

The video game as a battlefield: Russia case study

El videojuego como campo de batalla: Estudio de caso de Rusia

O videogame como campo de batalha: um estudo de caso da Rússia



ARTICLE



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Abstract

This article analyzes the relationship between videoludic activities and the actors of the government of the Russian Federation using a holistic methodology based on social constructivism, neo-institutionalism and aesthetics. As a result, we can point to the use of video games as a tool of memory and soft power, whose objective is to build a narrative in accordance with the foreign policy of the country, reactionary to Western policies.

KEY WORDS

Aesthetic memory, Public diplomacy, Narrative, Russian Federation, Videoludic.

Resumen:

Este artículo analiza la relación del ocio videolúdico con los propios actores gubernamentales del Estado ruso empleando una metodología holística basada en el socialconstructivismo, el neoinstitucionalismo y la estética. Como resultado se aprecia el empleo del videojuego como una herramienta de memoria y *soft power* cuya intención es construir una narrativa acorde a la política exterior del país, reaccionaria a la occidental.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Memoria estética, Diplomacia pública, Narrativa, Federación Rusa, Videolúdico.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa a relação do videolúdico com os próprios atores governamentais do Estado russo utilizando uma metodologia holística baseada no construtivismo social, o neoinstitucionalismo e a estética. Como resultado, aprecia-se o uso do videogame como ferramenta de

memória e *soft power* cuja intenção é construir uma narrativa de acordo com sua política externa, reacionária à ocidental.

Palavras-chave

Memória estética, Diplomacia pública, Narrativa, Federação Russa, Videolúdico.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE VIDEO GAME AS A POLITICAL BATTLEFIELD

The strategic discourse is composed of different practices and allows to represent the security policies, an important part of the identification discourse (Shapiro, 1990, pp. 330-331). Starting with this idea is not accidental, since it allows us to consider security as a component element of the identification discourse and to describe various mechanisms.

Video games are a means of mass communication with their own cognitive consequences (Frasca, 2004, pp. 232-233) and act as fields of confrontation, as seen in the escalation of tension due to the nuclear crisis with Iran (Schulze, 2016, pp. 81-84). This medium draws the attention of governments and parliaments. Examples of this are the leaking of confidential documents due to the “veracity” of a battle tank in *War Thunder* (Matas, 2021) or when some members of the Bundestag resonated with China’s attempt to purchase the developer *Crytek*, company of interest to German defense for its simulation programs (Mössbauer et al., 2021).

Russia is studied for standing out from the US and China, due to its greater political relevance with respect to the States on the video game. This is attested to by members of the State Duma, such as Sergei Shirokov or Robert Shlegel who, in 2010, advocated the need for

patriotic games (Taranova, 2010). Not only the State Duma mentioned this need, but it is also a cross-cutting issue in the Executive. Illustrating the above, the Minister of Communications and Media, Alexei Volin, coinciding with the celebration of the 70th Victory Day, inaugurated a *World of Tanks* tournament (Wargaming, 2010) in the year 2015 saying:

World of Tanks is not only one of the most popular computer games, but also an important tool for the history and patriotic education of citizens. Soon half of the players will begin to show interest in the history of the Great Patriotic War. [...] Most of the victories in the game are carrying Soviet tanks (Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media [Minkomsvyaz], 2015)

In the Ministry of Defense, the video game was also called a “battlefield” through Andréi Kartapolov, Deputy Minister of Defense and head of the Main Directorate of Political-Military Affairs:

The *Metal Gear* saga is a special project of the US intelligence agencies to manipulate and alienate society against the authorities. Kartapolov argues that the next battle between the superpowers will be fought on the Internet and that games are yet another weapon. [...] Kartapolov has highlighted the use of these virtual weapons as the new ele-

ments of modern warfare. (Gonzalez, 2019)

Maria Zajárova, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, testified about video games:

They started with the confrontation of man against monsters, alien creatures. Now, computer games directly distribute the roles between countries and peoples, in which characters with symbols of one nation must destroy people who in turn symbolize another state. [...] The modern entertainment industry teaches children, the younger generation, that this is normal. (Figuereido, 2019)

