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Heroism in American Sniper

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Abstract

This present research paper studies Clint Eastwood's movie *American Sniper* and the ideology it conveys. This movie is analysed in comparison to the American political agenda on the War on Terror with reference to Louis Althusser's theory of Ideology that considers cinema as an ideological apparatus that serves the interest of the state. Thus, this research aims to confirm our hypothesis that *American Sniper* as a movie has an ideological and political dimension that serve the United States' post 9/11 foreign policy.

Key words: heroism, 9/11, movie, *American Sniper*, Hollywood, ideology

Dedication

To my family and my friends, who have always been present for me in times of need.

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General Introduction

The concept of heroism is deeply rooted in human history. Heroes and heroines shaped the stories and tales of human civilisations. Indeed, heroes are people who are gifted with supernatural physical abilities and great mental power. Heroes are regarded as the pride of nations for they assure protection against all forms of evil. Heroes show great courage and strength while facing adversity.

As any other culture, the American culture has its own mythology of heroes. In the collective imaginary of the American people, the first men who founded the United States are gifted with heroic deeds. For the Americans, their country is meant to be great.

In the past, the fantastic accomplishments of heroes were transmitted to the next generations through both written and oral literature. Nowadays, with the hegemony of cinema being the most prevalent medium of culture, the deeds of heroes are best depicted in movies.

Indeed, cinema cherishes heroes. Hollywood movies often portray the favourite American hero, the Soldier. Hollywood soldiers are presented as very strong men who fight with great sense of courage and patriotism. In fact, this this embellished depiction of the American soldiers is deliberate for it has political and ideological dimensions.

As an example of political-oriented movies that plays on the heroification of soldiers, *American Sniper* is a Hollywood product that builds a mythified image of American soldiers in order to serve the political agendas of the American government. Indeed, *American Sniper* serves the American policy of War on Terror that U.S government adopted after the 9/11 massacres.

The concept of heroism is one of the most ancient myths in human history. Heroes and heroines shaped the storytelling of each civilisation.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the hero as a person who is admired for great achievements. A hero is also who is gifted with noble qualities, physical strength and great courage. (“Hero”)

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell argues that everywhere in the inhabited world, in every epoch and circumstances, myths of heroes have arisen. The manifestation of the hero myth is found in religion, philosophy, folk tales and arts. Myths of heroes inspired the physical and mental activities of men. Furthermore, Campbell argues that although people differ according to time and place, the heroes of every civilisation share common features he calls the Hero’s Journey. (10, 11). These common elements are named Archetypes. Carl Jung defines archetypes as primitive mental images that humans have inherited from their ancestors. In his essay *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconsciousness*, Carl Jung says that heroes from different horizons share some features that make the image of the hero look the same in different societies; it is what he calls the Hero Archetype. (5)

Philip Zimbardo, Zeno Franco, and Kathy Blau said that heroism is seen as the apogee of human ideals and the apex of noble behaviour. Heroes have the ultimate status within their respective societies; they are respected and loved for their virtues. Indeed, heroes are altruistic and brave; they accept death and mutilation for the service of others. (99). Moreover, Zimbardo forwards many example of heroes, he cites the soldier who with brave defends his country while facing huge danger. Then, he talks about political and religious leaders who managed to establish peace and prosperity to their countries. Finally, he cites the scientific heroes who work hard to heal people and to find cures for mortal diseases. (109)

Heroes are very important in the life of men. They procure sentiments of security, welfare and pride. Psychology studies confirm that the stories of heroes heal people’s

psychological wounds and nourish their hopes. It is true that heroes help societies improve themselves by teaching people virtues of altruism, courage, wit, and love (Allison). Robert Penn Warren says that heroism has a great value amongst people. He admires the hero:

For he is the embodiment of our ideals , the fulfilment of our secret needs , and the image of the daydream self, then to analyse him is likely to mean, in the end ,an analysis of the hero-makers and the hero-worshippers , who are , indeed , ourselves. (qtd. in Fried 491)

In ancient times, the hero myth was conveyed through folk tales, rituals and of course written literature. However in the last two centuries, cinema has grown to be major storytelling media in the American culture. As a result, the idea of heroism is now best conveyed through the seventh art. Cinema nowadays holds a prominent place in people's life. It conveys information, advertisement, opinion and entertainment. Thus, the hero movie is a cinematic success for many reasons. Erin Free thinks that the troubled times demand heroes. In an interview given to *Filmink*, Michael Shannon, a movie producer, says that in times of great fear, it is nice to believe that there is a protector. Moreover, Free argues that in times of terrorist threats, financial crisis or just traffic congestions, people would love to see someone who comes in rescue. Second, he argues that hero movie producers are themselves big fans of superheroes. Those producers adhere to the superhero mythology and folklore. While interviewing *Guardians of the Galaxy* director, James Gunn, the latter confirms that as a young boy, he used to buy *Spider-Man* and *Thor* magazines (qtd. in Free). Another reason of the big success of hero movies is the technology used and the budget spared. Free says that nowadays, directors can pull in their movies as much fantastical properties as they will. It is a highway to imagination, everything is allowed, everything is possible. Besides, gigantic studios that produce hero movies as Marvel and DC Comics spend huge budgets in order to

produce the best hero movies (Free). As an example, the last *Avengers* movie held the budget of \$ 356,000,000. (Avengers)

In the modern history of the United States, the soldier has become America's favourite hero. The status of the soldier as a hero is fostered by Hollywood war movies. The Hollywoodian American soldier is the symbol of patriotism, hard work and courage. Geraldine Manning argues that soldiers are gifted with spiritual values such as love, honesty, respect and justice. Therefore, the soldier's success is due to the audience's obsessions with war movies. Although the events they depict happened in the past, war movies continue to sell. Movie editor Andrew Pulver thinks that the war genre seduces the audience for many reasons. First, war is multidimensional conflict that triggers political, societal and economic mutations. These mutations represent a great potential to create infinite stories of heroic military achievements, to tell parallel versions of events and to unfold new stories that remained unknown to the public. Second, movies have this capacity of rewriting history; Matthew Sweet gives the example of *Saving Private Ryan* which made people believe that America won the WWII on its own. Matthew Sweet believes that:

Steven Spielberg's version of D-day will be the one that people would memorise in 300 years' time, in the same way that people think of The Russian Revolution through Eisenstein's movies. It's almost like an attempt to produce the official version of events. (qtd. in Pulver)

The invasion of Iraq was one of the major military conflicts in the last 20 years. The war was launched after the 9/11 attacks and was enrolled in the War on Terror agenda. Still, this war remains the subject of harsh critics for the reasons that triggered it and the casualties it caused. The United States alleged that Iraqi regime possessed weapons of mass destruction and its president Saddam had a Qaeda and had a potential involvement in the 9/11. However,

the allegation was in fact a mere falsehood; in 2003, President Bush himself admitted that the United States had no clear evidence that Saddam was involved in the 9/11 attacks. Slavoj Žižek believes that the war in Iraq was not the product of counterterrorism but rather the result of a pure ideological agenda. First, Žižek believes that America used the usual pretext of bringing democracy to a fascist regime. Second, He argues that America had to show once more its global hegemony and domination by using military power. Third, Žižek believes that America targeted Iraq's oil resources. (4). Paul Wolfowitz, United States Deputy Secretary of Defence during the Bush Presidency, declared that the weapons of mass destruction motif was a 'bureaucratic' excuse for the war and admitted that America wanted Iraq's oil, he declared that "we had no choice in Iraq, the country swims on sea of oil." (qtd. in Žižek 5)

It is noteworthy to refer to the place of cinema in shaping public opinion. Since its creation, the movie has not stopped being the medium of propaganda and persuasion. Movies are used to serve particular political agenda or to mould ideology to the masses. In fact, there is a strong relationship between American politics and Hollywood. Indeed, the Pentagon assisted the production of more than 200 movies by means of budget, men, buildings, and logistics. Actually, in order to obtain financial support, moviemakers submit their screenplays for The Department of Defence. Matthew Alford and Tom Secker gave the example of *Fields of Fire*, a Vietnam War movie that the Department of Defence refused to support for it comprised scenes of American soldiers torturing innocent civilians. Actually, the movie gave a negative image on the American troops. As result, the movie was censured thus never been produced. (6 -7, 8).

American Sniper is one the most illustrative examples about American war movie propaganda during the invasion of Iraq. The movie tells the story of Chris Kyle, the most lethal sniper in the history of the American army. The movie's story happens during the invasion of Iraq. John Horgan declares that *American Sniper* serves the political agenda of the

War on Terror as a necessity. He believes that Clint Eastwood's movie follows the traditional Manichean scheme that glorifies American soldiers as the heroes of goodness and settles the Iraqis as the purest evil. Chris Kyle in the movie kills women and children to protect his fellows; he feels some guilt only to show that he is endowed with good deeds. John Horgan concludes that the American Army killed at least 1200 Iraqi children during the war, and through the movie the audience is driven to accept that those kids deserved to die. (Horgan)

The concept of heroism in American culture and its representation in Hollywood movies has been the subject of various studies. However, no research has been conducted linking the movie *American Sniper* with the idea of heroism, the war on terror policy and the portrayal of the American image. The choice of the movie is relevant for it embodies perfectly the American hero soldier and conveys the American ideology.

