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Wargames: Non-Linear Experiential Modes of Historical Knowledge

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Preface

This project involves taking a core part of myself and putting it under a critical lens and to analyze whether my love for video games, wargames, and gaming in general has really any potential value in historical research. I have generally kept gaming to myself while growing up and not really sharing it with anyone or any institution. It has always been labelled as this useless part of life that people engage in when they want to kill time or relax. It generally has not been taken seriously in academic inquiry. Initially, I hesitated to do this project due to a general nervousness that a project analyzing games would be forgotten or ignored. However, since I am writing this preface now, it is quite clear that I have decided to go ahead and discuss the historical value of wargames in their encapsulation of how the public perceives and relates to the historical past. Personally, I learned about history and was inspired to deepen my understanding of history mostly because of and through games. Hence, in this project, the discussion on *Napoleon: Total War,* I draw heavily on my own experience with the wargame and its parent series. In terms of historical interest, I have always been interested in war and conflict. My interest in the bloody business of war is more centered around decision-making, human psychology, and human behavior under conditions of terror, morbidity, and absurdity of violence. Why do we as people engage in such violence, for what purpose, and what methods and decisions did we use to kill each other and gain power in the past? Moreover, this project, as an exercise in historical inquiry, is meant to shed light on the underprivileged or unknown modes of historical knowledge, as an attempt to expand our own capabilities as historians of understanding how we perceive and codify the historical past. Studying and researching wargames is one of the first forays into the unknown and undiscovered.

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Introduction

Historical academia generally overlooks experiential[1] modes of historical knowledge in favor of textualized modes of historical knowledge. Unlike forms of non-linear narratives,[2] linear narratives[3] hold an inherent power in retelling history in a relatively simple fashion, are easier to produce and thus, more readily available. A chronological progression is key in linear narratives, and since historical events occurred and are unchangeable,[4] linear narratives have the rhetorical power of telling the objective truth of how events happened and when. Telling stories is an innate ability found in humanity.[5] By extension and research into historical narratives[6] becomes an exploration and analysis of what makes us human, how humans see the world, and how we codify knowledge of the world. Leading up to humanity's recent developments in technology and innovations in historical inquiry, the most common historical sources were scripts, scrolls, and books. It only makes sense that after thousands of years, academia still highly values these structures of narrative. Even with the advent of photography and film, historical narrative structures remain mostly linear, maintaining their privileged position.

The drawback of the linear narratives' ease-of-access and academic popularity is that they overshadow other more unorthodox, non-linear, experiential, or complex forms of narrative

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[1] Experiential modes refer to ways of knowing and understanding through active physical interaction, emotion, or memory regarding a topic, theme, or system. In other words, it is knowing through doing, feeling, or remembering. Most kinds of games are experiential modes of knowledge in that the player gains knowledge through the interaction with the rules and pieces of the game itself.

[2] Non-linear narratives are a form of knowledge codification and presentation that do not necessarily follow a chronological or linear temporality, are open-ended, and have no set end or predetermined conclusion.

[3] Linear narratives are a form of knowledge codification and presentation where the content itself does not change, regardless of the audience's interaction, and the structure of the narrative typically progresses logically from point to point. Typically, there is also some form of chronological progression to the narrative itself An example of a linear narrative is a book or film.

[4] White, *Metahistory,* 5.

[5] White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," 6-7.

[6] A historical narrative is a mode of knowledge codification and organization that presents knowledge on the historical past.

for historical research, thus limiting our attempts at a holistic and multi-perspectival understanding of the historical past. An exclusive focus on linear narratives, as the main mode of discourse of academia, a relative minority in society, excludes the ways in which the public accumulates and understands historical knowledge. The public experiences historical knowledge, primarily not through complex and dense texts, articles, and books, but through non-linear and experiential modes of historical knowledge, like rituals of commemoration, museum exhibitions, and games. Non-linear narratives, like the digital wargame *Napoleon: Total War,* which has had a total of two million players[7] experience it in some way over its eight-year lifespan,[8] give us an inclination of the public's relation to the historical past.

Experiential modes of knowledge allow one to understand how individuals feel, think, and act within any given moment in history. They are an inquiry into the intellectual and emotional experiences of people's lives. Apparently, in our increasingly scientized world subjectivity loses value in favor of finding perfect objectivity in history, a subject, which is, arguably, based on humanity's subjective understanding of its past. Experiences do not necessarily accurately illustrate actions or events, or even cause-and-effect relationships, which the field of history concerns itself with. Sources that aim to convey the objective interpretation, perspective, or truth on the historical past can fall into the notion that they hold more gravitas or authority in the research process. Just as it is easy to fall prey to exclusive use of objective sources, linear forms of historical narrative can be as limiting as solely relying on subjective experiential modes of historical knowledge. Exploration of experiential forms of historical knowledge precisely aims to understand the seemingly controversial role subjectivity plays in

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[7] I will be referring to players as individuals who play with wargames.
[8] "Napoleon: Total War," steamspy, accessed November 13, 2017, http://steamspy.com/app/34030

history. Wargames are one amongst an array of experiential modes of knowledge, such as reenactment, commemoration, or role-playing, concerned with the public's relation to and understanding of the historical past.

With recent developments in computer technology and the mass proliferation of interactive media, video games, and digital simulations are challenging the dominance of linear historical narrativity. Games and other interactive media embrace the non-linear and the experiential as designers invite players to test the limits of their own agency and decision-making capabilities within contextualized moments of contingency in a carefully crafted system with open-ended results and conclusions the player can internalize and understand themselves. The player's dynamic interaction with wargames through the act of play has been called "meaningful play" by prominent video game designers Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman.[9] Wargames in particular, a specific genre of games focused on the portrayal and simulation of combat and military command, are growing in popularity in modern society due to increased digital literacy and variation of themes and topics in games.

Wargames as non-linear forms of historical narrative[10] are not a new phenomenon. They have grown and developed since the dawn of civilization, with games such as Chaturanga, Ludus Latrunculorum, Chess, Checkers, and Go, acting as the first representatives.[11] These abstract wargames from as early as the first millennium BCE serve as examples of how military decision-makers and even the population viewed military command, strategy, and tactics. Due to the limitations of technology, these early wargames are more abstract in their representation of military command than most modern wargames, making it difficult to use them in historical

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[9] Salen and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play*, 33.

[10] In chapter 2 I present the argument that wargames are forms of historical narrative.

[11] Lewin, *War Games and Their History*, 16-17.

research as effective modes representing historically contextualized and realistic military strategy and tactics.

The turning point in modern wargame design and proliferation occurred in the final years of the Napoleonic Wars with the introduction of *Kriegsspiel,* translated as "war game", also known as the Reisswitz game, in 1812 by Prussian officer Georg Leopold von Reisswitz, which his son Georg Henrich Rudolf von Reisswitz later revised.[12] The introduction of *Kriegsspiel* coincided with the reorganization of the Prussian military after their humiliating defeats in the war of the Fourth Coalition. The intent of the Reisswitz game was to model Prussian military doctrine on the battlefield using miniatures, blocks, and symbols representing military objects on a widely configurable board. In addition, the intent of *Kriegsspiel* was to act as a training tool for the Prussian military to test and practice methods of command and execution. Though the Prussian wargame is not explicitly meant to be a historical source in the mind of its designer, it inevitably holds historical value in giving a sense of how the Prussian military, and its counterparts perceived command, training, and preparation for war. Many modern physical and digital wargames still contain features and "mechanics"[13] pioneered in the Reisswitz game. For the purposes of this project, I choose to focus on the 2010 wargame *Napoleon: Total War* designed by the United Kingdom-based company, The Creative Assembly (henceforth CA). Since modern wargaming traces its roots to *Kriegsspiel,* which coincided with the Napoleonic Wars and the evolution of military thought, strategic thinking, and tactical application, as seen in the works of Baron de Jomini and Carl von Clausewitz, I find it only fitting to use a wargame set during the Napoleonic Wars as an example for my investigation.

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[12] Ibid., 43-44.

[13] "Mechanics" is a commonly used term in the wargame community, which is interchangeable with the word mechanisms, referring to structural wargame rules, systems, algorithms, processes, and features.

It is not out of simple coincidence that I have chosen to use *Napoleon: Total War* as a

case study. The Napoleonic Wars as a historical period warrant further study in understanding

the military transition period from feudal mercenary systems before the French Revolution to

early modern nation-based systems of war. Furthermore, the period saw the rise of nationalism

and has laid the foundation of our modern conception of geo-politics, warfare, and national

identity. In relation to rapid military developments, the Napoleonic period provides a rich period

for studying decision-making processes, strategy, and the experience of command. The goal of

the project is not to make a new claim or reimagine the Napoleonic Wars, but to discern if

wargames themselves have any value in revealing how the public perceives, accumulates and

understands historical knowledge of a period in human history, using the Napoleonic Wars as a

case study. Though not being as popular as other wargames, like Blizzard Entertainment's

science-fiction themed *Starcraft II*,[14] which has a massive eSports following and wide

popularity, or the critically acclaimed fantasy-themed *Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos*,[15] also from

Blizzard that have a non-historical theme but an emphasis on personal agency, *Napoleon: Total

War* and the *Total War* series as a whole are in a unique position in that they straddle two

different audiences: those interested in wargaming for the decision-making process, and those

interested in the portrayal of the historical past. This gives the *Total War* series an advantage

over its other Napoleonic-themed and obscure wargame counterparts, such as independently

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[14] Blizzard Entertainment, "Starcraft World Championship Series," Blizzard, accessed April 23, 2018, https://wcs.starcraft2.com/en-us/?blzcmp=sc2_sitenav_esports.
[15] Blizzard Entertainment, "Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos," Blizzard, accessed April 23, 2018, http://us.blizzard.com/en-us/games/war3/.

published *HistWar: Napoleon*,[16] or Slitherine-published *Scourge of War: Waterloo,*[17] that emphasize historical authenticity and realism over decision-making subjectivity and agency.

The central question of the project is: How does the player's experience through wargames affect their accumulation and understanding of historical knowledge? By accumulation and understanding, I mean not only what historical facts the public accumulates, but how wargames lead to a kind of processing and internalization of historical facts, concepts, and events. Other subset questions to consider are, what are the ways in which players experience the historical past through the wargame? To what extent does the player expect or desire objectivity in the simulation of the historical past? To what extent does subjectivity play in the player's engagement with the wargame? Is there a tension between the desire for objective illustration of history and the inherently subjective decision-making experience? What role does the non-linear narrative play in codifying and presenting historical knowledge?

As my research base I use the following types of sources: primary and secondary literature on the Napoleonic Wars and contemporaneous military thought and theory; the wargame *Napoleon: Total War* and related reviews, public online forums and chat rooms, video playthroughs, and articles; an IRB approved online forum and survey study with an anonymous participant[18] base; primary and secondary literature on wargame design principles, game design, history of wargames, game theory, philosophy of technology, conceptualization of historical narrativity, reenactment, and the role of play in human civilization. The online forum and survey

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[16] "HistWar: The Napoleonic Video Game," HistWar: Napoleon, accessed April 23, 2018, https://www.histwar.net/.
[17] Slitherine Ltd., "Scourge of War: Waterloo," Steam Store, accessed April 23, 2018, http://store.steampowered.com/app/369390/Scourge_of_War_Waterloo/.
[18] I will generally be referring to participants as those who participate in any kind of activity, not necessarily wargames. Regarding the forum and survey respondents I refer to them as participants, even though many of them are also players.

studies allow me to get a sense of how the wargame community interacts and perceives historical knowledge through the wargame. The majority of forum and survey responses have answered directly to the questions, giving the opportunity to work with a substantial level of detail.

In this project I argue that wargames are a non-linear experiential mode of historical knowledge capable of effectively illustrating and simulating conditions of historical contingency, with historical realism informing player strategic and tactical decision-making as a central designer intent. Moreover, wargames themselves serve as historical artifacts representing the practice of militaries and the public codifying and modeling war in rule-bound systems. The player experiences historical knowledge through their own fixation on realism, a desire to discover the objective truth of the historical past through historical immersion, to give meaning to the narrativization of history and for personal meaning in the act of interacting with the wargame's systems. Furthermore, due to the unique fluidity and flexibility of the digital wargame platform, players share their own perception of history through the process of modification, a metahistorical and narratological rethinking and expansion of historical discourse. Through the process of modification, players challenge conventional dualistic dynamics of authorship and receptive audience, as the audience itself becomes an active author and owner of their own understanding of historical knowledge and interpretation of the historical past. Finally, the primary mode through which players experience historical knowledge is through the process of decision-making, an inherently subjective mode of historical knowledge, as players embody historically contextualized thought processes of individuals in positions of military leadership.

I have split the project into to two thematic parts. In the first part I discuss the theoretical understanding of wargames, drawing primarily on the experience and perspective of wargame

designers. In chapter 1 I define the nature and structure of wargames. In chapter 2 I argue that wargames are a form of non-linear historical narrative and in chapter 3 I provide a detailed exploration of the mechanisms in *Napoleon: Total War* as a practical case study. The second part the core of the project, explores the player's experience with the wargame. In chapter 4 I discuss that the player's inherent fixation on objective historical realism pervades their wargame experience. In chapter 5 I explore the interpretive capabilities of the wargame modification process. And finally, in chapter 6 I argue that players experience the wargame through an innately subjective process of decision-making. Through this structure we can compare the designer's intentions to how players actually relate to wargames. For exploring the player's experience, it is necessary to understand what wargames are and hence, the first part is meant to contextualize and give an outline of wargames' structural elements.

Part 1: The Wargame

Chapter 1: Wargames, Design Concepts, and the Designer

Introduction

Before getting to the discussion and exploration of *Napoleon: Total War* as a specific case-study for the project, it is first vital to define and understand wargames, their structure, purpose, and the designer's intent. I use the two first chapters of Part I to discuss wargames on a theoretical level and argue that they are a non-linear form of historical narrative. This is to contextualize Chapter 3, where I will explain in greater detail the relevant mechanisms of *Napoleon: Total War*. Moreover, historical academia itself may not be aware of a working definition of wargames, and hence, it is necessary to explain their nature. Wargames are also markers and examples of the public's relation to the historical past, as in our digital age it is more likely for the individual in society to experience history through modes like wargames, films, or simulations.

For presenting a detailed understanding of what wargames are, I largely use Dr. Peter Perla's *The Art of Wargaming* book and James Dunnigan's *Wargames Handbook, Third Edition*, as they write and argue most directly and closely to the topic on wargames. If *Kriegsspiel* laid the groundwork for modern wargame design, then James Dunnigan popularized and systematized an effective mode of production for post-WWII hobby wargaming. He has created many wargames, as well as written many articles discussing strategy, historicity in wargames, and wargame design concepts. Dunnigan was the first contemporary wargame designer to codify and consolidate wargame design principles into a linear narrative form, and thus, is an invaluable authority on the nature of wargames, due to his extensive experience in the field. Dr. Perla a former naval operations research analyst at the US Center for Naval Analyses was one of the first authors to lay out the history of wargames and discuss wargame design principles in both hobby

and professional spheres critically. Both Dunnigan and Dr. Perla were both pioneers in the

wargaming community and it is only respectful and reasonable to use their definitive works on

post-WWII contemporary wargaming.

I argue that wargames provide a basis for historical knowledge accumulation through the

organization and presentation of the designer's subjective interpretation of history and adherence

to realism in the mechanics of the wargame. Such a basis allows the player to experience

historical knowledge through the intellectual and emotional elements of military leadership

found in the modeling of human agency in command structures under uncertain and historically

contextualized conditions. Finally, the history and evolution of wargame systems themselves

provide an access point for accumulating historical knowledge on the use of wargames as

training systems in military strategy and tactics, as well as the public's relation to the experience

of military leadership.

Nature of Wargames

In broad terms, wargames are a type of interactive modeling method[19] that incorporates a

system of formulas, procedures, exercises, algorithms, conditions, and rules[20] that allow for an

approximation of the intellectual and emotional experience of military conflicts between a

number of players through abstract and symbolic means[21], in order to gain historical knowledge

and an experiential understanding of how military decision-making and command operates, as

well as exploring the role of personal agency within historical contingencies, without risking the

player's life. It is easy to consider wargames as a kind of repetitive exercise or replication of

historical actions without context or explanation. But Pat Harrigan and Matthew Kirschenbaum

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[19] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 163
[20] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum, *Zones of Control,* xvi
[21] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 78

refute the idea that wargames are a mere replication of history in the introduction to their essay and article compilation, *Zones of Control,* where wargames focus on the intellectual elements of military command rather than the replicative and repetitive nature of military exercises and drills. They claim, "Wargames […] are not a troop exercise, but an intellectual battle which approximates the experience of command in times of war, where players control game elements that represent forces in combat. […] Wargames are speculative, almost thought-experiments."[22] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum note that one of the core elements of wargames is their focus on the intellectual process involved in the experience of military command. They say that wargames are "almost thought-experiments" indicating that that there is an element of deliberation and analysis of decisions and their consequences present. The authors, while comparing wargames to thought-experiments, reveal that wargames have some ability to show the principles of war through a simulated experience. Such a claim does show that wargames require a measure of speculation within the "intellectual battle" or competition between players to achieve the result of experiencing "command in times of war." Harrigan and Kirschenbaum's statement is that the process of approximation in wargames is not inherently factually accurate, authentic, or realistic. Approximation may lead to the removal or simplification of critical elements that could aid in understanding the experience of decision-making as it is an estimation of the actual experience of the historical past.

Wargames are a way to access historical knowledge of a historical continuity of militaries systematizing and codifying the process of military decision-making into the system of a wargame, with the end of the Napoleonic Wars being the watershed moment for the development of modern wargaming experiences and design principles. Due to the massive technological

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[22] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 3

developments since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the capabilities in designing and producing

more complex and advanced wargames has increased exponentially. Where games, such as

Chess, the ancient Indian game Chaturanga, the predecessor to Chess,[23] or even Checkers, were

limited by the physical materials and theoretical frameworks of their respective periods in time,

contemporary wargames[24], starting with the 1950's, have had greater public and professional

interest in the design and application of wargames. With the proliferation of personal computers

into daily life wargames have also evolved with technology and have become more advanced in

their techniques of modelling the experience of military command.[25] The play element of

wargames connects the development of both hobby and professional wargames, since play is an

active mode of engagement with the theme of war, combat, and everything else associated with

the bloody business of human conflict. Both militaries and the public experience a fascination for

organizing and modeling historical knowledge of warfare and the experience of military

decision-making based on past concepts, cause-and-effect relationships, processes, events, and

interpretations.

Wargames encapsulate both physical board games and digital video games, as both have

similar structural elements and both mediums allow for the accessing of historical knowledge

through the player's experience in military decision-making within the contingency of any given

historical moment. Until the 1970's and 80's, when both the US military and hobby industries

began transitioning to digital platforms for wargame design, in both professional and hobby

wargame communities the physical board game dominated wargame production, where players

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[23] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 16

[24] "Contemporary wargames" I refer to any wargames produced after WWII, like Avalon Hill's *Panzer Leader* (1974), Clash of Arms' *La Bataille de la Moscowa* (2011), and The Creative Assembly's *Total War* series (2000-)

[25] Lewin, *War Games and Their History*, 224.

had to use physical objects and pieces that were abstract and symbolic representations of

forces.[26] The earliest digital wargames were simply video game versions of their physical

counterparts.[27] Digital wargames originally came out of the tradition of board wargames, and

hence, retained the symbolic and abstract representative elements and capabilities from the

physical medium. The continuity of modeling mechanisms in this technological evolution and

transition simply shows how connected these two mediums are, even though both have their

peculiarities and uniqueness in presentation and methods of player interaction.

In comparison to physical wargames, digital wargames streamline and hide irrelevant and

distracting rules, systems, and limitations to focus the player's attention on the interaction and

experience of decision-making.[28] Dunnigan summarizes, "A wargame usually combines a map,

playing pieces representing historical personages or military units and a set of rules telling you

what you can or cannot do with them."[29] It is precisely from these structural elements of the map,

playing pieces, and rules that the key similarity exists and that is both physical and digital

mediums allow the player to experience and enact strategic and tactical decisions within

historically contextualized conditions. Both board and video games incorporate and illustrate the

key structural elements that make up wargames and both act as platforms for designers to encode

and present historical knowledge to the player. Though in the current mass proliferation of

digital technologies in society, digital wargames are more relevant and prominent in discussing

the experience of a larger portion of the public.

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[26] Ibid., 223.
[27] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 152
[28] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 231
[29] Ibid., 1

The history of wargames itself gives access to knowledge of historical continuity on two levels: the physical and continuous evolution of wargame systems and mechanics; and replication, imitation, or copying of historical actions of militaries in the past. The first form of historical continuity is that wargames throughout history never stopped developing and evolving, with the example of the Prussian Reisswitz game or *Kriegsspiel*, revealing that the systems of the game change over time with the first iteration introduced in 1812 and the second in 1824.[30] *Kriegsspiel* itself went through two iterations before the Prussian military officially accepted it as a legitimate training tool.[31] The example of *Kriegsspiel* is vital to wargaming history as it was arguably the first wargame that any military seriously considered and officially employed for its own training purposes. It is also a relevant example to the discussion on the perception of the Napoleonic Wars, as *Kriegsspiel* modeled contemporaneous tactical and strategic decision-making based in Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic modes of warfare. With contemporary wargames, such as *Napoleon: Total War*, always evolving with updates and feedback from players, this consistent evolution of wargames as modeling systems is a form of accessing historical knowledge of how wargames themselves changed and evolved in the past.

The second form of accessing historical knowledge in the history of wargames is the act of players and designers engaging and interacting with the system of the wargame, just as militaries did in the past. Taking the Reisswitz game as an example, the Prussian military at first was reluctant to give much thought to the game, until its second iteration, as it brought a more flexible rule system and configurable map setup.[32] After the disastrous defeats at Jena and Auerstaedt in 1806, the Prussian military engaged in an intense reorganization of the military to

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[30] Lewin, *War Games and Their History*, 42-43.
[31] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 26
[32] Lewin, *War Games and Their History*, 44.

adapt to new modes of warfare. To effectively combat any potential threats, the military had to

ingerate a new approach to preparing the command structure for practical operations in war.

Kriegsspiel was that new approach to military preparation, officially introduced into the Prussian

military in 1824 and further widely patronized in 1872.[33] Between the post-Napoleonic Wars era

and WWII, wargames did not evolve considerably, nor was there a capability for mass

production of wargames to elicit wide public interest. Like the rethinking of army training in the

post-Napoleonic era, during and after WWII, wargaming along with operations analysis became

popular ways to prepare for wartime tactical and strategic developments. For example, Dr. Ellis

A. Johnson of the Countermeasures Section of the Naval Ordnance Laboratory employed

wargaming techniques to explore ways to use mine warfare to defeat the Japanese military.[34]

Such application of wargaming techniques in exploring new ways of warfare became much more

commonplace after WWII, just as the Prussian military emphasized or rediscovered wargames

for their own training purposes in the 1820's.

