EUROPA® UNIVERSALIS IV

- Educator's Guide -

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(Game Version 1.34.5.0)

Europa Universalis IV: Educator's Guide Part 1: Lesson Plans and Logistics for Playing in History Class

Introduction

Europa Universalis IV is a complex and engrossing game about states in the early modern world that takes time to learn to play and analyze as a game history. Accordingly, this educator's guide has three parts. Part 1 (this part) covers organizing class time for students to learn to play, purposefully play, and analyze *EUIV*. Part 2 provides a tutorial for learning to play *EUIV* that is as basic as the game gets: managing a state consisting of a single province. After learning the absolute basics of state management here, teachers and students can more effectively transition to the excellent in-game tutorials designed for general players. Finally, Part 3 uses the guide in part 2 to provide a guide for academic and classroom analysis of *EUIV*. This analysis is based on the Historical Problem Space framework (McCall (2020; 2022a; 2022b) and draws on teaching principles I have developed in *Gaming the Past Second Edition* (McCall 2022a).

It's important before we begin, to briefly consider a few principles about history education and the effective use of historical video games in class. First, history is best taught as an investigation of the past. It should not be the delivery of pre-formed expert opinions about what happened and why that students must simply learn and deliver on assessments. That sort of teaching promotes intellectual passivity. It promotes the idea that history is nothing more than the established thoughts of experts and that students cannot be historians. Instead, history is best taught as a critical engagement with evidence from the past, whether the evidence is a primary source like a diary or letter, or a secondary source like an article from an academic historian. Ideally, students of history learn that all sources must be critically read, analyzed, compared, and corroborated to deliver defensible interpretations of the past and its meaning for us today (McCall 2022a).

In this light, the ideal goal for most history lessons involving video games is not to have the game deliver content that the students passively receive or note. Rather, the goal is to have students learn to play the game, analyze the game through purposeful play, and critique the models and interpretations the game presents about the past. That critique should be based on critically selected evidence: readings, documentaries, teacher lectures, *etc*.

Historical games, however, are not like other historical media, especially texts. They offer functionally cohesive (See McCall 2024 forthcoming) models that players interact with as player agents (more on this to follow). Some of those models of historical agency and process the game offers will be **more defensible**. In other

words, they can reasonably be supported by critically evaluated evidence. Some models will be less defensible. *Europa Universalis IV* can be expected–like all game histories and <u>all academic histories too</u> – to offer models about systems and agents in the past that are both more and less defensible according to the evidence and interpretation you, the educator, and your students rely upon. That's the point: engaged play and critique of a game are the goals, not passive memorization of what a particular game suggests about the past. The deepest, most powerful academic learning from lessons involving historical games comes from the act of analyzing and critiquing a game using valid evidence (McCall 2010, 2022) And in the case of *EUIV*, most of the game's models focus on the early modern state, a period in-game from 1444 to 1821.

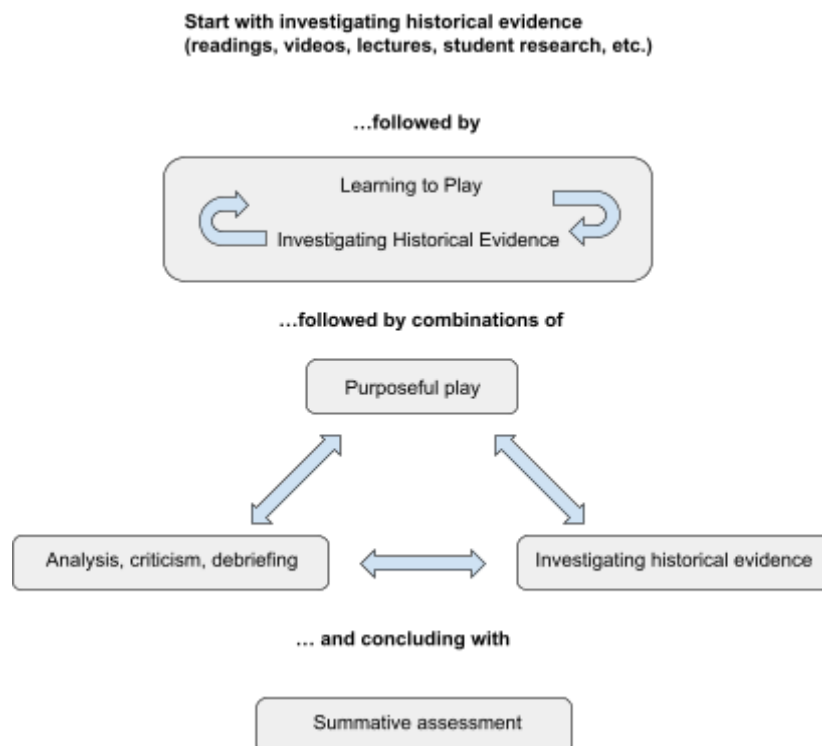## The Four Parts of a Unit on Europa Universalis IV

There are four core steps for effectively crafting a unit using *EUIV* as a learning tool.

1. **Investigating historical evidence:** though it is listed first, the critical step of investigating historical evidence can take place at any time in the unit involving *EUIV* and, ideally, should happen at several points throughout the unit. This evidence can consist of all the sources history educators regularly employ: primary and secondary sources, classroom lectures, documentaries, textbooks etc.

[Educator Notes: Part 3 of the Educator's Guide discusses approaching EUIV as a game history and suggests some more critical historical questions the game raises.]

2. **Learning to play:** Students do not have to master the game (a task that could take countless hours) to critique it, but they do have to effectively learn the basics of play first – how the game models basically operate. So begin by structuring lessons so that students learn to play. Trying to introduce too much analysis of the game at the beginning will only overwhelm students. **Help them learn to play EUIV first**. Then move into more purposeful play.

3. **Purposeful play:** once students are comfortable with the basics of *EUIV* gameplay, move into lessons and gameplay sessions that combine further play with analysis of gameplay. The goal of this purposeful play is to strengthen students' understanding of **how** to play EUIV while also considering, through note-taking and analysis questions and exercises, the historical models *EUIV* presents. The purposeful play stage is also a great time to review or consider more historical evidence that will be useful for critiquing *EUIV*'s models of the past

4. **Analysis, criticism, debriefing:** Using the historical evidence that has been critiqued and analyzed along the way, and the analysis notes and ideas gained from purposeful play, shift to solidify students understanding of the past through the explicit critique and analysis on *EUIV* through class discussions, reflective writings, analytical essays etc.

Please note that while these four stages are arranged in a rough order, it tends to be most effective to work the introduction of historical investigations into multiple stages of the process. So, reviewing historical evidence or introducing new evidence as part of the purposeful play stage can be very effective. Purposeful play can and should be intermixed with sessions of analysis. Those analyses may warrant more investigation of evidence, more gameplay, etc.

Start with investigating historical evidence
(readings, videos, lectures, student research, etc.)

...followed by

Learning to Play
Investigating Historical Evidence

...followed by combinations of

Purposeful play

Analysis, criticism, debriefing ⟷ Investigating historical evidence

... and concluding with

Summative assessment

Finally,

5. **Summative assessment**: Have students develop and demonstrate their understanding through a variety of means ranging from analytical essays to presentations, to class discussions, and so on.

The general structure of these five steps with learning outcomes, instructional strategies and activities, and assessment will be presented in tables below. For more details on how to analyze *EUIV* as a game history, see Part 3 of this *Educator's Guide.* For more detailed discussion and breakdown of lesson plans along with examples of assessment prompts, see McCall (2022a), *Gaming the Past Second Edition* (Routledge)

Preliminaries

Before beginning a unit with *EUIV*, it is important to visualize **how** students will play the game and what computer hardware that will require. It is essential to plan for the hardware affordances and restrictions of your particular class. *EUIV* requires a PC running Windows, Linux, MacIOS or Steam IOS. The precise system requirements can be found online, here: [Europa Universalis IV on Steam (steampowered.com)](). There are all sorts of possibilities for how students might play the game ranging from using school computer labs with the game installed, to having students purchase and play on their own computers (and share with classmates whose machines do not have the necessary hardware). More than one student can play a single game of EUIV in small playgroups of no more than 4 students. The group plays a single game and discusses, takes notes, and makes gameplay decisions as a group.[1] Indeed, small groups can be optimal because they take the individual gaming experience and make it more of a lab-like experience with room for discussion and notes (see McCall 2022). One can even effectively learn about history and critique *EUIV* using a single instance of the game, operated in class by the educator and projected for the class to see.

A related consideration: will students be able to play the game during class time (through school computers or their own laptops) either individually or in small groups or will all play sessions take place outside of class time? Neither is necessarily better but the educator needs to make sure they are allocating enough in-class and outside-of-class work time for students to learn to play and enough opportunities for students who require more assistance in learning the game to get assistance.

For this guide, we will assume an optimal set up. Students will be able to either play EUIV individually or in small groups of no more than four students per game. The instructor can introduce the game in class by projecting it for the class.

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[1] Note that EUIV does have an intriguing Cooperative Play mode where more than one student can manage the same country on different computers. Successfully doing so, in my opinion, requires that students first learn the basics of single state management outlined in the Part 2 tutorial.

Learning to Play

Realistically if the plan is for students to learn to play and analyze *EUIV*–a complex strategy game–in any detail perhaps six hours of time will be needed to gain familiarity with basic gameplay. This does not need to be only strictly playtime but can be intermixed with quick reflection and analytical sections about learning to play the game and the core models of the game.

It will depend on the class, but with a game of *EUIV*'s complexity, it's generally not a great idea to simply tell students, "go learn to play!" Some students will accept this challenge eagerly and do fine. Others will be overwhelmed and, as a result, even less likely to learn how to play and how to critique the game as a model of history.

