APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR SIMULTANEOUS TURN-BASED PLAY BOARD GAME

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Abstract

Apparatus and method for simultaneous turn-based play comprises: providing each one of a plurality of players with substantially identical play boards having a predetermined number of regularly arranged territories, providing each one of said plurality of players with an identical set of playing pieces, allowing all players simultaneous turns to place their playing pieces on said playing board, then, at the end of each simultaneous turn superimposing the play boards and providing a play result comprising eliminating certain playing pieces and leaving remaining pieces, then returning the boards to the players with the remaining pieces and repeating the simultaneous turns and said eliminating until only one player has any remaining pieces.
Opening screen

Waiting for other player to join

Start game
Initial piece positioning on hidden board

When player ready press "GO"

Other player is ready?

NO
Waiting for opponent to press "GO"

YES
Show pieces
Show turn results

Waiting for opponent to press "GO"

Both players have pieces left?

NO
Show winner and won points

YES
Reposition pieces on hidden boards

Fig. 11
APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR
SIMULTANEOUS TURN-BASED PLAY BOARD
GAME

FIELD AND BACKGROUND OF THE
INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to apparatus and a method for simultaneous turn-based play in a board game.

[0002] Turn-based board games are well-known. A group of players take turns in moving pieces around a board according to predetermined rules in order to achieve an objective. The player achieving the objective wins the game. Well-known turn-based board games include chess, draughts, Monopoly™, Snakes and Ladders, Battleships™, Risk™, and Trivial Pursuit™, and range from games of pure chance to pure skill and deep strategy, with combinations of skill and chance also widely available.

[0003] The game of chess is played on a board laid out in a regular arrangement of squares, and each square constitutes a separate territory which can be occupied by a single piece. In Risk, by contrast the board is a map intended to represent the world. In Monopoly or Snakes and Ladders each player is represented by a single playing piece but it is more common for each player to have sets of playing pieces. In the game of battleships the individual grid squares are not individual territories in the sense that they can be occupied as autonomous units by playing pieces. Rather the playing pieces, the ships, cover multiple grid squares and the grid squares represent units of damage from individual attacks.

[0004] In all of the above board-type games, each player takes his turn in full view of the others. There are other games where the turns are simultaneous and each player makes a concealed move. The concealed moves are then revealed together. The child’s game of rock, paper, scissors, is an example of a game in which turns are taken simultaneously. The game, although apparently a game of pure chance, in fact allows players the opportunity to benefit from the non-randomness in the behavior of their opponents.

[0005] In computer gaming, simultaneous turns which are taken in a concealed manner and subsequently revealed for all the players together are known from strategy and war games. For example, Tin Soldiers: Alexander the Great™ is turn based, but the turns are taken simultaneously and each player only learns about the other player’s move at the time that his own move is revealed. That is to say a player does not take turns with his opponents as such. Instead each opposing player plans out his own strategy and issues orders to his units simultaneously, then presses a play button and the battle rages as all the units execute their orders for that turn in unison. The game is played on a map which represents some geographical location and is therefore differentiated over its surface. Furthermore the games with such simultaneous turns are all strategy games. At the moment there does not exist a board game which is on the face of it a game of pure chance but allows players to benefit from non-random behavior of their opponents, and has a place for skill.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] According to one aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for simultaneous turn based play comprising:

[0007] a first play board, said first board having a substantially homogeneous layout comprising a predetermined number of regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories,

[0008] a second play board, also having said substantially homogeneous layout comprising said predetermined number of regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories,

[0009] a first set of play pieces for placing on said first play board and moving between said territories,

[0010] a second set of play pieces for placing on said second play board and moving between said territories, and

[0011] an end of turn combiner configured for superposition of said first set of play pieces and said second set of play pieces at the end of each one of a plurality of turns and calculation of an overall result for said playing pieces.

[0012] According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of simultaneous turn-based play comprising:

[0013] providing each one of a plurality of players with substantially identical play boards, each board having a predetermined number of regularly arranged territories,

[0014] providing each one of said plurality of players with an identical set of playing pieces,

[0015] allowing all players simultaneous turns to place their playing pieces on said playing board,

[0016] at the end of said simultaneous turns superimposing said play boards and providing a play result comprising eliminating ones of said playing pieces and leaving others of said playing pieces as remaining pieces,

[0017] returning said play boards to said players with said remaining pieces and repeating said simultaneous turns and said eliminating until only one player has remaining pieces.