The goal of engaging in a historical process of wargame interaction is to prepare

individuals for the experience of strategic and tactical leadership. In the late 1970's the US

military experienced a training crisis for its officer corps and command structure. In response,

Andrew W. Marshall, director of Net Assessment from the Department of Defense recruited

prominent wargame designer James Dunnigan to aid the military in developing effective training

models using hobby wargame design principles.[35] This recruitment of military outsiders and

civilians into the US military is a similar case to the Prussian military in the beginning of the 19th

century, as both Georg Leopold von Reisswitz and his son Georg Heinrich Rudolf held low ranks

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[33] Ibid., 44-45.

[34] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 107

[35] Ibid., 147-8

in the Prussian military. Furthermore, both militaries engaged intensely with wargames for officer training. This historical recurrence in wargaming history, as well as contemporary militaries and the public accessing wargames often for leisure or training, is an unintentional or subconscious accessing of a historical continuity or a repetition of militaries and the public historically relating to wargames.

Wargames allow the player to explore the emotional experience of military command, without having to be physically present and in mortal danger on the battlefield. Though not a historian, English author H.G. Wells played a critical role in promoting the value of wargames and inspiring interest in wargames in the public of the British Empire and around the world.[36] Dr. Peter Perla of the Center for Naval Analysis sums up Wells' claim on wargames in his book, *The Art of Wargaming,* "Wells, […] while acknowledging the intellectual aspects of his game, focused on its emotional side. The wargame provides an opportunity for glory without gore and defeat without destruction."[37] Perla iterates Wells' opinion that the personal involvement of the player within a wargame's system leads to a deeper and internalized understanding of the emotional experience of command. There is an obvious limitation to Wells' claim on the internalization of the emotional experience in that the player's perception of military leadership comes from an abstracted and streamlined model of warfare that does not contain or illustrate all the psychological and physical complexities of actual participation in war. As a result, the player can distance themselves from the horror, terror, and trauma of war. However, wargames do provide "a unique learning experience […] than can be attained by any other method short of actual participation on the field of battle,"[38] in that the historical knowledge obtained from the

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[36] Ibid., 35
[37] Ibid., 4
[38] Ibid., 4

wargame, comes from the designer's own emphasis on and organization of carefully chosen elements of war. Wargames are a next step back from actual participation in war that still has some value in accumulating emotional historical knowledge. Considering Wells' discussion on wargames regarding the public rather than a solely professional audience, a large portion of the public had no ready access or capability to experience the uncertainty of war first-hand, and hence, wargames provide the next best alternative for the individual to experience the emotional dimensions of war.

Wells' conception of the emotional experience of war reveals that wargames are a platform for discovering the role of personal agency under uncertain and historically contextualized conditions, rather than a model exclusively focusing on transmitting objective historical facts. Dr. Perla points out the ability of wargames to elicit the capabilities of human agency in military strategy and tactics, claiming that "While analysis focuses on systems, the true value of wargaming lies in its unique ability to illuminate the effect of the human factor in warfare. […] Wargames seek to explore precisely those messy, 'unquantifiable' questions that analysis must ignore."[39] The author indicates that in comparison to systems analysis as a method of military research, which almost exclusively focuses on numbers and data, wargames have the capability of giving insight on the relationship human behavior, thinking, and emotionality has on military leadership, command, and decision-making. Numbers and data are codified results of human action in relation to weapons and operational data; however, they do not explicitly illustrate the effect of personal agency in processes of decision-making, as those factors are

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[39] Ibid., 284

"messy", difficult to qualify, and "unquantifiable." Numbers and data in research do not inherently contextualize their own existence, and how individuals play a role in creating data.

Despite Dr. Perla's emphasis on wargames as a model for the experience of military leadership, the wargame *Napoleon: Total War* illustrates that there is some adherence to historical factuality, such as the uniforms and types of forces during the Napoleonic era. Wargames still provide a basis of historical fact, which aids in constructing and contextualizing the experience of war.

Figure 1: Austrian infantry from left to right – Grenadiers, Line infantry, and Grenzers. Note: Some Cuirassiers can be seen in the upper left corner. Grenadiers wearing bear fur caps, Line Infantry wearing the 1813 pattern shako, and Grenzers wearing the customary brown coats and blue breeches.[40] Also note the officer with the yellow sash in the center of the Line infantry unit, drummer, and standard bearer stand out from the rank-and-file infantrymen. I have personally taken all the screenshots from the wargame to illustrate the visual feedback players get in the wargame.

In this image we see that the designers put effort into visually differentiating unit types based on their historical attire, as well as including variety and aesthetic uniqueness for individuals within each unit. Dr. Perla echoes one of the lead designers of wargame publishers Avalon Hill and SPI, James Dunnigan, claiming that one of the main reasons for wargame engagement is to experience military command processes and "to massage information in order to see what different shapes the information is capable of taking."[41] The experience of military decision-

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[40] Haythornthwaite, *Austrian Army of the Napoleonic Wars (1): Infantry*, 28-29, 32.
[41] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 107

making in wargames is a transmission of information to the player, and it is their responsibility, just as it is for any authority in a position of command with significant personal agency, to interpret information for strategic and tactical purposes.

Wargames organize, systematize, and model the experience of military command structures operating in strategic planning and execution. In war, outcomes of battles, initiations of operations, and results of campaigns rely on the personal decisions, actions, and initiatives of individuals in command of military resources.[42] Dr. Perla states that, "[wargames] are best used to investigate processes. They can help the hobbyist and the historian better understand the principles and limitations by which military command was or could be exercised under a wide variety of real or hypothetical past, present, or future conditions."[43] The author shows the flexibility of wargames in illustrating the framework and capabilities under which military command structures and organizations operate, as wargames are capable of portraying contextualized decision-making based on a variety of factual or hypothetical conditions. Unlike Chess, where starting conditions and resources do not change regardless of the player, wargames, such as *Napoleon: Total War,* provide a situation where conditions, resources, and opportunities change nearly every time they are engaged with, illustrating that wargames are modular and flexible in demonstrating and explaining open-ended situations of military action. Dr. Perla's statement that wargames model "hypothetical past, present, or future conditions," raises the question of whether modelling ahistorical or counterfactual conditions may betray or weaken the ability of wargames to effectively model a historically informed military command experience, since if a wargame does not follow the rules, logic, and established historical conditions of a

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[42] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 100.
[43] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 9

given event or period of conflict, the experience then lacks accurate historical context. As an

extreme example of a hypothetical or ahistorical condition in *Napoleon: Total War,* most nations

can field large amounts of rocket artillery batteries, which are themselves surprisingly effective

and accurate at hitting their targets.[44] However, during the Napoleonic Wars, the only nation to

use rockets as field artillery was the British military. Moreover, its effectiveness was

questionable, so, its use was limited in pitched battles during that era.[45]

Regardless of the potential weaknesses of wargames as models of military command, the

main element of military command that wargames elicit is the act of decision-making of

individual agents in positions of command, as well as an illustration of the consequences and

effects of those decisions within historically contextualized conditions. The nature of the

intellectual match finds the player considering and reacting to the consequences of their own and

opponent's decisions and actions. Dr. Perla claims that, "Wargaming, […] is a tool for exploring

the effects of human interpretation of information rather than those of the actual information (or

data) itself."[46] The author believes that the most important aspect of the wargame is not

necessarily how the mechanics of the wargame transmit facts, but how players use the platform

of the wargame to make decisions in an environment that represents conditions of combat. Thus,

wargames are a platform illustrating the player's own active interpretation of facts in real-time

and how they apply them to achieve a given objective, with historically contextualized

conditions informing or guiding the player's interpretation of facts and data.

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[44] "Fear the Rockets - Napoleon Total War (3v3 Online Battle #18)," video file, 31:01, YouTube, posted by
Pixelated Apollo, December 31, 2015, accessed April 14, 2018, https://youtu.be/3bmWflFgPd8?t=318
[45] Wooten, *Waterloo 1815,* 24
[46] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 281

Another key element in wargames that steps back from the factual modeling of history and personal agency is that not only does the wargame allow us as investigators to know and understand the nature of a decision, but "how and why [the player] make them."[47] Wargames allow for the explanation of the decision-making process involved in command structures. One way to explain decisions is through the consequences of the player actions. One analyzes the intent of the player's strategy and how the chosen tactics lead to actual consequences of a decision and subsequent action. Since wargames are an ongoing process and experience, in the analysis of intent, methods, and results, the wargame elicits a self-critical reflexivity in the decision-making process, which implicitly reflects historical knowledge on the critical discussion on the nature of leadership that both Clausewitz[48] and Jomini[49] engaged in their respective works.

The Designer's Intent

The designer's central design intent is to portray history as realistically and accurately to actual events as possible. Dunnigan frames his understanding of wargames as a realistic and accurate tool for understanding history and that the codified rules, systems, and limitations in the wargame would reflect the historical past. He summarizes, "A wargame is an attempt to get a jump on the future by obtaining a better understanding of the past. A wargame is a combination of 'game,' history and science. […] To be a wargame, in our sense of the word, the game must be realistic. And in some cases, they are extremely realistic, realistic to the point where some of the wargames are actually used for professional purposes."[50] Dunnigan thinks that the realism of wargames lets historians, militaries, and other professional organizations to prepare for future

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[47] Ibid., 281
[48] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 100.
[49] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 38-39.
[50] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 1

conflict situations by reflecting on highly realistic past decision-making dynamics. The key method of attaining realism in a wargame's system is through the process of verification combined with interpretation.[51] However, being an open-ended system that is not necessarily concerned with exact replication of history, wargames have a questionable appeal to historicity in portraying factual events or concepts. For example, in *Napoleon: Total War* once a player has begun a campaign scenario as the Kingdom of Prussia, the wargame provides an approximation of the historical conditions that the polity found itself at that moment in time. Yet, at the same time, the factual replication or approximation of history ends there as the player can go completely against established historical events, due to the wargame's open-ended nature. The battle of Jena might not even occur at all in 1806, as the player decides to declare war on all members of the anti-Napoleon Coalition and conquer the world. That potential of ahistorical action is present in *Napoleon: Total War*, but it relies on the initiative of the player and not on the designer. Therefore, there is a tension between the designer's intent on modeling history realistically and the nature of wargames testing the capacity of the player's own capabilities as independent historical agents.

In the intent to make wargames as realistic as possible, designers choose and filter the amount of detail and information they include to make the simulation effective and historical knowledge relevant, purposeful, and meaningful. Dunnigan clarifies his position on the relationship between wargame design and realism claiming that, "[it] is important to remember that in any historical game you basically have two concepts you must adhere to. One is fixed and that is the concept that the historical event must be accurately simulated. The other is more variable and has to do with how much or in what detail you wish to portray the historical

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[51] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 240

event."[52] Dunnigan thinks that there is a relationship between focusing on accurately portraying historical events and choosing how much or how little detail to include within the system of the wargame itself to effectively illustrate an event. Dr. Perla summarizes, responds, and modifies Dunnigan's key concepts of wargame design saying that, "In these two basic concepts, Dunnigan succeeds in stating the two fundamental requirements of any wargame: realism, the accurate simulation of events in some sense, and playability, achieved by choosing that sense and also the focus required to make it meaningful."[53] Perla's clarification of Dunnigan's point is that there needs to be a balanced relationship between the complexities of accurate historical simulation and the accessibility or ease-of-access of the wargame' system as a whole to the public. The wargame may be as complex as the designer wants it or needs it to be, but the wargame will lack any "meaningful" value if the players are not able to understand, process, and engage with the system. The representation of the world of the historical past has to be recognizable to the player to be meaningful.[54] Combining Dunnigan's concepts of wargame design and Dr. Perla's clarification, wargame designers seek to illustrate an accurate, realistic, and meaningful simulation or depiction of the historical past, where the meaningfulness of the simulation arises from the designer's conscious choice to focus on carefully selected details of history that are relevant to the system as a whole and relevant to the type of historical knowledge the designers desire to present.

Realism is the focus on emotional and intellectual details of life that are not abstract but tangible in experience. Dunnigan and Dr. Perla have already pointed out the required balance of realism and playability in wargame design. Dr. Alexander Galloway, an associate professor at

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[52] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 151
[53] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 189
[54] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 334

NYU and prominent scholar on video games, problematizes defines and problematizes realism or realisticness in his works. He writes,

> Realisticness is important, to be sure, but the more realisticness takes hold in gaming, the more removed from gaming it actually becomes, relegated instead to simulation or modeling. […] Andre Bazin defined realism in cinema as a technique to approximate the basic phenomenological qualities of the real world. […]. It […] means real life in all its dirty details, hopeful desires, and abysmal defeats.[55]

Galloway indicates that when a game adheres more to realisticness, which is not only the portrayal of life in simple visual detail or graphical representations, but also the emotional and intellectual experiences, feelings, and details, the play element dissipates, and the system becomes more akin to a replicative simulation of the historical past, which would make wargames more linear in their narrative structure. In comparison, Dunnigan and Perla argue for a greater emphasis on realism for wargame models and simulations. Putting Dunnigan's conception of wargame design in discussion with Dr. Galloway's idea of play dissipation in relation to realism, effective wargame systems are a balance between realism and the play element, where realism takes priority. For Galloway it seems that the playability and accessibility of the game interferes with the portrayal of realism, as the play element itself in wargames may not fully illustrate accurate processes and cause-and-effect relationships of history, as too much control for players may inhibit the realistic portrayal of the historical past.

Looking at *Napoleon: Total War,* the balance between realism and playability is problematized even further as not every wargame follows Dunnigan's principles. Playability and streamlining of the experience overshadows or overpowers some elements of realism. Playability can negatively impact realism as the player's own enjoyment and ease-of-access of the game can get in the way of elements strictly concerning themselves with portraying realism and historical

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[55] Galloway, *Gaming,* 73-74

accuracy. For example, during battles artillery has unlimited ammunition, meaning artillery may fire throughout an entire battle without the player worrying about tedious management of supply for each single unit of artillery, let alone each individual ordnance piece.

Figure 2: Unit Cards for Austrian 6lb artillery battery (left) and Austrian Line Infantry (right) as seen in battle. Note: Line infantry has a bar in the lower right corner of its card denoting available ammunition. Artillery does not have this ammo bar as they have infinite ammunition.

In the image we see that during combat artillery that the player does not need to concern themselves with artillery ammunition management as the designers did not program an ammunition limit, whereas infantry has a finite ammunition pool. During the Napoleonic Wars ammunition usage during engagements was a real concern not only for battery commanders, but also for the overall battlefield commander.[56] Regardless of any individual examples of ease-of-access overshadowing elements of realism, wargame designers maintain realism as an ideal in their designs for the purposes of providing meaningful historical knowledge, yet they still must balance realism with playability and ease-of-access.

Wargame designers intently encode historical outcomes, situations, and instruments for players to reach set objectives, to present historical knowledge on the processes of the effect of human agency under conditions of uncertainty. Dunnigan explains in his handbook on wargame design that for a wargame to be effective it needs to accurately model or illustrate the historical

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[56] Hollins, *Austrian Napoleonic Artillery 1792-1815,* 14

outcome of a given event or situation. He says, "However, no matter how much you analyze the game from a technical point of view, you are still analyzing the historical situation since, when the designer puts the pieces together, he was doing it consciously (or unconsciously, as the case may be) with the intention of achieving a desired historical result with what seemed the appropriate historical effects."[57] Dunnigan thinks that simply analyzing a wargame for its mechanics and their factual accuracy in illustrating historical effects is not enough, as it is most valuable to discuss a wargame in terms of how well it illustrates a historical situation. The designer inherently focuses on encoding mechanics within the wargame system that will lead to a historically verifiable outcome. It is simply up to the player to interact with the mechanics of the wargame to reach that outcome and obtain the historical knowledge imbedded within the mechanics of the wargame itself. Dunnigan's claim about the designer's inherent encoding of historical outcomes within wargames invites skepticism to the validity of historical knowledge they present, especially regarding a specific example. Historically, the Allied Coalition ultimately defeated Napoleon at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1814 and then in 1815. In *Napoleon: Total War* there is an option for the player to pursue "Historical" objectives for their chosen nation of interest. These objectives are based on the national interests of each nation, for example, Russia's territorial objectives are to conquer provinces in Poland belonging to Prussia, which are west of its border. With the "World Domination" objective set, the designers encode a conscious breach of historical accuracy, allowing the player to throw historicity to the wind and simply interact with the mechanics the designers provide, revealing that they have the ability to encode both historical outcomes and historically verifiable knowledge, but at the same time the potential for non-historical outcomes based on player initiative.

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[57] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 47

Conclusion

      Wargames are a mode of historical knowledge representation through a symbolic method of modeling and simulating historical concepts and processes. The designer's intent to pursue realism as a guiding principle provides the groundwork for codifying historical knowledge and the act of play is the mode through which players experience such realism. Moreover, the wargame is itself a vessel or an artifact representing a historical process of both professional organizations' and the public's perception, experience, understanding, and preparation for military leadership through the systems of the wargame. Furthermore, wargames elicit the player's reception of historical knowledge through the modeling of intellectual and emotional experiences of war and the personal agency players exhibit in decision-making while positioning themselves as historical military actors in moments of historically contextualized contingencies. By analyzing, exploring, and interacting with wargames there is an inherent accessing of historical knowledge of the evolution in the perception and perspectives on military leadership, strategy, and tactics through the lens of wargames. In the next chapter, I will argue that wargames are a non-linear experiential form of narrative.

Chapter 2: Wargames as a Non-linear Historical Narrative
Introduction

One of the most common forms of narrative in the historical record is the linear form of narrative, such as books, articles, and films. The core feature of the linear narrative is that the story, the message, or the argument is unchangeable and progresses from a beginning to some form of end. Furthermore, linear narratives do not necessarily require an active participant or reader for the message to be clearly related, presented, transmitted or even to exist. The content of a linear narrative can exist in a vacuum without an audience. Wargames, like reenactments, commemorations, and role-playing require active participants who actively engage with a contextualized and open-ended experience. In this chapter I will discuss how wargames as historical narratives relate to the practice of historical narrativization. Since designers root wargames in historical realism and they construct a system of rules and limitations to outline the platform for an open-ended experience, wargames then become non-linear forms of historical narrative experienced through the modes of decision-making based on historically contextualized conditions.

Wargames are a form of historical narrative comparable to conventional linear narratives in that the author organizes and presents meaningful historical knowledge to an intended audience as an act of communication. Dunnigan in his *Wargames Handbook* discusses the role of the game designer in creating a wargame as a presentation of information on the historical past. He claims, "Game design is very much like writing a book, term paper or any other work of nonfiction. […] A nonfiction writing assignment is basically an act of communication. The writer collects, reorganizes and presents data in a form that the reader can easily use. This type of

communication, however, is what I call linear."[58] Dunnigan compares wargame design to

"writing a book" in that the designer or author organizes and communicates facts and historical

knowledge to an understanding audience hence, wargames are an act of communication.

Dunnigan, though, claims that "writing a book" is what he calls a "linear" type of

communication or narrative where the content of the narrative is set and never changes,

regardless of the audience's experience. Wargames do have elements of linear narrative as seen

in the linear temporality of the timeline of the Napoleonic Wars in the wargame *Napoleon: Total

War.* Though CA presents a linear form of temporality in their wargame, there is also a

mechanism where players can "save" their progress in campaigns and, if necessary, go back or

forward in time as they see fit.[59] This breaching of linear temporality does not necessarily break

the basic temporally linear progression of the Napoleonic Wars, as players must still proceed

forward in time no matter what their start point is or how many times they wind the time

backwards or forwards. However, this breach of linear temporality also has the possibility of

breaking the linearity of established narratives on the Napoleonic Wars, as the player's choices

may end up completely changing the course of history in their playthrough, which can

undermine factual historicity and meaningful historical knowledge, but not necessarily the

feeling of realism.

　　　Wargames are comparable to linear narratives in that they are the designer's subjective

interpretation and narrativization of historical knowledge. In their introduction to *Zones of

Control,* Harrigan and Kirschenbaum claim that wargames and linear forms of historical

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[58] Ibid.*,* 146

[59] "ARTILLERY MOUNTAIN! Napoleon Total War: Darthmod - Prussia Campaign #7," video file, 28:32,
YouTube, posted by Lionheartx10, June 28, 2017, accessed June 29, 2017, https://youtu.be/idsG9UKlXIo?t=122

narrative share a common feature in that they each present a synthesized interpretation of history from the designer or author. They write,

> [The] goal is not to find the single, definitive simulation – indeed, one that merely mechanically replicated the historical outcome as each playing would be deemed a failure – but rather to compare and contrast the techniques and interpretations across the different designs, much as a historian reads multiple accounts and sources to arrive at her own synthesis of events. […] The wargame design process therefore encodes assumptions about historical events […] into mechanics of the game itself. In this they are no different from any other system of representation, since it is in the nature of a model to simplify the complexity of the world,[60]

Historical narratives that attempt to model and narrativize the historical past inherently simplify and make understanding complex history more manageable. Narratives are a kind of packaging of complex historical data into meaningful and streamlined presentations of historical knowledge. Furthermore, Harrigan and Kirschenbaum claim that one of the primary goals of modeling history is not to create a single objective repetitive portrayal of history, but instead have a variety of models and interpretations from a wide range of sources to understand personal conclusions about the historical past. These authors emphasize the idea that wargame narratives are a presentation of the subjective interpretation of history of the designer or author and that "in this they are no different from any other system of representation," such as nonfiction novels or literature on historical analysis. The interpretations of history of the wargame designer are encoded "into mechanics of the game itself," where the systems themselves represents the designer's position or understanding of historical processes.[61] The crafting of mechanics to represent historical processes is less comparable to proving an algebraic theorem or discovering objectively true history, but more of a method of making the interpretation of history complete and believable to the player.[62] Both authors realize that wargames and other forms of modeling

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[60] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum, *Zones of Control,* xvii-iii

[61] Hill, "Fire & Movement Interview with John Hill," interview, Across a Deadly Field.

[62] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 183

cannot achieve objectivity and, hence, there exists a variety of wargames and literature on the

historical past for more a more holistic understanding of history. Questioning Harrigan and

Kirschenbaum's optimism for wargames as representations of the designer's subjectivity, it is

possible that the interpretation of the designer may be dubious in nature, or the implementation

of a given mechanism may not be reflective of the designer's intent or established historical

truth. For example, CA chose not to give the Austrian Empire any type of horse artillery, as an

interpretation of Austria's chronic command-and-control problems in strategic and tactical

maneuvers and orders.

Figure 3: Custom Battle artillery choices for Great Britain. Note: Second unit card from the left is British 6lb horse artillery.

Figure 4: Custom Battle artillery choices for Austrian Empire. Note: Austrians have no unit card with a horse, indicating a lack of horse artillery.