Our study aims to understand the relationship between the Hollywoodian Hero Soldier and the political agendas of the United States. More specifically, the study aims to bring out the propaganda conveyed through movies concerning U.S politics.

The main topic of this research is the relation between the movie *American Sniper* and American politics. More specifically, the study examines the role the Hero Soldier in supporting American politics through Hollywood.

In this study, we hypothesise that the depiction of the soldier Chris Kyle as a hero in *American Sniper* works to strengthen the American image and to consolidate its foreign policy agendas.

In order to grasp the relationship between the movie *American Sniper* and the American politics, we will study:

- 1- The origins of American Heroism

2- The soldier as the new American hero

3- *American Sniper* and its relation to American politics

In order to achieve the objectives of our research, we will study the movie through Louis Althusser's theory of Ideology which stipulates that cinema serves the ideological and political agendas of the Ruling Class.

Our work is divided into three chapters:

The first chapter tackles the concept of heroism and its relation to Hollywood. It traces the origins of American heroism and its manifestation in Hollywood movies.

The second chapter examines the post 9/11 ideology "The War on Terror" and its promotion using the media and cinema.

Finally, the third chapter tackles the war of Iraq and the analysis of the movie *American Sniper* through selected scenes and through mise-en-scene features.

Chapter I

Heroism and Hollywood

Introduction

The idea of heroism is as old as human history on earth. Stories of heroes, real or fictional, have fashioned not only the storytelling but also the mentalities that characterised civilisations. For each culture, each civilisation, and each epoch, heroes were the pride of the nations and holders of the Good. From Greek mythical warriors to the biblical stories of Jesus Christ and the extraordinary powers of Thor, heroes constituted the highest range of people in all societies. Heroes assured not only the protection of their fellow citizens, but also gained their love, respect and veneration.

1. Definition and Etymology

The word hero comes from the Greek word (*hērōs*) which means literally a ‘protector’ or a ‘defender’ (Hero n.1). By a broader definition, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines a hero (heroine for its feminine form) as a real person or a fictional character who, when facing a danger, fights against adversity through feats of brave, courage, ingenuity and strength. (112)

2. The Traditional Hero in Literature and Cinema

The traditional hero is considered a warrior who lives and dies in the pursuit of honour and asserts their greatness by the brilliancy and efficiency with which they eliminate their foes. In literature, the traditional hero is gifted by natural or supernatural skills, attributes, and qualities that distinguish them from the common people. They usually play the role of the good that fights evil with courage and brave. (Schein 69).

In literature, stories of heroes fashioned the written heritage of civilisations and cultures. Hector the Trojan prince is a great example to portray the traditional hero. In his book, *the Iliad*, Greek historian Homer places Hector as the leader of Trojans, fighting the Greeks with great courage and harshness, protecting his city Troy. He managed to kill 31000 Greek warriors by himself. Hector was known not only for his courage, but also for his noble and courtly nature. Indeed, Homer describes Hector as peaceful, witty, a responsible husband and father, who is not driven by evil motives. (196-212).

In cinema, the figure of the classic hero is highly represented. Influenced by the classical heroes who advocate the Good and fight evil, Hollywood studios provide the audience with characters that follow the path of the Greek heroes. In one of the most popular sagas in the history of Hollywood, we find *Star Wars*' Luke Skywalker. The fictional character of Luke Skywalker is the main protagonist in the *Star Wars* Saga. Skywalker is a Jedi, a galaxy warrior and peacekeeper armed with a lightsaber (See Fig.1). Skywalker is a character animated with humility, knowledge, wisdom, altruism and of course courage. Skywalker possesses also supernatural attributes. In the saga's jargon, this supernatural trait is referred to as 'the Power'. (Skywalker)

3. Modern-Day Hero: the Myth of the Hero Soldier

In modern times, there was the rise of a new type of heroes, the soldier. Nowadays, the soldier is portrayed as a warrior whose essential traits are physical strength, courage, and aggression. On the other hand, the soldier is gifted with moral powers in order to justify the war; he is patriotic, loyal, trustworthy, and altruistic.

The soldier fights for the right causes. He proudly serves his nation. He is ready to leave his homeland, his beloved ones and to sacrifice his own life in service of the duty. In the eyes of society, the soldier incarnates the warrior of the right.

3.1. The Construction of the Myth

In his essay *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung advances the idea of archetypes which he defines as a universal archaic images, signs and symbols that derive from the collective consciousness. (3, 41).

The Jungian Hero Archetype was morphed and modelled in modern time by Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*. In order to become a hero, the protagonist undergoes what Campbell calls the hero's journey. This journey is shaped in the following steps:

First, the protagonist is not a hero yet. He goes through challenges, trials and tribulations. At the beginning, he is filled with doubt and confusion, but a superpower comes to convince him to take the journey. Second, the hero goes into a journey to fight evil, leaving behind the beloved ones, their previous life and its delights. Third, the hero faces traumatic events as the loss of a relative, a friend or lover. Finally, the hero returns from the journey with reward yet with incurable wounds. (45,227)

Similarly, the soldier is perceived as a hero for he undergoes the same stages of the Jungian hero. The soldier often refuses to engage in a war, then, he decides to leave his family and to go to serve into a foreign country to fight the enemy, facing hostility and danger. The most common motif that incites him is patriotism. Third, the soldier faces the atrocity of the war as he loses friends dying in the battlefield. Finally, after finishing the service, the soldier comes back to his mother country, decorated and proclaimed a hero yet he is no longer the same person, he is now suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

3.2. The Projection of the Myth

Hollywood is a prominent institution in the United States. Hollywood studios produce hundreds of movies every year, generating billions of dollars. The movie as any other form of art is the purest reflection of the socio-political, economic, and cultural conditions that govern a particular society. In the on-going century, movie has gained huge popularity worldwide. In modern times, Hollywood has become the perfect playground where soldiers demonstrate their heroic deeds.

Movies occupy nowadays a very important place in American culture. Since its appearance in the late nineteenth century, influence of movies has not ceased to grow ever since. Besides its entertaining and artistic nature, cinema has political and ideological dimensions. Robert Sklar argues that from 1896 to 1946, movies have grown to be the most popular and influential medium of entertainment in America (3). Moreover, movies constitute the most effective way to propagate propaganda and to construct opinion. Slavoj Žižek, the Slovenian philosopher claimed that “cinema is the ultimate pervert art, it does not give you what to desire-it tells you how to desire.” (*The Pervert's* 00:0:29-00:00:36) However, Hollywood movies went through a long process of development and mutations from the 19th century short motion pictures to the 21st century blockbusters we know today.

The first movies were very short. Some movies were four minutes long. They were projected at fairgrounds or music halls. The subjects that were viewed were people's daily activities, scenes of foreign landscapes, and sometimes short comedies.

By 1914, many national movie industries were established. The first were established mainly in Europe. Movies at that time started to be longer and storytelling. At the time, America was not a cinematic leader yet. By the growth of the cinematic production, people started to see more movies. Movie producers started to invest big amounts of capital in this

fresh industry. Consequently, large studios were established to make more movies. The first thirty years of the twentieth century marked the history of cinema. Movies started incorporating colour and sound. By 1940, all movies were presented by synchronised sound and with efficient colours. This technological prowess settled the dominance of the American movie industry and launching the golden age of Hollywood.

Nowadays, the movie genre that dominates the cinema industry is the blockbuster. The modern blockbuster is a movie that is characterised by huge a production budget, international display, and massive income in the box office. This new genre of films is designed to relate the whole world, to be admired and enjoyed worldwide, and to engender big profit.

Tanner Mirrlees thinks that the success of the blockbuster is due to four major reasons. First, blockbuster producers spend big budgets to create the most spectacular movies possible. The average Hollywood movie holds the budget of \$100 million where the average budget for a blockbuster is between \$200 and \$300 million. Second, blockbusters are mass-released. They reach as many cinemas as in as many countries possible within a short time. This aims to generate as much revenue as possible. Third, blockbusters target a global audience. They are designed to please people from different cultures, cinematic tastes, gender, age, and language. Moreover, blockbusters feature themes and subjects that appeal to everyone such as good versus evil, heroism, and love. Fourth, blockbusters always feature famous and globally recognisable actors to plays both the protagonists and the antagonists. (Mirrlees, *Global Entertainment Media*, 183,184-185)

Mirrlees gives the example of *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007) as a profitable blockbuster for it gathered all the required conditions that make it successful. First, the movie is a box office hit. IMDb ranks the blockbuster as the twelfth highest revenue-generating movie worldwide earning more than \$ 950 million. The movie production budget

is estimated to \$300 million making it the most expensive movie of all time. Second, the movie was massively promoted. Months before its release, the movie was mass-marketed in every way possible: Television and online advertisements, banners, t-shirts, and videogame adaptations were produced worldwide. Third, the blockbuster featured famous actors such as Johnny Depp, Keira Knightley, and Orlando Bloom. Finally, *Pirates of the Caribbean* reached wide audiences for it conveyed the universal themes of good versus evil, friendship, and courage. (*Global Entertainment Media* 189)

4. Hollywood and the American Image

The American society is marked by thoughts and beliefs that differentiate it from the other societies. Americans have acquired a particular vision of the world that has shaped their cultural identity.

