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The Glitz and Glam of Ideology: How the CIA and Department of Defense Use Hollywood Blockbusters as a Way of Propagating the Ideology of the American War Machine

I. Introduction & History

Joseph Goebbels (Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany, and creator of Nazi propaganda films) once said, “Those who are to be persuaded by (propaganda) should be completely immersed in the ideas of the propaganda, without ever noticing that they are being immersed in it.”¹ In other words, the propaganda succeeds when the audience buys into the ideology of the film without even knowing that they are being sold it. As Americans, we would like to believe that propaganda is something completely absent from the grand tradition of American Cinema. However, this is not entirely true. Goebbels’ idea of an audience unknowingly being immersed in a film's message is present in American film. Additionally, like the Goebbels films, a pervasive ideology being sold in American film is rooted in the ideology of the military, more specifically, the ideology of the American War Machine. This ideology works to uphold the naturalized acceptance of the use of U.S. military and political powers to perpetually increase U.S. dominance overseas. This is not to say that the American War Machine or propaganda about it can be directly equated to that of the fascism of Nazi Germany. However, since the 1940s, the Defense Department (DOD) and CIA have helped fund and rented out military equipment to over 1,000 Films and Television series.² This funding can give the

DOD/CIA explicit permission to read over³ and even sometimes rewrite⁴ these films' scripts, directly challenging the notion of "free market" capitalism in the creative field.

The goal of this paper is to examine a selection of CIA/DOD funded films/TV shows: *Zero Dark Thirty*(2012)/*American Sniper*(2014); *24*(2001-2004)/*Homeland*(2011-2020); *Jack Ryan*(2018), *Iron Man*(2008)/*Captain; Marvel*(2019.); *6 Underground*(2019); and, *Transformers* (2007). I draw upon the theories of Slavoj Zizek on ideology, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer on the culture industry, and Noam Chomsky, among others, to illustrate how these films and TV shows propagate the ideology of the American War Machine. This paper will focus only on post 9/11 CIA/DOD-funded films/TV shows to home in on the current ideology of the American War Machine. Additionally, I will be looking at the successes and failures of a collection of Hollywood films (*The Report*, (2019), *Burn After Reading*(2008), and *Children of Men*(2006).) that attempt to challenge the ideology of the American War Machine. As Goebbels' use of Nazi propaganda demonstrates, it can be extremely dangerous when a film's ideology is being sold to an audience without its knowledge. As Louis Althusser says, "ideology never says, 'I am ideological.'"⁵ Thus, it is of the utmost importance to examine the ideology of the mass media texts and decode the damaging ideology inside. This idea of decoding the texts' ideologies does not mean that the ideologies necessarily lie beneath the surface. In fact, ideology is perhaps most effective when it is in plain sight. However, before proceeding, it is important to understand how and why the CIA/DOD influences these media products, and the ideology of the American War Machine itself. As well as a brief history of the collaborations between the CIA and DOD and Hollywood.

The mere idea of the CIA/DOD funding Hollywood films/TV shows might seem like an outlandish conspiracy to many readers. However, a working relationship between the CIA/DOD

and Hollywood is as grand a tradition in American cinema as the summer blockbuster. In fact, this relationship between the Defense Department and Hollywood goes all the way back to World War II, where the United States military worked with studios like Walt Disney to create recruitment videos for the military in response to Nazi propaganda films of during WW II.¹ In *Military Propaganda: Defense Department Films from World War II and Vietnam*, Claudia Springer describes these early films as “mandatory viewing for all military personal... that were subsequently released commercially to... a great deal of attention,”² but ultimately did not prove to be as powerful as the propaganda films of Nazi Germany.³ However, despite the lack of ideological success of these early DOD-backed Hollywood films, the relationship had been established, and more importantly this partnership had proved to be commercially successful for the Hollywood studios. This relationship continued into the Cold War era (1941-1991), where these DOD-backed Hollywood films truly began to flourish as an ideological tool. Lawrence Suid details this relationship between the DOD and Hollywood films in his book, *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*. Suid describes how during the Cold War, the DOD provided equipment, intelligence, and funding to hundreds of Hollywood films, all portraying various United States military conflicts.⁴ In exchange for this DOD funding, the filmmakers would have to work with members of the DOD to ensure that they were “positively

¹ *Military Propaganda: Defense Department Films from World War II and Vietnam*, Claudia Springer, University of Minnesota Press, 1986

² *Military Propaganda: Defense Department Films from World War II and Vietnam*, Claudia Springer, University of Minnesota Press, 1986s

³ *Military Propaganda: Defense Department Films from World War II and Vietnam*, Claudia Springer, University of Minnesota Press, 1986

⁴ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

portraying”⁵ the U.S military on screen.⁶ This collaboration was largely successful for both parties during the 1950s and 60s. The DOD viewed these films as an integral tool in gaining the support of the American populace,⁷ and saw their Hollywood partners as “unquestionably loyal”⁸. While the Hollywood studios saw major commercial and critical success in these DOD funded films⁹, with many of the people working on these films citing the DOD’s consultations as “essential”.¹⁰ It is clear from this brief overview of the DOD and Hollywood that there is a clear historical basis for the American War Machine using films as an ideological tool. The use of films as an ideological tool, moreover, has endured during different eras in American history, and is closely mirrored in the history of the CIA and Hollywood, as described below.

Unlike the DOD’s relationship with Hollywood, the history of the CIA working with Hollywood is much shorter and much less harmonious. Before 1990, while the DOD was working hand-in-hand with Hollywood, the CIA refused to open its doors to Hollywood.¹¹ However, this lack of cooperation between the CIA and Hollywood does not equal a lack of historical interest by the CIA in Film/TV as an ideological tool. In fact, a now declassified 1943 memo from the CIA’s Office of Strategic Service (OSS) entitled “The Motion Picture as a Weapon of Psychological Warfare” shows how the CIA viewed film as a powerful ideological

⁵ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

⁶ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

⁷ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

⁸ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

⁹ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

¹⁰ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

¹¹ *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television*, Tricia Jenkins, 2016, University of Texas Press

tool. The memo states that, “the motion picture is one of the most powerful propaganda weapons at the disposal of the United States.”,¹² a clear sign that the CIA had an interest in using this weapon to propagate the ideology of the American War Machine. While I have no doubt that the CIA attempted to use film/TV as an ideological weapon shortly after the publication of this memo, clear evidence of a collaboration between the CIA and Hollywood is not seen until over 40 years later in 1990. After the end of the Cold War in 1990, the CIA fell under scrutiny from the American public stemming from many questions regarding its necessity given the fall of the Soviet Union.¹³ In response, the CIA established an official entertainment liaison in order to rehabilitate its image and halt any questions of its necessity.¹⁴ This entertainment liaison got straight to work, and by 2001 it had consulted and funded over 30 Hollywood productions.¹⁵ This relationship was extremely similar to that of the DOD and Hollywood, wherein a CIA-funded film/ TVhow would only qualify for funding if the CIA ensured that the agency was portrayed in a positive light.¹⁶

This brief historical overview of the relationship between the CIA/DOD and Hollywood makes clear that there is certainly a context for the CIA/DOD working with Hollywood. However, it is still unclear as to why or how the CIA/DOD would use Hollywood films/TC shows to propagate the ideology of the American War Machine. After all, doesn't the CIA/DOD have more important issues to deal with than the ideology of mass media products, and even if

¹² THE MOTION PICTURE AS A WEAPON OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE, FOUND AT: <https://ratical.org/ratville/CAH/OSS-motionpicturesasweapons.pdf>

¹³ *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television*, Trcia Jenkins, 2016, University of Texas Press

¹⁴ *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television*, Trcia Jenkins, 2016, University of Texas Press

¹⁵ *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television*, Trcia Jenkins, 2016, University of Texas Press

¹⁶ *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television*, Trcia Jenkins, 2016, University of Texas Press

the agencies did care about the ideology of these films/TV shows, aren't the studios behind these films part of the private sector? And what about the "free marketplace of ideas"? Could the filmmakers not simply refuse to accept any CIA/DOD revisions to their films? The answer to these questions is two-fold.

II. WHY THE CIA/DOD USES FILMS/TV SHOWS TO PROPAGATE THE IDEOLOGY OF THE AMERICAN WAR MACHINE & DEFINING THE AMERICAN WAR MACHINE.

As for why the creators/studios behind these films incorporate the CIA/DOD's revisions to their films, it is important to understand the types of products that are influenced by the CIA/DOD. These texts fall into two categories: First, we have "The Realistic Look at the War on Terror." This category's stories are either "based on real events" (*Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*), or "ripped from the headlines" (*24* and *Homeland*), and show the gritty "reality" of the lengths that American armed forces and intelligence officers must grapple with to protect American lives from terror threats at home and abroad. To show the "reality" of these based on/inspired by true event stories, these films/TV shows must have access to the information (for example, Military/CIA mission reports, strategies, and intelligence) and technology (for example, military grade arms, vehicles, and equipment) necessary to depict these real-life events. This access is provided to the creators and studios behind these products from the CIA/DOD in exchange for access/influence on its script or creation. For instance, in the case of a film/TV show's access to CIA information, a released CIA memo details a contract between the CIA and 20th Century Fox where the "CIA has agreed to provide... unclassified summaries

drawn from actual CIA files that will serve as the bases for story and script development,”⁶ as well as access to CIA tech⁷ in exchange for “the ability to ensure review of the scripts within five days,”⁸ among other privileges that provide an opportunity for redaction of the film’s content.⁹ This contract is a perfect example of why “The realistic look at the War on Terror text” receives revisions from the CIA/DOD. This category needs access to the intelligence and technology of the CIA/DOD in order to provide the depiction of “reality” necessary for its creation. In order to attain this access from the CIA/DOD, these films/TV shows must provide the CIA/DOD with the access to revise their scripts. Thus, the existence of “The Realistic Look at the War on Terror Film/TV Show” relies on the CIA/DOD not only having access to their scripts, but also lacking the ability to prevent CIA/DOD revisions to their scripts, as the example above demonstrates.

The second category of films/TV Shows is the “Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film.” Films in this category are massively successful Hollywood blockbusters, full of explosions and CGI, where a supernatural hero must defeat a fictional villain grounded in a realistic threat. For example, a scene from Jon Favreau’s *Iron Man* (2008), where Tony Stark (Robert Downey, Jr.) dons his mech suit to aid the U.S. military in killing a Middle-Eastern terrorist group, with lasers-beams and micro-missiles.¹⁰ This category of film similarly requires access to the CIA/DOD, but this access is used more for technology than information. This category of film’s existence relies on providing the audience with gigantic explosions and violence grounded in real-world circumstances. These real-world circumstances normally involve U.S. military conflict. In order to portray these military conflicts, the films need access to military equipment (tanks, guns, drones, jets, etc). One example is a memo detailing the DOD’s contract with Paramount Pictures regarding the use of military vehicles used in the film *Transformers*. The memo details how the film gets to shoot military ships and aircraft

as they perform their regular missions,”¹¹ as well as rent out military vehicles for specific shots,¹² in exchange for a “script review [that] ultimately get[s] DoD approval to move forward.”¹³ In addition, the contract requires that a military intelligence officer be present at all shoots involving military tech.¹⁴ While this memo only specifically cites *Transformers*, it also states that this policy extends to all films that contract out tech from the DOD.¹⁵ Films in this second category rely on providing their audience with the type of action and excitement available only with access to the technology of the CIA/DOD. Much like films in the first category, these films’ access to this technology is made possible only by giving the CIA/DOD access to their scripts and shoots to ensure CIA/DOD control over the narrative of the film. Thus, the “Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film” is unable to deny the CIA/DOD access to their scripts because these films’ very existence depends on access to the technology of the CIA/DOD. Having established how the CIA/DOD is able to influence the ideology of Hollywood films/TV shows, the paper will address why the CIA/DOD would want to influence the ideology of these films/TV shows when these agencies seemingly have more pressing issues to deal with. The first part of the answer to this question has to do with my choice of looking specifically at CIA/DOD involvement in films/TV shows in the post-9/11 era. After 9/11, in response to the growing threat of international terrorist attacks on U.S soil, the National Defense budget was drastically increased,¹⁶ meaning that the budget of the CIA/DOD was drastically increased as well. This \$1.25 trillion budget¹⁷ is so astronomical that the CIA/DOD can essentially take on any project they please. However, even though increased budgetary resources help make CIA/DOD involvement in Hollywood possible, it does not explain why the CIA/DOD wants to use Hollywood films and TV shows to propagate the ideology of the American War Machine. I would argue that Hollywood films/TV shows propagating the

ideology of the American War Machine is essential to upholding the ideology of the American War Machine in the minds of the American public. My argument stems from the fact that the products the CIA/DOD are influencing are inherently mass culture in nature. Thus, they are inherently products of Adorno and Horkheimer's theory of mass culture in "The Culture Industry," and Antonio Gramsci's work on cultural hegemony.

