Militarized Patriotism: Constructing Norms Of Patriotic Behavior Through The Image Of The Soldier In Film

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MILITARIZED PATRIOTISM: CONSTRUCTING NORMS OF PATRIOTIC BEHAVIOR

THROUGH THE IMAGE OF THE SOLDIER IN FILM

by

MATTHEW BLAKE MORLEY

Under the Direction of Henry Carey, PhD

ABSTRACT

Janet Cramer's concept of militarized patriotism is an important contribution to the study of social militarization. This essay attempts to expand our understanding of militarized patriotism by interrogating the ways patriotic norms of behavior are established within American culture and altered during moments of crisis. I argue that changes in the cinematic reproduction of the image of the soldier during the 1970s established "honoring the soldier" as a new form of enforced patriotic behavior. In particular, I argue that the attempt to portray the "real" events of Vietnam constructed an image of the wounded soldier that allowed audiences to empathize with American veterans. As the image of the wounded soldier was consolidated in American culture during the 1980s and 1990s, honoring the soldier became a repressive mechanism that now works to legitimize a permanent state of war.

INDEX WORDS: Patriotism, Militarization, War Films, Visual Analysis, Images, Soldiers

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Art

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2018

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August 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1   INTRODUCTION

Despite a modest opposition in the United States and a near global rejection of the Bush administration's unilateral foreign policies, including a strong anti-war movement in Europe, very little public debate occurred in the United States prior to the 2003 Iraq War (Cramer 2009, 151; Sheehan 2008, xiii–xv, 214). Any debate that did occur amounted to what Steven Van Evera terms "non-evaluation"; a debate where those in power seek to direct attention and public favor towards their position by actively ignoring or suppressing contradictory information and criticism (in Kaufmann 2004, 6). As Richard Jackson observes, the Bush administration successfully controlled the debate through a concerted effort to "deny, deconstruct, and delegitimize" oppositional narratives of the war (Jackson 2011, 398). By the time the war commenced, the American public overwhelmingly favored the war in Iraq (see Eichenberg 2005; Mueller 2005) and marched impulsively into a devastating war without a national discussion (Kohn 2008).

The cost of the Global War on Terror has been drastic. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan killed over 6,800 U.S. military personnel and wounded another 32,000 (Deer 2016). By 2016, there were nearly 1 million disability claims filled with the Department of Veterans Affairs (Deer 2016). These numbers, however, pale in comparison to the effects the two wars have had on Iraqi and Afghani citizens. There have been at least 210,000 confirmed civilian deaths in both war zones (Deer 2016). In the years since the 2003, the United States military has expanded exponentially. In the last years of the Bush era, the United States was spending upwards of $600 billion annually to support a military infrastructure that spanned the globe (Boggs and Pollard 2008, 566). The promise of hope and change that lead Barack Obama into the Whitehouse had little effect on United States militarization. By 2012, US defense spending was over $700 billion,

nearly half of total military spending across the globe (O'Connell 2012). Despite this exorbitant spending, in the 2012 presidential campaign, both Obama and his Republican challenger Mitt Romney called for an increase in the military budget (O'Connell 2012). As Aaron O'Connell points out, the US military has become the "third-rail" of American politics (O'Connell 2012).

The costs of permanent war in the United States, both in material and human terms, is especially problematic considering it is now clear that the Bush administration's campaign to garner public support for the war in Iraq was intentionally based on disinformation and over-inflated threat assessments (see Kaufmann 2004; Massing 2004). More troubling, we now know the information needed to debunk the administration's case for war was present at that time (Cramer 2007, 2009; Kaufmann 2004). In light of these revelations, as Robert Gilpin rightly asserts, the toll of war should weigh "heavily on the conscience of every American" (Gilpin 2005, 5). Yet the question remains: why did politicians, the media, and, perhaps more importantly, the American public, not actively oppose the Bush administration. Indeed, not only was there a remarkable lack of opposition but, despite the collapse of the administration's narrative that Iraq posed a clear and present danger to the security of the United States, the administration was re-elected to a second term in 2004.

Janet Cramer argues any opposition to the 2003 Iraq War was effectively silenced by two norms of "patriotic" behavior that emerged during the Cold War (Cramer 2007). As American culture became increasingly militarized as a result of a collective fear over the threat of the Soviet Union and communism, the American public came to accept a strong military and deference of war powers to the presidency as a necessary means to maintain national security (Cramer 2007, 490–91). In the process of legitimizing the mobilization for war in 2003, the Bush administration and its supporters deployed patriotic appeals to unity that were reinforced by Cold

War era norms of patriotic behavior (Jackson 2011). As a result, those that opposed the call for militarization risked being labeled "unpatriotic, disloyal, divisive, and naïve" (Jackson 2011, 398). Thus, in Cramer's view, opposition to the war was silenced and discredited by what she terms militarized patriotism.

Militarized patriotism is an important conceptual framework to interrogate everyday cultural practices that may not directly relate to militaristic beliefs and attitudes. Militarized patriotism speaks to processes of social militarization that normalize the military and war to the point that even the most resolute anti-military activist may inadvertently be contributing to processes of militarization by performing a patriotic script. I believe militarized patriotism has taken on a renewed significance in our current political climate. Like previous election cycles, the 2016 election was marked by endless expressions of support and devotion to the military. Both sides of the aisle attempted to exert their loyalty to the military while calling into question the other's patriotic motives. In the wake of the election, President Trump surrounded himself with generals and veterans to symbolize his support for the troops. At the same time, Trump's recent national security policy calls for a return to Cold War methods and military posturing, including revamping the US nuclear arsenal (National Security & Defense 2018). Likewise, the president's recent attacks on black athletes who exercise a constitutional right to protest by kneeling during the national anthem calls into question the meaning of patriotism and what a citizen's civic duty is to those who fight for "freedom and democracy." This leads me to ask, in a society defined by permanent war, has the spectacle of honoring the soldier become a new form of militarized patriotic behavior?

The purpose of this essay is to expand our understanding of militarized patriotism by interrogating the ways in which honoring the soldier has become an enforced norm of patriotic

behavior. In doing so, this essay seeks to address a key gap in Cramer's conceptualization; namely, how militarized patriotism endured both the popular rejection of the Vietnam War during the 1960s as well as the end of the Cold War in the late 1990s. Thus, to broaden Cramer's concept, this essay asks: how has militarized patriotism remained a dominant fixture within American culture despite changes in international and domestic conditions?

Historically, the cultural practice of honoring the men and women who serve in the military has been a core component of patriotic expression. However, I argue that following the Vietnam War, this cultural practice turned into a new norm of patriotic behavior, marked by what Andrew Bacevich refers to as the "romanticized view of soldiers," where the soldier comes to symbolize the strength and well-being of the national identity (in Kohn 2008, 193; also Bacevich 2013, 2). It was this transformation that allowed militarized patriotism to remain a key component within American culture. In order to describe how this process occurs, this essay analyzes the cultural processes that construct and reinforce new patriotic norms in times of crisis. In particular, I interpret Hollywood's portrayal of the soldier in war films in order to reveal how the image of the soldier functions to construct appropriate forms of patriotic behavior within American culture.

This essay proceeds as follows. In the first section, I review the relevant literature in which militarized patriotism is situated and establish my theoretical argument. The second section explores how variations in the image of the soldier in *Sergeant York* (1941) and *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) create new forms of patriotic behavior specific to the crises of World War II and the Cold War. In the third section, I discuss how the Vietnam War creates a crisis of patriotic idealism, which in turn leads to the cultural rejection of the image of the soldier in John Wayne's *The Green Berets* (1968). In the fourth section I demonstrate how films like *The Deer*

Hunter (1979), *First Blood* (1982)*,* and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) allow the practice of

honoring the soldier to be consolidated in American culture by reframing the image of the

wounded soldier. It is through this process that honoring the soldier comes into being as an

enforced norm of militarized patriotism.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Patriotism

The use of national artifacts are integral to the imagining of the political community (see

Anderson 2006; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). However, national artifacts are not just

motionless markers of a territorially bounded sovereign nation-state, they are active objects that

destroy, construct, demarcate, and give meaning to boundaries, internal and external, real or

imaginary. National artifacts are the symbolic mechanism through which individuals feel a

connection to the nation and "the people." National artifacts elicit feelings of belonging, of place,

of common purpose. They are also the devices through which the political community is not only

imagined but also fought for and defended. "For the nation to remain cohesive," Ryan Watson

contends, "members of different generations must feel obliged to fight and die for the nation"

(2007, 4). Patriotism, or the feeling of love and devotion to one's country (Adorno et al. 1950;

Viroli 1995), materializes through a positive emotional attachment to national artifacts

(Kosterman and Feshbach 1989). Individuals feel patriotic when they interact with national

artifacts. They elicit feelings of solidarity and commitment to the nation, its institutions, and the

larger political community.

Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States experienced a way of

patriotic sentiment. Likewise, in the wake of the attacks, a great deal of attention has been placed

on patriotism within the Academy. Much of this scholarship addresses the long-standing debate over what patriotism is and whether or not it is a positive or negative phenomenon. For example, numerous scholars have explored the relationship between national artifacts and patriotism (for example Butz, Plant, and Doerr 2007; Coryn, Beale, and Myers 2004; Ferguson and Hassin 2007; Hassin et al. 2007; Huddy and Khatib 2007; Skitka 2005). Others debate the virtuousness and moral significance of patriotism (for example Brubaker 2004; Calhoun 2002; Gomberg 1990; Laborde 2002). Outstanding scholarship has focused on the negative consequences of ultrapatriotic landscapes. For example, a number of scholars argue the heightened patriotic mood following 9/11 legitimized the Global War on Terrorism (Birkenstein, Froula, and Randell 2010; Brewer 2011; Butterworth and Moskal 2009; Dittmer 2005; Falk 2013a; Kellner 2004). Likewise, some argue patriotism justified the passage of the 2001 Patriot Act, the establishment of the Homeland Security apparatus, and the substantial curtailment of civil liberties and increased surveillance of the citizenry (Coy, Maney, and Woehrle 2003; Cramer 2009; Kellner 2004, 2015).

Much of this work aligns with the historical perspective that there are two forms of patriotism; a "genuine" democratic patriotism and a nationalist "blind patriotism." Genuine patriotism is believed to be a necessary requirement to a well-ordered democracy by nurturing feelings of solidarity, a sense of a unified national identity, and a belief in institutions and shared responsibility (Adorno et al. 1950; Nathanson 1989; Skocpol 2002). Blind patriotism, on the other hand, maintains the belief that the "Nation" is superior to other nations and should be dominant (Adorno et al. 1950, 107; Kosterman and Feshbach 1989, 261; Schatz, Staub, and Lavine 1999). Therefore, blind patriotism is associated with increased intolerance and prejudice (Coryn, Beale, and Myers 2004), jingoism (Everett 1900; Goldman 1917; Ryder 1919), and other

"authoritarian values" (Li and Brewer 2004, 728). "The patriot as nationalist," cautioned Falk, "does not question the rightness of the cause pursued by his or her government, nor the legality and morality of the means to achieve national objectives in times of war" (Falk 2013b, 203). Valuable as these debates may be, they often overlook the fact that to *be* patriotic, one must *act* patriotic.

2.2   Militarized Patriotism

In analyzing the lack of congressional deliberation leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Janet Cramer makes a novel contribution to the study of patriotism. Writing in "Militarized Patriotism: Why the U.S. Marketplace of Ideas Failed Before the Iraq War", Cramer argues convincingly that the lack of public deliberation can be attributed the "powerful silencing effect" of what she refers to as "militarized patriotism" (2007, 490–91). For Cramer, militarized patriotism is the mechanism that enforces two norms of appropriate patriotic behavior: the support for a strong military and deference of war powers to the Executive Branch (2007, n. 12). Militarized patriotism forces political actors to perform these norms of behavior in order to avoid being labeled unpatriotic or disloyal. Militarized patriotism is not a new form of patriotism that emerged following 9/11. Instead, it is a deformation of a previous form of genuine patriotism that occurred as a result of the militarization of political culture during the Cold War. Put another way, the norms of behavior enforced by militarized patriotism emerged in response to the collective fear of the Soviet Union and the global threat of communism (Cramer 2007, 495). The consolidation of these norms of behavior within US political culture created new rules of the game where it was deemed "too politically risky" for political actors to appear "weak" on military or foreign policy issues (Cramer 2007, 500). Thus, militarized patriotism is a particular

cultural script created from a specific set of historical conditions that affect the behavior of contemporary political actors.