4.1. American Exceptionalism

The concept of Exceptionalism is defined by Duncan Watts in the *Dictionary of American Government and Politics* as the belief that America is unique in terms of the society, the culture and the political organization (10). Americans have inherited the puritan values of liberty, brave and providence. In the collective imaginary of the American people, these values represent the ultimate truth.

The American Exceptionalism myth is not a recent idea. This myth has been constructed through important phases of history. Significant personalities and events contributed to the in American grandeur as we know it nowadays. The puritan Legacy of America is very important in the collective memory of the Americans.

The first event that shaped the American exception is The Pilgrim Fathers' journey. The Pilgrims fled England and its persecution, sailed to America to settle in Plymouth. In

order to organize their colony, the Pilgrim Fathers signed the Mayflower Compact in 1620. This document is considered as the core of the American Constitution. The Mayflower's importance resides on the fact that it was the first document to assure self-governance and democracy. People regarded themselves as citizens not as subjects. John Quincy Adams declared that the Mayflower Compact was "the most legitimate source of government" (qtd in Grant 14). Second, in the spring of 1630, eleven ships carrying more than 700 men, women, and children sailed to America. The leader of the expedition John Winthrop made a sermon that would stay in the American psyche forever. He declared in *A model of Christian Charity* that those people risked their lives crossing oceans in order to establish, in the Name of God, a Puritan city in Massachusetts, his words were:

We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when he shall make us a praise and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantations: the Lord make it like that of New England: for we must consider that we shall be as a City Upon A Hill, the eyes of all people upon us. (qtd in Grant 14).

Indeed, Winthrop looked to America as a city upon a hill, a country which was elevated and superior compared to the other nations who would only look it in full admiration. Nowadays, this sermon is regarded as the greatest sermon of the millennium. In modern times this sermon was popularised by President Regan. President Regan explained that he viewed America as a God-blessed, elevated, and proud city that had been built upon rocks where people from different horizons live in peace and harmony (Hodgson 1, 2). The third event that shaped the American exception was the Revolution. Before America had gained its independence, many intellectuals spoke in favour of its liberation, among them British-born American Thomas Paine. In his milestone essay *Common Sense*, Paine praises America in terms of surface, strategic location and power. Paine was conscious of the importance of the geographical

location that America held and the opportunities it had in order to create a strong nation .He declared that the independence of America was not the affair of a country or a city but rather a continent that has the area of one eighth of the habitable globe. He added that England could no longer govern America for England belonged to Europe while America belonged to itself. Moreover, Paine said that the new American nation is God-graced; he asserted that by Divine said fashion the Reformation was preceded by the discovery of America as if the almighty graciously opened a sanctuary for the persecuted. Finally, Paine assured that America would be a Republic. Contrary to Europe where the King was the law, for America the Law would be King. (Paine 43, 48, 58)

Undoubtedly, the American Revolution was exceptional. The revolution gave birth to the biggest republic in the globe. The Americans proclaimed a republic that would guarantee equality and human rights. It held the principle that the state would rule in the consent of the people, breaking with monarchical Europe's traditions of Divine and Hereditary Rights of governance. Without a shadow of doubt, America became a leading republic and a worldwide model as a country that respects of human rights and liberties. (Hodgson 35-36)

Fourth, after becoming an independent people, Americans launched a huge campaign of westward expansion. The domestication of the whole continent was a strategic goal. America would have the chance to build up a nation with institutions that would serve public interests and throw off all kinds of despotisms. Thomas Jefferson, the third American President believed that the creation of a strong nation depended on land ownership and agriculture. Soon, this westward expansion was associated with religion. In 1845, a journalist named John Sullivan argued that it was Americans' Manifest Destiny to take liberty westward. (Manifest Destiny). Indeed, the exploration of the West had a religious argumentation. Bishop Berkeley wrote "westward the course of empire takes its way". (Horsman 83)

In modern times, some events contributed to great America as we know today. After the First World War, the two powers in Europe, France and Britain, were severely affected by the war. Those two countries became dependant of U.S products such as wheat and weapons. This dependence helped America to boost its production and its exportations. By 1920, America was the biggest manufacturer of cars. The United States produced more cars than Britain, France and Germany combined. By 1940, America was proclaimed world's strongest economy. After the Second World War, America was in possession of the most sophisticated weapon on earth and had already used it twice in Japan. During the 1950s, Americans enjoyed material welfare and social stability thanks to the economic prosperity and the powerful position their country held in foreign affairs. (Hodgson 67-68, 84)

In 1969, the American flag was planted in the moon, marking a new era in history. After exploring outer space, America's domination expanded to the whole universe and created a new horizon for the future. Undoubtedly, the moon landing was an epoch-making event that showed to the whole world that Americans are capable of great things .Hence, the moon expedition settled America as a great nation of science and technology. (Launius 14)

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Communism everywhere, Liberal Democracy and Capitalism became the prevalent political and economic systems worldwide. The American democracy triumphed over despotic Communism. Capitalism and democracy guaranteed material and moral welfare. Modern America assured wealth, freedom and security to its people. Capitalist America could achieve what two centuries of Marxism could not reach: a classless society with absolute freedom. (Fukuyama 287-290). In the last 40 years, the belief that capitalism is the only reliable system is largely widespread among Americans, citizens and intellectuals alike. Capitalism and free market economy dominate worldwide event though some fierce detractors still criticise it. Slavoj Žižek declared that it was easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism (qtd in Fisher 2)

4.2. American Patriotism

Patriotism is the sentiment of faith a citizen manifest to its country. It is also the identification in the country's symbols, history, beliefs and destiny. In the subject matter, Americans are one of the most patriotic peoples on the globe. One common practise of The American patriot is waving the flag at any given occasion; on The Fourth of July, during sport events, or at any random day, tirelessly claiming that America is the best country in the world. Actually, people as well as nations construct their identity in regards to others. Americans built their patriotism in comparison with other people. Americans are what others are not: free, democratic, and powerful. Thus, the American patriotism is slightly different from other patriotisms. The glorification of the nations' History and the heroification of its founders made people blindly follow the decisions of the government. (Stam and Shohat 1, 4, 5)

4.3. American Values

The movie significance relies on the fact that this cultural artefact has the outstanding capacity to reach a huge amount of the global audience and to transmit exactly the same message. As an effect of globalisation, the echo of movies reach different people from different horizons and culture yet manages to evoke the same responses to the subject in matter. Moreover, movies have this faculty of capturing imagination, shaping and directing the sense of what is real, good ,beautiful and righteous thanks to the cinematic effects of sound and image.

Since its creation, the Hollywood industry has not ceased to promote the American culture at all its boundaries. Movies play the role of the cultural ambassador either in America itself or to the external world. Indeed, culture is America's best exportable good.

The hegemony of the Hollywood over the cinematic production and its worldwide projection has the consequence of sacralising the U.S culture. Movies help promoting the American way of life. Pure American cultural products such as Rock and Roll music; Basketball, the Simpsons, and Mc Donald's are brought to the world via movies. Furthermore, Hollywood movies efficiently work to promote the most cherished American values. Movies carry messages of freedom, liberty, hard work, democracy and most of all heroism. Truly, the collective consciousness of the American people harbours the idea of American exceptionalism that drives the US to proselytise culturally the rest of the world. In his famous editorial *The American Century*, Henry Luce asserted:

There was already an immense American Internationalism , American Jazz, Hollywood movies, American slang, American machines, and patent products, are in fact the only things that every community in the world recognize in common[...] more than that, America is the intellectual, scientific and artistic capital of the world. (169)

Also, America has demonstrated its will to create U.S-like world that would better serve its political and economic interests. As a result, America has become an admiration to the whole world. All nations adhere to the American way of life and values. The American cultural product is highly consumable especially for the youth. In this way, as advanced by Herbert Marcuse, western capitalist societies happily embraced American movies, music, and TV shows because consumerism made people docile and placid. (Artz, Oretga Murphy 54)

4.4. American Foreign Policy

America was the triumphant country after WWII, since the 1940's and after the weakening of the traditional powers of the previous century, France and Britain; America's hegemony grew stronger than ever becoming the world's major power.

Today, America has established itself as a leading diplomatic, scientific, economic cultural and most of all military superpower. America indeed surpassed the Roman Empire supremacy. The United State regulates global economy and markets, its army intervenes in all conflicts and its media controls the flux of communication and culture. (Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* 1)

Hollywood plays an important role in the promotion and the perpetuation of this global domination. First of all, Hollywood tries to create the desired opinion within the US territory. Movies are the perfect way to shape opinions. During the WWII; the U.S Office of War Information had a unit dedicated exclusively to Hollywood, The Bureau of Motion Pictures. The task of the latter was to produce movies about the WWII in order to persuade Americans to support the war effort. The Head of the Office war information declared that the easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into the majority of people's minds is by using a medium of an entertainment picture. He believes that by doing so, people would not realize they are being propagandised.(Mirrlees, *Hearts and Mines* 76-77).

