SOMBRAS EN VIDEOJUEGOS: VIRTUAL TOURISM AND COLD WAR
REPRESENTATION IN TACTICAL SHOOTERS

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Latin American Studies

Charlotte

2019

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ABSTRACT

SARAH ANN HAWKINS. Sombras en Videojuegos: Virtual Tourism and Cold War
Representation in Tactical Shooters
(Under the Direction of Dr. OSCAR DE LA TORRE)

In 2018, Newzoo reported video games as a 135 billion USD industry selling

millions of units each year around the globe which also create a response in the real

world as Venezuela's prohibition on violent video games in 2009 reveals. I argue that an

interactive subtext and landscape, through Cold War ideas and virtual tourism, depict

Latin America through the violence of the tactical shooter genre emphasizing shallow

perspectives and mindsets on the region's history and politics. Two ideas create a

framework to analyze the perspectives, as well as the subtext, within video games:

gamescapes - or virtual landscapes - and *interactivity* - the core design of the video game

medium. Developers and publishers design the *gamescapes* and *interactivity* which, in

turn, form the medium's lens representing Latin America's region and people. Twenty

chosen, popular video games identify the representative patterns within tactical shooters

and appear side-by-side to travel narratives for historical context. The history of travel

narratives takes perceptions on Latin America towards foreign, or outsider, mindsets

which video games apply through publishers and developers from the United States,

Europe, and Asia within the international corporations branded AAA (Triple-A) known

for high quality products. Tactical shooters paint incomplete pictures which misrepresent

Latin America's cultural, more than physical, landscape due to a lack of different, far-

reaching perspectives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Sarah, Dennis and Bern, my grandparents.

May you forever enjoy looking to the future while sharing all about the past.

Dedicated to Riley Howell, Ellis "Reed" Parlier, and to the UNCC community.

No matter how tragic life seems, we can remember, respect, and persevere.

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INTRODUCTION

A successful assassination attempt against Fidel Castro, a threat to United States national security; a Bolivian puppet government at the mercy of a drug cartel, also a threat to the United States - both ideas a part of fiction, alternate realities from recent great hits within action video games. Both plot narrative examples - respective to *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (2010) and *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Wildlands* (2017) - received such intense pushback to involve criticism from the Cuban people and Bolivian administration. On the Cuban website cubadebate, the news website ran a story denouncing the video game for smearing not only the history of Castro through the icon's representation but also glorifying the plot of assassination, an alternate reality in which one supposedly and finally succeeds.[i] However, the Bolivian administration took the criticism further by filing a letter of complaint to the French embassy - location of the Ubisoft corporation's European office, the video game publisher of *Wildlands*. Bolivia attempted to correct the outlook before seeking any legal action. Ubisoft rejected Bolivia's idea since the game is an alternate reality – nonexistent in the real world.[ii] The narratives touched a nerve not in one country but two; not with one person but many; and not with one subtext but multiple - a subtext perceived through two topics, one historical and one current, but as part of one time period: the Cold War. I argue that an interactive subtext and landscape, through Cold War ideas and virtual tourism, depict Latin America through the violence of the tactical shooter genre emphasizing shallow perspectives and mindsets on the region's history and politics.

Statistical reports and data tracking groups like Newzoo, Statista, and Nasdaq reveal the growing trend and reach of video games with near-exponential rates, usurping film and music as popular entertainment mediums.[iii] As Newzoo reveals, China and the United States stand in the top two spots, holding an estimated 800 million video game players within 2018's global market based on game revenue.[iv] Newzoo reports beyond the estimated global number of players and reveals that the 2018 global games market comes around $134.9 billion and future predictions reveal such markets to grow to a probable $174 billion in 2021.[v] The revenue numbers show one point about the medium's reach and units sold show another. *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (2010) sold 30.4 million units and *Call of Duty: Ghosts* (2013) sold 28.8 million units as of February 2019, Statisa reports.[vi] In addition to the sales, a report identified a specific ratio of video game genre popularity in the United States consumer-base with shooters and action video games listed as 47.8% of the sold units during 2017.[vii] The collection of data reports from Newzoo, Statista, and Nasdaq reveal the rate video games grow in comparison to music and films - already over double the gross revenue in 2018 and predicted to rise further.[viii] This data trend reveals the locations and interests of the player-base but also the broad age breakdown with 57% of US video game players under the age of 35 in 2018.[ix] The data shows the international effect and reach video games hold from the early 2000s to the 2010s and analysts expect the market to continue growth with a youth as a future consumer-base.[1x]

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[1] The consumer-base appears under two broad terms to help identify the group and the individuals, respectively: community and players. For the community, this grouping places a portion of the consumer-base as loyal fans or interested parties towards specific video games and franchises; players represent the individuals within the industry's consumer-base who purchase and play the video games.

Beyond video games' popularity, the industry's developers create an impact through game design which provide a shallow lens through misrepresentation on Latin American people and places. The video game development process involves numerous developers, technology, time, budget and research. Each company who designs a video game uses in-house methods and industry trade skills but almost all the companies follow a four-step development schedule:

1) Concept – a time to format basic ideas for the gameplay and plot narrative

2) Pre-Production – a stage to add details on top of the idea formation from the first phase

3) Production - the game design implementation and alteration of info from previous phases

4) Post-Production - testing to check that the video game fits company standards[xi]

This schedule shows the rigorous business model within the competitive video game market and how business practices balance profitability between narrative and game design. For example, companies cancel video game development projects for reasons such as the market's current trends towards specific genres to even the project's overall entertainment value. Most project cancellations or delays occur within the final phase, the last 10% so to speak, due to problems which appear in tests during the post-production phase.[xii] However each choice made by a company, specific to an international corporation and market release, involves hundreds, if not more, developers checking a game's design but also excluding certain design and narrative details. One such area to highlight involves a game's world-building narrative details that vanish from the final product to cut time or better the flow based upon a game's gameplay and

narrative style. In fact, there exists an additional step during the post-production phase through a process known as *localization*; this process adapts products and content to a specific locale or market that may include different legal requirements, censorship, and various forms of local information like translation, unit measurements, and cultural references.[xiii] Thus, each detail within the design and narrative reflects a chosen, conscious decision which emphasizes a final product's representation.

Table 1: List of Chosen Video Games[2]				
Name	Genre	Publisher and/or Developer	LA States Represented	Release Date
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	Tactical Shooter	EA DICE; ColdWood Interactive	Argentina; Bolivia; Chile; Colombia; Peru; Venezuela	2 March 2010
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Tactical Shooter	Treyarch; N-Space; Raven Software	Cuba	9 Nov 2010
Call of Duty: Ghosts	Tactical Shooter	Infinity Ward; Raven Software; Neversoft; Treyarch	Brazil; South America	5 Nov 2013
Cuban Missile Crisis: Aftermath	Real-Time Tactics	1C Company; G5 Software	Cuba	24 June 2005
Front Mission 4	Tactical RPG	Square Enix Co., Ltd.	Venezuela	18 Dec 2003
Max Payne 3	Tactical Shooter	Rockstar Games; MORE	Brazil	15 May 2012
Mercenaries 2: World in Flames	Tactical Shooter	Pandemic Studios; Behaviour Interactive; Pi Studios	Venezuela	31 Aug 2008
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	Metal Gear Player Online (MPO)	Konami; Kojima Productions	Colombia	5 Dec 2006
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	Tactical Shooter	Kojima Productions	Costa Rica	28 Apr 2010
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Tactical Shooter	Ubisoft Entertainment; Red Storm Entertainment	Argentina; Brazil	18 March 2003

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[2] A handful of chosen video games fall under different genres than tactical shooter and help reveal any differences specific to game design beyond the patterns of landscape and plot narratives. The different subgenres such as role-playing games like *Front Mission 4* or real-time strategy games such as *Cuban Missile Crisis: Aftermath* help reveal the design techniques specific to tactical shooters. Some differences include the playable player perspectives - first person versus third person and god perspectives; turn-based combat versus combat realism; and level designs.

Table 1: List of Chosen Video Games Continued				
Names	Genre	Publisher and/or Developer	LA States Represented	Release Dates
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2	Tactical Shooter	Ubisoft Entertainment	Mexico	18 March 2008
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Essentials	Tactical Shooter	Ubisoft Entertainment	Colombia	21 March 2006
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Tactical Shooter	Ubisoft Entertainment; Red Storm Entertainment	Cuba	13 Nov 2001
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter	Tactical Shooter	Ubisoft Entertainment; Red Storm Entertainment	Nicaragua; Mexico	9 March 2006
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2	Tactical Shooter	Ubisoft Entertainment; Red Storm Entertainment; Grin; High Voltage Software	Mexico	6 March 2007
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier	Tactical Shooter	Ubisoft Entertainment; Red Storm Entertainment	Nicaragua; Bolivia	22 May 2012
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Wildlands	Tactical Shooter	Ubisoft Entertainment; MORE	Bolivia;	7 March 2017
Socom II	Tactical Shooter	Sony Computer Entertainment; Zipper Interactive	Brazil	4 Nov 2003
Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix	First-person Shooter	Raven Software; Gratuitous Games	Colombia	20 May 2002

Twenty video games from *Table 1* represent the genre tactical shooters, excluding

a few exceptions, and include Latin American representation within this entertainment

medium through analyzing patterns of ideas shared between the games. This focus on one

genre narrows the lens to analyze and acquire more details of each video game example,

delving into the medium's content instead of the number of video games. By limiting to

tactical shooters, the analysis avoids the problem of too many variables from too many

genres. Tactical shooters work well with topics of violent narratives prevalent in Cold

War ideas and events within the Latin American region. However, to limit analysis on

narrative alone leaves a large gap within video game presentation of Latin American

landscapes and ignores the overlying visual and audial depth immersed within video

games from graphic design. Thus, virtual locations delve into how immersive, physical landscapes appear as intermediaries for narrative analysis on Cold War plot points.

The *Table 1* video games fall under the brand AAA (Triple-A) which certain video game companies – housed in the United States, Europe, and Asia – identify as, and even label products with, due to the promoted and expected high quality content, marketing, and reach of such branding. Predictions for these AAA products lead to expectations and sometimes those products end up as bestsellers or even with awards. Awards for AAA categorize under multiple titles but none as iconic as the game of the year, an award usually determined by votes at an annual event currently known as *The Game Awards*.[xiv] With the addition of live coverage over multiple platforms and websites, over 26.2 million people watched this event in December 2018 - up 128% since last year's 11.5 million.[xv] The developers and publishers, as a whole group, present a foreign perspective when exploring various regions in video game landscapes since these AAA companies listed in *Table 1* do not call any Latin American country a home office location - as based upon information provided in the companies' various public annual reports over the past decade.[3][xvi]

Most of the *Table 1* video games identify under the genre "tactical shooter" which so happens to involve player perspectives of either, or both, first and third person views during interactive gameplay. The decision to focus on tactical shooters, instead of another genre, comes from three different reasons: the genre's popularity, misrepresentations of

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[3] Though the business structure for the video game industry can appear confusing at first, the industry splits into two separate groups under the various company names: publishers and developers. Publishers stand as the companies who fund the development of the video game product as well as handle the marketing and public relations; publishers either develop in-house, through groups like studios or subsidized companies, or use external development through separate companies. Studios will appear as the developers for the branding but company information about the business or products will appear under the parent corporation; for example, Red Storm Entertainment's information appears under Ubisoft Entertainment reports.