Two fundamental elements can be seen in the cited public statements: the values and the (neorealist) role of the State. First, the importance of values and the idealization of a glorious past is observed, which is presented to Russian citizens as the source of values to protect and is related to the Great Patriotic War as the main scenario, where the element of strategic communication transmits certain messages: the war as a founding pseudo-myth of the role of Russia and as a backbone of nationalism (especially through the army), the presentation of the western border of the Soviet Union, a hostile zone, as well as the vindication of its narrative against West; although this is related to the second position. What is described appears in series such as *Men of War* (2009-2019) or *Ilya Muromets* (777 Studios, 2014). In both examples there are elements that allow you to create a memory. But, in Figure 1, the continuity between the flag of the Empire and the current Federation transmits the history of the Empire and its achievements, legitimately, in an environment that transmits truth.

Figure 1

Ilya Muromets



Source: Taken from Steam (777 Studios, 2014).

Another trend extracted from the statements concerns the discourse of the international role of States in video games, where the special virulence of the “official” discourse stands out, opposed to the Western narrative. The most notorious case is *Syrian Warfare* [SW] (Cats who play, 2017) for having unleashed a great controversy, since there was even talk of a conspiracy by the Free Syrian Army against the game (Sputnik Editorial Office, 2017). It highlights the realism of the vehicles (of Russian origin) and units, which are reproduced thanks to a permit from the Armed Forces and shows the relationship between the industry and the State. (Moreno & Venegas, 2020). SW tries to achieve credibility by telling the story as it is, at least from the developers’ perspective. As a cultural product, it has a clear intention in the desired message (Suárez, 2021), such as reducing the enemy to a homogeneous block, represented as terrorists, which encompasses all opposition to the Syrian regime. But this game has a common message in national security strategies: the concept of security and the consequent peace, thanks to the above. Both *Syrian Warfare* and *Confrontation: Peace Enforcement* (Red Ice Software, 2008) or *Alpha: Antiterror* (MiST Land-South, 2005) share the narrative, in scenarios presented as plausible (in Figure 2 a mujahideen with pakol can be seen), of that it is Russia, through the Army, that provides security and peace. For example, the last title described as:

Terrorism. Its target is not the one who became the victim, but the one who survived. Their goal is not senseless murder, but well thought out intimidation of society. It is a war that cannot be lost. [...] You are a fighter of the special elite unit Alpha, created to fight against extremist gangs. Afghanistan, Chechnya, the Pankisi gorge, the caves of Tora Bora: wherever terrorism has found fertile ground, where fanatics have crossed the threshold of humanity [...]. (MiST Land-South, 2005)

Well, as has been seen, video games are an instrument (although to a certain extent wasted) used by the Russian strategic discourse and due to its simulation characteristics it attractively represents the hardest power, although framed in the soft power of a State:

The ability to establish preferences that are associated with intangible assets such as personality, culture, political values, and institutions and policies that are legitimate or have moral authority. [...] It is the ability to attract and always attract spoiled leadership. Simply put, in behavioral terms, soft power as attractive power. (Nye, 2004, p.21)

Figure 2

Muyahidín portrayed as a terrorist.



Source: (MiST Land-South, 2005)

Despite studying the concept of soft power in the case of the United States, Moreno and Venegas (2020, pp. 163-184), let us not forget that a similar concept derives from it with a certain nuance that makes it different. Public diplomacy contains an objective: public opinion, business and civil society, for which it projects its own values and positions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, 2020). It should not be ignored that the concept of public diplomacy is proactive and sustained over time, with an objective international audience and the ability to generate a certain environment, although it will not be effective if it is not integrated into a larger policy (Lord, 2009, pp43-60). For Lord, it has a marked cross-sectional character as non-state forces participate and contribute to national power (2009), in this case, the different developers. The dimension of public diplomacy with the greatest emphasis in this study is digital diplomacy defined as "The change management strategy through digital tools and virtual collaboration [...] with ICT and online communities" (Holmes, 2015, p.15).