Antonio Gramsci argued that the ruling classes use ideology to create a certain form of cultural hegemony where the viewers are forced to consent to living their lives by the code of that ideology.¹⁸ Building on Gramsci's work on ideology, Adorno and Horkheimer argued that American mass cultural products (for the purpose of this paper, film and TV, exclusively) created a culture industry where the viewers are sold only mass cultural products that reinforce the ideology of the American ruling class to the point where it becomes hegemony. This hegemony is comparable to Nazi Germany and how its mass culture made fascist ideology mainstream.¹⁹ While both Gramsci and Adorno/Horkheimer were writing about the ideological hegemony of the 1940s, Gramsci's idea of ideology being used to create cultural hegemony among the masses, combined with Adorno and Horkheimer's idea of the American mass culture industry creating films whose sole ideological purpose is to reinforce the ideology of the ruling class, is key to understanding why the CIA/DOD use film/TV shows to reinforce the ideology of the American War Machine. For the purpose of this paper, the "ruling class" will be replaced with The American War Machine, as it is directly applicable to Gramscian idea of how a "Cultural Social Unity is achieved through which a multiplicity of dispersed will, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, as the basis of an equal and common conception of the world."¹⁷ This idea is applicable because the American War Machine can

¹⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Edited and Translated by Quentien Hore, and Geoffrey Nowell Smith New York University Press, 1971

operate at full capacity only if its ideology is in cultural social unity with the ideology of the viewers, or the American public. In order for the American War Machine to fulfill its ideological purpose of maintaining and expanding U.S soft power at home and abroad, it must ensure that the American public is united in said ideology. It is this need to ensure ideological unity between the American War Machine and American public that connects CIA/DOD involvement in Hollywood films/TV shows to Adorno and Horkheimer's work on the culture industry. To illustrate how CIA/DOD funded media products exist in the culture industry as a way of creating ideological unity, I will first define the American War Machine and its ideological power.

As stated in the introduction, the American War Machine is defined for this paper as the government institutions (military & intelligence) that work to expand and increase U.S domination abroad through hard power methods of warfare and imperialism as well as soft power methods that reinforce the ideology of American values. The most obvious manifestation of this hard power is the increase in territory through acts of war or imperialism. However, the form of U.S soft power can take many shapes. One example is the power of ideology, in particular, the ideology of American exceptionalism, and the legitimacy of U.S soft power. In order for the United States to invade a country, it has to provide legitimate reasons to the American people why an invasion is necessary. For example, when the United States went to war with Iraq in 2003, President Bush focused on protecting America's security after the attacks of 9/11 in order to justify the war. "The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder,"¹⁸ In other words, the American War Machine and Bush used a claim that the U.S was under the threat of attack to legitimize an attack on Iraqi soil to the American people. The

¹⁸ Full text: George Bush's Address on the Start of War, George W. Bush, 04/19/03, The Guardian

problem with Bush's speech was that Iraq didn't have weapons of mass murder, and his administration knew it.¹⁹ What did become clear is that Iraq represented a major asset to maintaining U.S soft power, due to Iraq's massive oil supplies. In "It's Imperialism, Stupid", Noam Chomsky states, "If the United States can maintain its control over Iraq, with the world's second largest known oil reserves, and right at the heart of the world's major energy supplies, that will enhance significantly its strategic power and influence over its major rivals in the tripolar world that has been taking shape for the past 30 years."²⁰ In other words, the American War Machine and Bush used the ideological mask of Iraq as a threat to U.S legitimacy to trick the American people into thinking that a grab to expand U.S soft power was a war to protect U.S lives. However, the ideology of the American War Machine is not limited to masking expansions of U.S power as the protection of U.S legitimacy. The ideology of the American War Machine is also used to expand U.S soft power under the ideology of American Exceptionalism.

American Exceptionalism may be defined as an ideology wherein the United States is held above the rest of the world as the model of democracy and justice. We encounter a strong example of this in a speech by Barack Obama on the United States' approach to terrorism:

We were founded upon a belief in human dignity that no matter who you are, or where you come from, or what you look like or what religion you practice, you are equal in the eyes of God and equal in the eyes of the law. Even in this political season, even as we properly debate what steps I and future presidents must take to keep our country safe. Let's make sure we never forget what makes us exceptional. Let's not forget that freedom is more powerful than fear. That we have always met challenges, whether war or depression, natural disasters or terrorist attacks, by coming together around our common ideals as one nation and one people.²¹

¹⁹ It's Imperialism, Stupid, Noam Chomsky, *Khaleej Times*, July 4, 2005

²⁰ It's Imperialism, Stupid, Noam Chomsky, *Khaleej Times*, July 4, 2005

²¹ Read the Full Text of President Obama's Address to the Nation on Terrorism, Barack Obama, December 7, 2015, Time

This speech relies on the idea of American Exceptionalism where America exemplifies superior values compared to the rest of the world, and thus must act as a global policeman on the basis of this moral high ground. The problem with this speech is that Obama's idea of an American moral high ground based in American exceptionalism is a lie. This lie mostly stems from the drone strike orders which Noam Chomsky calls "Barack Obama's global assassination campaign."²² This global assassination campaign has killed over 50 foreign civilians (Note that the program considered all men above the age 18 enemy combatants),²³ and even killed multiple American citizens.²⁴ Obama claims that America has a moral high ground over terrorists groups, and yet Obama himself has committed identical acts of terrorism against the very people he condemned. This exposes the hypocrisy of American Exceptionalism. There is no legitimate moral difference between an Al Qaeda bombing and Obama and the American War Machine droning a small village in Yemen. Both parties claim the lives taken by their violent actions are in service of a higher calling. The only difference is that America is a superpower, and therefore, it believes, the same rules do not apply to it. That is the power of the American War Machine, a power wherein the morality of American exceptionalism is whatever the American War Machine says it is because America is the one with the power. Noam Chomsky summarizes this ideology best in his essay, "We Own the World, where he writes, "[W]e're [the United States,] an outlaw state by definition ... Our threats and use of force are not foreign, they're indigenous because we own the world. Therefore, it's fine."²⁵ The ideology of the American War Machine, as Chomsky argues, is based on the idea that America owns the world, and therefore that American exceptionalism or

²² Chomsky: Paris Attacks Show Hypocrisy of West's Outrage, Noam Chomsky, 01/20/15, CNN

²³ Chomsky: Paris Attacks Show Hypocrisy of West's Outrage, Noam Chomsky, 01/20/15, CNN

²⁴ From Torture to Drone Strikes: The Disturbing Legal Legacy Obama is Leaving for Trump, Jennifer Williams, Jan 10, 2017, Vox

²⁵ We Own The World, Noam Chomsky, 01/01/18, Chomsky.Info

legitimacy is what America wants it to be. Since America controls the power, it writes the narrative. Indeed, it is in the writing of the narrative that the American War Machine does the majority of its ideological work.

To deconstruct how the American War Machine uses ideology to create narratives, I will rely again on the work of Noam Chomsky, specifically his work with Edward S. Herman surrounding the propaganda model in their acclaimed book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. This propaganda model consists of five ideologically distorting filters present in the United States' political economy that are applied to mass media news in order to preserve ideological hegemony.²⁶ This first filter is "Ownership". Ownership ideologically distorts information because all mass new outlets are owned by larger companies that have a rooted interest in profit. These interests can sometimes be directly threatened by potential information; thus, these media companies or conglomerates will intentionally distort information to make a profit.²⁷ For example, Haliburton, an oil company that made over 50 million dollars due to the Iraq War,²⁸ has BlackRock (one of the largest investment firms) as a heavy investor. Blackrock is also heavily invested in various media companies that report the news.²⁹ Thus, any news outlet that Blackrock is invested in would directly hurt the profits of Haliburton and any investors if they reported certain facts regarding the Iraq War. Therefore, it directly serves the profit interests of Haliburton to ideologically distort the actions of the American War Machine in Iraq.

²⁶ *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011

²⁷ *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011

²⁸ A Closer Look at Cheney and Halliburton, David e. Rosenbaum, September. 28, 2004, The New York Times

²⁹ A Closer Look at Cheney and Halliburton, David e. Rosenbaum, September. 28, 2004, The New York Times

The second filter is “Advertising”. The ideological filter of advertising is a symptom of the news outlets that generate the majority of their funding through advertisements, causing newspapers to compete with each other over securing ad deals.³⁰ This competition creates an environment wherein these news outlets tailor their content to serve the whims of the advertisers' products' and receive funding in return.³¹ This tailoring of news to assist in the sale of a product is where the ideological filter is applied. For example, a 2004 episode of ABC-TV's *Nightline* (“The Fallen”) depicts the narrator reading off the names of all the soldiers who had died in the conflict at the time of airing, accompanied by photographs of their faces.³² The Sinclair broadcast group, a media conglomerate that had ad space on ABC, claimed that the broadcast “appears to be motivated by a political agenda designed to undermine the efforts of the United States in Iraq.”³³ However, the broadcast was quite tame in comparison with the brutal depictions of violence contained the photographs of many independent journalists at the time.³⁴ In this example, we can see how ABC sanitized its reporting of the Iraq War to appease an advertising company by ideologically distorting the violence of the American War Machine to sell products.

The third filter is “Sourcing”. Chomsky and Herman describe the ideological filter of sourcing as one wherein "the large bureaucracies of the powerful subsidize the mass media, and gain special access [to the news], by... reducing the media's costs of acquiring ...] and producing, news... { . } The large entities that provide this subsidy become 'routine' news sources

³⁰ *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011

³¹ *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011

³² Has the Internet Changed the Propaganda Model?, Sheldon Rampton, The Center for Media and Democracy's PR Watch, 2007

³³ Has the Internet Changed the Propaganda Model?, Sheldon Rampton, The Center for Media and Democracy's PR Watch, 2007

³⁴ Has the Internet Changed the Propaganda Model?, Sheldon Rampton, The Center for Media and Democracy's PR Watch, 2007

and have privileged access to the gates,”³⁵ thus allowing them to filter information to serve their ideology. For example, a 2008 New York Times report exposed how the Bush administration directed Pentagon sources to soften the torture occurring at Guantanamo Bay.³⁶ In this example, we can see how the American War Machine used its relationship with major news outlets to distort the brutal torture in Guantanamo Bay by ideologically masking this brutality as harmless interrogation.

The fourth ideological filter is “Flak.” Flak is a term that Chomsky and Herman use to describe how major business conglomerates will fund various forms of criticism (such as letters, call-ins, law-suits, etc.) to pressure news outlets into ceasing news coverage that paints said companies in a compromising light.³⁷ Because this pressure directly hurts the news outlets’ profits, they often cease reporting.³⁸ For example, in 2010, when Wikileaks leaked footage showing drone killings by the U.S military, the Pentagon put pressure on and threatened lawsuits against any major media outlet airing the leaked footage.³⁹ While this footage was still widely seen on the Wikileaks website, it still shows how the American War Machine used the threat of flak to censor information that opposed the ideological narrative of American exceptionalism in drone warfare.

Finally, the fifth ideological filter of the propaganda model is “The War on Terror” In the original 1988 release of the propaganda model, this filter was “Anti-communism/Fear”.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011

³⁶ Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon’s Hidden Hand, David Barstow, The New York Times, 2008

³⁷ *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011

³⁸ *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011

³⁹ When Old and New Media Collide: The Case of WikiLeaks, Elizabeth Blanks Hindman, Ryan J Thomas, Sage, 2013

⁴⁰ *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011

Chomsky updated this filter in 2011 to reflect the modern ideology of American news coverage.⁴¹ The War on Terror ideologically filters news coverage by placing the enemies of the American War Machine under an Islamophobic filter that paints them as villains directly threatening the U.S public.⁴² Take, for example, the media's coverage of Iranian protests after Trump's American War Machine bombed Iran in 2019. During the protests major media outlets (NBC, Fox, CBS, CNN, and ABC) aired footage of Iranian citizens burning American flags and chanting death to America.⁴³ This coverage framed the citizens of Iran protesting an attack on their nation as direct threats to America in a clear attempt to stoke support for Trump's escalation of the U.S conflict with Iran. This provides a clear example of how the American War Machine works with news outlets by using "The War on Terror" filter to ideologically mask the non-threat of the Iranian people as a direct threat to U.S citizens by stoking Islamophobia.

