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Far Cry 3, and Mobile Legends through the Popular Culture and World Politics (PCWP) Framework

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Fathanaditya Rianto

Department of International Relations,
Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia
fathanadityarianto@gmail.com

In the current digital era, video games, which have evolved from ancient times, have become immensely popular media with significant impacts on society. In this context, it is evident that video games are not merely entertainment but also powerful instruments for conveying stories and ideologies, playing a significant role in communicating political and social messages. Through in-depth analysis of various game genres, this study explores how video games can reflect, influence, and even shape our perceptions of power dynamics, government policies, and global conflicts. This aligns with the framework of popular culture and world politics (PCWP), which views popular culture, including video games, as capable of influencing and shaping our perceptions of the Global South. This research also investigates how video games like "Far Cry 2", "Far Cry 3", and "Mobile Legends: Bang bang" can be used as tools to promote specific ideologies, both explicitly and implicitly. Employing a qualitative method with a case study approach to analyze narrative content formed within video games, this study, utilizing the PCWP framework, will examine how the stories presented in video games can shape understanding and attitudes toward social, economic, and political dynamics in the Global South.

Keywords: video games; narratives; Global South; popular culture; world politics

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving digital era, the role of video games extends beyond mere entertainment. With their ability to create rich and complex liminal spaces, video games serve as effective instruments for delivering narratives distinct from other forms of media. They hold tremendous potential in shaping narratives and representations of regions in the Global South. The term "Global South" refers to countries worldwide considered to be developing, characterized by conditions such as poverty, higher income inequality, and lower life expectancy (Heine, 2023).

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It's worth noting that developing countries in regions like Asia, Latin America, Africa, and others encompassed within the Global South are often overlooked in mainstream narratives such as popular media like films, books, and television. The emergence of video games presents an intriguing platform for introducing new narratives and expanding representations of Global South countries. With their distinctive delivery, video games enable player interactivity, allowing direct engagement in immersive and profound liminal experiences. Fresh perspectives on challenges, cultures, and lives experienced by Global South societies can be encapsulated in video games, serving as instruments for promoting cross-cultural understanding and facilitating intercultural dialogue in unique ways.

Narratives in video games are crucial due to their ability to provide players with motivation, engagement, and goals within the gaming world, enabling them to experience and empathize with different perspectives and viewpoints (University of Europe, 2023). The narratives crafted in video games can significantly influence perceptions of the Global South, such as empowerment or stereotypes, gaming community influences, cultural and geographical representations, as well as depictions of social and political issues. This is further supported by findings from research (Robertson, 2022), stating that strong narratives in video games with value frameworks and attributions can influence political views. It can be argued that video games can influence and alter players' political perceptions in complex and diverse ways, such as shaping global perceptions, fostering empathy, presenting alternatives, prompting reflection and discussion, influencing social and cultural norms, and encouraging creativity and innovation.

Overall, video games hold great potential to influence perceptions of the Global South by presenting diverse and holistic representations related to the challenges, social issues, and cultures faced by Global South communities. This underscores the importance of video games as a popular culture medium capable of significantly contributing to shaping more inclusive and diverse narratives, reflecting various perspectives and experiences.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The literature reviewed in this discussion highlights various perspectives and research on topics relevant to the title from previous studies, providing a foundation or reference for conducting research. In the first study, based on the work of (Jenn, 2020), the exploration delves into how trauma and postcolonial identity in the Global South can be represented through new media like video games, with game narratives serving as instruments in uncovering trauma narratives, developing new analytical methods, critiquing existing understandings, and considering postcolonial and Global South narratives. This research offers fresh insights into how postcolonial identities and the Global South can be represented in video games, examining players' experiences within trauma narratives.

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Furthermore, findings from (Mukherjee & Hammar, 2018) elucidate how postcolonial areas are often overlooked in video games, with some popular games criticized for representation errors leading to a lack of proper understanding that can affect players' experiences of postcolonial regions. This study also explains how video games, as a disciplinary study, tend toward Western or Eurocentric perspectives, creating gaps in gaming studies between colonizing and colonized regions.

Moving forward,Crilley (2021) posits that the current popular culture and world politics (PCWP) should not neglect important issues outside the West and should ensure the direction of PCWP. The article emphasizes the importance of expanding PCWP research focus beyond the West to encompass the entire world, incorporating all aspects such as methodologies, theories, and philosophies from beyond the West to understand and analyze PCWP. This is crucial because PCWP research should not only focus on the non-Western "world" but also involve non-Western "thought," especially considering some forms of PCWP are better understood from non-Western traditions, providing a broader perspective on PCWP.

