Empower yourself, defend freedom! Playing games during times of war

Nieborg, D.B.

[Link to publication]

Empower yourself, defend freedom!

Playing games during times of war

David B. Nieborg

The January 2008 edition of the popular Dutch game magazine *Power Unlimited* featured a two-page advertisement by the Koninklijke Landmacht (Royal Dutch Army). The full color advertisement on pages two and three carried the tagline: 'Fine leadership comes naturally.' The left page shows soldiers pointing at a map and discussing strategy, the right page packed a lot of reading. Interestingly, the ad shows no weaponry at all and is, compared to the showy marketing material for war games, quite considerate. The underlying recruiting motive here is professionalism – accepting a ranking job in the Royal Dutch Army primarily asks for management and leadership skills. Putting an ad in a game magazine is an obvious move, considering the shared target demographic (16- to 26-year-old boys) of both gaming magazines and army recruiters. Despite 'a disappearing audience for war' (Carruthers 2008), the First Person Shooter (FPS) game *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* topped the all important 2008 holiday sales charts and has sold over nine million copies.

Despite the hunger of many 'hardcore' gamers to experience mediated warfare, as the stunning success of *Call of Duty 4* shows, the outlook for the Dutch Army, in terms of new recruits, is not at all favorable. For one thing, the Dutch involvement in the war in Afghanistan led to a number of fatal casualties, lowering the propensity of Dutch youngsters to consider an army career. To aid recruiting efforts, the Dutch Army is seeking recruits at increasingly lower ages and is directly tapping into the fabric of game culture. At the annual Army open door days and at industry events such as game conventions, the Army set up Xbox 360 demo pods to lure gamers into their recruiting booth to play the war game *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2*. However, it is with a mix of envy and esteem that ranking Dutch service members look at their allies in the west.

In 2006 the US Army had a whopping 3.9 billion dollar recruiting budget to spend on: 'slick ads that reach students before they set foot on campus – in fashion and music magazines, free iPod downloads, MySpace campaigns, on television and hip-hop radio stations, and through concert and sporting even sponsorships' (Allison and Solnit 2007, 46). During informal interviews with Dutch

service members, most of them gamers themselves, I was told that Dutch recruiters are particularly envious of one specific recruiting project: *America's Army*. This game can be seen as the first state-produced, highly visible and popular game with an overt persuasive agenda (cf. Løvlie 2007). To label the *America's Army* project as successful would be an understatement. In direct ways, by projecting the US Army brand deeply into game culture at minimal costs, and indirectly by getting into 'the consideration set' of US high school students, the project is said to have saved hundreds of millions of marketing and recruiting dollars (Nieborg 2005).

The aim of this chapter is to deepen the understanding of the representation and simulation of modern war in games *vis-à-vis* government propaganda. Therefore, a short discussion on the Global War on Terror as a war on ideas follows first. Next, to contextualize the use of propaganda in games, the argument will be made that the theme of modern warfare is already a familiar commoditized intertext, thereby aiding the acceptance of pro-military themes. The militarization of society and of popular culture has a long history, and war has been a familiar theme in television, movies, toys and digital and non-digital games (Regan 1994; Hall 2003). The usage of games, and *America's Army* in particular, as part of wider US strategic communication efforts signals the usefulness of game culture for the dissemination of state-produced propaganda via military-operated game communities (Nieborg 2006).

The America's Army platform

The *America's Army* development team cleverly mixed various educational, marketing and propaganda mechanisms at their disposal to offer a free game which on the one hand fits perfectly into the FPS genre while at the same time reinforcing a highly politicized recruiting agenda (cf. Allison and Solnit 2007).[1] The best-known version of *America's Army* is its freely downloadable public version, or as version 2.8.2.1 (2008) is called *America's Army: Special Forces (Overmatch)*. 'The Official US Army Game', as it is labelled by the US Army itself, is best described as an online, multiplayer, squad-based, tactical FPS PC game. The game is distributed via various game websites and was developed under the auspices and with material and immaterial input of the US Army. The goal of the game is to inform popular culture rather than to persuade, and to raise awareness of the US Army brand rather than to recruit directly, which is done by a large group of dedicated US Army recruiters. A key component in building and maintaining both the US Army and *America's Army* brand identities is the Goarmy.com website, and one of the main goals of the *America's Army* project is to raise traffic to the dedicated recruiting website. Primarily an advanced online recruiting station, the website offers a virtual insight into an Army career. Whereas before the game launched a large number of leads to the website stemming from TV and radio advertisements, to-

day a significant number comes from the *America's Army* website and from within the game itself.