Latin America, and the ratio of time the region appears within the video games. Current

debates within the video game consumer-base and critics exist regarding the subtle

differences between subgenres for shooter video games. To simplify the community

debate, one subgenre term - tactical shooter - appears for the broad area of the action

genre specific to shooters which emphasize combat realism.[xvii] Combat realism involves

multiple details and designs such as weapon design, weapon loading graphics, damage

systems implementing realistic damage taken or given by the playable character, as well

as computer-controlled teammates which the player switches over to control or orders

about.[xviii] This genre identification from action or shooter to tactical shooters comes from

either the publisher or players and appears during the development or release of a

product.
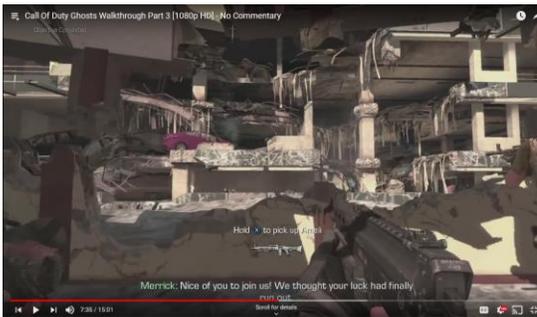
Figure 1: Example of First Person[xix]   Figure 2: Example of Third Person[xx]

The *Table 1* video games appear in the chosen list from specific requirements

such as release dates, settings, genre restrictions, and plot points to help create the limit

on analyzing content, patterns, and Latin American misrepresentation. These video

games released over a decade, with the earliest video game released on November 13th,

2001 and to the latest on March 7th, 2017. The twenty video games share similarities,

both minute and specific, to the genre and topic of the Cold War beyond the requirement

of including Latin America in the setting. Based upon the time frame created by these

release dates, as well as the minimum of 1-5 years most projects of this level require for

development, current events dating from before the late 1990s to the early 2010s

influence the narrative, subtext, and landscape design.[xxi] In addition, other significant

historical events like 9/11 occur and repeat throughout the plot and subtext beyond the

iconic Cold War events. Terrorism, as one current trend, caused a reaction within various

entertainment mediums and influenced game development and final product

representation through censorship, such as editing out the appearance of the World Trade

Center, or discussions of the controversial and violent topic.[xxii] For example, the

interactive level from *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (2009) includes a playable

character taking part in a terrorist attack on a Russian airport with realistic graphics and

non-playable characters (NPCs) acting as targetable civilians.[xxiii] Thus, the subtext within

the video games involve two parts towards historical topics: the historical context and

events in relation to present developments within the 21st century.[xxiv]

Beyond the development and reach of these AAA video games, two concepts

apply within video game design and sets a framework to analyze the chosen video games

from *Table 1*: gamescape and interactivity. *Gamescape*, a term coined by Shoshana

Magnet, delves into the virtual aspect within landscapes in video game design and

explores a player's perspective on such virtual locations and people. Magnet identifies

gamescape as a perspective provided by developers and presented within the games. By

laying down the framework for how perspective branches out beyond fictional narratives,

Magnet helps connect landscape beyond a physical representation and into broad

stereotypes such as tropicality - a trope that forces one to fit into a tropical climate

persona. *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* (2010), one video game to test Magnet's

gamescape, travels to various Latin American countries while following the main plot. The gamescape represented within *Bad Company 2* explores different scenes of topography but overall not the local people. In how Magnet describes gamescape, the design focuses on location without including locals and such choice reveals a design implementation not fitting Magnet's entire version of gamescape. Magnet analyzed one video game franchise, *Tropico*, which delved into the simulation genre and varies from tactical shooters; Tropico applied historical context not only in the topography but also in details such as the building information, non-playable characters representing locals, and so on. However, even though gamescape involves varying implementation, gamescape applies the spatial ideologies within virtual presentation through both genres using physical presentations of the countries. Thus, this analysis into tactical shooters expands Magnet's gamescape and applies the term from the multiple layers of gamescape into examples for when gamescapes create shallow presentations using just one layer: topography - causing problematic outlooks onto the region.[4][xxv]

The video game consumer-base identifies by a nickname which befits the core of the medium: players; by playing a product, an active participation in the medium exists - one which ties to the aspect of interactivity. Mark J. P. Wolf explores interactivity - an active instead of passive interaction between the product and the player - apparent within video games and compares interactive entertainment to cinematography, a medium that uses passive participation instead.[xxvi] This interactivity appears not only as a core design

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[4] Magnet applies space into the virtual personification of landscape not only due to the aspect of representing physical locations but also through the already existing literature on the topic of video games and space. Mark J P Wolf explores the topic of space alongside time, narrative and genre within video games and compares the implementation of such design aspects towards other mediums like cinematography. The work *Medium of the Video Game* appears as a core source of discussion on this topic and sets the stage for the discussion to explore how video games implement design of the real world through accurate and exaggerated presentations.

through video game development but also as a part of the plot. Additionally, Matt Garite expands the definition of interactivity to include the similar concept of ideology, one shared by Magnet's analysis, but through a player's active participation as a subject of ideology. Put together, Wolf, Magnet and Garite all explain analysis of players as the subject through active participation in interactivity to help present the lens developers design. After all, *Modern Warfare 2*'s controversial terrorist scene caused an outcry due to the player's necessary choice to control and act out the attack instead of viewing such a plot point as a cinematic cutscene – one example of active instead of passive participation. By combining gamescape and interactivity, a framework settles down to analyze landscapes within video games but also to help apply a term yet connected to video games - virtual tourism.

Virtual tourism refers to a virtual exploration of a location and society; this analysis specifies the term for video games using the interactivity apparent within the medium to analyze the gamescape. I apply virtual tourism towards existing literature which creates the necessary space to understand how representations in gamescape impact the real world.[5] However, virtual tourism appears, not out of the blue, but from literature already exploring similar ideas which brush the surface and possibilities of virtual reality. Feifei Xu, Dimitrios Buhalis, Jessika Weber, and Lisa Nakamura explore the idea of tourism through three different terms: *gamification* of tourism, *cybernetic tourism* and *identity tourism*.[xxvii] Each academic approaches tourism through the lens of an outsider gathering and observing information about a foreign group or location before

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[5] Other academics such as Phillip Penix-Tadsen delve into the topic of virtual tourism within video games but separate the term as one applied just to video games instead of throughout literature on cyberspace or virtual tools used in the real world.

exploring tourism using either a tool or construct for the lens. These academics explore

tourism through cyberspace to either create visual or audial tools similar to gamescapes.

In the real world, the tourist and real estate industries also apply virtual tools like audial

and visual tours of historical sites or properties to help fill a gap limited forms of physical

tours create.[xxviii] By applying the term virtual tourism, these real-world tools used outside

of the video game medium reveal how tools can implement perspectives from whomever

designed the tools. For example, a museum audial tour guide using headsets creates the

narrative the museum shows of museum objects. The implementation of virtual tools

reveals the broad application of virtual tourism both by literature and the real-world

industries.

When the discussion on virtual tourism expands beyond the scope of a method or

tool, virtual tourism reaches out as an overarching construct to create a lens for

perspective. Lisa Nakamura describes virtual tourism as a construct through an

individual's active, not passive, relationship within cyberspace either to shed or immerse

into identity tropes; such tropes create a perspective for both the active participants

within the cyberspace but also all those individuals who view into the cyberspace.[xxix]

This construct, defined as a product of culture with existing, real-world power dynamics,

applies beyond the Internet's cyberspace. The application of virtual tourism as a construct

in video games allows for a product brand awareness which expands to the landscape

present within the game design and narrative – as long as a player volunteers to take part

in the gameplay.[xxx] To summarize, virtual tourism appears within the specific topics

applied and analyzed by academics like Xu and Nakamura as if the terms coined by these

academics fall under the broad term of virtual tourism. The key point of virtual tourism

uses the term as a limited view on places or people - a foreign perspective on the focus. This foreign perspective comes to the forefront for virtual tourism and branches from gamescapes into the plot which so happen to refer to the Cold War as a common point, both as a discussion tool and as the topic of focus.

The Cold War represents a time period of international politics and commerce through militaristic interactions, covert interventions, and proxy wars between the two rising global superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union until the collapse of the Soviet Union.[xxxi] The United States administrations feared the influence Communism pushed into Eastern Europe after World War II and also attempted to safeguard the rest of Europe, and soon the world, from the different and threatening ideology opposing Capitalism and Democracy.[xxxii] This tension between the two super powers lead to a lack of direct conflict between the two nation-states but caused an arms race and foreign relations of political, economic, and militaristic nature as the US actions in Guatemala, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic reveal during 1954 to 1965.[xxxiii] During this time of geopolitics, Latin America stood as one battleground for ideological conflicts between the two superpowers while attempting to reach stability and acquire benefits within the tense situation on the international stage. Piero Gleijeses explores the local perspective and interactions with the foreign superpowers by analyzing the history of Cuba under Fidel Castro's administration. In Castro's Cuba, the baffling resistance against US hegemony in the nation-state's sphere of influence almost defies the superpower in the nation-state's own backyard - a misnomer of possession on the Southern, sovereign territories and neighbors to the United States. The Platt Amendment, an agreement between the United States and Cuba in 1901, reveals the historical context of diplomatic

actions by the US into the Western Hemisphere as Cuba needed to achieve certain stipulations first before attaining identity as a full, sovereign nation. Cuba's success in between the clashes and failures against the United States either included or lacked support from the Soviet Union.[xxxiv] Cuba represents a threat to the United States and the superpower's national security. For the video games in *Table 1*, the perspective on Latin America represents the foreign outlook towards the region even as historical events both from Latin America and the United States create active reactions between the various countries during the Cold War in real life - a point overlooked in the chosen video games unless alternate, fictitious realities present the region in a new light.