The Bremen tutorial in part 2 offers a path to get students comfortable with gameplay basics. Depending on the responsibility the educator wants to place on the students to learn the game themselves, students could be tasked to play through the Bremen tutorial without any prior exposure to the game. In this case students ideally (and small groups can be very effective here too) will have the tutorial available in print or onscreen as they play *EUIV*.

Introducing the game and gameplay first through direct instruction of the Bremen Tutorial in part 2, however, will likely be more effective. The tutorial has been written so that it can be used more-or-less as the instruction-guide for the educator as they guide students. In this case students should have notebooks available (or even a physical or digital printout of the tutorial for annotation) and be tasked with taking notes. The notes at this point should focus on helping them effectively play the Bremen tutorial. This is an important point: **students need to learn to play before they can effectively analyze.** Jumping into deep analytical questions before students learn to play can be very counterproductive. Learn to play first.

Plan	Learning Outcomes	Instructional Strategies	Assessments
#1	Students will learn the basics of game play, how to control the game, and how to operate a simple state in *EUIV* (1-1.5 hours)	Setup: - Project an instance of *EUIV* onscreen. - Provide digital or physical copies of the Bremen tutorial guide to students Instruction - Model gameplay essentials on-screen and talk students through the Bremen tutorial - Student notes focus on what individuals need to know and remember to play the game OR (if possible) - Students play the Bremen tutorial on their own computers, following the teacher's guidance (Approximately 1 hour)	Possibilities - Annotated Bremen guide notes - A written or oral (recorded) reflection of students' subsequent play experience as Bremen - An annotated screenshot of their Bremen, 30 years into the game with annotations that point out features of the game (use the Historical Problem Space framework in part 3 to identify these features
#2	Students will demonstrate understanding of the basics of game play, how to control the game, and how to operate a simple state in EUIV. (1-1.5 hours)	Students play the Bremen tutorial alone or in groups, in class or for homework (approximately 1 - 1.5 hours; can be divided into multiple classes or used as an activity for part of class.)	- A written or oral (recorded) reflection of their subsequent play experience as Bremen - An annotated screenshot of their Bremen, 30 years into the game with annotations that point out features of the game (use the Historical Problem Space framework in part 3 to identify these features

Optimally, an in-class introductory session will be followed by students playing the Bremen tutorial in or outside of class, individually or in groups, to reinforce the teacher's introduction.

Notes on the Lesson Plans:

Annotated screenshots are a helpful way for students both to enhance and to demonstrate their understanding of the game. Essentially, players take screenshots of their game in progress. Then they make annotations, either on physical copies or through textboxes in standard word processing software. The annotations should consist of lines, circles, etc highlighting key elements on the game screen attached to text explaining or critiquing that element. See *Gaming the Past Second Edition* for more discussion.

Written or oral reflections of play experience can helpfully focus on either a) the experiences of the student-player as a learner, b) the experiences of the student-player as the historical player-agent they are in the game, or c) both.

    Some prompts for a):
- Describe your experience playing the game:
- What did you find confusing?
- How did your understanding of the game improve?
- What are the things you would like to understand better in your next play session?

    Some prompts for b):
- Describe your gameplay experience as the state of Bremen:
- What were your goals?
- What actions and choices could and did you make?
- What were the obstacles and challenges to reaching your goals?

Next Steps for Learning to Play

The first steps take about three hours as do these next steps.

Some students may not be ready to engage fully in purposeful play after completing the Bremen tutorial once. Some will need to play the Bremen tutorial again to reinforce their understanding of the basics of gameplay. Since Bremen is very limited in its gameplay possibilities, it is better if possible to transition students relatively soon to the *EUIV* in-game tutorials. The Basic Tutorial covers controls, unit control, production and war. From there, students can either play the Advanced Tutorial or jump to the Spanish Empire Tutorial and begin playing as that large state. Another alternative is to play as Portugal. Portugal provides a state with very few enemies, access to the Atlantic for colonization, and the benefit of not too many provinces making up the state. That makes it a moderate challenge to play compared to states like England, France, and Spain.

In addition to the in-game tutorials, Mordred Vikings' 4 Youtube tutorials on the basics of *Europa Universalis* can be very helpful guides for learning to play.

- [Europa Universalis IV: Tutorial For Complete Beginners with MordredViking #1 - The Basics - YouTube](#)
- [Europa Universalis IV: Tutorial For Complete Beginners with MordredViking #2 - Trade - YouTube](#)
- [Europa Universalis IV: Tutorial For Complete Beginners with MordredViking #3 - Diplomacy - YouTube](#)
- [Europa Universalis IV: Tutorial For Complete Beginners with MordredViking #4 - Armies and Navies - YouTube](#)

If there is time, students should gradually experiment with playing as a particular state for longer stretches of time, say 60 years. As students expand their understanding of gameplay and undertake playing as Spain or Portugal, the principles of the Bremen tutorial should be maintained, especially the primary reminders (see part 2 for more details):

- **Keep it simple and keep the game clock running!**
- **Don't worry about making the mathematically best decisions; try to roleplay**
- **Work on achieving one or two national missions; then move on to others**

There are many aspects of the game introduced during the in-game tutorials, but the main obstacle to successful play in *EUIV* is the new player's not-uncommon sense of being overwhelmed. Reminding them that the game is a running simulator and that it models historical processes regardless of whether the player plays optimally or not should help.

Transitioning from Learning to Play to More Purposeful Play and Analysis

Once students have been given some space, time, and support to learn the very basics of *EUIV*, teachers can start introducing more elements of purposeful play. The hallmarks of purposeful play are more awareness of game play as students play and frequent pauses for note-taking, discussion, and analysis. These notes, discussion, and analysis can focus both on how the game portrays the past and how it compares to the historical evidence obtained through research or various class modes (lectures, readings, documentaries, etc.).

Note-taking in the purposeful-play stage can be effectively organized and guided by treating *EUIV* as a historical problem space (HPS), a concept that is elaborated in part 3 of the guide.[2] Early questions about *EUIV* can focus on the features of the HPS the game demonstrates, so: Player-Agent, Roles, Goals, Gameworld, Gameworld Elements, Player Agent-Action Choices. Again, these are discussed in detail in part 3.

Your flexibility as an educator is important here. After 3 hours of play focused on learning-to-play, a number of students really should be able to handle the in-game tutorials. Some will even be ready to jump into their first larger state: Portugal is a great candidate as far as difficulty. But some students may need more practice and instruction. There will be a mix in each class. So, plan for ways for those who need more tutorials to get those (working with more skilled student players or the instructor; playing the Bremen tutorial again, etc.).

The structure of purposeful play sessions, if conducted in a class, is similar to those for learning to play. Each of these sessions can last 1-1.5 hours.

Plan	Learning Outcomes	Instructional Strategies	Assessments
#1	Students play *EUIV* and develop a set of notes about how the game models states in the early modern period	Teacher points out the particular aspects of the game's historical problem space students should focus observation, discussion and notation on for the session. Students play as individuals and small groups in class. As they play they take notes about *EUIV* as a historical problem space of early modern states. Instructor pauses play every so often (say every 15-20 minutes) for the instructor to ask the class questions about the history portrayed in the game. Using the Historical Problem Space framework to guide analysis.	Possibilities - HPS focused notes (see part 3) - A written or oral (recorded) reflection of their play experience. - An annotated screenshot of their current state, 30 years into the game with annotations on core HPS features.

[2] More details about the Historical Problem Space framework for historical game analysis are in McCall 2012, 2020, 2022a, 2022b

#2	Students analyze a feature of *EUIV*'s model of history and compare it to historical evidence.	Begin with a historical topic lecture or discussion (for a list of some possibilities, see part 3). Examples: - The primary features of the early modern state. - The technological foundations of Atlantic Empire - Interstate relations Students then work in small groups and use their gameplay knowledge to consider how *EUIV* portrays these features and the extent to which this portrayal matches evidence they have acquired (through reading, research, or teacher lecture)	A written or oral analysis of an element of the game and the extent to which it is defensible based on the historical evidence

Analysis, Criticism, Debrief – The Importance of Note-taking

The most significant historical learning from using *Europa Universalis IV* comes not through the play of the game itself but from analyzing, reflecting upon, and critiquing the game as a model of early modern states. *EUIV* can be effectively analyzed as a form of historical problem space as discussed in Part 3. During analysis, criticism, and debrief of the game, players can be tasked to note, discuss, critique and reflect on the different features of EUIV's problem space.

The first step for this analysis, once players begin to understand gameplay basics, is to to take notes on the different features of the game's problem space. *Gaming the Past Second Edition* (and The Historical Problem Space Framework for Game Analysis | Gaming the Past) offer possibilities for note-taking graphic organizers. While individual players can be charged with taking notes, it can also be very effective for students to work in small teams, optimally 3-4. One student controls the game and the others make notes on the different features of *EUIV*'s problem space. In this way students can investigate the elements of the *EUIV* gameworld as an HPS (see part 3)

During or after note-taking, students can be grouped for discussions of the HPS in *EUIV*. There is a wealth of literature on the subject of holding effective classroom discussions. Here it can be noted that effective discussions can center analytically on how the different parts of the *EUIV* gameworld interact.

Once students learn the basics of play and are able to analyze and debrief in bits, there are all sorts of interesting questions teachers and students can explore. Just a few examples (see part 3 for more):

- Who is left out or Who is marginalized in a game of *EUIV*? Who is focused on?
- What are the primary causes of change and continuity in the game?
- How would the game explain the major historical events and processes in the early modern period?
- How do different early modern states in different regions of the world compare in their basic goals, limitations, and abilities?
    - The Ottomans and the Ming;
    - The Spanish and the Aztecs
    - The Mughals and the French
- Are the in-game models defensible based on the available historical evidence?