Two dimensions that soft power and public diplomacy share stand out: the presence of political values and culture. Where do these values come from? How are cultural products [video games] impregnated with values, discourses and ideas defended and defined by state institutions? There are studies referring to how video games adopt military discourse (Venegas, 2021, pp. 185-190) but also the fact that exchanges between the different actors take place through specific mechanisms (Scharpf, 1997) and video games are cultural products developed by people who transmit their frames of thought, as Suárez (2021) indicates. These messages are transferred in an environment of multilevel power in which an attempt is made to impose a framework whose success depends on the power exercised by the actor through the creation and manipulation of images (Castells, 2009) integrated into the strategic discourse. The question that remains to be asked is: What are the main images and what implications do they have in the Russian strategic discourse?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. OBJECTIVES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The general objective [OG] from which it starts is the analysis of the use of the video game as a political tool of the Russian State.

Three specific objectives derive from the OG: investigate the video game as an exercise in public diplomacy by the Russian Federation, delve into the role that the video game plays regarding an identity (integrated in the strategic discourse) and, finally, try to elucidate how the video game industry adopts a certain discourse emanating from the institutions.

Given the objectives to which we will respond and knowing the underlying complexity of video game analysis (replayability, simulation conditions, etc.) as a cultural product, the theoretical framework must be interdisciplinary and eclectic.

To this end, the theoretical framework adopted is based on the one hand, on the contributions of social constructivism, a theory of international relations that analyzes the intangible aspects of policies. The constructivist turn implies the analysis of the international context, as well as the interests found in the discourse and its power. The social-constructivist theory allows identifying the significant elements based on their own social and historical characteristics and the accent on the social group, appreciating ideas articulated with the discourse or indirectly through codes (Skolimowska, 2017 pp. 185-190). These ideas are based on identities (Ibáñez, 2015, pp. 189-218). This is important because these codes are reflected in sensitivities that predominate in certain societies, so the frame of reference conditions perception (Sequeiros et al., 2022); something that complements the textualization.

The intertextual allows the analysis of characteristic representations (Cornago, 2015) and enables the appreciation of political meaning through representative practices (Bleiker, 2001). It is appreciated thanks to the analysis of the “gaps” between meaning and signifier, lies in the importance of convictions and legitimacy (Bleiker, 2017) and gives the opportunity to analyze the video game as a form of aesthetic memory, plausible reproduction of images and their assimilation with other cultural products (Venegas, 2020, p.5).

Once the theoretical framework that allows analyzing the corollary of ideas and their representations in video leisure has been esta-

blished, institutionalism centered on actors is mentioned because this theory places its emphasis on the micro level, on the preferences of the actors and on how these are inserted in an institutional framework that affects and conditions them (Zurbriggen, 2006). It will be explored how the Russian video leisure is impregnated with the “official” institutional discourse in the aspects conditioned by the institutions.

Finally, theoretical contributions from game studies are needed, in which various elements such as procedural rhetoric are found, namely the construction of arguments through processes. Bogost (2007) with his procedural rhetoric highlights the importance of the study of mechanics in video games, expanded in the works of Oliver Pérez (2012), since he provides new dimensions of study: playful-meaningful, narrative and enunciative, something fundamental to understand video leisure from a holistic perspective. Finally, in a contribution intimately linked to international relations, we find several authors summarized in this idea:

The game provides a fertile ground to explore global politics every day. [...] The game aligns with and provides a useful vocabulary for theoretical traditions in IR [International Relations] that seek to explore modes of becoming that problematize and resist concrete being. (Hirst, 2019, pp. 7-10)

2.2. METHODOLOGY

As noted, game studies lack a uniform methodology, so in this research we assume the need to be eclectic and innovative to respond to the objectives set.

The methodology used is qualitative and semi-ludological elements from other authors are used but adapted to the problem studied. Added to the above are different specific me-

thodological contributions of the game studies already outlined. As well as elements of analysis of the aesthetic turn, attention is paid to the gap between signifier and signified, filled by specific political ideas, so representations are conceived as an act of power (Bleiker, 2001, pp. 512-513).