[0018] According to a third aspect of the present invention there is provided a networked server comprising therewithin apparatus for simultaneous turn based play by remotely located client based players, the apparatus comprising:

[0019] a client interaction unit for providing to a first player a first play board, said first board having a substantially homogeneous layout comprising predetermined number of regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories, the client interaction unit further being for providing to a second player a second play board, also having said substantially homogeneous layout comprising said predetermined number of regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories,

[0020] the client interaction unit further being configured to provide said first player with a first set of play pieces for placing on said first play board and moving between said territories, and said second player with a second set of play pieces for placing on said second play board and moving between said territories,

[0021] the server further providing an end of turn combiner for superposition of said first set of play pieces and said second set of play pieces at the end of each one of a plurality of turns and calculation of an overall result for said playing pieces.

[0022] Unless otherwise defined, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. The materials, methods, and examples provided herein are illustrative only and not intended to be limiting.

[0023] Implementation of the method and system of the present invention involves performing or completing certain selected tasks or steps manually, automatically, or a combination thereof. Moreover, according to actual instrumentation
and equipment of preferred embodiments of the method and system of the present invention, several selected steps could be implemented by hardware or by software on any operating system of any firmware or a combination thereof. For example, as hardware, selected steps of the invention could be implemented as a chip or a circuit. As software, selected steps of the invention could be implemented as a plurality of software instructions being executed by a computer using any suitable operating system. In any case, selected steps of the method and system of the invention could be described as being performed by a data processor, such as a computing platform for executing a plurality of instructions.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0024] The invention is herein described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings. With specific reference now to the drawings in detail, it is stressed that the particulars shown are by way of example and for purposes of illustrative discussion of the preferred embodiments of the present invention only, and are presented in order to provide what is believed to be the most useful and readily understood description of the principles and conceptual aspects of the invention. In this regard, no attempt is made to show structural details of the invention in more detail than is necessary for a fundamental understanding of the invention, the description taken with the drawings making apparent to those skilled in the art how the several forms of the invention may be embodied in practice.

[0025] In the drawings:

[0026] FIG. 1 is a simplified diagram illustrating apparatus according to a first preferred embodiment of the present invention for simultaneous turn-based gameplay between two or more players.

[0027] FIG. 2 is a simplified diagram illustrating one of the boards of FIG. 1 according to one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0028] FIG. 3 is a simplified diagram illustrating two sets of ranked playing pieces for use with the board of FIG. 2 and according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0029] FIG. 4 is a simplified schematic diagram illustrating one of the pieces of FIG. 3 in greater detail, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0030] FIG. 5 is a simplified schematic diagram, illustrating the placing of the playing piece of FIG. 4 on the board of FIG. 2 and illustrating how the piece may be orientated according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0031] FIG. 6 is a further simplified diagram showing the piece of FIG. 5 and showing how the orientation may be achieved by rotation according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0032] FIG. 7 is a simplified diagram illustrating how a piece belonging to one player may stab a piece belonging to another player, thereby to bring about elimination of the latter piece, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0033] FIG. 8 is a simplified diagram showing the end result following the elimination in FIG. 7, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0034] FIG. 9 is a simplified schematic diagram illustrating the case of elimination by pieces of different rank being located on the same territory on the board, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0035] FIG. 10 illustrates two playing pieces of the same player both pointing at the same hexagon, a position allowed according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0036] FIG. 11 is a simplified flow diagram showing the overall gameplay, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0037] FIG. 12 is a simplified schematic diagram of the board of FIG. 2 showing two pieces of the same player being placed on the same hexagon, a not-allowed condition according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0038] FIG. 13 is a simplified schematic diagram of the board of FIG. 2 showing two opposing pieces stabbing each other, a condition leading to the elimination of the lower-ranked piece according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0039] FIG. 14 is a simplified schematic diagram of the board of FIG. 13 following resolution according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0040] FIG. 15 is a simplified schematic diagram of the board of FIG. 2 in which two pieces of equal rank attempt to stab each other, a situation resulting in both pieces being eliminated according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0041] FIG. 16 is a simplified schematic diagram of the board of FIG. 2 showing the case in which two opposing pieces of the same rank are located on the same hexagon, the case leading to elimination of both pieces according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0042] FIG. 17 is a simplified schematic diagram showing the board of FIG. 2 with a three-way conflict between pieces, and a resolution according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0043] FIG. 18 is a simplified schematic diagram showing the board of FIG. 2 with a four-way conflict between pieces and a resolution according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0044] FIG. 19 is a simplified flow diagram illustrating two opposing players' opening moves in a first act and showing the moves being combined and leading to elimination.