And some BIG questions:
- Does *EUIV* lend itself to bourgeois, whig, or Marxist historical interpretations?
- Is *EUIV* a history of Great People, of Masses, of Impersonal Forces shaping development of the world, a bit of each, or something else entirely? Is it defensible in its approach to the past?

Note that these questions can very effectively be coupled with any number of texts about causation in history, the early modern period, *etc*.

Summative Analyses

The questions above can also be the basis of a variety of summative analyses.These summative projects can take a variety of forms, including.
- podcasts or discussions of the game as history
- formal analytical essays on the game
- presentations or commented playthroughs
- A series of student-annotated screenshots (using a tool like Google Drawings)

.For more details about designing and implementing these and other sorts of summative exercises, see *Gaming the Past Second Edition* (McCall 2022).

Europa Universalis IV Educator's Guide Part 2: Teacher and Student-Player's Guide

Introduction

Educator Notes:
- *Taking students through the first steps of controlling the game can be very helpful for setting them up for future play sessions. If possible, consider having students with the game installed follow along as the instructor teaches them basic game controls and the goals for the tutorial as Bremen.*
- *If the resources are available, it would be most effective for the instructor to guide students through 30-60 minutes of this tutorial as Bremen, using a display the whole class can see and followed with students working on the tutorial individually or in small groups.*

Before we jump in, a few points about you, the student-player, and your role in the game. Europa Universalis IV (EUIV) is a simulation game. It depicts the rise of states and nations and international relations including imperialism, colonialism, and enslavement in the period from 1444 to 1821. You essentially are the state. Not a particular leader or advisor of a state–they come and go in the game–but a developing state itself. And your primary goal is to make sure your state develops over time into something more. Wealthier, larger, more developed, more powerful. You get to set your goals. EUIV will offer suggestions and guidance along the way. The goals you want to pursue, however, are ultimately up to you!

When learning to play and analyze EUIV as a game about early modern history, one of the most important things to remember is that the game models a living, active world. So as long as the game clock is not paused, events will happen **with or without you**, many out of your sight or not connected to your country at all. So your job is NOT to control everything. Your job is not to **win** the game. No, your job is to make some decisions for your country and see how those play out in this living, active world.

Selecting Bremen from the start screen

Learning to play EUIV can be overwhelming, so, the goal of this tutorial is to simplify as much as possible and get down to some basics of the game. And so, this first time out, you will play as the single-province state of Bremen, "The Free City of Bremen". Playing as a country with a single province keeps the difficulty level down while still allowing you to get acquainted with many of the basic decisions needed to play the game. Once you have some experience with a small country, feel free to try some of the larger ones on your own time. More specifically, after this tutorial the next step is to move on to the EUIV built-in tutorials or play as a smaller state like Portugal.

Let's get started. Start *EUIV* on your computer. Once the game loads, you will see the starting screen for the game (1.1)

Fig. 2.1: EUIV Start Screen

Click the "Single Player" button at the bottom center of the screen. This will bring you to the state selection screen (2.2) where you pick the state you will play as for this game. There are a dizzying number of choices for states to play as. If you scroll to the east or south, you will also see options in Africa and Asia.

Fig 2.2 State Selection Screen

Also notice that many of the labeled states on the selection map are divided into a number of provinces. We're going to start out with a state made up of a single province: the Free City of Bremen, SW of Denmark in what is now the north coast of Germany. Bremen is roughly in the center top of Figure 2.2. Here's a closeup in Figure 2.3.

Fig 2.3 Closeup of Bremen province on the state selection screen

Click on the province of Bremen. You'll see an information window about Bremen on the right side of the screen (2.3). Click the "Play" button at the bottom and you are ready to start your session as the Free-City of Bremen in November of 1444.

An information screen providing an overview of the history and current (1444 CE) position of Bremen appears. Skim it briefly, then close the information window; **keep things as simple as possible while you learn to play**.

[*Educator Note: Bremen is the subject of this tutorial because of its relative simplicity to play. it :*
- *is a single province state,*
- *Is very unlikely, being in the Holy Roman Empire, to be invaded in the 30 year period,*
- *uses the generic mission tree, which is simpler and provides insight into EUIV designer's thoughts about early modern states*

A teacher could select other single province states with similar characteristics and apply most of this tutorial to them]

Moving and zooming the camera

First: a note on moving and zooming the camera

To move the camera: use the arrow keys on the bottom right of the keyboard to move the camera north/south/east/west.
To return the camera to focus on your state (Bremen): press the Backspace key.
To zoom in and out on the map: Use the center mouse wheel or pinch and spread two fingers on the touchpad, if available.

For this tutorial, zoom in to roughly the level shown in figure 2.4. Focus on Bremen and its immediate neighbors. Occasionally, you'll be asked to zoom out or to move the camera further east/west or north/south using the arrow keys, but for most of your 30-year run, you can stay focused on Bremen at this level of zoom. **Keep it simple!**

Figure 2.4: A good level of camera zoom and focus for the Bremen tutorial

Keeping it simple: setting the game to pause on events

The game begins on the main map screen zoomed in somewhat on Bremen and its geographic neighbors. There is **A LOT** of information on this screen, but you do not need to understand most of it for this tutorial. You will learn in time but for now, stick to the basics. **A LOT** of pop up messages may report developments in other states near and far; you can ignore them for now. Instead:

Focus on achieving your goals for Bremen. Feel free to skim pop-up messages as they appear but do not waste time on them if they do not pertain directly to Bremen – press the enter key and the popup will disappear. You only need to focus only on Events - pop up messages that require you to make a decision. Pause the game, make the decision, and unpause the game. Try to keep the game clock running as much as possible.

Figure 2.5: An event

To help you focus only on the critical issues, and keep the game clock running, you will need to adjust a setting in the game so that the game will pause when Events occur. Events are significant things that happen to your state and usually require you to make a decision.

Events occur in pop-ups that look like this. We want the game to pause when things like this occur. So, here's how to choose that setting.

Figure 2.6: Main menu options

Once the game has started, press the escape key to get the main menu. Select "Game Options" from the menu (2.6).

Figure 2.7 Settings window

This information box will appear (2.7) . Make sure the "Pause on events" checkbox is checked. Then press apply and return to the game.

Now the game clock will only pause when an event occurs, a situation that affects Bremen directly and requires you to make a decision.

Later on (in "**Making Decisions when Events Occur: Roleplaying not Precision Accounting"**) we will cover some basic guidelines for handling events.

Making decisions when events occur: Role playing, not precision accounting

If you have checked the box in the game settings, the game will only pause when an **event** occurs, a situation where you must make a decision. There are hundreds of possible events, but they all are presented in a box that will look something like this.

An event will have a title, explanation text, and one or more options (2.8).

Figure 2.8

To handle an event, read the description, then look at the options. Hovering the mouse over each choice will cause more information to pop-up, explaining to you the effects of the choices.

Note: Occasionally, a notification flag will appear toward the top left of the screen. If these have a glowing border, they are limited time offers, like marriage offers or requests to march armies through your country. Otherwise they may be clicked if and when the player wishes.

The best advice when learning the game. **Role play**. Pretend you are managing an early modern state. Don't try to immediately understand all the numbers that are presented by the choices in the event. Don't go searching, unless you really want to, for explanations for what all the figures mean. Instead, **Role play!** Embrace the simple fact that the game can run without you even if you walk away. So instead of trying to control everything (impossible), or lots of things (extremely difficult), focus on being observant about the development of your state and making a few decisions to steer your state's development a little.

Think of yourself as head of the state in Bremen, look at the effects of the choices and pick one that seems like the most plausible for your state (you are welcome to make bad decisions, just to roleplay and see their effects on your state!). Green numbers are an increase/addition and red are a negative/subtraction; gold numbers are neither, or rather, you decide whether they are positive or negative. All choices have consequences but remember: your goal is not to make the best decisions. EUIV, by design, will not declare you a winner (or loser). Your goal is to play for 30 years of game time as Bremen. Not to win; just to survive and figure about how the game runs a little. And your decisions, **however poor they might be for the state, will almost assuredly not end the game.** So, decide which increases or decreases sound the best (role play – what kind of state do you want Bremen to be?)

So for example, in this event, "Land Theft" (2.9) you can decide who gets to keep the land that the nobility has been poaching from the clergy in Bremen.

Figure 2.9: "Land Theft" event

Hovering over the choices reveals:

- One choice "Side with the Clergy" will increase clergy loyalty to the state but decrease nobility loyalty
- A second choice "Side with the Nobility" will do the opposite: increase nobility loyalty to Bremen but decrease clergy loyalty
- A third choice "Favor neither party" will upset both sides.

Now, there is more to it than that (land ownership and influence in the country of the clergy and nobility estates will change and this can affect many things in your state). In the end though, **you** need to make a decision. Do you want your state to favor the clergy, the nobility or neither? Would you rather please or anger the clergy toward the state, or please or anger the nobility? There is no "correct" answer, just the choice that best fits the state you want to play.

Note the event in your gaming journal, note the effects of the choices and note the choice you choose. Then make the choice and move on.

So as you make decisions for events, role play and look at the positive (green) and negative(red) effects. Pick the ones that sound the best to you, roleplaying as the Free State of Bremen. Don't worry about working out the math (unless it's a question of money in the treasury). **Role play**. Some examples:

- Hiring that Italian Engineer will increase your military power, but cost the state over 9 ducats. Can you afford it?
- Changing your army research will lower your military tradition; not changing it will lower your state's prestige. Which sounds better or worse for your Bremen?
- In cases of Simony (purchasing church offices) would you rather have more influence with the pope, or more money in your treasury?