Similar to the Goarmy.com website, the US Army as a possible future career is a central theme to the game's design. Having commerce at the core of its brand identity, the PC game exemplifies the linkage of commercial goals with a cultural text through creating an engaging (brand) experience (Van der Graaf and Nieborg 2003). Along with a PC version, the *America's Army* brand has been expanded since its introduction on 4 July 2002 by publishing the Xbox game *America's Army: Rise of a Soldier* (2005), a Xbox 360 version called *America's Army: True Soldiers* (2007), and the mobile phone game *America's Army: Special Operations* (2007). In addition, dedicated fans can buy *America's Army* action figures, apparel or other knickknacks on armygamegear.com, or seek out an *America's Army* cabinet in an arcade hall.

Over the years the PC version of *America's Army* has become more of a platform than one single and stable game within the US Army. Or as the official website explains: 'The America's Army "Platform" (AAP) is a government-owned core technology and content infrastructure designed to support existing warfighters, instructors & students through a new generation of low cost, PC-based, web-deployable, interactive training' (US Army 2005). This set of non-public governmental applications was built by specialized sub-groups of in-house game developers in cooperation with commercial game studios and US Army researchers. Together they use advanced, commercial, off-the-shelf game technology to develop various training tools (e.g. for land navigation), and modeling and simulation applications (e.g. weapon testing), used by various US governmental organizations, such as the US Secret Service. The proprietary *Unreal* game engine, developed by the US-based Epic Games game development company, affords the Army a perpetually updated and versatile platform to provide high-fidelity simulations.

By analyzing the production, distribution, and use of both the governmental and public version of *America's Army*, four different dimensions can be distinguished. The *America's Army Platform* can be seen as an advergame, an edugame, a test bed and tool, and a propaganda game.[2] The edugame and test tool dimension are most apparent in several governmental applications, while the public version encompasses all four dimensions. Hereafter only the public use of the PC version of *America's Army* will be discussed. The adaptive character of contemporary game technology enables game developers to design multidimensional PC games, such as *America's Army*, moving beyond 'mere entertainment'. This begs the question: Is *America's Army* a form of propaganda? If so, how does it function as a propaganda tool within the vast US military complex? And, how does its propaganda message manifest itself in the representation and simulation of war in the game? Whether or not *America's Army* 'works' as intended, or whether it is, in the eyes of its players, a symbol of rampant American imperialism or a new form of camp is a highly relevant question, but falls outside the scope of this

chapter. Next, the notion of soft power is introduced to expand upon the interplay between popular culture and propaganda.

Digital games as soft power

That infamous September morning in New York, the world changed the moment the first airplane hit the Twin Towers. The US was at war. Les Brownlee, former Acting Secretary of the Army, and General Peter J. Schoomaker, Chief of Staff of the US Army, emphasize the long-term character of the current war:

> This is not simply a fight against terror – terror is a tactic. This is not simply a fight against al Qaeda, its affiliates, and adherents – they are foot soldiers. This is not simply a fight to bring democracy to the Middle East – that is a strategic objective. This is a fight for the very ideas at the foundation of our society, the ways of life those ideas enable, and the freedoms we enjoy (Brownlee and Schoomaker, 2004).

