of Reputation icons across all your Candidates.

Reputation reigns supreme in politics, often surpassing all other assets. After all, having the resources to broadcast your message means little if people don't believe in your credibility.




Popularity


In Campaigning Phase, you may **control the Media Pawn** if you have highest Popularity. Additionally, it offers a **cost discount** on **bolstering** your Candidates.

Popularity rules the roost! In the world of modern politics, being well-liked can be a game-changer. It's the key to rallying support, garnering attention, and ultimately, clinching victory at the polls.

Each of the 7 icons might also gain you additional Votes during Phase 3 - Elections and Results, explained in detail in Pages 12 - 14.



National Issues = Rally Cards
(linked to )

Candidate Assets = Asset Cards
(linked to )

Both card types have the same back!

Phase 1 - Candidate Fielding

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1. To begin the game, shuffle all the Candidate tiles and deal 6 tiles to each player at random. If playing with fewer than 4 players, some tiles will be left over. These are returned back to the box; they won't be used in this game.
2. Simultaneously, all players secretly choose 1 Candidate tile from their hand of 6 and place it face-down in front of them. They then pass the remaining 5 Candidate tiles to the player on their left, rotating clockwise.
3. Players repeat this process, selecting 1 Candidate tile from the new set of 5 received tiles, and so on, **until each player has exactly 5 face-down Candidates**. The last remaining Candidate tile is discarded. *(This process is also called Drafting)*
4. Next, players examine their 5 chosen Candidate cards secretly, and strategically place them in positions A through E. Position A corresponds to the leftmost seat, and position E corresponds to the rightmost seat, as depicted below.
5. Once all players have decided, they simultaneously reveal their Candidate tiles. Each Candidate is fielded for a Specific seat according to their position.
6. Each player then uses 5 position tokens from A to E to mark their Candidates, denoting their position for easy referencing with respect to the Seat tokens. Candidate A is linked to Seat A, Candidate B is linked to Seat B and so on. **Each player's 5 Candidates are now linked permanently to 5 distinct Seats!**

Example: Simoni is playing as red player. After drafting her 5 Candidates, she plans and choses the positions for Candidates A to E as per the Seats A to E, respectively.



Designer's Strategic Tip: Consider the long-term effects of your candidate choices. Aim for a balanced combination of political assets to lay a strong foundation for Phase 2. Pay close attention to the icons on both candidate and seat cards to maximise synergy between the qualities and issues constituents seek in their representatives. Just as in real-world elections, aligning candidate attributes with voter preferences can greatly influence your success.

Phase 2 - Campaigning

Over **8 rounds**, players engage in simultaneous play, where all players act at the same time, by following these 7 steps in order, while keeping track of rounds using the round tracker:

1 Move Round Tracker

- Move the Round Tracker Disc to the next round on the Round Tracker tile. **This step is ignored in the very first round of the game.**



2 Control Media Pawn

- Next, the player with a clear highest number of Popularity icons gains control of the Media pawn . The Media pawn holder acts as **the starting player** for all purposes of resolving anything in clockwise order.
- In the event of a tie during the very first round, the tied player with the most Popularity icons in their rightmost Candidate takes control.
- In subsequent rounds, if there is a tie, the player who had control of the media pawn must choose to give it to any one tied player of their choice.
- In case the current owner is also tied for the most number of Popularity icons, **they MUST still pass on the control of the pawn** to another tied player of their choice, i.e., they cannot retain the ownership of the pawn in case of a tie. The pawn always changes ownership if there is a tie.




Counting Asset Icons in Campaigning Phase: As the game goes on, your Candidates will gain more Assets in addition to the two, by a process called **Bolstering**. When counting a certain type of icon to check something (e.g., highest Popularity, total Reputation etc.) count all instances of that icon **across all your 5 Candidate tiles**, as well as **on any cards tucked under Candidates**.