A suggestion though: it is probably wise to avoid decisions that increase **corruption**. Corruption costs the state money and Bremen makes very little income already. The choice, however, is up to you!

Goals for your first play session as Bremen

You will not conquer the world, dominate Europe, or accomplish any other grand achievement in this first run–I practically guarantee that. Instead you must:

1. Play as Bremen for **30 years** (to January 1st 1475 to be exact). Let the game clock run (the space bar pauses and unpauses the game) as much as possible while you make decisions. Remember it will take about 1 hour for 30 years of game time to pass at speed 4, so you will want to keep the clock running while you think and make decisions.
2. Develop Bremen a little by trying to complete one or two of its generic missions
3. Learn some of the basic information needed to manage a single-province state, including: How to improve country relations and make an alliance; how to build a building in a province, and how to increase income from a province

That means for this tutorial that you can ignore the **majority** – that's right, the majority of the information presented on the main screen. Focus instead only on the things that directly affect Bremen and your goals for it:

1. Survive for 30 years;
2. Work towards completing one or two generic missions

To do this follow this primary rule: **Keep it simple and keep the game clock running!**

- Try to ignore every message and pop-up that does not directly involve Bremen–There will be **many**. Pause the game to make a decision on a popup. Otherwise ignore and keep moving.
- Think of the game as a simulation. Thanks to the AI in the game, events are happening and states are acting (even your state) all the time whether you make choices or not. **Remember your job is to see how the game simulates early modern history, not to win!**
- In general, keep the game clock running at a 3 or 4 speed or faster unless you have to think about a choice presented in a pop-up message (like a marriage request or request for marching access); pause then using the spacebar – your goal is to survive and, if possible, develop over a 30 year period. Without pausing it takes around 1 hour for 30 years in game to pass at at speed 4
- You do not have many decisions to make; there will not be a lot for you to do. **Don't worry!** That's the whole point. Keeping it simple while you learn to

manage a single province will prepare you for future games managing larger states.

The following figures show the most important information onscreen for your 30 years as Bremen. Feel free to look at other information but don't feel rushed to figure out the importance of the large amounts of other information in the game. **Keep it simple and keep the game clock running!**

In the main game screen (2.10) the **most** important information and buttons are:

- The "Open Country View" button used to make decisions about your country.
- The treasury information, **critical** for managing the state budget.
- The clock speed, to control how quickly time in the game passes.
- The notifications bar, where the game tells you when you have something important to do.
- Monarch points, which you can spend on improving your country through new technologies etc.
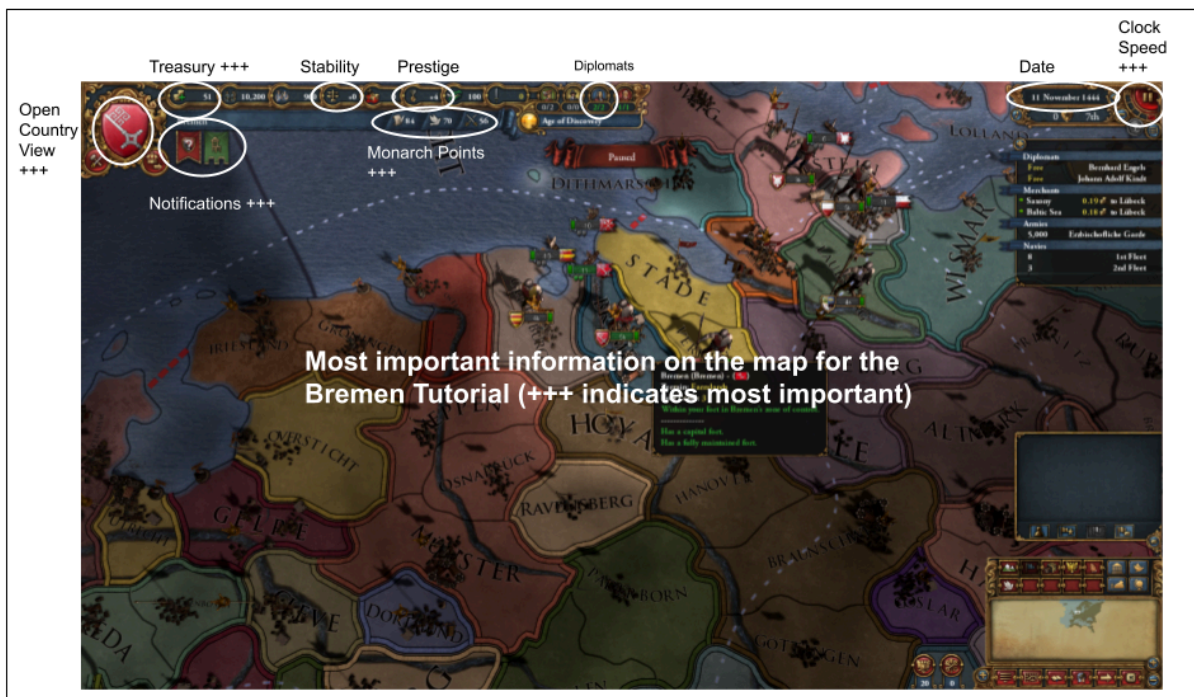

Figure 2.10 The Most Important Information for the Bremen Tutorial on the main screen
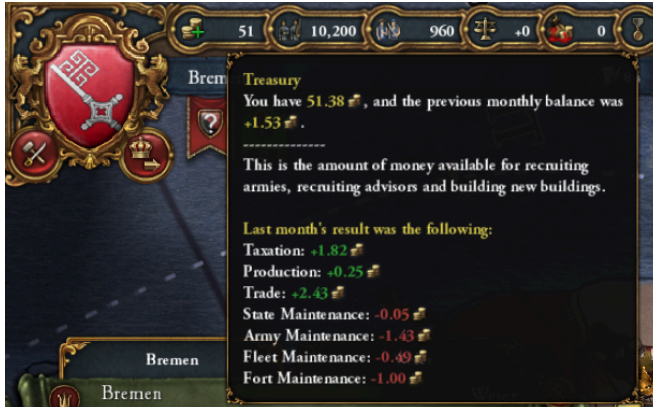
Figure 2.11 Close-up on the treasury

Hovering (leaving the mouse pointer in one spot) over the treasury information (the gold coins, called ducats in the game) will reveal more detailed and important information about your treasury (2.11). This includes your monthly balance (how many ducats you collect or lose each month) and your sources of income and expense. The treasury information is some of the most important in the game.

Now let's look at the province window, shown in Figure 2.12. Here the most important details are the income for the province (Bremen in this case), and the section to the right showing the buildings that exist in the province and space for more buildings.

Completing generic country missions for Bremen

Remember. Your main goals for this tutorial:

1. Play as Bremen for 30 years (to at least January 1st 1475)
2. Develop Bremen a little bit by trying to complete one or two of the generic missions

Figure 2.12 The Most Important Information in the Province Window for Bremen

Generic Missions

24

(Generic missions - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki) are provided by the game to give you more specific guidance for ruling their country. Many countries have missions unique to them. Many smaller countries like Bremen, however, use the generic missions provided. Again, these point to what EUIV developers think are the major goals of states in the early modern period.

 To look at the generic missions, first press the "Open Country View" button (the big shield in the top left corner of the game screen. The Country View is an information window that provides **A LOT** of information and decisions for you (we can ignore most of it for this tutorial). Select the missions tab at the top of the Country View window to see Bremenian Missions available. They look like a set of badges as shown in Figure 2.13. The top row of colored badges show some of the currently available missions. Let's examine the top four: Build to Force Limit, Trustworthy Allies, High Income and Global Dominance.

 To see a detailed list of requirements for each generic mission, see the EUIV Wiki (Generic missions - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki)

Global Dominance is an unrealistic mission for tiny Bremen to complete, so let's ignore that one. It is possible, however, to complete one or more of the other three missions during a thirty-year time period.

Figure 2.13

Remember as you work on completing missions: **Keep it simple and keep the clock running!**

- Ignore messages and pop-up that do not require you to make a choice. Try not to pause the game – the game will pause when an event happens that requires you to make a choice.
- Try to keep the game clock running at speed 3; 4 is even better.
- Though many things will clearly be happening in the the world around you (and in Bremen too) beyond your immediate control, you will not make many decisions; there will not be a lot for you to do as you wait for the treasury to grow, and diplomatic relationships to improve. **Don't worry: Keep the game clock running! Ignore the messages that don't absolutely require your decision! Play to study the game, not to win.**

While you may certainly choose to approach these generic missions in a different order, the following is a suggested way to pursue the goals the first time you play.

Working towards completing the 'Trustworthy Allies' Mission

Making alliances is an important part of EUIV so this is a good mission to work on while playing as Bremen. Relations are explained in more detail on the wiki: Relations - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com)

To complete this mission: You'll need two countries to be allied with Bremen and each to have a 150 opinion of Bremen. Each country has an opinion of Bremen ranging from **-150** to **+150**. At low or negative values a country is less likely to aid Bremen and more likely to attack Bremen. At higher values the country is less likely to attack and more likely to ally with Bremen.

Select a nearby country you wish to improve relations with by clicking on that country on the game map. The province window for that country will popup. That country's current opinion of Bremen is shown. In Figure 2.14, Oldenburg, directly to the east of Bremen, has a **+21** opinion of Bremen.