Militarized patriotism is a valuable conceptual framework to interrogate alternative forms of patriotic behavior today. By framing militarized patriotism as a cultural performance, Cramer is asking the important question of how patriotism functions rather than more common approaches that ask what it is (aggregate of ideas, beliefs, and attitudes) or whether it is a positive or negative phenomenon (good patriotism versus bad nationalism). In Cramer's formulation, militarized patriotism is a repressive mechanism. It does not inspire, as is commonly accepted, but forces individuals to act according to a consensus on what is and is not appropriate patriotic behavior. By conceptualizing militarized patriotism as a repressive mechanism, Cramer is challenging traditional approaches to political culture. By recognizing that militarized patriotism may not be easily associated with shared beliefs, ideas, and political orientations, Cramer is arguing that the examination of aggregate properties typically may not reveal the full extent to which militarized patriotism affects culture. Moreover, against traditional constructivist arguments, militarized patriotism does not necessarily constitute a shared world-view (for example Duffield 1999; Farrell 1998; Katzenstein 1996; Kier 1996; Sheehan 2008). Rather, Cramer observes that individual actors may not possess militaristic preferences, attitudes or a shared world-view, nevertheless they are compelled to act within the prescribed script for fear of negative consequences (2007, 492). While it could be argued that these individuals were acting according to their own rational interests, Cramer's point is the opposite. Because one of the foundational tenants of a well-ordered democracy is open and public deliberation, these actors are actually operating against their long-term interests by weakening the democratic process.

Furthermore, militarized patriotism reveals the significant role that patriotic behavior plays in processes of militarization. In traditional political science research, militarization is understood as the extraction and distribution of labor and resources to the military (Lutz 2002). However, militarized patriotism speaks to the social and cultural process through which civil society is organized for war and violence (Geyer 1989). Cynthia Enloe defines social militarization as the complex multi-layered processes through which society is organized for violence in ways that are not easily identifiable with the allocation of resources or the material mobilization for war (see 2000, 2010, 2014). Numerous scholars have demonstrated how social militarization functions through the use and manipulation of non-military images, discourses, and symbolic languages in ways that still "glorify and legitimate" the military (Lutz 2002, 724; see also Walker 1987; Wilson 2000; Giroux 2003; Schulzke 2012; Enloe 2010). Catherine Lutz adds that social militarization functions through the "less visible deformation of human potential into hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality" (2002, 723). For Linda ÅHäll, social militarization is the "subtle process of the normalization of a militarized society" (2015, 68). Davies and Philpot suggest that social militarization is intimately connected to "abstract" meanings of citizenship and patriotism (2012, 49). Indeed, patriotic sentiment reaches its peak when states militarize and wage war (O'Leary and Platt 2001). In my view, militarized patriotism speaks to a broader phenomenon inherent to social militarization, specifically, the construction and maintenance of a permanent state of war. This is to say; militarized patriotism addresses the puzzle of why some states do not experience a period of de-militarization at the conclusion of war or conflict (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989). However, Cramer does not explicitly address this puzzle.

2.3   Culture and the Endurance of Militarized Patriotism

As Steven Johnston points out, any dominant social and political order will always create feelings of love and devotion within the social body as long as that order is deemed just (2002). Patriotism, for Johnston, is a specific language deployed by the dominant social forces to address a specific crisis (Johnston 2002). Furthermore, patriotism operates through the belief that individuals can correct the crisis as long as they act according to the prescribed patriotic script (Johnston 2002). Thus, the type of patriotic script, that is, what distinguishes appropriate forms of patriotic behavior, is determined by the nature of the crisis. In Stuart Hall's formulation, a crisis is an opportunity to transform the status quo that arises when there is a disruption in the "normal" functioning of the governing economic, social, cultural order (2002, 229). The normal functioning of the state in times of war and conflict is to militarize; that is, to extract resources and labor from the social body to ensure the survival of the state. War, by its very nature, challenges the stability of the dominant social and political order. It also accentuates and energizes the social and cultural tensions and contradictions within society. New ideas, discourses, and rationalities emerge from this instability to challenge the dominant ideas of the ruling elite. The tension between pacifist-isolationist and interventionist discourse is a notable example. Thus, to maintain a legitimate claim to the monopoly of coercive power (Weber 1947), the ruling elite seeks to maintain its dominant position in society through popular consent. Patriotism is a useful tool to maintain consent because it reifies the "common-sense" understanding that the state, its institutions, and the military are necessary for the protection of society. Thus, I argue, militarized patriotism occurs when the struggle between two competing groups challenges the state's ability to militarize. When a crisis occurs, American culture is the primary site of conflict in which new norms of behavior are negotiated, constructed, and

enforced. This process allows militarized patriotism to endure despite changes in domestic and international conditions.

Following Douglas Kellner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham, I understand culture as "a set of discourses, stories, images, spectacles, and varying cultural forms and practices that generate meaning, identities, and political effects" (2009, xiv). From this perspective, culture is the production and consumption of everyday artifacts and practices: texts, art, film, theater, popular music, and dance. Culture also involves less visible forms of ritualized behavior such as shopping, eating at a fast-food restaurant, gathering in a public park, or going to a nightclub. The consumption of these cultural artifacts and practices allow individuals to "see and understand" the world around them and internalize their position within the larger political community (Durham and Kellner 2009, xiv). For this essay, I argue that the transformation of militarized patriotism can be interpreted by reading its constituent artifacts and practices situated within "historically specific situations" and "the social relations of production and reception in which culture is produced" (Durham and Kellner 2009, xxi). In doing so, such an analysis will illuminate how changes in patriotic artifacts reflect or reproduce alternative forms of patriotic behavior (2009, xxi). As my primary argument is that changes in historical conditions gave rise to the patriotic norm of "supporting the troops", the specific patriotic artifact this essay analyzes is the image of the soldier in popular culture.

2.4   Hollywood and the Image of the Soldier

Hollywood has long been an essential tool for United States militarization. Boggs and Pollard argue the United States lacks an "official" propaganda machine and therefore Hollywood has become the primary public forum where politics and culture come together (2008, 566). US

government influence in the entertainment industry, writes Burston, "is as old as the movie business itself" (2003, 68). According to John Garofolo, the relationship between American cinema and Hollywood can be traced to the "introduction of motion picture technology in the late nineteenth century" (2016, 58). "Ever since the 1920s," writes Shaw, "the US armed services had shown themselves to be more than willing to offer logistical help with film productions that portrayed their activities positively" (2007, 201). The relationship was mutually beneficial; "movie producers got access to military bases and equipment, while the military benefited from free advertising" (Shaw 2007, 201). Indeed, Hollywood's relationship with the military, security, and intelligence apparatuses is well documented (for example Brewer 2011; DeBauche 1997; Kumar and Kundnani 2014). Furthermore, many scholars have highlighted how Hollywood has been a primary mechanism through which citizens internalize and understand patriotism and processes of militarization (for example Birkenstein, Froula, and Randell 2010; Koppes and Black 1990; Pollard 2002; Wetta and Novelli 2003).

One of the primary genres through which Hollywood has contributed to processes of militarization is the war film. As Brewer argues, the government uses war films to disseminate "all the rational and emotional reasons why Americans must fight" (2011, 6–7). According to Patrick Deer, the 1940s war film allowed the government to rally support for a policy of "total war against fascism" by shifting the narrative from an isolated geographically defined conflict to a "global war of space and movement" (2016, 51). The war film is also a powerful marketing tool for the military. Catherine Lutz, for example, argues that although the Defense Department has a $2 billion annual recruitment budget, it also benefits from films like *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001) to promote military service (2002, 724). As one senior Pentagon spokesman opined, "If we can have television shows and movies that show the

excitement and importance of military life, they can help generate a favorable atmosphere for recruiting" (in Kumar and Kundnani 2014, 74). Most importantly, the war film affects positive attitudes and beliefs about war, the military, and patriotism (Pollard 2002). Furthermore, through the "symbolic glorification of the military," Patrick Regan argues, the war film ability to increase popular support for the military becomes a significant hurdle for arms reduction and demilitarization (1994a, 116, see also 1994b).

John Garofolo argues, the war film is the "ideal mechanism to convey the warrior ideology to a largely non-warrior populace" (2016, 56). "The motion picture," he adds, "has been the preferred medium to encourage, support, create, and properly indoctrinate a nation's warrior culture when needed" (Garofolo 2016, 58). War films construct popular support for the military or convey the appropriate warrior image by replicating similar plots: "heroic men encountered sinister, semi-human antagonists opposed to freedom and democracy" (Pollard 2002, 123). Likewise, these films present soldiers as noble, virtuous, and "glorify wartime exploits while embellishing the military experience itself" (Pollard 2002, 121,124). Even those films, as Boggs and Pollard point out, that "deal only peripherally with military combat" still rely on traditional military tropes: "male heroism, battlefield camaraderie, superpatriotism, violent struggle of good against evil, noble US objectives, and glorification of high-tech warfare" (2008, 567–68).

The image of the soldier is a specific cultural production associated with the war film. In the 20th century, it was deployed in patriotic fashion to generate camaraderie, national unity, and remembrance in times of war. However, as the Interwar and Vietnam eras demonstrate, the image of the soldier has also been used to rouse mistrust, doubt, and raise questions over the American military tradition. In this sense, the image of the soldier is not a neutral, timeless symbol. It lacks continuity. Any continuity the image of the soldier does claim, borrowing from

Hobsbawm, is "largely fictitious" (1983, 2). Rather, the image of the soldier belongs to the whole series of "invented" practices and discourses through which, by way of repetition, the public is taught appropriate values and norms of behavior (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 2). The image of the soldier, then, is reactionary; it a response to "novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 2). Samuel Huntington argues the inclusion of positive images of soldiers in popular culture is the best way to resolve the security crisis inherent to liberalism (2002, 457). Images that portray the military in a positive frame, he argues, leads to a more "conservative" political culture favorable and sympathetic to the military. Further, positive images of the soldier increase both cultural acceptance of the independent role of the military in society and military professionalism; both cornerstones to his normative theory of objective civilian control (Huntington 2002). Thus, the positive image of the soldier is an important tool for closing the perceived "gap" between civilian and military cultures (for example Collins and Holsti 1999; Feaver and Kohn 2001; Holsti 1998). Today, literary images of soldiers fill the pages of countless mass-market publications, from non-fiction accounts of America's military history to popular warrior memoirs (Lutz 2002). Television channels like the History Channel allow for the continuous recirculation of popular images of World War II heroes (Wetta and Novelli 2003, 866). In sum, then, the image of the soldier has become a ubiquitous feature in American culture. So much so that their role as the "nurturing soil" from which processes of militarization can grow is often overlooked (Enloe 2010, 1109).

2.5   The Power of Images

The visual is becoming increasingly recognized as a legitimate object of analysis. In an era of on-demand images, global media networks, the Internet, social media, and smartphones, James Der Derian suggests, "the realities of international politics increasingly are generated, mediated, simulated by new digital means of reproduction" (2000, 779). In our current conjuncture, the public's understanding of war, terrorism, famine, natural disasters, and any number of major political events, as Roland Bleiker rightly points out, is always determined by "how images dramatically depict the events…and how politicians and the public respond to these depictions" (2015, 873). In *The Politics of Pictures*, John Hartley argues that the public domain no longer exists as a physical place "you can literally enter" (2017, 1). Rather, the modern "public" exists in a mediated form; "the popular media of the modern period" (Hartley 2017, 1). As a result, images are much more embedded in everyday life than traditional politics has ever been (Hartley 2017, 3). Images are, according to Hartley, "the place where collective social action, individual identity and symbolic imagination meet–the nexus between culture and politics" (2017, 3). Accordingly, Hartley suggests a new form of political analysis is necessary if we are to understand contemporary politics (2017, 1). Hartley argues, "it is necessary to ask what institutions and what discourses are engaged in making the mediated representations of the public domain, what the resulting picture of the public looks like, and who speaks for–and to–the public so created" (2017, 2).