ONLY in two cases: when counting Popularity icons for purpose of Bolster discounts, AND for the purpose of gaining bonus votes during Phase 3: Elections and Results, you would check icons **for a single, specific Candidate** and on cards tucked under that Candidate, solely. (Pages 8, 12)

Phase 2 - Campaigning

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3 Draw and Play Masterstrokes

- The current **player with the Media Pawn** chooses a **Masterstroke card** either from the two open cards or by blind draw, picks it and adds it to their hand. Any card drawn from the open cards is then immediately replaced and restored back to two open cards.
- Then, all players with atleast one Masterstroke card in their hand, **MAY simultaneously play 1 Masterstroke card facedown**, in the open area. These are then revealed and resolved in order, starting with the player holding the Media Pawn and going clockwise.
- Masterstrokes are powerful cards that either give advantage to players or help in attacking opponent players. Some Masterstrokes are resolved immediately and then returned to the bottom of the Masterstroke deck. Some stay for the entire round while some stay active for the entire game, and are discarded then. **The current player with the Media Pawn is immune to certain Masterstroke effects** as indicated on cards with a  shield icon - they cannot be attacked by other players using these specific Masterstroke cards.

4 Draw Rally and Asset cards

*If you do not have any **Capital, Influence, and/or Reputation**, you may assume a minimum of 1 of each and play accordingly.*




- Each player **draws Rally cards equal to their total number of Capital icons**, across all their Candidates (as well as cards tucked under them)
- Each player **draws Asset cards equal to their total number of Influence icons**, across their Candidates (as well as cards tucked under them)
- If either the Rally or Asset cards draw deck gets over while drawing, shuffle the specific discard pile to form a new draw pile and continue drawing.
- You may choose to draw fewer or no cards, if you want to.
- **The hand limit is 10 cards at the end of the round.** You are allowed to exceed this limit during a round, but you must ensure you have at most 10 cards before moving to the next round and therefore discard excess cards if any. This end-of-round hand limit applies to all card types (Rallies, Assets, &



Assume Purnima has 2 Capital and 3 Influence icons, respectively. She therefore draws 2 Rally cards and 3 Asset cards and adds a total of 5 new cards to her hand. She could have drawn fewer cards if she wishes to!

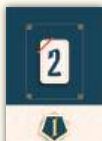


5 Play Rally and Asset cards

- Each player may **play as many Asset and/or Rally card(s)**, in any combination, equal to **the total number of  Reputation icons** across all their 5 Candidates.
- Cards are always played facedown, and specific to chosen Candidate(s) that the player wishes to play to. They simply play the cards near the bottom of the Candidate tiles, for now. Players may distribute cards among Candidates as desired, and even opt to play fewer (or no cards) than their Reputation level. The backs of Rally and Asset cards are same to keep your strategies secret!
- Rally cards make up a Candidate's Rallies in order to gain Votes across Seats. Asset cards bolster the Candidate's Asset icons and make them more powerful.**

6 Extend Rallies and Bolster Candidates

- Once all players have played their respective Asset/Rally cards facedown, cards are then revealed simultaneously, and then resolved one Candidate at a time!
- Rally cards when revealed are added above the Candidate tile, in its rally area.** Rally cards are **stacked to form a column of cards**. It is NOT necessary for all cards in a Candidate's Rally to be of the same color.
- If there is an existing rally going on, i.e., there is already a column of Rally cards above the Candidate, the new cards are just added to extend that rally. If the rally area is empty, the new cards start a new rally.
- Each Candidate can have **atmost one active rally**, and each rally is linked to the same Seat as the Candidate, denoted by equivalent position tokens.
- Contrary to Rally cards, **Asset cards when revealed are tucked under the Candidate tile. This is known as bolstering a Candidate**, and the Asset icons from the card are permanently 'bolstered' or attached to the Candidate, giving access to more icons!
- Bolstering involves a cost**, that is mentioned on the Asset card itself. Simply discard that many additional cards from your hand to cover for the bolstering cost (this is mandatory).
- This cost is **discounted** IF the Candidate being bolstered has Popularity  icon/s on its tile, and/or on any pre-existing Asset cards tucked under it. Note that you must **ONLY count Popularity icons of the Candidate and cards tucked below the Candidate**. You discard 1 less card for every such Popularity icon.  icons give permanent discount!
- You MAY add more than one Asset card to a Candidate in this step, provided you can cover the total costs of all played cards all at once! **Popularity discounts if any, apply to the overall TOTAL costs** and NOT to each Asset card being bolstered, in a single round.