Figure 2.14

How to raise Oldenburg's opinion? Diplomacy. Click on the blue "Diplomacy" button underneath the Opinion level of the Country (2.14)

There are all sorts of actions but two categories of diplomatic actions are important here. "Alliance actions" and "Relations actions". If you select "Alliance actions" the first option underneath is "Offer Alliance". Clicking on the button will show you the likelihood of Oldenburg accepting an offer of alliance. It is likely that Oldenburg, though it has a positive relationship with Bremen, is not ready to accept.

To increase your chances of an alliance, improve Oldenburg's opinion of Bremen. Do so by pressing the "Diplomacy" button tight underneath Oldenburg's opinion. Selecting "Improve Relations" underneath the "Relations" actions. There is a picture of a diplomat on the "Improve Relations" button because you will need a free diplomat to improve relations. You should have at least one free diplomat unless you have sent them off to negotiate with another country.

Over time (remember, let the game clock run as much as possible) Oldenburg's opinion rating will improve. Check the "Offer Alliance" button every so often; when the red **X** turns into a green ✓ , Oldenburg is ready to accept your alliance offer. For more detail on alliances, see the EUIV Wiki [Alliance - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com)](paradoxwikis.com)

Once you have made an alliance with Oldenburg, continue letting opinions approve until they reach **+150**. Ally with a second country using the "Improve relations" act and raise their opinion to **+150**, and you will have completed the "Trustworthy Allies" mission.

Note: A country, often Hamburg, may ask for an alliance and a message will appear in the notifications. Feel free to accept the alliance: you will still have to improve relations to get up to a **+150**, the requirement for the mission

Working on completing the 'High Income' Mission

It is generally not possible to complete the High Income mission in thirty years of game-time. But you can get started along the road to improved finances, and solid finances are useful when playing as any state. The wiki has more information on economies in the game: [Economy - Income Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com)](paradoxwikis.com)

Figure 2.15: Treasury details

To complete the High Income mission, you must increase Bremen's gross income (the total amount of money coming in) to a bit more than double its current level. At the time of writing, Bremen starts with a 3.23 ducats income and needs to raise it to 6.76 ducats.

Hover the mouse over the treasury section of the information bar (shown here and in Figure 1.7) . You can see that the three sources of income for Bremen are Taxation, Production (what Bremen makes and grows for sale), and Trade. And the four sources of spending: maintaining the state, army, fleet, and fort. If your state has corruption, that will also be listed as an expense to the state – officials are stealing state money and pocketing it!

You may, if you choose, disband your army and fleet, but that may not be the most secure decision in inter-country politics. Still, the choice is yours.

It is, however, a very good idea to have your available fleet of light ships (barques) patrol one of the trade routes you use and, in doing so, increase trade income–how to do this is discussed below. Technology and buildings, the next area to focus on for increasing income, are discussed after.

Protecting your trade routes (and income) with light ships

A very good way for Bremen to increase its monthly income is to order its small fleet of light ships (barques) to protect important trade routes – for more information, see: Naval units - Light Ships Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com). Protecting trade routes increases trade income. Here are the steps to do that.

First use your mouse to select Bremen's fleets. They are the ship icon in the ocean directly north of the province. When you have selected your ships correctly, you will see an information box for the fleet pop up on the left side of the screen.

Note: You have two fleets here: the 1st and the 2nd. You need to give orders to the 1st fleet (barques). If the information box says at the top that you have the 2nd fleet

selected (type of ships: cogs) click on the boats in the ocean north of Bremen again until the 1st Fleet ships (barques) is indicated. The information box for the fleet will look like Figure 2.16.

Figure 2.16

Selecting the ships was actually the difficult part. Now, once you have the 1st Fleet and its barques selected and in the information window, press the "Select Mission" button (circled with arrows in the figure above). One mission type will appear "Protect Trade ". Click on it.

You will then select the trade node you want your fleet to protect. Send the fleet to protect the Lubeck trade node: the option is shown in figure #:#. They will sail off and your trade income will increase a little bit (Bremen has a small treasury. Little bits add up). For more information, see: Trade nodes - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com)

Figure 2.17

To further increase income, in addition to protecting trade routes, you will have to wait for Bremen to research new technologies that allow you to build improvements in the province. These technologies will allow you to build financial buildings in the province like the Church–because Bremen is labeled as Christian--and the workshop So let's look at the technology information window (2.18)

Technology

Figure 2.18

The Technology window can be reached in the country view (the Big Badge Button on the top left of the screen) by clicking on the tab with small gears (2.18).

Here you can see that your country, without you doing anything!, is slowly developing technologies in three categories: Administrative, Diplomatic, and Military. At the start of the game in 1444, your country is researching the **Temple** tech (a church in medieval Catholic Bremen) , the **Marketplace** tech and the **Pike Square** tech.

New technologies are purchased by spending **Monarch Power Points**. There are three kinds of monarch points, all listed in the information bar at the top of the screen. Administrative, Diplomatic, and Military. Each can be used to purchase new technologies in its respective category (administrative, diplomatic, and military). See Monarch power - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com) for more details.

Both the Temple and Marketplace technologies, when completely researched, will allow you to build buildings in your province, Bremen, that will increase your country's income. This will take time: **Keep it simple and keep the game clock running! Ignore unessential messages.**

For now, we have to wait for those technologies to be developed. Keep the game clock running. It will take about 5 years of game time for your state to generate

enough research points to upgrade a technology. If you have not worked on building alliances yet, this would be a good time. Otherwise just investigate the game while the clock is running:

- Put the mouse over parts of the screen and see what information comes up
- Watch the soldiers and ships of other countries move about

If you want the game to go faster, click the + button on the top right of the screen or hold the <Shift> and press the <+> key on the keyboard. The game will run faster, and your income and monarch power points will accumulate faster

Choosing New Technologies
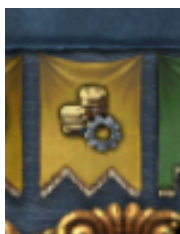
When you have accumulated enough monarch power points to purchase a new technology, you will see a "You can invest in a new technology" notification tab appear in the notification bar in the top left of the game screen. Press it to return to the Technology window in the Country View. The technologies you currently can purchase are shown in blue. The ones you cannot yet afford are shown in gray (2.19).

Figure 2.19

When you have enough monarch administrative points to purchase the "Temple" (a church for Bremen) technology or enough diplomatic points to purchase the "Marketplace" technology, click on the button to do so and confirm your choice.

The Temple and Marketplace technologies both allow you to construct new buildings in your single province of Bremen. In a game where you control more than one province, you will be able to build temples and marketplaces in each province. But to build these buildings, you must have enough money in the treasury (or you will take out loans and have the added burden of managing payments and interest – totally your choice)

You almost certainly have not accumulated enough money in the treasury to buy either a Church or a Marketplace. So go back to running the game clock and accumulating enough ducats to do so.

When you have enough money (which will likely take a couple more years – see how slowly a tiny state like Bremen develops?), purchase the Church or Marketplace building in the province Building window. Notice that your income will have increased in the treasury information window. The Church will increase tax income; the Marketplace will increase trade income.

Now wait for time to pass again, respond to events as they arise, and purchase when able until the following things have been acquired
- You have purchased Temple and Marketplace technologies
- You have built both a Church and a Marketplace in Bremen

Eventually, aided by these and more financial improvements, your state's income will increase. Bremen is small though, and it is unlikely you will come close to completing the high income mission in your play time.

Completing the 'Build to Force Limit' Mission: Recruiting soldiers in the province of Bremen.

Figure 2.20

It costs money/ducats to maintain an army, and Bremen has a small treasury. If you want to increase your army size, waiting until after you have increased your monthly income is a good idea.

If you click on the soldier in Bremen on the world map you will see you have an army currently of size 5 (= 5000 soldiers). You have a force limit of 7. So, recruiting two additional units of infantry or cavalry will complete this mission. To complete this, recruit military units until you have a force of size 7.

Each province separately supplies troops in EUIV but you have only one province. To open the province window, click on the province of Bremen on the world map. Then, press the "Recruit Regiment" button in the Province Window (see the Province Window and Recruitment buttons in Figure 2.12). Select either "Latin Medieval Infantry" or "Latin Knights" to recruit additional infantry and cavalry. Select two additional units.

Like everything else in the game, these units take time to build, so you will need to let the game clock run for about 56 days to recruit a new Latin Infantry and 84 days to recruit a now Latin Knights. **Keep it simple and keep the game clock running!**

When you have recruited these units, notice the change in the Treasury (1.7). Your army costs +/- 1.89 gold to maintain. This likely puts you at a deficit where you are spending a little bit more (+/- 0.23) each month than you are bringing in.

Bremen Tutorial FAQ

I have almost no income (<1 ducat a month). How can I increase it?
> Several ways
> - Disband military units or lower the amount spent on their maintenance
> - Don't make choices that increase corruption. If your state treasury does suffer from corruption, you can always restart (try to make it through 30 years first)
> - Assign your light ships in Bremen to patrol trade routes.

I have notification flags; shouldn't I click on them?
> Generally speaking, yes – it's a good way to get into more important details of gameplay. The two notifications at the start of the game, "Too few rivals" and "You have a free advisor slot" are a bit of a special case. As for advisors, your country's income is far too low at the moment to spend money on an advisor. Feel free to choose rivals, but for our 30 year play session, they will not be important. As new flags appear (like offers of alliance) do see if you can click on them and make a decision. But remember, **keep it simple and the game clock running**!

One notification flag tells me to hire advisors; should I?
> **Absolutely not!** Though the game is telling you that you have no advisors, your state has far too low an income to afford the monthly expense of advisors. Ignore this notification or right click on it to hide it.