The focus on US hegemony as a foreign perspective towards Latin America appears in an unbalanced power relationship numerous times through economic, militaristic, and political methods explored by academics like Dennis Florig, Timothy M Gill, and Caroline Kennedy. Florig twists the success of hegemony as overreach and, in some instances, diplomatic failure which Gill supports through examples of foreign intervention into Latin America - gunboat diplomacy, economic neoliberal policies, and covert operations.[xxxv] Kennedy expands hegemony from diplomatic reactions to understanding human reasoning behind foreign perspectives - referring to the Manichean temptation for moral justification behind the superpower's actions and interventions.[xxxvi] As such, Kennedy's explanation of propaganda towards the US as a moral good in Cold War geopolitics appears within the video games through various plot narratives with a skewed reaction against the antagonists or Latin America overall. Gill also supports such a line of reasoning by delving both into the political and economic intervention and interests into Latin America. Such Manichean temptations lead towards a mixture of

interventions, one which Ginger Williams and Jennifer Disney explore through the militarism of the United States in both diplomatic and direct influence on various Latin American countries or dictatorships.[xxxvii] All these lines of questioning explore the details and reasonings behind the perceptions in the *Table 1* video games but also explore the impressions of the European and US travelers within travel narratives. The travel narratives, after Spain opened the borders to the region during the colonial time, formulates a long historical influence onto the mindsets towards Latin America.

Policies from the Cold War, such as the War on Drugs, still appear as relevant pieces of discussion with regards to both current events as well as the representations within video games. The War on Drugs stays on the top of any metaphorical list not only with the continuation of drug smuggling over international borders but also due to the expansion of the War on Drugs into an entertainment representation called narcoculture. Narcoculture is a romanticized perspective - a "partial reality" - on the topic of the illegal drug trade.[xxxviii] Within analysis on the *Table 1* video games, narcoculture will not appear as a prevalent focus due to the Cold War aspect within the narrative alongside the uncertain timeframe of when this pattern of romanticized representation first appeared during the late 2000s to 2010s. Williams and Disney describe the War on Drugs' influence on the Latin American region and how the impact more recent foreign policies, like the War on Terror, holds in relation to the historical policy. Alterations to the War on Drugs held two important differences: first, the Pentagon and US Southern Command (Southcom) now hold more responsibility than the State Department for foreign policy in Latin America within the last decade; and second, funds designed for counter narcotic programs now divert towards counterinsurgency missions which weakened policy

effectiveness for the War on Drugs. All the while, rhetoric applies the two policies - terror and drugs - together, a shared fate.[xxxix]

Within the video game analysis following in chapters one and two, both the gamescape and plot narrative come into question but with a focus on some video games over others from *Table 1* and with a framework of gamescapes over interactivity. For example, the two video games from the *Metal Gear Solid* franchise listed on *Table 1* require reference to Latin America's impact in the overall narrative but, in comparison to the detailed settings of *Max Payne 3* or *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Wildlands*, the *Metal Gear Solid* games require less analysis for understanding. All video game information comes from recorded sessions publicly available on the website YouTube under videos known as Let's Play walkthroughs; the option of no additional commentary by the individuals recording appear when available for full immersion into the content while avoiding bias when possible. The *Table 1* video games received a collection of responses from critics and the consumer-base, some positive, negative, or mixed; all critic ratings and data collections (units sold, revenue made, etc.) vary depending on the specific site or publisher the information comes from. As such, the focus remains on the content of the video games more than the overall response; only community discussions found on online forum websites - official video game forums or third-party websites like Reddit - appear as reliable, detailed description for some community responses. Within the video game content in the walkthroughs, the visual and audial stimuli come into question instead of interactivity. Interactivity requires playing the video games to understand the immersion aspect of active participation; yet, if such a method of analysis took place, the

limitations from timeframe and the possibility of missing details through a personal gameplay experience create too many holes for full analysis.

In the first chapter, virtual tourism thrives as the visual stimuli in video games help reveal the problems and benefits of the region's presentation through tropicality, modernization, and underdevelopment while the industry's advancement created more content throughout the decade. Within the chosen video games, emphasis on the latest video games appear due to the amount of detailed graphic content to work with in the overall discussion. Comparisons to early 2000s video games identify technological advancements as well as similarities in gamescape presentations to the other literature presenting foreign perspectives. Gamescape presentation of the landscape narrative compares to the historical traveler narrative towards Latin America dating all the way back to the 1800s using a mix of primary sources such as the publications of travelers in these time periods as well as literature from Mary Louise Pratt. Using the historical background on foreign perspectives towards Latin America, the video games reveal similarities and differences to the travel narrative highlighted in three areas: tropicality, modernization, and underdevelopment. The variances between urban and rural life appear in both virtual and real-world landscapes and one important highlight involves the favelas; Justin McGuirk adds on the twist of favelas as a proud identity for the region - giving a different and present-day opinion on the topic in comparison to the historical contexts of the traveler narratives. Thus, the gamescapes reveal how such history on foreign perspectives, from traveler literature to video games, echoes using virtual tourism to take an audience along for the ride as the subject of ideology.

In the second chapter, the foundation set by gamescapes delve further into the plot which not only creates the picture of the Cold War representation but also how that subtext uses the Cold War as a tool of discussion and misrepresents the region's culture and people. The specifics of paramilitary, guerilla, and counterrevolutionary groups also make an appearance within this chapter, both real and imaginary, to understand the misrepresentation of the people beyond the detailed perspective of the landscapes. However, beyond the discussion tool, the plot reveals the continuation of one aspect from the Cold War: the War on Drugs. Altogether, the Cold War representation comes out to play here, highlighting the foreign perspective of a Manichean temptation towards a US hegemony in Latin America, and adds on the subtext of foreign perspectives on the people, not just the gamescapes.

Notes

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CHAPTER ONE: VIRTUAL TOURISM AND LATIN AMERICAN GAMESCAPE

Awe and wonder: two split-second emotions which make or break the video game and in which the specific development team, the game artists, designed to help detail the setting and then compliment the plot. Game artists breathe the landscape, draw the emotions, the subtext, and the fun from the physical environments and act as the intermediaries that breach the boundary towards the rest of the video game experience. Game artists also stand as just one of the many solid pieces laying the foundation for the overall video game design, a dependable support. The video game designers intertwine with this same goal, by taking the second part of Shoshana Magnet's description of gamescape and putting the term into practice. In specific detail, Magnet describes how the landscape exists not as objects to observe but as dynamic and interactive parts of the environment - movable, descriptive, or even explorative.[xl] Put together, game artists and designers help create the pavement and perspective of landscapes used throughout the rest of a narrative, through the gamescape; landscapes involve the surroundings, locale, and environment, visual and audial representations, which symbolize the cultural image of a place and people.[xli] However, the practical goals fail to pave the way towards understanding the foreign perspective on Latin America and fall short in shining light on the complex and numerous cultures from this region.

Within the historical context of foreign perspectives towards Latin America, travel literature applies best in similarity to video games and gamescape. In fact, two of the video games in *Table 1*, *Wildlands* and *Max Payne 3*, both used teams who traveled to

the locations and documented with photographs, notes, and observations for information about the physical landscapes – echoing the tactic used throughout the history of travel narrative. The developers, knowingly or not, used similar practices of past individuals who wrote historical writings describing Latin America in the 1800s and early 1900s. I argue that the comparison of travel narratives to video games reveal Latin American stereotypes through three trends: tropicality, modernity, and underdevelopment. These ideas applied to Latin America within a historical context but continue to show up as a perception on the region through the physical representation. On top of the literature, Mary Louise Pratt and Justin McGuirk add an additional layer to the discussion through present-day observations of Latin America, going so far as to criticize any outdated or misinformed stereotype.

Gamescapes, the virtual landscapes within video games, appear as one more type of foreign perspective on Latin America in a long historical list of narrative – written word as the first. Travel literature appeared as far back as the colonial period when Europeans first discovered the continent and region. Mary Louise Pratt delves into organizing a collection of travel literature depicting not only foreign perspectives but the continuing phenomena of published travels for individuals in search of understanding and exploring the unknown, exotic, or scientific. Pratt gathers a collection to highlight the historical perspectives from the colonial period all the way to 2007 in hopes of challenging the dominant thoughts presented in these writings, such as the three stereotypes of tropicality, modernization, and underdevelopment. For gamescapes, the video games from *Table 1* highlight similar mindsets to the travel literature and come

from the foundation set by the historical context of foreign perceptions, specifically the European and United States' view on Latin America.

The first of the three areas which gamescapes share with the historical travel literature involves an exotic representation of topography known as tropicality. Tropicality refers to a metaphorical association of tropical topography towards a subjective experience, vision, landscape or society. Derek Gregory highlights the connection of the Tropics as counter to civilized or cultivated places or people through a "form of discursive projection imposed by the West," referring to Europe and later the United States. In this instance, the Tropics include the geographical location within the Americas near the Equator - a shared idea applied back in history by various writers like Alexander von Humboldt and discussed by academics such as Pratt.[xlii] The definition of tropicality helps understand the method in which Magnet details *Tropico* as a tropical island filled to the brim with stereotypes for the region. Additionally, tropicality appears the most of all areas for comparison within the chosen video games, partially due to the simple connection a player can make to a location depending on the visuals through the presented topography.

Within the travel literature, scientific literature begins a pattern of naturalistic writing as both scientists and individuals travel to Latin America to collect information and data about Latin America's natural environment, plant life, and animal life. The individuals depicted in literature such as the La Condamine writings describe the information of the terrain outside of cities during land expeditions to understand the interior instead of the past popularity with maritime exploration. The La Condamine writings detail the jungle, the routes, small cities, rivers, and so on. Alongside the La

Condamine writings, Pratt depicts travel literature to Latin America picking up during the mid-18th century due to the isolationism controlled by Spain in the region over the European territory before that time. In fact, La Condamine symbolizes the loosening of Spain's control over Latin America as more foreigners explored the region - usually the area now known as South America.[xliii] Another source, this time an account written by Reverend J. A. Zahm, later in 1916 after the wave of independence in Latin America, follows the same pattern of naturalism as La Condamine. However, Zahm expanded the naturalistic writing to include daily life and people.[xliv] In fact, the literature blends together as scientific accounts include details about the itinerary, personal experiences, descriptions, and impressions left on the writer - giving an overview of the entire journey instead of facts collected during the time abroad.

One popular detail shared within travel literature involves descriptions of foreign cities and the positive and negative parts of the urban landscape like the state of infrastructure and nature's presence. When Reverend J. A. Zahm traveled through the Brazilian port of Bahia, Zahm depicted the city during a state of awe through the beauty and infrastructure. One of the details Zahm gives involves the harmonizing decoration the buildings hold when the garish colors coincide with tropical plants, creating an attractive design and visual stimuli.[xlv] Another individual, this time Theodore Child, depicts a different city - Buenos Aires - and the terrain surrounding the city as one with tropical forests over mountains and hillsides. Child's depictions move the city descriptions of the blending of tropicality from urban into rural. Each piece of literature at one point mentions the tropical plant life, terrain, or animal life connected to the Tropics. The written descriptions here attempt, however, to give the audience the first look of a place

by detailing these visuals - an attempt to not only show the scale of a place but also a quick picture. Video games skip that step by the medium's design and show the visuals with ease.