[0045] FIG. 20 is a simplified block diagram showing a server providing a game according to the present embodiments to remotely located client computers over the Internet.

[0046] FIG. 21 is a simplified block diagram illustrating two computers in close proximity and linked together to provide gameplay between the two players.

[0047] FIG. 22 is a simplified block diagram illustrating a server providing simultaneous turn-based gameplay according to the present embodiments to two mobile telephones via the cellular network.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0048] The present embodiments comprise an apparatus and a method for playing a game based on simultaneous turn-based play on a homogeneous board game. More specifically each player makes a concealed move on his board and when each player has made his move then the different moves are superimposed and an overall situation is calculated according to game rules. The game rules are such as to set up an initial situation which is in principle random, but which allows individual players to benefit from non-randomness in the behavior of their opponents, and gives a certain place to skill.
The principles and operation of an apparatus and method according to the present invention may be better understood with reference to the drawings and accompanying description.

Before explaining at least one embodiment of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to its application to the details of construction and the arrangement of the components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments or of being practiced or carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

Reference is now made to FIG. 1, which illustrates apparatus 10 for simultaneous turn based play. The apparatus includes play boards 12 and 14 for each of the players. Although only two boards are shown it will be appreciated that like many other board games the number of players is extendible.

Each of the boards has a substantially homogeneous layout made up of a repeated pattern of spaces or territories for occupation by playing pieces. There are typically a predetermined number of such territories, the number being set at the beginning of the game. The larger the number the harder the game, or the longer it may be expected to take.

FIG. 2 is an example of a board in which the regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories are hexagons 20. The hexagon is advantageous because it allows for six clearly defined neighboring cells and allows free movement in the diagonal directions. For this reason the hexagon is widely used in wargames.

Reference is now made to FIG. 3, which shows two sets of playing pieces 22 and 24. Each player has a set of playing pieces for moving over the board between the territories. As shown in the figure, and also in FIG. 4, the individual pieces 26 are shaped with body 27 to fit into a hexagon, but have a point 28 to point at one of the neighboring hexagons.

Returning to FIG. 1 and there is further shown an end of turn combiner 16 which waits until the end of a turn is signaled. As all players have completed their moves the boards are superimposed one upon the other. As a result certain playing pieces of the opposing players may be found to be occupying the same or neighboring territories. In such circumstances a conflict may be found to exist between the two pieces and rules are then used to calculate a result which resolves the conflict, typically by elimination of playing pieces. Typically the result involves elimination of certain pieces, as will be explained below.

An end of turn signal may be generated in one embodiment when both players indicate that they have completed their respective moves. Alternatively a timer may be used and players may be given a maximum time to complete their moves. In the latter version, the moves that are transferred are moves that have been completed. That is to say if a piece is in the middle of being dragged as the time ends then it returns to its place.

In one embodiment the end of turn combiner comprises an activation point for each board, so that the player can indicate completion of his turn. The board carries out superposition following activation of all of the activation points.

As shown in FIG. 3, the playing pieces are progressively ranked. One way of resolving a conflict between two opposing pieces are on the same location is to eliminate the piece with the lower rank. In this case the calculation would involve making such an elimination. If the two opposing pieces are of the same rank then one way to resolve the conflict would be to eliminate both pieces. Another way would be randomly select one of the pieces for elimination.

Referring now to FIG. 5, the playing pieces comprise a directional indicator 28 or pointer, as mentioned above. As the playing pieces are placed on a particular hexagon the directional indicator may be pointed at any surrounding hexagon, as indicated by arrows 30. Preferably the playing piece may be fully rotated as indicated by circular arrow 32 in FIG. 6. In the case of the territories being hexagonal, the pointer may be directed at any one of six neighboring territories.

FIG. 7 is a simplified diagram showing a conflict between white piece 40 and black piece 42. In this case the black piece is eliminated because it is pointed to, or stabbed, by the pointer 28 of white piece 40, leading to the result shown in FIG. 8, where only white piece 40 remains. As will be explained in greater detail below, the ranking between the pieces makes no difference unless both pieces stab each other.