According to US government officials, such as former US Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, the Global War on Terror (or GWOT) is not only a war on 'stateless criminals' but also a seemingly endless war on ideas (Taylor 2008). It is a war to spread freedom and liberty – i.e. values appropriated by and associated with the United States (Nye 2004). The handling of the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, however, has had devastating results for the image of US foreign policy: 'The war has increased mistrust of America in Europe, weakened support for the War on Terrorism, and undermined US credibility worldwide' (Defense Science Board 2004, 15). This trend of the US's slipping global image and dwindling support for the GWOT is backed by the polling data of the Pew Research Center (2006). They conclude that although the values such as freedom and democracy, as well as free market capitalism, are shared around the world, the Bush-Cheney White House's handling of the war effort is seen as the main reason for the decreasing support of the US-led GWOT (Hersh 2004; Woodward 2006).

The question is then, how? How are anti-American attitudes to be altered? In his book *Power, terror, peace, and war: America's grand strategy in a world at risk*, foreign relations expert Walter Russell Mead (2004) reflects on this question and discusses the changing role of the US as a superpower. In his opening chapter he addresses the almost messianic role of American grand strategy, to spread peace, freedom and liberty around the world using various forms of power. Mead builds on Joseph Nye's (2002) distinction between hard and soft power, offering two sub-categories for both. Hard (military and economical) power is split up into sharp (military) and sticky (economical) power, and soft power (cultural power) is split up in hegemonic and sweet power.[3] As comic books and Coca-Cola are part of the US's sweet power, so are games, movies and television series. Accord-

ing to Mead and Nye the GWOT cannot be won by hard power alone, you need soft power as well: 'In any case, American sweet power, though limited and variable, clearly plays an important role in winning sympathy and support for American foreign policy around the world' (Mead 2004, 39-40). Soft power is not under government control like propaganda is, and has limits, just as military power does. But, as I will argue hereafter, *America's Army* is not only a propaganda tool, it is a powerful example of the ability of the US to successfully wield soft power by directly tapping into popular culture.

The military entertainment arcade

If foreign relations experts are to be believed, anti-American attitudes are not only a direct threat to US national security, they also undermine the sole surviving superpower's soft power. Since soft power is mostly manufactured by commercial enterprises, it will be no surprise that the US military is eager to appropriate such valuable practices. The Defense Science Board (2004) directly points to the private sector with its expert knowledge when it comes to successfully getting across messages with an agenda. One way to do this is by using 'interactive and mediated channels', because 'pervasive telecommunications technology permits the cost effective engagement of target audiences in sustained two-way interactions using electronic mail, interactive dialogue, virtual communication, interactive video games, and interactive Internet games' (ibid, 57-8). As such, online games are to be used for the US effort. And why not, the sweet power of many military themed games seems stronger than anything else. Think of recent examples such as *Battlefield 2* (2006), *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* (2007), and *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* (2007). How has this come to be?

The US military and the global game culture are profoundly interlinked on a technical, cultural and social-economic level, and the representation and simulation of modern war in computer games are at the same time a result as well as a catalyst of this bond (Halter 2006). The technological symbiosis between games for entertainment and military simulations has a long shared history. With the end of the Cold War, the structure of the US military and the way US forces would wage future wars changed dramatically (Toffler and Toffler 1995). Simultaneously, the research and development into modelling and simulation techniques flourished in the commercial entertainment industries. The booming innovation of commercial simulation technology did not go unnoticed by the US military, and the vast and influential military-industrial complex transformed into the military-entertainment complex. The reach of the military-entertainment complex is beyond the technical realm of simulation technology. Co-developed films, television series, toys, and various other entertainment products are direct outputs of the complex (Hall 2003; Robb 2004).

The representation and simulation of modern warfare in games demonstrate that there is already a common understanding about digital war (Nieborg 2005). Think of the many conventions in the FPS genre such as the fetishism of weaponry and the focus on combat (at close quarters). The US Army does not have to make an expensive movie or produce their own television series; they are able to directly tap into existing technological and socio-economical frameworks of the military-entertainment complex, and above all the military masculinity of certain parts of game culture. The Army can harness the collaborative nature of online game communities and use them to their advantage: spreading the Army's symbolic capital (Van der Graaf and Nieborg 2003). Gamers are familiar or at least not surprised by another Army game, since military advisers decorated the box shots of commercial games for over a long time. Modern warfare, similar to the *Harry Potter* or *Lord of the Rings* franchises for example, has become an intertextual experiential commodity, and the need for simulations of war is omnipresent in today's youth popular culture. A global gaming culture, with its military origins of interactive play, is entertained by games primarily based on conflict, eagerly developed by young males for young males (Kline, Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter 2003).