In *Figures 3* and *4* below, a side-by-side comparison helps give the written descriptions of the past a better understanding of tropicality through visuals alone. *Figure 3* depicts Riberalta, Bolivia in the tropical forest area at the northern tip of the country in recent years. Like described by Zahm, urban life even in smaller cities stand next to plant life native to the region, in this instance the tropical plants of Bolivia. Riberalta, Bolivia created a plaza or a park to give a public space to the city - a design common throughout the world as seen in cities like New York City with Central Park. However, *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* represents the same area within Bolivia but as a nearby rural area with no small town. *Bad Company 2* includes only two urban areas - one abandoned in Argentina and the other in the middle of conflict within Venezuela. *Bad Company 2* creates an interesting picture based upon the void left by what the video game leaves out in the representation, a disproportionate lack of urban settings. *Figure 4* represents the opposite of *Figure 3* but helps give an idea of the gorgeous topography of Bolivia, a similar pattern between *Bad Company 2* and *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Wildlands* seen in *Figure 5* and *6*. All these figures help give the best visual stimuli to understand the kind of detail possible within video games but also the way in which developers implement such design.
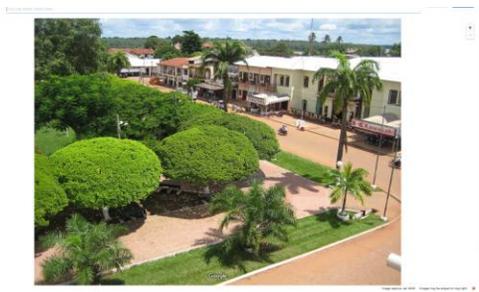
Figure 3: Riberalta, Bolivia[xlvi]

Figure 4: *Bad Company 2* "Upriver" Level[xlvii]

Figure 5: *Wildlands* Topography Detail[xlviii]
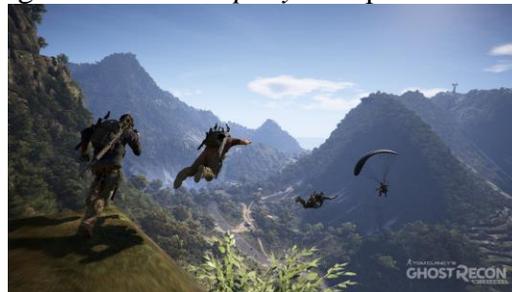
Figure 6: *Wildlands* Open World[xlix]

     Wildlands represents a game design uncommon within the *Table 1* video games:

open world. In a Polygon interview with Ubisoft - publisher and developer for *Wildlands*,

the video game required in-depth research to create an open-world environment for

players to explore. The developers researched the topography of Bolivia to even include

certain landmarks such as the Laguna Colorada (Red Lagoon) in which the team traveled

to the country like the individuals who published travel literature and photographed the

country while soaking in the landscape and daily life. The result of such research created

a virtual exploration and tour of a country which the players walked, drove, flew, and

parachuted around; players even received a positive sense of completion through

achievements by collecting information about the video game's presented landmarks. Of

all the twenty video games in *Table 1*, *Wildlands* represents just one of two video games

with an open-world design - *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames* represents the other.

Excluding *Cuban Missile Crisis: Aftermath*, *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas* and

Vegas 2, all other *Table 1* video games, 17 out of 20, include at least one level with either an urban area designed with tropical plant life or a rural area either next to or within a tropical forest.

Figure 7: Gameplay of *Island Thunder*[l]

Figure 8: Combat Scene from *Front Mission 4*[li]

The difficulty with presenting tropicality through visual graphics involves the technological differences between old and new video games. In the early 2000s, graphics still involved limitations such as *Figure 7* and *8* where design choices help create smooth transitions for gameplay such as fog to lessen the detail loaded up for visual display or a level design with less artistic detail for the environments. One way in which early video games got around graphic limitations involved cinematography - to improve visual detail - and using non-interactive points in the plot narrative cutscenes, as seen at the beginning of the Brazilian levels in *SOCOM II*. The opening scene for Brazil in *SOCOM II* depicts the jungle and a visual panning away from a waterfall either on a forest-covered hill or cliff, details rarely seen in the interactive levels during gameplay. Compare *Figure 8* to the visual representation of *Wildlands*; *Figure 8* shows a combat fight within *Front Mission 4* which released in 2003 while *Wildlands* released in 2017. Not only can the comparison between the two games reveal the advancing graphic design and technology but also in what tropicality appears as within the medium. *Front Mission 4* resorted to

using more than visuals by including audial sounds. The sound effects from *Front Mission 4* represents an exotic setting using animal noises and upbeat tunes stereotyped to represent the jungle. *Wildlands* also includes audial sound effects but the detail further advances from early video games with numerous options and timings of when such sound effects play instead of noise repeated within a certain zone.

To summarize, tropicality appears in more than just basic, visual representations of topography but with common stereotypes of jungles, or specific plant life. Topography emphasized in video games even depict weather patterns as seen in *Bad Company 2, Max Payne 3* and *Wildlands* alongside the blending of environment into urban areas as represented in video games like *Max Payne 3*, *SOCOM II*, *Mercenaries II*, *Call of Duty: Black Ops* and *Ghosts*, and *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2* and *Future Soldier*. The jungle levels represent the most iconic of this stereotype of the Tropics. In fact, jungle levels appear most of all and even appear within games solely dedicated to urban environments like *Max Payne 3*. In *Max Payne 3*, a jungle appears on a mission taking place on the city outskirts in a rundown, industrial area which reveals the intersection between urban and rural life. Most jungle levels include the uneven terrain, visual and sound effects of animal and plant life, and even small dirt paths to follow. However, *Soldier of Fortune II* represents the only level to also include additional detail of ancient ruins instead of camps or small rural areas. The overarching idea with all these details involves one important idea: exoticism. Polygon's interview about *Wildlands* even states that the video game takes the player to an exotic setting, one refreshing for the player than the same-old video game. However, the idea of Latin America as exotic instead of more seems odd; after all, the United States in the past

seemed exotic to a foreigner as does any other foreign location for someone not from that location.

Moving on from tropicality, the second out of the three areas for comparison involves the modernization of Latin America. Modernization defines as a process connected to development, growth, progress, and liberalization towards a society imagined in the image of the West with similar, capitalist values to Europe and the United States.[lii] Though perceptions of modernity share similar ideas to those of advancement for any society, modernism first took shape around the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century before postmodernism stepped up later on. Zahm and Child both include discussion of urban development, specifically infrastructure upgrades, to cities like Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - a city praised for the design and advancements made by the city's inhabitants.[liii] However, unlike Zahm, Child criticizes the cities and mocks the cities as a "spirit of imitation" in which such advancements prove the opposite for Latin America and that the cities like Buenos Aires represent a "gross manifest of vulgar luxury."[liv] In comparison to one another, Zahm and Child reveal the varying perceptions of Latin America even back then with one final narrative by Hiram Bingham. Bingham took time to dedicate chapters describing the time's baffling criticism against Latin America. For comparison, Bingham detailed travel literature on the United States after the American Revolution which held the same kind of criticism found against Latin America from Europeans; Bingham refers to Dickens' US experiences in specific detail here. In the end, Bingham admits that without criticism the travel literature would not give an accurate picture for foreigners arriving in the region with certain expectations. Thus, Bingham excuses such criticism against Latin America.[lv]

Before detailing patterns of modernism in video games, the third area of

comparison helps create a full picture with relation to modernism: underdevelopment.

Underdevelopment refers to a comparative absence of development when looking at

multiple areas, cities, or countries; in this instance, comparing countries to Europe and

the United States as the goal to achieve.[lvi] The linear comparison side-by-side to

inequality between countries left one always striving for advancement. Countries gain an

identity as underdeveloped through various means such as the lack of or out-of-date

knowledge about scientific thought, a majority, rural population, and even poor

infrastructure. Now, underdevelopment coincided with modernist theories on ranking

countries in the world. Latin America so happened to represent an underdeveloped region

in the world even with the praise of cities in the region by individuals like Zahm - placing

the comments by Child within historical context. Again, the infrastructure within cities

received praise while the delays in travel due to weather and road conditions outside the

cities failed to please.

Figure 9: *Max Payne 3'*s São Paulo[lvii]   Figure 10: *Max Payne 3's* Favela in São Paulo[lviii]

Within this instance of modernity alongside underdevelopment, an interesting

dilemma appears regarding poor areas in Latin America known as favelas. Due to the

high population growth which impacts underdeveloped countries, the rate of progress for

infrastructure cannot implement proper housing for everyone; thus, a portion of a

country's population ends up with unofficial housing for shelter, iconic within high-density urban areas. Alongside tropicality, favelas or similar representations appear often within the video games in *Table 1*, with less than half representing a similar collection of sheds either in rural or urban areas in the levels or open world. Where *Wildlands* represented a researched depiction of topography, *Max Payne 3* represents the researched urban life of some of the most infamous Brazilian cities - São Paulo specifically. *Max Payne 3*'s development team from Rockstar traveled to São Paulo to take photographs as well as using new technology to grab the motions of the city's daily life. In the city observations, the developers not only recorded the interactions of locals but also the method of travel for rich individuals by helicopter, the violence of cities with gang-related crimes, and much more. However, Rockstar states within interviews that the purpose of the gamescape involved highlighting human struggles and such struggles even appear in the physical representations of the favela. The emphasis on human struggle polarized standards of living as seen within *Figures 9* and *10.* By this statement, Rockstar admits to presenting polarized situations within urban Brazil, creating a lens of strife over other aspects of Brazilian daily life.

Since the creation of favelas, both local and foreign individuals found these unofficial areas to represent a black spot in the cities that such favelas took residence in. However, Justin McGuirk disagrees with the negative sentiment towards the favelas and even the push towards designs of European influence. McGuirk leaves one resonating thought for reflection: Rio, as the birthplace of the favela, presents a far more radical city then Brasilia - a capital built from scratch. Favelas represent the heart of the city - a location of contest, of violence, of density, and of daily life; these makeshift towns within

metropolitans exist out of necessity due to the polarized standards of living and the domestic, economic situations apparent within the political spectrum. Nearly a third of all city dwellers within Latin America live in informal conditions. With favelas accounting for 22%, 1.4 million, of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's total population in 2014, the favelas remain a part of city identity.[lix] McGuirk recognizes Latin American cities as some of the greatest experiments in urban living during the 20th century and labels such identity as one to wear with pride. This prideful image stands as a part of the landscape, as an informal city with culture.[lx] However, McGuirk represents just one individual who believes this way and other people started to pick up the same thought as seen within the media. Freethink creates a mini-documentary video describing the other side of the favela beyond the misconceptions where daily life continues - a local perspective instead of just foreign perspectives. Sadly, the misconceptions appear within the video games and not the other side as seen with McGuirk and local perspectives; compare *Figure 10* to *Figure 11*, packed makeshift buildings of numerous materials within the urban area.