This methodology, inductive in nature, allows us to analyze through a semiotic framework the main relations of Russia’s strategic discourse, made up of the discursive analyzes of official journalistic sources related to the Russian Government, *think tanks*, and those expressed in the enunciative narrative and significant aspects of the video games examined. While the semi-ludological elements facilitate the analysis of the cultural product examined (video games, variables corresponding to the memory, institutional and public diplomacy dimensions are coded in Table 1), the textualization complements the analysis and verifies it through the representative practices. Finally, the situational logic will be the method that allows us to observe the interaction mode of the institutional and videoludic system, although this logic will also be based on (neo) technonationalism (public and private cooperation in order to favor national interests) indicated by Yamada (2000).

The units of analysis [AU] that can be seen in the following section have not been chosen randomly. They respond to an inductive analysis and have been selected by territorial criteria (all the AUs have Russian or Ukrainian origin) because the objectives condition both the independent variable and the dependent variants. Another criterion to consider has been the adequacy of the AUs to the specific objectives. Although they are analyzed transversally, in 3 AU the external narrative is located (with its values and variations over time). In addition, there are 2+1 (the AUs located to the right of the table) whose message is primarily based on historical events

appropriated by the official narrative, with the exception of a third party (Ukrainian) that acts as a control unit. Special attention is given to enunciative-narrative elements.

The variables capture specific indicators based on methodology with the ultimate goal of responding to the proposed objectives. There is an interrelation between them as variables such as that referring to values, elements of aesthetic memory or the intention of truthfulness. They seek to respond to the more con-

crete specific objective of the identity; however, they are not watertight and are closely linked to their integration into other strategies (with a clear link to the objective on international positioning) or with narrative closeness and its benefits (that specifically seek to explore discourse adoption). This connection will be clearly seen in the following section.

3. RESULTS

Table 1

AUs and variables

Variables	Options	Syrian Warfare [SW]	Confrontation: Peace Enforcement [CPE]	Alpha: Anti-terror [AA]	Men of War [MoWAS2]	Strategic Mind: Blitzkrieg [SMB]	Ilya Muromets [IM]
Great Patriotic War	1.No 2.Yes	1	1	1	2	2	1
Nationalism through the army	1.Null 2.Low 3.Average 4.Quite a few 5.High	5	5	5	5	1	4
Aesthetic memory elements	1.Null 2.Low 3.Average 4.Quite a few 5.High	5	3	3	5	1	3
Presence of values defended in strategies	1.Null 2.Low 3.Average 4.Quite a few 5.High	5	5	5	5	1	5
Narrative proximity to institutions	1.Null 2.Low 3.Average 4.Quite a few 5.High	5	5	5	5	1	5
Truth intent	1.Null 2.Low 3.Average 4.Quite a few 5.High	5	2	5	4	2	5

Integration in other policies	1. Not integrated 2. Partially integrated 3. Integrated	2	2	2	3	1	3
Funding-benefits/public initiative	1. No/unknown 2. Funded-Benefited	2	1	2	2	1	2

Starting with the case of *Men of War*, this 1C video game saga was published while the State Duma established a round table on the role of games in the formation of values. Here, even the mechanics seem to favor an attempt at mimetic representation in a clear search for truth, something that can be seen, to cite an example, in the representation of the Red Army units. But the aesthetic elements go further, and Soviet symbols can be seen in the game interface. In addition, the mission design itself has a political meaning that transcends mimetic representation and conveys the ideas of official memory.

The “victory scenario” designed in the missions of the entire saga is double, so truthfulness is tried to be achieved through the pretend world, imitating historical events such as the Battle of Kursk and World War II is used as a legitimizing myth. The experience derived from the gameplay even with some variation is previously prescribed. Through the veracity in the representation, the nationalist message is transmitted (through the army). This can be seen in Figure 3, the flag, the Order of the Patriotic War (drop-down menu that allows obtaining better troops), the famous T-34 and even a guard transport, representation of an American M3A1 but without that name and with the

red star, perhaps in a subtle reference to The Law of Lending and Leasing. It should not be overlooked that the army still uses the red flag or the star as a cockade today. Another fundamental element of the nationalist message and that can be extrapolated to the security argument present in the strategic discourse is that in the world represented in the video game, where there is no trace of any civilian, the Red Army cannot, not even by mistake, commit crimes; something also present in SW, CPE or AA.