Empower yourself! Defend freedom

Short and simple, *America's Army* is a form of propaganda. At least, following the definition in the *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* in which propaganda is defined as: 'Any form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly' (Department of Defense 2004, 427). Propaganda is thus a message with a clear intention, known in advance by its sender, meant to influence behavior. As stated, *America's Army*'s four dimensions make it a fairly unique game. Three of its four dimensions show an interesting overlap, as propaganda, advertisement and education have much in common. The multidimensional approach of the *America's Army* project leads to two coinciding 'persuasive goals' (Bogost 2007). The first and most vivid is its recruiting agenda. The second rhetorical goal concerns the game's opaque ideology of war: 'as a manifestation of the ideology that propels the U.S. Army, the game encourages players to consider the logic of duty, honor, and singular global political truth as a desirable worldview' (Bogost 2007, 79). While *America's Army* is first and foremost a sophisticated marketing tool, it also (literally) teaches gamers what it means, or at least should mean, to *be* a US soldier.

America's Army's main design principle is to create a virtual replica of certain aspects of life in the US Army, mainly those involving combat. As an important institution in the American society, the US Army directly and indirectly represents

the values of this society and its government. And as a copy of the US Army, the game reflects US foreign policy. The loading screen of the game features the Soldier's Creed and before joining any online round, players get to see the creed telling them: 'I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values,' culminating in, 'I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat. I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life. I am an American Soldier.' It seems almost like a virtual contract. When the game is ready, the loading screen disappears, and the player temporarily joins the virtual US Army.

Propaganda does not equal lying or deceiving. Far from it, the most effective forms of propaganda are factually accurate for the greater part. It is the context of a message which turns opinions and world views into information (Taylor 1998). As with the above-mentioned Royal Dutch Army's advertisement, *America's Army's* rhetorical strategies actually accentuate modesty and responsibility and are based on the US Army's take on morality. Drawing on computer game theory, Løvlie (2007) emphasizes three rhetorical strategies underlying America's Army's persuasive agenda: the strategy of identification, that of authenticity, and that of legitimization (cf. Nieborg, 2005). Let's consider these strategies more in depth.

One of the ways *America's Army* aims to influence the attitudes of gamers is by showing that the use of violence by the US Army is justified because freedom has to be defended. In addition, players are taught that the US Army is a professional organization, based on the US Army values – Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage (LDRSHIP). To put these values into context, *America's Army* appropriates the format of the FPS genre and recontextualizes common in-game player actions previously devoid of any political or ideological connotation. For many gamers the sheer joy of playing tactical FPS games comes from playing as a team. The US Army skilfully refurbishes conventional player actions such as teamplaying by labeling them as value-laden expressions. By offering an 'authentic' combat simulation, the Army provides a game space where Army values become more explicit. A vivid example of this mechanism comes from the first lecture during 'medic training', part of the single player edugame dimension. Sitting behind a desk in a classroom, the player watches a virtual drill sergeant boom:

> In many cases, you will be risking your own life in a selfless way to provide first-aid. You are doing what's right, and showing personal courage, both physically and morally. By performing first aid, we are living up to the Army value of honor, because saving a human life brings honor to yourselves and to the United States Army.

In his critique of the many 'myths of war' Hedges argues: 'The hijacking of language is fundamental to war' (2002, 34). Common in-game actions, such as nur-

turing, self-sacrifice and acts of heroism, are assigned a new purpose in the game by designating Army values to them, such as 'loyalty', 'selfless-service' and 'personal courage'. *America's Army* propagates the US Army ethos and through this, the rationale and legitimation of US foreign policy.