Figure 11: Real Life São Paulo Favela[lxi]

Favelas appear within video games more as struggling, desperate peoples than the ever-changing core of a Latin American metropolitan. Within *Max Payne 3*, the player

travels into the favela and not only sees the large, complex streets and buildings but also

interacts with the environment as firefights break out with enemies appearing from

multiple buildings. The accurate, physical depiction of favelas in *Max Payne 3* represents

one side of gamescape. However, the various other video games which include shacks or

unofficial favelas create another picture altogether. *SOCOM II* depicts a dirty, poor area

within a Brazilian city at night within *Figure 12* while *Mercenaries II* depicts a favela

through shacks made from metal and laundry hung up outside in *Figure 13*. Both depict

the urban area in poor and desolate conditions and not the accurate, ever-changing, and

packed urban areas favelas today appear as. Other urban areas represented within the

video games appear as bustling cities either halted due to violence or as a non-interactive

viewable scenes as shown in *Figures 14* and *15*. These scenes of urban life counteract the

rural levels of tropical forests in a nice balance throughout the various video games in

Table 1.

Figure 12: *SOCOM II* Cutscene of Brazil[lxii]Figure 13: *Mercenaries II* Favela[lxiii]
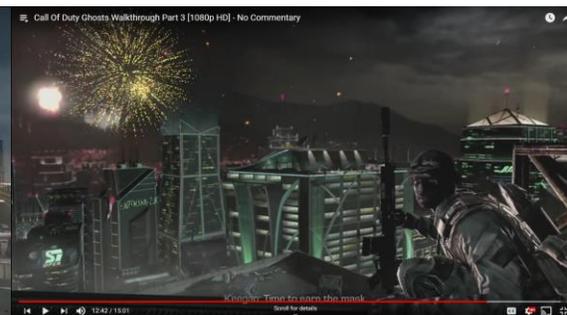

Figure 14: *Bad Company 2* Cinematic[lxiv]   Figure 15: *Ghosts* Venezuela Cinematic[lxv]

The skewed focus on the urban and rural life, with topographical tropicality and the urban development of favelas, help give the overarching perspective shared within the tactical shooter genre towards Latin America but almost never altogether within one sole video game. First, the video games represent the region both as a modern area with a mixture of developed, or developing, cities with rural areas. However, the overall representation leaves out two important facts: individual video game representations and alternate plot realities for the region. The various representations in each video game either hit or miss the aspect of representing multiple Latin American gamescapes. *Bad Company 2*, a video game with the largest amount of Latin American countries in the plot, leaves much to desire in level design of urban cities in the region; only at the end of the video game in the mission "Zero Dark Thirty" does the player travel into a city out of the 13 missions in total, all other ones appearing in rural areas - excluding the rundown and abandoned town in the Argentinian level - or bases. *Wildlands*, for how accurate the topography stands, makes several serious mistakes in gamescape by including fictitious landmarks in the map. These landmarks and world map mean to represent accurate depictions but only include rural areas for the player to explore and never the cities. *Max Payne 3* holds an opposite standing to *Wildlands* by not representing the rural side to Brazil.

Each video game representation for the gamescape holds some sort of flaw but the total numbers on the patterns for stereotypes help reveal the problematic misrepresentations. Of the various video games in *Table 1*, 15 out of 20 represent rural areas in Latin America while 10 out of 20 represent urban areas, both in varying amounts of time for gameplay within the individual video games. Again, due to the extreme

technological advancements over the decade, video games in *Table 1* released in the early 2000s include less detail by design but still manage to include enough to represent a certain lens of daily life, or broad setting for levels such as a city or jungle, in between the violence of the tactical shooter genre. Video games developed in the later portion of the 2000s, such as *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (2009), and beyond into the 2010s include such graphic detail to not only advance the combat realism of tactical shooters but also the immersion into the exotic setting such as more options to level design - size, interactive environments, number of enemy NPCs, etc.

For video games with alternate realities in the plot narratives, ironic assumptions come out when dealing with hypotheticals and what-if scenarios regarding the design's implementation of a fictitious reality. The main point lies in that the flaw with alternate realities involves the core aspect of the idea: an alternate reality cannot exist in current reality. Thus, the alternate realities with what-if scenarios not only creates a presentation of Latin America as places non-existent or exaggerated but also creates the extreme scenario available for exploration within fiction. In *Bad Company 2*, the only mission to represent Venezuela as a developed country faces the rural life in the rest of the missions - creating the possible assumption that developers do not view Venezuela as developed; look at *Figure 16* to prove otherwise when looking at urban infrastructure alone. Additionally, *Figure 17* reveals an extreme case of industrialization for a large factory in *Call of Duty: Ghosts*, taking the threat placed by this fictitious super power to the next level.

Figure 16: Caracas, Venezuela[lxvi]

Figure 17: *Ghosts* Factory in Mexico[lxvii]

On a final note regarding gamescape, each video game described or listed in

Table 1 represented the physical locations yet not one mention of the second portion: the

people. Only 4 out of 20 video games include non-playable characters (NPCs), excluding

enemies, within the video games outside of the cutscenes: *Wildlands, Max Payne 3*,

Future Soldier, and *Mercenaries II*. These four video games depict local NPCs which

register as civilian, or as friendlies. Even still, the representations of the NPCs leave

much to desire. First, the NPCs represent the physical environment more than individuals

represented in the plot narrative or as believable local civilians in the video game. When

a person appears within the gamescape's environment, with only identification as a local

labeled based upon the setting, should the person represent people or as one of many

details within the physical environment? Towards gamescape, the answer leans more

towards environment even when the video games show the NPCs acting out daily life for

the country - a tool to immerse into the exotic setting. After all, daily life needs

representation in the NPCs actions instead of a set walking pattern for realism. Some

examples of in-depth realism of NPCs include dialogue with or between NPCs,

interaction with the environment objects (i.e. purchasing from a street vendor), and

realistic responses to violence from enemy NPCs or the player. Even within the listed

video games which represent locals outside of cutscenes, the aspect of daily life and

civilians stills leaves a shallow, incomplete presentation of the overall country and

society. After all, tourism by nature only gives a window to immerse into a culture and

place - not a full understanding of the landscape. This limited space within video games

and development presents the concept of virtual tourism in full: a brief, short experience

of travel, leaving gaps of knowledge in the foreign perspective.

     Within gamescape, the physical representation of Latin America reveals common

countries shared between the twenty video games and those countries further include

specific differences with one another tying in the first connection gamescape holds

towards the plot narrative. Argentina (2), Bolivia (3), Brazil (3), Chile (1), Costa Rica (1),

Colombia (4), Cuba (3), Mexico (4), Nicaragua (2), Peru (1), and Venezuela (3) list all

the different countries represented within the *Table 1* video games as well as the number

of times those countries appear in the various video games. Only 11 countries within

Latin America represent the entire region, not even a quarter of the different countries -

including the Caribbean and mainland. The physical representation of the topographies,

though popular in the tropicality trope, still branch off into the different environments of

the countries as seen within *Bad Company 2* and *Call of Duty: Ghosts*. The virtual tour

started by gamescapes into the visual and audial stimuli create the framework to

understand how foreign perspectives further explore a region towards more of the subtext and plot narratives. In fact, plot narratives highlight the aspect of foreign observations and mindsets beyond the physical while also revealing the impact active participation holds for interactivity of the player as a subject of ideology to these perspectives. By laying the framework to look past the visual and audial details, the plot narrative helps reveal the further expansion of the tropes and mindsets using the Cold War plot points.

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CHAPTER TWO: THE COLD WAR SUBTEXT, NARRATIVE AND DISCUSSION
TOOL

For any fictional form of entertainment, the plot adds one more additional layer
and, for video games, adds to the video game design and development beyond
gamescapes and laying down a core interest to a product. Gamescapes delve into the
physical environments and settings visible within the *Table 1* video games. However, the
rest of significant representations appear within the plot as settings which expand from
physical locations to people and a region's culture. For the tactical shooters that delve
into Latin America, similar patterns appear within the narrative: conflicts, opposing
groups - usually paramilitary or guerillas, and policies or events from the Cold War such
as the War on Drugs. By delving into video game plots, I argue the historical context of
the Cold War, the usage of the Cold War as an overlying discussion tool, and exploration
of the Cold War mindset towards the War on Drugs pushes foreign misrepresentations
onto Latin America's history and politics. The Cold War represents the US hegemonic
position by revealing the foreign perspective through the video game protagonist's
observations and impressions of groups, people, and the plot.

Throughout the various plot narratives, 19 out of 20 *Table 1* video games
represent groups which identify under one of three labels, but with obvious differences
between one another: paramilitary, counterrevolutionary, or guerillas.[6] To understand
differences between paramilitary and the other two, Julie Mazzei in *Death Squads or*

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[6] *Cuban Missile Crisis: Aftermath* represents one plot narrative holding no connection to such groups
behind the world-building information of Castro's rise to power.

Self-Defense Forces details paramilitaries as groups which act outside the purview of the State and rebels - even if the group represents either a group's or another faction's interests within a conflict. In situations where a paramilitary group represent State interests, the State can refuse a paramilitary's legitimacy as a state-recognized force. Thus, paramilitary groups fall into either grey or illegal areas within a nation-state's legal system. These private forces based upon the "catch-all" meaning given to paramilitaries fit multiple groups of armed individuals from elite military forces to rogue units and even as death squads. Paramilitary groups define as neither positive or negative but just as political, armed groups which include extra-military, extra-State, and noninstitutional organizations that use links with powerful allies and even factions within a State to operate. A paramilitary's illegal nature alongside any political influence allows for more leeway as an offensive unit to keep a status quo of a political hierarchy or privileged group. Paramilitaries appear within video games as broad groups useful within plot narratives either as support groups - allies - or as enemy NPCs as seen within *Call of Duty: Ghosts*.[lxviii]

In certain instances - sometimes inaccurately, two groups appear interchangeable with one another through misunderstandings on the groups' differences: counterrevolutionary and guerillas. As stated by Gill, the United States represented a foreign group interested in pushing specific people or policies into power within Latin America and go so far as to fund individuals, activists, and opponents to the current dominant political power to help achieve this goal.[lxix] However, excluding the aspect of foreign influence within counterrevolutionary and guerilla groups for now, the only way to understand similarities and differences between counterrevolutionary and guerilla

involves looking at real world examples. One example just so happens to appear in the

Table 1 video game *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Essentials* with regards to the Fuerzas

Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), also known as

the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army. As detailed by James

Brittain and James Petras, FARC-EP stands as one of the most demonized mass social-

political movements within the region and even holds the label as a narco terrorist

organization by both the US and Colombian government. FARC-EP stands as a guerilla

movement due to necessity based upon Colombia's domestic situation as the Colombian

government attacked the communist parties in the 1960s. During the 1960s, Columbia

fell into disarray as the state fought to regain control of territories by using death squads

and military violence against the communist parties and rural communities, known as *La*

Violencia. This origin within the 1960s caused a partial-grassroots formation of a

rebellious peasant movement that spread throughout the countryside in defense of the

people.