Phase 2 - Campaigning (Examples)

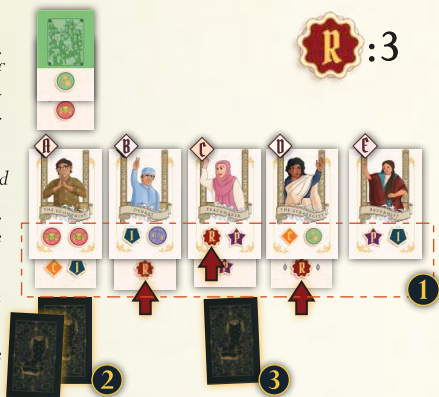
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1. Play Rally and Asset cards

- 1 Purnima has 3 Reputation icons. Therefore she can play a maximum of 3 cards from her hand, in any combination of Asset cards and/or Rally cards.
- 2 She plays 2 cards for Candidate A, and
- 3 1 card for Candidate C, respectively. The cards are played beneath the respective Candidates, facedown.

Optionally, she could have played fewer than 3 cards as well!

NOTE: Candidate A already had an active rally of 2 cards from previous turns



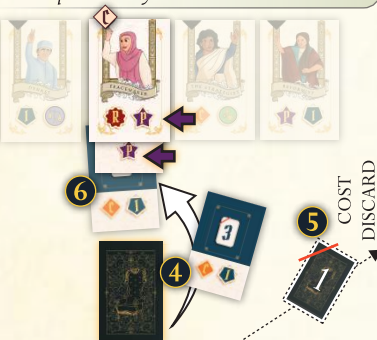
2. Extend Rallies

- 1 Purnima flips to reveal 2 Rally cards she had played for Candidate A.
- 2 Candidate A already had an active rally of 2 cards; the two new cards get added on top of the existing rally.
- 3 Now the Candidate A's rally is extended and becomes 4 cards long.



3. Bolster Candidates

- 4 Purnima flips to reveal 1 Asset card she had played for Candidate C. The cost to bolster this Asset card is 3.
- 5 However, because the specific Candidate C already has 2 Popularity icons, the cost is reduced to $3 - 2 = 1$.
- 6 Therefore, Purnima discards just 1 additional card from her hand as the cost, and then adds the Asset card permanently under the Candidate C tile.



7 End Rallies and Gain Votes

- Starting with the Media Pawn holder and going clockwise, **each player may end (up to) any 2 different Candidate rallies that are active** (i.e., for those Candidates containing at least 1 Rally card above them). By ending Rallies, Candidates **gain votes** for the linked Seat, as well as certain **rally-end benefits**.
- For every Candidate Rally that a player ends, they must declare a **National Issue**, of which at least 1 Rally card must be present in that Candidate's Rally. **That National Issue icon is checked to gain votes** for the linked Seat.
- They count the number of matching occurrences of the **chosen National Issue icon** across:
 - All Rally cards used for that specific Candidate's Rally, and
 - The specific Candidate Tile (including previously bolstered icons below it), and
 - On the linked Seat, IF the Seat's National Issue matches to the chosen issue.
- The Candidate gains as many votes as the number of matching occurrences of the single National Issue icon they have chosen.**
- To gain votes for a Seat, players use vote cards of their party symbol and tuck them under the respective Seat tile, facedown. This forms a **common facedown pile of vote cards under each Seat tile**, shared by all players, respectively.
- Players must use existing denominations of **1, 3 and 5 value votes only** to gain the exact number of Votes they gained. If it is not possible to gain the exact number of votes, you gain the next lowest best value possible.
- Players gain additional benefits if they had at least 2 rally cards in the rally that they just ended.** The rally-end benefits are cumulative, and depends on the number of cards that were present in the ended rally.
- Repeat this for another rally you want to end, if you chose to. Then, discard all these used rally cards to the respective discard pile, faceup.
- Ensure that your hand has at most 10 cards in total! The round ends, and new rounds begins.



Rally End Benefits

(Cumulative)

At least 8 Rally Cards: You may additionally gain extra +2 Votes of your color, under this Seat!

At least 6 Rally Cards: You may additionally draw a Masterstroke card from the two choices.

At least 4 Rally Cards: You may additionally add a -2 Vote card (of ANY player) under ANY 1 Seat of your choice.

At least 2 Rally Cards: If at least any one of the Rally cards has a **Bolster** symbol on it, you may add that card as an Asset under the Candidate, permanently!