The PCWP framework, serving as the conceptual framework in this study, refers to an understanding of where popular culture such as films, literature, music, social media, and video games can be used to comprehend global politics. Popular culture can influence and reflect global political dynamics and vice versa. Notably, renowned video games like Call of Duty indirectly reflect and influence

public perceptions of associated countries, carrying ideologies through their narratives and messages. Aligned with the research theme, the PCWP foundation is relevant because it can provide a broader understanding of video games. Moreover, video games generally fall under soft politics due to their indirect involvement in politics but are used to convey messages, influence viewpoints, and trigger social and political changes. With the use of PCWP in this study, it is hoped to provide broader and different insights from conventional "international relations."

With the theoretical framework of PCWP, the author can analyze the role of video games in shaping narratives in the Global South. Representations of the Global South in popular video games like Far Cry 2, Far Cry 3, and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang can evoke emotional reactions that can influence the identity of the Global South. It becomes interesting to study these three video games because they incorporate elements of the Global South. For instance, "Far Cry 2" and "Far Cry 3" feature narratives and visuals closely tied to conflicts often occurring in Global South countries. Moreover, Ubisoft, a major game studio from France (Ubisoft, 2024), has a significant influence on the video game industry due to its high-quality products and complex narratives that highlight the intricacies of post-colonial struggles. On the other hand, "Mobile Legends: Bang Bang" differs from the previous two games by showcasing the diversity and cultural richness of the Global South, providing a more positive alternative narrative. This video game is a major success for the Chinese game studio

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Moonton (Moonton, 2024), as it has created a mobile game product that is relevant and appealing to a broad audience, particularly in Southeast Asia.

Some researchers have found the importance of popular culture in understanding how power, ideology, and identity are formed, produced, and manifested (Grayson et al., 2009). Thus, it is essential to understand the role and connection between power, ideology, and identity to unravel the complexity of political dynamics in the Global South. Aspects related to popular culture such as actors, institutions, processes, texts, sites, and practices can be used to understand and analyze how popular culture operates (Caso & Hamilton, 2015). These elements can be translated into indicators in this research to measure, analyze, and understand to achieve the research objectives.

Methodology

In this study, the author employs a qualitative approach to obtain a deeper understanding in exploring this research from the perspective of Post-Colonial World Perspectives (PCWP). In collecting data related to this research, two approaches are utilized: in-depth content analysis and video game case studies. These two qualitative approaches are chosen for this research due to the complexity of narrative phenomena within video games in the Global South. Qualitative methods allow researchers to explore themes and unearth information more deeply, enabling a more subjective exploration from the perspectives of video game players and developers. This method also allows the au-

thor to examine the role of video games in shaping narratives in the Global South with a PCWP perspective, thus providing findings different from traditional perspectives in international relations.

Data obtained from in-depth content analysis will be used to comprehensively analyze research themes to yield relevant results. This approach is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role of video games in shaping perceptions of the Global South from a PCWP perspective. Additionally, in the video game case study approach, the author will select several video games that directly or indirectly present narratives of the Global South. The focus will be on elements such as narrative, themes, and gameplay patterns within the chosen video games. This approach allows researchers to understand the formation of narratives within video games in the Global South based on the elements present in the games.

By utilizing data from these two approaches, the author aims to provide insights into the role of video games in shaping narratives in the Global South. Furthermore, by employing a PCWP perspective, this study seeks to contribute to the field of international relations by presenting alternative views that do not always align with hard politics.

Analysis

In the eyes of the international community, video games appear to be a double-edged sword. On one side, some studies find video games to be instruments of propaganda, while on the other side, there are also studies that suggest video games can serve as

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strategies to introduce diplomacy and international relations. It cannot be denied that the presence of video games in the international arena has indeed become one of the effective instruments of propaganda. However, it is important to emphasize that the existence of video games does not inherently make them "evil propaganda instruments," as propaganda itself is neutral, and video games likewise. It should be stressed that video games are commercial tools with advertising purposes, educational tools across various subjects, and even political instruments to support or criticize certain ideologies (Erad, 2018). However, the case study of the American-made video game Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, presents Russia as the villain, often engaging in inhumane acts against civilians without clear justification. What the author finds particularly problematic is the portrayal of Islamic values as terrorists in the game, which alludes to "imperialist propaganda." In this context, players are indirectly guided toward fictitious information that supports imperialistic policies under the guise of "liberation."