Colombia's Communist party (PCC) helped form FARC-EP by laying down the

foundation for both the rural and urban lower classes to unite and organize but not the

framework for the group's self-defense strategy. However, FARC-EP's mass self-defense

strategy for rural militancy came not from Colombia's communists but from the peasants

in an adaptation to Colombian daily life and soon found implementation into the party.

As a result of *La Violencia*, this strategy evolved from just a form of protest to a state of

survival by organizing self-defense units over an uncertain time frame during the 1950s

and 1960s to avoid extinction by the rural elite and the State. Since this time, FARC-EP

organized self-defense units which spread not from rebellion but from necessity and civil

liberties rural Colombians expected or desired.[lxx] FARC-EP represents a wonderful example to explain the difference between counterrevolutionary and guerilla.

As stated, FARC-EP appears as an antagonist within one mission in *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Essentials*. Even though most of the video game's plot includes almost nothing about Latin America, the inclusion of FARC-EP within one mission, a flashback during an interrogation to a solo rescue op, helps reveal a lot about the demonized nature of the group as well as how even one rebel group appears in the eyes of foreign operatives who happen to oppose the interests of such guerillas. This representation involves the information from before 2006 since the remnants of FARC-EP split into two separate groups: one which now approves of the groups disarmament and the other which disagrees and continues to act as the group used to.[lxxi] One example of FARC-EP's representation and actions involves the events in 2002 surrounding the Bojayá massacre and how a United Nations investigation found the AUC paramilitaries, FARC-EP and the Colombian government at fault in the disaster of the civilian casualties.[lxxii] Though labeled at partial fault to the events, FARC-EP's demonized, media image came out into the limelight after the Bojayá massacre. The demonized representation of FARC-EP in *Splinter Cell: Essentials* dips a toe into the complex situation in Colombia but reveals a limited perspective caused by the protagonist's position. When the protagonist's leader gets captured by the rebels, the protagonist finds himself opposing the rebels as a natural flow of the plot and the protagonist performs a solo rescue op.

Based upon the example described with Brittain and Petras' overview, guerillas can expand beyond the identity of revolution but can still include a counterrevolution origin or existence. Though such groups still respond with controversial violence,

guerillas form through various reasonings and origins specific to the domestic situations

of the nation-state in question; counterrevolutionary groups hold a more specific origin

based upon the group label alone even if the individuals identified under this one term

involve a mixture between local, foreign, and the State. In fact, counterrevolution applies

more as a movement instead of towards a specific group. A collection of various

academic works, called *A Century of Revolution,* focused on counterrevolution within

Latin America. For most of the revolutions, the immediate response or aftereffects of a

revolutionary movement cause another one, counter to the new administration or

individual in power. These opposing individuals could include a military presence and

other groups within the original revolutionary movement. The counterrevolution

following the revolution and then coup d'état in Chile detailed by Peter Winn represents

an extreme example of how violent some of these movements can get during the 1970s -

a similar context applied within the plot narrative of Operation 40 in *Call of Duty: Black

Ops*.

In comparison to the few counterrevolutionary movements which appear in the

Table 1 video games, more instances of paramilitary and guerilla groups emerge within

various plot narratives, 12 out of 20 - in particular. In fact, counterrevolutions appear

either as movements or under the label of guerrillas (i.e. counterrevolutionary guerrillas).

Paramilitary groups appear, for example, within *Max Payne 3* while guerillas appear in

numerous examples either under the broad label as rebels or under specific names like

FARC-EP in *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Essentials*. FARC-EP represents the only real

group, outside of certain mentions of real political icons like Castro in *Black Ops*, to

appear in the *Table 1* video games; all other video games, when naming such groups

beyond rebels or some other trope, create fictitious groups within the plot narrative - though sometimes based upon reality - specific to the fictional plot made within the real setting in the gamescape. In certain instances, the plot narrative delves so far into the fiction to leave little in connection to real world representations, a problem with the *Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops* and *Peace Walker* video games. In these cases, the plot summarizes the foreign group's intervention as necessary while placing the Latin American country requesting aid as a damsel in distress, a passive participant in the nation-state's own future.

In a similar manner to FARC-EP, the fictitious group from *SOCOM II* - called the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Brazil (RAFB) - desired to destabilize the Brazilian government; though, unlike FARC-EP, no specific motivation appeared for the reason why the group desired such an action. RAFB not only terrorizes the nearby civilians into working in the group's interests but also forces people to take part in the illegal drug trade, implying a narco-terrorist label. In addition, such inhumane treatment within the plot reveals the extremes the group will go to when the RAFB resort to taking over a dam with hostages resulting in the Brazilian government labelling the group as terrorists. Unlike FARC-EP, the RAFB represent antagonists who hold as misrepresentations of guerillas due to a lack of any motivation mentioned behind the desire for Brazil's destabilization, not even an attempt at showing a grassroots organization.

Video games breathe fiction within plot, but reasons exist as to why the medium chooses fiction for people and groups when not choosing the same for landscapes and one such reason involves copyright. Only a handful of the *Table 1* video games chose to represent real organizations and icons over fictitious groups and people; interviews or

public statements explaining specific reasons come not from the video game companies but from observation and understanding of copyright law. For US copyright laws, certain characters, groups, and ideas fall under copyright while generic traits of unnamed character tropes stay free reign.[lxxiii] Additionally, by limiting specifics and generalizing or creating fictitious labels, developers and publishers avoid scenarios where public relation controversies cause people and even government administrations like Cuba and Bolivia to complain or crack down on such representations.

Within *Call of Duty: Black Ops,* the Bay of Pigs shows up not as a design choice of background, world-building information but as playable missions within the video game's single-player campaign: Operation 40. Based upon the actual details, some discrepancies exist between the real event and the video game representation. The invasion first involved a wave of air raids on April 15th, 1961 and a land invasion which followed two days after by US-trained Cubans accompanied by CIA agents; the small scale of the invasion alongside the desire for the mission's secrecy remain as partial causes to the operation's failure.[lxxiv] The Operation 40 mission represented the events all happening at once: air raids striking at a specific time, CIA operatives and counterinsurgent Cubans already within the country with more on the way. Even though the same contents appear in both versions, the time frame reveals the problem as any alterations to an event like timing of strategic attacks could change the overall outcome or minute details. This video game represents a Cold War historical example with the presentation of a real event, minus factual discrepancies. However, the plot narrative borders an alternate depiction due to the fictional route the plot then takes with the protagonist after capture and handoff to the USSR. The final scene in Operation 40 shows

Fidel Castro trading the captive protagonist to the USSR agent and presents both the

political figure and the fictitious USSR agent as a national security threat to the US. This

security threat appears in context when placing such a threat parallel to the show of

power in the operation's opposition and Cuban military strength against the nearby

superpower. The protagonist as an active CIA participant in both the covert and direct

military intervention into another nation-state follows the real-world perspective on

events which Gleijeses depicts as US administration after administration, until President

Kennedy, built up to the events of overthrowing Castro in the Bay of Pigs.[lxxv]

Figure 18: *Black Ops* Operation 40 Cutscene[lxxvi]

     Call of Duty: Black Ops not only received raving reviews but continues to stand

as one of the best within the franchise but with controversy from Cuba's own

reaction.[lxxvii] Both the critics as well as the consumer-base consider both the narrative as

well as the gameplay representative of the AAA branding and expectations. However, as

all extremes reveal, positive comes with negative and Cuba's reaction to the leader's

fictitious assassination came with outcry. The representation of historic events alongside

the allowance all fictional narratives acquire in bending the truth created a harsh response

and a cry for concern. As some representatives of the Cuban government ask, should

fiction help glorify decades of covert attempts of regime-change?[lxxviii] The simple fact

remains: video games represent another entertainment medium that bends the truth,

setting the table for discussion only and not a final say-all. However, the protagonist's perspective on the Bay of Pigs creates the idea of a moral good and reasoning for US hegemony and foreign intervention into the neighboring, sovereign nation-state. The foreign intervention appears in history as a common practice during the Cold War which John Soluri describes as such intervention relates to commerce - specifically with transnational corporations, a shared idea and thought as seen with the Venezuelan oil industry within *Mercenaries II*.[lxxix]

Oil exists as a modern commodity valuable enough to appear within multiple video games with narratives dedicated to the resource, an example on the importance of commodities to foreign trade and interests. Parallel to oil, other commodities export out of Latin America and first appeared with exploited workforces and industries as Soluri highlights when delving into the foreign company United Fruit and bananas. Soluri details the historic struggle of the local Honduras workforce with regards to labor rights versus the business model and ethical practices implemented or ignored by foreign companies, United Fruit in specific starting in the early 20th century. The time frame Soluri focuses on involves the same time frame as the travel literature perspectives on the region mentioned towards landscapes. The most important point mentioned by Soluri comes from the focus on groups other than political figures, emphasizing the significance of groups like corporations. This discussion by Soluri appears within *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames* as the plot narrative encircles the idea of a threat but not one of national security but of economic interests.[lxxx]

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames delved into the coup d'état which attempted to take control over the Venezuelan oil from the current foreign interests which held

influence over the nation's commodity. This coup not only opposed the protagonist over a personal vendetta regarding the individuals involved but also revealed the controversy of such a sudden action not only with the opposing guerilla force but also the petroleum businesses, the mafia, China, and the Allied Nations lead by the United States. Various groups appear within the narrative and attempt to shift the previous status quo to one which will benefit the groups in the future for Venezuela's petroleum. In this video game, the narrative allows for control over which group the protagonist allies with. The plot's conclusion includes the ones which the protagonist held personal vendettas for ending up as defeated or killed. Though *Mercenaries 2* includes problematic narrative design, sometimes shallow in the dialogue or storytelling, the various groups within the world-building help reveal the states, paramilitary, and guerillas under a simplified understanding to separate the groups from one another.