An abrupt break with FPS design conventions is the change in point of view. The game's point of view is, by means of a software trick, limited to that of an American soldier, setting the game apart from all other, that is commercial, FPS games. Whereas you can choose to be a German, British, American or Russian soldier in the multiplayer segments of almost every World War Two shooter out there, you cannot play one of the 'Opposing Forces' in *America's Army*. Just as news reporters used 'we' and 'us' to bend the complex logic of war into the more streamlined ideology of 'good-versus-evil' (Taylor 1998), 'we' and 'us' in *America's Army* always stands for the US Army. Make no mistake, in *America's Army* you are always 'with us/US'. It is one of the oldest and most common propaganda tricks in the book, limiting the point of view in order to vilify and obscure the enemy (Toffler and Toffler 1995).

The acceptance of the role as an US soldier is never really questioned on the game's official forum, and debates asking for different roles – i.e. to play a terrorist – are virtually nonexistent. Many gamers are aware of the fact that they perform two roles – i.e. functioning as 'double-bound warriors'. An American soldier towards oneself and towards your team, you see your own hands holding an American weapon. At the same time you are, in the eyes of your opponent, one of the opposing forces. The 'terrorist' perspective from popular FPS games such as *Counter-Strike* is lost to reinstate the only 'right' point of view.

In short, the game shows how the US Army fights and why. The 'Why?' question is made explicit offline in the official 224-page *America's Army* game manual stating: 'while tactical movement and communications are often essential to the success of a mission, the US Army exists to defend freedom, and employing force in combat is an important element of their job' (Tran 2003, 36). In this case, lethal force is justified as a legitimate state action: 'The rules and definitions of violent force are dangerously fluid and arbitrary. By mediating the definitions of violence, nation states have the ability to shield their own uses of force from censure and, furthermore, to manipulate representations of their uses of force to inspire citizens' (Hall 2003, 27). In *America's Army* the sole justification to use lethal force is to empower oneself in order to defend freedom.

The role of strategic communication

The ongoing GWOT calls for more soldiers and thus more recruits. The second Gulf War in particular has put heavy strains on the available manpower of the Army. However, while *America's Army* may be a legitimate branding tool and recruiting aid within the US, being available worldwide conflicts with the games'

recruitment goals. The FAQ section on the official website explains why someone outside the US can play *America's Army* for free: 'We want the whole world to know how great the US Army is' (US Army 2007). Deliberately choosing to make the game accessible for gamers worldwide challenges the original goal of recruitment. Which other national army has the financial means to develop and distribute a free high-tech PC game? Being a free, highly advanced, and frequently updated game with the simulation of hard power, *America's Army* becomes part of the US' soft power.

How then, as a form of sweet power, does *America's Army* fit in the overall strategic media use of the US government? The developers do not explicitly frame the game as a recruiting tool or an advergame, but as a 'strategic communication tool' (Davis 2004). In this paragraph the concept of strategic communication as it is used within the US military will be linked to *America's Army*. Although the next definition does not directly include *America's Army*, or any other video game in particular, it gives a valuable insight into the rationale of using strategic communication:

> (...) strategic communication describes a variety of instruments used by governments for generations to understand global attitudes and cultures, engage in a dialogue of ideas between people and institutions, advise policymakers, diplomats, and military leaders on the public opinion implications of policy choices, and influence attitudes and behavior through communications strategies (Defense Science Board 2004, 11).

The emphasis on influencing attitudes and behavior aligns strategic communication with propaganda. The renewed attention to the role of strategic communication within the US defense community is a direct result of the GWOT.

The US Government uses four instruments to deploy strategic communication: public diplomacy, public affairs, international broadcasting services, and information operations. Toffler and Toffler discuss the different levels of strategy 'at which the military propaganda game', i.e. strategic communication, 'is played' (1995, 194). Information Operations, also known within the US military as Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), are used at the tactical level of strategy through radio transmissions, leaflets, or television broadcasts aimed at foreigners in order to influence their behavior. In an advice to the former US Secretary of Defense regarding 'the creation and dissemination of all forms of information in support of [PSYOPS] in time of military conflict', the Defense Science Board discusses the use of 'other media types' for PSYOPS:

> A number of other media types, and means of dissemination, are also widely popular. Video games are perhaps the most popular. They can be disseminated by a number of techniques, ranging from diskettes to web downloads. Internet

games allow a number of geographically dispersed players to participate in a large, shared virtual space. (...) All are suitable for PSYOP in some situations (2004, 43).