Europa Universalis IV Educator's Guide Part 3: EUIV as a Game History: A Historical Problem Space Analysis

Introduction

The most effective history educators, those that can best encourage students to move into critical thinking about the past, recognize that history, far from a fixed record, is the curated representation of the past (McCall, 2020, 2022a). And so, we all do history and can do so in a theoretically limitless number of media. Text, image, sound, conversation: history is crafted whenever someone selects elements and evidence–credible or not; popular or rarefied–and uses them to represent the past. (Chapman 2016; McCall 2020, 2022a). Certainly, historical video games present histories and Europa Universalis IV is no exception. Like all Paradox historical games, EUIV offers what can meaningfully be called a game history, a curated representation of the past in the form of a video game. In particular, EUIV offers a game history about states and their interactions in the Early Modern Period from 1444-1821CE

But EUIV, like all historical video games, does not represent the past in the same way a text or lecture or film about the early modern period would. Rather, it represents the past in ways particular to game histories. That's an important point. To expect EUIV to present the past to students like a textbook listing facts or dates surely misses the point. EUIV will present your students a game history, a set of components that, with the addition of a player, create a closed fully functioning system run on a computer. Analyzing EUIV as if it were a set of independent assertions about the past, will not provide very meaningful or interesting results in class. Rather, some core questions for students analyzing this game are:

- How does EUIV, as a system of systems, represent the past?
- How do the game features of *EUIV* represent the past and how do they do so differently from other historical media?
- How do any particular game features of *EUIV* interact with other game features to model the past?
- To what extent does *EUIV*, or any particular element in it, **defensibly model** the past? In other words, how much can the game's models of history be supported by critically gathered evidence? What sorts of defensible models does *EUIV* offer about the past? Where and why are there less defensible models?

The purpose of part 3 of the *Educator's Guide* is to offer an introductory analysis of *EUIV* as a game about history, a game history. It will ideally provide a starting guide to analysis that educators can use to understand the game. It will also serve as a foundation for classroom-based analysis. The questions posed and the statements

made in this section can be effectively used as topics for discussions with students, prompts for analytical writings, *etc*.

Note: *Part 3* does not assess whether *EUIV* as a system or any of its parts defensibly models the past. There is no list of criticisms and/or praise, such as "*EUIV* does a great job illustrating historical concept X" or "*EUIV* does a poor job illustrating historical concept Y." These evaluations are for you and your students to decide after investigating the early modern period portrayed in the game. Rather this part of the guide analyzes how *EUIV* **does** represent the past and describes some parts of the game history to help educators and students who want to critique the game. It does so using a tool called the Historical Problem Space framework (McCall 2012, 2020, 2022a, 2022b).

Game Histories: Games as Historical Problem Spaces

Every medium presenting the past does so in particular ways. The core of a game presentation of the past is **choice**: game histories offer players choices. Going further, historical games present the past in terms of a more or less cohesive gameworld system with problems the player must overcome to reach one or more goals set by the developers. For convenience, we can call these worlds presented by historical video games, historical problem spaces (McCall 2012; 2020)

Presenting a **historical problem space** means presenting the past with the following features (the conceptual diagram is from McCall 2022a):

There is a primary **player agent,** the main character controlled by the player, representing a historically documentable, archetypal, or fictional being. That player

agent can have certain roles, abilities, and attributes. The player agent is also tasked by the game developers with one or more **designed goals**, the victory conditions of the game. The player agent pursues these goals, if they choose, within a virtual **gameworld** where the effects of the majority of player-agent's actions occur.
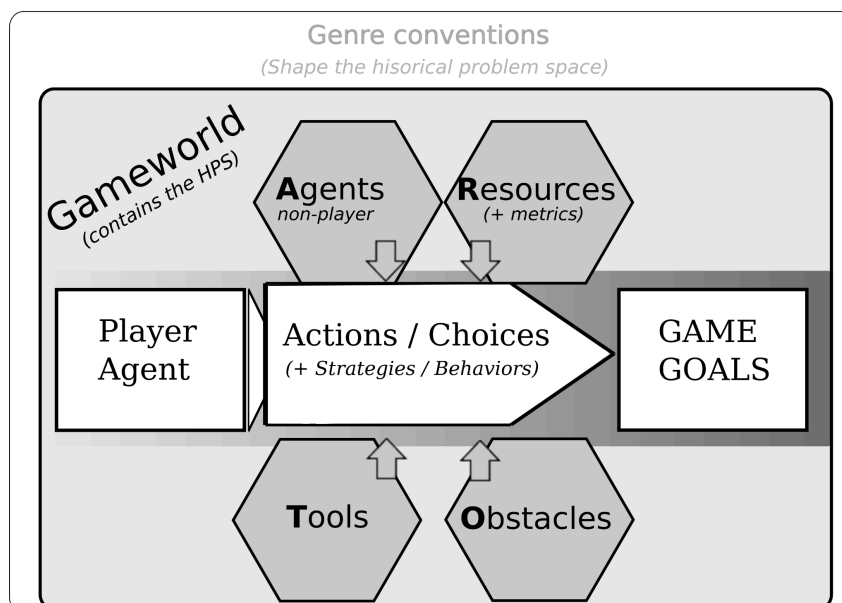
How to achieve those goals is the "problem" and the gameworld is the "space" in HPS. Further, in this gameworld are a series of **elements**, not least of all non-player **agents**, **resources**, various **tools** and **obstacles**.[3] And so, in this gameworld, the player agent, assuming they choose to pursue the designed goals of the gameworld, makes **action choices**, forms and executes strategies made up of action choices, and adopts behaviors in the process. Viewed from the perspective of designed-goal seeking, these action choices optimally take advantage of the benefits afforded by gameworld elements and circumvent or redirect the constraints offered by gameworld elements. Importantly, the historical problem space of a particular game, the affordances and constraints of the gameworld, the combinations and interactions of agents, resources, the designed goals, etc. is very often heavily influenced by the genre conventions of the game (McCall 2020; 2022a; 2022b). To put that another way, the genre of the game significantly affects how the history in the game is presented.

EUIV is a cohesive, systemic problem space–the parts work together quite precisely as computer models do. Accordingly, there is a real limit to how meaningfully one can just pick this or that historical phenomenon represented in the game and ignore how that component relates to the rest of the game. Rather, they should be analyzed more holistically.

So, critical questions for this game history include:

- How does *EUIV* represent the past as a historical problem space, a world of systems where a player agent solves problems?
- How do the game features of *EUIV* represent the past and how do they do so differently from other historical media?
- How do the ways the historical phenomena in the game appear fit within the overall system design of the game? How do the components of the game cohere? What effect does that need-to-cohere have on how the past is portrayed?
- To what extent does *EUIV*, or any particular element in it, defensibly model the past? What sorts of defensible models does *EUIV* provide about the past? Where and why are there less defensible models?

And because *EUIV* lets students manage historical states scattered across the globe in Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas, it enables comparison of how different states are modeled and whether those models are historically defensible. Does the game provide an excellent model of the kingdom of England but less so for Ming China and the Aztecs? Did all three states have similar goals, *and so on*?

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[3] You may find it useful in class to collectively refer to gameworld elements as **a.r.t.o.**s – nonplayer **a**gents, **r**esources, **t**ools, and **o**bstacles

Game Graphics: Conceptual vs. Realist

Before continuing, a quick point about the graphical representations in EUIV is helpful. EUIV adopts an approach to graphically representing a game world that can be called a "conceptual" approach. In short, EUIV intentionally presents the past abstractly and symbolically through stylized maps, buttons and interfaces, etc. It does not, nor is it intended by the designers, to present the gameworld as a photo-realistic 3D space that a player navigates, as found in an Assassin's Creed game or a Call of Duty, for example. Criticisms of a game designed in the conceptual approach are most meaningful therefore when they focus NOT on how the game looks but how the game's rules and systems model the past (See Chapman 2016, Chapter 3 for details)

Also the HPS framework is great for comparing video game histories, for appreciating how the design and genre of two or more games shape the history that they present. So EUIV can be fruitfully contrasted with *Assassin's Creed* games set in the early modern world, in addition to the strategy games *Civilization*, *Humankind*, and *Age of Empires III*.

So, let's apply the HPS framework to *EUIV*. The goal for part 3, again, is not to declare whether and how much *EUIV* defensibly models one or more aspects of the early modern / transatlantic imperialism period of history. We'll leave that to you and your students. Rather, part 3 provides a blueprint to the game as a historical problem space. That blueprint can guide you as you help your students critically form their own HPS analysis.

The historical problem space framework is an effective structure for analysis of *EUIV* and all historical video games because it encourages the analysis of the game as a what it is: a complex system of elements that must cohere mechanically to be successful and operate as a closed functional system with the addition of a player. The HPS framework also helps us compare *EUIV* with other games about the period to better understand the range of possibilities for game models of the past and in particular how *EUIV* models the past.

So now that we have considered some of the basic features and terminology, let's explore the historical problem space *EUIV* presents to players.

Introducing the Historical Problem Space of *Europa Universalis IV*

After providing a brief description of each HPS component in *EUIV*, a series of basic questions for analysis are provided. These questions can form the basis of discussions, written analyses, etc. For more depth on these terms and on the Historical Problem Space Framework, see McCall (2012, 2020, 2022a, 2022b). HPS terms are bolded to emphasize using them to aid teacher and student analysis

A player agent: Every historical game has an agent that represents the player in the game world, the protagonist. In *EUIV* the player-agent is essentially the state. Advisors are hired and fired. Rulers come and go and estates can be loyal one moment and rebellious the next. The persistent player agent, however, is the state. Several important features characterize the *EUIV* state player agent. First, it is **unembodied**: the player agent is not represented by an avatar in the game world.[4] Unembodied player agents can be found in other strategy games such as *Age of Empires* and *Civilization*. In contrast, games with **embodied** player agents include many historical games ranging from *Call of Duty* to *Assassin's Creed*. As an unembodied agent, the state does not act directly on the game world so much as it gives orders to **non-player agents** (ranging from diplomats and merchants to armies).