In the two images above, we see that unlike the British army, the designers did not include the

option of fielding horse artillery for the Austrian army, which superficially strategically and

tactically limits their mobility. Yet, historically the Austrian military did field horse artillery and

that Austrian command-and-control deficiencies did not solely stem from physically slow-moving foot artillery.[63]

One of the key similarities between linear and non-linear historical narratives is that in both the author deliberately manipulates time and space to present a compelling, focused, and meaningful historical narrative. Tetsuya Nakamura, an award-winning wargame designer, writes on the use of time and space in historical narratives in his article "The Fundamental Gap Between Tabletop Simulation Games and the 'Truth'," from the *Zones of Control* collection of articles and essays on wargames. He states, "So in a game the time and space frames can be expanded or contracted. Does this decrease its fidelity as a simulation? […] We construct our understanding of history from the depictions of history we are familiar with. […] [In] a narrative of Napoleon's Hundred Days, the time and map scales are wide at the beginning but focus slowly in as we approach the Battle of Waterloo."[64] Nakamura compares the flexible use of time and space in wargames to an historical narrative of Napoleon's Hundred Days, where the author chooses to contract time and space for simplicity's sake at the start of their narrative to contextualize it, and then later expands space and time for more detail and focus on the historical elements that matter to the author's overall message, theme, or interest. Where wargames freely manipulate time and space to focus the audience's attention on "the depictions of history [they] are familiar with" within the system of the wargame, linear forms of historical narrative enact the same kind of manipulation of time and space to focus the reader's attention on the author's chosen elements. The designer's manipulation of time and space is a method of presenting and organizing historical knowledge. Since "we construct our understanding of history from the

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[63] Hollins, *Austrian Napoleonic Artillery 1792-1815,* 6
[64] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 46

depictions of history we are familiar with," and that Nakamura implies that audiences are used to historical narratives manipulating time and space, wargames follow the same principles of information manipulation as other historical narratives. However, in linear narratives, the manipulation of time and space is present to aid the author's objective of presenting a focused factual narrative, where accuracy of statements and descriptions are key. The manipulation of time and space in wargames allows the player to escape established historical facts and events, such as terrible defeats of the Russians at Friedland, forcing the Russian Empire to seek a peace treaty with Napoleon,[65] where the "save" feature allows the player to move backwards and forwards between moments in time and change spatial conditions. These acts of repositioning let the player escape or change historical events testing and experimenting with the effect human agency has in any given moment of the historical past. This invites skepticism on wargames and designers manipulating time and space for their purposes of producing an enjoyable experience, which may hinder historical accuracy and meaningfulness of historical knowledge.

Non-linear narratives of wargames contextualize and explain decisions of historical agents within past events, precisely because of the open-ended nature of non-linear narratives. Dunnigan explains in his handbook that the non-linear form of narrative in wargames allows for the explanation of history without the inclusion of historical arbitrariness found in linear historical narratives. Dunnigan claims, "What makes a simulation such a powerful form of communication is that it is, like most events, non-linear. A book or film is linear. […] Flip through a book, and you pick up pieces out of context. Make different moves in a game, and you have a context, because the game allows, even encourages, deviating from the historical

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[65] Britt, *The Wars of Napoleon*, 75.

events."[66] The author indicates that linear narratives, such as books or films, if picked apart scene by scene or section by section, do not provide explanation for why certain historical processes happened, as there is no personal agency within a contingent moment present in the reading of a book or viewing of a film. Wargames assume that players act rationally and logically within the parameters of the system and hence, decisions and actions they perform within the system of a wargame show how historical processes unfolded because of personal agency. Comparing Dunnigan's claim with a practical example from a wargame, shows that there are weaknesses in arguing that deviating from history and engaging in decisions allow for the explanation of historical processes within a narrative. For example, in *Napoleon: Total War,* a player engaging with the wargame as the Prussian Kingdom may adopt an expansionist military and economic policy, opting instead to take and aggressive posture, and confront either the French or the Coalition powers more directly.[67] Such a policy and course of action, though deviating from established historical events, does not necessarily explain why the Prussians initially took a more neutral stance in the unfolding events of the War of the Third Coalition. What the player's actions can explain, however, the capabilities and options the Prussian Kingdom within the tense diplomatic atmosphere they had to navigate.

Wargame narratives derive their structure from analytic history, where the goal is to organize and present historical knowledge in a model or simulation for analytical purposes. Dunnigan argues that "[analytic] history is what a wargame was before it became a game. A wargame is, after all, an historical account of an event in simulation form. The subject must be

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[66] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 220

[67] "THE IMPERIAL EAGLE RISES! Napoleon Total War: Darthmod - Prussia Campaign #1," video file, 64:05, YouTube, posted by Lionheartx10, June 12, 2017, accessed June 21, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvTBvdU7eNo.

researched and the data organized so that it can be presented in a simulation format."[68] He further goes on to break down analytic history into four essential parts: the components, or the essential facts and bits of information on the historical past; the time line, the chronological progression of historical events; the presentation, the organization and transmission of information and knowledge to the audience through a variety of means; and finally, selectivity and conciseness, the selection and compression of relevant and meaningful information to the theme or period of history.[69] Dunnigan provides a model of how analytic history breaks down the organization of history for transforming relevant historical knowledge into a simulation model. He indicates that there is an element of narrative linearity still present in the analytical origins of wargames as the time line is inherently linear. However, Dunnigan's claims of selectivity and conciseness imply that there is an element of simplification, compression, if not censorship of possibly relevant historical knowledge. Moreover, Dunnigan does not clearly define what information he sees as relevant and thus, gives no specific framework for deciding on critical elements of historical knowledge. For example, in *Napoleon: Total War* there is an attrition mechanism in the wargame, where armies suffer losses over time, due to poor weather, desertion, and disease if they do not stay on roads. However, attrition occurs only during the winter, which is a simplification on the part of the wargame designer of the concept of friction in war, where whenever an army moves or acts during campaign, it will always suffer an element of attrition from natural elements and human activity.[70] Winter only exacerbates friction in war, but it is not the only time of year when friction in war occurs.

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[68] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 217
[69] Ibid., 218
[70] Clausewitz, *On War,* 119
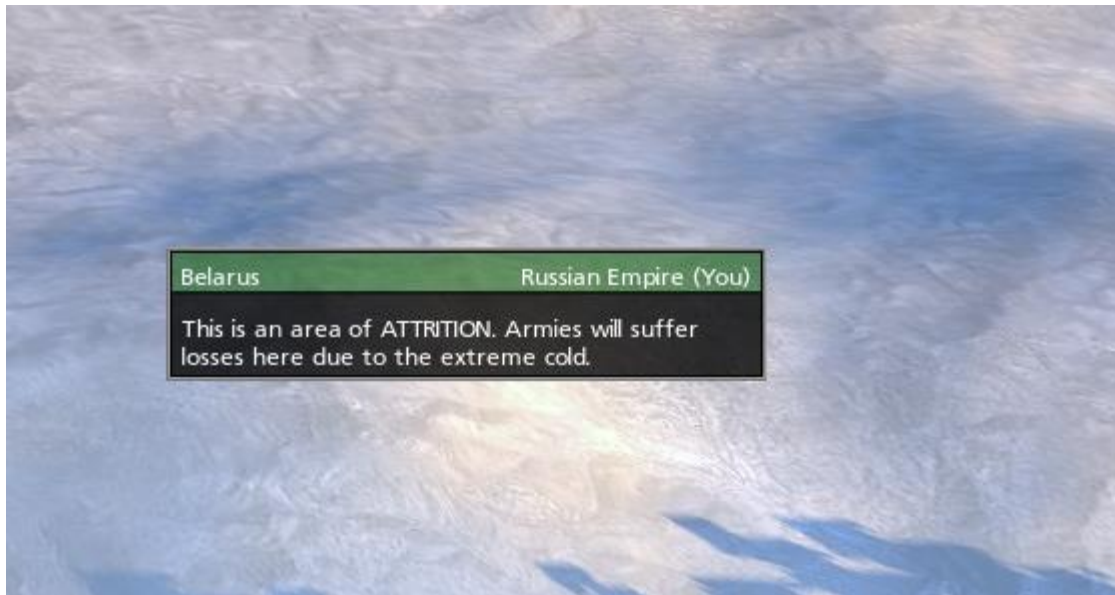
Figure 5: Indication of an attrition zone during the Winter season. Note: The snow-covered area is somewhere in the province of Belarus near Minsk. Attrition does not occur in other seasons or if armies stay on roads.

In this image we see that the player's forces suffer attrition in areas away from roads and in Winter turns.

With the example of wargame designers selecting and compressing relevant historical knowledge it is necessary for historians to inject their own views and beliefs on the historical past into their narrative compositions and structuring their narratives around argumentation and organized meaning. Historian Hayden White in the introduction to his book *Metahistory* discusses the personal role a historian plays in composing historical narratives

> It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by 'finding,' 'identifying,' or 'uncovering' the 'stories' that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between 'history' and 'fiction' resides in the fact that the historian 'finds' his stories, whereas the fiction writer 'invents' his. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which 'invention' also plays a part in the historian's operations.[71]

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[71] White, *Metahistory,* 6

White notes that historians as subjective agents in narrativizing history inject some of their own views, beliefs, and perspectives into their narrative, contrary to the common view that historians solely focus on narrativizing the objective truth of the historical past. White presents that historians manipulate or structure narrative are through presentation of a thematic argument,[72] where the meaning of the narrative comes from a discursive argument about the historical past, and through presenting a type of plot or story within the narrative, where the structure of the narrative itself provides meaning.[73] The author's own ideological beliefs, biases, and outlooks can serve as the basis for "injection" or invention of the author to compose their argument and structure.[74] These methods aid the historian and the designer, in structuring their narrative around a theme or established form of presentation. Historians' "invention" of history can go against the notion of pursuing realism within the system of the narrative in wargames, as historians cannot support their invented elements with sources, revealing their biases to scrutiny and undermining the relevance of their presented historical knowledge.

Given the overwhelming presence of personal agency in developing historical narratives, wargames as non-linear narratives are the product of the subjective view on history of the designer with the intent of appealing to the subjectivity of the player. Tetsuya Nakamura also tackles the idea of historical subjectivity in wargames. He writes,

> I think such fictional simulation games can be accepted as correct simulations if they are presenting a reasonable *image* of the created world. Putting this in a rather extreme way, I would say that truth in a simulation board game is a product of each individual's image of history. Each individual's image of history is different and subjective; […]. It is not impossible that one event is true for one person but false for another.[75]

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[72] Ibid., 10-11
[73] Ibid., 7
[74] Ibid., 21
[75] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum, *Zones of Control,* 47

Nakamura argues that the "image" or representation of the historical past in wargames appeals to the inherent subjectivity of the player and their view of history, if that image is "reasonable" and has some basis in historical research. Since "[each] individual's image of history is different and subjective," the point is then to access that subjectivity through the wargame and its non-linear narrative, which is itself subjective. Taking Nakamura's argument to the extreme, for some players the Napoleonic Wars might not even exist in their understanding of the historical past, because that is their subjective view, or at least some players may see them unfolding differently. Though, there appears to be strong evidence in accounts, artwork, and other textual sources that the events of the Napoleonic Wars, did in fact happen, rendering the extreme of Nakamura's argument moot. Hence, it is critical that the "image" of history and historical knowledge within presented subjective interpretations are "reasonable" in that they have some verifiable basis or source.

Since wargames have a focus on the effect of human agency not only of the designer, but of the player as well, the non-linearity of wargame narratives allows the player to access and understand the dynamic potential of historical actors within historical contingencies of conflict situations. Dunnigan discusses that a key difference between linear and wargames is that they illustrate the concept of dynamic potential. He claims,

> By dynamic I mean how and to what limit the various elements of the game may be manipulated. […] Most history books or films are presented as a linear rendering of what went on, so there is no potential for exercising this dynamic. A game, of course, is just the opposite. Its elements are meant to be exercised and a player will often do this in his head with the aid of the game components.[76]

Dunnigan believes that the non-linearity of wargame narratives allows the player to understand the dynamic potential of history, conditions, and information available in any given

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[76] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 114

contextualized moment of history. In terms of military command, the dynamic potential would be the resources, information, and capabilities that individuals in positions of authority would have available to work within the decision-making process. Even though wargames may present situations that other forms of narratives cannot, it is still the case that the conditions and resources a wargame includes to represent historically contextualized dynamic potential can have limitations and may not give the full understanding of the open-endedness of contingent moments. For example, in the strategic component of *Napoleon: Total War* the player controls the strategic elements of one of the great powers, comparable to what an emperor or a monarch of the time would have to deal with.[77] However, such a control perspective is limited in that the wargame gives no access to the dynamic potential or the personal agency of an infantry battalion commander, who would not have access to the grand strategic elements and conditions of monarchs. In the strategic element of the wargame, the grand strategic perspective limits the experience of dynamic potential of contextualized contingencies to the highest levels of authority.

Dynamic potential is the concept that the player can access the mindset of any individual in history at a moment of uncertainty and be able to act within the parameters of any given historically contextualized conditions. It is the illustration of the personal agency of historical actors within moments requiring decision-making. Authors use linear narratives to bring order to the informational chaos of history.[78] The result of such linearity is that the narrative may falsely suggest that historical events have predetermined conclusions. There is a potential in linear narratives of underplaying the agency of historical actors in moments of contingency. Dunnigan

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[77] "Napoleon Total War Austria Campaign Part 1," video file, 39:05, YouTube, posted by HeirofCarthage, January 31, 2016, accessed June 14, 2017, https://youtu.be/3jFVEwPvapk?t=76.
[78] White, *Metahistory*, 5.

defines dynamic as "how and to what limit the various elements of the game may be manipulated. Every historical situation has this dynamic potential."[79] The author is claiming that in any given historical situation it is necessarily the case that individuals have the ability to manipulate, organize, and understand information to make a decision and act in contextualized moments of uncertainty. Dunnigan discusses the dynamic potential only in terms of wargames and that they provide this capability for players within the system of the game. Yet, this concept of dynamic potential can give a broader understanding of the historical past. Dynamic potential allows the player to access the mindset of a historical actor within a given historical situation. In the case of wargames, the contextualized historical situations are military in nature. In practical terms, the non-linear narrative structure of *Napoleon: Total War* has the potential for the player to act in the same conditions as Napoleon Bonaparte and have a similar mindset, giving insight into how a military leader had to think at the time and act upon those decisions, without definitively knowing the course of events following chosen actions. To reiterate, the presence of the dynamic potential within wargame narratives, allows the player to exercise their capabilities, initiative, and decisions as a subjective historical actor within a contextualized moment of contingency. By emphasizing the agency of the player and not ascribing a simple replication of historical events, the wargame enhances the condition of uncertainty for the player.

It is the responsibility of the wargame designer to make the experience of the non-linear narrative and the presentation of meaningful historical knowledge accessible to an intended audience. Dunnigan pushes the idea of accessibility in wargames, but mostly from a hobbyist point of view. Dr. Perla argues from the point of view of professional wargaming. He summarizes Dunnigan's view in that "[He] suggested that game designers radically simplify their

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[79] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 114

models and reorient toward greater human involvement. The wargame 'has to be presented in a way that the user will be tempted.' The temptation Dunnigan had in mind was the urge to play with the game and try things out."[80] Perla's summary of Dunnigan's principle of wargame narratives, indicates that for wargames to attract an audience, designers must focus on simplifying historical detail to the point that it does not impede the interactive experience of the player. Since wargame narratives do not exist without willing players, whereas a book's narrative stays intact regardless of a willing or unwilling audience, the simplification of historical detail is something designers must consider when creating their narratives. However, such simplification may lead to the undermining of the historical value in wargame narratives. For example, in *Napoleon: Total War,* the player on the tactical level of the wargame, instead of regulating his commands to couriers and sub-commanders, as was the practice during the Napoleonic Wars, takes direct command of all troop formations, which streamlines historical practice, removing the strenuous command and control element.[81]

Conclusion

Wargames as a concept, narrative form, and modeling system provide a multi-faceted approach to encoding and presenting historical knowledge. Among these methods are the designer's organization of their subjective interpretation of historical phenomena into an interactive experiential non-linear narrative of history, as well as these narratives displaying historical facts and an adherence to realism through the mechanics of the wargame itself. The non-linearity of the wargame narrative, in similar ways to reenactment, role-play, or commemoration, allows for exploration of human agency within moments of contingency.

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[80] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 336-7

[81] "THE IMPERIAL EAGLE RISES! Napoleon Total War: Darthmod - Prussia Campaign #1," video file, 64:05, YouTube, posted by Lionheartx10, June 12, 2017, accessed June 21, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvTBvdU7eNo.

Arguably the most unique capability of the wargame non-linear narrative is to be able to experience historical knowledge through decision-making. However, all these facets of historical knowledge production and presentation come from the theoretical structure and understanding of wargames themselves and intent of wargame designers. In the next chapter I will explain how practically *Napoleon: Total War* reflects the established theoretical framework.

Chapter 3: *Napoleon: Total War*
Introduction

The *Total War* series of wargames is one of the most prominent strategy game series on the digital market. It uniquely incorporates strategic and tactical elements for a holistic experience of leadership spanning economics, warfare, politics, technological development, and diplomacy. The series itself builds on the modern tradition of wargame design beginning with the Prussian military wargame *Kriegsspiel,* in that both the strategic and tactical levels of the *Total War* series resemble, at least in graphical presentation, an approximated map with the various pieces, symbols, and markers reminiscent of the old miniatures or wood blocks used in the past. *Napoleon: Total War* is the culmination of 200 years' worth of wargame development practices and is itself a historical artifact of historical knowledge, representing how militaries and the public view, prepare for, and relate to military decision-making. Moreover, the wargame limits and focuses player accumulation and understanding of historical knowledge through the perspective of military command, as the wargame inscribes that the complete experience of the narrative comes through primarily military action.

Narrative-driven *Total War* Wargame

Napoleon: Total War is a narrative driven digital wargame, released on February 23, 2010 for the Microsoft Windows operating system for PC. The focus of the *Total War* series centers around exploring various periods of military history, such as the rise of the Roman Empire, or the Sengoku Jidai period in Japan and so on.[82] Most of the titles within the series typically focus around a large span of time, covering decades if not centuries of historical development, without necessarily singling out any historical individuals as period-defining actors

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[82] The Creative Assembly, "About Total War: Shogun 2," Total War Wiki, accessed April 21, 2018, http://wiki.totalwar.com/w/About_Total_War:_Shogun_2.

in history, aside from *Napoleon: Total War* and the more recent title *Total War: Attila*.[83] Thus

Napoleon: Total War has the advantage of being a more detailed look into a tumultuous period

of military history, centered around one of the most famous military leaders of the time,

Napoleon Bonaparte. The focus of the wargame narrative on an individual's exploits in the

historical past puts the spotlight on the capabilities of historical actors to affect the progress of

events of history.[84]

Contrary to the core values of the *Total War* series, which allow the player to take control

of historical polities and individuals themselves, the idea of a narrative-driven campaign that

focuses on the influence and actions of a single individual from history takes away some of the

player's agency in their experience within the simulated world of the wargame. The narrative

structure of Napoleon's campaign in *Napoleon: Total War* has a linear progression with set

objectives that directly reflect Napoleon's historical ambitions and goals.

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[83] The Creative Assembly, "Total War ATTILA," Total War Wiki, accessed April 21, 2018, http://wiki.totalwar.com/w/Total_War_ATTILA.

[84] Turner, "Human Agency and Impersonal Determinants in Historical Causation: A Response to David Lindenfeld," 300.
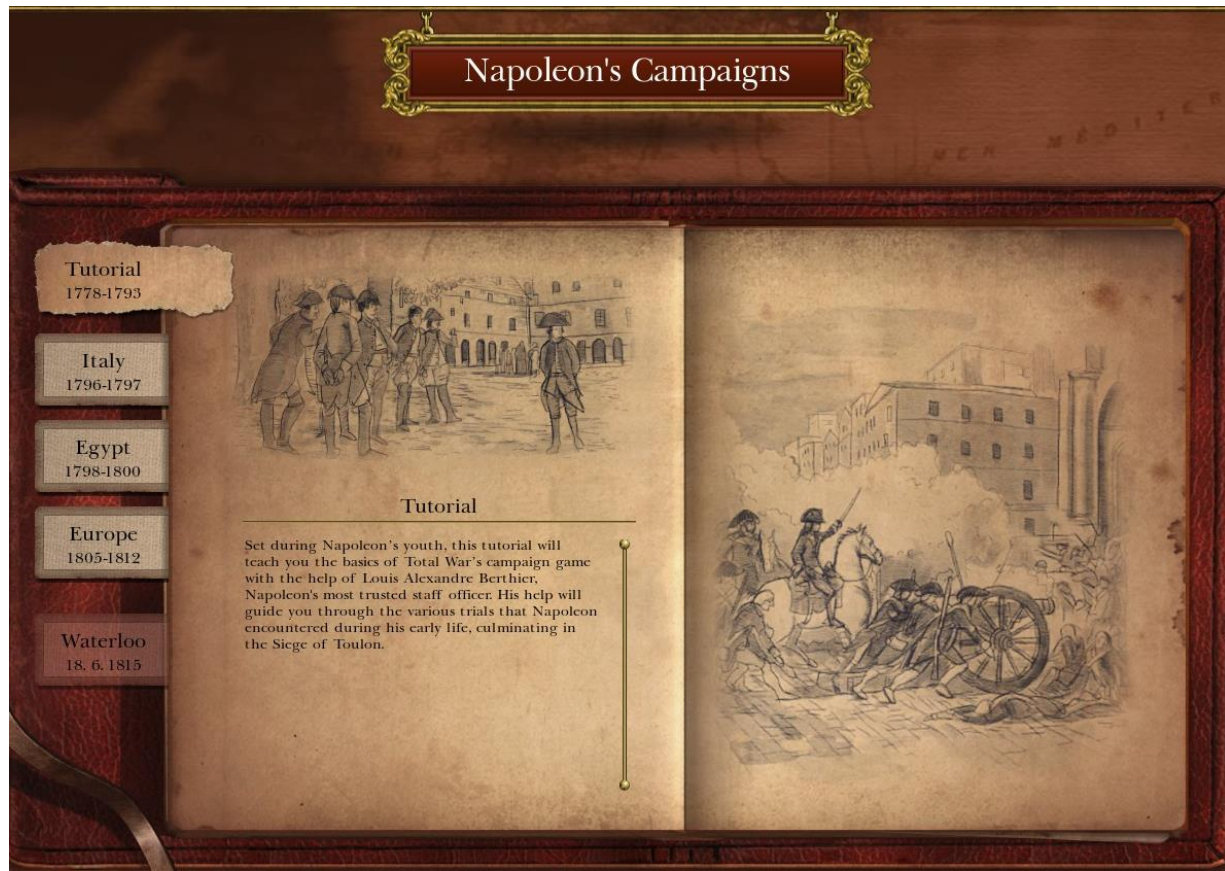
Figure 6: A menu listing the Tutorial scenario, Napoleon's Italian, Egyptian, and European campaigns. Note: The campaigns must be completed sequentially. The "Waterloo" campaign tab is transparent and cannot be selected as the European campaign is not yet complete.

In the image above, we see the available narrative-driven military campaigns CA included in the base version of the wargame that the player must complete chronologically. An example of the linearity of Napoleon's narrative-driven campaigns, is that one of the initial objectives is to defeat the Austrians before attacking the Prussians and forcing them into a peace settlement in the European campaign. The player still has agency in choosing how to achieve the objectives, though the strategic and political result must reflect the historical past. This narrative element of the wargame sets *Napoleon: Total War* apart from the rest of the series as it indicates the developer's attempt at balancing absolute player freedom of action with the inescapable eventualities of historical progression.