After examining Chomsky and Herman's five filters of the propaganda model in connection with the American War Machine's manipulation of the media, it becomes evident the American War Machine uses the mass media as an ideological tool to rewrite the narrative of American warfare to the tune of its ideology. Thus, it now becomes clear as to why the CIA and DOD, would use film/TV as an ideological tool for the American War Machine -- these films/TV shows and their ideologies allow them to create their own narratives. In order to examine how the American War Machine uses film/TV as an ideological tool, I will now examine the films/TV shows themselves and uncover how they support the ideology of the American War Machine. To accomplish this, I will once again separate the films into two categories.

⁴¹ Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda, Noam Chomsky, Seven Stories Press, 2011

⁴² Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda, Noam Chomsky, Seven Stories Press, 2011

⁴³ Four Simple Steps the U.S. Media Could Take to Prevent a Trump War With Iran, Mehdi Hassan, The Intercept, 2019

III: HOW THE CIA/DOD USE THE FILMS/TV SHOWS TO PROPAGATE THE IDEOLOGY OF THE AMERICAN WAR MACHINE & AND GOING DEEPER INTO IDEOLOGY

The role of "The Realistic Look at the War on Terror Film/TV Show " in the culture industry of the American War Machine is to create an ideological unification between the American War Machine and viewers on how they view the violence used in the name of the American War Machine. These films/TV shows are directly about depicting the "reality" of violence done in the name of The American War Machine. Thus, it is imperative for the CIA/DOD that these texts show a reality that fits into the ideology of the American War Machine. For example, in the world of the CIA/DOD-funded *24*,²⁰ torture always works. It is gruesome and Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) does not seem to take pleasure in it, but torture always gets him information to save lives. In *24*'s ideology, torture is a means to end. Jack Bauer describes this perfectly while explaining the necessity of torture to an apprehensive colleague. "That's the problem with people like you, George. You want results, but you never want to get your hands dirty. I'd start rolling up your sleeves. I'm gonna' need a hacksaw."²¹ Jack uses this hacksaw to torture the suspected terrorist and gets the location of the nerve gas. Because he obtains this information, Jack can prevent a terror attack and save thousands of people. That is the key to *24*'s ideology. In the world of *24*, torture always provides results and saves more lives. In *24*, torture is simply the product of a utilitarian calculation -- brutalize one person to save thousands. This is the same ideology that the American War Machine of the Bush era used to defend its practice of torture. The late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia even used Jack

Bauer as an example to defend Bush from prosecution, “Jack Bauer saved Los Angeles ... He saved hundreds of thousands of lives, Are you going to convict Jack Bauer?”²² In reality, torture does not get information that saves lives. A Senate Committee Report on the CIA detention and interrogation program indicates that most of the time the information gained from torture is useless. It states that “the CIA, at least initially, could not always distinguish detainees who had information but were successfully resisting interrogation from those who did not actually have information.”²³ *24* was a massive cultural phenomenon, averaging a viewership of 12 million an episode²⁴ and winning 21 Emmys²⁵ during its nine-season run. The CIA/DOD was able to use an immensely popular piece of mass culture in *24* to make the illegal and unsuccessful torture being used in the American War Machine seem like a necessary evil. The “ripped from the headlines” show portrayed torture as the “realistic” and justified interrogation method that was created by the ideology of the American War Machine. A “Realistic Look at the War on Terror Film/TV Show” like *24* is created by the American War Machine to be a product of the culture industry that forces the American public to consent to the American War Machine’s ideology. This is an ideology wherein American state-sponsored torture is a necessary evil performed by the American War Machine for the purpose of protecting U.S lives. Thus, the CIA/DOD creates a massively popular product of the culture industry in *24*—an exemplar of the “A Realistic Look at the War on Terror Film/TV Show”— for the direct purpose of creating ideological hegemony in the masses who are forced to consent to the ideology of the American War Machine.

The “Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film” performs a similar role to TV shows and films in the first category in the way it is used to create an ideological unification between the American War Machine and the American public. However, the ideological purpose of films in this second category is not to justify the violence of the

American War Machine, but rather to make the actions of the American War Machine heroic. In fact, this ideology of heroism can be quite literal when it comes to the films in this second category. For example, in the DOD-funded film, *Iron Man*,²⁶ defense contractors are superheroes who work with the U.S military to defeat evil forces abroad. In *Iron Man*, Tony Stark is a private defense contractor for the United States military, who on a visit to a U.S military base in the Middle East, is captured by a terrorist cell. This event triggers Stark to dawn the Iron Man suit and begin working with the U.S military to fight evil.²⁷ Stark's Iron Man uses his incredibly advanced military tech to work with the U.S military to save the world numerous times with limited casualties.²⁸ In the film, and in Iron Man's own words, he has, "privatized world-peace."²⁹ His lasers, rockets, missiles, and drones are tools that the U.S military contracts to handedly win military conflicts in the service of creating peace. The private sector has created a superhero for the American populace. In the ideology of the film, defense contractors like Iron Man are heroes used by the military to create peace. This is the same ideology used by the American War Machine regarding defense contractors like Blackwater. During the height of the Iraq War (2003-2007), Blackwater earned over a billion dollars from defense contracts with the U.S.³⁰ for services including the deployment of 100,000 private soldiers in Iraq³¹ and the contracting of millions of weapons/equipment to the U.S military.³² In *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, Jeremy Scahill describes how "Blackwater enjoyed its...status as a hero in the "war on terror" within the [Bush] Administration and the GOP-controlled Congress"³³ due to its ability to act without the government bureaucracy that slows down the U.S military.³⁴ Under the ideology of the Bush administration, Blackwater is Stark Industries and their soldiers are Iron Man-type heroes fighting for peace, free from the chains of bureaucracy or international law. However, the defense contractors like Blackwater that the

United States military works with are not superheroes privatizing world peace -- they are monsters. Unlike, *Iron Man* and Stark industries, Blackwater soldiers did not use their weapons to create world peace. Instead, Blackwater soldiers used this advanced technology to inflict terror -- terror that included the 2007 the Nisour Square Massacre, where Blackwater soldiers killed 17 Iraqi civilians,³⁵ the dozens of reported sexual assaults Blackwater soldiers inflicted on American women stationed in Iraq,³⁶ and the killing of the body guard of Iraq's vice president, a U.S ally, by a Blackwater soldier under the influence of alcohol.³⁷ "The Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film" like *Iron Man* is created by the American War Machine as a product of the culture industry that forces the American masses to consent to the American War Machine's ideology. This is an ideology wherein the American War Machine's use of defense contractors like Blackwater is a case of contracting private super-heroes in the name of bringing peace to a country like Iraq. Thus, the CIA/DOD creates a massively popular product of the culture industry in the "Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film" of *Iron Man*, a film that grossed \$382 million domestically³⁸ and started the Marvel Cinematic Universe franchise that has grossed \$5 billion and counting.³⁹ This massively popular film is used for the direct purpose of creating ideological hegemony in the masses who are seduced into becoming in synch the ideology of the American War Machine. Under this ideology, the war crimes of Blackwater are turned into the thrilling feats of an actual superhero looking for peace; the violent alcoholism of Blackwater soldiers is turned into the loveable debauchery of Tony Stark; and the vile rapes committed by Blackwater troops are turned into the Stark's charming womanizing.

However, the ideological power of the CIA/DOD funded films/TV shows of the American War Machine is not limited to making act of brutality seem heroic as seen in *24*, *Iron*

Man, and the jingoistic war films of the 1950s. In fact a key element of ideology is a process of inoculation. Roland Barthes described the ideological power of inoculation in his 1957 collection of essays, “*Mythologies*.” Barthes described inoculation as “admitting the accidental evil of a class-bound institution in order to conceal its principal evil,”⁴⁴ wherein an ideology’s, “small inoculation of acknowledged evil... [protects it from]...the risk of a generalized subversion”⁴⁵ from the viewer. In other words, this process of inoculation occurs when a dominant ideology like that of the American War Machine criticizes itself in order to subvert any criticism, thus making said ideology even more dominant. The ideologi of the CIA/DOD funded films/TV shows of the American War Machine began using inoculation in the 1970s when collaboration between the CIA/DOD and filmmakers became frayed, largely due to the convergence between anti-war sentiments among the American populace and an influx of young, uncompromising auteur filmmakers in the studio system during the “New-Hollywood” period, who refused to work with DOD.⁴⁶ These two factors led to an era where the DOD “perceived that they could gain little or no benefit from any film attempting to make a comment about the American Experiences in Vietnam,”⁴⁷ thus disrupting collaboration between the DOD and Hollywood for a time. However, this collaboration re-emerged during the aftermath of the Vietnam War and boom of anti-Vietnam War films, albeit in an entirely new way. This new relationship between the DOD and Hollywood functioned much differently than it had previously, when DOD-funded films had to ensure that they emphatically endorsed the acts of warfare being portrayed. During this new period (1975-1990), these DOD funded films did not have to positively portray the

⁴⁴ “*Mythologies*”, Ronald Barthes, Frauer, Straus, and Giroux, 1971

⁴⁵ “*Mythologies*”, Ronald Barthes, Frauer, Straus, and Giroux, 1971

⁴⁶ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

⁴⁷ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

Vietnam War. In fact, during this period, the DOD funded several overtly anti-Vietnam War films (*Apocalypse Now*, *The Deer Hunter*, and *Platoon*, to name a few).⁴⁸ This new, seemingly relaxed approach of the DOD towards script overview relied on one key tenet: “[The films could be] anti-Vietnam, [but not] ‘anti-war’”⁴⁹ in order to get funding. For example, the DOD forced the writers of *Goldeneye* to change a line in the script wherein James Bond makes a quip regarding the U.S losing the Vietnam War,⁵⁰ citing “potential embarrassment”⁵¹ to the U.S military as the reasoning for the removal.⁵² This new era, with its more collaborative procedure, marked an ideological shift in how the DOD viewed film as an arm of the American War Machine. In this era of ideological inoculation, the DOD adapted to an increasing anti-war sentiment by forgoing the pro-war propaganda films of World War II for the critical anti-Vietnam films of the post-1970s. By funding these anti-Vietnam films, the DOD was able to ensure that any anti-Vietnam films would not take an ideological stance against American warfare as a whole. This approach protected the ideology of the American War Machine by ensuring that the DOD remained in control of any ideological criticism it was receiving. The American War Machine’s ideological use of inoculation continued in further collaborations between the DOD/CIA and Hollywood, and is even present in *24* and *Iron Man*.

It is clear that the ideology of *24* and its hero Jack Bauer is one wherein the brutal and ineffective torture methods of the American War Machine are masked as a necessary evil

⁴⁸ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

⁴⁹ *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002

⁵⁰ *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies*, David L. Robb, Prometheus Books, 2004

⁵¹ *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies*, David L. Robb, Prometheus Books, 2004

⁵² *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies*, David L. Robb, Prometheus Books, 2004

wherein the ends justify the means. Thus, one would assume that it would be easy for the American left to uncover this mask and criticize the ideological lies of the American War Machine in *24*. However, the mainstream critical reception for *24* was, and remains, largely positive, even in more leftwing publications. One example of this shocking left-wing praise for the political ideology of *24* comes from a 2014 article in *Mother Jones*, a largely left-wing publication, titled, “Torture-Heavy “24” Was Actually a Pretty Damn Liberal TV Show”. In fact, the article’s author, Assawin Suebsang describes the show as an anti-war, anti-racism, critique of American defense contractors and as a portrait of an incompetent and weak Republican president.”⁵³ This baffling interpretation of *24*’s ideology as a critique of the American War Machine stems from its ideological use of inoculation. One major example of this inoculation comes from the show’s fourth season in which Bauer must team up with two America-loving, gun-totting Muslim brothers to defeat a group of American military contractors who have gone rogue.⁵⁴ This plot line is a clear example of the show using inoculation to subvert the criticism that the show was anti-Muslim. By providing this one example of Bauer teaming up with two Muslim Americans, the show is itself criticizing the anti-Muslim ideology that is present in the countless scenes of Bauer brutally torturing unnamed Muslim men during the show’s nearly decade-long run. Furthermore, portraying these Muslims as jingoistic Americans is a clear example of an ideological manipulation in which the only way for a Muslim to be “truly” American is to embrace the patriotic attitude and behavior of the most right-wing members of the American populace. However, the show’s most powerful use of ideological inoculation comes from a scene in its eighth season, wherein after brutally torturing his lover’s killer for

⁵³ Torture-Heavy “24” Was Actually a Pretty Damn Liberal TV Show, Assawin Suebsang, *MotherJones*, 2014

⁵⁴ *24*, Season 4, Howard Gordon, 2005, Fox

information that the killer does not possess, Bauer exclaims, “This isn’t working.”⁵⁵ By having a scene wherein Bauer’s use of torture yields no results, the show is leveling a criticism against its own portrayal of as a foolproof method of gathering information, thus creating an ideology wherein torture is only an 99% accurate method of gathering information. This makes the show’s ideology impervious to the criticism that it inaccurately portrays tortures as a completely foolproof way of gathering information. The DOD and American War Machine use a similar form of ideological inoculation in *Iron Man*.