The Cuban Missile Crisis takes the stage as another historical event represented within video games, but one so altered by a 'what if' scenario that the video game identifies more as an alternate reality than an accurate depiction of the real-life events from October 1962. *Cuban Missile Crisis: Aftermath* takes the historical event upside down and asks one simple question: what if that event lead to Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)? Even though the event involved Cuba as the original setting, just like as with the real-life event, Cuba remains the battlefield location and only the Western superpowers versus China and the USSR gather more active roles. *Cuban Missile Crisis: Aftermath* revolves a simple concept with little to analyze; yet, the fact that such an event appeared within a video game out of all the ones to choose from shows a point of interest. The Cuban Missile Crisis represents all the fears, tensions, and hesitation which people

carried within the time of the Cold War, specifically the US perception of the event as a danger to national security and then further to global safety. The creation of the topic as a discussion tool to explore possibilities allows for further questions and debates on this old topic to enter the foray as well. As Dan Martins reveals, this 'what if' scenario came close to fruition and only President Kennedy's decision to avoid the expected expedient military solution for a more diplomatic negotiation allowed tensions to cool down and more logical heads to prevail.[lxxxi] In fact, the video game represents one of the numerous attempts to hypothesize the same 'what if' apocalyptic scenario of a modern end to the world, still striking fear into people.[lxxxii]

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon and the expansion Island Thunder explore further into the specifics of Cuba but delve into a different topic of discussion towards dictatorship: a 'what if' scenario surrounding the first free election of a nation-state and the risk run for further corruption and power usurpers. The elite Ghosts unit enter the country to help keep the elections fair and lessen the intimidation factor of one anti-American political faction, El Frente Democratico del Pueblo (FDG), which desires a return to Cuba's past. The FDG attempts to utilize violence to coerce others into the same mindset of anti-Americanism with regards to the election results. This topic of election fraud appears over numerous countries within the modern world and limits not just to Latin America even if certain decades held dictators running "free" elections. Venezuela's most recent election controversy stands as one of many in the region and in the world with the self-proclaimed interim president Guaidó struggling to acquire support against violent repression.[lxxxiii] Williams and Disney refer to some historical dictatorships in Latin America as "US-sponsored" regarding the hypocritical aspect of Manichean temptation to

look the other way when such dictatorships benefit US hegemony in the hemisphere.

These "US-sponsored" dictatorships never appear within *Island Thunder* but could

appear as an example fitting of US propaganda on the topic of intervention for moral

good.[lxxxiv] *Front Mission 4* follows a similar line of thought regarding propaganda

creating a foreign perspective on ethical interventions in another sovereign nation-state,

especially when referring to locals as passive to the group's future in the home country.

These 'what if' scenarios apparent within the *Table 1* video games reveal a US-

centric outlook on the Latin American setting, highlighting the historic placement of the

United States as a superpower while ignoring the region's local perspectives. *Call of*

Duty: Ghosts reflects a similar fear to *Cuban Missile Crisis: Aftermath* in another 'what

if' scenario but this time as a land invasion by Russia on the United States territory

through the superpower's southern neighbors. The film Red Dawn (1984) shows a

parallel scenario with the protagonists reflecting the US perspective in a similar way to

the protagonists in the video game - underdogs defending the character's right to life and

freedom.[lxxxv] Though unlikely to occur in the ways presented in both the film and the

video game, a land invasion plays into a fear and curiosity asked and thought about by

foreigners to Latin America. This question comes up due to the region's strategic location

south of the US which allows for movement of troops to the neighboring country. All

three scenarios - nuclear disaster, electoral corruption, and military conflict - apply a

negative or pessimistic outlook on life and looking at the worst-case scenarios for the

United States. In the instances of *Cuban Missile Crisis: Aftermath, Island Thunder,* and

Call of Duty: Ghosts, local opinions never show and the players complete the video

games assuming the perception for the locals involved the same negative outlook with a morally justified reasoning for foreign intervention whether asked for or not.

Within some of the various video games, like *SOCOM II*, brief mentioning of groups using drugs for funding appear within the narrative while the only video game in *Table 1* which delves further into the topic of the War on Drugs comes from *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Wildlands*. The War on Drugs foreign policy appeared during the last decade of the Cold War with the Reagan administration in the 1980s and continued to implement diplomacy in a method which sometimes bent the understanding of nation-states' sovereignty. Menno Vellinga discusses the problematic existence of the War on Drugs and how such policies clashed against the status quo groups held towards commodities connected to the illegal drug trade (i.e. cocaine) such as the coca plant within Bolivia's agriculture.[lxxxvi] The plot narrative within *Wildlands* brings two important points together: a foreign drug cartel pushing the illegal drug trade within Bolivia plus the incapability of the Bolivian government to do anything about the problem in the nation's sovereign territory. Thus, a plot appears in which the plot points justify foreign intervention through a military group, an American one at that, to stop the problem through covert operations.

Wildlands stands as one of the few video games within *Table 1* to receive an official state response, this time from the Bolivian government - an outcry of the representation apparent within the video game.[lxxxvii] This letter sent to the French embassy about Ubisoft's product reveals the concern Bolivia holds with the country's representation. This concern most likely appeared for two reasons: the large international reach of the product to players plus the country's international reputation. However, as

revealed within some discussions in the community, the opposite may in fact hold true. Individuals from Bolivia or individuals interested in the topic of Bolivian representation delve into and reveal that misrepresentation comes with a grain of salt. In fact, the locals attempt to find misrepresentation like another part of the game.[lxxxviii] Who knew that the hilarity of inaccurate dialect from the localization process creates even more enjoyment towards a product? The results arrive: *Wildlands* rates well, an average of 7 out of 10, with a majority of critics highlighting a few issues based upon gameplay mechanics which allow for a dip in difficulty (i.e. a more forgiving range for accurate shooting).[lxxxix] Ubisoft Entertainment sold over 1.62 million units within the first week of the video game's release date. On top of the first unit sells, various fiscal reports from 2017 reveal *Wildlands* as one of the best-selling of the year alongside a plan for the company to support the product leading to a long-term plan with updates and future downloadable content.[xc] If the Bolivian administration feared the international reach of the video game, these data reports reveal why. *Wildlands* came out on top as a commercial success and none of the state outcry could stop that momentum.

Allen Jack Joseph Gilles helps give a possible explanation into the reasoning as to why Bolivia's reaction make sense in comparison to the video game's consumer-base and the light banter surrounding the same problems when detailing Bolivia's history on state-narco networks. Bolivia holds a historic connection to the state-narco networks which survived not only through the government change from authoritarian to democratic in the 1980s but also pressure from the United States to crack down on illegal drug trade. Gilles adds a challenging argument against the phenomena of drug trade violence focusing on the rise in connection to weakened state capacity on top of hardline approaches within the

War on Drugs "legitimized" when assuming drug corruption. In addition, the need to assist the nation's southern neighbors in liberal democracy and economic development further increased tensions between the two countries. In fact, the US pushed the mentality to allow for a bend in nation-state sovereignty and to influence, bypass, or even eliminate these so-called corrupt local power structures.[xci] The state-narco networks helped keep political equilibrium during the government change and even appeared almost like informal forms of governance which reinforced political order. However, the states, US and Bolivia, acknowledged the drug trade economy as an effect from underdevelopment but the methods in which to handle the situation differed between the two nation-states.[xcii] As the US-Bolivian relations continued through the 1980s, the "three Ds" (drugs, democracy, and development) made up a majority of the foreign relations.[xciii] *Wildlands* highlights some of Bolivia's history and even takes the perspective of the 'legitimized' militaristic intervention used by the United States alongside the overall mentality the country held in enforcing a messianic mission connected towards the nation's national security.

Additionally, since *Wildlands* represents the latest video game released from *Table 1*, the recent rise in popularity of narco culture in other entertainment mediums like film and television reveal a pattern at present to relook at drug history. One specific television show rises to the top of controversy with this new subtext in entertainment: the Netflix show *Narco*. *Narco* represents the life of Pablo Escobar and Colombia during time of drugs and violence. In comparison, *Wildlands* reveals the violence of a fictitious drug cartel and the crimes apparent within Bolivia with this fictitious set of events. However, *Narco* depicts the events of Escobar's life and reminds the audience of the time

of violence and international complications of such drug trade. Certain local perspectives state that no, violence in Colombia changed and such representations balance a fine line between misrepresentation of the current country versus inaccurate presentations of the historical events.[xciv] Entertainment stretches the truth, plays with 'what if' scenarios and alternate realities of events to show extremes as well as explore subtexts. *Wildlands* reveals a recent interest in the drug trade, one which ties back to that Cold War policy of the War on Drugs from the 1980s.

Like *Wildlands* and the topic of the drug trade, the Global War on Terror shows up in multiple *Table 1* video games since the topic of terrorism in recent years appear as a main aspect within the plot narrative alongside other subtext topics like rebel groups. *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield* jumps into the fray right out of the frying pan and into the fire by going to the extreme within the video game's plot. Not only does this video game apply the term terrorist to more than just rebels but labels a historical group, Neo-Fascists, with the additional term. Neo-Fascists appear within the narrative as the escaped and dying Ustashe official from World War II attempts to resurrect global Fascism through terrorism as a method to spread the message. Neo-Fascists, a group lumped together with Neo-Nazis and white supremacists, appeared within the current events at the time before the video game's release date based upon a failed white supremacist terror plot within 2001-2002, around the same time as the 9/11 attacks.[xcv] Unlike the video games which censored topics about terrorism after 9/11, *Raven Shield* took the discussion by the horns to make people think about the topic and how that topic expanded from just religious extremism to other form of extremists.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas and *Vegas 2* represent another form of terrorist, this time one without any specific reason given for motivation leaving the player to assume at those motives. The terrorist group, Mexican in origin, not only cause chaos within the native country but also towards Mexico's northern neighbor which just so happens to include the target of interest for the terrorist ringleader. One of the few assumptions to make about motivation involves the possibility of anti-American sentiment. However, Alan McPherson cautions the usage of such a vague term as anti-US due to no specific definition existing but also due to the existence of the term more as an ideology caused by a subjective clash in culture and subjective perception on the US impact towards specific Latin American events.[xcvi] The two video games, one a sequel to the first's plot narrative, intertwine and reveal the global interest in terrorism and national security even towards Latin America - a shared fate to the past policies from previous decades towards the region.

The final video game, *Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix*, introduces terrorism as more than one group pitted against another, but one group pitted against the entire international community. *Soldier of Fortune II* revolves around a set of missions that unravel a mysterious terrorist group called Prometheus who not only use bioweapons as a method of attack but do so on unsuspecting people from around the world. The characters realize the methods of the mysterious terrorist group when Prometheus targeted a Colombian village by using a local rebel group as a proxy. The discussion of terrorism here falls into multiple categories. First, the time frame of talking about terrorism instead of censoring the topic after 9/11. Second, the emphasis on the international level to reflect how the problem involves the world and not just one specific country. Third, the

adaptation of terrorism from an explosion to advanced weapons like bioweapons and germ warfare. In this video game, terrorism applies the concern of the international community over the local and highlights the threat on the world instead of the damage on and by Columbia's people.

All three *Table 1* video games involving terrorist plots received wonderful reviews from critics and even received amazing response from the consumer-base to the point that demand to play these video games still exists in recent years – a long-standing impact and influence onto players.[xcvii] Terrorism appears in these three as significant representations of the extremist problem beyond religious explanations and towards other aspects of life. This discussion beyond the violence represented in the gameplay helps make individuals realize how violence can apply to anyone and not one individual remains good and not one group stays evil.