In recent years, the study of images has become an important component for social militarization and security studies. In particular, Lene Hansen and Michael C. Williams have called for a greater emphasis on how the image functions within securitizing discourse(for example Hansen 2000, 2011, 2015; Williams 2003). Hansen and Williams both consider the

image a powerful medium through which an object is securitized. This is to say, images allow audiences to perceive and comprehend the construction of an existential threat (the image of a terrorist for example) against a referent object (e.g. an image of a child). By allowing the audience to internalize the reality of a threat, the image strengthens the ability of a securitizing actor (usually a government or a politician) to make a legitimate claim to the use of extraordinary measures–excess militarization, violation of civil liberties, illegal detention, drone strikes etc.–to confront the threat (for a complete discussion on Securitization Theory see Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998). Thus, when we speak of militarization we are always discussing a response to a securitizing discourse. However, for this purpose of this essay, what interests me is not the construction of the threat that legitimizes processes of militarization. Rather, I am interested in how the image functions to establish norms of behavior that actors perform regardless if they accept the reality of the securitizing act.

So what makes images so powerful? First, the image allows the audience to identify the subject being portrayed easily. As Nancy Armstrong argues, identification occurs through the visual recognition of physical objects, actions, poses, gestures, and landscapes (in Briggs 2003). On the other hand, identification entails not just the visual representation of the object but also a myriad of emotions, memories, and historical contexts that underlie the image itself. Lene Hansen suggests the image also allows the audience to identify *with* the subject being portrayed by allowing for the "emotionally charged 'drawing in' of the spectator" (2011, 56). Second, images are powerful because they make a claim to authenticity. Since antiquity, the authenticity of the visual has been fundamental to politics (Hartley 2017, 5). The language of visualization, of "seeing," of transparency, of "exposing" the truth, is foundational to our belief in a well-ordered democracy. "Democracy," the Washington Post's tagline tells us, "dies in the darkness." Hartley

writes, "so ingrained is the idea that public affairs are visible that metaphors of light and sight suffuse political rhetoric, acting as guarantors for the credibility of the representation (2017, 6). According to Gillian Rose, the image claims authenticity because we, as the audience, assume it is a truthful "snapshot" of reality (2016, 27). Third, the image is powerful because of its circulability (Hansen 2011). Circulability refers to the material and technological conditions through which the image is reproduced and the speed at which it is transmitted to the public. While technological advancements since the birth of television have increased the speed of transmission, the last 20 years have seen the proliferation of new media technologies that have altered both the way we consume the image and how the image is produced. Facebook and Youtube, among others, have replaced traditional media by allowing anyone with an Internet connection and a camera to produce and circulate images. Thus, on the first level, circulability refers to the accessibility of the image through its consumption. On the second level, circulability refers to the technology through which the image is produced. Circulability also refers to the image's translatability. "The main distinctiveness of the visual," writes Hansen, "resides in the belief in its capacity to transgress linguistic boundaries–that visuals can be 'read' by all" (2011, 57). Hence the image creates what Hansen terms the "possibility of seeing" (2011, 57).

There are methodological challenges to the study of images. "Images," writes Bleiker, "do not speak for themselves. They need to be interpreted" (2015, 875). Likewise, W.J.T Mitchel argues, "Images are not words. It is not clear that they actually 'say' anything" (2005, 140). The image may portray an event, a person, or a place but, according to Mitchell, "the verbal message or speech act has to be brought to them by the spectator, who projects a voice into the image, reads a story into it, or deciphers a verbal message" (2005, 140). Therefore, the challenge resides in the interpretation of the image. Interpretation, by its very nature, is conditioned by the values

and ideas of the interpreter as much as those contained within the image itself (Bleiker 2015).

Likewise, although an audience may see the same image, they may not read it the same way as

another audience (Hansen 2011). The image, as David Campbell argues, is read within a specific

historical, political and social context (in Hansen 2011). Likewise, according to Hansen, "the

image never speaks exclusively from within the frame, but is constituted through a larger

intertext" (2011, 55). In my analysis of the image of the soldier, I focus on three elements from

Lene Hansen's framework for the study of images: analysis of the image itself, its immediate

intertext, and an analysis of the underlying policy discourse (Hansen 2011).

3   MILITARIZED PATRIOTISM AND THE IMAGE OF THE SOLDIER

Throughout the 1930s, American culture was dominated by pacifism and isolationism

(Pollard 2002). As the Versailles Treaty began to fail, many Americans questioned the point of

another European war. Moreover, regardless of what was happening overseas, most Americans

were more concerned with the lingering effects of the Great Depression. As the crisis of fascism

began to unfold in Europe and Asia, many politicians openly argued that World War I was a

disastrous mistake that need not be repeated (Brewer 2011). Instead of another European war,

most isolationists argued the western hemisphere could be defended from Nazi aggression by

constructing a "Fortress America" (Brewer 2011, 91). Others believed the threat of Hitler was

exaggerated. The dominance of this isolationist culture challenged Roosevelt's authority to

militarize successfully. However, following the rapid land grabs by German, Italy, and Japan the

isolationist position became difficult to sustain. In his public appeal for intervention, President

Roosevelt made continual references to the plight of European citizens, to American's sense of

patriotism, and, as Steele points out, glorified the democratic "cause" that worked well for

Wilson (Steele 1984, 70). Roosevelt also openly attacked the culture of isolationism. In his view, isolationism was "the helpless nightmare of a people without freedom" (in 1976, 8). Roosevelt often spoke of the "obvious delusion that we of the United States can safely permit the United States to become a lone island…in a world dominated by the philosophy of force" (in 1976, 8). An efficient propaganda machine backed up Roosevelt's public rhetoric. His supporters on the radio and television continually lambast isolationist politicians as "disloyal, un-American, Nazi sympathizers, and 'Fifth columnists' or subversives who deliberately paved the way for German takeover of the United States (Brewer 2011, 94). More than anything else, the president relied on his supporters in Hollywood to spread the interventionist message.

During the 1930s, American cinema rarely addressed challenging domestic or international problems (Jacobs 1967). During the troubling years of the Great Depression, Hollywood provided the necessary escape through light-hearted musicals, comedies, gangster movies, westerns, and historical dramas (Pollard 2002). When it came to war, most films reflected the popular mood by avoiding the subject altogether (Pollard 2002). Those films that dealt with the subject of war focused on the horrors and atrocities of warfare in a definitive anti-war stance. The isolationist culture in Hollywood, however, was weakened by the escalating situation in Europe and the Pacific (Pollard 2002). By the late 1930s, many filmmakers were encouraged by Roosevelt's public rhetoric and began to put out films meant to enlighten the public on the dangers of Fascism (Brewer 2011; Jacobs 1967). These films were crucial for increasing public awareness of the threat of fascism but they did little to promote interventionism. What Roosevelt's interventionist cause needed was a new image of the solder to reflect the president's call for militarization.

Figure 1: *Sergeant York (1941),* Warner Brothers

3.1   Constructing Patriotism through the Image of the Soldier

Sergeant York (1941) is the perfect cinematic representation of Roosevelt's interventionism. Gary Cooper plays the eponymous young Tennessee man who, although at first objects to being drafted to fight in World War I on religious grounds, goes on to become an American hero during the Argonne offensive of 1918 when he singlehandedly kills 20 German soldiers and secures another 132 prisoners. The film opens in a small rural chapel where a preacher is attempting to give the daily sermon. He keeps getting interrupted as a group of young men outside are shooting their pistols and making much noise. One of the men is the young Alvin York. He is well known in the village for his heavy drinking and hell raising. In the local store, a group of men is asked about the impending war. One of the older men responds, "We

ain't done much thinking on it…It ain't in our corner, no how" (Hawks 1941). This is Hawk's first attempt to establish the isolationist position of the film. When Alvin meets Gracie, he decides to clean up his act and get a piece of "bottomland" so that he can marry the young woman. Despite his attempts at making enough money, he ultimately fails. After a brief return to his rebellious past, he decides to "get religion." As a result, his life begins to turn around, and he grows closer to Gracie. When the United States enters World War I, York refuses to register for the draft proclaiming, "War is killing and the book's against killing, so war is against the book" (Hawks 1941). Only after his pastor tells him he can register as a conscientious objector does he do so. However, his status is rejected, and he is soon drafted. York again refuses, asking the pastor "what kind of law is it that says a man has to go against the book and its teaching" (Hawks 1941). Persuaded that it is the right thing to do, York reluctantly decides to go. Here we see two important movements to reify the authority of the state. First, the audience is told that rejecting the war itself is acceptable as long as you do it within the prescribed way. Second, with the pastor convincing York, we are told that the laws of the nation transcend those of God. In training, York excels and is quickly promoted. However, again, he refuses the promotion due to his religious beliefs. His superior officer tries to convince York that the fight for Freedom is a noble cause and sacrifices are necessary to maintain that freedom. York is given a book on the history of the United States and a furlough to travel back to Tennessee to think over the offer. Only after reading Matthew 22:21, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's," does York come to the revelation that World War I is a good cause. When he returns to his unit, he is shipped off to Europe where he achieves his heroic status. When York returns from Europe, he is offered multiple offers for films and product endorsements totaling $250,000. The money will allow him to buy the piece of land he believes

he needs to achieve his ultimate goal: to win Gracie's hand in marriage. Nevertheless, he refuses the offer. In his rejection of profit for his actions, York reaffirms that war is not something to be profited from: "I ain't proud of what happened over there. What we did in France was something we had to do. Some fellows done it ain't coming back. So, the way I figure, things like that ain't for buying and selling" (Hawks 1941). In the end, he returns to Tennessee to reunite with Gracie. To his surprise, the people of Tennessee have purchased 200 acres of bottomland for him and Gracie to start their new life.

Sergeant York presents the ideal image of the soldier for the interventionist cause. First, York reflects what Richard Kohn terms the "prototypical" enlisted man (1981, 554). Dominant throughout American culture, the prototypical soldier exhibits extraordinary heroism in combat, achieves a high level of success, and does this, typically, with average skills. In this way, the prototypical soldier reflects what Richard Schickel views as the "dumb, dutiful decency of the average American" (in Bayles 2003, 14). For Bosley Crowther, Gary Cooper and cast embody "a perfect specimen of homo americanus" (1941). In Cooper's performance, we find the "gaunt, clumsy yokel, the American hayseed" but also "the proud, industrious, honest, simple citizen who marches in the forefront of this nation's ranks" (Crowther 1941). York's success as an image of the soldier is not despite his rural upbringing but because of it. As David Lee points out, "York's pioneer-like skill with a rifle, homespun manner, and fundamentalist piety endeared him to millions of Americans as a kind of "contemporary ancestor" fresh from the backwoods of Appalachia" (Lee 2014, x). Finally, York does not fight for glory or honor but out of patriotic duty to defend freedom and justice. Indeed, despite his achievements, he is reluctant to receive praise.

Second, *Sergeant York* provides a patriotic script for the transformation from an isolationist position to interventionism. Importantly, the scripted transition is not a zero-sum decision between, on the one hand, a position that views war is morally wrong and, on the other, a position that views war as a moral responsibility to maintain freedom and democracy. The dualism here is representative of what Samuel Huntington argues is the ambiguous relationship American's have always had with war; War is either an "abomination" or a "crusade" (2002, 151). The decision made by York provides another option where, to use Huntington's words, "the nation," embodied by the soldier, is able to "choose peace or war as its interests guided by justice shall counsel" (2002, 151). As Crowther observes, Sergeant York "put aside his religious scruples against killing for what he felt was the better good of his country and thus lasting benefit of mankind" (1941). Thus, through the image of the soldier in *Sergeant York*, we find a third way, the logic of the just war. Part of this occurs, as Thomas Doherty suggests, through the film's attempt to rewrite World War I as a "reasonable national enterprise" and not the "crazy slaughterhouse" depicted in classic isolationist war films like All Quiet on the Western Front (in Bayles 2003, 13). In doing so, York replicates the patriotic call to arms of the Wilson-era by emphasizing war as a necessary measure to ensure a more peaceful democratic society (Bodnar 2001). By situating the image of the soldier within the just war narrative, York can maintain his religious convictions while rejecting a total commitment to war.