In *Iron Man*, the ideological inoculation takes the form of the film's villain, Obidiah Stane (Jeff Bridges), an employee of the Stark weapons company who steals Tony’s iron suit technology to attempt to seize the company for his own and sell weapons to various terrorist cells, before being bested by Tony.⁵⁶ The character of Stane acts as a form of ideological inoculation by acknowledging that there are private military contractors who are not heroic like Stark. Stane thus provides a critique of the film's own portrayal of private military contractors as pure heroes of an ideological fantasy, and subverts any criticism of the film’s own ideological fantasy. Furthermore, by having the evil military contractor of the film be represented by one singular character, the film creates an ideology wherein the awful acts committed by members of private military contractors like Blackwater become the case of a few bad apples, rather than a larger systemic problem. From these examples, it not only becomes clear not only how powerful but also how complex the ideology of the CIA/DOD funded films/TV shows of the American War Machine can be. Thus, it becomes necessary to go into greater depth on how the ideology of the films/TV shows shift to serve the ideology of the American War Machine. In

⁵⁵ 24, Day 8: 12:00pm-1:00pm, Howard Gordon, 2010, Fox

⁵⁶ *Iron Man*, Directed by Jon Favreau, Written by Mark Fergus, Hawk Ostby, Art Marcum, and Matt Holloway, Disney Studios, 2008

order to accomplish this, I will once again separate the films into categories, using the work of Slavoj Žižek and other scholars to show how these films worked to support the ideology of the American War Machine even as that ideology has changed over time.

IV. CATEGORY ONE FILMS/TV SHOWS

The films/TV Shows included in the “Realistic look at the War on Terror” Show” consists of two sub-categories. The first category is defined by *24*, *Homeland*, and *Jack Ryan*-- three examples of “inspired by real events” TV shows that have ideologically shifted to replicate the aesthetic differences in the ideology of the American War Machine under the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. The second category consists of *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*, two examples of “based on real events” films whose ideologies have aesthetically changed to accommodate the public's opinion of American conflicts abroad at their release. The three “inspired by true events” shows, *24*, *Homeland*, and *Jack Ryan* are eerily similar to each other. All three give Americans a “gritty” and “real” look at the trials and tribulations that the men and women of the intelligence community face in upholding the ideology of the American War Machine; all received major script oversight from the CIA in exchange for access to information;⁴⁰ all enforce the ideology of the American War Machine itself, and two of the shows (*24* and *Homeland*.) were created by the same showrunner (Howard Grand);

The only true distinction between these three shows is that their respective ideologies have shifted in aesthetics to mirror that of the American War Machine of their time. As mentioned earlier, the ideology of *24* lies in its justification of American-sponsored torture as a means to an end, creating a “reality” where the Bush administration’s illegal and brutal use of torture is masked by the necessary evil of Jack Bauer. For example, during an episode of *24*’s third season, Jack must apprehend a suspected terrorist and interrogate him in order to prevent a looming terror attack against the U.S. The detainee demands a lawyer, but Jack disregards this request, “You’re not under arrest. I’m taking you in. You’ll be interrogated.... Your constitutional rights no longer apply. Let’s go.”⁴¹ The law dictates that a suspected criminal is considered innocent until proven guilty and thus has constitutional rights to a lawyer and trial. But in the world of *24*, Jack Bauer is the law itself. The minute Bauer decided that this person was a terrorist, he became guilty. Each season of *24* takes place over a single day and thus creates a constant race against the clock for Jack to prevent a terror attack. Because of this literal ticking clock, the law becomes an enemy for Jack. Trials take time, and in the world of *24* time is too valuable to waste. This ideology is one where adhering to the law results in terror attacks and no one suspected of being guilty is innocent. Because of *24*’s “ripped from the headlines” plot of stopping terror attacks, its massive audience applies this same ideology to the Bush administration and the CIA. In reality, Bush's dismal record on human rights was a jailable offence⁴² that resulted in numerous innocent men being detained illegally for years,⁴³ and the American War Machine's ideological justification of protecting U.S. lives is laughable.⁴⁴ When Americans looked at Bush’s actions through the lens of The American War Machine and *24*’s ideology, Bush became an American hero like Jack Bauer, willing to sacrifice American law and values to protect American citizens from terror. Through this ideology, innocent men become

guilty because of the simple fact the American hero George H.W Bush believed they were guilty. The ideology of *24* allowed Bush and the American War Machine to wear the mask of a hero like Jack Bauer and create a new reality. As Slavoj Zizek says in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, “the mask is necessary for the very creation of the ideology.”⁴⁵ As applied here, Zizek’s insight suggests *24*’s masking of torture and its disregard for the law to save lives is necessary to the American War Machine’s idea of torture as a means to an end. Without this mask, the ideology could no longer exist.

Masks can, however, be taken off, for a time at least. Zizek would argue that ideology’s power comes from the fact that the viewers can remove the mask.⁴⁶ In fact, the ideological illusion can become even stronger when we attempt to look beneath said mask.⁴⁷ Take, for example, how Americans likely know that torture does not work like it does in *24*, and they also know that Jack Bauer and the events of the show are not representative of the American War Machine. Yet in spite of this, the masses still buy into the ideology of *24* and the American War Machine. Zizek describes this process as one where we “blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, we are still doing them.”⁴⁷ This ironic ideology exists in the context of *24* and the American War Machine because people know that *24* is a fantasy, yet they still buy into it. People tend to buy into this fantasy in three different ways. First, they might be comforted to think that the American War Machine is like the ideological fantasy of *24* where George W. Bush is a hero akin to Jack Bauer; therefore it is easier for them to buy into ideological fantasy than to accept reality. Second, a person might claim that he or she is not buying into the ideology of *24* and the American War Machine, and yet still be captivated by the violence of the show and

⁵⁷ *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Slavoj Zizek, Verso Books, 2008

buy into the ideology without ever knowing it. Finally, someone could buy into the ideology ironically, laughing at the show's ideology even while they are consuming it. In short, the ideology of *24* is a mask that the American War Machine wears to disguise fantasy as reality. This ideological fantasy then truly becomes a reality when the public is no longer able to separate fantasy from reality..

In contrast, the ideological fantasy of the American War Machine in *Homeland* is not meant to disguise the reality of brutal and illegal torture. However like *24*, *Homeland* is a massive mainstream hit, becoming Showtimes highest watched program at the time of its premiere,⁵⁸ and going on to win eight emmy awards.⁵⁹ Additionally like *24*, *Homeland* had significant consultation and involvement from the CIA, evidenced by declassified documents found in Jenkins's, *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television*⁶⁰ Unlike *24*, *Homeland* is an ideological fantasy of the American War Machine of the Obama administration, an ideologically "liberal" or "progressive" American War Machine. This change is shown in the ideological shift of *24* to *Homeland*. In *Homeland*, the grizzled and violent Jack Bauer has been replaced by the calculating and vulnerable Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes). On the surface, Carrie is the opposite of Jack Bauer. She is more brain than brawn, has some semblance of empathy, and is even a woman! However, these progressive-sounding differences do not reflect a shift in ideology but rather are merely aesthetic, in that these shifts are in how the ideology is presented, rather than the ideology itself. For example, Season One, Episode 5 of

⁵⁸ *Homeland* Posts Best New Drama Series Debut Ratings on Showtime in 8 Years; 'Dexter' Sees Season Premiere High, TV by the Number, TVbythenumbers.com, 2011

⁵⁹ *Homeland* makes the case for an Emmy comeback with a thrilling final season, Riley Chow, Goldderby.com, 2020

⁶⁰ *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television*, Tricia Jenkins, 2016, University of Texas Press

Homeland, “The Blind Spot,” has a scene depicting Carrie interrogating the Afsal Hamid (Waleed Zuaiter), the personal guard of terrorist leader Abu Nazir (Navid Negahban), to gain the location of a suspected terrorist.⁴⁸ The differences in how *Homeland* and *24* depict Carrie and Bauer’s respective torture methods boils down to two key aesthetics differences. Firstly, instead of the visceral waterboarding of Bauer, Carrie opts for the “enhanced interrogation methods” of locking this man in a room for hours with heavy metal music blasting on full volume until he gives Carrie what she wants.⁴⁹ This differentiation of Carrie’s “enhanced interrogation” from Bauer’s violent torture stems from a shift from physical violence to psychology, an aesthetic difference mirrored in the shift from Bush’s American War Machine to Obama’s. Unlike the American War Machine of the Bush administration, Obama’s American War Machine was firmly against forms of torture like waterboarding.⁵⁰ However, despite Obama’s removal of methods like waterboarding, there was still torture occurring during his administration. In fact, one method of torture used during the Obama administration was known as music futility, where a detainee is placed in isolation and subjected to hours of loud music meant to disorient them.⁵¹ This process is similar to the method used by Carrie in *Homeland*. Music futility “engenders a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness on the part of the source,”⁵² causing it to earn the condemnation of international law as a form of torture.⁵³ Obama’s American War Machine was able to maintain the illusion that the government did not torture while using such highly coercive methods like music futility thanks to a loophole in the DOD’s 2005 executive summary on torture. This summary stated that the, “Placement of a detainee in the interrogation booth and subjecting him to loud music and strobe lights should be limited and conducted within clearly prescribed limits.”⁵⁴ Because these limits were never specified, Obama’s American War Machine never had to deem any use of music futility as torture. Thus, Obama/Carrie use the

same form of torture present in the Bush/Bauer American War Machine, yet the use of technicality masks this same ideology of torture as interrogation.

The second aesthetic difference between Bauer and Carrie stems from the sense of duty and determination of Bauer's torture as a means to an ends being replaced with a somber looking Carrie unable to look at the video feed of the “enhanced interrogation techniques” being employed on Hamid.⁵⁵ The difference between Carrie’s guilt about torture and Bauer’s pride in committing torture reflects an aesthetic change that mirrored by the shift in rhetoric from Bush to Obama. The rhetoric of Bush and his American War machine focused on protecting American’s security to justify America's violence, “The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace,”⁵⁶ the type of means-justify-the-ends rhetoric employed by Bush mirrors that of Bauer’s. On the contrary, the rhetoric of Obama and his American War Machine focused on justifying violence as necessary to upholding the moral high ground of the U.S. As Obama explained, “protecting our way of life requires more than our military... we, as citizens, must remain vigilant against external aggression, we must guard against a weakening of the values that make us who we are. That’s why, for the past eight years, I’ve worked to put the fight against terrorism on a firm legal footing. That’s why we’ve ended torture”.⁵⁷ As we already know, Obama’s ending of torture was a technicality, a move that masked the ideology of torture in Bush’s American War Machine in a new aesthetic. Therefore, this rhetoric must be read as a sort of ideological signaling from Obama, where Obama and his American War Machine are assuring us that even though they might torture, they understand that torture is wrong and even feel bad about it. This signal of guilt is the exact same signal that *Homeland* gives the audience when Carrie somberly stares at the floor during the torture of Hamid. However despite this signaling of guilt from Obama/Carrie

and their American War Machine or the different methods, they continue to torture just as Bush/Bauer and their American War Machine did. Thus, this signaling of guilt is not a shift in ideology from the American War Machine. It is merely a new aesthetic mask of guilt to assure the audience that this American War Machine know the horrors of torture. This assurance allows the ideology of the American War Machine and *Homeland* to alleviate the audience's moral qualms about torture by allowing the audience to exist within Zizek's ironic ideology.⁵⁸ However, This shift in ideological fantasy from Bauer/Bush to Carrie/Obama is nothing compared to the move into the post ideological world of Donald Trump's American War Machine and his fictitious avatar of *Jack Ryan*.