Second, the domination of America is projected to the rest of the world. America's leadership is well portrayed in movies. War movies portray the sophistication of the US army, the openness of its people and the nobility of its values. Indeed, Hollywood helps the United States achieve political goals without to resort to military force. During the Cold War, America knew it would not vanquish communism with military power. It used culture instead. Although Hollywood movies were banned in the Soviet Union, some of them were introduced illegally. One of the movies that made it was *Dr. Strangelove*, a critic about American nuclear weapons policy. A soviet journalist said that the movie was shocking and had the same effects on the soviet people. They knew that even their country could face a devastating fate if nuclear weapons happened to be used. The soviet audience discovered through movies that unlike their country, American people didn't have any shortage of products and could afford

beautiful houses and fancy cars. In 1980, after the assassination of John Lennon, a member of the legendary music band the Beatles, a monument of him appeared in communist Prague. In 1988, some peace and human rights activists founded the Lennon Peace Club who militated for the removal of the soviet troops. As a result, after time, John Lennon overcame Lenin. (Nye Soft Power 23)

4.5. American Soldier

The figure of the Hero Soldier is very symbolic in the American psyche. The soldier is a person who, filled with patriotism and courage, sacrifices his own life to save those of others. The soldier is ready to operate abroad in very hostile lands such as Iraq or Afghanistan in the name of democracy and human rights. He is the reflection of the American values of freedom, hard work, patriotism and brave. In fact, Hollywood plays an impressive role in fostering the image of the soldier as a national hero.

Tanner Mireles claims that there is no country in the world which creates as many images of itself and its military heroes as America does, it is a unique cultural phenomenon. The American actor John Wayne is perceived as a Second World War hero though he never fought in the war. Indeed, John Wayne incarnates the real American Hero Soldier who, doped with high doses of masculinity and charisma, fights with brave for the honour of his country (How Hollywood). Surely, this heroification of the soldier is a result of the American way of thinking. Nick Cull affirms that Americans tell the story of World War II in a way that makes them feel good about themselves. He adds that Americans love watching WWII movies because they love seeing themselves as the righteous heroes who defeated evil. Moreover, Hollywood places the soldier as the hero who protects the nation. The propaganda carried by movies of America being in perpetual danger raises faith in the soldier. Once more, Cull

affirms that Hollywood ‘scares the hell out of Americans’. As a result, the intervention of the soldier becomes a matter of survival. (qtd in How Hollywood)

Within the American society, the image of the soldier continues to shine. The confidence put in the army raised the soldier to the rank of a national icon. The Hollywood soldier is played by a handsome strong white man who tirelessly serves the national duty. Additionally, the cinematic techniques of picture and sound succeed to catch the audience and to create a sentiment of veneration and love for the character of the soldier. As a result, Hollywood has succeeded to implement the idea of the hero soldier in the collective consciousness of the American society.

4.6. American Militarism

Militarism is the belief that is necessary to have strong armed forces. This will to power aims to assure protection to the ever growing threats and to win political and economic advantages.

Andrew Bacevich claims that the American obsession of the military power started after the Vietnam War debacle (6). The United States’ politicians were frustrated after losing the war to a small Communist country. America felt the need to invest more money on the military industry. Bacevich then asserted that America engaged in competition with the Soviets in order to possess the most lethal of weapons. The historian adds that at the end of The Cold War, American politicians, democrats and conservative alike, have said yes military power (14).

America is nowadays is a military superpower. Bacevich claims that “today as never in their history, Americans are enthralled with military power” (1). The efficiency of the American troops during the war in Iraq showed the real strength of the American Army.

Journalist Gregg Easterbrook declared in great jubilation that the American forces are stronger than both the Wehrmacht in 1940 and the Roman legions at their highest power.(qtd in Bacevich 1)

Yet, this military supremacy is not priceless. Militarism costs money: it is to know that the budget spent by Pentagon in the last twenty years was % 12 larger than the Defence budget during the Cold War. (Bacevich 17) According to *Business Insider*, the cost of the 2003 Iraq War was estimated to 2 trillion dollars, which was a way larger than Britain, France and Germany military budgets combined. For the military presence of America outside its frontiers, the United States army owns 800 military bases in more than 70 countries. He added that the maintaining of these bases cost 85 to 100 billion dollars per year. (Vine)

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with three major themes. The first theme tackles the concept of heroism and its roots in the human history and consciousness. It manages to express the importance of heroes in the storytelling and the shaping of human culture. Second, this chapter gives an insight about the importance of cinema, both as an entertaining medium and a cultural and political vector .Thus cinema not only manages to divert the masses but also to construct opinion and myth. Finally, this chapter puts the light on the new American hero, the soldier and its depiction in Hollywood movies.

Chapter II

Hollywood and Ideology

Introduction

Ideas and opinions are not innocent. History tells us that since the advent of men, some ideas and opinions fashioned the course of people either from the same community or from different horizons. The most popular thoughts would govern the course of History. Some ideas are more prevalent than others. They may be religious, political, or philosophical. The sum of this dominant opinions and thoughts is called ideology.

1. Ideology

The concept of ideology is often linked with German philosopher Karl Marx. In his book *The German Ideology*, written in collaboration with Frederick Engels, Marx argues that ideology is the creation of thoughts, opinions, and consciousness. Ideology includes all men conceptions and imaginations in the domains of religion, politics, law and morality. (42).

Indeed, ideology is the product of the activities of men. For every epoch and every place in the world, specific ideas were shaping the course of History and the relations between people. Marx indicates that the dominant ideas of the era are fixed by the ruling class. For Marx, the rulers' ideas are dominant for the ruling class detain the material means of production. Consequently, the material control engenders the intellectual control, in other terms, the control of ideas. Thus; Carl Marx views History as the vertical relation between the rulers and the ruled. The first one makes opinions and the second follows. The dominant ideology is the ruling class' ideology. (67)

2. The War on Terror: the Post 9/11 Ideology

The Marxist approach to ideology is still relevant today. In every corner of the globe, various ideologies dominate. Some state leaders have specific political agendas to implant among their citizens. In order to do so, the ruling class create discourses, conjunctures, and beliefs to achieve desired goals. In its modern history, America has shifted from various ideologies, from antifascism in the 1940's and the war against Nazism to Anticommunism during the Cold War era.

However, since the 9/11 events, the dominant ideology in America is the War on Terror. After the attacks, and all that resulted from chaos and psychosis, President Bush declared the war against the newest form of enemy, terrorism. This ideology is still carried on by Bush's successors at the white House, president Obama invaded Syria to overcome Daesh and the Trump Administration continues to deploy soldiers in Iraq.

War is about persuasion. Geoff Martin and Erin Steuter argue that although America has a long tradition as global military superpower, its people remains quite resistant to the idea of waging wars abroad. As a consequence, the U.S government has to give proof and arguments in order to support the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. (45) The war of Afghanistan was the first step America had taken in its war against terrorism. Martin and Steuter argue that most of Americans easily supported the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 because the 9/11 attacks created sentiments of pure rage and revenge (50). Indeed, Americans were driven by their emotions rather than by their intellects. However, convincing public opinion to wage the war in Iraq was not an evident task. The Bush Administration made speech after speech to present evidence that Iraq had connection to 9/11 and that Saddam's regime was developing Weapons of Mass Destruction. By doing so, The U.S government had set Iraq as a potential threat to both its national security and to the neighbouring countries. (51)

3. Hollywood as an Ideological Apparatus

To sustain any ideology, governments use different mechanisms to make any opinion or idea prevalent. For the philosopher Louis Althusser, governments impose ideology through two distinct mechanisms; the Ideological and Repressive States Apparatuses. First, the Ideological State Apparatuses represent a set of institutions, organisations, and practises by which the State circulates ideology. These institutions include the Family, the Church, the Political Parties, and the Media. (77-79) Second, the Repressive States apparatuses are also a set of State institutions. However, This Repressive Apparatus works to enforce people's behaviour and social conduct. They include the Police, the Judiciary or the Army. (92). Through those two mechanisms, the ruling class generates the suitable ideology that best serves the State's interests ,keeps the masses obedient ,and prevent any form of social insurrection. (93)

4. Media, Hollywood, and The Politics of Fear

Undoubtedly, one of the most efficient mechanisms to sustain the State's ideology is the media and by extension, the cinema. America has always been involved in military conflicts; the biggest challenge is to convince the population to go to war. Herman Goring, former Nazi Air Force Marshal declared at the Nuremberg Trials that:

Of course people don't want war. But after all, it's the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it's always a simple matter to drag the people along whether it's a democracy, a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the

pacifists for lack of patriotism, and exposing the country to great danger. (qtd in Martin and Steuter 48)

One would understand from Goring's speech that people are driven by their emotions to wage a war that they did not want initially. Governments use propaganda in order to persuade people that they are constantly in danger. The war of Iraq saw the exact conduct. After the 9/11 attacks, the media played the game of terror. Psychologist Tom Pyszczynski said that no one could deny the chaos and the terror provoked by the 9/11 attacks. However, the media took profit from this chaos. The majority of news television channels were repeatedly reviewing the attacks. The media explained that the attacks targeted American symbols of economy and security. All in all, the message that the media conveyed was that there was an enemy who was anti-American, who despised democracy and freedom, who was jubilating for the damage he caused. (1136-1141).