In sum, then, *Sergeant York* serves as a patriotic script through which the American public can make the transition from isolationism to interventionism without sacrificing their core ideals. More importantly, the image of the soldier in *Sergeant York* reveals the patriotic norms that were necessary for the nation to prepare for war. Specifically, *Sergeant York* constructs an ideal type of liberal patriotism in four ways. First, York maintains a keen appreciation for

individualism and personal freedom. However, his freedom and individualism are only valuable within the context of the greater good. Second, York comes to understand and accept that these freedoms are only guaranteed by the exchange that occurs between the individual and the institutions that regulate and maintain freedom. Put another way, York's freedom is determined by the nation yet the fate of the nation rests in his hands. Third, York reconciles his religious views with the acceptance that war is a moral cause and necessary to protect his freedoms. Moreover, war is necessary so that others may enjoy the same freedoms and benefits from democracy. These three norms of patriotic behavior are enforced by the film's emphasis on the "civilizing" conversion that York undergoes to become the ideal liberal soldier. This is to say; York is constituted through the enforcement of social standards and constraints that transform him from a reckless, wild "bad boy" to a "respectable civilized man" embodies by the decorated war veteran (Slocum 2005, 42–43). Moreover, only after he sacrifices part of his individualism for the greater good does York become a fully constituted civilized man. To be a fully embodied citizen then is to be a patriotic citizen and accept the liberal tenet that war is a necessary means to achieve the democratic peace.

Finally, York's liberal patriotism reflects a romantic attachment and sense of duty to the ideals of the American Revolution. As the real York stated at the premiere of his cinematic biography, "if Americans stopped fighting for freedom, 'then we owe the memory of George Washington an apology' because if so, 'he wasted his time at Valley Forge'" (in Brewer 2011, 92). *Sergeant York* would go on to inspire a new wave of American patriotism that would help the Roosevelt administration unite the country against a common enemy (Suid 2002). Likewise, the image of the soldier constructed throughout the film would go on to be the patriotic model for most World War II-era war films. Following Pearl Harbor, American audiences would be

subjected to the same types of visual cues, narratives, and choreographed action that made *Sergeant York* the highest grossing film in 1941 (Suid 2002).

3.2   National Security and the Crisis of the Cold War

The United States emerged from World War II as a new global power. Although there was a general consensus that the old international system could not be restored, many disagreed over how the new world order should look and what role the United States should play in it (Griffith 1979). Again, political discourse began to split between those that advocated for a return to isolationism and those who sought to maintain intervention. Isolationism was enjoying a modicum of success by exploiting the war-weariness of the American public. Many isolationists questioned the Roosevelt administration's motives for war and the handling of the war effort. Like Wilson before, there was a growing sense that Roosevelt had manufactured the attack on Pearl Harbor to justify the United States entry into the war (Nevins 1976). Interventionism, however, was emboldened by the success of World War II, which, they argued, was a lesson on the mistakes of isolationism (Boyle 1972). Additionally, interventionism was strengthened by the aggressive acts of the Soviet Union in post-war Europe and revelations of Stalin's atrocities. On March 12, 1947, President Truman consolidated post-war United States foreign policy–what would ultimately become the status quo for the next four decades–by stating, "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure (Truman 1976, 436). Truman's new foreign policy of containment marked a fundamental shift from Roosevelt's approach of cooperation.

No sooner had the dust settle in the battlefields than the United States embarked on a period of rapid militarization. Containment led to a global war of position with the United States and the Soviet Union in a race to fill the power vacuum left by the war. For many in the United States, global peace required filling the vacuum with the spirit of capitalism, self-determination, and religious freedom against a rising tide of Soviet-communist ideology (Tindall and Shi 2016). Likewise, after the Soviet Union entered the nuclear arms race in 1949, politicians and policymakers came to believe that the threat of nuclear war necessitated quick and decisive decision-making (Jablonsky 2002). National security interests could no longer afford open debate (Jablonsky 2002). As Janet Cramer notes, "it was assumed that a president who had the prerogative to act quickly or make independent, credible threats was necessary for national security" (2007, 497). At the same time, many politicians, policymakers, and military professionals believed that the rise of Fascism and the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor represented a failure in pre-war institutions. This failure, in turn, meant that that United States was ill prepared to confront new global threats (Jablonsky 2002). To ensure national security, US military and diplomatic infrastructures were drastically altered to confront the Soviet Union anywhere in the world (Jablonsky 2002). The National Security Act of 1947 instituted the most significant expansion of the United States' war capabilities in 170 years (Jablonsky 2002). By centralizing the Armed Forces within the newly established Department of Defense, as well as the creation of the Joint Chiefs and the National Security Council, the National Security Act amplified the war powers of the Executive Branch exponentially (Jablonsky 2002). Additionally, through the founding of the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Act created the first peacetime intelligence apparatus (Jablonsky 2002). By 1949, the United States was maintaining permanent military forces throughout Europe and Asia (O'Brien 2006). By 1953,

US defense budgets had increased to $52.8 billion from $13.7 billion in 1950 (Cramer 2007, 495)

To legitimize post-war militarization, public discourse shifted from "national defense" to "national security" (O'Brien 2006, 248). According to Edward Pessen, the change in discourse meant that the government could now legitimize "open-ended commitments and the capabilities of anticipating and responding to political and military changes anywhere in the world" (in O'Brien 2006, 248). More importantly, the shift to a national security discourse was an effective tool to manipulate the public into accepting the drastic alterations that Cold War militarization would have on American society. The most logical solution to obtain national security was, as Whitfield observes, to "reduce the options" (1996, 257). Reducing the options required cleansing public discourse of its progressive roots. National security demanded a "closing of the ranks" and cultural "homogeneity" in American society (Whitfield 1996, 257). "The American way of life," writes Whitfield, "was understood to be singular" (1996, 257). It also necessitated suppressing public dissent, the restriction of civil liberties, and restraining intellectual and artistic creativity and independence (Whitfield 1996). Thus, the American post-war political culture was dominated by a discourse that promoted "authority at the expense of liberty, stability at the expense of change, and order at the expense of reform" (Whitfield 1996, 257). According to Whitfield, national security "put liberalism on the defensive" (1996, 256).

National security discourse allowed a new wave of conservatives to gain a foothold in both politics and culture. In part, the dominance of national security discourse allowed them to identify and label those that opposed increased security measures as "un-American leftist fringe" (O'Brien 2006, 249). More effectively, the language of national security allowed them to pursue their political opposition into the "heartland of American Liberalism–unions, academia, and

media" (O'Brien 2006, 249). Senator McCarthy is, of course, the Cold War bogeyman that still haunts the public imagination today. However, as Whitfield argues, McCarthyism could not exist without the "pieties and orthodoxies that were designed to constitute an embattled unity in the struggle against communism" (1996, 257). "Though intimately involved in curbing liberty," writes Whitfield, "the state acted with popular approval and acquiescence; the will of the majority was not thwarted" (1996, 260).

The national security discourse was able to achieve a level of popular consensus because it was ambiguous. To be sure, collective fear and anxiety were a driving force behind the consolidation of the national security discourse. However, as Wittkopf and McCormick argue convincingly, the "threat of communism" was not a unified idea within American culture (1990, 630). For many American, the idea of the threat of communism was constructed not only through McCarthyism but also from Roosevelt's anti-isolationist discourse and attacks on his opposition. Communism, like fascism before, was an ideological threat with subversive "fifth column" agents lying in wait in every corner of American life. Anyone, in this context, could be a communist threat. At the same time, national security discourse constructed the threat of communism in terms of the material capabilities of the Soviet Union (Wittkopf and McCormick 1990). Reflecting the anxiety over nuclear war, this discourse focused on the ability of Russian bombs to destroy American cities and Russian military invasion. Although these two aspects are complementary, the ambiguity of what really was the threat of communism allowed competing, often contradictory, groups to coalesce around a core belief that communism was bad.

Many public intellectuals, academics, and cultural producers reinforced the national security discourse within American culture. The Committee on Un-American Activities of the House of Representatives (HUAC) is the most notable example of the perpetuation of the

subversive threat. As the hearings were widely publicized, many Americans listened and watched as many famous "friendly" personalities testified about the communist threat in Hollywood (Leab 1984, 62). At the same time, many liberal scholars responded to the material threat of the Soviet Union by advocating for a conservative movement to protect liberalism. In 1957, for example, Samuel Huntington argued, "conservatism is the intellectual rationale of the permanent institutional prerequisites of human existence. It is the rational defense of being against mind, of order against chaos" (1957, 461). He adds, "until the challenge of communism and the Soviet Union is eliminated or neutralized, a major aim of American liberals must be to preserve what they have created" (1957, 473). Conservatism's ideals, for Huntington, "remind men of the institutional prerequisites of social order. And when these prerequisites are threatened, conservatism is not only appropriate, it is essential" (1957, 473).

In an era of national security, patriotism and loyalty became a permanent state of being. More importantly, Cold War patriotism constructed the citizen as the always already combatant in the struggle against communism (Whitfield 1996, 263). Cold War patriotism, then, demanded an uncritical "civic enlistment" from the citizen as the front-line soldier in the battle for information (Whitfield 1996, 262). The citizen's patriotic duty, then, was to always be on the lookout for subversives while simultaneously preparing for the impending nuclear war. This culture of conspiracy and surveillance caused American culture to become increasingly conformist. In a visit the United States in 1947, Simone de Beauvoir observed, "this country, once so passionate about individualism, had itself become a nation of sheep; repressing originality, both in itself and in others; rejecting criticism, measuring value by success, it left open no road to freedom except that of anarchic revolt" (in Whitfield 1996, 256).

In the first two decades of the Cold War, war films functioned to legitimize the extensive powers of the government, the extreme militarization, increased surveillance, and project the new vision of patriotism. Having witnessed the enormous impact Hollywood had on shifting American culture in favor of the interventionist cause during World War II, in 1949, the Defense Department established the Motion Picture Production Office to "regulate and facilitate cooperation between the military and the film industry" (Shaw 2007, 201). According to Shaw, this allowed Hollywood producers access to "free use of military hardware, official film clips and actual soldiers" in exchange for "feature films that aided recruitment and enhanced the military's public image" (2007, 201). Many of the films during the Cold War took advantage of this relationship by glorifying and honoring the men who fought the "good war" (Pollard 2002, 125). Films like *The Desert Rats* (1953), *Stalag 17* (1953), *To Hell and Back* (1955), *The Bridge Over the River Kwai* (1957), *The Longest Day* (1962), and *The Great Escape* (1963) celebrated the men who fought and sacrificed for the struggle against a violent and monstrous ideology. These films shared the same conclusion: the war against communism, like World War II, is a "noble historical crusade in defense of Western Civilization" (Pollard 2002, 130). However, the dominant position of the national security discourse in American culture maintained the belief that success in the fight against communism was not going to be through the same "glorious" battles that defined World War II. It was going to be a much more difficult battle; a battle that was to take place not in a distant field but within the community, schools, and the home itself. Thus, to be prepared for the fight, American culture needed a new patriotic commitment and a new form of the patriotic soldier. The *Sergeant York* image needed to be replaced.

Figure 2: Sgt. Stryker in the *Sands of Iwo Jima (1949),* Republic Pictures

3.3   Militarized Patriotism and the Conservative Soldier

John Wayne is an American icon. Notably, he is a conservative icon. As James Campbell

writes, Wayne has achieved a level of conservative deification through his "embodiment of

authority, masculinity, love of country, and other allegedly endangered American virtues" (2000,

466). "Not until John Wayne created the role of Sergeant Stryker in Sands of Iwo Jima," writes

Lawrence Suid, "and then merged his personality with the character did Americans find a man

who personified the ideal soldier" (2002, 114). In *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), Wayne portrays

the hard-edged Marine Sergeant John Stryker who leads a diverse group of Marines in the

Pacific theater of World War II. His unit reflects the diversity of American history with each

soldier representing a segment of America's (European) immigration story. Stryker's primary

role in the film is to turn the soft progressive civilians in his unit into hardened conservative

warriors. His methods are questionable, and his soldiers despise him. Nevertheless, he is

committed. "Before I'm through with you," Stryker tells his unit, "you're gonna move like one

man and think like one man. If you don't, you'll be dead" (Dwan 1949). Indeed Stryker reflects

the perfect image of American masculinity. His impressive physicality is evident when Stryker

single-handedly takes out a Japanese bunker on the Tarawa Atoll. At the same time, he is well

aware of his responsibility to his Marines and the chain of command. When one of his Marines is

wounded and cries out for help, Stryker refuses a *Sergeant York* display of bravery, knowing

from experience that the enemy could be waiting to attack. Furthermore, attempting a rescue

would violate his orders. Thus, his physicality is matched by a high degree of stoicism and

restraint, even to the point of displaying a willingness to shoot another member of his unit for

violating orders. According to Josiah Bunting, Wayne's appeal, reflected in his portrayal of

Stryker, is his "anti-intellectual Archie Bunker temperament" (in Suid 2002, 133).