To understand video games as a medium within the framework of PCWP, three indicators can be used in analyzing video games: narratives, visuals, and gameplay. To comprehend video games, one must navigate through various options or alternative patterns within the game under study (Caso & Hamilton, 2015).

Figure 1. Three Indicators in Researching Video Games
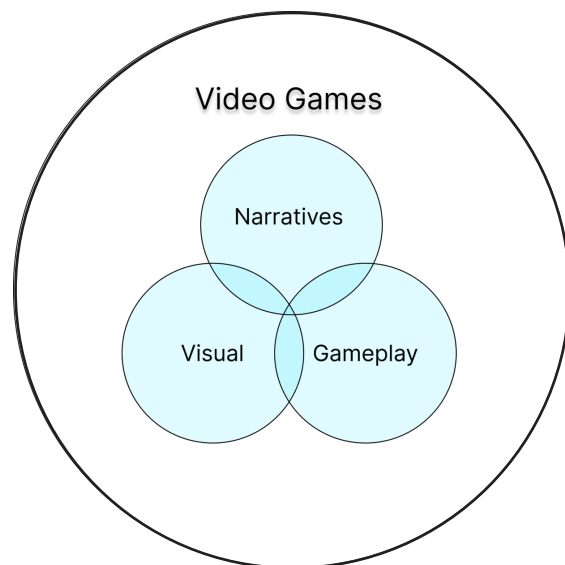
When researching video games through the PCWP framework, three indicators from the above image can be utilized in the study. First, the narrative or story in video games encompasses various aspects such as characters, themes, and plots conveyed through the game's story. The narrative in video games can reflect political ideologies, global conflicts, or relevant social issues within the PCWP context. Second, visuals encompass the visualization aspects in video games, including world background design, characters, and overall aesthetics. Visuals can represent the environment, conflicts, and political powers contained within the video game, allowing players to understand the conditions within it. Last, gameplay involves the interaction between players and video game mechanics, which can include decisions, strategies, or consequences of actions. The presence of gameplay can help players feel involved, making it easier for

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them to understand the messages conveyed in the video game. These three indicators are interconnected in helping to understand the contribution of video games in representing, responding to, or shaping society's perceptions of global political issues in the form of popular culture.
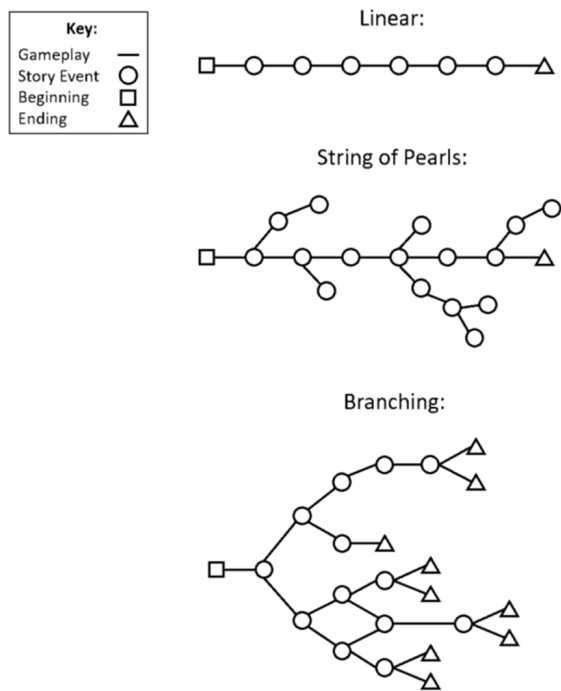
The Formation of Global South in Video Games

It is understood that media such as video games play a significant role in shaping and developing narratives in the Global South. In this context, the presence of video games in the Global South from their inception to the present cannot be underestimated. Video games in the Global South serve not only as entertainment but also as important instruments in conveying narratives about everyday life, politics, and culture in this region. The visualization of environments, cultures, and architectures in video games can provide players with immersive experiences. Similar to a film, video games encompass many aspects such as moving images, sound, music, and a running narrative. However, there is a specific point that can be derived from playing video games that is quite different from other media: the presence of complex interactions between players, the video games being played, developers, and other stakeholders, indirectly conveying messages from this media. Even the role of countries in the Global South that enjoy this media cannot be underestimated. According to data from (Dihni, 2022), Indonesia, as an example of a country in the Global South, is one of the largest markets for the video game in-

dustry globally, with 94.5% of internet users aged 16-64 playing video games.