Figure 3

Batalla de Kursk en MoWAS2



The attractive power of the army is greater than the iconography since it allows to select units individually. This is common in most AUs, but specifically in *Men of War: Assault Squad 2* (MoWAS2) basic characteristics can be described: they will have typically Russian names and appearance: any other nationality that makes up the USSR/Russia will be ignored. This will generate a homogeneous block. Normally, the portrait will be a dark silhouette, anyone could be the soldier. The role of women is ignored. Lastly, any soldier will hold his position until he receives an order to the contrary. This is a feature in troop micromanagement in any RTS game. It plays a role as a narrative of the official history and reinforces the victory scenario, defensive in a double sense: Russia defends the world from the greatest evil, while transmitting sacrifice for the collective. The mechanics of the waves will force whoever defends outside positions to resist more, even if it supposes a greater complication.

This proximity to the values defended by politicians is also explained in terms of attractive power when used as narrative elements. The above allows us to compare the game with *Order 227*, aesthetically represented from a western perspective with executions within the Soviet side itself, something that led to the withdrawal of *Company of Heroes 2* (Relic Entertainment, 2013) (Otero, 2017).

MoWAS2 was published coinciding with the Crimean crisis and, as has been seen, in aesthetics and narrative they range from the speeches in the State Duma on historical memory (State Duma, 2020) to the values of the historical memory of the Valdai Club, where the conflict with western narratives is recognized (Barabanov, 2020).

Russian values cannot be understood without the process of renewal nationalism, in the Pu-

tin era the role of the USSR was redefined in World War II and in video games, for example, MoWAS2. The past of the USSR is appropriated by Russian nationalism and translated into "Russian values". They are articulated and legitimized with the symbols and the role of the army that act as guarantors of the status quo in the face of any attempt at revisionism (State Duma, 2020).

However, it is not integrated into the melting pot of public policies that support this memory, as can be seen from the fact that it is not part of the patriotic education project of the Ministry of Education or in the infinity of memory projects of the Ministry of Defense. There is a subordination of the industry (aware of the place it occupies within the situational logic) to the government as seen in Jenkins (2010). These positions become more palpable when techno-nationalist elements are added to that logic. Those video games that add the official narrative will tend to benefit, either economically or technically, or by avoiding a certain level of censorship. Examples of this style can be seen in the analyzed UAs, projects directly co-financed by the Russian Military History Society. This is a public entity that, in cooperation with private developers and publishers (especially 1C), gives rise to different video games such as the aforementioned *IM*.

The private initiative of companies directly or indirectly reinforces the official narrative thanks to a game of sums. The developers that adhere to the official narrative obtain benefits such as the development of military simulators (Jenkins, 2010), the purchase of developers by the SberBank (belonging to the Central Bank) (Tadviser, 2021) or, in different ways, technical support that favors the "veracity" of the visual representation. For example, access to historical documents as occurs in *IM* (Horth, 2014) or *AA*, which was advised by the CSN FBS of Russia, a

center on which the anti-terrorist units depend (Aleksándrov, 2005).

This relationship produces that the developers who adopt the official discourse suffer a double tension when they adopt their discourse and ideas that they directly or indirectly transmit embodied in the environment and the “arrangements”. The first conditions from the ability to force the removal of a game from the market through censorship to the condition of including or not this entertainment as an element of the digital economy program (Analytical Center of the Government of the Russian Federation, 2020). The second, the institutional arrangement, determines the constellations and modes of interaction by the de facto hierarchical-asymmetric relationship mode (presence of actors such as the Roskomnadzor, the Duma, the presidential office, the developers, the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media [MDDCMM], among others). The MDDCMM is essential in generating the majority of regulatory activity as well as recommending support through the inclusion of developer projects in the list of promising information technologies. Virtual worlds and augmented technology are collected in the “Information Security” project.