Turn-based Strategy Dimension

The *Total War* series is a unique combination of two historical types of wargames for a

holistic approach to modeling military strategy: a turn-based strategy dimension inspired by pre-

digital physical board game mechanisms and a real-time tactics dimension unique to the digital

medium. Turn-based strategy refers to the dimension of the wargame where players can control a

multitude of military, economic, diplomatic, and political elements through a series of menus,

sliders, and moving playing pieces on a digital map. Players take turns acting through and upon

these accessible elements over a series of turns, which represent the linear progression of time,

until they have completed or reached their objectives, or whenever the player decides to.
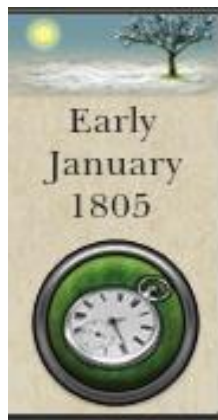
Figure 7: Image of Temporal Record Display in *Napoleon: Total War* Heads-Up-Display (henceforth HUD).

In this image, the time measurement of *Napoleon: Total War* measures in two-week segments,

with the current season represented in the small graphic above the current time segment. The turn

does not end until the player clicks on the stopwatch icon, leaving the progression of time in the

player's hands. This mode focuses on the process of open-ended strategic decision-making or the

series of short-term and long-term decisions players make to reach their objective over time.

Real-time Tactics Dimension

The real-time tactics level of the *Total War* series is an exclusive mode to the digital

medium, allowing for the experience of an approximation of a non-stop and continual

progression of time within a limited space. When player armies and military forces meet on the

strategic level of the wargame, the player's perspective shifts to a more detailed view of a

confined battlefield at the army meeting points and then the players can control their armies to

defeat their opponent.[85] Unlike the turn-based level of the wargame, players do not pass turns in

controlling their forces, but instead all decisions and actions happen simultaneously, just as it

would have happened during live combat. The real-time aspect of the wargame is arguably a

more accurate representation of the experience of temporality than the turn-based approach most

physical wargames tend to use. The real-time tactical dimension models the chaos of battle and

the effect the cesspool of uncontrollable external factors has on human agency in moments of

contingent decision-making.

Strategic Maps

The designers have chosen to model and represent a limited number of relevant markers

and territories to illustrate an approximate representation of how military leaders may have seen

geography and geo-politics in the process of planning and subsequent execution. Both turn-based

and real-time levels of the wargame use the Warscape 3 engine to render 3D graphics. On the

turn-based strategic dimension, CA created three different detailed maps. The first is a map of

Northern Italy for Napoleon's Italian campaigns. The second is a map for Napoleon's Egyptian

campaigns, including the regions of Mamluk controlled Northern Egypt, Syria, the island of

Cyprus, and Ottoman controlled Southern Anatolia. The final map includes all of Europe,

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[85] "Napoleon Total War Austria Campaign Part 1," video file, 39:05, YouTube, posted by HeirofCarthage, January 31, 2016, accessed June 14, 2017, https://youtu.be/3jFVEwPvapk?t=434

stretching from Lisbon, Portugal in the West, to Moscow, Russia in the East, including the

British Isles, the North African Coast, Southern parts of Scandinavia and the Greek holdings of

the Ottoman Empire. At least in the strategic level, CA engages the player in an active

understanding of realistic historical geography, since the maps, though with filtered detail, just

like any strategic map, simulate the terrain and geography of Europe.

Figure 8: Image of pre-start campaign territorial display of chosen great power in the European campaign.

In this pre-start wargame screen, as an example, I have chosen the Russian Empire to illustrate

the extent of the European Campaign map, where the westernmost territories are Lisbon and the

Irish Isles, and the easternmost territory is Moscow. On the 3D rendered maps, the developers

focus on illustrating major geographic features of the landscape as well as the main cities, ports

and towns in each region.[86] Due to the large scale of the wargame, not all cities and urban areas have a representative model, and resource rich areas are abstract and consolidated points of interest, such as farms, stables, mines, and lumberyards. These modeled areas, both cities and resource sites, act as the primary stationary entities on the map with which the player may interact. They contextualize the decision-making process of the player as an authoritative agent. Thus, the designers engage with a kind of historical geographic recreation and representation to create a grounded platform for historical immersion, based on the conception of European geography during the Napoleonic Wars.

Tactical Terrain

On the tactical real-time level of the wargame, the graphical representation of the Napoleonic Wars becomes more detailed as to give the player the most relevant visual feedback during combat. Where in the strategic maps CA chose to model an idealized large-scale map of Europe with filtered detail, for tactical terrain CA took a more generalized approach to modeling terrain. In previous *Total War* titles, the tactical battlefields directly reflected the strategic terrain. For example, if armies met in a valley with hills to the west and east on the strategic map, then those terrain features would appear in the tactical engagement. However, with the introduction of Warscape 3 as the new game engine in 2009 for *Empire: Total War,* CA changed their approach where the tactical battlefields only loosely reflect strategic terrain. The tactical maps can look and feel generic as most battlefields have common features, just randomized for each battlefield. Thus, in the tactical level of geographic representation, the designers chose to forego any kind of specific historical knowledge coding in the terrain. Though in the Historical Battles mode, CA

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[86] "Napoleon Total War Austria Campaign Part 5," video file, 17:30, YouTube, posted by HeirofCarthage, February 3, 2016, accessed June 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cn3eK8v_sCM&index=5&list=PLgD7g4nZBibeifmjv0-2Pm0KOyDfDHdzb.

takes a different approach, which I will discuss later. Furthermore, in the real-time tactical battles, all soldiers, uniforms, horses, and weapons, such as sabers, muskets, and artillery, are present for the player to survey. Each of these individually modeled actors and their equipment on the field of battle affect combat. To put it simply, a single musket shot from a soldier will have the effect of a single discharged firearm, whether it finds its target or not.[87]

Historical Battles

Alongside the dual dimensions of *Napoleon: Total War*, the wargame contains playable simulations of several historical engagements during the Napoleonic Wars, which in parallel with the narrative-driven campaigns, is the only linear narrative element within the wargame. The historical battles in the wargame are: Battle of Lodi, Arcole, Battle of the Pyramids, Battle of the Nile, Trafalgar, Austerlitz, Friedland, Borodino, Dresden, Ligny and two versions of the Battle of Waterloo, one as the French and one as the British.

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[87] "Napoleon: Total War Gameplay Trailer #3," video file, 2:55, YouTube, posted by Blue's News, January 26, 2010, accessed April 13, 2018, https://youtu.be/BakqVLD-zVw?t=38

Figure 9: Image of Historical Battles in *Napoleon: Total War.* Note: Crossed sabers indicates that the battle is available for interaction.

In this image, the designers have chosen to narrativize the historical battles, as the player must

complete one battle after another to reach Napoleon's final engagement at Waterloo, thus

experiencing a kind of temporal progression of Napoleon's career. The terrain is hand-crafted for

each of these historical battles and approximates the geography of the included battles. The

troops modeled into these historical scenarios, just like the terrain, are also abstract

approximations of the order-of-battle of the belligerents, though they still hold symbolic and

representational power of illustrating geographic historical knowledge. There is a limitation to

the designer's inclusion of hand-crafted and historical maps, as these unique maps are not

present in the overall strategic experience of the wargame, even when players engage in tactical

combat. Due to the narrative focus of *Napoleon: Total War,* the Historical Battles also follow a

certain narrative path, as the player can only act as Napoleon's Grande Armee, except for the English perspective at Waterloo. Only in the multiplayer section of the wargame are players allowed to control forces of Napoleon and the Coalition.

Unit Flexibility

Despite the tactical battles being more intricate and detailed than the abstract strategic level of *Napoleon: Total War,* the real-time level of the wargame has a measure of abstraction for more understandable gameplay for the player. Even though each individual soldier affects the battlefield as a unique entity, all soldiers are present in groups of units, which are the smallest elements of organization that the player can issue orders to and act through. The player cannot physically command single individuals but is able to command the unit that any given individual soldier is associated with. These units in battles cannot merge, nor separate into smaller section, meaning that the abstract concept of the unit in *Napoleon: Total War* is inflexible,[88] unlike in the actual organization of armies during the Napoleonic Wars, where there were levels of large units, like divisions that can be combined to form corps and armies or broken down into smaller more flexible parts, such as regiments and battalions.[89]

Multiplayer Mode

Napoleon: Total War contains both single-player and multiplayer modes, providing a broad range of opponents, each with its own unique strategic and tactical conditions. In multiplayers battles, players choose their own order-of-battle, composed of troop types reflecting the armies of the Napoleonic Wars, such as infantry, cavalry, and artillery, to field on pre-made maps, or select historical scenarios where the geography and troops are all predetermined. In
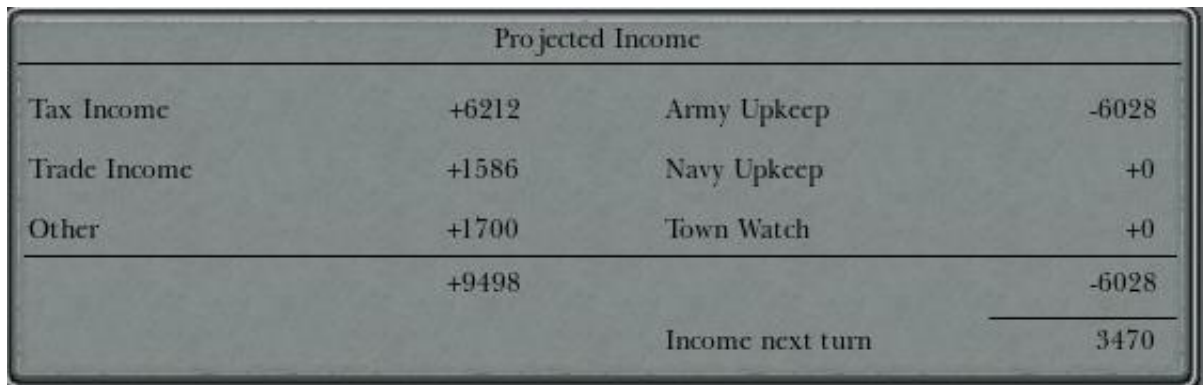
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[88] "BATTLE ON LAND AND SEA! Napoleon Total War: Darthmod - Prussia Campaign #10," video file, 63:01, YouTube, posted by Lionheartx10, July 5, 2017, accessed July 7, 2017, https://youtu.be/eOaqu6ebPcc?t=743
[89] Britt, *The Wars of Napoleon*, 33-34.

multiplayer campaigns, a maximum of two players can engage in a cooperative or competitive campaign where they can choose to play as any of the major powers during the Napoleonic Wars. However, CA chose to remove most of the narrative features for players in the multiplayer campaign, emphasizing the open-endedness of the non-linear leadership experience, where players have the freedom to reach the wargame's objectives any way they choose without any historical narrative elements guiding the experience.

Economic System

In the strategic campaign mode, aside from solely military action, an abstracted economy system is one of the main ways players may act upon the map. Every nation within the wargame has an abstract and simplistic economy system where the primary ways of earning income are through taxes, trade, raiding enemy trade routes, and sacking settlements. The main indicator of the economy is the level of income of generalized gold coins a player gets per turn.

Projected Income			
Tax Income	+6212	Army Upkeep	-6028
Trade Income	+1586	Navy Upkeep	+0
Other	+1700	Town Watch	+0
	+9498		-6028
		Income next turn	3470

Figure 10: Image of player's Projected Income in the National Summary tab.

The image above shows how the player sees the breakdown of their treasury expenditure with sources of revenue and expenses abstracted each into three sections. However, this "Projected Income" screen does not represent full information on expenses, as there is no explicit information on construction projects. For example, the value of all buildings or resource

installations, like farms or mines that produce raw resources for industrial use, is expressed in money income or percentage increase of income and are included in either the "Other" section of the "Projected Income" section. Some structures allow for other benefits such as cost reduction for military units or buildings. The economy system in *Napoleon: Total War* focuses the player's attention on relating the economy as subservient or supportive of the military focus of the wargame, emphasizing the military as the main mode of experiencing historical decision-making in positions of leadership.

Strategic Campaign Objectives

The objectives of the wargame encourage players to engage in military planning and execution. Since *Napoleon: Total War* attempts to illustrate the military dynamics of Napoleonic Wars, the end state for the game reflects those military dynamics. *Napoleon: Total War,* to some extent, is a zero-sum game, as the decisions, actions, and gains of one player diminishes the capabilities of another. However, this is assuming that losses and gains between them are equal. Yet, this is not the case for *Napoleon: Total War*, the victory conditions set at the start of a campaign dictate the player's intent, losses, and benefits. Each nation has a unique set of victory provinces or territories they must capture for the player to become the victor. Depending on the victory conditions, some powers may not even interact with each other in a zero-sum game dynamic. There are two objective sets that players can choose from for each nation. There is a "Historical Victory" set, which is unique to every nation, and this set typically includes territories that the developers believe hold some historical significance to the player's nation.

Figure 11: Image of pre-start selection of "Historical" Victory Conditions for the Kingdom of Prussia.

This image indicates the "Historical" victory conditions for the Kingdom of Prussia, as the goal is to generally expand the borders of the Prussian Kingdom. The second objective set is "World Domination Victory" where the player wins after conquering most, if not all the map.

Figure 12: Image of pre-start selection of "World Domination" Victory Conditions for the Kingdom of Prussia.

This image shows that to reach the World Domination victory conditions, the player must go beyond their "Historical" objectives and most regions on the map. Where the "Historical" objective set makes a claim to territories having historical significance, the latter set entices players to ignore the historical goal of nations and instead aim for the maximum possible victory condition, within the rules of the wargame itself.

Unit Control

The main way players reach their objectives is through the previously mentioned real-time tactical battles. In these battles players directly control all units within any present army with the goal of eliminating or driving the enemy forces from the field. All the main troop types of the era are present within the wargame; however, their combat use and applicability of historical formations is another matter entirely. Since the scale of the units within the wargame is relatively small, the player controls the width and depth of all unit formations with great precision, though the tools available to the player do not allow for each individual unit to deploy and act in a historical manner.[90] During the Napoleonic era, infantry, cavalry, and artillery all followed doctrine, marching orders, and instructions on engaging the enemy, which dictated strict formations, such as line, column or square, for example, for infantry.[91] In *Napoleon: Total War,* except for the infantry square, the player's troops do not follow predetermined formations of engagement as that is in the hands of the player only. Thus, depending on the actor's own knowledge and adherence to role-playing the tactics employed in battles can be historical, or completely ahistorical in execution.

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[90] "Napoleon Total War Austria Campaign Part 2," video file, 31:31, YouTube, posted by HeirofCarthage, January 31, 2016, accessed June 15, 2017, https://youtu.be/ZI-eBlsZsow?t=444
[91] Nosworthy, *With Musket Cannon and Sword: Battle Tactics of Napoleon and His Enemies*, 93.

Strategic Government and Military Leadership

The player, as the leader of a great power, has complete control over the recruitment

process of their military leadership and individuals to improve the capabilities of their

government, economy, and army. The names of generals and ministers available within the

wargame are mostly based on real leaders of the Napoleonic Wars. Most of these leaders have

traits that characterize their historical capabilities from the era. For example, Napoleon, as he is

modeled in the wargame, has combat traits, which improve both the morale and fighting spirit of

his men and the effectiveness of artillery within his army, reflecting Napoleon's military

background in artillery.[92]

Figure 13: Image of Ministerial Cabinet, replacement candidates, and representative Monarch in the Government tab of the Russian Empire.

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[92] Britt, *The Wars of Napoleon*, 4.

In the image above the player can see the type of government their chosen power is, the head of government, and the cabinet of ministers abstracted into five bureaus, with potential candidates available for ministerial positions. Recruited military leaders, also appear on the tactical real-time battles and the player has direct control of them. However, the leader units do not act as proxies of command for the player, and instead only act when the player commands them directly to follow orders. The historical personalities within the wargame, ironically, have no agency, as their fates and capabilities are within the player's hands alone.

Public Order

Even though the focus of the *Total War* series is on combat and military decision-making, the integrity of the nation's unity affects the player's access of economic resources. Since taxes are one of the key sources of income for the player's war effort, they can set different levels of taxation, from very low to very high, which in turn affects the public order and popularity of their national government. The higher the taxes, public discontent increases, hence, the player must balance the level of tax income with the with the clamor of the population.

Figure 14: Image of Tax Level sliders and summary of their effect on the economy and public order of The Nobility and Lower Classes.

The image shows the taxation sliders players use in setting a level of taxation, with an indication of the province with the lowest abstract value of public order and that the player can gauge their own popularity between the nobility and the lower classes of society within their nation. The presence of raiding enemy armies, conquests, and various technologies also affect public order.

Once public order reaches a certain negative threshold, a province has a chance of revolting and declaring independence from the player's influence. If there is a revolt or rebellion in the nation's capital, then there is a governmental type change, depending on the class of population revolting. For example, if the lower classes of the population rebel in the capital and take it over, the nation's government can switch to a republic if it previously was a monarchy. Even though *Napoleon: Total War* primarily focuses on the player's exploits, they still must consider the integrity of the nation for support of their military efforts.

Technology and Science

Players experience technological progress of the Napoleonic Wars through a predetermined tree of options. The technology tree has three sub-trees each of which answers for a different aspect of the nation's core systems. Each technology allows the player to recruit new units, construct new buildings, improve the economy, or affect public order. One of the main features of the technology trees is that the player sees all available technologies they can research, showing that there is no randomness or true deviation from the historical progress of technological development.

Figure 15: Image of Research and Technology Tab. Note: Gray and shaded technologies are currently unavailable to the player.

This image indicates that completed construction projects sponsor technological progress in *Napoleon: Total War* and that technology research occurs in specifically designated university buildings on the campaign map. There are some outliers, as some of the later technologies, like the ability to construct ironclad warships, which did not appear in any substantial form until the US Civil War, the player could research and deviate from historical technological progress. Ironically, in military, political, economic, and diplomatic action in *Napoleon: Total War* the player can radically deviate from history, yet technologically they are only able to research historical technologies at a rate of their choosing. The military dimension of the wargame gives

more freedom to experience contingent decision-making, yet technology is not necessarily open-ended and more linear than military strategy and tactics.

Fog-of-war

Part of the decision-making experience is ultimately Clausewitzian in nature in that the player must tackle conditions of uncertainty. All the player's characters, agents, and armies have a line-of-sight that lifts the fog-of-war within the game.

Figure 16: Image of Strategic fog-of-war. Note: Shaded and darkened area represents unavailable intelligence to the player.

The image shows the effect of the in-game fog-of-war mechanism as a dimming and darkening of the map in the left part of the map, where points of interest, armies, and opposing characters are invisible to the player. Cities are the only element that is visible to the player amidst the fog-of-war. The reason for this mechanism in the wargame is to illustrate the fact that the player must contend with the fact that it is impossible to engage in decision-making with perfect

information.[93] However, the fog-of war system only extends to the strategic dimension of the

wargame. On the real-time tactical level, the player has perfect information of the enemy troop

movements unless forest terrain conceals enemy troops.

Modification Viability

The digital platform of the *Total War* series is flexible enough for the wargame

community to edit and add elements to the wargame, changing the experience of the base system

of the wargame. CA gives enough tools to the community to engage players in modifying the

game, without revealing any developer trade secrets. The effect of the community's involvement

in the development of the wargame post-launch is that a variety of downloadable modifications

are available on the online forums of the *Total War* series and these modifications include a wide

range of changes to the wargame.[94] One of the key reasons for modification is to increase the

realism or historical accuracy of a game by changing in-game dynamics of the wargame. For

example, for *Napoleon: Total War* there exists a modification called Darthmod, which improves

the capabilities of the artificial intelligence (henceforth AI) to act more intelligently and

aggressively to challenge the player's own command-and-control capabilities, as well as adding

graphical improvements and increasing the scale of units so that they are closer to historical

numbers.[95] The modification of each creator is a unique interpretation of how the wargame

should illustrate history. No two mods are the same, and hence there is a broad spectrum of

changes the community offers that aim not only to improve but to change the experience of

military decision-making in strategy and tactics.

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[93] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 101.
[94] Anonymous post to Total War Center web forum, "Compilations and Overhauls."
[95] Darth Vader to TWCenter web forum, "DarthMod Napoleon Full Features."

CA's Intent

The intent of CA with the wargame *Napoleon: Total War* is to illustrate the effect

Napoleon, as a personality and military leader, had on France as a nation and the effects his

exploits had on the world. In August 2010, Kieran Bridgen, the head community manager of CA,

claimed that "Napoleon: Total War is a story-driven experience, which focuses on the rise of

Napoleon, the man and his link to the destiny of the France, the French nation, and it follows

Napoleon's exploits throughout… ."[96] Bridgen proposed that the focus of the wargame will be

on Napoleon's actions that shaped France as a nation. CA's intent to focus on the actions of an

individual is the developer's attempt to illustrate what mindset a historical figure had and what

thought process aided them in reaching historical conclusions. Within the wargame itself, though

the objectives are unchangeable, at least the limited availability of control beyond pure historical

repetition gives insight into the capabilities of human agency within historically contextualized

conditions.

CA's intent is also to emphasize the reaction of Napoleon's opponents to his and the

player's actions, both historically and in the context of the wargame itself. During the

Napoleonic Wars, the French initially held technological advantages politically and militarily

that allowed them to prevail over their opponents. However, by the end of the wars in 1812-

1815, the Coalition powers caught up and surpassed Napoleon's Grande Armee in tactical

combat and incorporating French-inspired military technology. In the context of the wargame,

Bridgen claims that "By the latter period of the final grand European campaign the other

campaign nations have access to these things [technologies] and can research and develop them,

because they've seen them, they've seen them all in use, they've seen them being used by the

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[96] "Napoleon Total War Developer Interview," video file, 5:01, YouTube, posted by EB Games Australia, August 6, 2010, accessed January 2, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfdZuN7FkMw.

French army now, for decades, you know. So in that respect, it's quite realistic to have these technologies for those nations."[97] The CA representative indicates that in terms of technology, France's opponents evolve over time revealing that the player's actions, if they choose to act as France, are not in a vacuum and that just as historically Napoleon's enemies learned and evolved to defeat him, the major European powers follow a similar historical pattern of evolution within the wargame. Alternatively, if the player chooses to act as one of the powers of the Coalition, their goal is to catch up with the technologically superior French under an AI controlled French Empire in a single-player campaign or against a human opponent in a multiplayer campaign. Thus, CA's intent with *Napoleon: Total War* is to encode a competitive historical relationship between the major European powers during the Napoleonic era and the system of the wargame reflects such a dynamic of conflict.