Bolster Symbol on certain Rally Cards



Phase 2 - Campaigning (Examples)



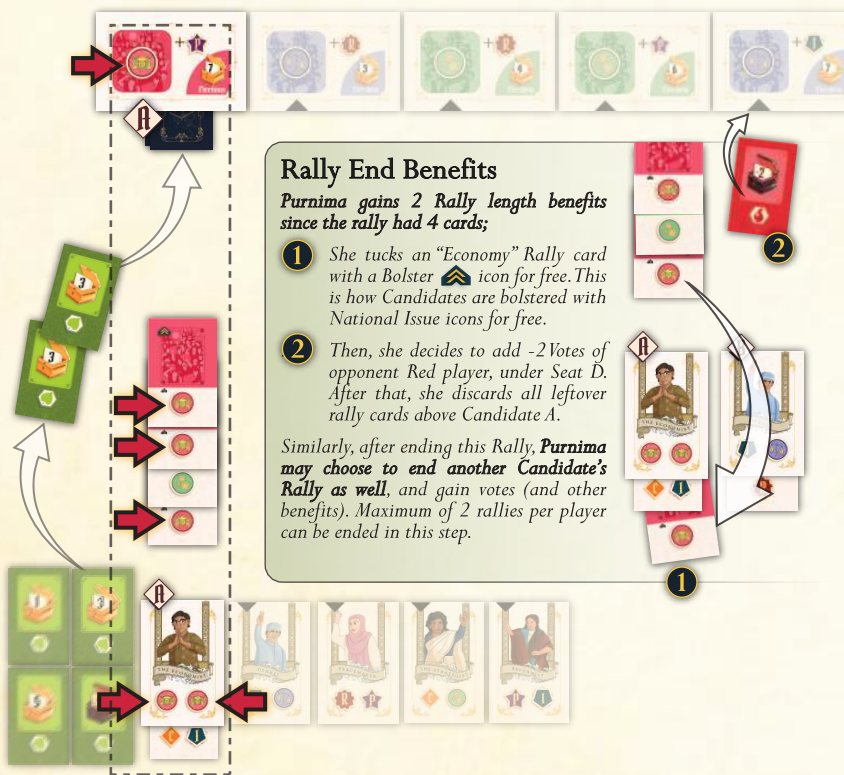
Ending a Rally and Gaining Votes

Purnima decides to end only 1 Rally this round. She ends Candidate A's Rally, and chooses National Issue: Economy as she has played at least 1 Rally card with an Economy icon.

The number of icons she can count for Economy (Pink) is:

- 3 from the Rally cards
- 2 from the linked Candidate tile + bolsters, and
- 1 from the linked Seat

That is a total of **6 icons** belonging to Economy National Issue. **She immediately gains 6 votes for Seat A.** She places her vote cards totalling a value of 6 under the Seat A tile, facedown.



During the game, you cannot examine the existing Vote cards on the Seats; they are only evaluated during the endgame in Phase 3. If you run out of a specific denomination of Vote values, you cannot exchange them with your used Vote cards present under Seat tiles.

Designer's Strategic Tip: Balancing the length of your rallies is crucial in Phase 2. Opt to end shorter rallies for immediate candidate bolsters, while strategically prolonging others to secure additional benefits and significant vote margins. When bolstering candidates, ensure alignment with the characteristics of your seat and your overarching strategy. Utilize masterstroke cards and the Media Pawn judiciously to outmaneuver opponents. Stay vigilant and adapt your strategy based on your opponents' actions—remember, victory can be achieved through multiple pathways.

Phase 3 - Elections and Results



1 Elections

- After 8 rounds of Campaigning is done, the game moves closer to end, to the final phase - Elections and Results. Elections offer a final chance to gain votes before the end-game tally. Each of the 5 Seats is evaluated to determine which player gains additional votes for each Seat, respectively. Starting from the leftmost seat, assess each player's linked Candidate and the matching icons as mentioned on the Seat tile itself.
- For each of the 5 Seats, count total number of matching icons present on the linked Candidate card (and bolsters below it). Having them in pairs is NOT required. **Only icons belonging to the linked Candidate and their bolsters are considered for comparison, for every Seat**
- For every Seat, the player whose Candidate has the most matching icons in this manner, earns **additional votes**. The number of votes gained varies and is specified on the seat card itself. Winner adds those many additional votes under the specific Seat. In the case of a tie, tied players evenly divide the votes (rounded down if needed).
- Lastly, players with the **most Capital icons across all of their 5 Candidates + bolsters** may add up to **3 free votes** to any one seat of their choice (they can't distribute these 3 votes among various seats). In the case of a tie, all tied players gain 3 votes each respectively!