Amazon's *Jack Ryan* follows the titular Jack Ryan (John Krasinski.), a CIA analyst whose incredible intelligence thrusts him into the world of field work. *Jack Ryan* may have only recently finished its second season, but it has already been deemed a huge hit for Amazon, emassing 4.6 million viewers per episode, and becoming one of Amazon's most watched original shows.⁶¹ Additionally, *Jack Ryan* has received a significant amount of consulting from the CIA, with the series lead and producer John Krasinski even citing the CIA as major influence for the show in an interview with Entertainment Weekly. Krasinski discussed working hand-in-hand with the CIA for the purpose of, "getting to the truth of the story, to the truth of the people, and to make sure that you captured the essence of who you were playing and the world that they were in",⁶² a clear sign that the CIA was deeply involved in the show's script and production. The CIA's close involvement with the production of *Jack Ryan*, combined with the immediate mass cultural popularity of the show qualifies it as the evolution of the "ripped from headlines" '

⁶¹ Stats Show *Jack Ryan* Is The Huge Hit That Amazon Has Been Hoping For, Britt Lawrence, CInembled, 2018

⁶²*Jack Ryan* Star John Krasinski Reveals What Surprised Him Most on His CIA Visits, Samantha Highfill quoting John Krasinski, Entertainment Weekly, 2018

Television show of our category one films/TV Shows. However, unlike, his predecessors of Bauer or Carrie, Jack Ryan does not torture, even if he wants too. Take, for example, the climactic scene in the finale of *Jack Ryan's* second season, wherein Ryan finally captures his nemesis Nicholas Reyes (Jordi Molia), and begins to beat him, until he is stopped by his fellow agent (Mike November played by Michal Kelly), informing him that they are above torture.⁶³ At the surface, Ryan's decision not to torture Reyes seems like moment wherein the show shifts away from the ideology of *24* and *Homeland* by taking a stance against the American War Machine's use of torture, and even against Trump's public support of torture.⁶⁴ However, viewed in context with the rest of the series, this scene is nothing but a brazen example of post-ideological manipulation. Zizek describes post-ideological manipulation as the process where, "ideology no longer has to make pretenses to mask itself. Its pure cause is simply manipulation."⁶⁵ In other words, there is no longer a mask to trick the public, the ideology is purely propaganda. Ryan's refusal to torture Reyes is a case of post-ideological manipulation because throughout the show Reyes is depicted as an almost comically evil character who seems to take pure joy in the killing and torture of innocents. Thus, when Ryan finally captures Reyes we want nothing more than to see Ryan enact a violent revenge on him in the form of torture. It is in this desire to see Ryan torture Reyes, wherein the show's ideological manipulation is enacted. By making Reyes a fully evil character whom the audience desires to see tortured, the American War Machine is manipulating the viewers into seeing that the enemies of the United States are purely evil men who deserve any form of torture they receive at the hands of said

⁶³ *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, Strongman*, Directed by Andrew Bernstien, written by Carlton Cruise and Graham Roland, 2019, Amazon Studios

⁶⁴ Trump Brazenly Endorses the Use of Torture While Defending CIA Nominee, Meahne Shmitz, 06/07/2019, ThinkProgress

⁶⁵ *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Slavoj Zizek, Verso Books, 2008

American War Machine. Thus, the audience is being ideologically manipulated into agreeing with Trump's justification on torture, this justification being that, "We have to beat the savages."⁶⁶ This uniquely Trumpian post-ideological manipulation in *Jack Ryan* is only made more prescient when viewed in connection with the real life events that inspired the show's second season.

Jack Ryan's second season follows Ryan as he leads a U.S.-backed coup of the aforementioned Nicholas Reyes in a fictional version of Venezuela. In the opening minutes of the second season premiere, we see Ryan asking his students who is the biggest threat on the world stage.⁶⁷ His students respond by listing off the usual suspects (China, Russia, and North Korea.), only for Ryan to state that Venezuela poses the biggest threat to the world because if not stopped, its corrupt leader (Reyes) will turn the country into a "failed-state," making it a major threat.⁶⁸ Ryan then describes how Reyes is up for re-election, and that if his opposition (Gloria Benalde, played by Cristana Umame.) wins, she would prevent Venezuela from becoming a 'failed-state.'⁶⁹ Eventually, we learn that Ryan and the CIA are working with Benalde to ensure her victory over Reyes and save Venezuela. In the same year that this season aired, the real-life leader of Venezuela, Nicholas Maduro, was attempted to be removed from power by the U.S.-backed Juan Guadino based on charges of election fraud.⁷⁰ Guadino's seize of power was

⁶⁶ Trump on Torture: 'We Have to Beat the Savages', Jeremy Diamond quoting Donald Trump, 03/06/2016, CNN News

⁶⁷ *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, Cargo* Directed by Phil Abraham, written by Carlton Cruise and Graham Roland, 2019, Amazon Studios

⁶⁸ *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, Cargo* Directed by Phil Abraham, written by Carlton Cruise and Graham Roland, 2019, Amazon Studios

⁶⁹ *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, Cargo* Directed by Phil Abraham, written by Carlton Cruise and Graham Roland, 2019, Amazon Studios

⁷⁰ Venezuela Crisis: How the Political Situation Escalated, BBC News, 01/13/2020, BBC News

emphatically supported by the United States as a victory of world democracy, with Trump even pointing to the potential removal of Maduro as victory for freedom.⁷¹ The remarkable similarities between the fictional couple in Venezuela in *Jack Ryan* and the real-life events of the U.S backed-Guaidao attempting to seize power from Maduro in Venezuela is no mere coincidence. Instead these similarities are blatant cases of The American War Machine using *Jack Ryan* as a tool of post-ideological manipulation. The manipulation taking place in the show's portrayal of Reyes as an evil figure who must be removed from control of Venezuela by the heroes American War Machine as a way to convince the American masses that the real-life U.S-backed attempted ousting of Maduro was an act of heroism. What separates this uniquely Trump-era ideology of *Jack Ryan* from the Obama/Bush-era ideology of *24/Homeland*, is that the Trump-era American War Machine is not even attempting to mask this example of pure propaganda. In *24/Homeland*, the American War Machine would have at least attempted to mask this blatant ideological manipulation of the viewers to support a U.S coup of a sovereign nation under the guise of American exceptionalism or promotion of democracy. In Trump's post-ideological American War Machine, *Jack Ryan* does not mask the justification for the coup in Venezuela under any guise of moralism. Instead, the only justification the show gives the audience is that Ryan thinks Reyes is "an asshole" who needs to be removed.⁷² In fact, the only attempt the show makes to mask this manipulation is by changing the last name of Nicholas Maduro to Reyes. *Jack Ryan* and the Trump-era American War Machine represents a turning point in the "Realistic look at the War on Terror Film/TV Show", one where the American War Machine no

⁷¹ Statement from President Donald J. Trump Recognizing Venezuelan National Assembly President Juan Guaido as the Interim President of Venezuela Found at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-recognizing-venezuelan-national-assembly-president-juan-guaido-interim-president-venezuela/>

⁷² *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, Cargo* Directed by Phil Abraham, written by Carlton Cruise and Graham Roland, 2019, Amazon Studios

longer feels the need to ideologically mask its propaganda under any guise of moral superiority, and has become a strictly post-ideological American War Machine

The American War Machine's ideological manipulation in the "inspired by true events" shows of *24*, *Homeland*, and *Jack Ryan* becomes even more sinister when used in the "based on true events" films, *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*. Both *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*, which chronicle the "true to life stories" of the men and women of the American War Machine, had sizable CIA/DOD involvement and were gigantic mass culture hits at the box office. *Zero Dark Thirty*'s plot revolves around how the CIA found and killed Osama Bin Laden,⁵⁹ gave significant script oversight by the CIA in exchange for information,⁶⁰ and made over \$132 million at the box office.⁶¹ *American Sniper*, tells the real-life story of war-veteran Chris Kyle,⁶² permitted a member of the Defense Department to remain on set in exchange for the use of military equipment,⁶³ and made over \$500 million at the box office.⁶⁴ In spite of these similarities, the two films serve slightly different functions for the ideology of the American War Machine. Ideologically, *Zero Dark Thirty* serves the American War Machine by rewriting reality to fit the ideological mandate of the American War Machine. As in *24*, this ideology is central to reinforcing the idea that torture is a necessary evil that the U.S. uses to stop terror. However, *Zero Dark Thirty*'s ideological masking of torture as a method of gaining accurate intelligence is not a fictional masking; it is a bold lie to the audience about how the U.S. found and killed Osama Bin Laden. In the film, the CIA is able to gain the necessary information on Bin Laden's location through torture, thus allowing the U.S. to kill the most infamous terrorist in U.S. history.⁶⁵ Because the film is "based on the true story" of how the U.S. killed Bin Laden, the audience believes that the U.S. used torture to kill Bin Laden in real life. However since the release of the film, new information has revealed that while the U.S. did employ torture in the attempt to locate

Bin Laden, the intelligence that gave them the location necessary for the operation was not gained through “enhanced interrogation methods” (a euphemism for torture).⁶⁶ In fact, the men tortured for the purpose of finding Bin Laden largely fabricated information.⁶⁷ This information means that the supposed “true story” of how the CIA killed Bin Laden in *Zero Dark Thirty*, a central plot detail that the CIA had a direct hand in writing,⁶⁸ was based on a lie. It is only possible to speculate why the CIA would intentionally give the writer of *Zero Dark Thirty* such false information. One possibility is that because the ideology of the CIA as an arm of the American War Machine is committed to justifying the use of torture as a necessary evil, *Zero Dark Thirty* served as the perfect opportunity to seduce the American public into believing that torture provided the information necessary to find and kill Bin Laden. *Zero Dark Thirty* is the perfect vehicle for justifying this ideology because the killing of Bin Laden was largely seen by the public as a true triumph for the American War Machine -- the moment where America got the man responsible for the largest terrorist attack on U.S soil and a man who posed a major threat to American life. Furthermore, the film’s existence as a story based on the CIA’s version of the true story acts as a way for the ideology to take off the mask for the purpose of further seducing the viewers. Zizek describes the power in ideology taking off its own mask in the “Plague of Fantasies.” He writes, “Not all is ideology, beneath the ideological mask, I am also a human person is the very form of ideology, of its 'practical efficiency.’”⁶⁹ Zizek thus suggests that ideology is at its most efficient when it takes off the mask to reveal the person behind it, a person who is the pure form of ideology. The American War Machine took off the ideological mask in *Zero Dark Thirty* only to unveil its ideology of how Bin Laden was killed. This unmasking was done for the purpose of re-writing the reality of torture and seducing the viewers

into maintaining their ideological fantasy. This process of unmasking the ideological mask is not only present in *Zero Dark Thirty*; it is also present in *American Sniper*, albeit in a different way.

Unlike *Zero Dark Thirty*, *American Sniper* did not act as an ideological unmasking meant to rewrite reality to fit the ideology of the American War Machine. Instead, the film acted as an ideological unmasking used to justify the real-world violence of the American War Machine in the Iraq War as an act of heroism. In *American Sniper*, morality is black and white. The film's central motif is based on an idea that there are three types of people in the world: sheep, sheepdogs, and wolves. Early in the film, Chris Kyle (Bradley Cooper playing a real life Iraq War sniper) is told that, "Some people prefer to believe that evil doesn't exist in the world, and if it ever darkened their doorstep, they wouldn't know how to protect themselves. Those are the sheep. Then you've got predators who use violence to prey on the weak. They're the wolves. And then there are those blessed with the gift of aggression, an overpowering need to protect the flock. These men are the rare breed who live to confront the wolf. They are the sheepdog".⁷⁰ This quote appears in the film several times and serves as a justification for the countless killings Chris commits in Iraq. Furthermore, the quote acts as the central moral lesson for the film. The lesson is that Chris is the sheepdog who must enact violence upon the wolves (the Iraqis) to protect the flock of sheep (the American public). This ideology of the sheepdog protecting the sheep from wolves is in lock-step with the ideology of the American War Machine during the Iraq War. Because the film is based on true events, this ideology of sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs is used as an ideological justification for the violence committed by the American War Machine during the Iraq War. Bush summarized this ideology perfectly when announcing that the U.S was going to war with Iraq, "The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of

mass murder.”⁷¹ In the ideology captured by that speech, Bush and the American War Machine are the sheepdog going to war with the wolves (Iraq) to protect the sheep (the American public) from nuclear weapons. ⁷² The problem with Bush’s speech was that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass murder, and his administration knew it.⁷³ Because the wolves never had nukes, and because the sheepdog knew that, millions of American and Iraqi sheep died because of a lie. In 2014, the year *American Sniper* was released, the U.S was still engaged in a war that, by then, the majority of American knew was a lie.⁷⁴ The American War Machine used their version of the true story in *American Sniper* to unmask the ideology of Bush’s American War Machine and reveal the ideology of Chris Kyle re-writing the endless war in Iraq as a case of the American sheepdog protecting the world from wolves.

The “Realistic Look at the War on Terror Film/TV Show” are films/TV Shows (*Zero Dark Thirty/American Sniper* and *24/Homeland*) that use the mask of reality to seduce the masses in buying into the ideological fantasy of the American War Machine. Furthermore, this category of film/TV show is most effective as ideology when it is self-aware of that ideology (*24/Homeland*), or takes off the mask of ideology as a way of turning fantasy into reality. As effective as the ideology of these films/TV shows is, they are still explicitly ideological. This explicit ideology is a problem for the American War Machine. This problem stems from Althusar’s idea that “ideology never says, ‘I am ideological.’”⁷⁵ While “The Realistic Look at the War on Terror Film/TV Show” category never says it is ideological, their subject matter is explicit in its ideology. Creating an ideology that becomes more “real” than reality. The American War Machine addresses this flaw in the second category, “The Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film.” Although the subject matter of the films in this

category is not as explicitly ideological as that of the films in the first category, the ideology of the films is just as strong.