Alfred Hitchcock once said that "there is no terror in the bang, only in the depictions of it" (qtd in Glassner 14). This statement made by Hitchcock tells a lot about the 9/11 media coverage. Television is the perfect ground for dramatization. The normal does not seduce. Images have this peculiar capacity to amaze or to dismay. Images can mobilise people for the good and for the bad. (Bourdieu 21)

Barry Glassner said that the media substituted facts by scenarios. The most prominent message in the media was that the danger was real and that 9/11 carnage might happen again. He argued that the journalists and the audience were conditioned to take the matter more seriously than ever. Both sides believed the information that had been given by the U.S authorities without a further verification. Driven by sentiments of anger and patriotism, television journalists were wearing flag pins, some of them even cried live. Moreover, the media kept telling people that Al Qaeda and Saddam were the axis of evil. From 2002 to

2003, U.S officials were issuing high risks of terrorist attacks during press conferences. The watchword of the authorities was that terrorism is real; it can strike anytime, at any place. (75-76) Douglass Kellner said that “Breaking News T.V has become a form of reality television in which it capitalises on the ‘you are here’ dimension”. The news held people stuck in front of their television for days and months. The media made people live the 9/11 again and again. (115)

In fact, since its generalisation, Television became the dominant source for the news. Television can easily direct people thoughts and opinions about by focusing on a particular headline or just distorting the facts of an event. Television, which real task is to record reality, creates it instead. In the words of the Pierre Bourdieu: “the world is prescribed rather than described.” (18, 22)

Hollywood on its part contributed a great deal in the propaganda of fear. The war movies about Iraq supported the Bush agenda. Barry Glassner argues that it is contemporary Hollywood who sets the enemies. They were the Communists in the 1970’s and now the Arab Terrorists. Those terrorists are always portrayed as anti-American savages who preach violence and death, they are characterised by suicidal impulses and uncontrolled madness. Furthermore, Hollywood movies about Iraq show the two sides of the American soldiers. First, they are brave men who sacrifice their own lives for the glory of America and its values. Indeed, Hollywood pays a tribute for its heroes. Second, the movies show the soldiers as victims; they are in hostile country, surrounded by merciless criminals. (p112).

Consequently, the politics of fear that America had led succeeded in manufacturing consent. Americans were driven by their emotions. They were in state of fear and confusion. Those feelings of vulnerability, mixed with a wave of blind patriotism, adding to that an effective complain of media propaganda made Americans, citizens and intellectuals alike,

support all government decisions and adhere to its politics without any complaint. The media propaganda succeeded to forge the expected image about Iraq. Noam Chomsky said that right after 9/11, only 3% of Americans thought that Iraq was involved in the attacks. By 2002, the percentage was around 60%. (27)

Conclusion

Ideas make history. Through this chapter, we first discussed the concept of Ideology. Carl Marx asserts that ideology represents the opinions and beliefs that govern societies. For Marx, the dominant ideas are always the ideas of the Ruling Class. In the same paradigm, Althusser follows and adopts the vision of Marx. He argues that the State generates ideology through its institutions. In his view, the State maintains its power through two mechanisms. The first is a set of Ideological apparatuses that fix the ideas and the opinions that the government desires to implant among its people. These apparatuses may include the Arts, the Political Parties and more specifically the Media. The second is a Repressive Apparatus which role is to regulate the conduct of the masses and to prevent any opposition. In this case, the States uses The Police or the Army.

Second, we discussed in this chapter the role of media in generating and sustaining Ideology. We learned that after 9/11 attacks, the ideology that ruled America was the war on terror. Thus, we shed the light on the role of the media in making America the realm of fear and terror. As a result, the Bush administration managed to drift the public opinion to wage the war against Iraq though it was proven later on that it was not necessary. Finally, we highlighted the role Hollywood in manufacturing the consent about the War of Iraq.

Chapter III

American Sniper and the War in Iraq

Introduction

This chapter discusses the world of Iraq and the movie *American Sniper*. First the chapter traces the historical process that led to the invasion of Iraq and its consequences. Second, the chapter also focuses on how cinema pictures this military conflict through the eyes of the movie *American Sniper*

1. The 9/11 Attacks : A Triggering Event

The terrorist attacks perpetrated by the jihadist group Al Qaida on September 11th, 2001 were deadliest in the modern history of the United States. More than 2900 people were killed and more than 6000 people were injured in a two-hour time. The targeted buildings were the World Trade Center in Manhattan, New York and the Pentagon, the headquarters of U.S Department Of Defence in the capital Washington D.C.

The 9/11 attacks had an immediate negative effect on U.S economy. The Wall Street institutions such as the New York Stock Exchange have been evacuated. The market fell by 7.1 per cent the day after the attacks, losing 684 points. According to Lydia Polgreen from the New York Times, New York City's economy lost 143000 jobs. The damage cost of the world Trade Center is estimated to 60 billion U.S dollars. The debris cleaning at Ground Zero cost more than 750 million dollars. (Polgreen). Moreover, the American state spared a huge budget to help the citizens affected by the incidents. The people who were nearly exposed to the explosions and the toxic fumes that emanated from the fires were seriously affected. Data confirmed that by 2018, around 10,000 people were affected by 9/11- related cancer. to help its

citizens ,the U.S authorities created a compensation fund .from 2001 to 2004, more than 7 billion dollars were spent on the victims of the attacks. (Durkin)

2. America Responds:The Post 9/11 American Policy

2.1. Early Responses

President Bush delivered a televised address from the White House where he declared that “Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America.” In reference to what would later be a military response, the president adds that America would not make distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harboured them. (9/11 Address to the Nation)

On November 25, the U.S president created the Department Of Homeland Security, a cabinet that operates in counter-terrorism and border security. Some days after, the 9/11 Commission was established to investigate the events responsible of the recent terrorist attacks. On December 18, 2001, September 11 was named a National Day of Service and Remembrance and a Memorial of the victims and a memorial museum were established.

In the other side, the population showed great compassion and solidarity with the victims. Americans demonstrated their patriotism by putting the national flag on their cars and on the tops of buildings. Many others wore shirts dyed with the American flag. Many celebrities performed charity spectacles to raise funds in favour of the victims.

The 9/11 attacks had affected the whole world. They raised sentiments of horror and psychosis and placed terrorism as worldwide threat. Many countries showed an unprecedented sympathy for the victims and their relatives. French newspaper *Le Monde* announced on the day after the attack “Today, We Are all Americans”. Queen Elizabeth II showed solidarity for its faithful ally by singing the American Anthem at Buckingham Palace.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization declared that the 9/11 attack was not only on America but on all the other members. (September 11 Attacks).

2.2. The War on Terror

The al Qaeda – led attacks pushed President Bush to wage a global military campaign against terrorism. He called on world leaders to join a U.S-led coalition into a War on Terror. The Bush administration pointed the countries that harbours or support terrorism such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan or even North Korea.

2.2.1. The War in Afghanistan

Soon after the 9/11 attacks, Osama Bin Laden, the head of the Jihadist group al Qaeda, was identified as the main responsible behind the terrorist assault and the local Afghan terrorist group ,the Taliban, as his unfailing supporters. As response, the U.S and its allies launched air strikes against Afghanistan. This was the starting point of a war that still goes on.

2.2.2. The War in Iraq

The Iraqi war or the second Persian Gulf War is military conflict started in 2003. It opposed the United States-led coalition and the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. The war was consisted in two distinct phases. The first one was a brief battle that lasted one month, from March to April. The Coalition forces quickly invaded the country and defeated the Iraqi military forces .Then; it was followed by a longer second phase that was marked by local opposition and insurgency, repetitive civil conflicts, terrorism, precarity and insecurity. After the decline of violence in Iraq, the United States gradually reduced its military presence until the full withdrawal of all forces in 2011. (Iraq War).

2.2.3. The Rationale of the Wars

Iraq and the United States had been enemies since the first Persian war in 1990s. This adversity made Iraq to be notified as a potential threat. The link between the 9/11 attacks and Saddam Hussein was a probability. First, several reports made by the 9/11 commission, the Department of Defence and the Intelligence alleged that Saddam Hussein had a secretive link with Bin Laden. It was presumed that the two leaders were in talks from 1992 to 2003. Second, on February 5, 2003, American secretary of state, Colin Powell, appeared before the United Nations Council with “sold facts” and conclusions that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, he showed evidence of the presence of huge quantities of chemical weapons. He claimed that Saddam Hussein’s regime used chemical weapons on its own prisoners as experimentation in order to develop its arsenal. Powell added that Saddam was supporting Palestinian terrorist groups with weapons and intelligence, threatening the welfare in the region .Concerning its relation with al Qaeda, Powell assured that the Iraqi regime harboured and supported terrorism. Powell also claimed that Saddam gave shelter to terrorist leaders and supplied them with arms. (Iraq War)

In 2002, President Bush gave a speech in Cincinnati where he warned about the Iraqi nuclear and chemical weapons activities by declaring that :

Knowing these realities, America must not ignore the threat gathering against us. Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof – the smoking gun – that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.” (qtd. In Sanger)

The image of the mushroom cloud was referring to a nuclear explosion had a very strong psychological impact upon the minds of the American people.