These previously described tensions are reflected in the constellation of actors, understood as the strategy of the actors, which will lead to an accommodation strategy. The actors must adapt to the environment. Here you can see the reactive response (considering it a narrative battlefield) that is generated by adding the control AU. The simple fact of playing by invading the USSR and violating that aesthetic memory linked to the official discourse results in the Kremlin itself classifying it as anti-Russian and even Nazi propaganda (Sputnik Editorial Office, 2020 in relation to Strategic Mind: Blitzkrieg), something that links a Ukrainian game with its

government (and legitimizes current actions through past images) by Russia considering Ukraine as a country ruled by Russophobic Nazis (Security Council, 2022, p2). Russian values are attractive as far as they are protective and they offer security within the veracity sought in aesthetic memory, to the point of accusing three young people of training to attack the FSB through the game Minecraft (Mojang Studios, 2011) (Aleksandrov et al., 2021).

Up to this point, the importance of aesthetic memory has been seen and this narrative should be read as a triumph of the nationalist school of international politics, since the identity politics that is embodied as aesthetic memory is a tool of the Russian international narrative.

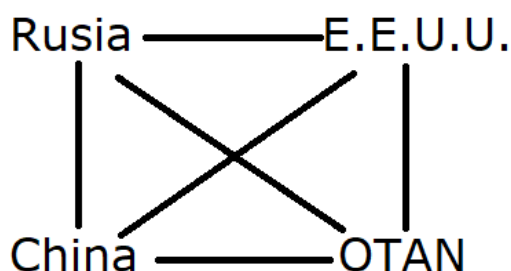
Russian foreign policy and its narrative are based on the Primakov doctrine and, therefore, linked to the prestige of being a great power in addition to its need for hegemony in the post-Soviet space in a multipolar world (Morales, 2018).

This can be seen from casual games such as *Modern Conflict* [MC] (Gaijin Entertainment, 2010), a game whose playable features can be translated into the semiotic framework of the Russian foreign narrative (Figure 4). Internally, the idea of Russia as a great power is presented by placing it in a direct confrontational relationship with the US, the current leading world power, while there is a relationship of denial between Russia and NATO, something very present in the Ukrainian conflict. Although it is not optimal in its foreign policy, Russia is not afraid of direct verbal confrontation with the US, as Putin himself, his ministers (especially Foreign and Defense) or some related media such as the Sputnik newspaper have stated on many occasions when defending the “uselessness” (Benítez, 2019) or the aggressiveness

(Reid, 2021) of NATO (especially due to the perception of threat in its expansion towards Georgia or Ukraine). This confrontation has led to the ridicule of North American war material, as happened with the recent trailer for *Battlefield 2042* (DICE, 2021), where, decontextualizing a scene from the trailer, they presented it as a ridiculous confrontation between a “useless” F-35 and a Su-57 (Sputnik Editorial Office, 2021). Finally, the relationship between Russia and China is complementary (strategic and of interest, present in the Primakov doctrine) since it denies the hegemony of the Americans and is contrary to NATO, thereby reinforcing the strategic multipolar element.

Figure 4

Semiotic framework of Russian geopolitics.



Regarding videoludic soft power, the semiotic framework allows Russia to be replaced by the concept of “international security – humanitarianization”, China as a “security complement” as opposed to “insecurity”, which would replace the US and the “dying” or “aggressive”, which would replace NATO. The video game is no stranger to this substitution.

Public/electronic diplomacy and soft power in Russia have the peculiarity of being an internal and external aspect whose purpose is to consolidate the elite, as indicated by María Pérez (2020, p. 5). Georgia was the turning point when trying to integrate both tools in the “information war” and the video game was no exception.

In *CPE*, one of the main vectors is satirically shown: the Caucasus, a war that served the Kremlin (mixing means of soft and hard power) to break the NATO belt in its neighborhood. It showed the hybrid intervention instruments and reinforced its influence on the GUUAM (Gándara, 2018 pp. 45-65). It was conveyed with a colorful and burlesque aesthetic (as seen in Figure 5) “that should not be taken too seriously” (Dyomkin, 2008). However, the war started because of Georgia and the obscurantist nations that make up NATO, mainly Russophobic Poland and Ukraine. Therefore, the Russian strategic discourse is reinforced by threatening both this country and the values contained in state doctrines, by trying to justify the Russian presence in the Caucasus like Medvedev, as peacekeepers, showing even in the date of publication a great synchrony with the political needs.