Video games are important to consider due to the massive narrative empowerment in the Global South. It is known that several video games draw inspiration from backgrounds in Global South regions, providing views and experiences related to the culture, politics, and social issues in these areas. Thus, players gain broader perspectives and understanding of the realities in the Global South. The narrative is one of the crucial aspects to ensure that the message in video games is effectively conveyed, and to obtain narrative content, it must be structured well. To obtain narrative content, three methods must be employed, such as semantic formation of content arrangement, organizing strengths such as grouping actors, and forming temporal syntagmatic consisting of sequences of actions. These methods will be implemented in seven phases: the initial situation, event trigger, change, and decision, search for solutions, obstacles and complications, resolution, and final situation (Arsenault, 2006).

Figure 2. Narrative structure

Source: Stone (2019)

In analyzing the formation of Global South narratives in video games, the author seeks to deepen understanding by exploring narrative structures based on the image above. Understanding the types of narrative structures can be applied to the formation of the Global South narratives. In linear narrative structures, video games set in the Global South can effectively convey stories sequentially and clearly, where the narrative progresses directionally from the beginning to the end. For example, this structure is suitable for video games depicting historical events such as the struggle for independence. Next, the strand of Pearl's narrative structure allows players to explore the video game world based on player choices. For instance, players can interact with local characters, engage in local cultural activities, and explore immersive locations, enhancing the game-play experience. Lastly, the branching narrative structure enables players to make choices that can influence the story's outcome, presenting players with diverse perspectives on the liminal space reality.

These narrative structures guide how storytelling techniques are applied. Text, environments, and cutscenes in video games can deliver narratives more effectively, particularly in the context of the Global South. This may include the use of local languages, character dialogues, and visual designs of the video game environment. For example, the video game "Uncharted: The Lost Legacy" utilizes various storytelling techniques with a strand of pearls narrative structure, creating a deep and engaging experience for players to understand the perspectives of characters. In this game, the main character embarks on a quest for legendary treasures in India, featuring sites, monuments, music, and art unique to India.

Representation of the Global South in Far Cry 2, Far Cry 3, and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Based on the discussion above, there are three main indicators used in analyzing video games for this research: narrative, visual, and gameplay. These aspects are closely intertwined in providing the gaming experience. When applied to the analysis of the video game "Far Cry 2," it is evident that this first-person shooter offers a rich narrative experience, highly realistic visuals, and challenging gameplay with a high degree of freedom. From a narrative standpoint, the game is set in a fictional African country and tells

the story of a player who assumes the role of a mercenary tasked with killing an arms dealer known as "The Jackal," while also becoming involved in the country's civil war. In terms of visuals, the game features detailed and authentic environments with dynamic weather effects and a day-night cycle, allowing players to experience a beautiful yet chaotic country due to ongoing conflict. Regarding gameplay, the game emphasizes an open-world mechanism that enables players to freely explore, complete missions, and employ various strategies and weapons, which can realistically degrade over time. The game employs a branching narrative structure, allowing player decisions to impact the storyline and relationships with other characters, thereby creating a unique experience with each playthrough.

Figure 3. The environmental visuals from "Far Cry 2"

Source: Ubisoft (2008)

Building upon the analysis of 'Far Cry 2,' which exemplifies the integration of narrative, visual, and gameplay elements, this discussion extends to how the game series situates itself within the broader context of the Global South. Specifically, this game presents players with a challenging and engaging journey set in locations and times

that roughly reflect various regions in Africa, focusing on complex social and political conflicts. The game also portrays diverse and complex African cultures through unique symbolism, values, and traditions, allowing players to interact within this virtual world. This game not only offers detailed visual graphics and sound but also includes various references to African history, such as the armed conflicts in Darfur involving multiple factions. Players take on the role of the main character, who embodies the values of freedom and justice. Throughout the game, players make decisions that shape a complex narrative, making justice and conflict subjective depending on the player's choices. This game reflects how Africa, as a conflicted region, has complex social structures with gaps between the elite and ordinary citizens, where power and wealth can be used for personal or group interests. Thus, the game serves as a medium for players to understand concepts of conflict, freedom, and justice.