As a conclusion, the invasion of Iraq remained an urgent task. It was the duty of the United States to disarm a fascist tyrant and a brutal criminal who was compromising the security of America and the welfare of its allies in the Persian Gulf and Middle East regions.

2.2.4. A War of Controversies

The invasion of Iraq faced huge criticism from both the intellectual and political spheres, and from inside and outside America. First, the allegations that Saddam and al Qaeda were in collaboration came to be unfounded and false. Former Vice President Dick Cheney admitted that the United States had spent a long time looking for any possible link between Saddam and Bin Laden but reports suggested that nothing was probable. One of the reasons that made impossible any Saddam and Bin Laden collaboration was the religious positions. Saddam was a secular Arab Socialist who favoured western values and hated rigorist Islamic dogmas while Bin Laden was radical Sunnite who had always thought of the west as the Devil.(Cheney: No Link)

Second, the United States reports about Iraq's weaponry capacities were exaggerated. After the invasion, the US army not only faced poor military resistance but also found no installations for nuclear weapons. The intelligence community stated that the Iraqi regime had not conducted the production of any chemical or biological arsenal and this, since 1996.

Third, The United States waged the war without the agreement of the United Nations. In an interview with the BBC, former United Nations Annan declared that "I have indicated that the war was not in conformity with United Nations Charter. From our point of view it was illegal." (Iraq War Illegal)

Fifth, the war on terror did not end terrorism in Iraq. In the contrary, violence has not ceased since the American intervention. Iraq has become the fief of terrorism and the theatre

of civil conflicts and violence adding to that the political and economic instability. Nowadays, Iraq has become the spot of bloodshed, ethnic confrontations, poverty, and mass migration.

3. The War in Iraq and Hollywood

Hollywood movies have always accompanied wars and military conflicts in which the United States were involved. This tendency started since the first major war engaged by the United States in its modern history, the Second World War. During the era, several movies were produced to give insight on the reasons that led America to be part of the war and to create an opinion about the military forces.

The controversy about the invasion of Iraq pushes Hollywood studios to produce movies that would support the allegations made by the authorities against the evil Iraqi regime and its possession of massive destruction weapons. Moreover, movies have the task to legitimize the war and to sell it to people worldwide. One of the movies that Support the War on Terror politics of the United States is *Zero Dark Thirty*. The movie Tells the story of CIA's agent Maya who is determined to eliminate the mind behind the 9/11 massacre, Osama Bin Laden. The movie's opening scene features emergency calls from burning buildings. Thomas Riegler believes that *Zero Dark Thirty* portrays the War on Terror as justified revenge for the 9/11 horrors. (11)

4. *American Sniper*

4.1. *American Sniper: The Book*

American Sniper: the Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in the U.S History is an autobiography written by the U.S Navy Seal Chris Kyle in collaboration with Scott McEwen and Jim DeFelice. The book tells the story of Chris Kyle, a Navy Seal in the American army who served in Iraq from 1999 to 2009. Chris Kyle is considered the deadliest sniper in the US

army history by eliminating 255 human targets. In the Iraqi town of Ramadi, Jihadi groups even put an \$80,000 bounty on his head.

4.2. Chris Kyle, The Protagonist

Chris Kyle was one of the most powerful soldiers in the American army history. He was a Navy SEAL, a branch of the United States Navy which activates in special operations such as counter-terrorism, reconnaissance and hostage rescue. The biggest achievement of the Navy SEALs was the elimination of Bin Laden, the head of the terrorist group al Qaeda in 2011. (Navy SEALs)

Chris Kyle joined the Navy SEALs in 1999. Motivated by the 9/11 attacks, he decided to go to Iraq. During the war of Iraq, Kyle participated in the major battles. He was in Fallujah in 2004 and in Ramadi in 2006. During the battle of Ramadi, Kyle established himself as a killing machine; in a single day, he managed to kill 40 enemies. This killing ability got him respect and adoration. Kyle was an extraordinary soldier; he had the endurance and the discipline. At the end of his career, Kyle had eliminated 255 targets. This achievement placed him as the most lethal soldier in the U.S military history. Back home in 2009, Kyle was welcomed as a national hero and a superstar, he was decorated 6 times one of them was the V device for heroism. His autobiography was a huge success. Published in 2012, the book was sold at 800,000 copies. Moreover, the fame of Kyle was boosted by television, he was invited several times to talkshows to speak about his achievements and to tell his military feats. He became a national figure of patriotism and heroism. Kyle spent the rest of his days helping veterans who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorders. He was assassinated on February 2nd, 2013 by a mentally unstable veteran. The United States honoured his memory by organising a funeral procession. The convoy was led by police cars and motorbikes. An

immense crowd of people, especially war veterans came to salute the memory of a national hero.

4.3. *American Sniper: The Movie*

American sniper is a 2014 American biographical war drama directed by Clint Eastwood and written by Jason Hall. The movie is based on the eponymous memoir *American Sniper: The Autobiography of Most Lethal Sniper in U.S Military History*. It tells the story of Chris Kyle, a Navy Seal during his service in the Iraqi war. Bradley Cooper starred as Chris Kyle and Sienna Miller as his wife Taya. (American Sniper)

The movie was a huge commercial success. The movie earned 350 million U.S dollars in America and 197 million worldwide for a general revenue of 547 million U.S dollars. It is the highest-grossing movie in the United States in 2014. Later, the movie became the highest-grossing war movie worldwide, dethroning the record held by the legendary *Saving Private Ryan*. The movie is also Clint Eastwood's biggest box office hit as a producer. (American Sniper)

The movie has received positive reviews, *IMDb* rated the movie by 7, 3/10. *Rolling Stone* reviewer admired the Eastwood experience; he claimed that "Eastwood fuses the explosive and the sorrowful as only he can. That's why his movie takes a piece out of you." Moreover, He also praised the acting performance of Bradley cooper as Kyle; he said that:

Cooper gives everything and then some in an astonishing, all-out performance; Cooper put on 40 pounds of muscle to play Kyle, flag-waving, good old Texas boy who sees evil in the world and aims to do something about it.

The journalist concluded by saluting the duo Eastwood-Cooper in capturing Kyle's engagement: "Cooper and Eastwood salute Kyle's patriotism best by not denying its toll. Their targets are clearly in sight, and their aim is true." (Travers)

The movie was certified fresh by *Rotten Tomatoes* earning a score of %72, the website critics were pleased by the pair work of director Eastwood and the amazing performance of Bradley cooper in the shoes of Chris Kyle:

Powered by Clint Eastwood's sure-handed direction and a gripping central performance from Bradley Cooper, *American sniper* delivers a tense, vivid tribute to its real life subject. (American Sniper [Rotten Tomatoes])

The Washington Post reviewer felt that the movie glorified the person of Chris Kyle; he said that "American sniper presents Kyle as someone with almost an almost superhuman ability to bear the same that weigh so heavily on others in his job." (O'Sullivan). Moreover, the reviewer underlined Eastwood's directing expertise by declaring that "the flavour of a western is not accidental Kyle, at one point, announces that he always wanted to be a cowboy. Maybe Eastwood does, too." Concerning the moral position of the movie , the reviewer said that despite that in some moments one may be confused who the good and bad guys were, American Sniper keeps its "metaphorical headgear ,white hats and black hats ,very much separate ." (O'Sullivan)

The New YorkTimes reviewer placed the movie in the Eastwood ideology of evil world and revenge; he indicated that *American Sniper* followed Eastwood's commitment to his cherished themes of justice and retribution in an evil world. He adds that in the movie director's movie repertoire, existence is synonymous with evil. So, as result, violence becomes moral necessity, a burden for those who desire the good. Furthermore, the reviewer declared that although the movie did not evoke the question of Iraq, it still remains indeed

political. Even if the name of President Bush is never pronounced, the movie was the advocating the Manichean approach to foreign policy. The reviewer concluded that *American Sniper* could be attributed to the Hollywoodian tradition of western movies that would turn any odd historical event or character into a heroic fable. (Scott)

5. *American Sniper* Movie Analysis

5.1. Themes and Symbolism

In order to analyse the movie, we have selected some significant scenes that corroborate our thesis that indicates that *American Sniper* is a movie that serves American political agendas. Those scenes portray different themes and subjects that belong to our subject of research.