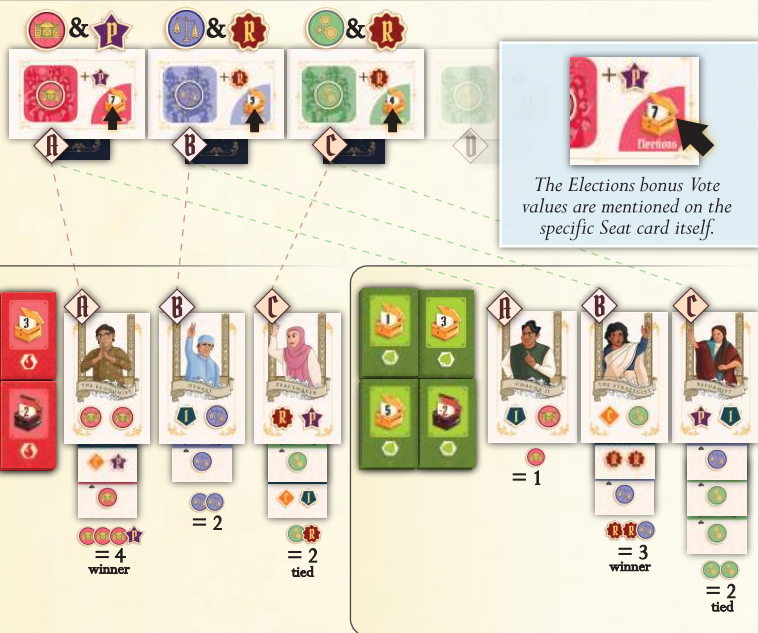
2 Results

- Finally, it is time to check the score and find the winner! First, each Seat is evaluated to check which player has won it. **All facedown vote cards under the seat are counted and added up for each player respectively.** Negative votes for a player color deduct that many votes in a Seat! **The player who gained most number of votes for a Seat, wins that Seat!** Winning player marks it by tucking a vote card faceup under the Seat, while all remaining vote cards are discarded.

Phase 3 - Elections and Results

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- In case of a tie for the highest number of votes, the tied players check whose linked Candidate (+ bolsters) has the most number of matching National Issue icons as per the Seat's National Issue. That player breaks the tie. If still a tie, NO player wins that Seat, and that Seat is skipped.
- Once all 5 seats are evaluated respectively, **the player who has won the most number of seats, wins the game!** In case of a tie, the tied player who has clearly won the left-most seat, breaks the tie and wins!



Elections

In this 2 player example, we are only comparing the Seats A, B and C (but the same rule applies to all 5 Seats)

- A** Among Candidates A, Red player has maximum number of matching icons as per Seat A, as compared to Green player. Red gains bonus votes in Elections phase for Seat A, and adds additional 7 red votes under Seat A.
- B** Similarly, Green player gains bonus votes for for Seat B and adds additional 4 green votes under Seat B respectively.
- C** Both players are tied for Seat C, and hence each of them gain $4/2 = 2$ votes for Seat C



Results

In this 3 player example, Red, Blue and Green players are done with counting of votes and results.

- Red player has won only Seat A.
- Blue player won Seats B and E.
- Green player won Seats C and D.

There is a tie between Blue and Green player for the overall winner, as both have won 2 Seats each. Since Blue has won the leftmost seat (Seat B) compared to Green, Blue player breaks the tie, and therefore, wins the game!

After your first game, feel free to experiment and try with lesser number of Seats and Candidates per player, for a different experience! The maximum recommended Seats per game is 5.

Designer's Strategic Tip: Strategically allocate your candidate bolsters to gain additional endgame votes, potentially tipping the scales in your favour. Aim to secure a clear mandate in both votes and seats to avoid tiebreakers. However, remain vigilant of potential ties and the significance of the left-most seat in resolving them. Remember, even the smallest margin can make a difference—I once lost a game by just one vote, so every vote counts!

Playtesting Credits

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We'd love to know your experiences when playing Kursi! Do share your stories, photos and tag us on instagram/facebook @zenwood.games! For additional info, please visit www.zenwoodgames.com