Reference is now made to FIG. 9 which illustrates a situation in which two pieces 44 and 46 are found by the superposition to be at the same location. The lowest ranking of the two pieces is eliminated as explained. This form of elimination is referred to hereinbelow as squashing. If both are of equal rank then both are eliminated. Alternatively one of the pieces is selected at random for elimination.

Referring now to FIG. 10, pieces 48 and 50 point to the same location. The pieces are on the same team and are allowed to point to the same location. If they were opposing pieces then no conflict arises and no elimination occurs.

In one preferred embodiment, the play rules provide that the playing pieces are freely located over the board at the first turn in the gameplay and in subsequent turns can only be moved onto neighboring territories. At all times however the pieces are freely rotatable to point at any of the six neighbors. Alternatives are a fixed initial starting position, as known from chess, or a random starting position set by the computer.

In one embodiment the boards are physical and the end of turn combiner is a mechanical or electronic arrangement which automatically resolves the conflicts and removes the eliminated pieces. In another embodiment the two boards are virtual boards implemented on a screen display and the end of turn combiner is implemented on a digital processor. The processor may be that of a computer, a mobile telephone or any other suitable device.

In another embodiment the two boards are implemented on separate devices which are connected together. Two mobile telephones or two computers may be connected by wire links or by wireless links, say over Bluetooth™, or may be connected by the telephone network, the cellular telephone network, the Internet, a LAN, WAN, a VPN or like network. The various possibilities are discussed in greater detail hereinbelow.

As described above, play is against live opponents. However play may also be against computerized components based on artificial intelligence.

Reference is now made to FIG. 11, which is a simplified flow chart showing the gameplay in a preferred embodiment of a simultaneous turn-based play according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The game starts with an opening screen and if necessary a wait while an opponent joins the game.
The game play begins by providing each player with the same homogenous play board. Each board has a predetermined number of regularly arranged territories, and each player is provided with an identical set of playing pieces. The players may be provided with an opportunity to select the size of the board or the number of the pieces or both.

Each player has an initial turn of placing their playing pieces anywhere on the playing board, and pointing the pieces in any direction. The initial turns are carried out simultaneously. At the end of the simultaneously carried out turns the two boards are superimposed and checked for conflicts, and a result is calculated. The result involves none, some or all of the pieces being eliminated. The resulting boards are then returned to the players with whatever pieces remain. The returned board preferably also shows the positions of the opponent’s pieces. In another embodiment the opponent’s pieces are not shown.

Further turns ensue, although now a further restriction applies that pieces may only be moved to a neighboring location. The game ends when only one player has remaining pieces.

A preferred embodiment is now described in greater detail.

The game is preferably played on a hexagonal board, itself composed of smaller hexagons, the territories. The basic game is itself a hexagon which is composed of 37 smaller hexagons as shown in FIG. 2. However, the game may be played with bigger or smaller boards, the size preferably being selectable at the start of the game depending on the desired level of difficulty or length of the game. As mentioned, the game can be played online, on an internal network, on a physical set of boards, or on any suitable game platform.

Each player has a set of ranked pieces as described above. The basic game is played by two players, each having six pieces of a single color. The pieces are ranked 1-6 according to a set of signs or arrangement of dots or numbers or any other suitable marking. Each piece stands for a specific rank, and typical signs are shown in FIG. 3 referred to above. The skilled player will understand that there are numerous other ways to indicate rank, including simply showing numbers on the pieces.

The game can be played with more or less pieces for each player as desired. Furthermore, the game can be played with more than two players, each having ranked pieces with their own identifiable color. Thus for example three players may play as white, black and red pieces respectively.

The object of the game is to eliminate all of the opponent’s pieces through a series of simultaneously taken turns. Decisions about individual moves are made simultaneously by all players, on hidden boards, which are exact replicas of a main board, and are then exposed simultaneously. All plays are depicted on the main board. With the software version, no hiding is necessary, since each player can make his or her moves on his or her own board, which serves also as a main board. In the case of physical boards of course the two boards must be out of sight of each other.

Each set of simultaneous turns, and their superposition and resolution on the main board, is referred to hereinbelow as an act. A game is composed of a series of acts.

A piece’s movement in any one act can be divided into two distinct elements:

A) The piece can be moved to any adjoining hexagon on the board, or it may of course stay where it is.