Intellectualism and self-determination are what get soldiers killed. War is hell and demands strict

adherence to authority and rigged toughness. Thus the image of the soldier we find in Stryker is

one that accepts violence as not only necessary when in war but ultimately triumphing in any

situation to solve problems. Violent men, writes Suid, "cut through the Gordian know to get to

the heart of the problem" (2002, 133). John Wayne as Sergeant Stryker is militarized patriotism

at its finest.

The action of the film revolves around what Lewis Jacobs refers to as the "our brothers in

arms" narrative (1967, 16). The unit, Martha Bayles adds, always serves as a synecdoche for

society as a whole (2003). According to Slocum, "because the combat platoon symbolized the

United States and its shared values, an attack became an assault on the integrity of the broader

social body" (2005, 46). During World War II, the unit in war films stood in for a American

progressive society where the soldiers' interactions embodied the "strengths of democracy"

(Bayles 2003, 14). The unit is typically portrayed as hierarchical. However, to signify freedom

and self-determination the structure of the unit is not rigid. Soldiers in the brother-in-arms script

are not, to borrow from Chaplin's infamous *The Great Dictator* speech, "machine men with

machine minds and machine hearts!" (1940). The soldier is allowed the space to function

independently, "to seize the initiative, improvise, and," writes Bayles, "when it comes to making

'the ultimate sacrifice,' do so willingly, because he believes without being coerced that the cause

for which he is dying is his own dignity and freedom" (2003, 14–15). The soldier-in-arms

formula functioned in *Sergeant York* to reify the liberal ideals of freedom and democracy. In

Sands of Iwo Jima, the unit is the mechanism through which Wayne's conservative Cold War

vision of patriotism is transmitted; recognition and respect for authority, rules and the law, a

singular homogenized vision of America, and the unconditional support of total war under a state

of emergency.

In *Sands of Iwo Jima*, the brother-in-arms narrative facilitates the conversion of Peter

Conway (John Agar). Conway is an arrogant college student (read liberal elite) whose deceased

father was a former commanding officer of Stryker. He detests Stryker for both his resemblance

to his father and his harsh parental leadership. However, in seeing his bravery in action and after

Stryker saves his life in a training accident, Conway's feelings towards Stryker begin to change.

When the unit is sent to fight on Iwo Jima, the fighting is intense, and many of the men in the

unit are killed. Conway saves Stryker's life and confesses his new found respect for his, telling

him he will name his child after the sergeant. Once the remaining men surmount the top of

Mount Suribachi, Stryker instructs the men to raise the American flag. However, before the flag

is raised, Stryker is killed by a sniper's bullet. Seeing this, Conway physically manifests as Stryker reborn, echoing his famous phrase, "Saddle Up, let's get back into the war" (Dwan 1949). Conway's transformation is complete. He has gone from the young, liberal pacifist to the hardened albeit conformist Cold War soldier. Stryker's patriotic duty was to sacrifice himself, mentally and physically, not for the cause of freedom and democracy but so young liberal men like Conway would see that winning the war meant abandoning idealism and freedom.

In sum, then, in the early years of the Cold War, the image of Sergeant Stryker constructed new patriotic norms of behavior that reflected both the demands of national security and the ascendancy of conservatism in American culture. These norms emerged in response to the perceived failure of liberalism to address the security concerns of the Cold War. Moreover, national security was not something World War II liberal patriotism could supply. The individualism, freethinking, respect for diversity, and duty to defend the ideological cause that was emblematic in *Sergeant York*, was replaced by the militarized patriotic image portrayed by a conservative, authoritative, and equally dead Stryker.

4   THE CRISIS OF VIETNAM

During the 1960s, Hollywood was having a difficult time making a war film about Vietnam. As one filmmaker noted: "Hollywood can't take sides because if it does, it can't sell tickets to the others" (in Spark 1984, 36). Although World War II films were widely popular, the Vietnam War, itself, was not (Spark 1984, 36). World War II films were successful, in part, because the narrative that the war against fascism was a noble cause was easily transferable to the war against communism. Moreover, films like *Sands of Iwo Jima*, constructing a new image of the soldier that transmitted the norms of patriotic behavior necessary for Cold War security:

respect for authority, cultural conformity, and acceptance of the emergency measures as a necessary means to defeat communism. Indeed, as Sergeant Stryker demonstrated, the only way to defeat communism was a total commitment to the war even if that meant losing the family or the ultimate sacrifice in death. However, this message was increasingly compromised as the United States became embedded in a war of position against the Soviet Union and China.

Until Vietnam, the success of the patriotic image of the soldier was its attachment to the memory of the revolutionary citizen-soldier casting off the oppressive chains of their colonial master. This narrative grounded the conversion story in *Sergeant York* by framing York's reconciliation of his religious pacifism with interventionism as a result of "learning" the history of America's wars for freedom. However, as the United States continued to battle for control over the former European colonies, the independence narrative was becoming untenable. Concurrently, there was also a growing resistance on the part of conservatives to internationalist foreign policies. Conservatives believed Truman had "lost" China to the communists for failing to take the necessary actions to prevent the overthrow of Chiang Kai-Shek (Hellmann 2006). Likewise, Truman's reliance on the United Nations system led to the stalemate on the Korean peninsula thus allowing a communist government to consolidate in the north. The events in South East Asia further strengthened the rejection of liberal internationalism. Although the United States ultimately was responsible for 80 percent of the cost of the French Indochina War (Hellmann 2006), in 1954, Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu. Like in Korea, the Geneva Accords recognized the independence of two Vietnamese states with the North under communist leadership and the south under the nationalist government of French-educated and catholic Ngo Dien Diem (Hellmann 2006). At the same time, leaders on both sides of the ideological spectrum were still confronting the "lesson" of appeasement during

the 1930s (Hellmann 2006, 298). As a result, there was an increased concern that the United States was becoming weak in the war to stop the global expansion of communism (Hellmann 2006).

President Kennedy was well aware of the conservative climate when he took office in 1961. The conservative climate, the failed Bay of Pigs operation, and the growing threats from the Soviet Union over Berlin convinced Kennedy that the United States needed to "show strength in Vietnam" (Hellmann 2006, 298). What he needed, however, was a different strategy. To find this new strategy, Kennedy turned to his obsession with the Green Berets. After reading William Lederer and Eugene Burdick's The Ugly American in 1958, writes John Hellman, then-Senator Kennedy became convinced that to win the Cold War, the United States needed to adopt a "new theory of counterinsurgency" (Hellmann 2006, 297). When Kennedy entered the White House, he ordered the Pentagon to transform the US Special Forces into a group of counterinsurgency warriors (Hellmann 2006). In his view, the Green Berets would become "America's own Guerrillas…capable of covert and direct action to cut through the Gordian Knot of delay, public fuss and diplomatic nicety" (Spark 1984, 32). "Counter-insurgency," writes Spark, "rapidly became something of a fad within the Kennedy administration, and the Green Berets, as the agents of the doctrine, the objects of considerable glamour" (1984, 31). Vietnam became the "new frontier" in the fight against global communism, and the Green Beret became the new image of the soldier (Hellmann 2006).

As images of the war circulated through media, the American public became increasingly averse to the war. By 1965, Vietnam was becoming unhinged. To control the pace of the war, Johnson increased the US combat presence in the country as well as authorized an unrelenting bombing campaign against the North Vietnamese (Hellmann 2006). Whereas President Kennedy

had approached Vietnam through a counterinsurgency policy, Johnson transformed Vietnam into a conventional war that relied on the size, strength, and technological superiority of the US military (Hellmann 2006). The primary tactic used by the United States in Vietnam was "Search and Destroy" (Hellmann 2006, 301). This strategy involved US military personnel sweeping through the countryside to draw the North Vietnamese out into the open, so the United States superior technological weaponry could "kill as many of the enemy as possible in a strategy of attrition" (Hellmann 2006, 301). Attrition also involved the displacement of large populations of indigenous peoples in the countryside to cut off communist guerilla recruiting (Hellmann 2006). According to Hellman, the war's strategy of attrition designated large areas of the Vietnamese countryside as "free-fire zones" in which anyone not easily identifiable as an "ally" became a legitimate target of the US military (2006, 301). Hellman adds, to make the enemy "visible and deprive him of food" the United States deployed "17.6 million gallons of Agent Orange" across "approximately "3.6 million acres" of the Vietnamese countryside (2006, 301). In short, the new military strategy of attrition was a devastating and brutal attempt to force the North Vietnamese into a negotiating position. However, these tactics threatened the legitimacy of the American mission in Vietnam as well as the military itself. By 1968, American culture was deeply divided over the war (Shaw 2007). News of the Tet Offensive ridiculed the claim that the war's end was imminent (Shaw 2007). Americans had lost the idealist patriotic spirit that had been so effective during World War II. "Only a deliberate intention," writes Spark, "to make a partisan statement, could produce a film about [Vietnam]" (1984, 36).

Figure 3: Col. Kirby in *The Green Berets (1968),* Batjac Productions

4.1   The Green Berets and the End of the Conservative Soldier

In 1965, John Wayne wrote President Johnson to express his desire to "make a film about the Special Forces in Vietnam, one with 'reason, emotion, characterization and action' that would inspire 'a patriotic spirit' among fellow Americans and tell the world 'why it is necessary for us to be there'" (Shaw 2007, 211). Johnson was more than happy to oblige. After all, Wayne was regarded as the military's most effective recruiting agent since World War II as a result of the success of *Sands of Iwo Jima* (Shaw 2007). Many believed Wayne's "mythical warrior status" would inspire renewed interest and support for the war (Shaw 2007, 224). Notably, the *Green Berets* (1968) was the only movie to be produced that took place within the context of Vietnam itself.

Green Berets follows a tight-knit group of elite Special Forces led by Col. Mike Kirby (John Wayne). When the unit arrives in Vietnam, it is tasked to a base camp, nicknamed "Dodge City," deep in Viet Cong territory. Their assignment is to organize and train the indigenous population and South Vietnamese soldiers to wage a guerrilla war against the North Vietnamese army and the Viet Cong. Kirby and the soldiers in his command are the perfect embodiment of the Green Beret myth that had was popular in American culture of the early 1960s; their aura and appeal derived from their exclusivity and their specialized training. They are the perfect cinematic superman-soldiers, capable of speaking multiple languages, accomplished at waging war with both their physicality and technological knowledge, and able to exploit nature for their survival and strategic advantage. In this way, the image of the soldier presents a romanticized image of the Cold War warrior that blends the technological efficiency of modernity with the "primitive self-reliance" of early myths of the American frontier (Hellmann 2006, 297–98). As Shaw observes, the Green Beret was the perfect combination of "James Bond and Daniel Boone" (2007, 211). Additionally, the film puts a great deal of emphasis on the unit's ability to fight and win despite overwhelming odds. In this way, Spark notes, the film reflects America's long tradition of celebrating the "daring deeds" of elite military units (1984, 33). At the same time, the action in Green Berets is reminiscent of World War II style combat scenes. By framing combat in this way, the film attempts to tell the audience that "true grit and superior technology" will win the Vietnam War (Shaw 2007, 220).