Conclusion

    Napoleon: Total War and its parent series is itself a vessel of representation of the historical development of wargames and how militaries and the public related to military strategy and the experience of command, through the lens of the wargame. Many of the design elements, mechanisms, systems, and even graphical representations are symbols that evoke design principles and goals found in wargames like *Kriegsspiel.* Just as the Prussians during the Napoleonic Wars sought new ways to prepare their military for new modes of warfare and the responsibilities of decision-making, the modern wargame modeling the Napoleonic Wars becomes a contemporary mode of rethinking how individuals, communities, societies, and even nations view, codify, and understand the historical past. Wargames as non-linear historical narratives exist alongside their linear counterparts as an act of communication from author to

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[97] "Napoleon Total War: Kieran Bridgen interviewed (part 2)," video file, 10:58, YouTube, posted by GamersGlobal, November 23, 2009, accessed January 2, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIOltkEDKAk.

receptive audience. Yet, the narrative of the wargame emerges from the player's own experience and interaction with the wargame's systems. The mechanisms and specific elements of *Napoleon: Total War* only serve as a practical example of what a wargame can be, as wargame design concepts are not laws and rigid rules and only serve as ideals. The next step in exploring how historical knowledge is accumulated and understood, is to analyze the player's personal experience with the wargame and how the experience affects their understanding of historical knowledge as presented in wargames and if there is any tension between the various modes of experience. The remaining chapters will deal directly with this core part of the project.

Part 2: The Player's Experience

Chapter 4: Fixation on Realism

Introduction

Now that I have defined wargames and have given a detailed explanation of the core mechanisms of *Napoleon: Total War*, I will move into the core part of the project, analyzing the effect of the player's perception and experience on their own accumulation and understanding of historical knowledge. I will split the discussion into three distinct chapters. The first chapter discusses inherent player fixation on an objective realism of the historical past. The second will tackle the concept of modification as a mode of player historical interpretation. Finally, the third chapter will discuss the player's experience of historical knowledge through contextualized subjective decision-making.

Since designers are the authors of wargames who encode historical knowledge, wargames require an audience of players to experience the designer's model and simulation of history. One of the main methods for expressing critique and thoughts on wargames is through public online discussion forums. In my research I have discovered that there are roughly two common types of forum discussions: critique or complaints about objects and minute detail in *Napoleon: Total War,* and questions regarding technical issues with the wargame. For the purposes of this Chapter, I conducted a forum and survey study of these forum posts and the respondents who participated encapsulate most of the sentiments found in a large variety of forum posts.[98] Hence,

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[98] To maintain anonymity of participant identity, as per IRB guidelines, I will be using pseudonyms. For the forum-based study I codify the participants as Forum Study Participant (henceforth FSP) and a number (e.g. FSP.1). For the survey-based study I codify the participants as Survey Study Participant (henceforth SSP) and a number (e.g. SSP.1).

the focus of chapter 4 is on the player's fixation on detailed aesthetic and mechanical historical

realism.

To supplement the responses from the online forum and survey studies, I also use video

game reviews from a variety of game online journals, online posts, and articles. The reviewers

balance out the opinions of the forum respondents, as most of the reviewers have had some

training in game journalism or have a professional opinion on *Napoleon: Total* War, treating it

like any other product with critical analysis and judgement on the product's value proposition.

Reviewers, as compared to forum posters, tend to have less overall experience with the wargame,

and arguably, less personal stake or connection to the wargame and its historical period.

Ultimately, the players objectify history, focusing historical knowledge into visual

representations of artifacts and paraphernalia of the historical period, fetishizing these detailed

objects as representations of the Napoleonic Wars to entertain the idea of reliving the past and

experiencing historical immersion, with the process of play inherently providing meaning to the

assemblage of realistic details, objects, and artifacts and to the process of historical knowledge

discovery and organization itself.

Wargames for the player are primarily a visual experience of a historical period. Where

designers have the knowledge of their design principles, rules, and systems and their intended

meaning, the way players experience historical knowledge is through the visual dimension of the

wargame. Historian Robert Citino writes on the advantages of wargames in the *Zones of Control*

collection, "The utility of the wargame as a visual and tactile representation of the real-life event.

Indeed, it is not even necessary to play the game to completion in order to gain this benefit.

Simply getting the game up, arranging the maps, and deploying the at-start orders of battle for

both sides can be enough to tell a researcher a great deal."[99] The writer expresses that the visual and physical dimension through which wargames transmit the experience and the layout of the wargame setup itself inform and contextualize the understanding of historical knowledge. The starting conditions of a wargame include a map with all the pieces laid out for the audience to interpret. However, Citino refers to primarily board games due to characterizing wargames as "tactile", denoting that for physical board wargames there is a physical dimension that players can access in interpreting historical knowledge. In digital wargames, like *Napoleon: Total War*, though removing the tactile physical mode of access, replacing it instead with a mouse and keyboard, there is an added emphasis on the visual mode of access as the medium of the computer allows for a real-time modeling of combat and more photorealistic and detailed visual representations of a historical period and its geography.

The focus on the visual mode of historical knowledge access is a platform for players to be self-aware of the tension between the designer's intent and the audience's expectations on how to encode historical knowledge. One of the *Total War* series' main selling points is its focus on recreating or modeling the visual elements of real-time battles of the Napoleonic Wars.[100] From the forum discussions on *Napoleon: Total War,* participants are aware of this intent and choose to focus on primarily the visual aspect of the wargame as the main mode of encoding historical knowledge, which results in a tension between the audience's expectations, wishes, and designer intent. FSP.3 states that "different people have different visions and CA's fundamental design philosophy directly conflicts with what we want, one way or another." The respondent shows an awareness of the relationship players have with the designer in their

[99] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 441
[100] The Creative Assembly, "Napoleon Total War," Total War Wiki.

expectations on the portrayal of historical knowledge. FSP.3 also suggests and acknowledges that varying audiences interpret the historical past from differing positions. This indicates an acknowledgement of the inherent subjectivity of participant perspectives within the wargame community regarding the organizational capabilities of wargames, yet the referral to CA's design intent conflicting "with what we want," shows that participants see the tension between designer and audience as a dichotomous relationship where the designers and the community are distinct collective units with separate and unique entrenched visions, where the community puts more emphasis on minute detail as the basis for wargames. Such participant awareness indicates that the community appeals to the greater and more numerous collective that is the wargame community in dictating or prescribing methods of portraying the historical past. The respondent concludes that the designer's intent conflicts with participant views "one way or another", revealing that there is a belief that perspectives on the capabilities of wargames inevitably conflict and that there is an inherently contentious relationship between the player's desires and designer intent.

National Identity

Player fixation rests on the expectation of national identity in unique national aesthetics, unique national capabilities, and an avoidance of national overgeneralization[101]. In the *Total War* series, to denote different factions and nations, CA implements different coloration and uniforms for the units on the campaign and in battle. As a response to this encoding of aesthetic historical knowledge, FSP.2 argues that "CA used many 'generic' units which limited faction specialization. This allows some cheap variations, without needing too much time of too many

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[101] By avoiding national overgeneralization, I mean that participants want the designers to avoid making each nation's military, strategic capabilities, and gameplay experience too similar to one another so that each nation is uniquely represented.

textures, but it greatly limits the details and immersion. In some cases, CA 'hardcoded' more specialization, like Portuguese units in the Peninsula campaign who speak Portuguese even if recruited by the British faction." The writer echoes wargame reviewer Bill Gray's critique that CA includes too many similar or identical units "which limited faction specialization,"[102] taking the critique further as the level of aesthetic detail leads to "some cheap variations" in uniforms and coloration of forces, which "greatly limits the details and immersion" for the participant. The clamor for unique aesthetics also extends to the desire for distinct national capabilities, like correct manpower representation.[103] The respondent does recognize that the designers "'hardcoded' more specialization," such as language for the Portuguese forces recruited into the British military; however, these "hardcoded" aesthetic national specializations are not widespread. For example, in the base version of the wargame, the French or the Russians do not have the ability to recruit Polish lancers with unique uniforms or language as CA did not single them out for national specialization.[104] This consistent connection of aesthetics to national identity reveals that participants engaging in historical immersion in *Napoleon: Total War* feel that a necessary element to increase "immersion" into the period is the focus on historical accuracy in detailed national identities of the Napoleonic Wars, as nations gain meaning and identity through specificity of visual and aesthetic representation.

Aesthetic Realism

Player desire for aesthetic realism expresses itself most clearly in the relation to the visual portrayal of combat in *Napoleon: Total War*. Since combat is one of the most direct modes of detailed and accurate modeling of Napoleonic tactical warfare, participants choose to emphasize

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[102] Gray, "NAPOLEON: TOTAL WAR," review, Wargamer.
[103] Irish437 to Napoleon: Total War web forum, "ARE BRITISH INFANTRY OVERPOWERED?."
[104] The Creative Assembly, *Napoleon: Total War*.

the importance of the visual representation of combat. FSP.3 comments on the visual

representation of tactical battles in the wargame, "Combat was also good, especially if compared

to Empire; bouncing cannonballs leave marks in the terrain, men fight individually into square

formation, squares cannot be formed if cavalry has made contact, animations work as intended

[…], ballistics are taken into account to a pleasant level." The respondent praises CA's effort in

adding visual and graphical detail to the portrayal of combat, "especially if compared to Empire"

the previous installment of the *Total War* series. The focus on "animations," "bouncing

cannonballs" and "men fight individually into square formation," shows how focused

participants are on the minutest of details of the visual representation of combat in the

Napoleonic Wars. Similarly, a reviewer from IGN praises the visuals of *Napoleon: Total War*,

though in contrast to the forum participant, the reviewer discusses the aesthetics in broader

terms, such as the visual effects of the environment and terrain or the general movements and

overall actions of forces.[105] The contrast of views reveals that the interaction with the wargame

itself affects how the participants experience historical knowledge, as a dedicated participant

who has large amounts of time immersing themselves in the system of a wargame, chooses to

emphasize the "animations" and the effect of cannonballs, whereas a reviewer does not

necessarily allow themselves the time to experience the wargame at a deeper or detailed level,

leading to a broader discussion of visual representation. Those who spend more time and energy

on the experience claim that detailed realism is the main perspective that should guide the

representation of the historical past. Moreover, for some participants who have never seen

combat, the realistic simulation of combat, regardless of the historical era, is the closest thing

they will ever get to the experience of participating in actual combat, reflecting H.G. Wells'

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[105] Butts, "NAPOLEON TOTAL WAR," review, IGN.

sentiment on wargames being a type of miniature war, without all the physical pain, trauma, and collateral damage.

Players realize that there are oddities in the aesthetic realism of the *Total War* series and claim that it is necessary to use imagination to taper expectations[106] regarding the historicity of modeled aesthetics in wargames, due to limitations in either designer intent or the medium itself. Due to wargame engines lacking ability to create perfectly sound and complete autonomous worlds that operate with their own rules, visual oddities occasionally occur in digital wargames either by design or from the medium's own limitations. FSP.3 writes of these oddities,

> [It] is made to appeal to a wide audience therefore it is filled with Hollywood tropes. Cavalrymen charging in and getting launched by men standing still? Yes, TW has that. Cannonballs that cause people to get thrown to the other end of the map when hit? TW has it. Romans that walk upwards and downwards on a siege tower only for them to get dropped from the wall, having to get back up and getting dropped again? Check! How about some XVIII century indian warriors on elephants getting destroyed by wooden stakes placed three meters away? Yup, TW has that too. So you see, getting immersed into a particular period in history is much more imagination dependent than any other factor because with all this you cant take TW very seriously.

Because of visual oddities in the digital wargame, FSP.3 suggests that the participant's ability to imagine around aesthetic absurdity, especially if the rest of the wargame is composed soundly enough, can give an effective enough sense of historic immersion. Imagination also plays a more prominent role when participants claim that the *Total War* series is "filled with Hollywood tropes" as "it is made to appeal to a wide audience," meaning the wargame's representative capabilities cater to the audience's cinematic-inspired understanding of the historical past.[107] To achieve a deeper sense of historical immersion participants have to exercise the ability to

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[106] Tapering expectations is the ability of an individual to see past oddities, absurdities, and irrationalities and modify one's own opinion or perspective to accommodate faults or quirks of a system. For example, film reviewers taper expectations of the audience, by giving an analysis of a film for the audience to consider before viewing.
[107] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* 48.

imagine the historical past and it is that very ability to combine the participant's imagination with a historically inspired representation of the Napoleonic Wars, which makes the wargame meaningful to the wargame community.[108] This may, however, inadvertently lead to the participant's own knowledge or expectations of history affecting how they see encoded historical knowledge. For participant reviewers the argument is instead to suspend disbelief and to approach the experience of wargames with tapered expectations knowing that the wargame is not an exact replication or perfect of model of Napoleonic warfare, but that the designers interpret and illustrate the historical past reasonably to tell their own narrative through the wargame mechanics. Participants recognize that they are responsible in realizing the limitations of the designer's intent and accept the product for its intent and goal.[109] Furthermore, the reviewer implicitly acknowledges that because *Napoleon: Total War* is historically inspired, to elicit a positive response to the Napoleonic experience, the designers have created a wargame that appeals to the cinematic conception of history, as the current wide permeation of historical knowledge occurs through publicly consumed and specifically molded media that fits the expectation and understandings of the public, like film and photography.[110]

Functional and Mechanical Realism

Not only do players expect aesthetic realism in combat, but functional and mechanical realism must be defining principals in simulating tactical warfare. For participants combat does not only have to look good but it also must work well and realistically. SSP.1 criticizes the combat mechanics of *Napoleon: Total War,* "The way units fight etc is off, like morale, shooting effectiveness. Realistic implies as accurately imitating the real life situation, in which Napoleon:

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[108] Smith, "Napoleon: Total War," review, Eurogamer.net.
[109] Gray, "NAPOLEON: TOTAL WAR," review, Wargamer.
[110] Harari, "War as a Phenomenon," 18:90.

Total War does not do." SSP.1, alongside FSP.3, exhibits the expectation that the wargame should depict Napoleonic warfare in its minutest detail, as they refer to "shooting effectiveness" of individual units and their weapons, if not soldiers. The participant reveals their naivete about historical realism when claiming that "realistic implies as accurately imitating the real life situation," where function and accuracy to real-life effects seems to be the primary mode of defining what historical realism is, without considering other perspectives on the definition of realism, modeling historical processes, or encoding of historical knowledge. This desire for functional realism in combat goes in tandem with the fixation on aesthetic realism, as combat, for the experience to be meaningful, must not only look real, but also progress and unfold realistically.

Players expect that for the sake of immersion and the feeling of a realistic or challenging opponent, the AI must be able to perform adequately enough to give a sense of a realistic opponent. Regardless of engaging in either the single-player or multiplayer modes of *Napoleon: Total War*, players inevitably would engage with an AI directed and controlled entity on the strategic map. FSP.5 argues that the "Main problem is how "AI" is done in Total War games.. there is no real AI, its just group of scripts which are fired when conditions are met.. some scripts are way too obvious, or written poorly, creating some terrible situations […] Problem is, this cannot in any way simulate strategical thinking of human opponent […]." For this participant the AI acts in a "way too obvious" manner, which in turn creates "some terrible situations" of non-immersive or unrealistic looking combat and battlefield maneuvers. Altogether "this cannot in any way simulate strategical thinking of human opponent," as the terrible situations created from the obvious and poorly written scripts cannot represent the complexities of the human mind, the decision-making process, and following actions. The digital medium is limited as computer

programming requires an algorithmic process of decision-making, where the computer executes processes based on scripts and conditional events. Humans do not have to necessarily abide by algorithm and rely on various modes and approaches to decision-making, like irrationality, intuition, instinct, heuristics, and logic. The inhuman and poor-performing AI represents a failure of a non-human decision-making apparatus. The critique of the AI indicates a desire for a strategic and tactical challenge from the opponent reflecting the challenges individuals in positions of military command had to face in moments of historically contextualized conditions. To some, though, the AI does act in a historical manner as it pursues goals in the strategic mode of *Napoleon: Total War* indicating that the inhuman and algorithm-locked thinking of the AI may actually be an accurate representation of strategic thinking.[111]

The clamor for functional realism also extends to the desire and expectation of a more complex strategic dimension through army recruitment, economics, and politics. Armies on the strategic map are fluid in composition and unit availability as players can change army formations with ease, without engaging in arduous logistics issues, reflecting Napoleon's own broad, far-reaching, uninhibited, and authoritative control of the military.[112] The designers optimized the mechanics to allow for the player to actively seek combat and engage in immersive battles. FSP.1 critiques CA's approach claiming that "The game would be better if the idea shifted away from recruiting an army and rather go in the direction of building one. Historically armies were very expensive to maintain and I believe this is a great detail that has been left out. By doing this it gives greater appreciation to ones forces, and demonstrates more carefulness in campaign planning and battles." FSP.1 exhibits a similar kind of entitlement to

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[111] Gray, "NAPOLEON: TOTAL WAR," review, Wargamer.
[112] Britt, *The Wars of Napoleon*, 8.

prescribing history on to the wargame as some of the other respondents, claiming that "historically armies were very expensive to maintain and I believe this is a great detail that has been left out," therefore "the game would be better if the idea shifted away from recruiting an army and rather go in the direction of building one," referring to a broad and multi-faceted approach to composing an army, combining several mechanisms. The respondent implies that objectively the game would be better, if there was a shift in framing strategic mechanics away from a simple one-click recruitment mechanism to a system requiring more time and effort to muster manpower, construct depots, and procure the right weapons based on an emphasis on a more complex natural resources economy system, as FSP.3 says, and then ensure the availability of clothing and payment for the troops. This critique indicates that for the participant a more complex strategic recruitment system would inherently reflect historical processes during the Napoleonic Wars as such a system would allow for "more carefulness in campaign planning and battles," where the greater care and caution for one's forces would entice participants to rethink the way they use their armies and devise strategies under a more accurate historically contextualized conditions. Participants, like FSP.2, desire overall a more complex mechanical implementation of strategic elements, like politics and economics to inform the decision-making process further. For FSP.1 caution and care for one's forces denotes effective encoding of historical knowledge regarding the experience of decision-making and execution. Taking the respondent's critical claims and desire for greater strategic and functional depth with the prescriptive approach, shows that the participant desires acknowledgement for and incorporation of their perspective, voice, and interpretation on the historical past.

Geographic Realism

Alongside national, aesthetic, and functional realism as defining features of the expectation for naïve detailed realism, players also focus on the perspective of geographic

realism in experiencing historical knowledge. When transitioning from the strategic to the tactical dimensions in *Napoleon: Total War*, the map randomly generates from a series of pre-made maps with elements like forests, small hills, elevation, and villages added for extra variation, while the tactical map itself does not exactly reflect the strategic map. FSP.3 reveals their opinion, "I would argue though, as a big plus in the quest for immersion, that Rome I and Medieval II had a more realistic approach to the campaign map and how battle maps were generated. The height and features were calculated directly from the campaign map itself rather than being selected from a fixed pool of standard maps, […]. [In] NTW you cannot be sure of anything because the game is more reliant on pre-made maps." When comparing *Napoleon,* to the previous titles of the series, FSP.3 indicates that some of the previous *Total War* installments had a more realistic system of geographic modeling as the tactical maps directly incorporated elements from the strategic map, as "the height and features were calculated directly from the campaign map itself," and that this approach is a "big plus in the quest for immersion." This shows that the participant sees the mechanism where direct and detailed translation of the campaign map into tactical battles is key to the feeling of historical immersion based on the modeling of terrain and geography. The fixation on detail and the "more realistic approach" to map translation pervades not just the expectation for aesthetic or functional realism, but the modeling of the Napoleonic world as well. However, in the survey study, SSP.5 claims that the strategic map of *Napoleon: Total War* gave the feeling of an immersive representation of a historically accurate Europe of the Napoleonic Wars. This difference of opinions from participants indicates that detail is of the utmost importance as an ideal for encoding historical knowledge, whereas for others, it is the atmosphere or the impression the map creates, which dictates the experience of historical knowledge, arguing that an impressionistic or almost abstract

appeal to the past has the same effect of immersion as simply recreating the past in all its tangible and unique details.[113]

Player expectation of naïve geographic realism is in a direct tension with the inherent idealistic and impressionistic nature of map crafting in wargames. Since wargame designers aim to provide the most relevant and meaningful historical knowledge to the player for them to accurately illustrate the experience of military decision-making, certain elements in creating maps take precedence for greater focus on the significance of any given feature of geography. Mapmaker Mark Mahaffey writes on the intent of wargame map design in *Zones of Control,* "Rather than slaving to a perfect grid geometry, it follows the land's underlying elevation contours, its hexsides curving to create a subtle dimensionality over the entire map […]. And so the whole aesthetic of the map is meant to reflect an idealized realism."[114] Though discussing the idealistic aesthetics of hex-based maps of physical wargames, digital wargames also have maps that are "meant to reflect an idealized realism," where the modeled geography and terrain portrays the most noticeable and relevant features that approximate historical geography. The purpose of wargame maps, Mahhafey claims, is to avoid the "perfect grid geometry," as idealized maps are a representation of a view of the world from the perspective of individuals who lived during any given historical era and that to some extent they are limited in the portrayal of perfect accuracy of geography and terrain.[115] As reviewer Gray notes that the design of map aesthetics of *Napoleon: Total War*, with its toy-like figurines representing armies and agents and idealized and stylized design elements gives the immersive feeling that a participant is looking at a table with a sprawled out map of Europe or Egypt in front of them to study in their preparations

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[113] Marshall, "Neomedievalism, Identification," 20:28.
[114] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 69
[115] Ibid., 66-7

for conquest during the Napoleonic era.[116] The modality of the map and its aesthetic design gives a kind of historical knowledge of the ways in which military leaders viewed the world. However, the fixation on naïve realism is at a tension with not only the designer's intent, but also with the role of wargame maps themselves.

Objectification of History

The player's focus on the minutiae and detailed representations of objects in wargames is the audience's mode of organizing and understanding history from an objectivist perspective. Objectivism or the objectification of history is the process of focusing historical knowledge within the confines of objects, artifacts, and other paraphernalia.[117] For the platform of digital wargames, models, simulations, and representations of realistic elements that have the attribute of infinite visual reproducibility due to the medium of the computer illustrating historical artifacts to a vast public, substitute the tactility and tangibility of real objects.[118] The visual dimension of the reproducibility of historical objects transforms these very objects into symbols, where each symbol holds historical meaning, which echoes the meaning of the original, and for the players of *Napoleon: Total War* the paramount request of getting the digital symbol as accurate as possible reveals their perspective of modeling history as objectivist.

Due to the variety and multitude of historical artifacts, players choose to emphasize the assemblage or the array of a variety of historical artifacts that lead to the realistic recreation of the past for the maximization of meaning creation for that very assemblage and for each artifact individually. Such sentiment of participant fixation with realism echoes that of the objectivist approach in the Colonial Williamsburg project. This similarity shows that the inherent desire for

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[116] Gray, "NAPOLEON: TOTAL WAR," review, Wargamer.
[117] Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 60.
[118] Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, 2.

factually focused history is not limited to digital wargames in that there is an ongoing process of recreating history with consistent discovery and incorporation of new facts and organization of these facts, where factual history comes from concrete empirical evidence, to get a better understanding of history.[119] The goal of the objectivist project of recreating history, in the case of digital wargames, is to reach an approximation of an objective presentation or encapsulation of history where objects, artifacts, and paraphernalia themselves as well as the narrative relationship between them creating a museum-like array, are the primary mode of progressing to the objective understanding of history,[120] as facts make it much easier to prove an historical argument or compose a historical narrative.[121] The creation of a museum-like array based on verifiable facts echoes the sentiment of wargame designer William Haggart, in that the model or simulation must be verifiable and testable.[122] Thus, wargames engage in a similar discovery and organization of new facts that occurs in projects like Colonial Williamsburg and that the wargame community takes the objectivist perspective in their relation to historical knowledge presentation in wargames.