V. CATEGORY TWO FILMS

For the “The Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film,” I will be returning to *Iron Man* and comparing it to *Captain Marvel* to show how the ideology of these films has shifted to accommodate the changing taste of their respective mass cultures. As previously discussed, *Iron Man* was a mass culture product that served the ideological purpose of masking brutal military contractors like Blackwater as the valiant superhero of Iron Man. The pig-headed, yet charismatic hero of the 2008 film was the perfect ideological mask for the American War Machine at the tail-end of the Bush administration (While the film was released during the first year of the Obama administration, its production occurred before 2008, and thus during the Bush administration.). Aesthetically, Tony Stark is quite similar to Bush. Firstly, they are both the sons of powerful men who are trying to continue the legacy of their father’s. Tony is the son of Howard Stark, the man from whom he inherited his company,⁶ while Bush is the son of former president George H.W Bush. Secondly, they both struggled with leaving a life of partying behind to serve a greater purpose. Tony forgoes his playboy life of drinking and womanizing to become the superhero of Iron Man⁷⁷ and Bush left behind a life of partying when he decided to run for office.⁷⁸ Aesthetic similarities like these were key in making the ideology of Bush’s American War Machine appear as the heroics of Tony Stark as Iron Man. However, as Bush’s American War Machine became the American War Machine of Obama, the aesthetics shifted entirely. Bush, the white, conservative, former son of a president, and Texan had been

replaced by a black, young, progressive civil rights lawyer named Barack Obama. All of a sudden, the viewers that embraced the debauchery and masculinity of Bush and Stark wanted a new progressive American War Machine, and a progressive hero to match it. This new demand meant that both the American War Machine and “The Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film” had to change, at least aesthetically.

This change manifested in what I call “woke ideology,” an evolution of Žižek's ironic ideology (Where the audience is seduced by ideology because the audience and the text are self-aware of said ideology) ⁷⁹ In “woke ideology,” the audience will buy into an ideology even if they know it is an ideology, as long as it displays an aspect of progressive ideals. The woke ideology of the American War Machine is mirrored in “The Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film” *Captain Marvel*, a massively successful piece of mass culture that grossed over a billion dollars worldwide.⁸⁰ The film follows Carol Danvers (Brie Larson), a young air-force pilot who proves her doubters wrong by becoming the superhero Captain Marvel, the most powerful being in the universe who saves the earth from certain doom.⁸¹ Like *Iron Man*, *Captain Marvel*'s production had heavy involvement from the DOD. The film has numerous action scenes involving the use of Air Force jets, which requires a contract from the DOD,² and studio even worked on a joint advertising campaign with the U.S Air Force.⁸³ However, *Captain Marvel* replaces the white sexist Tony Stark of *Iron Man* with the strong woman, Carol Danvers. She is a hero who not only fights to save the world, but to advance the rights of women, a character made for the American War Machine's woke ideology. For example, in the film's climax, Danvers is only able to unlock her powers' full potential when she thinks back on a time in the air force where she was able to beat a sexist male pilot in a race, despite his protests that he could never lose to a woman.⁸⁴ In short, this scene equates the

advancement in women's rights to the joining of the U.S air force. This equation of joining the military is mirrored in the air force recruitment advertisement, "Origin Story: Aim High." The real-world advertisement depicts a collection of exclusively female air force pilots flying jets as the female narrator describes how they all started their stories in the U.S Air Force, before asking the audience, "What their origin story will be?"⁸⁵ This advertisement has the exact same ideological message as *Captain Marvel*: the U.S Army is a champion of women's rights, and women should join the army if they want to fight for progress. However, in reality, the U.S is not a place for the advancement of women's rights; it's a haven for sexual assault. In fact, the Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military Fiscal Year 2018 reported that there 20,500 cases of "unwanted sexual contact" in 2018, with only 30% of these women feeling comfortable enough to report said assaults.⁸⁶ This report's finding that the U.S military is not only a nesting bedbreeding ground of assault, but an environment where women feel afraid to speak out, is a far cry from the message of female empowerment conveyed by *Captain Marvel*. However, the ideological power of *Captain Marvel* is not to trick the viewers into thinking that the U.S military is a beacon for women's rights. In fact, both the viewers and the American War Machine know that the reality of women in the military is not the super-heroics of Danvers. The American War Machine uses the aesthetic and surface level message of female empowerment in *Captain Marvel* to assure the viewers that this War Machine is a champion of progress like them. Therefore, the viewers can use the American War Machine's message of progress to justify buying into the ideology of the American War Machine, despite knowing this progressive ideology is pure fantasy. That is the power of woke ideology at work, a power where the American War Machine uses films like *Captain Marvel* to make a superficial nod towards the progressive values that seduce the viewers into buying into an ideology that

directly opposes the very progressivism that they believe in. However, the power of woke ideology does not work as well with the vulgarity of the Trump administration. Thus, once again the ideology of the American war Machine had to adapt their “The Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film.”. An adaptation that came in the form of what I would call vulgar ideology in Michael Bay’s, *6 Underground*.

6 Underground was a massively successful mainstream film, with Netflix stating that 83 million households viewed the film during the first four weeks of the film's premiere on the streaming service.⁷³ Additionally, the film's use of military equipment would not be possible without some involvement from the DOD.⁷⁴ The film follows an unnamed billionaire referred to only as “One” (Ryan Reynolds), who fakes his own death in order to create an underground army of mercenaries who operate above the law in order to remove a Bashar-Al-Assad stand-in (Baasha Zia played by Yuri Klonkilnokov) from power.⁷⁵ Unlike Stark or Danvers, One is a military hero who explicitly does not work with the military, and is instead portrayed as a sort of hyper-capitalist super-hero whose wealth allows him to bypass the bureaucracy of the United States military to save the day. This depiction of a hyper-capitalist who uses his wealth to gain power and bypass traditional rules and institutions of the United States is the Hollywood version of Donald Trump, a hyper-capitalist outsider who used his wealth to gain the presidency and continually bypasses rules and institutions. In other words, One is the super-hero for the Trump-era American War Machine. This connection is not limited to the similar backgrounds of Trump and One. In fact the most important similarity resides in the way the vulgarity of the film mirrors

⁷³ Michael Bay's '*6 Underground*' Viewed by 83 Million Members, Netflix Says, Pamela McClintock, The Hollywood Reporter, 2019

⁷⁴ Hollywood, Military Cooperation Often Mutually Beneficial, Steven Donald Smith, 2016, Available at the U.S Department of Defense Archive: <https://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=51>

⁷⁵ *6 Underground*, Directed by Michael Bay, Written by Paul Whernick and Rhett Reese, 12/13/2019, Netflix

the vulgarity of Trump's American War Machine. It is in this vulgarity that the ideological power of *6 Underground* is found. Before Trump, the American War Machine of the Bush and Obama eras had to mask the actions of the American War Machine under some sort of justification. The Bush American War Machine masked the failures and brutal reality of the war in Iraq and of private military contractors under the guise of a heroism. Thus, the American War Machine created the perfect tool for ideological manipulation in *Iron Man*. While the Obama-era American War Machine masked the vile nature of the U.S military under the guise of social progress. Thus, the American War Machine created the perfect tool for ideological manipulation in Carol Danvers. However, in the Trump-era American War Machine, there is no longer a mask. For example when Trump explained why the United States was stationing troops in Syria, he did not give some moral justification about why the US has to fight the injustices of the Assad regime. He simply said that the United States was in Syria “only for the oil.”⁷⁶ Trump’s justification of the U.S military presence in Syria as purely a monetary action is the perfect example of how his American War Machine has stripped the ideological mask the machine has used for decades to reveal the vulgar face that lies beneath. The power of this vulgar ideology is that in spite of knowing the ugly nature of the American War Machine’s ideology, the public is still powerless to stop it. In fact they are not only powerless; they do not want to stop it because the vulgarity of Trump and the American War Machine is endlessly entertaining. Take, for example, a recent Trump rally in Iowa where he mocked the 2020 Democratic candidates,

⁷⁶ Trump Contradicts Aides and Says Troops in Syria 'Only For Oil', Julian Bolger Quoting Donald Trump, 12/11/2019, The Guardian.

referring to one candidate, Michael Bloomberg, as “Mini Mike”⁷⁷, to a symphony of cheers.⁷⁸ At its core the crowd surely realizes the gross vulgarity of the President of the United States making fun of the opposition for being short; yet there is something inherently entertaining about seeing the most powerful man in the world regress to the vulgar nature of a child. It is the entertainment found in Trump’s American War Machines vulgar ideology that makes a film like *6 Underground* the perfect ideological tool. The film has some semblance of a plot, but it largely exists as a masterclass in vulgarity. For example, the film's opening scene consists of a 30-minute car chase wherein the protagonists make crude jokes regarding the hundreds of pedestrians being killed.⁷⁹ The camera cuts several times to nearly pornographic shots of models for seemingly no reason,⁸⁰ and gratuitous blood splatter shoots across the screen every five minutes.⁸¹ While this scene and the film itself are nonsensical, the base level reaction the audience has to its vulgar nature makes it endlessly watchable. This is the same type of vulgar watchability that gives the ideology of Trump’s American War Machine so much power. It seduces the masses into accepting the vulgar nature of not only *6 Underground*, but also the ideology of Trump’s American War Machine itself.

VI. FORMAL CONCLUSION

⁷⁷ . Trump Mocks 2020 Democrats During Iowa Campaign Rally, Morgan Chalfant Quoting Donald Trump, 01/20/202, The Hill

⁷⁸ Trump Mocks 2020 Democrats During Iowa Campaign Rally, Morgan Chalfant Quoting Donald Trump, 01/20/202, The Hill

⁷⁹ *6 Underground*, Directed by Michal Bay, Written by Paul Whernick and Rhett Reese, 12/13/2019, Netflix

⁸⁰ *6 Underground*, Directed by Michal Bay, Written by Paul Whernick and Rhett Reese, 12/13/2019, Netflix

⁸¹ *6 Underground*, Directed by Michal Bay, Written by Paul Whernick and Rhett Reese, 12/13/2019, Netflix

At the beginning of this paper, I used the fascist films of Nazi Germany to identify the power that a film's ideology can have in seducing its audience into evil. While I still cannot say that the CIA/DOD backed films/TV shows are the same as the propaganda of Nazi Germany. I can say that they serve the same purpose. In the documentary, "The Pervert's Guide to Ideology", Slavoj Zizek says, "Cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn't give you what you desire - it tells you how to desire."⁸⁷ It is this function of film telling you how to desire where the American War Machine's films/TV shows share a commonality with those of Nazi Germany. The ideological power of these film/TV shows is not brainwashing; common sense allows anyone to understand that these films are not reality. However, we have seen that all of these films/TV shows' key ideological power is that of seduction, or desire. We see this seduction work under three different forms of the American War Machine in *24* (George W. Bush.), *Homeland* (Barack Obama.), and *Jack Ryan* (Donald Trump.). Three mass culture products that shift to portray the differing ideological fantasies of the American War Machine. Fantasies where the United States' breaking of international law was justified by protecting U.S lives and the sanctity of American Exceptionalism. The power of this ideological fantasy is that it tells the viewers that they want to believe that these crimes were justified, and because of the heroics of Bauer, Bradshaw, and Ryan, we do begin to desire a reality in which these criminals are heroes. Similarly, in the films *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*, the viewers are seduced into an ideological fantasy where real-life acts of U.S violence and brutality are used only to fight evil, and because of the "real-life" heroics of Chris Kyle and the CIA, we begin to desire this fantasy in which the United States uses brutality only to fight pure evil. Finally, in *Iron Man*, *Captain Marvel*, and *6 Underground*, the viewers are seduced into an ideological fantasy where the

sometimes despicable men and women of the armed forces are superheroes protecting the world from villains, and because of the super-heroics of Iron Man, Captain Marvel, and One we want to believe that the members of the armed forces are real-life superheroes. Furthermore, the viewers are only seduced into desiring the ideological fantasy of these film/TV shows because these fantasies are explicitly made to be desirable. These products of the culture industry are meant to please as many people as possible, and they succeed. That success represents the true danger of these films/TV shows' ideology. When the viewers buy into the ideological fantasy of these films, they buy into the ideological fantasy of the American War Machine, an ideology that has resulted in an astronomical body count. Furthermore, these massive Hollywood productions are explicitly created to be smooth and easy to consume texts that coerce the viewer into consenting to their ideological narrative. In her seminal essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey describes how the pleasurable and easy to consume narratives of Hollywood cinema pushes the viewer to consume the ideology driving that pleasurable narrative.⁸² Thus, the pleasurable narratives in the Hollywood productions of the American War Machine use the easy to consume smoothness of their narrative structures to coerce the viewer into consenting to the deadly ideology underlying them.