Kirby and company bring something new to the image of the soldier. They are portrayed not only as efficient warriors but also as competent medical personnel, civil engineers, and modern-day civilizing agents. By portraying the elite soldier as both a skilled warrior and, in Richard Betts words, as "an ambassador, propagandist, medical and economic aide, applied

anthropologist, and surrogate war heeler", the image of the Green Beret effectively obscures the borders between military and civilian roles (in Spark 1984, 32). As such, the image of the soldier in the film personifies Kennedy's vision of America as a "young nation fulfilling its ideals in contrast to the imperialism of older European powers" (Hellmann 2006, 297). Thus, the image of the soldier represents, as the cover to Robin Moore's 1965 eponymous novel on which the film is based claims, "a new kind of soldier in a new kind of war" (in Spark 1984, 30).

Like his portrayal of Sergeant Stryker in *Sands of Iwo Jima,* Wayne's portrayal of Kirby blends Kennedy's vision of the highly skilled guerilla commando with touches of Wayne's conservative views. His role is to not only aid indigenous peoples in rejecting the communist onslaught but to facilitate the transformation of Beckworth (David Janssen), a journalist embedded in the unit who has openly voiced his opposition to United States intervention in Vietnam. More precisely, the interaction between Beckworth and Kirby is framed so Wayne can convert American public opinion for the war. Beckworth's character is meant to be the vehicle through which Wayne's conservative message is transmitted to the audience. When the journalist sees first hand the diplomatic side of the Green Berets as they interact with the locals, we too are meant to understand the humanitarian mission in Vietnam. The film goes to great lengths to maintain this narrative by portraying Kirby and the soldiers as compassionate and caring towards the indigenous peoples. However, as Shaw notes, the film depicts the South Vietnamese as "childlike people who need American guidance" (Shaw 2007, 217). Indeed, one of the underlying plots revolves around the friendship between several of the soldiers and a young orphaned Vietnamese boy named "Ham Chuck." Likewise, when Beckworth sees the dark side of combat, the capture and torture of an alleged spy, we are meant to understand the lengths to which American soldiers must go to protect their fellow soldiers and the unit. When Beckworth

confronts Kirby over the use of torture, Kirby is responding not to Beckworth but to the audience, "out here due process is a bullet" (Wayne 1968). Beckworth, like the viewer, is unconvinced so Wayne sets up the transformation through a series of interactions that reinforce the logic that the Viet Cong–and, by extension, international communists–are ruthless killers. Beckworth joins the unit on patrol where he sees first hand the atrocities committed by the Viet Cong. Shortly after that, a massive contingent of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers attack the camp. Beckworth is forced to fight alongside the men and even assists in the escape of the locals. The fierce battle continues throughout the night as many of the members of the unit are killed or wounded. When morning comes, Kirby orders an airstrike that kills the remaining enemy soldiers. When the surviving members of the unit return to the camp, Kirby asks Beckworth, the "now enlightened" journalist, what he is going to write about. Beckworth responds, "If I say what I feel, I may be out of a job" (Wayne, 1968).

The *Green Berets* serves as Wayne's patriotic ode to the conservative fighting man. It is also a patriotic script. When Beckworth "sees" the horrible actions of the Viet Cong, he comes to realize that Vietnam is a different type of war that demands a different type of morality and a new kind of soldier. By framing the film through the conversion of Beckworth, the audience is meant to accept the conclusion that, to win the war, "trust the judgment of the Green Berets; the elite fellowship 'in the field' knows best" (Spark 1984, 37). Their style of fighting is the only way to win the war.

John Wayne may have thought that his image as an American icon could help shift American culture towards supporting the war. However, as Shaw points out, "by mid-1968, many television viewers had seen enough live-action footage of Americans burning Vietnamese villages and napalming children to realize Wayne's treatment of the war looked decidedly

sanitized and one-sided" (2007, 223). John Garofolo argues, the lack of idealism during Vietnam caused the military to become "a hollow force…haunted by fighting an unpopular war that called the very existence of the military institution into question" (2016, 56). Garofolo adds, although the film was a modest financial success, it was nevertheless, Cunningham argues, an "ideological failure" (2016, 64).

Not even Wayne's patriotic ode to the war and the mystique of the Green Beret could change this. "The Green Berets is unashamedly old-fashioned, blood-and-guts patriotic propaganda," writes Shaw (Shaw 2007, 216). One New York Times film critic labeled the film "vile, insane and dull" (in Shaw 2007, 221). "I do not know how it would be possible to produce a more revolting picture," wrote Michael Korda, publisher of Glamour magazine, "short of giving Martin Bormann several million dollars to make a Technicolor movie showing that Auschwitz was a wonderful place to live" (in Shaw 2007, 221). A young Roger Ebert derided the film for being "offensive not only to those who oppose American policy but even to those who support it" (1968). "At this moment in our history," Ebert added, "locked in the longest and one of the most controversial wars we have ever fought, what we certainly do not need is a movie depicting Vietnam in terms of cowboys and Indians" (1968). Renate Adler responded this way, "This is crazy. If the left-wing extremist's nightmare of what we already are has become the right-wing extremist's ideal of what we ought to be we are in steeper trouble than anyone could have imagined" (1963). The image of the soldier in *Sergeant York* helped to define the ideal patriotic American during the national emergency of World War II. Likewise, Sergeat Stryker, in *Sands of Iwo Jima*, shift the patriotic script to meet the security demands of the Cold War. It is clear that by the time John Wayne attempted make American's accept the noble cause of Vietnam, the image of the soldier was falling apart. If Wayne's hard-nosed, do-or-die Stryker

helped construct an ideal Cold War patriotism in 1949, Wayne's modern, "due process is a bullet" Kirby brought about its demise.

5   MILITARIZED PATRIOTISM AND THE WOUNDED SOLDIER

By the late 1960s, Americans were beginning to distrust the government. In 1967, the CIA's undercover operations within mass media as part of its "domestic Cold War cultural activities" was revealed (Shaw 2007, 250). The New York Times 1971 publication of the *Pentagon Papers* demonstrated the extent to which the US government went to prosecute a war against the North Vietnamese. Likewise, the Watergate scandal further eroded "the public's confidence in their government's honesty and commitment to democracy" (Shaw 2007, 250). According to Shaw, by the 1970s "conservatism was on the defensive" (2007, 235). American culture was not only rejecting the war, it was rejecting the legitimacy of the state itself. When the Vietnam War finally came to a close, the nation, argue Wetta and Novelli, was "robbed of its vigorous sense of triumphalism…The country made by war had become the country humiliated by defeat" (2003, 865).

Hollywood found itself in an awkward position. Until its demise in *The Green Berets*, the World War II formula provided the necessary mechanism through which American culture came to understand patriotism, war, and the soldiers who fought it (Garofolo 2016, 64). The war's divisive effects on American culture, its ultimate failure, and the extreme social and cultural backlash against the conservative status quo of the 1950s created a crisis that neither Hollywood nor the state could reconcile (Garofolo 2016, 64). John Garofolo argues this failure occurred because Hollywood "supported the dominant ideology of the state, and this dominant ideology proved quite contrary to the average American's understanding of Vietnam as a major cultural

and policy failure" (2016, 64). Moreover, Vietnam had the effect of undermining the legitimacy of the military and, perhaps to a greater extent, that of the soldier. As America's social issues came to the forefront and the anti-war movement gained strength, most Hollywood studios shifted away from traditional war films. As Pollard notes, the American public was no longer interested in the "formulaic combat genres in which distinctly American (usually white male) heroes are portrayed as courageous, decent, and victorious" (Pollard 2002, 126). Americans, writes Suid, were beginning to "explore their long-standing love of the martial spirit and their previously unquestioned respect for the military establishment" (2002, 2).

According to Shaw, many of the popular films in the 1970s featured "liberal conspiracy thrillers" that portrayed "right-wing" plots, assassination attempts, and corrupt "economic and corporate power elites" (2007, 252). Despite the claim that these films represented the consolidation of left-wing liberalism in Hollywood, they were not a rejection of the Cold War national security discourse. As Shaw rightly points out, when viewed as a whole, it is clear that conservatism still lingered in the backdrop of 1970s cinema. Many films still framed the Soviet Union as the greatest threat to America's national security; nuclear holocaust still loomed in science fiction; and there was an abundance of conservative "nostalgia-driven," "backward-facing" films or "right-wing cop/ vigilante" plots (Shaw 2007, 234). According to Garafolo, with the fall of Saigon, a wave of Hollywood films emerged by filmmakers who believed "the Vietnam experience demanded a more authentic representation of the war as a means to come to terms with the loss" (2016, 65). These films sought to represent the reality of Vietnam by portraying the war as "futility and hopelessness" (Garofolo 2016, 59). There was a greater emphasis on the brutality and chaos of war. Specifically, these films focused on the wounding of American soldiers in war. Likewise, many films centralized not the war but the transition of the

wounded soldier back into American society. Although this attempt to depict an authentic

account of Vietnam was meant to promote national reflection and critical engagement with the

war, Vietnam realism had another effect. The focus on the wounded soldier filled the void left by

the demise of the patriotic image of the soldier. Moreover, the authentic account of the physical

and psychological effects of war on the soldier during the 1970s established the foundation from

which the norm of honoring the soldier became enforced by militarized patriotism.

Figure 4: Mike in The Deer Hunter (1978), Universal Pictures

5.1 The Wounded Soldier

The Deer Hunter (1978) tells the story of three friends, Mike (Robert De Niro), Nick

(Christopher Walken), and Steven (John Savage). The trio mirrors the common cultural image of

blue-collar America. They are the children of Russian immigrants living in a small Pennsylvania steel town. Their immigrant status rejects the dominance of the patriotic white, protestant image of the soldier dominant in American culture. Likewise, the town reflects the darker, dirtier side of modern industrial America. Mike, Nick, and Steven work in one of the local steel mills. Their work is hard and dangerous yet necessary to obtain their understanding of the American dream. They work hard but they also play hard as well. They are a wild, rebellious trio. Like *Sergeant York*, the first half of the film focuses on the lives of the trio prior to their enlistment and shipment to war. Steven and Angela (Rutanya Alda) are getting married. Mike wants to get one last hunt in. Nick attempts to reconcile his decision to go to war. By focusing on the last few days of the lives of ordinary citizens before they go to war, *Deer Hunter* successfully establishes the humanity of the future soldier. Thus, the film enforces the logic that wars are not fought by soldiers but by hardworking young American boys who answer to call to service. The film does not establish whether the trio is drafted or enlists by choice. Nevertheless, the attention to the material and social conditions of their lives suggests that Mike, Nick, and Steven are meant to represent the average American soldier who, on one hand, joins the military to improve their lives and, on the other hand, the soldier who had little reason to go to Vietnam but no recourse to refuse except for complete abandonment of the American Dream; jail or Canada.

Mike is a rugged frontier type character. To a certain extent, he mirrors Sergeant York's youthfulness and wilderness proficiencies. However, York's qualities reflect a certain amount of simplicity and honest. Mike's allure is more intentional; a semi-rejection of the civilization by remaining on the fringes between two worlds. As John Hellman observes, Mike "lives on the edge of civilization and nature" (Hellmann 1982, 421). At home, the steel town standing in for modernity's industrialized society, Mike lives on the border between the city and the wilderness

in a trailer (Hellmann 1982). Although he is part of the community, Hellman writes, Mike is

"clearly separated from it by his alienation from its corruption and by his strict adherence to a

personal code closely associated with the uncorrupt wilderness and its original inhabitants"

(Hellmann 1982, 421). That Mike is more comfortable in the wild landscape of the mountains

reflects the nostalgic lure of the frontier and the self-reliance of "living off the grid." From this

view, Mike embodies a culture disrupted by war and modernity that seeks stability in the

memories of a stable past. Steven and Nick exemplify the everyday "All-American" youth. They

are both idealist, innocent, and are deeply attached to the community. Nick's only stated desire is

to marry Linda (Meryl Streep). He shares Mike's appreciation of the wilderness but not the

wilderness lifestyle that Mike adopts.

All three have a boyish romanticization of war and the military. When the group

encounters a Green Beret at the local VFW post, they "gush" over the sight of him (Pease 1979,

256). Mike offers the soldier a toast to the war. The Green Beret replies with a cynical "fuck it"

(Cimino 1979). Mike is angered and attempts to confront the soldier. Steven and Nick express a

sense of surprise and apprehension. The scene is important for a number of reasons. Mike's

anger establishes his commitment to war. He is a true believer. Nick and Steven's reaction

symbolizes their uncertainty. Thus, we see the beginnings of two divergent images of the soldier.