Facts make the process and the desire to recreate the past easier to accomplish and to create an immersive environment that mimics the historical past, as the assemblage of artifacts in thematic and coherent modes of narrative provides the platform for physically and visually experiencing historical knowledge. Engaging with digital wargames is like medieval reenactment as the process does not end with a single iteration and therefore, repeats itself and historical knowledge transmits through an array of historical artifacts or their digital representations.

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[119] Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 60.
[120] Ibid., 58.
[121] Ibid., 92.
[122] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 240

Author David Marshall argues that in medieval reenactment it is the entire process of getting accurate attire, equipment, and participating in a kind of ritual gives the participants the ability to experience an imitative and approximate version of history.[123] For digital wargames it is no different, except that the physicality of handling equipment, using it, and acting in an atmospheric ritual condenses and organizes into the systems and visually focused modality of the digital wargame. Participation in a Napoleonic battle with 3D-rendered models is closely comparable to being there personally, as all objects, gestures, sensations, emotions, and actions are simply symbolic representations of the same empirical facts of history,[124] and once a participant experiences one battle in the wargame, there is no reason not to continue, as the medium and the symbols are infinitely reproducible.[125] The objectivist approach to history and the constant repetition of a reenactment or experience of historical immersion is a way to fetishize history, due to the repetitive processes of reenactment, with historical meaning encapsulated in historical artifacts.

Fetishizing History

Fetishizing history through the objectification of history occurs in a twofold principle: participants have an inherent obsession with historical accuracy, which reinforces through visual media, like wargames;[126] participants engage in a kind of experiential historical immersion.[127] Since one of the most common topics for forum posts is the discussion of historical objects, artifacts, and details of the Napoleonic Wars and the designer's tension with player objectivist expectations, due to the designers taking a different constructionist approach to history, where

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[123] Marshall, "Neomedievalism, Identification, and the Haze of Medievalisms." 20:28.
[124] Vowinckel, "Past Futures: From Re-enactment to the Simulation of History in Computer Games." 330.
[125] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 20.
[126] Ibid.*,* 48.
[127] Horowitz, "Confederates in the Attic," 7.

ideas, themes, and the interpretation of history itself matters more than simple facts,[128] such fixation indicates that the players themselves have an inherent obsession and inescapable desire to see perfect visual representations of the historical past.[129] Considering the ever-increasing prominence of digital technologies, visual mediums, such as digital wargames, cinema, and photography, have inadvertently reinforced such an obsession for graphic perfection. One of the main ways participants and the public experiences history is through visual mediums, as there is a greater sense of familiarity with objects, artifacts, and representations through the sense of sight. The increasing prominence of cinema and photography, where perfect visual accuracy is not only essential, but ingrained in the medium itself, such an expectation of visual accuracy carries over to other modes of historical knowledge presentation, be it digital wargames, a museum, or a reenactment event. In other words, the proliferation of visual mediums as modes of narrative has created the expectation for perfect visual historical accuracy in the public's relation to the representation of the historical past.

Historical Immersion

The second principle explaining player fetishizing of objectified history is the desire to experience a kind of immersion in an idealized past and to create meaning for history through the immersive experience. Tony Horowitz describes the veterans and the hardcore Civil War reenactors desiring to experience a "period rush" by using period accurate artifacts and creating the conditions for that past in the process of experiencing history.[130] The period rush that the reenactors refer to is that very feeling of meaningful immersion, or the desire to experience a particular historical period by recreating or approximating the conditions of the historical period

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[128] Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 61.
[129] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* 48.
[130] Horowitz, "Confederates in the Attic," 7.

that would change the participants' way of thinking to become closer to people's mindsets in the historical past.

Fetishizing the objectivist approach to history and engaging in the desire to experience historical immersion is ultimately a search for and creation of personal meaning and meaning for history itself. One of the methods of creating meaning is through the process of commemoration.[131] In the 2015 200th anniversary reenactment for the Battle of Waterloo, the reenactors themselves reported that the reason for their massive effort to imitate the momentous clash, was not simply to walk around as soldiers and play dress up, but also to educate and commemorate the men and women who were directly affected by that historical event.[132] By not only commemorating individuals, but the event itself, reenactors sustain the approximate experiential memory for the Battle of Waterloo, and by remembering create meaning for history, for if there is no participant experience, meaning would dissipate for the them and the event itself.

Meaningful historical commemoration involves a removal of the self from the present conditions of modernity and placing the self in an accurate and immersive recreation of the historical past. For *Napoleon: Total War* players commemoration is just as easy as reenactors, except it involves less mass organization and a more personal process of reenacting historical events from the Napoleonic era, substituting physical tangibility for digital representations and symbols of the period. Medieval reenactment establishes that commemoration does not necessarily require direct ancestral connection to the period, but instead an element of respect

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[131] Ibid., 26.
[132] Sawyer, Shute, and Bridge, "Battle of Waterloo,".

and a degree of interest for the historical past, and this respect for history comes from the pursuit for the objective reconstruction of a historical past.[133]

Personal meaning and meaning creation for history through immersive experiences not only occurs in the act of commemoration, but through the process of using and acting through the representations of historical objects and imitating historical processes that do not exist in contemporary society. Author Veronica Ostenberg West-Harling indicates that one of the many reasons reenactors choose to engage in recreating an objectivist version of history is that it allows for the use of historical artifacts that have lost everyday function and meaning, and engage in activities and events that mimic or recollect the historical past.[134] Historical objects elicit the removal of the participant's self from the modern, as they are forced to think and act in a different manner that would be closer to how individuals from history would have thought, acted, and lived. Personal meaning from the idealized engagement with the historical past arises on an intellectual and emotional level.[135] In this example, the writer claims that participants, by removing themselves from modern conditions and engaging in a kind of idealized historical arena create meaning for themselves, and, either willingly or unwittingly, commemorate or create meaning for the very period they engage with. For players of *Napoleon: Total War,* or any historical digital wargames, the entire process is comparable to any other reenactment process, except that its done through a digital platform populated by models and representations of realistic objects and processes and the removal of the self occurs more on an intellectual and emotional level, than on a physical level.

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[133] Marshall, "Neomedievalism, Identification, and the Haze of Medievalisms." 20:28.
[134] West-Harling, "Medievalism as Fun and Games," 18:8.
[135] Saguto, "Reflections on Reenacting," Colonial Williamsburg.

The Play Element

The process of reenactment and engagement with a digital wargame has a key factor that provides meaning not only to the process of fetishizing history through the player's experience of historical immersion, but also to the objectification of history and that is the element of play, by nature a meaning-imposing form of representation.[136] Objectified history can only go so far in conveying historical knowledge as objects and artifacts cannot use and act themselves and require actors to create further meaning. In the Colonial Williamsburg reconstruction the focus on recreating history is not only on the objects, but also on populating and enlivening the reconstruction of the historical period with people who interact with the historical artifact assemblage, thus creating a living and breathing imitation of the historical past.[137] The invocation of the past itself, the desire to be something long past is a desire to play.[138] Play is the act of removing one's self from the present to a closed off world bound by rules, limitations, and self-imposed conditions that do not necessarily affect the current world, where participants become something else.[139] Reenactors and wargame players remove themselves from the present to a historical past in exactly the same way one would remove the self while engaging in a game or an activity that involves the act of play. Hence, the reenactors and participants living in Colonial Williamsburg engage in the act of play, just as players do in *Napoleon: Total War*, within the reconstruction of a living history of Colonial Williamsburg, as it transcends normal life and imposes meaning on a past period of history. The act of play in recreating history by its very nature imparts meaning to the process of play and to recreations and representations of the historical past in the platform or arena of play.[140] The historical period itself also matters to

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[136] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 13.
[137] Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 71.
[138] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 26.
[139] Ibid., 26.
[140] Ibid., 1.

representation, as wargame designers and players themselves gravitate towards periods that are of personal interest or have historical significance in shaping the historical past. For example, in military history the Napoleonic Wars are an important period of study in the development of military strategy and tactics, and the interest to represent that period extends to the designer and the public in interacting with *Napoleon: Total* War. Regarding the platform of digital wargames, digital symbols replace living and breathing individuals in representing processes of history, which hold the same power as the real and it is the participant's engagement through the act of play, which imparts personal meaning to the participant, but also to the historical past.

However, the removal of the real could impose a kind of emotional or even intellectual distancing for the participant when engaging with the simulation, as infinite reproducibility of digital algorithmic symbols replaces tangibility and tactility of physical board games or reenactments and the narratological and representational power of each single object or representation loses value due to dilution. Due to the thematic focus of the wargame and the designer's choices of limiting the kinds of historical knowledge they encode, such as the emotional impact of loss on the battlefield or on campaign, players inevitably do not get a perfectly complete experience. Though it is not the intent of the wargame to illustrate absolutely every aspect of warfare, as the focus remains on strategic and tactical decision-making, where the relationship of the entire assemblage of representations and symbols and not singular items or models hold immersive and narrative power to the player. Meaning in *Napoleon: Total War* does not just come from the experience of Napoleon Bonaparte's military exploits and leadership skills, but the entire period, the experience of command, the formations of troops, the establishment of taxation policies, the sound of artillery, the audible screams of fear and so on.

One of the most direct methods of engaging in the play element in digital wargames is through the central theme of the wargame, which is combat, warfare, strategy formulation, and execution of tactics. One of the main conditions of play and wargames is the presence of limitations and rules that focus the representation of the historical past into a manageable and meaningful experience. The focus of the *Total War* series is the portrayal of combat, regardless of the period. Combat and war as historical processes have the same representative capacities as play, since war and combat also have rules and limitations.[141] Wargames have the same structure and representative power of knights jousting for sport, representing skillful mounted combat or military parades, representing disciplinary, technological, and doctrinal prowess. All these modes of play have rules and limitations and are themselves modes of representation. Napoleon's act of defeating the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz, though obviously very real for the people involved, is a representative act of French dominance over both of their opponents, through a mode violence, which is comparable to competitive play, as players represent their superiority and skill through direct or indirect modes of defeating their competitors. Hence, combat becomes a meaningful representation of violence, honor, or power. Pairing the play element with the digital symbolization of historical objects and artifacts, the *Total War* series, then becomes a convenient, publicly accessible digital model of the representational historical process of combat. The digitization of combat and war as symbols and modes of violence, objectification of history, and the process of play itself is a triple method of deriving personal meaning from representing and recreating history and providing and reinforcing meaning for history itself.

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[141] Ibid., 89.

Conclusion

　　　Player engagement with wargames is like reenactment due to their own focus on the objectification of history and fetishizing history through the desire to experience historical immersion and providing personal and historical meaning through the act of play. However, with *Napoleon: Total War*, the digitization of recreating and reconstructing history and solidifying objects, such as weapons, uniforms, and flags, as symbols of historical meaning of the Napoleonic Wars, is more meaningful, due to the convenience and the broad public access the digital medium provides, than simple reenactment or even linear academic historical literature with low accessibility to a broad audience. The digital platform of wargames becomes not only a method of commemorating or creating meaning for history, but also sharing the subjective understanding of historical knowledge between players through that same digital and online platform. Each player's experience is subjective and personally meaningful, yet it sponsors continued discussion between them and the designers about the methods of representing historical knowledge, which leads to the process of modification.

Chapter 5: Modification – Representation and Authorship

Introduction

Hayden White claims that "the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning itself."[142] Where there is no voice or an expressed perspective in narrative form, especially regarding history, there is no meaning in the object of discussion. Authorship and ownership of narrativity leads to the creation of personal meaning and meaning to the topic of narrative interest. Modification, or modding[143], of wargame systems and aesthetics is a common practice in wargame communities. Modding allows the community to use the tools, rules, and systems within wargames itself to make changes to suit the needs of the audience for any reason the modder chooses. For digital wargames, modding is a comparatively more widespread practice than in physical board games as files, downloads, and revisions to the game are more readily accessible on public forums and file databases. Modding is the process in which players become the authors and owners of their own narrative voice and conception of the historical past within the structural conditions of wargames, and in turn, share it with the broader wargame community. Important to note that player modding requires a measure of conventional research for the modders to provide a new interpretation. Thus, modding acts as a meeting point of non-linear experiential historical knowledge and incorporation of knowledge from linear narratives. The flexibility and the malleability of the digital medium creates a more fluid understanding of authorship in crafting historical narratives, where the wargame itself becomes a mode of sharing the responsibility of historical narrative

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[142] White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," 6.

[143] "Modding" is the wargame community term for modification. Since the project discusses wargames, it is only reasonable and respectful to use wargame specific terms to help historical academia become more aware with wargame terminology. "Mod" refers to the online file or program that changes or modifies the base experience of the wargame. The extent of modifications and changes varies from mod to mod and creator to creator. "Modder" refers to the content creator of a modification.

authorship. Players use this flexible digital sharing platform for the representation of their own subjective perspectives on history.

Because of the tensions between player background and expectations on modeling historical knowledge with designer intent and wargame purpose, modification provides grounds for players to respond using the digital medium with their own perspectives on how historical knowledge organization and presentation. Game designer Greg Costikyan comments on the nature of digital wargames, "A computer wargame should allow us to break free of the grid; performing distance calculations is trivial […]. A digital wargame also allows us to break free of the tyranny of cardboard counters; it allows us to treat units in a more flexible and realistic way."[144] The author claims that compared to physical board games, where the medium of cardboard and paper itself being static and limiting, digital wargames have the ability "to break free of the grid," meaning that the medium can be much more malleable and liberating in modeling historical knowledge, as, for example, in maps "performing distance calculations is trivial," due to computer processing power and calculative abilities. Units can be modelled "in a more flexible and realistic way," where the medium of the computer allows for a broad approach in encoding historical knowledge about units and increase the feeling of realism. Such malleability of the medium as a mode of narrative, introduces a fluidity to the production of historical knowledge itself, unlike books or films where the narrative of the finished product stays the same. The flexibility of the digital medium and the participant's increasing literacy in that medium in the wargame community provides the platform for a public response to designer intent using mods. In comparison to a text-based medium, where the options of participant and author interaction is limited to actions such as book reviews, notes, an article or a book written in

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[144] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 682

response, where the original text does not fundamentally change, the nature of the computer allows participants to manipulate the code of the game itself, to the extent that the designers give access to tools and programs of their game engine, and provide fully-formed interpretations, synthesized and modified from the base experience of the wargame. Wargame players have greater freedom in interacting and modifying the wargame's content and code than an audience or reader of a textualized or linear form of narrative.

Modding is a platform for the wargame community of *Napoleon: Total War* to improve the wargame's AI performance and mechanical systems. The *Total War* series is a popular platform for the wargame community to introduce mods affecting gameplay and the aesthetics of the game. A prominent mod, DarthMod, for *Napoleon: Total War* created by a community member named Darth Vader aims to improve the overall experience of the base game, especially focusing on improving AI decision-making performance. The tag line of DarthMod reads, "Play realistic napoleonic battles against a challenging AI. The gameplay is vastly improved, the arcade feeling of the official game is removed and not only that... You will witness the full power of the new DarthMod Formations, which make the Battle AI to attack you without hesitations and weak plans."[145] The modder emphasizes that his particular improvements of the game allow the player to "play realistic napoleonic battles against a challenging AI," indicating that he appeals to the notion of historical realism as a central feature of the mod, or it is simply a method of emphasizing the mod's technical capabilities as a marketing method to attract an audience. Since Darth Vader discusses realistic Napoleonic battles in relation to "a challenging AI," such a relationship illustrates that a better preforming tactical and strategic AI aids in the

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[145] Darth Vader to Total War Center web forum, "Download; DarthMod Napoleon v2.65 'Epic Edition' (24/3/2013)," April 14, 2013, accessed September 14, 2017, http://www.twcenter.net/forums/showthread.php?513599-gt-gt-gt-Download-lt-lt-lt-DarthMod-Napoleon-v2-65-quot-Epic-Edition-quot-(24-3-2013)&s=ca305b0ad7298049482b84ac53d08ce2.

increasing realism of the mod. One method for increasing the realism effect from the challenging

computer opponent is that increased adherence to battlefield formations lets the "Battle AI" feel

more difficult and more realistic than the base version of the game in that the AI would act more

like a human opponent with sound decision-making capabilities. Though being one mod amongst

many, this consistent focus on the capabilities of the AI in relation to the increased feeling of

realism, illustrates that a capable and more lifelike computer opponent is an integral element to

the player's view of history and understanding of historically contextualized contingent decision-

making.

Modders also accent nation-specific aesthetics and wargame mechanical systems to

further elaborate on their interpretation of what a more historically accurate wargame should be

like. Where DarthMod mostly focuses on improving gameplay by modifying and updating the AI

making it more challenging, other mods, such as the "Masters of Europe" mod, improve

gameplay mechanics and introduce new features to the wargame.[146] FSP.2 claims that "Modders

can greatly improve the immersion and the national specificities, by [spending] time and adding

specific texture, AOR, national language...". The responder indicates that wargame modders can

further give each nation within the context of *Napoleon: Total War* more national characteristics

ascribing certain national traits to the various powers during the Napoleonic Wars. In specific

terms, FSP.2 discusses that modders can introduce "AOR [and] national language" where AOR

refers to Area of Recruitment, which is a system in the wargame, allowing for the recruitment of

nation specific units on the strategic campaign map, only in designated territories. For example,

the French in certain mods can recruit Polish lancers in the city of Warsaw in the province of

Greater Poland and these units are not available to anyone or anywhere else. Moreover, these

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[146] Steph to TWCenter web forum, "Napoleon : Masters of Europe (MoE), a new mod by l'Aigle and Steph."

Polish units would have their "national language" to make sure that on the battlefield they speak their native tongue, and not generic French. The reason for this national specification is for the sake of "immersion" or the feeling as though the player is living or experiencing the historical past, which reveals that for modders national uniqueness is a requirement for increased immersion. In this case, modders introduce elements of nationalism into the wargame, where the base experience has limited national specificity.

As wargame communities become more tech savvy, available mods become broader in scope and scale of historical interpretation. Since the *Total War* series is a relatively popular wargame series with a readily available modding toolkit suite, the number of mods for each installment of the series, especially the more recent ones, has increased. *Napoleon: Total War,* however, is one of the last wargames of the series to have no officially supported modding suite, though the wargame is open enough for the community to mod on their own initiative. The lack of officially supported tools has not hindered the community from introducing and developing new interpretations of history through mods. In the *Zones of Control* essay collection, strategy game critic Troy Goodfellow argues that "As the skills and tools for general modification have become more common, the most skilled amateur designers have been pulled into modding instead of scenario design."[147] Goodfellow claims that modding, as a response to the designer's efforts in the *Total War* series, has become prominent as recent mods show "great attention to more realism, better AI or even more colorful uniforms,"[148] indicating that mods are not only limited to working on improving AI performance and behavior or wargame specific national traits, but also on improving aesthetic elements enhancing the feeling of realism and historical

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[147] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 153
[148] Ibid., 153

immersion. Goodfellow extrapolates that "instead of scenario design," modding is becoming more popular with the community as modding takes a much more flexible and in-depth approach, where the player can change the rules and add new features to the wargame, whereas scenario design only allows work within the confines of rules and systems of the wargame that are already in place. Mods have a greater potential, than simply designing new conflict situations, for the community to provide expansive, in-depth, and critical interpretations of how the wargame should model history, which in turn reveals how each modder accumulates and understands historical knowledge.

Greater capabilities of modding allows the community to combine scenario design with dedicated mods, creating historically accurate maps where the terrain and conditions from the map closely resemble the geography of Napoleonic battles. Even though scenario design may have limits in its ability in letting wargame community respond with its own interpretation of history, modding does not exclude scenario design from the repertoire of the *Total War* community's interpretive capabilities. FSP.4 study says, "if you look at my Napoleon's Eagles series of historical maps and scenarios you can find some 30 decent examples of what can be done to increase realism. Take for example the "ugly" Waterloo map and my rendition and then do a real trip to Hougoumont to spot the difference." The respondent evaluates CA's rendition of a historically modeled map of the Battle of Waterloo claiming that the designer's take is inferior to FSP.4's own accurate attempt at modelling the battlefield. Where the developers were not able, willing, or deemed it necessary to model a historically accurate representation of battlefields, the combination of modding and scenario design allows community members, like FSP.4, to provide their own publicly available hand-crafted maps and understanding of historical geography. The crafting of these maps with the intent of maintaining geographical and historical

accuracy shows that players actively engage with the developer's interpretation of history and encode their own perspective of historical terrain. Such a response to the developer's initial take on geography in their base version of the wargame is not limited to single changes or additions as FSP.4 reveals that in their "series of historical maps and scenarios you can find some 30 decent examples of what can be done to increase realism," indicating that the community takes time and effort to produce many changes, additions, and interpretations to effectively model Napoleonic battlefields, scenarios, and engagements.

Modding is not necessarily limited to the period of the base wargame as modders can enhance the wargame to illustrate other periods of the historical past and, thus, the community acts as the designer, taking ownership, and becoming the authors of their own narratological voice. Though many modders choose to focus on improving the base experience of *Napoleon: Total War,* as the Napoleonic Wars have a wide historical appeal for study, some go beyond the scope and period of the base version of the wargame. A wargame participant, Sirlion, comments on the variety of mods exploring new periods of history, "NTW has also more mods in many different historical periods such as ACW, Italian war of independence of 1859 and WWI. With mods, NTW can also deliver a very realistic representation of the battles during the period."[149] Sirlion indicates that the mechanics and systems of the base version of *Napoleon: Total War* are sound enough for modders to model historical periods, such as the American Civil War or the "Italian war of independence of 1859". The community goes beyond the initial intent of the developer's and mold the wargame into a new experience. However, such modding of other periods of history has limitations in that the base mechanics and engine of the wargame cannot change completely. For example, in the Great War mod for *Napoleon: Total War* the author of

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[149] DaCMan to Total War Center web forum, "NTW VS ETW."

the community driven mod, B-DizL, aimed to model the combat experience of WWI.[150] The

base version of the wargame models the dynamics of the Napoleonic Wars and hence, the Great

War mod has to abide by the rules of the original wargame systems, and therefore, certain

historical elements and dynamics cannot exist in the mod. For example, the *Napoleon: Total War*

engine limits the scale of WWI warfare to Napoleonic levels. The base game did introduce

mechanics allowing for field fortifications, such as trenches and redoubts, however, the trenches

are more like hastily made earthworks, than entrenched defenses. The combat mechanics of the

base game do not invite static combat dynamics of trench warfare found in WWI, though the

mod can effectively model the soldiers, the uniforms, and the weapons of the period. Despite

such limitations, the engine still allows for at least some flexibility in modeling the dynamics of

other historical periods.