In the aforementioned game, elements of power, culture, and world politics are reflected in various aspects. The setting in Africa reflects a time when economic and political power could be used by individuals or groups to control military power and natural resources in the region. Power struggles are visualized through armed conflicts between factions vying for control, involving private corporations, militias, and governments attacking each other to pursue their interests and goals. Cultural aspects are depicted through characters, environments, and interactions between players and local inhabitants. The portrayal of music and lan-

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guage reflects cultural diversity in the region. Furthermore, politics are reflected in the game's narrative, with geopolitical interests influencing various actors and shaping political dynamics in conflict-prone regions. These elements in the game serve as a medium for players to understand the situation and conditions in conflict-ridden regions, which are also relevant in several Global South regions often plagued by political oppression, corruption, and colonialism.

In delving into the analysis of the second video game, "Far Cry 3," it continues the successful trajectory of its predecessor by offering a profound experiential journey through its narrative, visuals, and gameplay. The game initiates with the protagonist, "Jason Brody," depicted as a stranded tourist on a tropical island. Its narrative intricately explores moral conflicts and character metamorphosis, as the central figure endeavors to liberate his abducted comrades and confront a charismatic yet deranged antagonist, catalyzing a significant evolution from an ordinary youth to a seasoned warrior. The visuals showcased in this gaming installment are striking, portraying lush foliage, numerous concealed caverns, and picturesque shorelines emblematic of tropical landscapes. Retaining the open-world mechanics of its precursor, the gameplay permits players to undertake missions with diverse combat strategies or indulge in uninhibited island exploration, all contingent upon player choices. The branching narrative structure of the game affords players the liberty to shape the storyline and outcomes, thereby granting them comprehensive agency to profoundly

influence the gaming experience.

Figure 4. The environmental visuals from "Far Cry 3"

Source: Ubisoft (2012)

Continuing the exploration of the "Far Cry" series, "Far Cry 3" developed by the same creators but with a fresh narrative and setting, presents another captivating experience. The representation of the Global South in this game is reflected in the fictional setting adopted in the Pacific, referred to as the Rook Islands in the game. This fictional setting triggers discussions as its specific location is ambiguous, with some players suggesting it is based on the Fiji Islands while others argue it is based on Papua New Guinea. Regardless of the debate, the game's setting utilizes a mysterious and exotic tropical environment reminiscent of regions in the Global South. The game's story depicts players as the main characters struggling to survive amidst conflicts between foreign colonizers and local communities. The relationship between colonizers and indigenous populations in this game vividly portrays regions in the Global South where social and political situations are tense, exacerbated by internal and external conflicts between colo-

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nizers and the colonized. Elements such as traditional weapons, ceremonial rituals, and dances provide a glimpse into the culture and life in this fictional region, potentially reinforcing stereotypes among players.

The dynamics of power, culture, and politics in the third installment of the "Far Cry" series are similar to those in the second installment of the game. Players are involved in conflicts between various factions vying for control of the territory and monopolizing its natural resources. The game's portrayal of culture showcases cultural and environmental diversity in tropical areas. Some scenes in the game use Indonesian phrases like "berhenti," "senapan ke bawah," and "berikan saya herba."(Ubisoft, 2012). Moreover, politics in the game are evident, with the presence of state agents and international criminals seeking the island's resources. These aspects also mirror real-world scenarios in the Global South, where foreign intervention in local political dynamics and the allure of resources often attract attention from powerful nations seeking to obtain and advance their national interests.

The analysis of the final video game, "Mobile Legends: Bang Bang," presents a straightforward narrative where individual characters possess their own respective stories, albeit with minimal impact on gameplay dynamics. Offering unique visuals spanning diverse themes, the Land of Dawn serves as the arena where players showcase their skills in vanquishing opponents or securing objectives, primarily the destruction of enemy towers divided into three lanes. The game features appealing character designs and flu-

id animations, contributing to its immersive environment. Furthermore, its gameplay is characterized by rapid and addictive 5v5 battles across various game modes, each character fulfilling distinct roles with accompanying strengths and weaknesses. Overall, while narrative depth may not be the game's forte, its allure lies in its highly addictive gameplay, facilitating engaging player-versus-player encounters and fostering an enjoyable gaming experience.