In Steven and Nick, we see the soldier who has an idealized vision of war. War is a noble and

necessary cause. They join because it is their patriotic duty. The Green Berets' reaction strikes at

the heart of this idealization. How could the ideal soldier, a reflection of John Wayne's Col.

Kirby, say such a thing? The exchange questions Nick's commitment and his outlook on war.

Later in the evening, Nick tells Mike, "don't leave me over there…you gotta promise" (Cimino

1979). Mike, on the other hand, both in his anger at the Green Beret and his subsequent

acceptance shortly after, signifies Mike's willingness to accept the realities of war. War is a

necessity, but Mike does not possess the idealized vision that Steven and Nick hold. This is

reinforced by his nostalgic lure of the wilderness. Nature, like war, is wild and chaotic, but it is

also honest. Thus, in Mike we see an image of the soldier reminiscent of Wayne's Stryker in

Sands of Iwo Jima. Thus, the image of the soldier we find in Mike is a blend of Sergeant

Stryker's toughness and Col. Kirby's commitment. Mike is the pragmatic warrior.

Now in Vietnam, Mike is a Special Forces soldier. He is unconscious when a North

Vietnamese soldier throws a grenade into a bunker with innocent civilians. Mike awakes to see

the soldier shoot and kill a woman and a child. Mike's response is pure violence and anger. He

cuts down the soldier with a flamethrower forcing him to die a brutal death. Even after the

soldier falls Mike continues to shoot the dead soldier in an apparent act of uncontrolled rage.

Shortly after, a helicopter drops off Steven and Nick. Reunited, Mike does not at first recognize

the two. He is completely submerged in war. However, their reunion is cut-off when North

Vietnamese troops overrun their position. The three are captured and held in a small cage half

immersed in a river. Both Steven and Nick are distraught. Steven more so, barely able to hold

onto a glimpse of hope and sanity. Mike, seemingly unfazed, attempts to comfort his troubled

friend. The trio are subjected to sadistic torture including, for the amusement of their captors,

being forced to play Russian roulette. Steven emotionally breaks during one of the games and is

sent to the "pit", a bamboo cage full of rats. Mike tells Nick to forget about Steven. It is now up

to the two to save themselves. Nick devises a plan to escape by tricking their captors into letting

them play the game with more bullets. The ruse allows Mike and Nick to overpower the guards

and rescue Steven. As the trio escapes, an American helicopter patrol rescues Nick. However,

Mike and Steven are left behind. Despite Steven's broken leg and poor emotional state, Mick

manages to get Steven to safety. Now separated, the three men's treacherous journey in Vietnam comes to an end.

Upon returning home, Mike sets out to repair the community he previously rejected. This signifies his attempt to overcome the trauma of war and return to some semblance of normalcy. He finds Steven in VA hospital. His friend has lost both his legs and is in the throes of post-traumatic stress yet Steven doesn't want to leave, telling Mike, "I don't want to go home…I don't fit" (Cimino 1979). Nevertheless, Mike liberates Steven from the hospital and returns him to his home and his wife. In doing so, he is performing his duty to his fellow soldier and his patriotic duty to the community. Thus, Mike is completing the first phase of his transformation. He is transforming from the soldier fully commitment yet pragmatic about war to the wounded soldier who struggles to reintegrate. Nick, on the other hand, is still in Vietnam. After the trio's escape, Nick finds himself in an Army hospital in Saigon. The effects of war and the experience of torture have broken him. When a doctor asks Nick what his parent's birthdays are, he breaks down because he can't recall. Nor can he bring himself to face Linda, his one expressed desire prior to leaving for the war. In this instance, Nick is reflecting not only the trauma of war but also how that trauma shatters the idealized vision of war. Thus, the image of the soldier embodied in Nick is filled with shame and regret. Nick's only recourse is to reject the civilization he fought for and submerge himself in the chaos of violence and war.

Mike returns to Vietnam in an attempt to fulfill his promise to bring Nick home. He finds Nick playing Russian roulette in a Saigon bar on the eve of the US withdrawal from Saigon. Mike begs Nick not to go through with the game. Despite his pleas, Nick has fully embraced the chaos of Vietnam and, we assume, is determined to implement his self-destruction. In the end, Mike's expression of love for Nick is not enough to break him from the War. Nick dies from a

self-inflicted shot to the temple. In Nick, we see the final act of destruction from the liberal image of the soldier. Once idealist and youthful, Nick was ill prepared to "handle" the war. His only recourse is to plunge himself within the machine completely. Even Mike's display of love for Nick is not enough to stop Nick from going through with the game. In the end, Nick kills himself. Mike, distraught over the loss of his friend, returns to the US with Nick body, thus fulfilling the promise he made years earlier on the night before they left to go to war. The film concludes with the unification of all the surviving characters as they gather to memorialize Nick (Hellmann 2006). Hellman writes, "close shots of the table being set, chairs lifted, and characters squeezing in around the table emphasize the daily heroism involved in preserving a community" (1982, 429). Likewise, Steven's portrayal as the wounded–albeit smiling and seemingly in good health–soldier symbolizes the reconstruction of the American family unit that the war destroyed. Mike, still in uniform, has completed his task of rebuilding the community. Mike's patriotic duty is further enshrined as the group begins to sing "God Bless America." With his final act of transformation complete, bringing his community together to honor Nick, Mike symbolizes the importance of family, friendship, and home; the very things for which the soldier fights.

Despite many observers viewing the film as an anti-war film, it functions as a militarizing narrative by cleansing the soldier of wrongdoing. As Susan Jefford's observes, films like Deer Hunter "urged us to sympathize with the young men who entered the war naively or unwillingly and who…lost all control over their own lives, thoughts, and futures, in the confusing and indiscriminate Russian roulette game that was Vietnam" (Jeffords 1988, 532). Thus, according to Marilyn Young, "the individual soldier fighting for his life becomes the victim of war; those he kills [are] the perpetrators of violence. His innocence is ours" (Young 2003, 255). Now cleansed

of individual responsibility, *Deer Hunter* inaugurates the new patriotic norm of honoring the soldier. It does this by highlighting the difference between two images of the wounded soldier. On the one hand, Nick projects an image of the fallen soldier. His idealization of war guarantees his own self-destruction. Thus, Nick's wounding is his own doing, and we are not meant to sympathize with his fate. On the other hand, Mike accepts the necessity of war and violence. Acceptance allows him to make the transition from total commitment to war to reintegration back into society. The obvious conclusion is that Mike is the good soldier that demands our patriotic love and devotion because Mike is the "true" victim. Thus, the ultimate message of the film is that, while not all soldiers are evil, there are distinctions that determine the soldier deserves our patriotic support and others that merely warrant pity. In sum, then, *Deer Hunter* attempts to present an "authentic" image by focusing on the wounding of the soldier. In actuality, the focus on the wounded soldier and the struggles to reintegrate back into society establishes a new form of patriotic behavior. The film tells us that our patriotic duty is to sympathize with the soldier and hate the war that caused his wounding.

Figure 5: John Rambo in *First Blood* (1982), Orion Pictures

5.2 The Conservative Warrior Extracts Revenge

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 brought about a drastic shift back to the

conservative Right in American culture. Reagan's political views aligned with the ideology of

the 1950s Cold War that reemerged under the banner of the New Right (Shaw 2007). The New

Right represented a neoconservative ideology that believed America was "a beacon of hope, a

shining city on the hill" and that "if America could 'renew' itself at home, it could rediscover a

'vision' overseas" (Shaw 2007, 268–69). The neoconservatives believed that the liberal policy of

containment was a mistake. They often spoke of Communism needing to be "rolled back"; "the

United States needed to 'break out of a future' that prophesied mutual assured destruction, and

'win' the Cold War" (Shaw 2007, 268–69). As Cramer points out, "militarization returned with

a vengeance in the 1980s"(2007, 496). Under Reagan, the United States maintained a higher

peacetime military budget than at any other point during the Cold War, spending over "$2.2

trillion in eight years on the military" (Cramer 2007, 496).

Reagan's foreign policy stance was nostalgic. Shaw writes, his perspective often "looked back in time, to a golden, pre-Vietnam era when the American flag was an honored emblem, and the nation confidently sought to fulfill its Manifest Destiny" (2007, 268). In Reagan's view defeating communism meant repairing the wounds of Vietnam. The war, he believed, "had been 'a noble cause' that Washington had lacked the will to win, and that Americans needed to kick the 'Vietnam Syndrome' lest communism take advantage of US passivity" (Shaw 2007, 275). To do this, Reagan set out to demonize and attack the political left (Shaw 2007). One of the underlying themes of his first administration, Shaw notes, was that "cultural power in America had to be wrested from the 'liberal elite' which had led the country astray during the 1960s and 1970s" (2007, 268). By the early 1980s, a younger generation of filmmakers had emerged who rejected the perceived liberal dominance in Hollywood during the 1970s (Shaw 2007). When Reagan came to office, his nostalgic rhetoric encouraged many of these conservative directors and producers to "reinvigorate American anti-communist cinema" and end the post-Vietnam malaise (Shaw 2007, 270). To do this, the conservative roots of the wounded soldier needed to be reclaimed.

First Blood (1982) opens with John Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) walking down a highway in the Pacific Northwest in search of a lost friend who, we find out, has died from cancer caused by exposure to Agent Orange. Rambo's long hair, worn service jacket, and stoic appearance reflect the loner, counter-cultural icon popularized by the likes of Brando and McQueen. However, in the cultural environment of the early 1980s, Rambo and his dead friend symbolize the plight of countless veterans returned from the war. According to Susan Jeffords, by 1980 over 500,000 Vietnam veterans were on disability (1988). Between 500,000 and 700,000 were

believed to be suffering from Posttraumatic Stress (Jeffords 1988). Additionally, there was a growing recognition of the links between deaths of veterans and Agent Orange.

Back on the road, Sheriff Teasle (Brian Dennehy) stops Rambo as he nears the small town of Hope. "Why are you pushing me," Rambo asks the Teasle. "We don't want guys like you in this town…drifters…first thing you know we've got a whole bunch of guys like you in this town," Teasle responds (Kotcheff 1982). The message is clear: even in Hope, the Vietnam soldier is not welcomed. "If you want some friendly advice, get a haircut and take a bath, you wouldn't get hassled so much," Teasle tells Rambo as he drops him on the edge of town (Kotcheff 1982). When Rambo refuses to leave, Teasle arrests him. In the local jail, the deputies, standing in for authority and the corruption of government, subject Rambo to a series of tortures for their pleasure. Each time, Rambo has flashbacks to the torture he has experienced as a prisoner in Vietnam. Pushed to the edge, Rambo breaks and physically overwhelms the deputies and escapes. Retreating to the mountain wilderness, Rambo relies on his Special Forces training to wound the deputies searching for him. Rambo captures Teasle and warns him that he will have "a war he can't believe" (Kotcheff 1982) if he refuses to stop pursuing him.

By refusing to kill the deputies, Drew Ayers observes, Rambo is performing a symbolic act of reclaiming the wounded soldier's "honor" while signifying his skills as a Special Forces soldier; "he can choose exactly how to harm his pursuers" (2008, 49). Teasle refuses to let Rambo go and, instead, he calls in the National Guard. Colonel Trautman (Richard Crenna), Rambo's senior officer in Vietnam, arrives on the scene to talk Rambo out of the mountains. In the climactic battle, Rambo overpowers Teasle and prepares to kill him. Trautman stops him telling Rambo, "this mission is over" (Kotcheff 1982). Rambo responds:

> Nothing is over…you just don't turn it off. It wasn't my war. You asked me, I didn't ask you. And I did what I had to do to win. But somebody wouldn't let us win. And I come

back to the world and I see all those maggots at the airport protesting me, spitting, calling me 'baby killer' and all kinds of vile crap. Who are they to protest me…unless they've been me or been there and know what the hell they're yelling about...In the field we had a code of honor, you watch my back I'll watch yours. Back here there's nothing…Back there I could fly a gunship. I could drive a tank. I was in charge of million-dollar equipment. Back here I can't hold a job parking cars (Kotcheff 1982).