B) Then, the point can be rotated to point to any of the six neighboring hexagons, as explained above with respect to FIG. 6.

One preferred constraint of the gameplay is that point is not allowed to extend outwardly of the boundary of the board. A player can leave a piece in its original position, or move only a piece’s point. It is illegal to place two or more of a player’s pieces on the same hexagon, thus the situation in FIG. 12, two black pieces and at the same location is not allowed. However, it is legal to have two or more pieces pointing to the same hexagon, as long as the bodies are placed on different hexagons. Thus the situation in FIG. 10 is allowed. It is preferable that a player is not allowed to point to one of his own pieces.

In the course of one turn, or one act, a player can move all of his pieces, some of them, or none of them, as long as each particular movement of any piece is legal.

As explained, there are two ways of eliminating an opponent’s piece. Hereinafter these ways are known as the stab and the squash. The stab is the elimination of any neighboring piece, regardless of rank, which is located in the neighboring hexagon that is being pointed to. The squash is the elimination of a piece on the same hexagon but only if it is of the same or lower rank.

At the end of an act, if a piece’s point is placed on the same hexagon as an opponent’s piece, the latter piece is eliminated. Thus in FIG. 7 piece 40 stabs piece 42. This is called a ‘stab’ and the result is to leave piece 40 alone as the survivor. The pieces’ ranks do not matter in a case of a stab. For instance, a rank 1 piece can stab and eliminate a rank 6 piece just as well as vice versa.

Reference is now made to FIG. 13 which illustrates two opposing pieces pointing to each other. That is to say, pieces 60 and 62 stab each other. In this case, in a preferred embodiment, the piece with the lower rank is eliminated. As shown, piece 60 has rank 5, and piece 62 has rank 3. Thus piece 62 is eliminated and is taken off the board, to give the result in FIG. 14.

Reference is now made to FIG. 15-1 which illustrates the case in which two pieces of the same rank, 64 and 66, stab each other. In this case both pieces have rank 5. When two opposing pieces of the same rank stab each other at the end of an act, both are eliminated to give the result shown in FIG. 15-2.

The other form of elimination is the squash. When two pieces of two opposing players are placed on the same hexagon at the end of an act, the lower ranked piece is eliminated. This is called a ‘squad’. For example, if player A moves the body of his rank 5 piece to a certain hexagon, and in the same act, player B moves the body of his rank 3 piece to the same hexagon, player B’s rank 3 piece is eliminated and is taken off the board. This was as illustrated above in FIG. 9 where piece 44 eliminates piece 46.

Reference is now made to FIG. 16 which shows a variation of the case in FIG. 15 but where both of the pieces involved in the squash are of the same rank. As illustrated in FIG. 16, when two pieces of the same rank, here 68 and 70, squash each other, both are eliminated.

FIGS. 17 and 18 illustrate more complex interactions involving three and four pieces respectively and explain how such cases are resolved according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 17-1 illustrates the case where piece 70 stabs and eliminates opponent’s piece 72, but is at the same time
eliminated as a result of being squashed by higher ranking piece 74. For instance, piece 70 is of rank 2 and stabs piece 72, a rank 3 piece. However piece 74 is a rank 5 piece. Thus both piece 70 and 72 are eliminated and are taken off the board, to leave piece 74 alone in FIG. 17-2.

Reference is now made to FIG. 18, where the above example is extended so that piece 72 is also stabbing rank 4 piece 76. In this case the elimination in FIG. 17 occurs as before but also the rank 4 piece 76 is additionally eliminated. The end result as shown in FIG. 18-2, is the same. A potentially unlimited chain reaction can in fact be induced, and theoretically, all the pieces on the board can be eliminated in the first act.

The opening act has different rules from the following acts. In the opening act each player places his or her pieces anywhere on his or her hidden board. The only limitations are that two pieces of the same player can not be placed on the same hexagon, as explained above, or cannot point out of the board or cannot point to a player's own pieces. When the opening act is completed, and the main board shows the superposition of both players' simultaneous openings, pieces are eliminated and are taken off the board according to the aforementioned rules of elimination.

Reference is now made to FIG. 19 which illustrates the sequences involved in an opening act. Stages 80 and 82 illustrate two players' opening moves of the opening act in which they place their pieces as desired. Stage 84 shows the two moves being superimposed and stage 86 shows the result of the elimination to leave white with a material advantage of 3:2, or a qualitative advantage of 13:7 according to the scoring method discussed hereinbelow.