However, ever since 9/11, terminology labelling other groups altered to include the aspect of national security against terrorism, the world's number one new enemy. *SOCOM II* presents the Brazilian guerillas as antagonists which also acquire a label as narcoterrorists instead of as narcotraffickers. This label connected both drugs and terrorism together, combining an old US foreign policy with the War on Drugs to the recent Global War on Terror together into a shared fate. Williams and Disney explain that the Global War on Terror now ties into the US foreign policy towards Latin America as a new guiding paradigm which updates and evolves the old paradigm of the Cold War. This one instance within *SOCOM II* creates an interesting question regarding the plot narrative of the antagonists next actions: the rebel extremists then take over a dam, a controversial action seen in the light of terrorism and not through crime. The current

events of the 2000s show full influence here as recent entertainment trends in plot narratives should continue to reveal patterns towards video games set within Latin America.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter and Advanced Warfighter 2, again the second a sequel to the first's plot narrative, reflect the importance of foreign interactions and relations as a coup d'état started due to the North American leaders attempt to sign a joint security agreement. All the while, secret intelligence winds up missing after a spy plane gets shot down around Nicaragua, leading to another representation of guerillas as enemies to the United States as the rebels then get a hold of the US nuclear football - the information necessary to set up any nuclear weapon from the US. This situation almost causes another Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) scenario as China and Russia prepare for a worst-case scenario. Once the US nuclear football ends up destroyed, de-escalating the international situation, key figures in the Mexican rebel movement die but the insurgency spreads to other areas in the country and even to other areas in Latin America. Then, the threat returns as the US learns the rebels acquired access to old Cold War nuclear weapons and Pakistani-built missiles stolen from cargo ships in the Panama Canal. One of the nuclear weapons detonated within a city in Mexico but the protagonists end up saving the day in the end and retrieving almost all the weapons and stopping the detonation of another. The narrative focus on a threat to the US represents just another escalation within the international relations towards other nation-states. In addition, the narrative also reveals the pattern of guerillas as, largely, enemies to the protagonists as well as the mentality of rebels as bad guys and a hidden threat. This

identity as antagonists comes from the fact that the protagonists always identify as foreign operatives, usually from a Western military unit.

In addition to the threat towards the United States, *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* takes on weapon traffickers in Nicaragua and reveals the dangerous cargo of the dirty bomb traced back to a Russian group known as the Raven's Rock. Almost in a full circle, the US focused on the criminals only to discover that Russians appear behind the scenes as the masterminds of the plot. The apparent existence with a Russian antagonist or opponent to many of the protagonists within the video games continues to show the pattern of the Cold War representation using Latin America as the battlefield, a nod to the historical events of covert operations and proxy wars.

All the various plot narratives share similar patterns such as a foreign protagonist, foreign or proxy antagonists, and the implementation of the Cold War either as historical, world-building context or as the topic of focus. Even with this similarity, the differences in the narrative allow for such variance within the same subgenre that the entirety of Latin American modern history comes out to play. Numerous countries in Latin America appear in some form from the uncommon Costa Rica to the popular Brazil, Bolivia, or Venezuela. Not only have the Cold War representations come out to play in side-by-side analysis but also as tools for the current events of terrorism and even to specific topics like oil in the region.

The Cold War representation appears in almost any narrative either as the historical context for the region or as a part of the narrative during a past or 'present' time, even considering the alternate timelines in the world-building for the video games. Evan R Ellis explains the continuation for foreign interest and intervention into Latin

America by comparing the USSR influence towards the modern Russian engagement of the 2000s. The ideological influence the USSR held towards the left-leaning groups and nation-states helped the country, for a time, to delve into Latin American relations for a further global strategy in increasing the USSR's global reputation and power. However, this interest only came into practice after the success of Cuba and the implementation of Fidel Castro's regime. The significance of Cuba appears here, and the historical events detailed by Gleijeses support the timeframe of USSR-Latin American relations described by Ellis. In parallel, irony appears when observing the *Table 1* video games' representation of Cuba as a serious national security threat - revealing the other side to the equation and the impact such a foreign relation held to the other global superpowers at the time. The USSR's sudden openness to relations to the region, even if a nation identified a form other than Communist, helped give the region another option to the US hegemonic and distorted choices, a door to escape the northern neighbors full force in the superpower's sphere of influence. The USSR held numerous examples of assisting the region in developing better infrastructure and even certain industries. This investment into the region continues even after the end of the Cold War when Russia cut back on foreign costs but invested into specific Latin American industries and projects like the region's petroleum.[xcviii]

As the video games, history, and literature about the USSR and the more-recent Russia reveal, foreign intervention outside of the United States remains and will stay within Latin America. If the protagonists represent one significant foreign body, then the antagonists represent the others while most of the side characters on both sides of the narrative represent the rest of the Latin American groups and locale. The narratives

follow the pattern of Latin America as just the backdrop to the overall battlefield of other nation-states, excluding the few exceptions like *Call of Duty: Ghosts*. This backdrop follows a similar path as the physical landscape to give a brief overlook, sacrificing accuracy for narrative control, creating a shallow, virtual tour of not only the geography but also the time periods within Latin American history. As the subtext reveals alongside the reactions to the video games, someone pays attention to the discussion, to the debate. The Cold War and the period's historical context allow for the more current topics to come through as the War on Drugs continues in new and old forms while the overall foreign policy switches from defense against Communism to defense against terrorism. What remains the same involves one point: the US considers Latin America a foreign area to keep an eye on whether Latin America likes the fact or not.

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CONCLUSION

Recent events from the last decade, like Cuba's and Bolivia's responses, created

an interesting dichotomy between two facts: the perpetual perspective on violent Latin

America and the challenge against such perspective. Cuba criticized, Bolivia complained

but no other country reacted so far as Venezuela who moved beyond censorships and

bans on individual products and placed an entire prohibition on violent video games with

criminal charges for those breaking the law if caught.[7] Venezuela's policy sets the

extreme standard of direct impact fictitious representations hold within the real world. As

seen within the *Table 1* video games with historical events, historical discussions, and

gamescapes, the Cold War still holds the current world within the time period's shadow.

Venezuela recognized the subtext of video games focused within the country and

Mercenaries II: World in Flames even appears as a cited source for one specific video

game to lead up to such political action by the administration. Though the conversation

started by Venezuela travels down the hot topic of violence in video games and children,

Venezuela never forgot to mention the chosen focus onto the medium out of all the

entertainment industries which emphasized foreign perspectives on the region.[xcix] Before

recent controversies towards video games and monetized gambling, Venezuela's

prohibition stood as the only policy of such extreme, beyond individual censorships, to

exist within the world towards video games.[c] Video games depict Latin America within a

shallow perspective on the region's history and politics more through the mixture of

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[7] The Venezuelan administration sets a subjective identification on what stands as a violent video game.

physical landscapes than with the people and the culture invaded by the extreme violence of tactical shooters.

Throughout the analysis on these various video games, a lot of topics missed the cut either due to the specific focus on the Cold War and virtual tourism or due to the specific genre to limit the number of video games. As stated beforehand, such a limited choice benefits the analysis to reveal more details about narrative, design, and overall patterns within the video games in comparison to the historical contexts and stereotypes connected to the numerous nation-states in the Latin American region. However, other stereotypes, representative patterns, and information exist beyond this lens such as gender and sexual identity, ethnicity, Africana studies, and even the hot topics of violence and children or the educational benefit/detriment of the medium. In addition, the limit to focus on the misrepresentation of violent Latin America left much out for daily life and other highlights on the region's various and individual cultures and peoples. Día de Los Muertos appears nowhere within these video games yet *Grim Fandango* (1998) - a video game rich in the holiday's references - stands as a classic within the medium, second to the *Carmen Sandiego* franchise. The focus on ancient civilizations only appear with that one shout out in *Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix* whereas an entire trope exists within video games under the aspect of tomb raiders and exotic history.[ci] The choice to focus on the Cold War and misrepresented Latin America as the chaotic, violent region stands out due to the constant emphasis of such a broad, generic stereotype no matter the specific country from the region and no matter the time period. The identity of exotic changes depending on the event or culture one may observe whereas the constant trope of violence never fades from the mislabeled region within the foreign perspective.

The analysis on the *Table 1* video games left out two areas for topics of interest: interactivity and foreign perspectives outside of the United States and Europe. I stated in a previous section that including interactivity in the data collection on video games limits the capability and strength of the overall analysis. However, to ignore interactivity's core role within video games limits the reach of the medium to a passive participation. Future research needs to appear to fill in the gap left by limiting analysis on interactivity and one method involves more detail towards the community discussions surrounding the topics found within the internet forums or even fan videos and blogs. In addition, foreign perspectives appear throughout the analysis and comparisons made towards travel literature but leave one large region out of the overall group: Asia. As one of the three large markets and publisher homes, Asia falls through the cracks in how the region represents landscapes and people as a foreign perspective to the virtual settings. Square Enix, a Japanese publisher and developer, created *Front Mission 4* yet never appears outside of early methods to representing tropicality. Future research on Asian representations of other regions will reveal similar and differing patterns as a mix of both a part of the international community but also as a region forced into an underdeveloped, unequal role within history. By combining future research to the research on virtual tourism and Latin American representation, a comparison will appear to identify the differences between the US, European, and Asian perspectives.

AAA video games, companies, and brands appeared as the type of video game beyond the genre selection in contrast to independent (indie) video games which narrowed to international over local perspectives. Another possible future topic involves the opposite focus to this research onto local, indie developers and video games. By

researching Latin American video game developers, different points of analysis appear in comparison to AAA such as the barrier created by physical distances from international events in comparison to groups at the heart of such events.[cii] Local perspectives reveal the voice of those people misrepresented by decades of video games as such people work for the next big indie hit – one which will spread a better perspective on the region.

Future endeavors on researching video games hold at the precipice of a large void ready to fill with discussion after discussion and not even the current papers from political science, psychology, or education fields stem the flow of such interest and remaining questions. The focus onto two fields - area studies and history - allows for an expansion of thought towards the overarching academic discussion within the humanities. This topic of Latin America and the Cold War within video games stands as one out of the many existing today even within today's less popular fields using historical analysis. By highlighting and revealing what some fields achieve when jumping into video game studies, I hope to reveal the patterns, impact, and realizations such analysis starts and lead to alongside the existing literature which sets out for the same overlying goal. So many different avenues of research exist even when narrowing onto the region of Latin America in video games. By detailing avenues which exist alongside ones which need further research, I hope to place this analysis of video game's Cold War representation in Latin America onto the table alongside the various literature both for the Cold War and for video games. For emphasis, video games reach an international audience and bring the subtext, debates, and discussions found in these representations to the homes of the international community; Bolivia and Cuba both recognized such a significance and Venezuela further emphasized the medium's supposed impact.[ciii] If nation-states,

community discussions, and media all talk about such a significance, should one then think about it too?

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