As Susan Jefford points out, *First Blood* functions as a process of "cultural debriding" (1988, 525). Cultural debriding, for Jeffords, is a process where "foreign matter" is exorcised from the "healthy" body through the display and "regeneration" of a "victimized American masculinity" (1988, 525). "In order to accomplish this debriding," Jefford adds, "veterans had first to be cleansed of their primary cultural association with the loss of the war" (1988, 526).

The 1970s image of the wounded soldier centralized the struggle that soldiers underwent in Vietnam and back home. However, soldiers were depicted as "emotional time bombs, just waiting to explode" (Bayles 2003, 17). The primary emphasis on the conversion from war to civilian life functioned as a mechanism through which audiences internalized the struggles that soldiers face in and after the war. The 1970s wounded soldier, in this sense, is the victim of war. This act of victimization humanizes, if not civilianizes, the image of the soldier. The audience is meant to accept the message that their patriotic duty is to recognize this humanity. However, this victimization does little to repair a culture that, through its mediated exposure to the horrific acts and atrocities of Americans in Vietnam, turned against the soldier. As a result, during the late 1960s and 1970s, there was a dominant cultural association with American soldiers that they were "simply not good soldiers, that they became lazy, or that they abandoned the project of winning 'hearts and minds'" (Jeffords 1988, 525–26). The 1970s image of the wounded soldier does not reject this association. It only suggests that if soldiers committed bad acts during the war, it was the result of the war, not the internal motivations of the soldier.

Rambo, on the other hand, attempts to cleanse this association outright from the image of the soldier. As Douglas Kellner observes, *First Blood* "deliberately positioned Rambo and his war buddy as social victims, unable to succeed in civilian life and betrayed by the US government" (in Pollard 2002, 128). Rambo's emotional response at the end of the film signifies to the audience his underlying provocation. Vietnam has taken everything from him. The sacrifices he made were not of his choosing. He did the job he was ordered to do. Like John Wayne's message in *Green Berets*, Vietnam was a different kind of war and Rambo was a different kind of soldier. At the same time, As Trautman's explanation to Teasle suggests, "Rambo's tragedy is that he was abandoned by the social order in which he believed, for which he fought, and for which he risked death" (Kotcheff 1982). As such, the image of the soldier portrayed by Rambo is not the victim of war itself, but a corrupt government that failed to achieve victory and the American people that abandoned him. By repositioning blame onto the government and, more precisely, the citizen, Rambo is rejecting the reintegration narrative found in the *Deer Hunter*. Mike, wounded by war, finds solace in the end by rebuilding his community. Rebuilding his community is the symbolic act of reintegrating that nurtures patriotic sentiments from the audience. Rambo, on the other hand, literally destroys the community that has rejected him. In this destruction, Rambo, and films like *First Blood*, tells the audience that our patriotic duty to the wounded soldier is not to sympathize but to respect their achievements and the sacrifices.

5.3   1990s Militarization and the Consolidation of the Soldier

With the end of the Cold War, many believed the United States would experience a period of de-militarization (Cramer 2007; Regan 1994a). However, shortly after the Soviet

Union collapsed the United States began an era of militarization that rivaled the early days of the Cold War. For example, from 1946 to 1988, the United States openly committed to large-scale military actions six times (Cramer 2007). Between 1989 and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the United States has engaged in nine separate large-scale deployments (Cramer 2007). Thus, the United States use of force has increase 300% in the 14 years since the end of the Cold War than the 40 years of the actual Cold War. Not included are the smaller incidents of use of force such as the use of cruise missiles or single bombings campaigns to enforce no-fly zones (Cramer 2007). The Republican takeover of Congress in 1994 did little to confront the rapid increase in militarization and military action (Cramer 2007). The lack of resistance, according to Cramer, resulted from their "desire to appear not as obstructionists, but as patriotic...." (2007, 500). By the mid-1990s, the United States military was operating out of 700 installations scattered throughout the globe. According to O'Brien, by the late 1990s, United States defense spending was more than "the next fifteen nations combined" (2006, 250). By 2002, according to Cramer, US military spending was "twenty-five times greater than 'the *combined* defense budgets of the seven 'rogue states' then comprising the roster of U.S. enemies" (2007, 499).

After the quick defeat of Saddam Hussein's army in 1991, President Bush proclaimed the United States had finally "kicked the Vietnam Syndrome" (O'Brien 2006, 250). However, as Marilyn Young points out, Vietnam itself was still collectively imagined as a wrong war (Young 2003, 253). To legitimize the rapid militarization needed to maintain the New World Order, the United States needed to revisit and reinvigorate its moral base (Pollard 2002, 133). To do this, Vietnam needed to be erased from public memory.

Figure 6: Cpt. Miller (far left) in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), DreamWorks Pictures

5.4   **World War II Nostalgia and the Cult of the Soldier**

Saving Private Ryan (1998) follows Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks) and his men in

their daring rescue of Private James Ryan (Matt Damon) shortly after the events of D-Day.

Miller is the soft-spoken father figure in the unit. Reflecting a modern hybrid of Sergeant York

and Sergeant Stryker, Miller's noble task is to follow orders and make sure his men are prepared

and make it home. He is a Pennsylvania high school English teacher who enjoys coaching

baseball and his only desire is to survive the war and make it back to his beloved wife. Miller is

the common man, meant to symbolize middle-class American sensibilities. Ryan is the sole

surviving brother of a family who has since lost the other brothers in action. The War

Department decides that it is necessary to remove Ryan from combat so that an entire generation

(of the family) will not be wiped out. When the film opens in present day, we share in the

experience of an unnamed old man at the Normandy American Cemetery in France. We assume by his appearance that he is a World War II veteran and that the memories of his service are the cause of the emotional response. Through his eyes, the film shifts to the opening assault on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. Regarded as one of the most violent and graphic film sequences in the history of cinema, *Saving Private Ryan* forces the audience to experience the horrors of D-Day. Following the assault, Miller and his squad are ordered to locate and rescue Private Ryan. The film proceeds to follow their journey as they encounter brutal fighting through France. Along the way, several members of the unit are killed. When Miller and his remaining team do find Ryan, he is with a small group of airborne soldiers preparing to defend a bridge from a German advance. Miller confronts Ryan with the news of his brothers' deaths. While saddened by the news Ryan nevertheless refuses to be rescued, telling Miller he will not abandon his brothers in arms. Miller and his men decide to stay with Ryan and help him defend the key position. The combat is heavy, and most of the men are killed. In the final scenes of the war, a mortally wounded Miller tells Ryan to "earn this*"*(Spielberg 1998). The film returns to the present day where we recognize the old man as Private Ryan standing at the base of Miller's grave with Ryan's family surrounding him. In the last emotional scene, Ryan asks his wife if he has earned Miller's sacrifice. The film ends with Ryan saluting Miller's gravestone.

Few would argue against the claim that *Saving Private Ryan* is a patriotic ode to the men who fought the "good" war. Likewise, most accept that the film is powerful. The question is why the film was so powerful at that particular moment. During the 1990s, Hollywood returned to the classic World War II formula that focused on the valor, bravery, and sacrifice of the men who fought in the war (Pollard 2002). These nostalgic reproductions maintained the narrative of the "good" war in ways that prioritized war as an ideological battle against the evil in the world

(Noon 2004, 348). Likewise, nostalgic reproductions of World War II imagined the war as the last great American battle. As a result, both Vietnam and Korea were resituated within the cultural landscape as insignificant growth-pains along the way to the "end of history" (Fukuyama 2006). In doing so, these films re-formed cultural understandings of patriotism, citizenship, and national identity in ways that legitimized US militarization in the absence of a dominant threat (Noon 2004, 358). Furthermore, by resurrecting the "good war," films like *Saving Private Ryan* tapped into an underlying collective frustration of a generation that did not have a "real" war (Noon 2004, 351). In the absence of a "real" war, Americans lacked the necessary mechanism to demonstrate patriotic duty, virtuousness, and national strength (Noon 2004, 351). In this way, as Michael Valdez Moses suggests, films like *Saving Private Ryan* represented "an unfulfilled epic desire on the part of a generation that felt diminished by comparison to the one that preceded it" (in Noon 2004, 350).

The image of the soldier in *Saving Private Ryan* is a product of nostalgia. Instead of transforming previous images, as has occurred in earlier periods to respond to the demands specific to that time, the image of the soldier in *Saving Private Ryan* is the site where other images are resurrected and collapsed into one. In this way, the film achieves its patriotic purpose by borrowing or recycling those aspects of previous images to create a nostalgic vision of the soldier. The soldiers in Miller's team regularly question the motivations and decisions behind the war strategy. Much of this revolves around the decision by the War Department to risk the lives of Miller's unit to save one young private. Thus, the image of the soldier in *Saving Private Ryan* reflects the cynicism, distrust, and anger of the (future) veteran evidenced by John Rambo. These moments of doubt also reflect the image of Conway in *Sands of Iwo Jima*. However, while Stryker's harsh demeanor and reverent respect of authority lead soldiers like Conway to

accepting the necessity of war, Miller does not resort to a patriotic speech or a hardened position to bring his soldiers in line. Instead, he enlightens his soldiers of his life back home and how, if finding Ryan is his ticket to get back home, then that is what he is going to do. Thus, we see in Miller shadows of Sergeant York; his attachment to home, his wife, and the desire to get the job done and get back home. At the same time, *Private Ryan* places a great deal of emphasis on the wounded soldier. Like Mike in *Deer Hunter*, the soldiers in *Private Ryan* are not victims of their own demise but of war itself and the brutality of the Nazi enemy.

At the same time, the film's emphasis on wounding implies a tone more reminiscent of John Rambo. Rambo was the victim of not only war and government but also the community itself, a community that abandoned him. In fact, *Private Ryan* puts so much emphasis on the wounding of American soldiers that the film, as Bodnar observes, "upholds its patriotic architecture with opening and closing scenes at an American military cemetery" (Bodnar 2001, 806). This framing device has important implications for the overall message of the film. The references to the cemetery reflect the permanency of the sacrifice made by the soldiers in the war. Like the decision by the United States government to leave America's war dead in Europe as a means to forever remind the European allies of America's role in protecting their freedom, the film's use of the cemetery to open and close the narrative functions in a similar fashion (Bodnar 2001). As Bodnar suggests, *Private Ryan* reminds the audience that our patriotic duty is never to forget the sacrifices made by soldiers like Miller (Bodnar 2001). Noon observes, the preservation of the "heroic moment of the past" demands that current and future generations must "periodically show themselves worthy of the gifts bestowed upon them by the wartime sacrifices of others" (Noon 2004, 342). Thus, Miller's last line is not directed at Ryan as much as

it is towards the audience. It is we, the civilians who do not fight the wars, who are supposed to earn Miller's sacrifice.

6   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the crisis of Vietnam had drastic effects not only on American culture but also on the way that individuals made sense of and dealt with war and patriotism. As I have demonstrated, beginning shortly before the United States entry into World War II, Hollywood constructed the image of the ideal liberal soldier to support Roosevelt's interventionist cause. Beginning with *Sergeant York,* these classic war films celebrated American's individuality, freedom, and diversity. In doing so, they reified patriotic norms of behavior that were necessary for the United States to mobilize for war. The crisis of the Cold War demanded a cleansing of the political discourse. The image of the soldier in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* replaced the liberal image that had been dominant during the war. Sergeant Stryker demonstrated that the necessary patriotic commitment to national security was cultural uniformity and submission to authority. With the crisis of Vietnam, American culture rejected the Cold War warrior and turned against the military and the soldier. From the 1970s to our present time, the image of the soldier in popular culture has been one of the critical spaces in which militarized patriotism had been able to regain a dominant position in American culture. The transformation of the image of the soldier from a hardened Cold War warrior to a wounded victim of war created the necessary conditions for the cult of the soldier to emerge. As a result, modern appropriate patriotic behavior now includes the near-worship of veterans and active duty military. As we near the end of two decades of permanent war, perhaps it is time we heed Tolstoy's advice, "to destroy war, destroy patriotism" (in Nathanson 1989, 536).

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