A game is over when only one player has pieces left on the board. This player is the winner of the game. If all players lose all their remaining pieces in the same act, then the game is tied.

The game may end when a given number of turns have passed without any pieces having been eliminated. In a variation the winner may then be the player whose pieces have the lower score, thus providing an incentive for the weaker player to survive an extended end game, and making it impossible for the stronger player to make time-wasting moves until the game finishes.

The given number of turns may be set for example at seven, or may even be left to the user as a customization.

When a game is finished, the ranks of the remaining pieces of the winning player are added up, to give a total which is the winner's score. For instance, if at the end of a game, player B has pieces ranked 1, 2 and 5 left on the board, then player B has achieved an 8 points win. Needless to say, players can play a series of games, and keep a running score, or tournaments can be played involving multiple players each playing each other. The winner of the tournament could be the player with the highest running total at the end of the tournament, or heats could be played in which running totals are kept, followed by a series of knockouts leading to a final.

Many other ways of organizing a tournament will occur to the person skilled in the art.

Reference is now made to FIG. 20 which illustrates a server 90 that provides the game to remote client-based players 91 over a networked link 92 such as via the Internet. The server provides the users with a client which provides them with the board, the playing pieces and the functionality to move the playing pieces in accordance with the rules. Alternatively the client is already located at the players and the server is merely needed for supervision, resolution of the individual acts or for the running of a tournament.

End of turn or end of act resolution of the gameplay may be carried out in one of three ways. One possibility is to carry out resolution at the server. A second possibility is to carry out resolution at one of the clients which is chosen as the master, and a third possibility is to carry out resolution simultaneously at both clients. The latter is possible because the rules for resolution are fully deterministic so that both clients will necessarily come to the same conclusion. The only requirement is for each client to communicate its local move to the other client.

The game may be provided as part of a website that offers numerous games. Prizes may be awarded to winners. The site may require a membership and then use the membership fees to award prizes to the best players. The site may provide tournaments as described above. A site providing such a game may be supported by advertising. Alternatively the game may be provided to different web content providers in return for royalties, or usage fees or for a share of advertising revenue.

The game may alternatively be provided as part of an online gambling site. Players may place bets on the outcome of the game, as with many other games. Bets may be placed on the game itself, say on whether they will win or not, or bets may be placed on the final score of a game. Bets may be placed against the other players or against the site provider, as desired.

Tournaments could be provided, with winners emerging on the basis of best of three, or any other suitable arrangement. In such a tournament the winner may be decided by the number of games won, but an overall score may be based on the scores of the pieces at the end of each game that is won.

Reference is now made to FIG. 21, which is a simplified diagram illustrating two computers 100 and 102 in close proximity and connected via a wireless link 104. Wireless link 104 could be a Bluetooth™ link or an infra-red link or it could be a link via a local wireless LAN. Alternatively the wireless link could be replaced by a wire link. Clients are present at each computer and gameplay is as above except that there is no server to supervise so either resolution is carried out at one client designated as the master or both clients carry out the resolution.

The game may usefully be provided for cellular users. The game is relatively small and is suitable for most types of mobile telephone. The game play can be supported by GPRS or WAP communication between distant telephones or by Bluetooth™ communication between physically close telephones. FIG. 22 illustrates a server 110 which is connected via cellular Internet 112 to mobile telephones 114 and 116. The cellular telephones may download clients from the server 110 and then play independently, or alternatively a connection to the server may be required to support play.

Again, the server may support tournaments, so that mobile telephone subscribers can play against each other in leagues or in knockout competitions etc. With mobile telephones, the subscriber's telephone bill may be used to charge for usage and thus pay for the site and fund prizes, as desired.

It is expected that during the life of this patent many relevant devices and systems will be developed and the scope of the terms herein is intended to include all such new technologies a priori.
It is appreciated that certain features of the invention, which are, for clarity, described in the context of separate embodiments, may also be provided in combination in a single embodiment. Conversely, various features of the invention, which are, for brevity, described in the context of a single embodiment, may also be provided separately or in any suitable combination.