Paradox Grand Strategy and Unembodied Player Agents

Recall that the genre of a particular historical game very much influences how that game presents the past. Paradox Grand Strategy games form what can be called a "brand-genre," an always developing, but still identifiable, set of shared gameplay and design features. One central genre convention is the unembodied player agent, the lack of an in-game avatar. In most Paradox Grand Strategy games, with the exception of *Crusader Kings*, the player is not even a single historical figure, but rather a collective like the state.

This gives a perception that the player is somewhat omniscient and omnipotent, making decisions that the world carries out rather than acting as an individual agent in the world

The state's powers and access to information are rather extreme compared to most early modern states. The state player agent can easily issue orders to agents across the globe, check detailed inventories, and survey activity near their territories with an ease that would make the Yongle Emperor weep with envy.

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[4] An avatar is a visible figure taking up space in the game world. See Calleja (2011) for this concept and McCall (2024; forthcoming) for its use in historical problem spaces.

Some starting player-agent questions for student analysis

- Is the player agent embodied? Does it have an avatar in the gameworld, or is it unembodied, *i.e.* not contained in any particular space in the game world?
- How does an unembodied agent affect the focus of the game, the history it portrays?
- What are the powers of the player agent and what is their scope of effect?
- To what extent does the player agent defensibly model the early modern state, its power, limits, control, access to information, etc.
- Does the player agent of *EUIV* tend to make the game history more of a "Great Person" history or a history of the masses?
- To what extent does the player agent of EUIV tend to seem like a historian observing the trends in world history (on this point, See Chapman 2016, Chapter 3)?
- How much agency does the player agent have in a world of interlocking systems and limitations?

Discussing the player agent of the game can first take place relatively early in the learning process since, unlike many other components of the problem space, students experience being the state player agent immediately in gameplay.

Designed goals: These are the primary goals for the game, the victory conditions, and the secondary goals that must be accomplished to achieve the primary goals. *EUIV* offers an overall metric for success in the form of a score. (see [Score system - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com)](#)) But the end of game screen, while comparing the player agents' score to supposed scores of other historical nations, does not state whether the player agent has won the game. Instead, *EUIV* offers an open sandbox sort of gameworld where players can easily create their own criterion for victory: conquer a particular neighbor; amass a certain amount of wealth, complete a certain set of missions, and so on. This can be contrasted with a game like *Age of Empires III*. In this game, also set in the early modern world, victory is much more narrowly determined: destroy all other states or control more than half of the gameworld's trading posts. Those victory conditions essentially ensure, should the player choose to pursue them, that a bloody struggle for domination is the main path for players.

But players are not required to pursue the developer's goals in-game. In fact, *EUIV* is a great illustration of an important principle in the historical problem spaces of games. The designed goals are those established in the game by game developers. It is up to the player agent whether they will pursue those goals. Players always have the agency to ignore or subvert the goals established by designers (Sicart 2011; McCall 2020, 2022a). Still, the goals presented by *EUIV* very much offer an opinion on what the developers think were the most important goals of historical states.

To see this, consider the list of generic missions given to smaller states in the game, like Bremen, discussed in part 2 ([Generic missions - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki](#)). Again, these are fundamentally assertions *EUIV* makes about the goals states in the Early Modern Period **in general** pursued. States generally aimed to:

1. Build armies and use them to acquire territory;
2. Increase internal revenue;
3. Promote trade;
4. Form advantageous diplomatic relationships;
5. Engage in scientific and technological research to improve the rates of internal tax revenue and trade, and the strength of military forces.

And so on. The national missions provide the main goals for a state in the game. This is an important point for students. *EUIV* 's proposition that these general goals **were** commonly shared by all early modern states can make for an excellent class discussion. And so, excellent questions for students historical analysis are: why are these the generic missions and to what extent are they historically defensible?

Some starting designed-goal questions for student analysis

- What were the goals of the early modern state? Can we generalize them?
- Does *EUIV* illustrate what it means to "see" and "think like a state" (Scott 1998) and Devereaux (2021)?
- Do the generic national missions defensibly reflect the general objectives of all early modern states? Do they reflect a particular perspective on the objectives of states (colonial, Western, postcolonial, Marxist, Neoliberal etc)?
- How do the goals in *EUIV* contrast with goals in other games set in the period: *Age of Empires III*, various *Assassin's Creeds*, various *Total War* games, *Civilization*, *Humankind*, *etc.*
- Can all states be thought of as having the same general goals?

Gameworld: *EUIV*'s gameworld is the place in which all the orders of the player agent carry out, and all the actions of non-player agents, whether opponents or subordinates (see below).

The overall space modeled in EUIV is of a 3D world with **explicit space.** Explicit space is specific virtual space in the game world that can be occupied or traveled to and through by units in the game. That explicit space is divided into provinces. Provinces are where taxes are collected, manpower is generated and recruited into armies, buildings are constructed, *etc*. Movement of armies and fleets, some of the most important kinds of spatial movement in the game, uses provinces as spaces. Each province also contains a variety of **implied spaces**, spaces that are referred to

but not included as places for armies and envoys to move into or through. The land occupied by the inhabitants of the province, the public buildings constructed in the province, any fortresses, and so on are all implied spaces–they have effects in game but are not visually represented.

The *EUIV* gameworld of provinces differs from many other strategy games about the early modern world. The gameworld is very much represented as a map. This is emphasized by the variety of filters the player can select to render the world in different maps emphasizing different data: nations, trade, geography, relations, etc. Note, too, that this provides an extraordinary amount of information to the player agent–far more than historically was available.

There are six core kinds of actions that take places within most, if not all, historical games' gameworlds, and within *EUIV*

> **Traversing and Exploring** - crossing space, to explore or to reach a specific location, such as when an army or fleet travels in the game world, province to province.
>
> **Exploiting and Developing** - Extracting resources from a space and creating **tools** to improve the resources or other benefits a space provides. In EUIV provinces are developed primarily by constructing buildings – tools that improve the productive capabilities of the province.
>
> **Contesting** a space against an opponent's attempts to occupy it. This most commonly happens when an army occupying a province is attacked by an army that enters the province. The victorious army will remain in the province while the defeated army will retreat outside of the province.
>
> and,
>
> **Controlling** a space, essentially owning it and being able to develop, exploit, and traverse it without opposition. In EUIV this occurs when a province is annexed and its color changes to that of the annexing state.

Note that in games with an embodied agent, like *Assassin's Creed* and *Call of Duty*, the **embodied** agent takes these actions. *EUIV*, however, has an **unembodied** agent. So, these actions in space are ordered by the player agent but carried out by non-player agents whether armies marching through provinces or envoys (diplomats, missionaries, merchants, *etc.*) traveling to other states.

Gameworld Elements

After the player agent, the "things" filling the gameworld can be referred to as **gameworld elements.** There are four main categories: nonplayer **Agents**, **Resources** and metrics, **Tools**, and **Obstacles** (which may be expressed in the acronym, **A.R.T.O.** for convenience). Each will be addressed briefly below.

Non-player Agents: *EUIV*, more than many games, offers a dynamic world of what can be termed agent-based models. In the sciences and social sciences, agent-based computer models of systems create a set of agents each with a certain set of behaviors. When the agents act according to their behaviors in a micro world one can see how those individual behaviors in the aggregate form general features of complex systems. This is a reasonable way to look at what arguably are the most important non-player agents in EUIV: other states. Each is a complex agent with various attributes, resources, and attitudes. Attitudes are particularly important. Each state has an opinion of all the other states it is aware of in the game. If opinion is high, states are open to peace, cooperation, potentially alliance; conflict and war result from states having poor opinions of other states.

There are many other non-player agents in the game that are not modeled with the level of detail other states have. Here we will broadly define as an agent any historically sentient actor who had real world agency in history: essentially all beings. Some in *EUIV* are **explicit** agents: they are actually referenced in the game, whether as named individuals, or a number. So, for example, the soldiers in the armies of the state are **explicit** agents as are the members of the different estates ([Estates - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com))](#) – nobility and burghers, Rajput and Vaishyas, and so on. Others are simply **implied**: they must have existed historically but are not explicitly referenced by the game: so the laborers and craftsfolk who must have existed to construct new provincial buildings for a state and must have existed to craft trade goods. Agents can also be categorized as **allies**, **rivals**, and **opponents**, overlapping categories depending on their relationship to the player agent. Allies, all who can assist a player agent as they pursue their goals, can be thought of as: independent agents, subordinate agents, and minions. *EUIV* includes all three kinds. Other states are **independent**: they may help or hinder but they do so based on their own goals, not the player's commands. **Subordinate agents**, on the other hand, are agents that can be ordered by the player agent but may not follow instructions completely. These include soldiers and armies (which can rout and refuse to accept commands until they rally, usually far away from the battleground). **Minions** on the other hand are agents commanded by the player agent who will always carry out the instructed task–although they may not always be successful. The state's envoys–merchants, diplomats, *etc.*–always follow the orders of the player agent without deviation ([Envoy - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com)](#)). Opponents can be modeled as thinking beings or they can be modeled as simply resources or obstacles for opposition (see McCall 2020, 2022a, 2022b)

An important question when investigating non-player agents in EUIV is, *how are traditionally marginalized individuals and groups represented in the game's problem space*? Game spaces, not least of all historical problem spaces, can easily skew to depicting a world where only the interests of the player agent matters; all others are evaluated only according to their usefulness to the player agent. Accordingly, some basic questions include:

- Are nonplayer agents treated as instruments, useful only to the extent that they help or hinder the goal-seeking player agent?
- Similarly, are nonplayer agents treated as minions that completely obey any player agent command?
- Are nonplayer agents depicted as subordinate agents, with some level of independent agency?
- Does any practice of marginalization in-game defensibly model the attitudes of states in the Early Modern Period?
- What are the effects of the game's portrayal of nonplayer agents on students' understanding of the past?

