Warlords V Design Proposal- Introduction

Posted by Slayer of Cliffracers - 01 Apr 2011 00:52

I have decided to write or rather partly rewrite my original plans for how Heroes V should be. We will start though with an analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of Heroes III and Heroes IV the competing influences for the development of Heroes V.

Heroes III

Strengths

1. It's immense customizability due to the lack of fixed sides and races at all. Everything can be combined freely with everything else.

2. A system of diplomacy that is flexible and is not penalized (because allies can jointly win a game without being penalized)

Weaknesses

1. Overly flexible strategic play which overly favors fast elite groups led by heroes at the expense of all else. Partly this is due to poor AI but partly game mechanics.

2. Lack of a need to protect and establish large base-areas as long as you have a large amount of money and 1 city: this reflects the lack of political depth of the game in that it is possible to occupy foreign cities and buy troop production as long as you have money instantly anywhere.

3. Lack of political depth in the sense that most of the map is controlled initially by neutral cities which much be conquered regardless of whether they are 'your' people or not.

4. Lack of political depth in the sense that the entire population of cities is represented by 4 units which can quite easily be pillaged away or the cities razed without political consequences for your side or consequences at all.

5. Serious interface problems related to units, such as the inability to tranfer items directly between heroes and the tendency of heroes to accidentally 'drown' over water.

6. It isn't possible to see all the units present in a city your control, only 4 of the one's you can recruit.

Heroes IV

Strengths

1. Political depth through the implementation of race relationships separate from the relationships of the side's to each-other.

2. Sane strategic play with meaningful 'front-lines' created by the standardization of all units movement and more powerful town defenses.

3. Towns belong to specific races and you can acquire control of those towns by diplomacy rather than merely force if they are of your race.

4. Tactical combat allowing to decide fight order flexibly in each battle.

Weaknesses

1. Lack of customizability leads to an extremely bland game indeed especially given the limited selection of races.

2. Insanely powerful warlords inside impregnable capitals tend to lead to ridiculous losses just to finish off defeated sides. This is made necessary however by the implementation of immovable Warlords in the first place.

3. 'Moral Racism' rather similar to that in Age of Wonders. Morality is assigned to units rather than to sides, this doesn't matter due to lack of customization but it would matter if greater customization were introduced.

4. Lack of political depth in that the race relationships are unalterable and your atrocities towards other races are ignored.

5. No diplomacy.

6. No ships.

7. Tedious movement due to lack of vectoring.

8. Basically it's an inferior version of Age of Wonders (enough said).

Feel free to comment on other weaknesses in the game design (not including AI problems). Now onto Heroes V.

Warlords V as written here. Warlords V design diary

Has a fairly major problem with it. While Heroes IV is not perfect, Heroes III is not flawless either. As written it takes a number of Heroes III's weaknesses and combines them with Heroes IV weaknesses. These weaknesses are.

1. From Heroes III: A lack of distinction between side and race; this was fixed in Heroes IV with the

race/race-wheel system but has been essentially re-introduced. This seriously hampers the development of any serious and realistic model of race relations that is based upon actual in-game behavior of the sides/race's in question rather than to be mentioned moral racism.

If an invading foreign army has just burned down your home and killed your family do you really care if they are motivated by 'good' or 'evil', depravity or virtue?

2. From Heroes IV: Moral Racism is taken to insane levels by the introduction of the attribute system to the sides/race. Instead of the different races/sides possessing attributes it is as if the attributes have now managed to possess races! For instance under constructing a side.

* Determines what your cities look like (e.g. a “Depraved” side gets the city made of skulls)

The problem with this is that while specializing in torture and depravity may with the likes of Lord Bane make sense it does not fit for instance with the undead of the Garden who are good, or at least not evil in Heroes III. While Knights are certainly not defined by being virtuous, for instance the treacherous Gildines. That they are treacherous however should not make them dark elves nor should their cities look like such! I should not be forced to make my Gildines virtuous so that they can look like Knights.

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Re: Warlords V Design Proposal- Introduction

Posted by KGB - 08 Jul 2011 06:05

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Dan,

coredweller wrote:

But since you have to release your patches and its not for personal use then I see why you balk at having to do this.

Correct. Everything I release, I have to pass back to Steve since he owns the code. So yeah, he wouldn't want something like that released for obvious reasons.

The other thing someone once asked for and that *might* be possible would be to extract all the unit data (hits/move/strength/race) from the code and put in in XML files (which the game uses now extensively). Then players could edit those to their hearts content. You wouldn't get new units or new

skills or be able to change races or race positions but you could assign stats/skills to your liking with the understanding that the AI would be unable to take advantage of some of those changes.

That is a good idea. Make it a spell that every Hero can cast. So that its not just a Nature spell or a combat spell. I would def settle for that.

I'd put it in the hero spell sphere that I added in 1.05. Everyone including Combat only warlords gets access to that. Of course it would cost mana to cast so you couldn't move around a lot.

Is it done in all C++? C#? VB 6? VB.NET? VB Script?

Good to know you can create virtual machines. I am never sure who can and can't to set up custom development environments.

The code is all C++ with XML configuration files. Not much in the way of comments or explanations so you sort of have to feel your way through things when first figuring out the code.

Trust me I do not blame you at all for not wanting to do it. It is probably a mess and very time consuming. But let me just say though, if it was me who had the code, I would be vigorously augmenting it to make the best Warlords game possible. Not for money, for fun, and to advance the game past where it is currently.

It's definitely a lot of time. Chasing down variables and bugs and figuring out code that you didn't write and making sure you didn't break the AI or something else when you add new features/menus etc.

When I started in 2005 there were still a lot of players playing the game. So the effort was worthwhile. I

know at one time Steve tracked over 1000 downloads of the 1.05 patch in 2008. There would have been others at mirror sites. So it seems a fair number of players found the patches plus the game was sold for a while by Direct2Drive.

But now in 2011, it's an 8 year old game. I bet less than 100 people still play it regularly. Hard to justify spending time on that. Plus as I said, the game is so old now that it's lacking in a lot support for things like wide screen monitors, DirectX 10/11. It doesn't install properly in Vista/Win7 due to writing saves in the game directory instead of My Documents etc etc. To do another real patch would require fixing all that and that's before doing any real work to improve the game.

But again I realize I cannot so I guess I just have to get over that fact and help out while I make my own game. *sigh*

Why not make your own game then?

There is already source code available for download. LordsAWar (link at the left) is an open source GNU project you can download right now. A War2 clone but it's up and running with units/maps etc. You could easily have the base stuff all ready to go and just add the new features you want. FreeLords is another one with code already there but it's in Java (which is probably the better long term option since it would work on Linux and probably IPads etc).

Another good open source game is Colossus. It's also Java based. I have the source for that one and it's very similarly written code wise to Warlords IV in terms of unit/stack organization/multi player support. It's not a Warlords game, but the concepts are similar so you might be able to adapt to what you want (hex based though).

KGB

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