Although the invention has been described in conjunction with specific embodiments thereof, it is evident that many alternatives, modifications and variations will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, it is intended to embrace all such alternatives, modifications and variations that fall within the spirit and broad scope of the appended claims. All publications, patents, and patent applications mentioned in this specification are herein incorporated in their entirety by reference into the specification, to the same extent as if each individual publication, patent or patent application was specifically and individually indicated to be incorporated herein by reference. In addition, citation or identification of any reference in this application shall not be construed as an admission that such reference is available as prior art to the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. Apparatus for simultaneous turn based play comprising: a first play board, said first board having a substantially homogeneous layout comprising a predetermined number of regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories, a second play board, also having said substantially homogeneous layout comprising said predetermined number of regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories, a first set of play pieces for placing on said first play board and moving between said territories, a second set of play pieces for placing on said second play board and moving between said territories, and an end of turn combiner configured for superposition of said first set of play pieces and said second set of play pieces at the end of each one of a plurality of turns and calculation of an overall result for said playing pieces.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories are hexagons.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said playing pieces are progressively ranked, and said calculation comprises eliminating a lower ranking one of said playing pieces when said superposition determines that said playing pieces are located on a same territory.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, comprising eliminating both of said pieces located on a same territory when both of said pieces are of equivalent rank.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said playing pieces comprise a directional indicator, said directional indicator being pointable at a user selectable neighboring territory.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein said calculation comprises eliminating a playing piece pointed at by said directional indicator.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein said pieces are progressively ranked and wherein when two opposing playing pieces indicate each other then said calculation comprises eliminating a lowest ranking of said pieces.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said eliminating comprises eliminating both of said pieces when said pieces are of equivalent rank.

9. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said playing pieces comprise a directional indicator, said directional indicator being pointable at a user selectable one of six neighboring territories.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein said calculation comprises eliminating a playing piece pointed at by said directional indicator.

11. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said playing pieces are freely locatable over said board at a first turn and are movable by only a single territory at subsequent turns.

12. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein each board is physical and said end of turn combiner comprises a mechanical arrangement.

13. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein each board is implemented on a respective computer and said computers are connected together via an electronic connection.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein said electronic connection is a wireless connection.

15. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said electronic connection is a network.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said network is a cellular telephone network.

17. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said end of turn combiner comprises an activation point associated with each board respectively, and is operable to carry out said superposition following activation of all of said activation points.

18. A method of simultaneous turn-based play comprising: providing each one of a plurality of players with substantially identical play boards, each board having a predetermined number of regularly arranged territories, providing each one of said plurality of players with an identical set of playing pieces, allowing all players simultaneous turns to place their playing pieces on said playing board, at the end of said simultaneous turns superimposing said play boards and providing a play result comprising eliminating ones of said playing pieces and leaving others of said playing pieces as remaining pieces, returning said play boards to said players with said remaining pieces and repeating said simultaneous turns and said eliminating until only one player has remaining pieces.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein a first of said simultaneous turns comprises moving each playing piece freely to any one of said territories and subsequent turns permit moving of each playing piece only to a neighboring territory.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein each territory is hexagonal, thereby to allow six neighboring territories.

21. The method of claim 18, comprising providing each playing piece with a ranking, and at said eliminating, eliminating a lowest ranking one of playing pieces superimposed on a same territory.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein, when both of said pieces on said same territory are of equivalent rank, eliminating both pieces.

23. The method of claim 18, comprising providing each playing piece with a directional indicator for indicating one of respective neighboring territories, and at said eliminating, eliminating any opposing piece on said indicated neighboring territory.

24. The method of claim 18, comprising providing each piece with a ranking, and providing each piece with a directional indicator for indicating one of respective neighboring territories.
territories, and where two opposing pieces both indicate each other, eliminating a lowest ranking one of said pieces.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein, when said two opposing pieces both indicating each other are of equal rank then eliminating both pieces.

26. A networked server comprising therewithin apparatus for simultaneous turn based play by remotely located client based players, the apparatus comprising:

- a client interaction unit for providing to a first player a first play board, said first board having a substantially homogenous layout comprising predetermined number of regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories, the client interaction unit further being for providing to a second player a second play board, also having said substantially homogenous layout comprising said predetermined number of regularly spaced and regularly shaped territories, the client interaction unit further being configured to provide said first player with a first set of play pieces for placing on said first play board and moving between said territories, and said second player with a second set of play pieces for placing on said second play board and moving between said territories, the server further providing an end of turn combiner for superposition of said first set of play pieces and said second set of play pieces at the end of each one of a plurality of turns and calculation of an overall result for said playing pieces.