The reinterpretation of history does not stop with the modeling of new periods of history

as modders introduce a greater sense of not only technological, but temporal aesthetic

progression and evolution to *Napoleon: Total War.* In CA's wargame, the date indicator and

technology trees are the only elements that definitively illustrate the progression of time

especially in the European campaign scenario. The armies themselves, for example, do not

change aesthetically, giving no indication that armies organically evolve as time and technology

progresses. FSP.2 professes that "The first [thing] modders can do is correct the uniforms, and

possibly introduce evolution. That's what I did in Masters of Europe, where every faction has

historical uniforms in 1805, and when the right date arrives, a script [disables] the old uniform,

and [enables] new ones." This modder, though focused on the uniforms in their mod, claims that

modding allows the community to accentuate the idea of historical temporal evolution as the

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[150] Aanker to TWCenter web forum, "The Great War | 5.1 DOWNLOAD HERE."

base version of the wargame can seem stagnant with its unchanging aesthetic. For example, the Austrian line infantry in 1805 do not differ from Austrian line infantry recruited in 1813. Even though this may seem to be a trivial element to the experience, the fact that the wargame community spends time and effort creating new scripts and wargame mechanics that "possibly introduce evolution" shows how important the detailed aesthetic elements of the Napoleonic Wars matter to modders and the community, and hence, they introduce their own understanding of historical knowledge of the period, in this case through correcting military uniforms. Furthermore, FSP.4 states that their Masters of Europe mod automatically changes uniforms "when the right date arrives" as "a script [disables] the old uniform, and [enables] new ones," which shows that this aesthetic evolution is not random, but inevitable as it corresponds to actual changes in the uniforms of Napoleonic militaries.

The medium of the computer incurs some limitations on the process of modding, thus, limiting the interpretational range of the historical past. FSP.2 outlines the issues modding has for the individual modder,

> Modding is a world of compromise
>
> - Between what you'd like to achieve vs the time needed to do that. Good to be ambitious... but if it'd take 10 years to finish is it worth it?
>
> - Between performances / quality: [example]: if you want to add one last coat for a specific uniform, you may need one full textures file (which are quite large=). So maybe you will not add this extra unit.
>
> - Between what you want to do, what the engine allows"

The respondent claims that there exists a balance between the appeal to pursue objective historical accuracy and realism with the practicability, performance, and system limitations. Though modders can work under different assumptions and intents than developers of wargames, they still need to consider "what you'd like to achieve vs the time needed to do that." The intent

may be to model and simulate the Napoleonic Wars aesthetics as detailed, expansively, and mechanically as possible within a wargame; however, it would be pointless if it would "take 10 years to finish" as no one would necessarily be interested after such a long wait to experience a new interpretation of history. There are technical limitations to incorporating every detail of aesthetics into the wargame, indicating that packing the mod with as much content as possible may actually hamper the experience of the wargame from a technical standpoint, rendering the modder's work unattractive to the wargame community.

The *Napoleon: Total War* wargame community chooses to use mods for their gameplay experience to increase the feeling of historical immersion from the experience of a realistic interpretation of the Napoleonic Wars not present in the base version of the wargame. Since modders are a kind of designer, their understanding and approach to modding wargames can be comparable to official wargame designers. In an online survey study, participants responded on their experience of *Napoleon: Total War,* with some discussing their reasons for using mods. SSP.2 that they are "playing Napoleonic Total War III because of the increased realism and the new game feeling it gives you." The respondent gives insight into the mindsight of the wargame community using mods in that they strive for "the increased realism and the new game feeling it gives you." The intent to use mods for "the increased realism" reveals that CA's initial effort to encode a realistic representation of the Napoleonic Wars may not have been effective enough in invoking historical immersion for some participants. Hence, part of the wargame community turns to mods like Napoleonic Total War 3, which primarily aim to overhaul the combat, maneuvering, and line-of-sight systems in tactical battles,[151] to experience new interpretations of history from modders that enhance the mechanical systems and the aesthetics of the wargame for

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[151] Lord Davn to TWCenter web forum, "NTW3 v7.6 SP Campaign Updates."

greater feeling of realism and historical accuracy, leading to greater historical immersion. Furthermore, participants use mods for "the new game feeling it gives you," as mods, depending on the scope and scale of changes, can provide a new experience to the wargame.

Napoleon: Total War players engage in the modded version of the wargame more than its competitors for the more immersive feeling in tactical battles. One of the promotional approaches CA takes is by promoting their technical prowess and innovations in modeling real-time tactical battles with period-accurate weapons and uniforms.[152] For some players, the experience of the battle simulations did not provide grounds for historical immersion. FSP.4 says, "Having played other games that pretend to simulate the napoleonic tactical warfare (SOW, Histwar) I must admit that a modded NTW is still one step forward regarding the feeling of immersion." The respondent claims that a new and enhanced tactical experience through *Napoleon: Total War* mods is a more immersive experience than some wargames with a dedicated intent to model Napoleonic tactical warfare. Immersion does not denote the wargame's factual historical accuracy or adherence to realism. The concept of immersion would be the ability of the wargame to give the player the feeling of a historical experience, as though the they have removed the self from the present and placed themselves in a historically contextualized arena, a kind of implicit reenactment or role-play. This concept of immersion that FSP.4 discusses, denotes the actor's willingness to experience a historical period, rather than just watch a simulation, walkthrough, or film. Moreover, the respondent talks of immersion within the context of "napoleonic tactical warfare," indicating that the real-time tactical layer is where the wargame community finds the greatest ability to immerse themselves or experience the

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[152] "Napoleon: Total War Gameplay Trailer #3," video file, 2:55, YouTube, posted by Blue's News, January 26, 2010, accessed April 13, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BakqVLD-zVw.

Napoleonic Wars. Since FSP.4 says "that a modded NTW is still one step forward regarding the feeling of immersion," the "modded" element of the wargame is essential for this greater "feeling of immersion," which shows that mods, as modes of community active correspondence with the developers, are a necessary element in the experiential understanding of historical knowledge of the Napoleonic Wars.

The intent of wargame players using community made mods is to experience unique perspectives and interpretations on the historical past and differing presentations of historical knowledge. Even though some mods modify similar elements, such as enhance the AI or introduce a sense of evolution into the game, no two mods are the same for *Napoleon: Total War*. FSP.1 states, "Each modder has their own skill set and idea of how the Napoleonic Age should look and feel like. For me the modders have made many aspects such as battles, sounds, visual etc much better and perhaps gameplay. For those who love this time period, it is now possible to see battles played out and your nation and favorite unit represented." This respondent sees every mod submitted by the *Total War* community as a unique expression of an individual modder's effort in representing their views and ideas on the Napoleonic Era. They do say that "each modder has their own skill set and idea of how the Napoleonic Age should look and feel like," indicating that there are not only wargame engine and system limitations to modding, but the expertise of the modder themselves affects the features and qualities of the mod. For example, DarthMod affects primarily AI behavior, implying that for a more realistic experience a competent non-human opponent is necessary,[153] whereas the Masters of Europe mod focuses mostly on including aesthetic detail and subsequent technological evolution, meaning that the

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[153] Darth Vader to TWCenter web forum, "DarthMod Napoleon Full Features."

aesthetic elements of the Napoleonic era are accurate representations of the period.[154] These

examples illustrate that each modder subjectively highlights specific elements of the historical

past. However, as FSP.1 claims that "modders have made many aspects such as battles, sounds,

visual etc much better and perhaps gameplay", emphasizing the plurality, and hence diversity of

modders and mods, indicating that participants enjoy a broad range of mods that enhance the

wargame experience.

Modding or community feedback is essential to the wargame development process, as

wargames do not exist in a vacuum and require an audience of players to experience and enhance

and evolve in future iterations. Since wargames are about the relationship between the designer,

the product, and the participating audience, the audience acts in continuing the development of

the wargame and providing feedback to the designer for future installments and evolutions.

Dunnigan writes in his handbook, "Feedback. This step is also extremely critical if you are going

to design any more games. This is the feedback step where you must systematically collect

feedback from those who play your game to see where you went right and where you went

wrong."[155] Feedback from the wargame community aids the designer in modifying, tailoring, and

correcting their systems and allows for further innovation. The wargame development process is

a symbiotic relationship between the designer and the audience. In the case of the *Total War*

series, one of the elements of this relationship is the community's ability to design and share

mods. Though indirect in nature, modding is a community response to the developer's

interpretation of the historical past, with their own modifications and perspectives on the

experience of historical knowledge. Wargames partake in the same iterative editing process as

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[154] Steph to TWCenter web forum, "Napoleon : Masters of Europe (MoE), a new mod by l'Aigle and Steph."
[155] Dunnigan, *Wargames Handbook,* 149

their linear narrative counterparts.[156] Unlike books or films, where these products and their message exist even without an audience, wargames require players and those who have experienced the systems and historical knowledge encoded in the wargame to have any real discursive effect.

Mods themselves act as platforms for discussion and debate within wargame communities on the representation of the historical past, where the process of debate itself produces historical knowledge in the act of sharing, as mods get continuous updates. An advantage *Napoleon: Total War* has over physical wargames about the Napoleonic Wars is that because of the size of the community and the proliferation of the Internet, the ability to share mods and feedback on such mods leads to a constant discussion within the community through web forums, online chatrooms, and video discussions. Goodfellow comments on the value of the Internet in eliciting discussion on history in *Zones of Control,* "It is disappointing that scenarios are not used better, […] to argue about our understanding of history. Instead, the culture of sharing and commenting on the Internet has led to these sorts of debates being hashed out in forums or reviews. Scenario builders will iterate on their designs within weeks if there is serious dispute about how a battle is being constructed."[157] Combining Dunnigan's concept of feedback for the base version of any wargame and the active discussions happening on the Internet regarding the interpretation of the historical past, the cycle of feedback is essentially endless, if the community maintains interest for any wargame. One element of this cyclical structure of community response is that, since there does not seem to be an end to the process of feedback, historical knowledge remains in flux, with no true settling point or perspective truly agreed upon

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[156] Perla, *The Art of Wargaming,* 231
[157] Harrigan and Kirschenbaum eds., *Zones of Control,* 155

by both the designers and the community, thus problematizing the pursuit of objective narrativization of true history.

Conclusion

The inclusion of feedback and modding into the wargame design process does not only aid the developer and designer in innovating and evolving their products in future releases, but also helps in changing the understanding of the role the player and the audience play in engaging with an author and presenter of historical knowledge. The breakdown of the dichotomous relationship between the authoritative author and the receptive public is unique to wargames, as the players of the wargame community themselves become owners of their own voice, their own subjective perspective, understanding, and interpretation of the historical past. Such an ability to express ownership of a voice or a perspective is itself a process of creating and layering meaning to the discourse on the history of the Napoleonic Wars and how the public ought to see this tumultuous period through the non-linear narrative form of the wargame. Ultimately, the fluid dialogue through the medium of digital wargames between the designer and the player establishes a robust system of searching and creating meaning for historical knowledge and provides a framework for the community and the designer to become aware of their own subjective positionality, as the experience of historical knowledge comes from the subjective engagement in the process of decision-making.

Chapter 6: Decision-Making – The Subjective Experience

Introduction

Linear forms of narrative, such as books and films, do not translate and illustrate human agency in contingent moments. They often can create the illusion that the events of history were inevitable and that individuals in positions of power and decision-making capacity only helped to bring about a seeming inevitability to the historical past. Many of these narratives fail to encapsulate in a meaningful manner the role the historical actor and agent has in a moment of historical contingency under conditions of uncertainty. Wargames as narrative structures differ from the constructionist and the phenomenological approaches to historical narrativity as both approaches, though taking different perspectives of argumentation, still assume in the narrative a foregone conclusion or clear end, eliminating any conditions of uncertainty and open-endedness. The non-linearity of wargame narrativity, in contrast, has no predetermined conclusion. Contrary to the generalization and universalization of human decision-making in mathematical models of game theory,[158] wargames choose to emphasize the effect subjectivity has on individuals moments of decision-making. Hence, leaders and individuals in positions of authority experienced their own progression of time not as an inevitable narrative progression, but as a constantly developing series of events where historical assumptions, biases, and subjective approaches to strategy affected decision-making in those contingent moments of uncertainty. Wargames can illustrate, simulate, and emphasize the capacity of military leaders' agency in the process of decision-making and subsequent execution to bring about a sought-after goal or event, through the spheres of military strategy and combat. It enhances or elevates the notion that historical military actors had a broader capacity for agency in the command of the economy, politics, diplomacy, and combat. Though, there is an inherent limitation to the modeling of high-

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[158] Spaniel, *Game Theory 101: The Complete Textbook*, 14.

level authoritative decision-making in that it foregoes low-level or local decision-making, except

from tactical battles where agency pervades nearly every element of the decision-making

experience. In terms of historical knowledge, subjective player decision-making accesses the

mindset and thought processes of historical individuals in a position of leadership, using

historical modes of planning and subsequent execution.

The role of wargames based in historical settings is for players to experience historical

knowledge of decision-making in historically contextualized moments of contingency. Since

wargames require an audience to experience the systems and mechanical interpretations, the

perspective of wargames purposefully accentuates the thoughts and subsequent actions of the

human agent. Game designers from the Extra Credits channel define the core element of

historical wargames,

> For all they strive for historical accuracy they [video games] can never ensure that the
> player's actions will mirror actual events, but they can put the player in the shoes of
> somebody wrestling with the large-scale problems of the day and ask the player to
> understand them and to come to grips with them themselves. […] those pivotal points
> where someone stands at the precipice of a decision that could change their world and has
> to make a decision about it, and those games let us live that, again and again.[159]

The aim of wargames is to focus on and understand the mindset and thought-process of

individuals, which the effective modeling and rendering of a historically approximated world

elicits and inspires. For example, after the battle of Borodino in 1812, the fate of the Russian

Imperial army rested in the hands of Kutuzov. He faced a moment of historical contingency

where his options were to continue to fight with greatly reduced strength to protect the capital for

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[159] "Historical Games - Why Mechanics Must Be Both Good and Accurate - Extra Credits," video file, 6:06,
YouTube, posted by Extra Credits, September 10, 2014, accessed January 25, 2018,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8yl09GcI48.

an uncertain amount of time, or to retreat with what forces he had and give up the capital to preserve the fighting strength of the Russian military.[160] Arguably, the overall Russian commander did not know what was going to happen if he were to pursue one of the many options he had. Kutuzov was at one of "those pivotal points" faced with the prospect of "a decision that could change their world". Wargames allow the player to experience what individuals like Kutuzov experienced in moments of contingency and uncertainty for themselves "and those games let us live that, again and again," where the player can experience those moments across a variety of scenarios, consistently facing and tackling contingent decision-making.

The mode of experiencing representational historical knowledge of decision-making, specifically strategic authoritative military and governmental control, as well as complete tactical military control in battles, is comparable to reenactments in the removal of the self from present conditions; however, wargames avoid the scripted and repetitive elements of reenactments and roleplay. The key mode of activity in reenactments for players is to act through an assemblage of historical artifacts to remove the self from the present and immerse the self into an imitation or an approximation of the past. The ability to act as someone else as Huizinga states, is a form of representation of a kind of imitative historical knowledge.[161] In reenactments, due to physical, organizational, and logistical constraints, acting typically occurs through scripts or earlier practice and repetition where reenactments cannot represent, test, or simulate strategic and tactical historically contextualized contingent decision-making. Wargames combine similar modes of representation as reenactments or historical roleplay with players interacting and using

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[160] Haythornthwaite, *Borodino 1812*, 74.
[161] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 13.

the assemblage of digital artifact representations rather than physical. Though the goal of

wargames is not to engage in the same repetitive and scripted action, as though a dance, but to

represent, understand, and provide meaning to historical contingent decision-making processes

and the conditions that individuals in positions of leadership must have faced and considered.

National Interest

Raison d'etat or national interest as a historical method of decision-making defines the

mode of planning and strategic preparation for achieving objectives, which includes economics,

geopolitical considerations, and consolidation and expansion of power. When players choose

their country to act as in *Napoleon: Total War*, they embody the decision-making elements of

their country. Geo-political and economic[162] conditions shape a country's subjective national

interests at the start of a scenario, the player's own character, biases, and perspective, and the

objectives set by the given scenario.[163] Such a focus on the subjective interests of a country

elicits a kind of paranoid way of thinking when considering diplomatic, political, and military

issues. YouTube content creator Lionheartx10 narrates their thought-process in a campaign as

Prussia, regarding their relationship with Austria,

> Last thing I want to do is jump on Austria right now when we are still trying to establish
> ourselves, cause we are going to need them to help against France, […]. And likewise, if
> I kill off Austria too soon, then maybe the Ottomans will get more of a hold, and if
> Russia decides to enter the mix, I definitely need a friend, nearby. […] I can already see
> potential enemies all around me, or I'm already planning to betray all those around me as
> such. But it's kind of choosing the opportune moment.[164]

The content producer's commentary on their thought process reveals that Lionheartx10 takes a

broad approach in considering, not simply Austria as a potential target for conquest and

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[162] Lecourbe to Napoleon: Total War web forum, "PRUSSIAN PREDICAMENTS."

[163] Ibid.

[164] "THE IMPERIAL EAGLE RISES! Napoleon Total War: Darthmod - Prussia Campaign #1," video file, 64:05,
YouTube, posted by Lionheartx10, June 12, 2017, accessed June 21, 2017,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvTBvdU7eNo.

territorial expansion, but also as a separate actor that can help deal with France. Lionheartx10 appears to be analyzing the role of separate countries around Prussia's own subjective interests and how they may best consolidate power to further increase their strategic capabilities,[165] which further emphasizes the nation-centric thinking players must take. The participant's metacommentary on their thought process exhibits a kind of hyperawareness of the decision-making process, showing that participants approach the experience of decision-making self-reflexively and critically, which indicates a willingness to be critical of one's own decision-making assumptions and, therefore, better understand the elements of the decision-making process. The YouTuber also indicates that even though they may be considering neighbors as potential allies in reaching common interests, they still see all other countries as potential threats, or targets for opportunistic betrayals and strategic shifts. Players in wargames accumulate and understand a kind of historical knowledge of national and leadership-based subjectivity and ego-centrism.

Despite being critical and hyperaware of their own decision-making process, players do not use wargames nor the video production format to engage in a systematized critique of the historical field through the exploration of counterfactuals, as they concern themselves with their own personal understanding of the historically contextualized experience. The nature of wargames indicates that they can be counterfactual explorations of history that help us question our own assumptions regarding the practice of historical research and narrative composition.[166] One of the selling points in *Napoleon: Total War* advertisement is the ability of players to see

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[165] Simon Magi to Napoleon: Total War web forum, "PRUSSIAN PREDICAMENTS."
[166] Kaye, "Challenging Certainty: The Utility and History of Counterfactualism," 38.

history unfold supposing a French victory at Waterloo.[167] The designers include the intrigue or the possibility of using their own wargame as a mode of counterfactual history, challenging historical assumptions of the Napoleonic era and how decision-making of various nations could have differed, given radically different circumstances. However, due to the fixation on realism and on the intent of personal meaning creation through understanding historical knowledge in the process of contextualized and contingent decision-making, players are less interested in the potential metahistorical qualities of wargames and are more focused on a personal and subjective experience of contingent decision-making under approximate historical conditions.

Geography and Terrain

One of the defining factors of raison d'état and strategic decision-making is the consideration of terrain, geography, and features of a theater of war in the process of planning. On a fundamental level, geography and terrain physically affect combat, but also strategic decision-making, as leaders and decision-makers must take the lay of the land into consideration when determining a strategy. Terrain can swing the balance of battles, campaigns, and wars if effectively incorporated into strategic or even tactical thinking, as seen at the Battle on the Katzbach in 1813 with Marshal MacDonald's poor use of the Katzbach river giving the Prussian Marshal Bluecher an early victory in the Leipzig campaign.[168] The prominence of terrain as a guiding principle still holds true in wargames. Lecourbe from the *Napoleon: Total War* forums describes the Austrian strategic situation at the start of the campaign, "The method of being as successful as the Austrians can hope to be, partly lies in establishing some defendable frontiers. This means controlling various river lines & mountain ranges. This will limit where the enemies

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[167] "Napoleon Total War Developer Interview," video file.
[168] Hofschroer, *Leipzig 1813*, 52.

can attack you, & where you need to concentrate your forces."[169] In this way, the terrain defines

the thought process of the participant representing the Austrian empire. Lecourbe's emphasis on

using the terrain for effective decision-making reflects Baron de Jomini's concepts of strategy in

that war is inherently tied to features of a map and that decisions and actions must flow from the

conditions found on these maps.[170] The Jominian conception of terrain in the player's discussion

on wargame strategy accesses historical knowledge of the perception of military theorists,

leaders, and decision-makers on warfare.

Execution

Both successes and failure in the execution of a plan and tactical combat inform, affect,

contextualize, and modify strategic conditions for contingent decision-making. In war it is

impossible to account for every aspect as there is an inherent element of uncertainty present in all

moments of decision-making and subsequent execution.[171] players in *Napoleon: Total War* can

experience that very feeling of difficult decision-making in a moment of uncertainty,

randomness, or contingency. YouTuber HeirofCarthage in the earliest moments of their

campaign enacted an initiative in Northern Italy with Archduke Charles to pressure the French-

aligned Kingdom of Italy, a minor power based in Milan. HeirofCarthage failed to secure a

victory with their force as it the pursuing Italian forces wiped it out. The content producer

comments on their situation after the unsuccessful operation, "I can't leave Munich uncovered,

but I can hardly afford many more troops. I may have to go ahead and train these guys. Problem

is recruitment - we don't have a lot of options. I'm gonna go ahead and build a better barracks,

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[169] Lecourbe to Napoleon: Total War web forum, "THE AUSTRIAN CAMPAIGN: NOTES AND REFLECTIONS."
[170] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 51.
[171] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 101.

cause normally I think it's gonna be better to recruit troops back there [in Venice]."[172] HeirofCarthage in their commentary notes that their resources are already stretched in that they "can hardly afford many more troops;" however, considering the importance of Venice to the participant as a central base of operations for an Italian theater of war, HeirofCarthage decides to "build a better barracks" to have more troop recruitment options in that theater. Because of their defeat in Italy, the content producer considers moving their forces from Munich southwards to cover Venice, though they do claim that they "can't leave Munich uncovered." HeirofCarthage is caught in a difficult dilemma from their unexpected failure in battle, on whether to shift resources from one important front to another important theater, even though their resource capacity does not allow to cover all possibilities. These difficult decisions illustrate and inform the difficult decision-making that historical leaders like Archduke Charles had to face themselves. For example, in the final hours of the Battle of Wagram in 1809, French Marshal Davout pressured the Austrian left around Markgrafneusiedl, threatening to cut off the Austrian army from a clear retreat. However, Archduke Charles, had the option of continuing the fight, putting the entire Austrian army at risk for the sake of a potential and uncertain victory over Napoleon, or to retreat and conserve the Austrian force.[173] Even though from historical records we know the result of the battle, linear historical narratives do not fully capture the difficult decisions combat leaders faced in the conditions of uncertain futures, and wargames allow players to experience those contextualized moments of uncertainty.

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[172] "Napoleon Total War Austria Campaign Part 2," video file, 31:31, YouTube, posted by HeirofCarthage, January 31, 2016, accessed June 15, 2017, https://youtu.be/ZI-eBlsZsow?t=1202
[173] Castle, *Aspern and Wagram*, 84-85.

