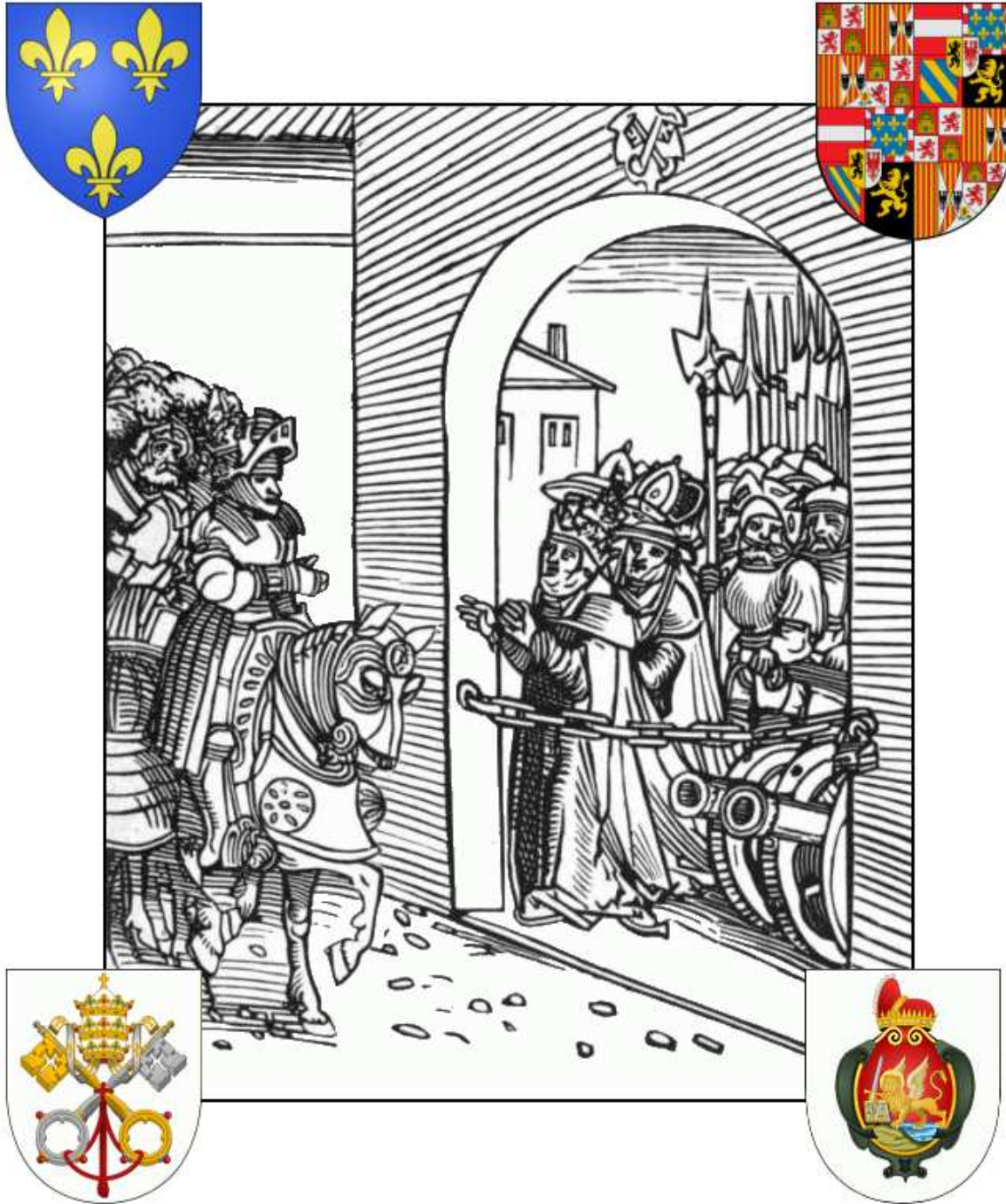


# Pike & Plunder

Wargames Campaign Rules for the Italian Wars



Version 2.0

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## **Introduction**

This is game for two, three or four players wishing to fight a map and table-top wargames campaign set during the early Great Italian Wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Although the campaign is not a historical refight of the wars I have tried to include many of the elements that characterised them. Pike and Plunder could, with a little work, be transformed into a board game but that was not my intention. The campaign mechanisms are designed to be usable with any table-top war game rule set.

The prime objective of the campaign is to put a series of table-top battles into a narrative context. Several other factors, such as diplomacy, have been written into the rules to add spice, interest and uncertainty but the table-top military aspect is the driving force. There will undoubtedly be more major battles than ever took place historically but I see this as all to the good. Pike and Plunder has been devised as a fun game, rather than a historical treatise on 16<sup>th</sup> century warfare and politics. The latter would require much more work than can reasonably be expected from anyone trying to relax after a hard day's work.