This dark truth prompts the question of how one can fight against the ideologies' of these products? Perhaps, it is only through the ideological power of film/TV that this ideological prison can be escaped. Luckily, mass entertainment is not limited to the CIA/DOD-funded films/TV examined in this paper thus far. In fact, there is a long history of anti-imperialist media in Hollywood. The impact of these films' critiques of the American War Machine is more of a mixed bag. In order to assess the success and failures of anti-American War Machine films, I

⁸² *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey, Palgrave Macmillan, 1989

have selected three post-9/11 films (*The Report*, *Burn After Reading*, and *Children of Men*) that directly confront the ideology of the previously examined films. The first film I will be looking at is the Coen Brothers satirical masterpiece, “Burn After Reading” (2008). The film will be examined in dialogue with *24*, *Homeland*, and *Jack Ryan*, to show how satire can be used to expose the American War Machines ideological masking of the CIA’s crimes as heroics in these three shows.

VII: CODA, THE FILMS THAT WORK TO FIGHT DANGEROUS IDEOLOGIES

In “*Burn After Reading*”, the audience's first introduction to the CIA is seen in the character of Osborne Cox (John Malkovich.), an ex-CIA analyst, recently fired due to concerns over his drinking problem.⁸³ After his firing, Cox records his memoirs containing classified information, which he forgets at his gym.⁸⁴ These recordings are found by Linda Litzke (Frances McDormand) and Chad Fedlheimer (Brad Pitt), two rather idiotic gym employees who attempt to blackmail Cox into rewarding for the return of his memoirs.⁸⁵ Cox is a very different film portrayal of a CIA analyst than Bauer, Bradshaw, and Ryan. Unlike the masculine figures of heroism supplied by Bauer, Cox is a figure who the audience is decidedly supposed to view as one of impotence and spite. Cox, for example, is cuckolded by his domineering wife, Henrietta (Tilda Swinton),⁸⁶ whom he insists should pay him alimony in a divorce.⁸⁷ Unlike the smart and sensitive Bradshaw, Cox is an idiotic and angry figure, as shown by Litzke and Feldheimers’

⁸³ *Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁸⁴ *Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁸⁵ *Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁸⁶ *Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁸⁷ *Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

continued indifference towards the bumbling-overdramatic threats Cox makes against them.⁸⁸ Finally, unlike the respected and confident Ryan, Cox is viewed by his colleagues and the film as an incompetent jackass, as shown by the fact that no other character in the film shows him the respect that he so much desires. The heroes of the CIA funded texts in *24*, *Homeland*, and *Jack Ryan* are ideological manifestations of American Exceptionalism. They represent the most desirable traits humanity has to offer, and work to mask the real agents of the CIA. This hero's is directly subverted by the character of Cox, whose constant ridicule and emasculation unveils the heroic mask of ideology hiding the CIA for what it really is-- an old white man, who is way past his prime.

However, the film's best critique is not of one of the agents who populate the CIA, but rather of the institution itself. After Cox's series of misadventures lead to the deaths of three civilians and to classified information leaking to the KGB,⁸⁹ the audience is presented with one final scene to bookmark the film. The scene depicts CIA Officer Palmer DeBaakey Smith (David Rasche) explaining to his superior (J.K. Smith) the debacle caused by Cox.⁹⁰ After Smith explains how Cox let classified information slip into the hands of the KGB, his superior asks him, "What did we learn?"⁹¹ to which Palmer replies, "I don't know sir?"⁹² only for the superior at the CIA to respond with the final words of the film, "I don't fuckin' know either. I guess we learned not to do it again."⁹³ In many ways, this final line encapsulates the entire thesis of the film, and its stance towards the CIA. The thesis is that the countless spying and scheming of the

⁸⁸*Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁸⁹*Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁹⁰*Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁹¹*Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁹²*Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁹³*Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

CIA ultimately boils down to what the superior would call a “Clusterfuck”⁹⁴, where the only intelligence gained is that their own actions should not be repeated. The film counters the ideology of 24, Homeland, and Jack Ryan that painted the CIA and American War Machine as some all-knowing source of just power, and exposes these institutions for what they truly are — institutions based on mistakes and lies that create nothing but destructive chaos. However, this power of a certain film's ideology to subvert the ideology of our category one film/TV show of the American War Machine becomes more complex when attempting to combat the ideology of category one film that is based on true events. The film that will take the form of my second example, *The Report* (2019), will be examined in direct dialogue with *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*. In order to show how *The Report* succeeds and fails in subverting the ideological rewriting of reality scene in *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*.

Scout Z. Burn's *The Report*, tells the real life story of the torture report, a 2012 Senate Intelligence Committee report that exposed the illegality of the “enhanced interrogation techniques” used by U.S after 9/11. The film follows CIA analyst Daniel Jones (played by Adam Driver), as he dedicates years of his life to exposing the illegal and brutal torture methods used by the U.S during the war on terror.⁹⁵ The film's greatest success in combating the ideology of American War Machine-funded films is seen when the film is put in direct conversation with *Zero Dark Thirty*. In fact, *The Report* overtly begs the viewer to directly compare it to *Zero Dark Thirty*, as evidenced through a scene where Jones becomes visibly angry while watching a scene from *Zero Dark Thirty*, even remarking that the film misportrays torture as effective.⁹⁶ This scene of Jones angrily addressing *Zero Dark Thirty* serves as a correction of the misinformation

⁹⁴*Burn After Reading*, Written and Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, Focus Features 2008

⁹⁵ *The Report*, Written & Directed by Scott Z. Burns, 2019, Amazon Studios

⁹⁶ *The Report*, Written & Directed by Scott Z. Burns, 2019, Amazon Studios

regarding the effectiveness of torture displayed in *Zero Dark Thirty* which was supposedly based on a true story. The ideological purpose of *Zero Dark Thirty* for the American War Machine was to rewrite the reality of CIA's successful killing of Osama bin Laden as possible only through the use of torture. *The Report* corrects that ideological remaking of reality by having its real life hero correctly frame the ideology of *Zero Dark Thirty* as pure fantasy. *The Report* then presents the audience with an ideology-free reality by showing numerous scenes of U.S agents brutally torturing men only to receive inaccurate information.⁹⁷ However, the film's direct confrontation of *Zero Dark Thirty* is not the only way in which it meta-textually confronts the ideology of American War Machine-funded films.

The Report also confronts the ideological fantasy of Chris Kyle as the hyper-masculine American hero protecting the weak from the strong in *American Sniper*. In *The Report*, real person-hero of the film, Daniel Jones, is played by Adam Driver, who was once a member of the Marine corps.⁹⁸ Unlike the badass gunslinger, Chris Kyle, (played by the pretty-boy movie star, Bradley Cooper), in *American Sniper*, Jones is a quiet and socially awkward nerd who does not even see himself as the hero. Numerous scenes, for example, show Jones neglecting a social life in favor of reading the torture reports alone in his office.⁹⁹ The ideological fantasy of the DOD-funded *American Sniper* turns the real-life soldier, Chris Kyle into a movie cowboy who is saving the weak from the dangerous threat of Iraq. By casting a real-life veteran (Adam Driver) in the role of Jones, *The Report* is able to reveal the ideological distortion of Chris Kyle as an American Hero for what it really is— a Hollywood star playing dress up. However, it is in *The*

⁹⁷ *The Report*, Written & Directed by Scott Z. Burns, 2019, Amazon Studios

⁹⁸ Actor Adam Driver Models The Marine Creed, Brady Rhodes, U.S Veterans Magazine, 2017

⁹⁹ *The Report*, Written & Directed by Scott Z. Burns, 2019, Amazon Studios

Report's subversion of heroic tropes where its greatest failure in tackling the film's of the American War Machine is found.

In a scene from Slavoj Zizek's documentary, "*The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*," he remarks that he is "already eating from the trash can all the time, the name of this trash can is ideology."¹⁰⁰ What Zizek is saying in this anecdote is that part of the power of ideology is that we are always consuming it, and the reason we consume it is because it is delicious-- delicious in the sense that while the ideology may be fantasy, that fantasy is one that we are naturally drawn towards. In terms of the ideology of film, this delicious nature of ideology would take the form of the sheer mass entertainment value gained from CIA/DOD-funded films like, *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*. These films' ideologies are consumed because the packaging is so entertaining. One example is the scene in *American Sniper* where Chris Kyle is laying down on a rooftop looking through his sniper scope at a child who he thinks is about to detonate a bomb and struggling to decide if he should pull the trigger.¹⁰¹ From a point of pure entertainment this scene is enthralling, the audience is on the edge of their seats as they wonder if Kyle will pull the trigger. Meanwhile, they do not realize that this incredibly seductive scene that they are being fed is just the packaging for an ideology. This is an ideology where American soldiers sometimes have to kill children to protect the lives of the weak— a pure fantasy. However, this fantasy is easily consumed by the public due to its highly entertaining packaging. This packaging is something that all of the films/TV shows studied so far have come wrapped in, whether it is the packaging of the bombastic scenes of entertaining destruction in *Iron Man*, *Captain Marvel*, and

¹⁰⁰ *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, Directed by Sophia Fiennes, Written and narrated Slavoj Zizek, Blinder Films, 2012

¹⁰¹ *American Sniper*, written by Jason Hall, Directed by Clint Eastwood, Based on the book by Chris Kyle, Warner Bros, 2014

6 Underground; the edge of your seat thrills of *24*, *Homeland*, *Jack Ryan*, *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper*; or even the laugh-out loud jokes of *Burn After Reading*. All of these films seduce the audience through mass entertainment packaging. This is a packaging that *The Report* lacks. Instead, *The Report* packages its ideology in countless scenes of characters reading or presenting evidence in hearings¹⁰² that feel more like a C-SPAN broadcast than a Hollywood film. This failure of the film to package its ideology in an entertaining way makes it so that all of its successes in tackling the ideological fantasy of *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper* are rendered meaningless because this film's ideology is not one that we want to consume. However, there are films that both subvert the ideology of American War Machine films and provide the entertaining package that seduces an audience. One of those films is *Children of Men*, the third and final example of a film that tackles the ideology of the American War Machine.

Examination of Alfonso Curon's 2006 sci-fi masterpiece, *Children of Men*, in dialogue with the category two films of *Iron Man*, *Captain Marvel*, and *6 Underground*, shows how a "Fantastical Elements in Exaggerations of Realistic Circumstances Film" can perfectly subvert the ideological fantasies of these category two films, and even create an ideological weapon for good. The film takes place in the dystopian future of 2027, wherein the women of the world have been infertile for 18 years, and the United States and United Kingdom have completely closed their borders.¹⁰³ The plot follows ex-eco-terrorist, Theo Foron (Clive Owen), who is tasked by his ex-wife, Julia (Julianne Moore), with escorting a young refugee, Kee (Claire Hope-Ashitey), who also happens to be the first pregnant woman in 18 years to the Human Project.¹⁰⁴ While the film does technically take place in the United Kingdom, the U.S army and American War

¹⁰² *The Report*, Written & Directed by Scott Z. Burns, 2019, Amazon Studios

¹⁰³ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

¹⁰⁴ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

Machine loom as a significant obstacle for our heroes. The ideology of *Iron Man* is one wherein the intersection of the private sector and weapons contractors with the U.S military is manifested in the heroic figure of Tony Stark, a superhero-billionaire who works with the military to save the world. In *Children of Men*, this collaboration between the private sector and military is manifested in Nigel (Danny Huston), a billionaire directly profiting from the U.S and U.K.'s endless war with the rest of the world,¹⁰⁵ making him a figure of pure greed and evil. Early in the film, Theo goes to visit Nigel in his apartment to ask for his help with the young refugee.¹⁰⁶ As Theo exits the streets of London riddled with the homeless and enters Nigel's heavily guarded home, the camera focuses on Nigel standing next to Michelangelo's sculpture, The David. Nigel then invites Theo to sit with him at the dinner table, backdropped by a Picasso painting, so that they can discuss the girl, only for Nigel then to decline him any assistance.¹⁰⁷ In this brief scene we learn everything we need to know about Nigel. Through the contrast between the poor masses of the London streets and the comical opulence of Nigel's home, the film makes it clear to the audience that Nigel's work with the military has directly damaged the masses in service of increasing his own personal wealth. Finally, Theo and Nigel move the window and Theo says, "You kill me, one hundred years from now there won't be one sad fuck to look at any of this...What keeps you going?"¹⁰⁸ Nigel merely responds, "I just don't think about it,"¹⁰⁹ while a Macy's Day parade-esque balloon of a pig floats in the background.¹¹⁰ This one snide remark from Nigel encapsulates his entire ideology. Nigel and the men like him are happily profiting off

¹⁰⁵ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Cuarón, Universal Studios, 2006

¹⁰⁶ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Cuarón, Universal Studios, 2006

¹⁰⁷ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Cuarón, Universal Studios, 2006

¹⁰⁸ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Cuarón, Universal Studios, 2006

¹⁰⁹ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Cuarón, Universal Studios, 2006

¹¹⁰ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Cuarón, Universal Studios, 2006

of the literal end of the world. As long as they get their fancy house and great works of art, they don't care about anything else. This one scene of Nigel unmasks the ideological fantasy of the American War Machine, wherein billionaire weapons contractors are superheroes. It takes these billionaire weapons contractors to their logical extreme— men who profit off the extinction of the human race so they can afford fancy works of art.