Figure 5. The character visuals of Gatotkaca from "Mobile Legend: Bang Bang"

Source: Moonton (2016)

Emerging as particularly intriguing is the fact that each character, drawn from the rich cultural landscape of the Global South, presents a unique narrative that resonates with players worldwide. This seamless integration of cultural elements not only enhances the gaming experience but also cultivates a deeper appreciation for the traditions and legends of various nations (Widyaswara, 2023). For example, characters like *Lapu-Lapu*, *Gatotkaca*, and *Badang* are inspired by national heroes and mythological figures from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, respectively. Additionally, characters like *Faramis* and *Minsitthar* have close ties to countries in the Global South (Widyaswara,

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2023). These characters convey the message that local stories and traditions can be introduced to international audiences, expanding understanding and appreciation for each country's cultural richness. Furthermore, these characters can be interpreted as efforts to strengthen national pride and identity amidst the dominance of Western culture, thus creating alternative narratives. Examining representations in popular video games like Mobile Legends directs research toward the rapid growth of the video game industry in the Global South.

Shift from PC Games to Mobile Games: From Exclusive to Inclusive

In recent years, the video game industry has experienced advancements in both technical and narrative aspects. Technology in video games has rapidly evolved, resulting in games with increasingly realistic visuals and complex stories. Today, we can enjoy high-quality video games in the palm of our hands, whereas previously, playing demanding video games was limited to computers. The shift from computer gaming to mobile gaming is palpable, especially in the Global South, where not everyone can afford or access computer-based video games. This transformation signifies a significant paradigm shift in the entertainment industry from exclusivity to inclusivity. It extends beyond gaming preferences and encompasses accessibility, participation, and representation in popular culture. Developers now consider the mobile gaming market to make games more accessible to a wider audience previously hindered by a lack of devices or inadequate infrastructure. This analysis is reinforced by data from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information, indicating that the number of video game players in Indonesia exceeds 170 million, with 133.8 million mobile gamers and 53.4 million PC gamers (KOMINFO, 2022).

There is a notable difference in how people play video games between Western countries and the Global South. In Western countries, the majority play video games on their personal computers, whereas in the Global South, not everyone can afford personal computers for gaming. Internet cafes are the primary choice for gaming in many Global South countries due to their affordability. Despite the popularity of personal computers, internet cafes are still prevalent in some developing countries where personal computers are considered expensive. With the current technological advancements, affordable and widespread mobile devices, particularly in the Global South, enable more people to enjoy video games and create business opportunities that empower more individuals. People in the Global South, whether in cities or villages, can now participate in gaming, which was previously exclusive to those who could afford personal computers. This shift fosters inclusion in various aspects, particularly as mobile games can better represent the Global South's cultures and values.

As an example of this shift in the Global South, we can look at the video game "Loka Pala," a mobile Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game developed by Anantarupa Studios in Indonesia (Anantarupa Studios, 2024). This video game

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serves as a significant representation of the Indonesian video game industry, reflecting local narratives and culture. It incorporates various elements of Indonesian culture and history, expressed through characters and stories inspired by the tales of Wayang and the Mahabharata (Kemenparekraf, 2021). "Loka Pala" plays a crucial role in shaping and defining Indonesia's narrative and identity, allowing the country to share its local stories with the world. This presents an excellent opportunity for Indonesia; players have the chance to recognize and appreciate their cultural heritage while also introducing Indonesian culture to a global audience. The gameplay also requires players to achieve independence through struggle, set against backdrops like temples and kingdoms that vividly reflect the Indonesian atmosphere (Kemenparekraf, 2021). "Loka Pala" also highlights the significant potential of local video games and the capability of developers from developing countries to compete on a global scale, showcasing the rise of the creative industry in the Global South. The presence of a local video game industry in the Global South emphasizes that video games are not merely a form of entertainment but can also serve as a medium for cultural promotion for the new generation.

Government support can also aid a country's digital economy. For instance, Indonesia's total revenue from the video game industry reached USD 1.1 billion in 2021, indicating significant potential for further development (KOMINFO, 2022). The shift in the video game landscape opens up new avenues for representing narratives in the Global South. Unexpectedly valuable opportunities arise, such as Esports in the mobile gaming world, which has a vast and remarkable market. Esports in the Global South are gaining momentum and indirectly create influential communities that foster competitiveness and lead to competition. For example, in Asia, mobile gaming competitions like PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB) are garnering global attention as they compete with Western audiences.