While currently *America's Army* is not directly used on the battlefield as a tactical PSYOPS tool, it just may become one in the future as public opinion will become an increasingly important factor in 'The Long Information War' (Taylor 2008).

Two other components of strategic communication, public diplomacy and public affairs, are two aspects of strategic communication which are more directly related to the use of *America's Army*. Public diplomacy is an interactive way to inform foreigners about US culture, values and policy (e.g. by offering scholarships, official websites in various languages, and televised interviews with ambassadors and military commanders). As discussed before, *America's Army* explicitly communicates various values, policies and views on US (military) culture. By doing so, *America's Army* has become so much more than just a free downloadable game, it forms part of the US public diplomacy effort. In times where the US's international public standing is in disarray, the success of *America's Army* justifies the expansion of the *America's Army* brand into global popular culture. In its role as a strategic communication tool, the game and its many spinoffs may turn out to be the cheapest weapon in the US arsenal ever conceived. As with any weapon of war, however, there is 'collateral damage'. In this case it is the subsequent militarization of popular culture and the politization of game culture.

Conclusion

America's Army goes beyond branding and marketing when it disseminates US Army ideology and thus indirectly US foreign policy into a global popular culture. By showing a global audience why and how the US Army fights, the game has become an example of public diplomacy through the exchange of 'ideas to build lasting relationships and receptivity to a nation's culture, values, and policies' (Defense Science Board 2004, 12). It even may be classified as a psychological operation, being a 'military activity' using selected information and indicators 'to influence the attitudes and behavior' of 'groups, and individuals in support of military and national security objectives' (ibid, 13). Media have become instruments of war; an army may win a battle on the tactical level, but lose on the strategic level, and thus lose the entire war by a lack of public support: 'Wars that lose their mythic stature for the public, such as Korea and Vietnam, are doomed to failure, for war is exposed for what it is – organized murder' (Hedges 2002, 21). In the wake of the ubiquitously criticized war in Iraq, *America's Army*'s simple slogans and cliché good-versus-evil dichotomy reifies the 'myth of war' as a historical inevitable and justified state operation.

In a similar vein Toffler and Toffler argue that future warfare 'will take place on the media battlefield' (1995, 194). However, various news media are still wary of direct Pentagon intrusion (Taylor 1998). In this light, games such as *America's Army* seem like highly suitable propaganda tools. In the end, rather than embedding a camera crew or censoring Hollywood scripts, the highly sanitized view on war in *America's Army* is constructed by the US Army itself. *America's Army* shows non-US citizens that the US Army is a highly trained, professional force, willing to fight against 'those who oppose freedom' and does so in an interactive dialogue with gamers through both the game and its community. In addition, as a byproduct of using the format of a technologically advanced free FPS game, *America's Army* adds to the US' soft power as a strategic communication tool.

By employing a discourse of authenticity in its marketing efforts, the US Army uses/misuses its institutional discursive power to market their game to a group of gamers who have never experienced real combat – i.e. teens. From a skilfully designed first-person viewpoint, a specific ideological perspective on the GWOT reaches the hearts and minds of a global youth culture. Entertainment has always been an indispensable element in the propagandist's toolbox. For many, *America's Army* is a legitimate model of how to use soft power to win a war on ideas. The Defense Science Board (2004) is clear about the role for the wider military-entertainment complex; its many military contractors should be ordered to develop even more vehicles, that is military games, for the dissemination of US soft power. As such, the unrelenting success of *America's Army* has serious implications for thinking about the use of games for advertisement, education, and most of all, state-produced propaganda.