This treating of agents as instruments is not just true of traditionally marginalized people. Others can effectively become marginalized in the state's view. Consider, for example, the manpower resource (see the discussion of resources below) in *EUIV*. Each point represents a human being essentially as a resource, with no account of human agency, dignity, complexity, and worth. But then, arguably, that may be exactly how the early modern state viewed individual humans! (For an excellent analysis, see Scott (1999))

Note: The analysis above is not intended to approve or criticize *EUIV's* portrayal. As educator and students, **you** should decide based on the historical evidence, which aspects of *EUIV* are historical defensible models based on the available evidence, and which are not particularly defensible. Most historical games will have elements of both. **You** should decide whether the portrayals are appropriate.

Some more Important questions that can be asked about any agents in the game:
- What are the attributes of the non-player states in *EUIV*? What are their resources? What are their goals? What factors determine their relationships with other states?
- Do the non-player agents in the state act as subordinates or minions? How defensibly does this model the early modern states' powers over those it ruled?
- How do various states in the game compare and contrast both in how their agency is represented and how they view and interact with their populations?

- How are traditionally marginalized people included and represented as agents?
- What are the ramifications of a world that is modeled as a series of rational agents? Is that a defensible model for inter-state relations in the Early Modern Period? Is it a reasonable design approach? Does it make for a cohesive and compelling game?

Resources: *EUIV* has all sorts of resources, defined here as any countable "item" (material or immaterial, as we'll get to in a moment) that can be accumulated and spent to acquire something in the game. Some resources have and had physical quantifiable counterparts historically. The most common of these are ducats and manpower (as noted above this treats human agents, soldiers and sailors, as mere resources). There are a number of in-game resources, however, that either cannot be quantified in history or are very difficult to quantify: the monarch power points (administrative, diplomatic, and military) used to "buy" new ideas; stability points, which affect the strength and expenses of the state, and so on.

Some more Important questions that can be asked about any resources in the game:

- What are the most important resources in the game, and do they defensibly represent core resources of the period?
- Why are resources like monarch power points and prestige (to name just two) represented as quantifiable resources? Does this arguably reflect their use in history? Does this facilitate their use in the game's historical problem space?
- Did most valued resources vary from state-and-region to state-and-region, and does *EUIV* reflect this in-game?
- To what extent does the player-agent state see the gameworld as a set of resources? (in other words, "sees like a state" (Scott (1999); Devereaux (2021)).

An excellent topic of discussion is whether more immaterial resources like these can be quantified and whether *EUIV* doing so defensibly models these features of early Modern states. And again, this raises the issue of how states tend to view the world and its denizens, especially its subjects

Tools: A **tool** according to the HPS framework is an element in the gameworld that the player agent can use to accomplish some task or provide some benefit. These can be divided into modifiers and producers, where modifiers add bonuses to some existing resource or attribute and producers actually create new units, resources, etc. Most commonly in the *EUIV* gameworld, tools exist in the form of modifiers, buildings and technologies that increase rates of resources and metrics like income, trade power, army tradition, and so on.

Even with the awesome work of the *EUIV* wiki-ers, cataloging and categorizing all the buildings in-game is a daunting task: [Buildings - Europa Universalis 4 Wiki (paradoxwikis.com)](#). Still, there are a number of basic questions one can ask about tools:

- Why and how are buildings used in the game to represent tools?
- Why does EUIV identify and use the particular buildings it does? How do those buildings connect to histories of these places in the Early Modern Period?
- How does representing technology and production in terms of buildings affect how the game portrays the past / how players view the past?
- What was the historical role of human agents in these researches and productions represented in the game by buildings? Does the building system obscure the role of agents? Is it a necessary design decision for the overall HPS of the game?

A larger potential area for analysis that goes beyond the limits of this guide is the research and technology system. How various strategy games in general represent the research, development, and implementation of technologies is a fascinating question. Considered briefly, most historical strategy games represent research as some investment of resources into a specific area of study in order to get an identifiable payoff, a new technology to implement. Historically, research and technological development tends to have been far less centrally directed, predictable, and guaranteed to succeed. Considering how *EUIV* represents the systems and process of research and development can foster intriguing discussions and EUIV can be compared to other games with research like *Age of Empires III* , *Civilization*, and *Humankind*. Some helpful analyses that can be applied to *EUIV* for students include Owens (2011) and Ghys (2012).

Obstacles: Obstacles are pretty self-explanatory. Sometimes nonplayer agents pose obstacles. Indeed some nonplayer agents in some games exist simply to block the player agent. Gameworld space often offers obstacles to player-agent and non-player-agent movement or line of sight, and so on. Unless the obstacle is a straightforward environmental block to movement or sight, deeper analysis can be had by considering whether the obstacle also belongs to the element categories of non-player agents, resources, and tools.

Action Choices, Strategies, and Behaviors: The choices of how and when to act are **the** critical parts of a historical problem space. They are what provides and enables agency for the player agent. They are what distinguishes an historical video game from other forms of history. And while this guide has reiterated this point frequently, it cannot be over-emphasized. *EUIV* presents players with the action

choices–and the corresponding abilities to form strategies and adopt behaviors–of a state player agent. These include:

- Accounting behaviors and action choices (how to generate and spend a variety of resources from ducats to monarch points;
    - This includes quantifying and instrumentalizing the world, *i.e.* seeing it in terms of things that can be counted and things that can be used;
- Development action-choices about what buildings to construct and in which provinces, which technologies to invest in, etc;
- Diplomatic action-choices of how to treat and interact with allied, rival, and opposing states;
- Military strategy action choices of how, when, and where to deploy armies and fleets;

and so on.

Put together, the states and countries in-game are machines, and the state player agent monitors one of those machines, fueling and fine-tuning it, so that it can produce: funds, technologies, Empire, etc. And so, one of the central questions about player-agent action choices, behaviors, and strategies is that posed by Scott in *Seeing Like a State* (1999): to what extent do states flatten and simplify the real world to make it usefully manipulable by states? For more discussion of the state focus in *EUIV*, an excellent resource is Devereaux's historical analysis of *EUIV* (2021)

This may be one of the most fascinating questions raised by EUIV. Does the game defensibly model how states "see" the world?
- Do the action choices offered defensibly represent those of early modern states? Do the action choices vary between Ottoman west Asia, the Kingdom of France, and the Aztec Empire. Did they historically?
- What sorts of state-behaviors are encouraged by the game through the systems of incentives, rewards, and goals? Do they vary from region-to-region and state-to-state?
- To what extent are the action choices the state player-agent has offensive when applied to the real-world? Can Early Modern States be considered in ethical terms? Should history do that?

Big Picture Questions

Before concluding it's worth noting that representing the past as a historical problem space, as all historical games characteristically do, impacts how that particular history is represented and modeled in game.

- Player agents tend to be presented as rational goal seekers with clearly defined and understood objectives – something which arguably is often untrue of real world actors.
- Accordingly, game histories, and according to many definitions of game itself, all games, are teleological in focus.
- Player agents often tend to have powers and access to information that are super-human
- Their action choices are limited by the functionality of gameworld and environments. As I note elsewhere
  > "Agents in the world often have access to environments full of space, resources, agents, tools and, consequently, choices that are simply beyond what a history game's player agent has. Where the world may offer many possibilities, the gameworld necessarily offers a finite set, and a set shaped by the logics of the designers." (McCall 2022a)
- Non-player agents are often portrayed with limited agency and, indeed, portrayed instrumentally, as tools the player agent can (and often must) use to achieve the designed goals.

Another common feature of many game histories, though one not necessarily the result of the historical problem space structure, is that the player agent is often a representative of dominant hegemony. Increasing numbers of historical games are being designed around player agents that were historically less powerful or marginalized and representing more diverse perspectives. Nevertheless, broadly in historical video games–if not all video games–the emphasis on white, male, European and American, cis, hetero player agents continues. The emphasis on conquerors and rulers over subjects and the marginalized also continues. Exploring the extent to which *EUIV* does these things, alone or in comparison to other video games is a fruitful area for discussion, for leveraging the power of games to discuss historical agents, systems, and agencies.

Finally, let's end with a few more big picture questions.

- Who is included in the game? Who is left out or marginalized? Who gets the focus?
- What are the primary causes of change and continuity in *EUIV* history?
- Is EUIV a history of Great People, of Masses, of Impersonal Forces shaping development of the world, a bit of each, or something else entirely? Is it defensible in its approach to the past? This is a question that can very

effectively be coupled with any number of texts about causation in history, the early modern period, *etc*.

- How would and does *EUIV* explain the major historical events and processes in the early modern period?
- Does *EUIV* lend itself to bourgeois, whig, or Marxist historical interpretations? To what extent does *EUIV* present social history? Could it have done more or less to do so given this particular chosen player-agent and problem space?
- Why do historical events occur as they do in history and to what extent can counterfactual histories be reasonably imagined? What are the various ways that history can break from the historical record in the game? And, in history itself, what kinds of changes would be sufficient or necessary for events to change, for the counterfactual to have been the factual? On this topic, note the excellent study of counterfactual history in *EUIV* by Grufstedt (2022).

<p align="center">***</p>

Equipped with this *Educator's Guide* for *Europa Universalis IV*, it is my sincere hope that you are well prepared for a thoughtful journey into progressive history education with *EUIV*! Good luck, and let us know how you do!

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