Discussion

Before delving into the realm of video game instruments, it is essential to understand the concepts of soft power and hard power in international politics. These terms denote a nation's ability to influence others, with soft power emphasizing attraction through cultural values and hard power through military might and economic pressure (Master Class, 2023). Video games can be categorized under cultural soft power due to their ability to captivate global audiences through various aspects such as music, culture, language, and more, thereby influencing countries with the variables conveyed through video games. In the current era of digital transformation, soft power has become an effective solution, capable of exerting influence on other nations without significant costs or casualties (HIMAHI UMM, 2023). It's worth noting that 41% of the world's population, or 3.26 billion people, have played or are currently playing video games, indicating a significant influence (Dimitrievski, 2023).

Indirectly, video games themselves have significant potential to serve as diplomatic instruments through various means. In the current era of video games, they can promote dialogue, values, cultural exchange, and international cooperation (Mujiono & Alexandra, 2019). Many video games played from childhood to adulthood often convey cultural values such as music, clothing, language, art, and stories, allowing players to understand and appreciate other countries' cultures. Additionally, video games create communities that foster relationships among players, providing forums for discussions, in-game events, and real-world meetings that transcend national boundaries. Furthermore, some games simulate real-world conflicts, prompting players to make difficult decisions akin to diplomatic simulations. In the current digital transformation era, online video games have become commonplace, even evolving into international competitive tournaments. From an International Relations perspective, Esports serves as an international competitive video game tournament platform promoting cooperation and friendship by forming teams from various countries to compete for victory. Additionally, Esports tournaments sometimes serve as venues for countries to reflect their national identities (Syahrin, 2023).

The emergence of new public diplomacy waves through video games is one-way nations share their culture with the international community. I have directly observed the educational impact of video games. Specifically, I have improved my English language skills through engaging with in-game dialogues. Moreover, while playing Age of Empires 3, I encountered the economic theory of mercantilism, which has provided valuable insights and references for my thesis (Rianto, 2022). In practice, video games also serve as political instruments, as seen in the United States with the release of Animal Crossing: New Horizons in 2020, featuring virtual Black Lives Matter protests and political campaign posters for Democrat candidate Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris, along with Barack Obama's virtual billboard advertisements in various video games (Reymann, 2020). This case study illustrates the potential of video games as political instruments, enabling actors to convey non-traditional messages and target subjects as desired. While political ads in video games may initially seem intrusive, when executed subtly, they can have significant impacts without players realizing they're being targeted.

Video games offer substantial strategic potential and benefits. They can be used for educational purposes (Rhett, 2017), exploring and teaching subjects through game mechanics (Loban Rhett, 2017), especially in international settings, where major tournaments serve as diplomatic reflections and platforms for understanding international relations (Syahrin, 2023). However, it's also a dilemma, as not all video game genres are effective educational tools; for instance, games like Grand Theft Auto or Call of Duty are often criticized for their negative influence on children. Thus, parental supervision is crucial. Nevertheless, UNESCO-MGIEP is committed to exploring video games' poten-

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tial in promoting peace education and conflict resolution (Ore, 2017).

Recently, competitive video gaming, known as Esports, has gained significant traction, with events like Defense of the Ancients (DOTA) 2 The International (TI) illustrating how Esports is viewed globally (Alfi Syahrin, 2023). TI tournaments have helped change negative perceptions of video games, now seen as a form of competitive sports equivalent to traditional ones. This transformation is supported by substantial investments and industry support, making TI one of the most prestigious tournaments worldwide, evident in its large prize pools, high-quality broadcasting, and extensive fan base.

From the analysis results, the video games "Far Cry 2," "Far Cry 3," and "Mobile Legends: Bang Bang" present complex representations of the Global South. Both "Far Cry" series depicts how power dynamics and political conflicts can occur in those regions, while "Mobile Legends: Bang Bang" explores cultural diversity in Global South countries. For the "Far Cry" series, through highly reflective fictional settings in Africa and the South Pacific, the complex reality of political conflicts and cultural differences between players and characters in the games is apparent. The complexity of the Global South regions is effectively portrayed in both games, often overlooked in mainstream media's portrayal of the Global South. This highlights the potential of video games to serve as instruments for deeper understanding and critical thinking among players regarding global issues such as cultural heritage, colonialism, exploitation, and the frequent conflicts in the Global South.

The shift from PC gaming to mobile gaming has significantly increased accessibility and inclusivity in the Global South, leading to wider access to video games at relatively low costs. This shift indirectly opens doors for various stakeholders, including individuals, investors, game developers, and governments in the mobile gaming industry. The shift also affects cultural representations in video games on a broader scale, as they can target players globally.