Notes

1. For a critical discussion of the ideological implications of educational games, see the chapter by Joost Raessens in this book.
2. See Nieborg (2005) for an overview and a detailed analysis of *America's Army's* four dimensions.
3. Hegemonic power is the interplay of sharp, sticky, and sweet power making: 'Something as artificial and arbitrary, historically speaking, as the American world system since World War II looks natural, desirable, inevitable and permanent. So, at least, we hope' (Mead 2004, 25).

References

Allison, Aimee, and David Solnit. 2007. *Army of none: Strategies to counter military recruitment, end war and build a better world*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Bogost, Ian. 2007. *Persuasive games: The expressive power of videogames*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Brownlee, Les, and Peter J. Schoomaker. 2004. Serving a nation at war: A campaign quality army with joint and expeditionary capabilities. *Parameters* 34 (2).

Carruthers, Susan L. 2008. No one's looking: The disappearing audience for war. *Media, War & Conflict* 1 (1): 70-76.

Davis, Margaret, ed. 2004. *America's Army pc game vision and realization.* San Francisco: US Army and the Moves Institute.

Defense Science Board. 2004. *Report of the defense science board task force on strategic communication.* Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense For Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics.

Department of Defense. 2004. *Department of defense dictionary of military and associated terms.* Washington DC: Department of Defense.

Hall, Karen J. 2003. War games and imperial postures: Spectacles of combat in US popular culture, 1942-2001. PhD Thesis. Syracuse University.

Halter, Ed. 2006. *From Sun Tzu to xbox: War and video games.* New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.

Hedges, Chris. 2002. *War is a force that gives us meaning.* New York: PublicAffairs.

Hersh, Seymour. 2004. *Chain of command: The road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib.* London: Harper-Collins.

Kline, Stephen, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter. 2003. *Digital play: The interaction of technology, culture, and marketing.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Løvlie, Anders Sundnes. 2007. The rhetoric of persuasive games: Freedom and discipline in America's Army. Master thesis. University of Oslo.

Mead, Walter Russell. 2004. *Power, terror, peace and war: America's grand strategy in a world at risk.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Nieborg, David B. 2005. Changing the rules of engagement: Tapping into the popular culture of America's Army, the official US army computer game. Master thesis. Utrecht University. http://www.gamespace.nl/thesis.

Nieborg, David B. 2006. Mods, nay! Tournaments, yay! The appropriation of contemporary game culture by the US military. *Fibreculture Journal* 4 (8). http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue8/issue8_nieborg.html.

Nye, Joseph S. 2002. *The paradox of American power: Why the world's only superpower can't go it alone.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nye, Joseph S. 2004. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics.* New York: PublicAffairs.

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. 2006. *No global warming alarm in the U.S., China: America's image slips, but allies share U.S. concerns over Iran, Hamas.* Washington, DC.

Regan, Patrick. M. 1994. War toys, war movies, and the militarization of the United States, 1900-85. *Journal of Peace Research* 31 (1): 45-58.

Robb, David. 2004. *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon shapes and censors the movies.* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Taylor, Philip M. 1998. *War and the media – Propaganda and persuasion in the Gulf War.* 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Taylor, Philip M. 2008. Can the information war on terror be won? A polemical essay. *Media, War & Conflict* 1 (1): 118-124.

Toffler, Alvin, and Heidi Toffler. 1995. *War and anti-war (Making sense of today's global chaos).* New York: Warner Books.

Tran, Nam 'DocNartman'. 2003. *America's Army version 2.0 Training manual.* Army Game Project.

US Army. 2005. *America's Army platform: Technology.* http://info.americasarmy.com/technology.php.

US Army. 2007. *America's Army: Special Forces — Support — Frequently Asked Questions.* 2007. Americasarmy.com. http://www.americasarmy.com/support/faqs.php?t=3&z=12#12.

US Army. 2008. *America's Army: Special Forces (Overmatch).* US Army.

Van der Graaf, Shenja, and David Nieborg. 2003. Together we brand: America's Army. In *Level up: Digital games research conference,* eds. Marinka Copier and Joost Raessens. Utrecht: Utrecht University: 324-38.

Woodward, Bob. 2006. *State of denial: Bush at war, part III.* New York: Simon & Schuster.