The core game mechanism is driven by a deck of cards. They allow forces to be raised and manoeuvred to attack enemies on land, or at sea, as well as the laying and relieving of sieges. They require armies to be paid and revenue to be raised. Finally, they cover diplomacy, assassinations and the general underhand sneakiness so typical of the period. Where possible, I have tried to detail most of the rules concerning the campaign cards on the cards themselves to avoid the need of constant reference to the rules.

Throughout, I have attempted to allow the campaign to proceed at pace. As a result several of the mechanisms have been abstracted into simple tables, trackers or dice rolls. There is also no need for an umpire to co-ordinate all of the action – as you will see everyone has a stake in the game.

Pike and Plunder is the product of more years than I care to remember devising and running various historical campaigns; some successful, others not so. I have tried to apply the three main lessons I learned. Firstly, keep it simple stupid; so I have minimised complexity wherever possible. Secondly, I have tried to keep all of the players involved at every stage of the map campaign to avoid players becoming bored and dropping out half way through. Finally, I have steered clear of the dreaded paperwork normally associated with campaign wargaming.

For the first time, this version includes author's notes to help those who embarking on their first campaign and to explain the rationale behind the various mechanisms used.

I hope you enjoy playing Pike and Plunder. I am always happy to receive feedback, talk about the rules or provide more detailed explanations. To do this, contact me via the Pike and Plunder blog at [www.pikeandplunder.blogspot.com](http://www.pikeandplunder.blogspot.com).

James Roach  
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### **Author's Notes**

**[1]** I have included No Treaty as this will probably be the standard state of affairs between players and it is useful for email campaigns as the default position. Having spelt this out, players should not feel picked on if no one seems to like them much – this is war after all. When playing Pike and Plunder my advice is that they should not undertake treaties or alliances lightly, and break them gently. A rash moment of opportunism against a ally might colour any dealings with other players in the future – and the adage “vengeance is a dish best served cold” might come back to haunt you.

**[2]** It will largely depend on the table-top rules in use as to how a Warrior Pope will affect the troops under his command. I suggest that, if your chosen rule set covers it, he is treated as a Sacred Relic, or something similar.

**[3]** Nearly all actions carried out on sequence cards require the expenditure of florins. Florins are used to put men into the field, to supply troops on the march, and pay troops when the need arises. They are used to carry out diplomatic actions, assassinations, and many other actions; florins are the sinews of war. To win a campaign, players must balance finances and military strategy. There is nothing more disheartening than to see a strong military force on the brink of significant gain, dissolve before one's eyes due to lack of funds.

**[4]** To add flavour to the campaign it is a good idea to give each general a name. “General A is advancing on Bologna” is a little impersonal and characterless.

**[5]** Though abstract this method of representing the value of an army simplifies everything and allows the campaign system to be used with almost any set of table-top rules. Most tabletop rules have a points system with their army lists and it is very easy to multiply the Florin value of the army to fit with it.

**[6]** I did not intend for naval battles to be fought out on the table-top but there is nothing to stop players from doing so. All that is required is a simple mechanism to transfer the action from board to table-top and back again with the odds slightly stacked for the defending player who would normally maintain control in the event of a tie.

**[7]** In an email campaign each player with an agent in the NPS should be contacted and asked how many influence they wishes to spend, and how.

**[8]** It may seem counter intuitive to penalise the overwhelming use of numbers in an assault. My thought process, when devising this mechanism, was that too many troops trying to force their way into a breach would cause confusion, a log jam, and unnecessary casualties. You may stack the odds, but you may pay dearly for it.

**[9]** One of the chief reasons I decided to use the ‘florin value’ system, and to keep the values relatively low, was to enable as much flexibility as possible. Where two small armies meet it is possible to increase the multiplier to give more units, or in large battles where insufficient miniatures are available to decrease it. Two observations I would like to make: Firstly, it is not a good idea to play

around with the chosen multiplier / divisor too much, just so you can get all of your figures onto the table-top on every occasion - this will just make all of the actions feel very samey. Secondly, remember that this is a campaign – it is a marathon not a sprint – and there will, in all likelihood, be lots of battles to fight before it is over; this being so, try to set your multiplier so that most games will be over in an average session's play, with only the very big ones taking more time than that.

**[10]** Grand tactical manoeuvre, the process by which an enemy army is strategically met then cornered and forced to fight at a disadvantage, is a very difficult thing to simulate. Several methods of doing this have been proposed but I found them contrived and wanting, not to mention time consuming and a little tedious. Therefore I prefer to do away with pre-battle manoeuvring and represent its essence on the table-top by the use of battlefield objectives.

**[11]** I cannot say exactly what percentage of casualties a unit must suffer before they equate to significant because casualties reflect different things in different rules. But, as a rule of thumb, if the unit has a fair chance of being routed they are significant.

**[12]** You may view things with a different eye and amend the post battle casualty assessment – which you are free to do of course – but do not do this lightly or you will find Italy stacked with big armies, and find that winning a pitched battle does not reap the rewards it should. Also, if one player keeps winning battles, the others will be forced to league together against it – just to survive – which is very much in period.