Figure 5

Cover: CPE



Source: Red Ice Software, 2008.

The best example of integration between foreign policy, public diplomacy and soft power is in the last battlefield: Syria.

In *SW* is found (in an effort to attract a foreign public) the principle of bilateral relations within a multipolar system, a source of security. The message that is transmitted is to combat international terrorism by providing physical security and humanizing the mission. All this will be done by allowing the expansion of Russian capabilities and supporting the Syrian regime with a faithful defense of the unity, independence and territorial integrity of Syria (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation [MAE], 2016). Russia will be the player's only true support in a hostile environment and suits the official narrative that western countries never participated against "terrorism in Syria". However, the Russian interest in the involvement of terrorism in its territories of the Caucasus and the post-Soviet space of Central Asia is undeniable.

The principles, previously stated, can be seen as transverse axes of the aesthetics of figures 6, 7 and 8. Figure 8 stands out: a "standard soldier" with a certain heroism, transmits the Russian vision of the world, Russia is that soldier who gives security and food.

As has been seen, these video games transmit codes that could be condensed into the idea that the world is threatening and interferes in Russia's affairs with new weapons: space and information (President of the Russian Federation, 2021). Therefore, these games must present elements of the Gerasimov-Primakov doctrine, such as the importance of Russian leadership in the post-Soviet space and, therefore, the constant criticism of NATO's expansion attempts (visible in *CPE*). Another fundamental idea in *SW* is the expansion of Russian capabil-

ities, especially hard power and the defense of multipolarity (Rumer, 2019, pp. 3-9), a space in which information and cyberspace are valued as a battlefield by being able to erode political leadership and public opinion through them (Colom, 2018, p. 30). Another fundamental idea that the control AU demonstrates is the use of aesthetic memory and its "truthfulness" component as legitimizing elements of the current decisions that affect Russia's foreign policy.

Figure 6

Humanitarian aid



Source: RupyTV

Figure 7

Aleppo, help has arrived



Source: Augusto Ferrer-Dalmau

Figure 8

Syrian Warfare



Source: (Cats who play, 2017)

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In short, the strategic discourse of the Russian Federation uses video leisure as a political tool of the State. For Russia, as seen above, security is an integral part of its narrative, so actions in foreign policy will tend to be legitimized on the grounds that they offer security and a legitimate challenge to the unilateral regime.

For this, an entire aesthetic memory has been built that is instrumentalized both for internal and external public opinion, and cases such as calling a government “fascist” are found at the headquarters of the Security Council of the United Nations, something that they had previously done with a game that “violated” the official aesthetic memory. This veracity of created images also brings it closer to the Chinese nationalist construction detailed by Moreno (2021, pp. 49-77), to the victimization of the country (Sino-Japanese War and World War II) because of a historical event that is mythologized through the official narrative. It is associated with specific values and is currently used to legitimize actions in the foreign policy of these States.

This instrumentalization and, consequently, the reactive element in case of denial of the official narrative shows the importance of the codes that are transmitted in an internal logic of social cohesion and at the same time, in the search to apply the external doctrine. This can be understood considering the specific approach of Russian soft power as indicated by María Pérez (2020, pp. 4-7), also included in the national security strategy (2021), the information security doctrine of the Federation Russia (2016) and the conception of foreign policy (2016).

The transmission of these codes is favored by the accommodation strategy of the industry that is located between the acceptance of the narrative and self-censorship, something that Castells (2009, pp. 354-365) has already studied in reference to traditional media. The accommodation of the media is essential to understand the use of video games as a tool of soft power. The literature that develops the role of video leisure on this problem is extensive (Moreno & Venegas, 2020; Moreno, 2021; Venegas, 2021; Schulze, 2016; Goodfellow, 2016). Underlying all of them is the idea that aesthetics and values are associated with their codes through an idealized militarization and normally in a Manichean manner. Throughout this text it has been stated that Russia, especially regarding its security and identity, acts as a paradigmatic case.

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