In the ideological fantasy of *Captain Marvel*, enlistment in the military is equated with furthering the progressive ideals of female empowerment. In *Children of Men*, the U.S and U.K military are forces that directly suppress marginalized groups in favor of retaining the status quo. Take, for example, a scene from the film wherein Theo and his crew cross the London border, only for the camera to pan away from our heroes to show cages of non-white women and children being guarded by the armed forces.¹¹¹ In this one camera move, Curon is able to dismantle any ideological masking of the military as champion of progressive ideals. These images of starving women and children being caged by the military expose the American War Machine's ideological fantasy of the armed forces as champion for the marginalized like Danvers in *Captain Marvel* for what it really is— an institution so committed to upholding those in power that is willing to actively brutalize anyone who does not belong to that group.

Finally, in the ideological fantasy of *6 Underground*, the violence of warfare is turned into a comical display of vulgarity manifested by the quick cutting and smooth displays of bloodshed. In *Children of Men*, by contrast, the violence of warfare is shown as a brutal exercise that only creates misery. Take, for example, the film's famous one-take car chase scene. The scene begins with Theo and Julia exchanging a romantic flirtation in the car, only for the camera to pan towards the windshield to unveil a flaming blockade followed by hundreds of mercenaries

¹¹¹ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

flooding the screen as they dash towards the car.¹¹² The camera then pans back towards the backseat as the car goes into reverse in an attempt to flee the mercenaries chasing them.¹¹³ During this attempted escape the camera spins around the inside of the car as four armed men on motorcycles drive up to the car and shoot Julia in the throat.¹¹⁴ The shot continues as the camera spins around the car again to show everyone screaming and crying, only to focus on Theo holding Julia as she bleeds out in his arms.¹¹⁵ Eventually, the car comes to a stop as they are stopped by two police officers, and the camera exits with Theo as he shoots them.¹¹⁶ When Theo reenters the car, the camera stays behind as he drives off, only for the camera to pan down at the two dead bodies before finally cutting.¹¹⁷ In the ideological fantasy of *6 Underground*, violence like this would be shot in hyper-stylized and clean fashion wherein any of the bloodshed is cut away from quickly to show the hero making some snide remark. This filmmaking style is used to seduce the audience into believing that the violence of warfare is a clean and even humorous process. *Children of Men's* subversion of this ideological fantasy lies in the one-shot style that Curon shoots this big action scene. Because the camera remains with our heroes and never cuts away from them, Curon forces the audience to see the chaos and misery that comes from violence. When Julia dies, the camera does not cut away; it stays in the car and shows the consequences of violence. In this one scene, *Children of Men* is able to unmask the American War Machine's ideological fantasy of violence, as presented in films like *6 Underground*. *Children of Men* shows that the violence of warfare is not fun or clean—it's a chaotic force that

¹¹² *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

¹¹³ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

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creates misery and loss. However, the ideological power of *Children of Men* does not reside solely in exposing the ideological fantasy of the American War Machine in the category two CIA/DOD funded films. In fact the film's true ideological power resides in its ability to package an ideology that stands opposed to that of the American War Machine in an equally entertaining package. This is an ideology rooted in hope, specifically, hope in human beings.

The true danger of the CIA/DOD funded films/TV Shows of American War Machine is that they seduce the viewers into buying into an ideology of American Exceptionalism that has been used to justify killings of countless people. This ideology can be unmasked by films that subvert the ideological fantasy of the CIA/DOD funded films/TV Shows of the American War Machine through satire, like *Burn After Reading*, or through factual corrections, like *The Report*. But these films do not provide an ideological response to the moral failure of the American War Machine, nor do they provide any hope for a better world. We can, however, see an ideology of hope in *Children of Men*, specifically in the film's climactic scene. This scene begins as any other action scene would, with Theo, Kee, and her newly born child seemingly at the brink of death, caught in the middle of a firefight between the U.S/U.K Military and rebel forces¹¹⁸ The camera shows Theo and Kee staring down a soldier as they prepare to be shot.¹¹⁹ However, Kee's baby starts to cry and the soldier lowers his gun, and begins screaming at soldiers on both sides to cease fire.¹²⁰ The camera then follows Theo, Kee, and the baby as they cross the battlefield, panning to show the audience soldiers on both sides lowering their weapons sides, and staring at the first child born in 18 years.¹²¹ Finally, the camera rotates in front of Theo, Kee, and the baby as they exit the battlefield, only to have the soldiers begin firing at each other in the

¹¹⁸ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

¹¹⁹ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

¹²⁰ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

¹²¹ *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006

background¹²²--- a brief moment of humanity and hope in a world of endless war. This image provides a perfect antidote to the ideological justification of endless war-for-profit seen in the CIA/DOD funded films of the American War Machine. If films are powerful enough to propagate the ideology of violence and misery of the American War Machine, perhaps they are also powerful enough to propagate an ideology of hope and humanity. Or perhaps, they are only powerful enough to inspire brief moments of these sentiments.

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41. Full text: George Bush's Address on The Start of War, George W. Bush, 04/19/03, The Guardian

42. *It's Imperialism, Stupid*, Noam Chomsky, *Khaleej Times*, July 4, 2005— While I did not cite this work much, Chomsky's work on Imperialism was key to honing my definition of the American War Machine and helped me stay focused.
43. George W. Bush On Drinking & Sobriety, Information Compiled from Various Speeches and Writings of George W. Bush, *I Am Sober*, 2019
44. Captain Marvel is Officially a \$1 Billion Box Office Hit, Alex Abad-Santos, 2019, Vox
45. *Captain Marvel*, Directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, Written by Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck, and Geneva Robertson-Dworet, Disney Studios, 2019
46. Airmen Fly Higher, Further, Faster With Captain Marvel, Shannon Collins and the US Department of Defense, 2019, defense.gov
47. *Captain Marvel*, Directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, Written by Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck, and Geneva Robertson-Dworet, Disney Studios, 2019
48. *Origin Story: Aim High'*, advertisement for the U.S Airforce, 2019, found on iSpot.tv
49. The Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military Fiscal Year 2018, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response unit of the Defense Department, 2018, found in the New York Times.
50. *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, Directed by Sophia Fiennes, Written and narrated Slavoj Žižek, Blinder Films, 2012 — While I only cited this in the conclusion, watching this gave the necessary vocabulary and framework to analyze the ideology of film without being redundant. Additionally, this film inspired me to think about these films in a new way.
51. *Military Propaganda: Defense Department Films from World War II and Vietnam*, Claudia Springer, University of Minnesota Press, 1986— A key text that I used to identify the history of collaboration between the DOD and Hollywood. Additionally I used this text as the basis for how the DOD can change a film to fit the ideology of the American War Machine.
52. *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film*, Lawrence H. Suid, University Press of Kentucky, 2002— Another key text that I used to identify the history of collaboration between the DOD and Hollywood. Additionally I used this text as the basis for the American War Machine used inoculation to strengthen the ideological power of film starting in the Vietnam era and continuing to the modern era.

53. THE MOTION PICTURE AS A WEAPON OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE, FOUND AT: <https://ratical.org/ratville/CAH/OSS-motionpicturesasweapons.pdf>— A key text used to identify the history of the CIA's involvement in Hollywood, and how they become much more involved in the post 9/11 era of American Politics.
54. Full text: George Bush's Address on The Start of War, George W. Bush, 04/19/03, The Guardian
55. Read the Full Text of President Obama's Address to the Nation on Terrorism, Barack Obama, December 7, 2015, Time
56. Chomsky: Paris Attacks Show Hypocrisy of West's Outrage, Noam Chomsky, 01/20/15, CNN
57. From Torture to Drone Strikes: the Disturbing Legal Legacy Obama is Leaving for Trump, Jennifer Williams, Jan 10, 2017, Vox
58. We Own The World, Noam Chomsky, 01/01/18, Chomsky.Info— A key text used to define the ideology of the American War Machine, and identify the insidious nature behind said ideology.
59. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Random House, 2011— The key text used to both further define the ideology of the American War Machine, and identify how/why said ideology uses media to further its goals.
60. A Closer Look at Cheney and Halliburton, David e. Rosenbaum, September. 28, 2004, The New York Times
61. Has the Internet Changed the Propaganda Model?, Sheldon Rampton, The Center for Media and Democracy's PR Watch, 2007
62. Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon's Hidden Hand, David Barstow, The New York Times, 2008
63. When Old and New Media Collide: The Case of WikiLeaks, Elizabeth Blanks Hindman, Ryan J Thomas, Sage, 2013
64. Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda, Noam Chomsky, Seven Stories Press, 2011
65. Four Simple Steps the U.S. Media Could Take to Prevent a Trump War With Iran, Mehdi Hassan, The Intercept, 2019

66. “Mythologies”, Ronald Barthes, Frauer, Straus, and Giroux, 1971— A key theoretical text that I used to expand on my paper's definition of ideology and inoculation. The American War Machine's use of inoculation taking place when it's ideology criticizes itself in order to shield itself from outside criticism and strengthen its own ideological power.
67. Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies, David L. Robb, Prometheus Books, 2004— A key text used to establish a history of how the American War Machine deployed ideological inoculation in film and Television throughout the years.
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69. 24, Season 4, Howard Gordon, 2005, Fox
70. 24, Day 8: 12:00pm-1:00pm, Howard Gordon, 2010, Fox
71. Homeland' Posts Best New Drama Series Debut Ratings on Showtime in 8 Years; 'Dexter' Sees Season Premiere High, TV by the Number, TVbythenumbers.com, 2011
72. *Homeland* makes the case for an Emmy comeback with a thrilling final season, Riley Chow, Goldderby.com 2020
73. Stats Show Jack Ryan Is The Huge Hit That Amazon Has Been Hoping For, Britt Lawrence, CINemblend, 2018
74. *Jack Ryan* Star John Krasinski Reveals What Surprised Him Most on His CIA Visits, Samantha Highfill quoting John Krasinski, Entertainment Weekly, 2018
75. Tom Clancy's *Jack Ryan, Strongman*, Directed by Andrew Bernstein, written by Carlton Cruise and Graham Roland, 2019, Amazon Studios
76. Trump Brazenly Endorses the Use of Torture While Defending CIA Nominee, Mealnie Shmitz, 06/07/2019, ThinkProgress
77. Trump on Torture: 'We Have to Beat the Savages', Jeremy Diamond quoting Donald Trump, 03/06/2016, CNN News
78. Venezuela Crisis: How the Political Situation Escalated, BBC News, 01/13/2020, BBC News
79. Statement from President Donald J. Trump Recognizing Venezuelan National Assembly President Juan Guaido as the Interim President of Venezuela Found at:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-recognizing-venezuelan-national-assembly-president-juan-guaido-interim-president-venezuela/>

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81. *6 Underground*, Directed by Michal Bay, Written by Paul Whernick and Rhett Reese, 12/13/2019, Netflix
82. Trump Contradicts Aides and Says Troops in Syria 'Only For Oil', Julian Bolger Quoting Donald Trump, 12/11/2019, The Guardian.
83. Trump Mocks 2020 Democrats During Iowa Campaign Rally, Morgan Chalfant Quoting Donald Trump, 01/20/202, The Hill
84. *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey, Palgrave Macmillan, 1989—
While this text is only cited once, Mulveys work on how the narrative ease and accessibility works to coerce viewers into buying into a films ideology is key to establishing the ideological powers of the films and TV shows used as my case studies. Additionally, this text provides a groundwork for assessing the success of the three films that fight against the ideology of the American War Machine.
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86. *The Report*, Written & Directed by Scott Z. Burns, 2019, Amazon Studios
87. Actor Adam Driver Models The Marine Creed, Brady Rhodes, U.S Veterans Magazine, 2017
88. *Children of Men*, Written & Directed by Alfonso Curon, Universal Studios, 2006