This shift has led to the development of mobile video games, such as the two mobile games analyzed, "Mobile Legends: Bang Bang" and "Lokapala," both featuring Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) systems and elements of Global South cultures, as discussed in the analysis. Both mobile games offer rich visual designs, but "Lokapala" offers designs and narratives based more heavily on Indonesian mythology and folklore. "Lokapala" indirectly invites players, whether from Indonesia or elsewhere, to explore Indonesia's cultural richness in an environment inspired by local mythology and history. The cultural representations in both games can broaden players' understanding and appreciation of the cultures they depict, especially considering the success of "Mobile Legends: Bang Bang" in Southeast Asia, which can serve as a significant platform for introducing Global South cultures to a larger audience of players, communities, and competitive events.

It's not unlikely for each Global South country to develop its national gaming industry, as "Lokapala" proves that Indonesia

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can not only be a consumer of foreign video games but also advance its own gaming industry's growth and development.

In addition, such as video games in the discussion above often incorporate cultural values, influenced by social media, which spreads gaming content globally. Southeast Asia, in particular, has become a significant market for mobile gaming, with games like Mobile Legends: Bang Bang incorporating cultural values and identities into their characters and settings, indirectly introducing Indonesian culture to a global audience. Additionally, games like Pokémon, born from animated series, have become immensely profitable video game franchises.

This form of soft diplomacy is relevant to the concept of multi-track diplomacy, where various channels such as government, international organizations, business, civil society, research and education, organizational activism, religion, funding, and media communication are utilized (HIMAHI UMM, 2023). Indonesia, for example, employs diplomatic efforts to promote environmental conservation through video games like Coral Island, incorporating Indonesian elements and values into gameplay to address current environmental issues. This demonstrates how diplomacy can be channeled through digital media, particularly video games, effectively influencing other countries subtly, making video games a potent instrument of soft power diplomacy in today's digital transformation era.

In conclusion, the impact of video games in shaping perceptions of the Global South is significant. Analyzing narratives, visuals, and gameplay reveals how video games influence views of Global South regions.

Reflection section

To foster a deeper understanding of the role of video games in shaping narratives about the Global South, comprehensive research policies are needed. These policies should encourage multidisciplinary collaboration by facilitating cooperation among experts in fields such as popular culture studies, politics, and computer science. Additionally, a strong ethical approach should be considered in representing cultures in video games to avoid causing harm or reinforcing negative stereotypes about Global South countries, which should also be aligned with stricter content monitoring. Importantly, inclusivity from various stakeholders is essential to provide broader insights and promote a deeper understanding of cultural and political dynamics in Global South countries.

It's crucial to acknowledge that large-scale video game industries are primarily profit-based, targeting commercial gains. However, smaller-scale game developers may prioritize conveying messages through game mechanics, objectives, and variables rather than solely focusing on profits. Governments can play a role in the video game industry by actively participating in production and distribution, and implementing policies regulating video game ratings and censorship. These governmental interventions aim to provide a stable regulatory environment and foster video game development (Zhadan, 2023).

As for inclusive case studies, initiatives like the Samsung Galaxy Gaming Acad-

emy organized by PT Samsung Electronics Indonesia provide insights, training, and networking opportunities in the video game industry (PT Samsung Electronics Indonesia, n.d.). Private sector involvement, as demonstrated above, can enhance the talent pool of video game players in the Global South, enabling them to participate in international competitions and receive relevant education for generational sustainability. Private sector involvement can also influence the representation of the Global South globally, allowing players from these regions to grow and develop within the esports community.

As a policy recommendation, government involvement in the video game industry is essential. One case study worth considering is India's full support for the video game industry to drive its growth. India's conducive environment for investment, consumer rights, technological capabilities, and welfare are efforts by the Indian government to support the development of the gaming industry. In 2021, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of India issued regulations related to information technology, banning all forms of gambling and providing guidelines to prevent addiction and mental health damage, ensuring parental controls for young players (Dewangi Sharma, 2023). India also allows foreign investors to invest 100% in the Indian gaming industry without restrictions as long as they comply with outlined regulations, such as a 28% tax on online games. These measures are taken because of the global recognition of esports reaching unprecedented levels, with India ranking second after China in terms of the

largest global player base. Furthermore, the Indian government supports innovation in the gaming sector, such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) integration, Cloud gaming, and Blockchain technology integration (Sharma, 2023).

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