5.1.1. Vengeance

Once more, it is an Eastwood movie about Vengeance. Vengeance is a common theme in Eastwood's movies. In the cinema of Eastwood, vengeance represents at the same time a desire for retribution and a will to assume responsibility. The modern Eastwood-style revenge narrative takes the audience from a sentiment of indignation and rage exacerbated by fear and hate for the evildoer to a sense of moral satisfaction and ecstasy by punishing the guilty. In this sense, *American Sniper* is about Chris Kyle who chases evildoers to avenge and bring justice. (Miller 170)

Kyle knew about the 9/11 attacks from the news television (See Fig.2). Eastwood wants to tell the audience that the 9/11 events raised in Kyle a strong will to vengeance. This vengeance created in him a sense of responsibility. As a result, Kyle decided to go to serve his country in Iraq. He went to punish America's foes and to protect his nation from further terrorism threats. Once more, television plays a very important role in creating opinion. The

broadcast of the 9/11 attacks on news channels had a large appeal among people. It is to know that the depiction of the collapse of American symbolic buildings had the sense of what William Butler Yeats called 'terrible beauty' (qtd in Nilges 23). The beauty of the destruction spectacle was unique. Modern television plays on the emotional side of people when turning tragic events into telegenic spectacles. For Guy Debord, in modern societies which are dominated by modern conditions of production, real life events such as terrorist attacks are receded into mere spectacles. (7)

Thus, the 9/11 attacks had the effect of the collapse of the American civilisation. Consequently, the attacks raised sentiments of fear, uncertainty, rage, and of course desire for revenge in the minds of the American people. (Nilges 23, 24)

During the war, Kyle's squad adopts the *Punisher's* logo as their mascot (See Fig.9). The *Punisher* represents an American movie hero who punishes evildoers and establishes peace.

5.1.2. America's Heroic Soldiers

Clint Eastwood was an actor before becoming a producer. His long acting career is shaped by western movies. The typical Eastwood character is always equipped with firearms. Eastwood incarnates a lethal western cowboy who loosely shoots but never misses his target. In his movie, Clint Eastwood portrays Chris Kyle as a strong soldier with patriotic deeds and with outstanding military technique (See Fig. 2, 3, 4). Actually, it is in the Hollywood tradition to portray the American soldiers as the ultimate warriors. Susan Jeffords Argues that Rambo's Character who was interpreted by Sylvester Stallone in the *Rambo* series is the archetype of the American soldier, she indicates that Rambo's powerful body- mixed with aggressiveness and heroism- was the image of America itself, a strong nation that stands invincible. (qtd in Pollard 129)

Tom Pollard gives the example of *Saving Private Ryan*. This Spielberg's masterpiece tells the story of American military squad during the Allies landing in Normandy during WWII. The military squad had the task to bring home Private Ryan who was serving in France. As Ryan's three brothers were killed in combat, US War Department decided to rescue the sole surviving son of the family. To accomplish the mission, the American soldiers had to fight courageously the demonic Nazi forces. Indeed, Spielberg's movie is a strong emotional message of altruism, patriotism and brave. (133,134)

5.1.3. Family

As a recurrent theme in Eastwood movies, family is in the centre of the Kyle's story. Kyle grew up in a southern conservative family where values of Christianity and family rule. Kyle's family is the archetype of the Puritan American family. Puritan teachings describe family as a godly fashion in which men and women unite in order to perpetuate life on earth. The good education is very important. Puritan parents teach their breed to first obey The Lord for he is The Creator then to respect their parents. Moreover, the parents invest a great deal in the physical, educational, and vocational formation of their offspring. (Garrett 230)

Kyle's father taught him and his little brother the importance of unity and family (See Fig.10). In this scene, he is telling his two sons that there are three types of people in the world. The first type refuses to acknowledge that evil exists in life and consequently cannot defend themselves in times of danger. The father calls those people the sheep. The second type comprises people who use violence to abuse the weak. Kyle's father names them the wolves. The third type is people who fight the wolves in order to protect the sheep. He calls this type the sheepdog. Indeed, the father urges his two sons to protect each other and to protect the weak wherever they are. This value accompanies Kyle during his whole life. As he

was engaged in the war, he was obsessed with the idea of protecting his mates who he considered as his family.

5.1.4. Religion

Religion is very important in the life of Americans, especially for the Southern conservative families. Alexis De Tocqueville said there was no country in the world where the Christian faith had a greater influence over the souls of men as America (300). Chris Kyle grew in a conservative family where he had received a strict Christian discipline. His journey in Iraq is full of religious connotations. The movie opens by young Chris Kyle in a church attending a sermon with his family (See Fig.6). In this sermon, Kyle learns that God created scenarios for each individual. God made a plan for everyone. Yet, in order to achieve glory, one has to persevere. As a matter of fact, this idea of God's plan follows Kyle during his trip to Iraq. Kyle believes that God's plan for him is to go to Iraq to fight. The rhetoric that Eastwood uses in the movie is the same adopted by the Bush administration after 9/11: America's war against the axis of evil is God-blessed. It is waged to establish democracy and to prevent further terrorist attacks. (See Fig.7, 8).

Indeed, the War on Terror had that sensation of a religious crusade. The term 'crusade' itself is an invocation for carnage and massacre. This word was uttered by President Bush few days after the 9/11 attacks when he declared "this crusade, this War on Terror". This declaration had the echo of a medieval confrontation between Christians and Muslims that resulted in mass butchering. Following the 9/11 attacks, all President Bush's speeches and actions would be imbued with religious connotations. Furthermore, many American religious personalities made racist commentaries about Islam and Muslims. Reverent Jerry Vines accused Islam of turning young men into terrible terrorists. Reverent Franklin Graham declared that "Islam was a religion which was wicked, violent, and not of the same

God.”(qtd.in Vallely 7). Two days before uttering the word ‘crusade’, George Bush gave a speech in a cathedral where he spoke about evil and goodness. President Bush told his disciples that killing ‘evil-doers’ is a holy mission and God authorised such violence. From then on, in every meeting, in every speech, President Bush would open his allocution with a prayer and end it with “may God bless America as He has always done” (Carroll)

Being highly religious himself, President Bush believed that waging war on terrorism is an essential step to achieve democracy. He declared that democracy is not just America’s contribution to the world but also God’s gift to humanity. Thus, the American population was seduced by the discourse of President Bush who blended religion and American values to call for arms. General William Boykin affirmed that President Bush was not elected by the majority but was chosen by God. He was convinced by the righteousness of the war when he asserted that he served in an army of God, fighting for the kingdom of God. (qtd in Vallely 16)

5.1.5. Otherness

When it comes to Americans, the issue of identity is always related to the idea of the “other”. The American people have this tendency to look at the world from their point of view. The American identity is shaped by looking at others. In the American psyche, the white Anglo-Saxon is the personification of the highest values such as civilisation, democracy and openness whilst the ‘other’ is the antipode of all what is noble: barbarity, fascism, and radicalism. Without a shadow of a doubt, Hollywood’s favourite ‘other’ is the Arab.

According to Godfrey Cheshire, the only racial stereotype that is not only still permitted but actively endorsed by Hollywood is that of Arabs as terrible terrorists (qtd in Whitaker). From 1896 until today, the image of the Arab has not changed in movies. Hollywood depicts Arabs as “brute murderers, religious fanatics and oil-rich

dimwits.”(Shaheen 14). The Archetype of the Arab character in Hollywood movie is a middle-easterner with a black beard and crazy hateful eyes who brandishes a fusil and screams ‘Allah Akbar’ (See Fig.11, 12, 13). In the horizon; one can see endless deserts and roaming camels. Speaking of Islamophobia, Jack Shaheen says that although more than 15 million Christians live in the Arab world, all the Arab peoples are labelled Muslims, and by Muslims, terrorists. (14)

Indeed, this dichotomisation of identity is not without consequences. Racial segregation continues to feed identity stereotypes, exacerbate hate speech, and increase violence acts against immigrants and minorities. In the movie, Kyle has a despising vision on the population: he calls them savages all along the movie.

5.1.6. Supporting The War

American Sniper is a movie that supports the Bush administration and its post 9/11 politics of counter-terrorism. The movie feeds the propaganda conveyed by the United States politicians who claimed that the war in Iraq was waged to end terrorism and to prevent another 9/11 massacre. (See Fig.14, 15, 16)

As mentioned above, the Bush Administration named Bin laden as the mind behind the 9/11 attacks and made a link to the Iraqi regime as a potential support for terrorism. The U.S troops launched assaults on Iraq to eliminate both Bin Laden and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (See Page 32)

5.1.7. The Victim, not The Hangman

War is one of the most terrible horrors known to mankind. There is nothing to fantasise about it. War is organised violence and massacre. American soldiers knew hell while

serving in Iraq, they saw blood everywhere. However, some may call them criminals while others see them as victims.