Tactical Decision-Making

Contingent decision-making also factors into the execution of military strategy on the tactical level due to the constant chaos and randomness of combat and the lack of knowledge of opposing AI behavior. Where the strategic dimension of *Napoleon: Total War* is turn-based, giving time for the player to deliberate, the real-time tactical dimension moves constantly forcing more rapid player decision-making to counter the unpredictability of combat. HeirofCarthage in their playthrough as the Austrians engages in combat with the Kingdom of Italy to secure their Italian theater against any hostile movements. Due to the numerically superior Italian infantry as well as incoming reinforcements, HeirofCarthage utilizes their locally concentrated cavalry forces to overwhelm the advancing Italian infantry, thus swinging the battle in their favor.[174] The YouTuber's decision to engage their cavalry is not deliberate and instead is a split-second and intuitive decision to gain an advantage over a superior opponent with the forces they have available. Such fast-paced and reactive decision-making is reminiscent of historical Napoleonic decision-making, as, for example, at the Battle of Wagram in 1809 when the Austrians began their general advance on the faltering French left wing positions of Marshal Massena, Napoleon committed elements of the French cavalry to delay the Austrian advance using the resources available to gain a local advantage over the Austrian onslaught. At Wagram and in HeirofCarthage's playthrough as the Austrians, in preparing for the battle, both decision-makers knew that they were going to use their cavalry for some purpose; however, the exact use of the cavalry to delay the enemy or to gain an advantage was not predetermined, and hence, in the real-time tactical dimension, players experience historical knowledge in moments of contingency during chaotic battles through rapid, intuitive, and reactive decision-making.

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[174] "Napoleon Total War Austria Campaign Part 2," video file, 31:31, YouTube, posted by HeirofCarthage, January 31, 2016, accessed June 15, 2017, https://youtu.be/ZI-eBlsZsow?t=1654.

Lack of Perfect Information

Lack of certainty and information due to the fog-of-war mechanism is a mode through which players experience moments of contingent decision-making under conditions of literal uncertainty in that they execute historical methods of intelligence gathering. On the strategic level of *Napoleon: Total War* players cannot see everything as a dimming effect conceals parts of the map, representing a lack of information they have on any given shaded area. Armies and agents, though, have lines of sight, which reveal some of the map. In their Prussian campaign, Lionheartx10 generally commits their armies westward towards Batavian controlled Amsterdam; however, in their southern theater of operations around Dresden and Munich they lack intelligence and strategic line-of-sight on opponent movements. The YouTuber discusses their actions regarding their lack of information in the area, "I do need to know what's going on down here, though. Um, so I need to pull an agent that way. See what's going on at Munich. Got a view here [Cleves], see if there's more enemies coming towards us."[175] Since the participant already "got a view here" in their main area of operations against the Dutch, Lionheartx10 needs to "see what's going on at Munich" to "know what's going on down" there to dissipate as much uncertainty as possible, as the French control Munich in the campaign and the city could act as a staging ground for French attacks towards the participant-controlled Dresden. To alleviate the problem of uncertainty Lionheartx10 claims that they "need to pull an agent that way" towards Bavaria to get better information on how to proceed further. The content creator indicates uncertainty in their decision-making due to a literal lack of certainty in information availability and the inability to read enemy intentions. Therefore, they must decide on how to act and deal with such uncertainty, using historical methods of intelligence gathering by committing scouting

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[175] "UNLEASH THE CANNONS! Napoleon Total War: Darthmod - Prussia Campaign #4," video file, 45:01, YouTube, posted by Lionheartx10, June 19, 2017, accessed June 25, 2017, https://youtu.be/_SaZjT6gMZE?t=1179.

units to help in further contingent decision-making. In the Napoleonic Wars light cavalry, such

as hussars, chasseurs a cheval, and other types of light cavalry, served such a purpose of

intelligence gathering and scouting to aid in the process of military decision-making. Hence,

Lionheartx10's noting of uncertainty and use of scouting methods accesses a kind of historical

knowledge in that, as military leaders, players must deal with literal uncertainty and act to

maximize their decision-making capabilities to consider multiple contingencies using a variety of

strategic intelligence gathering methods.

Relationship of Strategy and Tactics

Experiencing historical knowledge of contextualized contingent decision-making arises

from the close relationship between strategic planning and thinking and tactical execution. After

engaging the Dutch forces around Cleves in several decisive battles, during each of the battles

after routing most of the enemy troops on the battlefield, Lionheartx10 commits their remaining

cavalry to pursue the routing enemy troops to ensure the destruction of the Dutch armies.[176] By

pursuing the routed enemy and ensuring their total destruction, the Dutch lose their leaders and

armies on the strategic mode, which successfully advances the participant's strategy of

decisively defeating the Dutch. As a historical parallel, Napoleon consistently employed cavalry

forces in post-battle operations to finalize the defeat of his opponents forces as seen at the

attempted French cavalry pursuit at the Battle of Eggmuhl in 1809 near the village of

Alteglofsheim.[177] Not only is Lionheartx10's execution of a cavalry pursuit an accessing of

historical knowledge of cavalry usage during the Napoleonic Wars, but the decision-making

process behind employing the cavalry for a tactical role, which could have massive strategic

implications, is another kind of historical knowledge experience of military leadership in

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[176] "ARTILLERY MOUNTAIN! Napoleon Total War: Darthmod - Prussia Campaign #7," video file, 28:32, YouTube, posted by Lionheartx10, June 28, 2017, accessed June 29, 2017, https://youtu.be/idsG9UKlXIo?t=1393.
[177] Castle, *Eggmuhl 1809*, 84-85.

optimizing the use of units and troop types to get a desired result on the tactical and strategic

levels.

The "Pause" Tool

   To enhance the experience of contingent decision-making and reactive tactical execution

and decision-making, players choose to forego the convenient wargame "pause" tool. In

Napoleon: Total War the designers included a pause feature for tactical battles as a measure of

convenience in case the battle experience becomes too overwhelming. Many players choose to

ignore the pause mechanic and instead fully immerse themselves in the experience of command

immersing themselves in the uncertainty, chaos, and randomness of battle. Lionheartx10 explains

their opinion on not using the pause mechanic during their playthrough of battles,

> The reason I don't like to pause is I like the added challenge that I can't control
> everything so there are going to be, […] cavalry suddenly attacking from one side and
> swooping in, and I won't see that. And I kind of […] think that maybe that in a way
> reflects, […] the line of communication. Obviously, you would be able to react a bit
> better, you wouldn't have to wait for the commander's orders to come down the line, but
> occasionally you would be caught unaware.

The YouTuber expresses that the willing exclusion of the pause mechanic adds an "added

challenge" where they "can't control everything," which illustrates "the line of communication,"

where the participant implies that a slower reaction time to a sudden threat or action from the

enemy represents the military system of command-and-control adding challenge and difficulty.

Increased difficulty, thus, factors into feeling historical immersion. Unlike in wargames,

Napoleon did not have complete and direct control over every unit of his armies. The only way

he could order any units is to either command nearby troops personally or send couriers with

orders to his subordinate commanders and delegate them to micromanage tactical units.[178]

Nonetheless, these command methods of the Napoleonic Wars took time to execute, and

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[178] Britt, *The Wars of Napoleon*, 34.

Lionheartx10's willingness to voluntarily suspend the use of the pause mechanic indicates their own desire to experience the feeling of acting within the moment of contingency in battle, where the outcome of a battle hangs in the balance and is uncertain with human agency, action, and decision-making being the only modes of affecting the chaos of battle. The pause mechanic takes away from the experience of decision-making in moments of contingency, as it gives the player control over temporality during real-time battles. Since the linear progression of time is inescapable in our current understanding of history, modeling a linear form of temporality is realistic in the systems of a wargame and hence, the resistance to using the pause mechanic during battle reflects the player's wish to immerse oneself more fully in a realistic modeling and representation of contingent decision-making. Lionheartx10 does acknowledge the agency of lower level commanders indicating that even with the experience of low-level military decision-makers being specialized to smaller units, and hence, not having to worry about the broader picture, would still be taken aback by the randomness and chaos of battle. This seems to be a desire to feel vulnerable under the pressure of a constantly evolving combat situation yet being able to respond and react to correct issues as they arise. Players experience the feeling of vulnerability and powerlessness when encountering moments of uncertainty and randomness, yet becoming decisive agents shaping the course of events.

Multiplayer Dynamics

The multiplayer mode of *Napoleon: Total War* makes the experience of decision-making and strategic planning more complex and tension-filled as some human opponents take the representative role of the powers in the wargame. Because of the multiplayer functionality of the wargame, players interact with each other as great powers from the Napoleonic Wars in a more complex fashion in that they coordinate decision-making and engage in a more informal style of diplomacy, bypassing some of the wargame's systems and mechanics, adding a social dynamic

between players that is not present in the single-player dimension when engaging against the AI. The dialogue from the playthrough of YouTubers AlexTheRambler and WarriorofSparta illustrate the multiplayer social dynamics of the campaign, "[AlexTheRambler:] My aim would probably be to take Hannover first. So they are no longer a threat to Berlin. I'm probably going to try and hold Cleves and then strike southwards [...] [WarriorofSparta:] Well, I can try and take the North coast and take Caen, and then I'm literally on the border of Paris."[179] Both participants indicate that there is a willingness to cooperate with one another in the wargame to take down France; however, due to the nature of the wargame's objectives and the ultimately self-interested approach to thinking about the wargame, the coordination of the two content creators is tension filled. In a single-player campaign the AI acts based on a coded algorithm, where the player cannot change or interact with aside from the wargame's own diplomacy features, which do not cover the full extent of communication occurring between nations during the era. Furthermore, the participants themselves inject their own personality, character, roleplay into the wargame for greater immersion and definition of their style of decision-making,[180] for unlike a programmed AI the subjective character of each participant makes each moment of contingency unique and immersive and gives a sense of a historical personality's subjective understanding of their world.[181]

Subjectivity in Decision-Making

Combining the ability of historical artifacts, or representations of historical artifacts, to give players the feeling of historical immersion with the concept of decision-making, experience

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[179] "Napoleon Total War: Multiplayer Campaign - Part One w/Warrior of Sparta!," video file, 34:07, YouTube, posted by Alex The Rambler!, November 16, 2014, accessed June 30, 2017, https://youtu.be/qDl4SK_4DGQ?t=535.
[180] "Napoleon Total War: Multiplayer Campaign - Part Two - w/Warrior of Sparta!," video file, 38:02, YouTube, posted by Alex The Rambler, November 24, 2014, accessed July 6, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wByeOT-MZc.
[181] Thon, "Subjectivity across Media: On Transmedial Strategies of Subjective Representation in Contemporary Feature Films, Graphic Novels, and Computer Games," 68.

of historical knowledge in wargames comes from the changing of one's conditions through the assemblage of artifacts and applying decision-making scenarios to understand the inherent subjectivity of leadership. Reenactors require historical artifacts to engage in a ritualistic commemoration or engagement with history to experience historical immersion for meaning creation. Wargames take a step further in historical immersion and the experience of historical knowledge in that historical contexts create the conditions for players to embody a similar subjective mindset to historical personalities. Because wargames focus on illustrating the effect of subjective human agency in an arena striving for objective realism, wargame players use the same kind of assemblage of artifacts that reenactors use, except through the digital medium, which gives a sense of purpose and meaning to their use, which in turn gives a kind of understanding of how historical personalities engaged in decision-making processes, especially in the sphere military decision-making. Wargames do not give the exact historical thought-process or decision-making conditions, but instead they give a sense of how decision-making works in contextualized moments of contingency and how subjectivity informed such decision-making.

Narrativity and Contingency

In terms of portraying subjectivity within decision-making in moments of historical contingency, the non-linearity of wargame narrative structure encapsulates the very nature of uncertainty historical individuals experienced. In linear forms of narrative, the author creates a sense of structure to historical progression as well as the illusion of contingency in decision-making. The narrative has been set in proverbial stone of a linear book or film. On the other hand, wargames based on human agency and their non-linear structure do not have a set narrative. No player literally knows what is going to happen next, just as historical individuals could not literally know the future. Players and historical leaders could predict, theorize, and

model, but they could not literally know, which leads to the experience of contingency under conditions of uncertainty. Based on the assumption of constant uncertainty of future actions and events, subjectivity of the decision-maker takes over to bring about a sense of certainty. Wargames, with their non-linear narrativity, can approximate such an experience of contingency and subsequent decision-making for players to bring about a desired conclusion.

Wargames as systems of experiential non-linear narratives reject the structuralist approach to history within the decision-making process. A structuralist styled narrative of history implies that the author interconnects historical concepts, actions, themes, and events and that each variable necessarily leads to any given conclusion or end.[182] In effect, everything within the narrative plays a logical part leading to some conclusion.[183] The linearity of structuralist historical narratives adds to the illusion that everything a historian writes about or discusses leads to a predetermined answer. Ironically, wargames have some structuralist characteristics in the non-linear narrative as the literal mechanisms within the wargame can give the illusion that everything interconnects due to the inherent design process of wargames, where all systems and models have a purpose, which play off another. Not to mention the necessity of interconnected systems in the algorithmic language of the digital medium, where logic governs the writing of code. However, in terms of the player's experiential approach to historical knowledge and the sheer scope and number of simulated systems present, wargames, are not structuralist in nature, as not everything within the wargame follows cause-and-effect relationships. For example, a player enacting construction projects in Moscow does not in any way affect the AI's behavior in responding to potential rebellions in Spain. The two events may correlate as with more construction projects, rebellions may increase in Spain, but this does not imply a causation

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[182] White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," 5
[183] White, *Metahistory, The Historical*, 10-11.

between the two systems. The player cannot literally know the future in the temporal structure of the wargame until the moment comes when the player experiences moments of contingencies, through strategic planning and tactical execution. The experiential non-linearity of wargame narrative does not presuppose a structure to all things occurring within its system.

To a certain extent the decision-making experience of historical knowledge and non-linear narrative structure of wargames is phenomenological in nature. Phenomenological historical narratives, unlike structuralist narratives, suppose that everything in the historical past is not necessarily connected per se, but that the experience and actions of an individual presuppose a kind of linearity in that in any given series of events or actions there is a beginning, a middle, and an end.[184] Phenomenological narratives simply attempt to illustrate and give meaning to the actions and cause-and-effect relationships derived from individual initiative and human agents. The intent and the action an individual takes within the decision-making process in the historical past presupposes a conclusion. In the phenomenological narrative, the intent within an agent's action presupposes a linear structure in the narrative. To that extent, the experience of decision-making in wargames is phenomenological, as players plan and affect the world with a goal or conclusion in mind and the ideal in the decision-making process is that the player would linearly proceed to their intended conclusion with little or no challenge. However, no matter how much a player may strive towards a goal with their actions and decision-making and hope for a perfect linear progression to events, they still cannot access or create a definitive kind of factual knowledge about the conclusion or effect of their actions and decisions chosen. There are so many variables in wargame systems that on the one hand, player intent may change

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[184] Carr, *Time, Narrative and History*, 47-48.

due to radically new conditions, or on the other hand, some non-player affected condition, variable, or system may fundamentally change the desired conclusion of a plan or strategy.

Conclusion

Wargames embrace the subjective understanding of decision-making. The biases of individual players combined with the assemblage of historical artifacts providing the arena for approximating the understanding of how leaders and decision-makers of the historical past really thought and engaged in military strategy and tactical execution. The mindset of Napoleon has its own biases, which external factors shape, mold, and change. The biases and conditions of the Duke of Wellington are different than Napoleon's, which are different from that of Marshal Bluecher and so on. As a form of non-linear narrative, wargames have the advantage over their linear counterparts in that wargames do not need to use the illusion of contingency within their systems. At any given moment, wargames are by their nature contingent in that the narrative is open-ended. The player can never truly know the narrative, until they experience it. The main modes of experiencing decision-making in moments of historical contingency is through the processes of strategic planning and tactical execution, as the ways in which players plan and act are approximate to how historical decision-makers and agents acted and understood their conditions. Even though wargames do not give an exact and precise illustration or factualization of historical decision-making, they can at least help us as historians understand the effect human agency, psychology, and historical conditions had on the course of history. Though decision-making may not be a discursive form of historical interpretation, it inherits some of the interpretive subjectivity necessary in modification.

Conclusion

The main interconnected ways players experience historical knowledge in wargames are through the process of interacting with the wargame, the interpretative discourse of the modification process, the player's own fixation on realism, and the subjective decision-making process. Focusing on the representations and symbols of history from the Napoleonic Wars, players immerse themselves into an intellectual and emotional environment that approximates the historical past, which affects their own decision-making processes and capabilities. Because players fixate on the realistic representation of history for the greatest effect on their decision-making, the questions they consider during planning strategies, as well as the actions they take in executing tactics, themselves begin to approximate or give a sense of the kinds of dilemmas, moments of contingency, and modes of planning and execution leaders of the historical past engaged. Decision-making as a mode of historical knowledge requires a set of conditions, an assemblage of artifacts, or an immersive environment for players to accumulate and understand their interpretation of historical knowledge.

A greater tension is at play between the fixation on realism and decision-making. Ultimately, player fixation on realism is a desire to discover the objective truth of the historical past. Fixation on realism is a limitation or rejection of subjectivity from historical discourse. Decision-making bases itself on the innate subjectivity of individuals and their perception of strategic and tactical conditions modeled in the wargame, as well as on the assumption that history itself is contingent, fluid, and open-ended. There seems to be an innate struggle between the two main modes of historical knowledge. However, the fact that both modes of historical knowledge exist in the same system or narrative structure, I would argue, indicates that wargames embrace or balance both objective and subjective approaches to understanding the

historical past. Neither mode overpowers the other, and both are necessary as the objective and subjective approaches exist in a symbiotic relationship: the subjective agent acts within an approximate objectification of history. This symbiotic relationship within wargames is a commentary on how as historians we can approach history: strive for objectivity in understanding or discovering the historical past with the realization that the ways in which we perceive the past, are ultimately subjective in nature and that when studying human history, it is vital to recognize the inherent subjectivity of human agents in the processes of history. *Napoleon: Total War*, unlike some of its more obscure historical wargame counterparts, which tend to emphasize the objective portrayal of history more than the power of subjective decision-making, reducing their own potential audience, uniquely balances the objectification of history and the ability to test personal agency of personal actors to have a large enough audience accumulating and understanding historical knowledge on the Napoleonic Wars.

Modification, as the other mode of historical knowledge, indirectly links to the previous modes of player experience, as it is a more discursive mode of historical knowledge than its counterparts. For players to engage in the process of modification it is necessary that they experience both the mode of decision-making and fixation on realism. Once they have experienced the initial intended form of the wargame of the designers, players then use the flexibility of the digital medium in combination with conventional historical research of linear narratives to provide a personally authored response to the systems of the wargame to modify the experience itself so that it models the historical perspectives of the author. Thus, players experience historical knowledge by engaging in the continuous designer process, sharing their own subjective understanding of the wargame with the public over online platforms and forums, and taking authorship of their own modification. The player becomes a designer of sorts and can

fundamentally change how the wargame entices actors into the decision-making process through the lens of realism as a form of reiteration of the wargame's goals.

Modification as a mode of historical knowledge is a metahistorical and narratological interpretative strategy for players to provide their own understandings of the historical past. Since players cannot change the entirety of the wargame's base engine, their limited abilities allow them to make different interpretations of how the wargame ought to present historical knowledge. Yet, modification fundamentally affects the relationship between the fixation on realism and decision-making, as some modifications focus more on the objectification of history, and others simply improve the base wargame experience by focusing on improving the value of subjective decision-making. Regardless, the modification process itself breaks down the dichotomous relationship between active author and passive receptive audience, as the audience becomes the author and owner of its own voice and perspective of the historical past. This dynamic between author and audience-author enhances the subjective nature of our own perception of the historical past and elicits greater activity in historical discourse giving a voice to the public or the receptive audience, with the wargame serving as the platform for discussion. Modification becomes the process of claiming one's voice in historical discourse.

Fundamentally, the player's fixation on realism lines up with the designer's intent on modeling wargames as realistically as possible, therefore, players view wargames with the same broad historical lens as the designers themselves; however, from the designer's point of view, there are certain limitations in modeling complete realism in wargames and designers take a subjective and selective approach when incorporating realism into their wargames. Yet, since not all are aware of the limitations of wargame modeling systems, players demand a higher level of attention to realism so that history and the experience of historical knowledge become more

meaningful through objectification of history. Despite this inescapable tension between the inherent limitations of wargames and the designer's intent, players inevitably engage in a meaningful experiential mode of historical knowledge.

Wargames enhance historical knowledge in two ways: on the one hand, wargames themselves as models of military history provide an example of how designers view military leadership and how historical facts can be codified, packaged, and represented; on the other hand, the player's relation to wargames and how they experience historical knowledge gives an understanding of how the often-forgotten public views and relates to the historical past. Studying the public's relationship with wargames can give us a sense of how individuals, communities, societies, and nations codify and understand history, their biases, subjective perspectives, and modes of historical narrativity. Even more so, wargames are another tool in the historian's arsenal to expand the capabilities of historical academia itself to effectively and fairly communicate non-linear modes of experiential historical knowledge. Books and films can only go so far in illustrating the complexity of history, as linear narratives, no matter how polished and how much they disguise the seeming inevitability of history, have a set narrative, which cannot be reexperienced or told differently.

However, wargames do have certain limitations in the process of understanding and codifying historical knowledge. Just like any narrative, wargames can suffer from designer bias, where certain historical claims or models gain skewed precedence. Even though wargames inherently do aim to give a sense of the human factor in decision-making and the role of human agency in historically contextualized contingent moments, the systems of the wargame may give an inaccurate impression on how human agency affected specific moments, due to poor implementation or the role that bias plays in narrative composition. Wargames are a carefully

censored and polished version of how military command and decision-making works, but they do not engage with any ethical or moral questions about the effects of war on humanity and individual psychology. Thus, wargames can be an overgeneralized or oversimplified simulation of military experience in the historical past. Moreover, wargames focus on military conflict and strategy by inscribing a teleology toward war, military engagements, and struggle, limiting the use and effectiveness of other modes of planning and execution. Unlike linear forms of narrative, where the author can have near limitless freedom on how to compose a historical narrative, wargames, by nature, require rules and limitations, which can inevitably force players into a limited, even linear path if the wargame is poorly designed or balanced, leading to another limitation of wargames not being able to completely model randomness and chaos of battle.

Regardless of these limitations, wargames still provide an engaging, interactive, and fun method of studying and exploring historical cause-and-effect relationships in a non-linear and seemingly unorthodox fashion. Yet, just like various forms of reenactment, commemoration, and role-playing, wargames take their place as one of the oldest experiential modes of historical knowledge that have not had the chance to make a mark in understanding the historical past and have instead been relegated to specialized research divisions in militaries where they have served to prepare nations for war, by modeling moments of contingency and training decision-making and leadership skills. With new technologies on the horizon, such as continuously developing virtual reality displays and programs, more detailed and powerful graphical processors, and more complex AI, the wargame as a form of non-linear narrative along with its experiential brethren could fundamentally change, advance, and problematize the ways they present historical knowledge and how the public accumulates and understands historical knowledge.

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