David Kauzlarich et al think that just like civilians, soldiers in conflict can be regarded as victims of state crime for they perform unpleasant duty and obey irrefutable orders. In fact, military victimhood became an important subject for news media. In 2010, the *Sunday Telegraph* displayed the title ‘299th Victim’ when a British military chief was killed in Afghanistan. More than that, the media love to romanticise the miseries of soldiers. War documentaries often show that soldiers suffer from family separation, physical exhaustion, psychological issues, and of course imminent danger of death. (qtd. in McGarry and Walklate 902,903)

In fact, this process of military victimhood aims to whitewash American soldiers from the crimes they commit and to give an image of a ‘just’ war. Soldiers are accused of genocide, illegal torture, and rape. To embellish the image of the soldiers, movie producers put the American soldiers in the shoes of the victims. In *American Sniper*, Clint Eastwood presents Kyle as a victim who endures the cruelty of war, rather than an executioner who kills children and women. Kyle drees the absence of his wife, he witnesses the death of his friends, and he suffers from post-war stress disorders. Even after finishing his military service, Kyle could not resume a decent life. The war trauma caused him stress disorders and lack of concentration. He spent the rest of his days helping other veterans to recover until the day he was assassinated by a mentally-unstable veteran. Clint Eastwood paid tribute to Kyle’s heroic journey by incorporating his real funerals procession. (See Fig. 17, 18, 19, 20)

5.2. Mise-en-scene Study

In cinema, mise-en-scene refers to the components of movie frame. It includes lighting, Settings, costumes, and broadly all what the viewer sees in on the screen. In film

studies, mise-en-scene is a key concept to consider in understanding movie genres, styles, and authorship (Mise-en-scene). In order to study the mise-en-scene in the movie *American Sniper*, we have selected some illustrative scenes to highlight the components of the movie frame.

5.2.1 The Setting: The Western Movie Setting

Clint Eastwood became famous by playing in Western movies. His career was launched by *The Dollars Trilogy*; a series of three movies directed by Sergio Leone. Eastwood played the character of *The Man with No Name*. The setting in western movie is a silent, austere and harsh desert where men easily get lost. The Western movies usually portray the stark and void desert of Texas where nothing grows but cactus. The atmosphere is brown and hot where the sun is almost touching the soil. In *American Sniper*, Iraq is depicted just like the Far West. It is a huge desert with wrecked buildings. American Soldiers find themselves trapped in this hostile environment, surrounded by a barren lands and impetuous terrorists. (See Fig.21)

5.2.2 Lighting

In *American Sniper*, lighting has a significant relationship with the setting. There is a duality of light versus darkness that symbolises American and Iraqi values. Iraq is depicted as a hellish wilderness while America is depicted as merry Eden. Rudolph Arnheim believes that there is an ancestral tradition that associates light to goodness and darkness to evil. Unsurprisingly, this duality works in cinema too. (qtd. in Forceville and Renckens 163)

When Kyle is in Iraq, the movie director uses low-key lighting and dark colours to create a somber atmosphere. The aim of this action is to make the viewer feel that Iraq is a hostile land where soldiers are caught in trap. In a fighting scene, we see an American soldier

in dark room with little vision due to the sandstorm hit the region. The movie director uses low-key lighting to portray the harsh circumstances in which the American soldiers operate. (See Fig.22)

In the other hand, when Kyle comes back home, the director uses vivid colours and high key lighting to create a joyful atmosphere. America is portrayed as a delightful and pleasant place where people enjoy their lives. (See Fig.23).In this scene, Kyle is celebrating his son's birthday. The atmosphere appears to be colourful convivial.

5.2.3 Casting and Costumes

Casting and costumes bear 1meaning. In *American Sniper*, the movie director used different performers and costumes in order to distinguish the two sides, Americans and Iraqis. The Iraqi terrorists are interpreted by brown-skinned actors as Middle-Easterners. The physical traits of the Iraqis are long black beards, dark skins and scornful eyes. The beard represents the religious background of the Iraqis which is Islam. Concerning the costumes, the Iraqis wear archaic black clothes and carry firearms.The black colour is symbol of religious fundamentalism and cultural archaism. In fact, it refers to the allegiance to Al Qaeda which emblem is a black flag. One important prop that Iraqi terrorists wear is the scarf. The Arab scarf is called the *Keffieh*. The*Keffieh*is the emblem of the Arab resistance against the Western colonialism. It was made famous by late Palestinian president and resistance figure Yasser Arafat. (See Fig.24)

In the other hand, the American soldiers are performed by handsome white Anglo-Saxon men who wear fancy clothes. (See Fig.25). Undoubtedly, Hollywood is dominated by the white race. The dominant myth that Hollywood constructed through the years is the White Man as a saviour. Movies such as *Rambo* and *Lawrence of Arabia* feature white males who go into third world countries to save the local indigenous people from evil and to establish liberty

and democracy. The narrative that those movies convey is that third world people cannot manage their miserable conditions by themselves, so they expect the white saviour to bring peace and prosperity. From this point onwards, whiteness is associated with civilisation while the natives with barbarity and evil. (Shome 504)

Conclusion

This chapter has studied the movie *American Sniper* and the war in Iraq. First, the chapter spoke about the 9/11 attacks and its outcome as the triggering event that led to the invasion of Iraq. This chapter gave in detail the American rationale of the wars that followed after the 9/11 carnage. Second, the chapter studied the movie *American Sniper* through the analysis of some selected scenes and the analysis of the mise-en-scene. This study permitted to show that the rationale adopted in the movie is faithful to the one advanced by the American authorities.

General Conclusion

This research has looked into the relation existing between American heroism and politics. First, it has studied the origins of American Heroism and its development through history. Second, it examined the political dimension of heroism in American politics in the lights of the movie *American Sniper*. Indeed, the movie helped to understand the process in which the concept of heroism is used to sustain the American policy post 9/11.

This dissertation is divided into a general introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The general introduction has given an insight about the importance of heroism in the mythology of cultures. It has reviewed previous works that tackled the theme of heroism and its development through time. Moreover, the introduction has presented other works that studied the relation between heroism and politics. We spoke about the movie *American*

Sniper that best illustrates this relation. The first chapter is entitled “Heroism and Hollywood”; it has studied the meaning of concept of heroism, its development, and its importance in the lives of men. The chapter has also studied the growth of Hollywood and its appropriation of the theme of heroism through the figure of the American Soldier. “Hollywood and Ideology” is the title of the second chapter. First, this chapter defined ideology and its political proportions. In fact, this chapter has unveiled the ideology that America adopted after the 9/11 attacks. Second, this chapter examined the way ideology is being circulated and enhanced using Hollywood and the media. The final chapter is entitled “*American Sniper* and the War in Iraq”. First, this chapter has given a historical overview on the events that led to the armed conflict that opposed the United States to Iraq. Second, this chapter has examined the movie *American Sniper* and its ideological and symbolic background through selected scenes and mise-en-scene study.

Our research has unveiled the strong relationship between Hollywood movies and American politics by taking account the theory of ideology by Louis Althusser. Althusser believes that cinema works to promote the rulers’ ideology and to implement it to the masses. As a consequence, our study on the movie *American Sniper* demonstrated the ideology that this movie bears is identical to the ideology adopted by the United States government while engaging in the War on Terror. In fact, the movie adopts the American discourse concerning the American Heroism and the rationale of the wars.

Our findings stipulate that first the movie *American Sniper* helps consolidating the myth of American heroism through its fantastic soldiers, and second, it serves the political agendas of the United States in its war against terrorism. Thus being said, our findings confirm our hypothesis.

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Fig.1. “Skywalker” in Star wars



Fig.2. “Kyle Watching 9/11 Attacks on T.V”



Fig .3. “Kyle is a Killing Machine”



Fig.4. “Kyle Has Got the Eagle Eye”



Fig.5. “My Country before All”



Fig.6 “Young Kyle in the Church” (00:04:10- 00:04:38)



Fig.7. “We Fight For God, For the Country, and for the Family”



Fig.8. "Always in The Name of God"



Fig.9. "The Punisher's Logo on Kyle's Squad"



Fig.10. "Young Kyle with His family"



Fig.11. "They Are All Terrorists, Women and Children Alike"(00:02:40-00:03:29)



Fig.12. "Iraqis and Rebel corpse" Scene.6 (01:10:55-01:12:10)



Fig.13. "Jihadist Torturing a Child in Front of his Family" (00:47:36- 00:49:50)



Fig.14. "Bin Laden is the Number One Enemy"



Fig.15. "No More 9/11"



Fig.16. "Iraq is an Axe of Evil"



Fig.17. "Drop that Rocket Launcher, Kid!"



Fig.18. "We Are Victims of War"



Fig.19. "Kyle is Mentally Wounded"



Fig.20. "Rest in Peace, American Hero"



Fig.21. "Iraq is The Arab Far West"



Fig.22 "Heart of Darkness"



Fig.23. “American Colourful Way of Life”



Fig.24. “The Iraqi Terrorists”



Fig.25. “Chris Kyle with his wife”

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Résumé

Cinema has become one of the major tools of expressing thoughts and beliefs. Through work, we have demonstrated thoroughly the emergence of Hollywoodian cinema as an important medium of propaganda in modern world. Thus, our work highlighted the use of the Hero myth in movies in order to convey American thought system and ideology. Using the movie *American Sniper*, we have shown how the ideas of the American soldier's heroic deeds are conveyed to a larger public, helping to cement the myth of the heroic soldier.

Key Words

Heroism, Cinema, American Sniper, Myth, War, America